Theory Chapter

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May 25, 2017

Chapter 1

A Theory of Rebel Movement Structure

Why are some conflicts contested by multiple rebel factions, while others feature a single, cohesive group? Drawing on the literature reviewed in Chapter **??**, I argue that the number of rebel groups in a conflict is shaped by three processes. First, entirely new groups can enter the conflict. Second, previously cohesive groups can splinter into multiple successor organizations. Finally, previously independent groups sometimes merge. Only splintering has received extensive, direct consideration in the existing literature. Furthermore, I build upon previous work by explaining each of these processes in a single theoretical framework. In the remainder of this chapter I articulate a set of assumptions, a theory of the internal politics of dissident movements, and a set of hypotheses to be tested in subsequent chapters.

1.1 The Dissident Movement

I start from the assumption that rebel groups are drawn from a broader movement of dissidents. By dissident, I mean an individual who opposes the government. Dissidents are likely to vary on several dimensions. First, individuals vary in their level of involvement in violence. Lichbach (1995, 17) identifies five gradations of participation which range

from being constitutents who may not even consent to being represented by the dissident movement, to activists who engage in political activity but not necessarily violence, to militants who participate in violence or work in close support of such efforts. For instance, civilian activists may provide crucial material and logistical support to rebels (see Weinstein 2007; Parkinson 2013). Relatedly, dissidents may utilize different "repertoires of contention" (Tilly 1986; Tilly 2006), perhaps reflecting the resources and past behavior of the groups through which they are mobilized. In addition to varying across individuals, the willingness to use violence is often dynamic — previously violent individuals often desert their rebel group, and previously non-violent individuals can be moved to participate in the fighting.

Social identities form a second dimension of variation among dissidents. A few dissident movements are exceptionally homogenous. For example, some separatist movements benefit from a coincidence of ethnicity, language, religion, and geographic location. In most cases, however, there is some amount of diversity along these attributes. For example, the Kurds share a common ethnicity and language, but practice a variety of faiths. Bids to overthrow the central government might be made by coalitions featuring representatives of multiple ethnic groups, religions, languages, and regions. Rebel leaders often emphasize broad, inclusive goals and identities, hoping to gain the support of a large portion of society. Such coalitions are often vulnerable to "outbidding appeals" (Rabushka and Shepsle 1972; D. L. Horowitz 1985), through which moderate, diverse groups lose support to competitors claiming to explicitly represent a particular identity group.

Finally, while dissidents share a common interest in removing the incumbent government, they do not necessarily agree on many other political questions. Rural dissidents might make land reform their top priority in a post-war government, whereas urban dissidents might care more about welfare or modernization programs. Some dissidents hope to take control of a government with strong centralized authority, while others hope

to procure greater regional autonomy as a consequence of the war. Broader left-right ideological divisions are often present, and doctrinal differences often divide groups with relatively similar views. For example, Indian communists were long divided into Maoist and Marxist-Leninist factions. Even when dissidents largely agree on goals, there are likely to be divisions between hardliners and moderates, who will be more willing to accept compromises and less willing to adopt extreme tactics. Finally, even dissidents who largely agree on questions of policy will still find themselves in competition over the power and private benefits of government (Christia 2012), which are subject to rival consumption.

In short, the pool of individuals who oppose the government often form a mix of violent and non-violent organizations, and tend to have several social and political cleavages that might serve as the basis for organizational fragmentation. I argue that whether such divisions do produce fragmented groups, however, is contingent on contextual factors which I explore in the following section.

1.1.1 Changes to the Dissident Pool

I generally treat the dissident network as a fixed pool of government opponents. In reality, however, it will often change over the course of the conflict. Throughout history civilians have often fled conflict to become refugees. While one might reason that dissidents are somewhat less likely to do this than neutral civilians, in many conflicts the dissident network is undoubtedly depleted by fleeing members. Successful counterinsurgency operations by the government or third parties can also reduce the ranks of the dissidents. Both rebels and non-violent dissidents are often killed in great numbers, and even when they are not, they are may be subjected to imprisonment or repression that makes mobilization difficult. Under certain conditions, dissidents may even defect to the government side (Staniland 2012).

In other cases the dissident network may grow. Government repression may induce

previously neutral civilians to support the opposition. Dissidents may attract support by offering a morally or politically superior platform to the government's, or by obtaining legitimacy through their choice of tactics or international support (E. Chenoweth and Cunningham 2013). Rebels may attract new supporters by demonstrating strength and by extension their prospects for success (Christia 2012), or by offering private benefits to recruits (Weinstein 2007). Rebel groups may also attract or coerce support from civilians by controlling territory (Mampilly 2011). Finally, dissidents may be bolstered by international support. The Islamic State has recruited young Muslims from around the world to join them in Syria. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam enjoyed significant financial support from the Tamil diaspora, effectively giving them a larger civilian support network than they had locally.

While I am primarily interested in changes to the structure of the dissident movement independent of its size, it is important to consider the possibility that the dissident network may change in composition as well.

1.2 Rebel Entrepreneurs

In most cases rebellion does not emerge out of the spontaneous decisions of individual dissidents. Rather, individuals tend to be recruited into violence by entrepreneurial organizations. Indeed, my own data collection shows that most rebel groups can trace their origins to a pre-existing organization such as a political party, militia, or student organization (see also Staniland 2014). Comparatively few have emerged through grassroots processes, such as protesters steadily becoming more violent and organized (see Figure XX).

One school of thought in the literature on the causes of civil war argues that rebellion is motivated primarily by the pursuit of private benefits such as oil rents or profits from illicit trades (Mueller 2000; Collier and Hoeffler 2004). This so-called "greed hypothesis" implies

that rebels are not necessarily concerned with defeating the government. While doing so may be desirable in some cases if control of the state brings significant revenue streams, in many cases rebels aspire only to preserve their control revenue from sources such as drug cultivation. Kalyvas (2006) similarly believes that rebel violence is often motivated by private concerns, though he sees personal rivalries as a more common priority than material wealth.

I follow Lichbach (1995) and Weinstein (2007) in viewing private benefits such as drug revenues as a recruiting tool and secondary benefit of rebellion, rather than an end in themselves. The ultimate goal of rebel groups, then, are political goals such as the overthrow of the central government, or autonomy for a particular region. Thus, all else equal, rebel groups should prefer to defeat the government militarily. Short of that, they should prefer to use gains on the battlefield to secure at least a portion of their political goals in a postwar peace agreement. This creates an incentive for rebel leaders to amass as much military and political power as possible. Yet, even as a secondary motive, private benefits create a countervailing incentive to limit the size of one's group, so as to maximize the share of benefits distributed to each member. Ultimately, then, rebels should seek to build minimum winning coalitions (Christia 2012).

As noted above, I expect that rebel groups will generally be created through the efforts of entrepreneurial individuals or organizations. There two broad challenges inherent to such a task. First, collective action is generally difficult, and especially so in the high-risk context of rebellion. Second, the desire to produce a minimum winning coalition rather than any form of collective action limits the available solutions to the first problem. For instance, while private benefits might solve the collective action problem, many rebel groups lack the resources to pay an army sufficiently large to defeat the government. Even if rebel entrepreneurs do manage to attract a substantial number of recruits, it may be difficult to find a basis on which to restrict access. For instance, a rebel movement that encompasses

a large portion of a country's population might be immediately beset by infighting after defeating the government, as there is no clear basis for which elements of the group should have access to government power.

Subnational identities such as ethnicity or religion can serve as a basis for building cohesive groups that can be restricted in scope

1.3 The Dynamics of Dissident Alignment

1.3.1 Repression and the Dynamics of Identity

Some theoretical perspectives view ethnic and other social identities as largely immutable, deriving from ancient histories (D. L. Horowitz 1985). Increasingly, however, scholars view identity as a product of individual or collective choice. Posner (2005) argues that individuals choose to prioritize one of several identities such as ethnicity, language, religion, or class, selecting that which is likely to bring them the greatest benefit. Focusing on the realm of electoral politics, he finds that this choice is shaped by an interaction between group size and electoral institutions. In subsequent work Eifert, Miguel, and Posner (2010) find that individuals are more likely to identify with their ethnic group when interviewed near a competitive election. Penn (2008) models a similar calculation in which individuals choose to orient themselves toward a national or ethnic identity. She finds that ethnic identities become more prevalent as ethnic groups become homogenous, and as economic inequality between ethnic groups increases. Christia (2012) extends the argument to civil wars, arguing that ethnic identities are deployed instrumentally, with rebel elites emphasizing particular identities to justify alignments that are in fact driven by power politics. A key consequence of this malleability of identity is that ethnic outbidding is not inevitable - if political actors can appeal to multiple, overlapping identities, competition is no longer zero-sum (Chandra 2005). The opposite is also true, however - previously

cooperative relationships can be undermined by enhancing the salience of ethnic identities.

I argue that selective repression - repression which is targeted at certain individuals or groups while sparing others - should tend to increase the number of rebel groups in a conflict both by decreasing the relative cost of violent mobilization and by increasing the salience of particular identities. Indiscriminate repression, by contrast, should not systematically decrease the cohesiveness of dissident movements. First, repression should have a general effect of increasing the number of individuals participating in a conflict. Some individuals will participate in violence even when doing so comes at high cost. Many, however, will only participate when the cost of doing so is low relative to the cost of remaining non-violent. As one of the primary costs of participation in rebellion is the risk of physical harm, repression should tend to reduce the relative cost of rebellion by bringing the risk of physical harm to non-violent activities. Any form of repression should thus increase the number of individuals in a country willing to participate in violence.

The effect of repression on the structure of rebel movements, however, should depend on its form. While indiscriminate repression that targets many individuals within society should expand the pool of individuals willing to participate in rebellion, it should not systematically affect their desire to form new groups rather than joining existing ones. Some individuals may turn to an ethnic or religious group for protection, but in other cases widespread repression may unify citizens in opposition to their government. For example, the citizens of many former colonies banded together to pursue independence, before subsequently fragmenting along ethnic lines. Thus while indiscriminate repression should in some cases lead to an increased number of rebel groups, the aggregate effect should be of moderate strength.

In comparison, indiscriminate repression should be far more likely to increase the number of rebel groups in a conflict, as it induces individuals to identify with particular subnational groups. While targeted repression can be done on the basis of support for existing rebels

(Kalyvas 2006), often it is done on the basis of ethnicity or religion. For example, the Myanmarese government has frequently repressed the Rohingya ethno-religious minority, while being considerably more repsectful of the rights of the Burman majority. I focus on this sort of targeted repression. When individuals are targeted on the basis of group membership, these groups are likely to increase in salience relative to other social cleavages. Furthermore, individuals are highly likely to develop a sense of linked fate with fellow group members. In other words, they are likely to adopt the belief that their prosperity and perhaps even survival depends on their ability to band together and defend themselves. Thus, targeted repression should lead individuals to mobilize on the basis of the targeted group. Unless an existing rebel group was already mobilized on such a basis, this should result previously non-violent individuals forming new groups, and in members of existing groups forming splinter organizations that emphasize their identity.

In statistical terms, I expect that the relationship between repression and discrimination to be interactive, rather than additive. That is, I expect the effect of increasing the severity repression on the number of rebel groups to be very strong when it is targeted (discriminatory), and more modest when it is deployed indiscriminately. I expect the reverse to hold as well — the effect of discrimination should be greater when as severity of repression increases. While targeted, but weak repression might enhance ethnic identities, I do not expect that it will dramatically alter the relative cost of fighting. In short, I expect to find a statistically significant, positive interaction term.

1.3.1.1 Government Agency

Thus far, I have treated government behavior as an exogenous influence on dissidents. In reality, the government is almost certainly a strategic actor, with choice of repressive strategy being endogenous to its expectation of how dissidents will respond. Governments might be more inclined to repress if they expect that doing so will sow division among

their opponents. Alternatively, dissident networks that are already divided might be more attractive targets for repression than unified ones. It is important to account for such possibilities both theoretically and empirically. This is would be particularly true if my expectation that repression often produces fragmentation among dissidents is borne out, as it is not entirely clear whether this would be a desirable outcome for the government. Furthermore, if repression does in fact increase the number dissidents willing to resort violence, its use by governments becomes downright puzzling.

One explanation is that influencing the size or structure of rebel groups is not the only, and perhaps not even the primary purpose of repression in most cases. First, the governmental institutions involved in fighting rebels may differ from those that conduct the bulk of repression. Whereas civil wars tend to be conducted by state militaries, repression is often conducted by police forces or outsourced to pro-government militias, with less-than-perfect coordination between the entities (Mitchell, Carey, and Butler 2014). Second, rebellion is not always a particularly grave threat to a government's survival. Indeed, only about 16% of rebel groups defeat the government (D. E. Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2009). By contrast, leaders routinely lose power through elections, and are sometimes forced to resign in the face of mass uprisings. If governments use repression to maximize their chances at political survival, deterring dissidents from voting or protesting may take priority over preventing or dividing rebel movements. In either case, the government's strategy of repression would not be (entirely) endogenous to its affect on rebel structure.

In some cases, however, repression is likely aimed at least partially at making rebellion more difficult. If, as I predict, repression reduces the cost of fighting and increases the willingness of its targets to participate in violence, the government's use of this tactic remains a puzzle. One explanation is a sort of gamble. At its most successful, repression might induce dissidents to flee the country and become refugees, deter violent mobilization by signaling resolve (Pierskalla 2010), or physically prevent collective action from occurring.

The possibility of such a desirable outcome might lead governments to repress, even if doing so brings some risk of an escalating cycle of repression and increasingly violent dissent. As governments likely have incomplete information about their own ability to identify and repress dissidents, and about dissident resolve, counterproductive uses of repression are conceivable.

A more complete consideration of the government's use of repression is beyond the scope of this project. As the preceding section demonstrates, there are a number of theoretical accounts in which the structure of the dissident movement is incidental to the decision to repress. I provide further support for this notion with a variety of causal inference techniques in the subsequent empirical chapters.

1.3.2 External Intervention and the Dynamics of Political Goals

1.3.3 Testing the Microfoundations

Hypothesis 1: Repression should increase an individual's willingness to participate in political violence

Hypothesis 2: Repression should increase the extent to which an individual identifies with their ethnic group

Hypothesis 3: The probability that repression will induce an individual to identify with their ethnic group should increase with the extent to which the discrimination is targeted at the individual's group

1.4 Processes of Structural Change

1.4.1 Joining

Broadly, a conflict can come to have multiple rebel groups through two processes - the splintering of existing groups into multiple successor organizations, and the formation of an entirely new organization by previously non-violent individuals. At a minimum, then, the creation of new rebel groups requires division among the dissidents who comprise the pool of current and potential rebels. Splinter factions must have a reason for leaving their parent organization, and newly mobilizing individuals must have a reason for forming a new group rather than joining an existing one. At their most benign, these divisions might simply reflect the difficulty of coordinating actions across physical distance or linguistic barriers. In such cases the formation of multiple rebel groups might be a matter of convenience rather than an indicator of animosity or divergent objectives. In other cases, however, divisions may be deeper and more difficult to reconcile. For instance, if some rebels make improving the status of their ethnic group a primary concern, it is unlikely that members of other ethnic groups will join their organization, and any existing members with differing ethnic identities will be likely to leave.

Table 1.1: Necessary Conditions for the Formation of New Groups

Splinter Group	Entirely New Group
Division among dissidents	Division among dissidents
	Change in relative value of fighting

In addition to divisions with existing groups, the formation of new groups requires that previously non-violent individuals change their mobilizational calculus. This entails either

participation in violence becoming more attractive, or remaining non-violent becoming less attractive. The former might occur in situations where an individual found the grievances that led to the initial violence insufficiently persuasive to justify fighting, but new, more persuasive grievances emerge. For example, violence against civilians might lead new dissidents to mobilize in response. Alternatively, the initial fighting might reveal the government to be weaker than perviously thought, leading some to reconsider their decision to abstain from fighting. Non-violence can become less attractive if, for example, the conflict disrupts economic activity, decreasing the opportunity cost of fighting (see Collier and Hoeffler 1998). Indiscriminate violence against civilians can have similar effects by reducing the the risk of participation in violence relative to that of non-violence (Kalyvas and Kocher 2007). If the physical risk of remaining peaceful is not dramatically lower than that of fighting, the cost of participating in rebellion is relatively low. In the following sections, I argue that government repression, particularly when targeted at specific ethnic groups, can satisfy both requirements for the formation of new rebel groups — repression reduces the relative cost of fighting, and targeted repression activiates social identities that can sow division among dissidents.

1.4.1.1 The Perils of Ethnic Politics

Rebellions are organized around a variety of identities, ideologies, and goals. The Communist Party of India advocates a Marxist-Leninist ideology, Darul Islam sought to establish an Islamic state in Indonesia, the National Forces of Liberation challenged the ruling Tutsi minority in Burundi on behalf of ethnic Hutus, and the Kurdistan Democratic Party backs an irredentist goal of creating an independent Kurdish state in parts of Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. Many scholars have argued that ethnic identities are a particularly useful basis for mobilization. Ethnic groups tend to be among the most salient identities in society, and thus serve as a focal point for mobilization (Hardin 1995; Hechter and Okamoto 2001). Furthermore,

coethnics often have overlapping social networks, meaning that their interactions occur under the shadow of the future, mitigating many barriers to cooperation (Habyarimana et al. 2007). Indeed, several empirical studies find that ethnically-homogeneous groups are better able to cooperate than more diverse ones (Alesina, Baqir, and Easterly 1999; Miguel and Gugerty 2005; Habyarimana et al. 2007). Yet while activating ethnic identities may be advantageous for the initial organization of rebellion, I argue that in diverse societies such identities can have deleterious effects on the cohesion of rebel movement.

Intra-ethnic politics often follows a dynamic known as "outbidding," in which leaders make progressively more extreme proposals in hopes of winning the support of the group (Rabushka and Shepsle 1972; D. L. Horowitz 1985). Key to these models are the assumptions that individuals identify with a single ethnic group, that they care only about ethnic issues, and that ethnic politics is a zero-sum game. This produces a completely polarized bargaining space in which individuals hold positions on ethnic issues in which their group's interests are represented fully (e.g. a preference for a legislature in which group members hold a majority). In a spatial model of voting with such parameters, the optimal strategy for politicians is to adopt the most extreme position possible (Rabushka and Shepsle 1972). Even if a multi-ethnic coalition forms initially by creating uncertainty as to which group will be advantaged, it will eventually be undercut by challengers making more extreme appeals to one ethnic group. Other bases of mobilization, by contrast, tend to produce more heterogenous preferences - some members will actually prefer moderate positions - and thus greater potential for compromise. While the original formulation of the outbidding model assumes competition in an electoral context, it has also been shown to more violent forms of competition such as terrorism (Kydd and Walter 2006; Erica Chenoweth 2010; but see Findley and Young 2012).

Adding to the zero-sum character of competition between ethnic groups is the fact that ethnic rebellions are far more likely than others to claim specific pieces of territory. Ethnic

rebellions often make secessionist or irredentist claims against the government, while such demands are relatively rare among multi-ethnic rebellions in the post-colonial era. Territorial division is a zero-sum game - any territory gained by the secessionist movement comes at the expense of the state, and vice-versa. Furthermore, while in theory territory can be divided, resulting in compromise solutions, in fact it often takes on symbolic importance that renders it indivisible (Toft 2003). In addition to creating the zero-sum dynamic between an ethnic group and the state common to many ethnic issues, territorial claims can generate competition between different ethnic groups. Many territories are claimed by multiple ethnic groups (Toft 2003), placing secessionist claims into competition. Even in the absence of symbolic value, the territories that form secessionist claims are often remote, making them attractive bases for all rebel groups (Fjelde and Nilsson 2012). The activation of ethnic identities should thus create difficult-to-resolve competitions between dissidents of differing ethnicities, ultimately leading to an increase in the number of factions competing in a civil war.

Hypothesis 1: The number of rebel groups in a country should increase with the level of repression

The effect of repression on the structure of rebel movements, however, should depend on its form. While indiscriminate repression that targets many individuals within society should expand the pool of individuals willing to participate in rebellion, it should not systematically affect their desire to form new groups rather than joining existing ones. Some individuals may turn to an ethnic or religious group for protection, but in other cases widespread repression may unify citizens in opposition to their government. For example, the citizens of many former colonies banded together to pursue independence, before subsequently fragmenting along ethnic lines. Thus while indiscriminate repression should in some cases lead to an increased number of rebel groups, the aggregate effect should be of moderate strength.

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Hypothesis 2: The number of rebel groups in a country should increase with the extent to which repression is discriminatory

In statistical terms, I expect that the relationship between repression and discrimination to be interactive, rather than additive. That is, I expect the effect of increasing the severity repression on the number of rebel groups to be very strong when it is targeted (discriminatory), and more modest when it is deployed indiscriminately. I expect the reverse to hold as well — the effect of discrimination should be greater when as severity of repression increases. While targeted, but weak repression might enhance ethnic identities, I do not expect that it will dramatically alter the relative cost of fighting. In short, I expect to find a statistically significant, positive interaction term.

Hypothesis 3: There is a positive interactive effect between the level repression and the extent to which repression is discriminatory

1.4.2 Fragmentation

1.4.3 Alliance Formation

1.4.3.1 The Value of Rebel Alliances

Frequently, rebel factions engage in military collaboration with other non-state actors. This can range from an agreement not to target each other, to a divisions of territory, to joint campaigns on the battlefield, to full mergers. These alliances can be valuable for a number of reasons. First, alliances aggregate capabilities. This is perhaps the most common conception of alliances in international politics (see Bennett 1997), and it has been proposed as a motive for rebel alliances as well [Bapat and Bond (2012); M. C. Horowitz and Potter (2013). The logic of capability aggregation differs somewhat between international and civil conflicts. Whereas international alliances aggregate capabilities by bringing states into a conflict in which they might not otherwise participate, rebel groups by definition are already participating in conflict. Nevertheless, these alliances can bring great value because rather than simply aggregating, they can concentrate capabilities in space and time. For example, two rebel groups might be unable to capture a government-held town on their own, but in a joint operation would be sufficiently powerful to do so.

Second, alliances can allow for burden-sharing and specialization. Burden-sharing has been offered as an explanation for international alliances such as NATO (Sandler and Forbes 1980), though it may not occur under all circumstances (see Olson and Zeckhauser 1966). Alliances can ensure that a single rebel group is not responsible for defeating the government, and might serve as a mechanism for reigning in the temptation to free ride off of another group's efforts. Relatedly, alliances can facilitate specialization by rebel groups. For instance, one alliance partner might specialize in holding territory, while another specializes in launching offensives in new areas. Furthermore, they can share strategies and technical information. For example, Hamas is believed to have learned how

to use suicide bombings through its alliance with Hezbollah (M. C. Horowitz and Potter 2013).

Third, alliances can manage conflict between members and ensure that their resources are directed toward common enemies. Weitsman (1997) argues that alliances often serve to tether powerful states to one another, so as to reduce the probability of conflict between them. Gibler (1996) finds that alliance treaties are often used to settle territorial disputes between the signatories. Similar alliances can be seen in civil wars, for example as a number of Syrian rebel groups agreed to focus their efforts in different regions of the country. This allows rebels to avoid conflict with each other. Compliance with such agreements is incentivized by the fact that reneging on the territorial arrangement would likely result in the loss of the other benefits of the alliance, such as capability aggregation.

Fourth, operating as an alliance bloc may be beneficial to the members groups in bargaining situations. An alliance with a set of coordinated demands might command greater bargaining leverage than individual members, who collectively have similar power, but a more disparate set of demands. Perhaps more crucially, alliances might mitigate credible commitment problems. Peaceful settlements to conflicts can be derailed by concerns that the other side will not adhere to the agreement (Fearon 1995). In civil wars, this is often borne out by extreme "spoiler" factions. A rebel commitment to a peace agreement is more likely to be viewed as credible if it has formal control over other factions.

1.4.3.2 The Costs of Alliances

While the benefits are often many, most alliances between rebel groups are not without cost. The post-war political outcome, whether it comes in the form of a rebel victory or a compromise with the incumbent government, is likely to be shaped by all factions within the winning coalition. Thus, allying with another group holding differing ideologies and interests will tend to force a rebel faction to compromise on at least some issues, or to

de-emphasize certain priorities. If, as I assume, rebels are motivated by political goals, the value of an alliance will decrease as its ideological similarity to its alliance partners decreases (Bapat and Bond 2012). Furthermore, any private benefits deriving from the conflict outcome (such as seats in a post-war legistlature) must be divided among the members of the winning alliance (Christia 2012). These concerns should tend to constrain the value of alliances in civil war. The existing literature finds that these concerns limit the size of rebel coalitions (Christia 2012). Logically, they should also shape the choice of partners with whom rebels ally.

1.4.3.3 The Choice of Alliance Partners

I expect that the decision to form an alliance with a particular group is shaped by two broad considerations. The first is the ideological similarity of the two groups. The second is the potential gain in capability. Consistent with the existing literature, I view the current material capabilities of a potential ally as a crucial factor, with more powerful groups making more attractive alliance partners. I depart from the literature (e.g. Christia 2012), however, by also considering the importance of access to future sources of power. Specifically, I expect that a group will evaluate a potential alliance partner not only on its current level of capability, but also on the extent to which the group is a rival for access to future sources of power, such as natural resources or civilian populations. In other words, a rebel group with enough power to normally be an attractive partner may not be if it's strength is drawn from similar support bases as one's own group. By contrast, a relatively weak group with a completely non-overlapping support base might be an attractive ally.

A rebel group's support base is shaped by a mix of external factors such as the presence of natural resources and foreign sponsors, as well as its objectives. Some ideological objectives provide rebel groups with somewhat malleable support bases, such as those that entail the provision of public, non-rival goods to society. It is comparatively easy for groups

of this sort to minimize the overlap between their support bases. By contrast, rebels that pursue private, rival goods or interests specific to certain societal groups are likely to be in competition with rebels advancing similar objectives. In the remainder of this section I classify various rebel objectives on this dimension.

Most non-sectarian ideological interests should fall into the category of public, non-rival goods. If two groups each prefer a similar goal, such as a redistributive welfare system, a greater role for Islam in government, or a devolution of power to regional governments, they will be able to enjoy the benefits of such policies regardless of which group enacts them. All else equal, goals of this sort should create common interests among the rebels who share them. Furthermore, policies of this sort tend not to have pre-defined constituencies. A rebel group based on ideology could potential convert new members or civilian supporters to its cause by spreading its beliefs. As ideologies of this sort are generally not tied to a specific ethnicity, religion, or geographic area, the pool of potential converts is quite large. Thus, groups centered around ideologies of this sort should have high potential for cooperation, as they are relatively unlikely to be rivals for support. The value of cooperation will be especially high for groups that have similar non-sectarian ideologies.

H1: Rebel groups with similar non-sectarian ideologies should be more likely to form alliances than other rebel dyads

While groups with similar non-sectarian interests should tend not to come into competition until late in conflicts, for groups representing identity-based interests, the effect is contingent on the size of the group and malleability of group boundaries. The reason for this lies in the fact that many rebel groups rely on civilian populations for material support (Weinstein 2007), and the types of goals a group pursues is an important determinant of the malleability of civilian support coalitions. A group with broad-based policy goals might be able to persuade or coerce almost any group of citizens to support it. Thus, until a very large portion of the civilian population has been captured, groups sharing these

types of goals will not be in competition over support as they can simply carve out different coalitions. Similar dynamics should occur among groups pursuing the interests of large or social groups, such as the majority ethnic or religious group. For example two Syrian rebel groups seeking to replace the Alawite-dominated Assad regime with one that embraces Sunni doctrine should find that civilian support is not particularly scarce given that Syria is majority-Sunni. Similarly, groups advocating the interests of social groups with fluid boundaries should tend to have opportunities to capture new civilian support rather than competing with similar groups over existing support. For instance, for a group advocating a Salafi-Jihadi ideology, any Sunni Muslim might serve as a potential convert.

Rebels representing minority social groups, however, should tend to come into conflict more quickly. Groups of this sort must draw their support from a social base that is both smaller and more likely to be tapped out than the bases of more broadly defined groups, and that is more rigidly bounded. A rebel group aimed at advancing the interests of a particular ethnic or religious group is unlikely to attract support from non-group members. Even if it was able to do so, this might its standing with co-ethnics/co-religionists, as rival groups could claim that it is watering down its agenda. In other words, socially-defined rebel groups seeking to expand the pool of potential support might be vulnerable to outbidding appeals. In short, I expect that groups with the agenda of advancing the interests of majority ethnic or religious groups will be likely to cooperate with groups holding similar interests. Groups representing social minorities, however, should be unlikely to cooperate.[1]

H2: Rebel groups representing the same majority ethnic or religious groups will be more likely to form alliances than other dyads

Groups seeking to control the same territory should face a similar problem of rival consumption. Because secessionist claims tend to have well-defined geographic and/or ethnic

[1] In the present analysis, however, the Kurds are the only group to whom this logic is likely to apply, and thus I do not test this hypothesis as it would essentially be a dummy variable for the one Kurdish-Kurdish dyad.

boundaries, rebel groups representing such claims are likely to be in competition over a fixed pool of support. Thus, I expect that groups making similar territorial claims will be unlikely to cooperate.

H3: Rebel groups with overlapping territorial claims will be less likely to form alliances than other dyads

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