Introduction

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Why do some civil wars have multiple rebel groups, while others have only one? Theories of civil war tend to focus on individual- or group-level motives (e.g. Gurr 1970; Collier and Hoeffler 2004) or opportunities (e.g. Fearon and Laitin 2003) for rebellion, while giving little attention to the organization of dissent into rebel groups and coalitions. Even those studies which do explicitly consider rebel group formation tend to focus on group attributes such as treatment of civilians (e.g. Weinstein 2007), and do not consider the structure of the rebel movement that emerges. Yet, at least two rebel groups are simultaneously active at some point in 44% of civil conflicts.[1] Over the course of the Chadian Civil War, for instance, 25 distinct rebel groups appeared over the course of the conflict. Conflicts in Afghanistan in the 1980's, Somalia in the 1990's, Sudan in the 2000's have been similarly complex. The ongoing civil war in Syria is contested by at least two dozen armed groups. Even ethnically-homogeneous, geographically-concentrated populations with common goals, such as the Karen secessionist movement in Myanmar, often fragment into multiple rebel groups. Furthermore, the number of groups operating in these conflicts often varies greatly over time. Returning to the Syrian example, the opposition was largely consolidated under the banner of the Free Syrian Army early in the conflict, later splintered into dozens of factions largely on the basis of religion, and now is again reducing in complexity as groups merge or are defeated.

Several studies examine the implications of rebel movement structure. Generally, these works find that fragmented rebel movements are associated with particularly concerning conflict attributes. Conflicts with multiple rebel groups last longer than dyadic competitions, as the increased number of veto players complicate the negotiation of peaceful settlements (Cunningham 2006; Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2009; Akcinaroglu 2012), and create the possibility of peace being spoiled by extreme factions (Stedman 1997). Relatedly, Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan (2009) find that the presence of multiple government-rebel dyads decreases the likelihood that a conflict will end with a peace

[1] Source: Pettersson and Wallensteen (2015).

agreement, while increasing the likelihood of rebel victory. Findley and Rudloff (2012) find this effect to be conditional, however, as the fragmentation of weak rebel movements can increase the probability of peaceful settlement. Perhaps related to the paucity of peaceful settlements, both Atlas and Licklider (1999) and Zeigler (2016) find that civil wars with multiple rebel groups are prone to recurrence, as new episodes of conflict frequently occur between rebel factions from the previous conflict. Finally, conflicts with multiple dyads feature over 20% more fatalities than dyadic ones.[2] In short, conflicts with multiple rebel groups are an unusually severe subset of civil wars.

While prior has firmly established the importance of understanding why some conflicts have multiple rebel groups while others do not, to date very few works have attempted to explain this phenomenon. The studies that do exist in this area tend to focus on a narrow subset of the processes affecting conflict complexity. For example, several recent works explore the splintering of existing rebel groups (e.g. McLauchlin and Pearlman 2012; Staniland 2014). These works tend to focus on the organizational characteristics of rebel groups however, and thus have little to say about why rebel groups might form alliances, nor why entirely new groups might enter a conflict. Christia (2012) adapts realism from international relations theory into a unified explanation of splintering and alliance formation, but she too ignores the mobilization of new groups. I connect all three phenomena in a single theoretical framework, providing a unified explanation for conflict complexity. Additionally, the existing research is largely based on a small number of case studies disproportionately drawn from the Middle East and South Asia. While these conflicts are undeniably complex, they are outliers in terms of both their long duration and high degree of international intervention. I test my theory on a sample of all civil wars since 1946, demonstrating that it is widely applicable.

The goal of this project is to address a single broad research question: what explains the variation in the number of rebel groups in a civil war? I address several more specific

[2]Source: my own analysis using data from Sundberg (2008).

questions in pursuit of this broader goal. Under what conditions do new rebel groups join an ongoing civil war? Why do existing rebel groups splinter into multiple factions? When and why do previously independent rebel groups form alliances?

In brief, I argue that the treatment of civilians during wartime is a crucial determinant of rebel movement cohesion. Violent repression of civilians should lead many of them to calculate that joining a rebellion is not dramatically riskier than remaining non-violent, increasing the pool of individuals willing to fight. But as repression is often applied on the basis of ethnicity, and ethnic groups often offer a useful basis for organizing defensive measures, repression should also tend to induce greater levels of ethnic identification. Thus, repression should both create a pool of individuals willing to join the conflict, and lead to increased demand for rebel groups that emphasize ethnic identity. I expect that this dynamic will influence all three processes identified in the existing literature as determinants of conflict complexity — the formation of new rebel groups, the splintering of existing rebel groups, and the merger of previously independent groups into alliances. The results of my empirical chapters suggest that complex civil wars are often the result of a sectarian spiral — an initial wave of repression mobilizes violent dissent and induces greater levels of ethnic identification, and the rebel movement fragments along ethnic lines to reflect these individual-level preferences. Prior work suggests that a more fragmented movement might lead to greater levels of conflict severity, closing the vicious circle.

In the remainder of this chapter I review the existing literature on rebel movement structure, as well as prior work on repression and ethnic identification. Next, I summarize the broader theoretical and policy implications of the research. Finally, I provide a summary of the subsequent chapters.

0.1 The Contribution of this Project

First and foremost, this project advances our understanding of a subset of civil wars that is crucially important for the reasons outlined above. This research explains three processes that account for most of the variation in the number of rebel groups in a conflict — the entry of new groups, and the splintering and mergers of existing ones. This dissertation is among the first projects to directly address the first phenomenon of new rebel groups joining ongoing conflicts. Existing work either considers the formation of new rebel groups (i.e. groups that were not previously contained within another violent organization) only in cases where it is coterminous with conflict initiation (e.g. Lewis 2016), or in the context of contagion into previously peaceful areas (e.g. Lane 2016). Yet, I find that 27.5% of rebel groups active since World War II were neither present from the beginning of the conflict, nor is there any evidence that they descended from existing rebel groups. An important contribution of this dissertation, then, is explaining this common but mostly ignored phenomenon.

While splintering and alliance formation have been the subject of several prior studies, my findings largely contrast with existing work. Christia (2012) argues that realist power politics calculations drive both alliance formation and splintering. By contrast, I find that a rebel group's strength is predictive of neither its susceptibility to splintering, nor its propensity to form alliances. Asal, Brown, and Dalton (2012) and Staniland (2014) suggest that organizational structure is the key determinant of rebel cohesiveness. I find no evidence for this, however, as I find no evidence that rebel group centralization is related to splintering. Instead, I find that both phenomena are strongly related to repression. I also build upon the existing literature by unifying explanations of splintering and alliances into a more comprehensive theory of rebel movement structure, and test my theory in a much wider empirical domain than prior work.

My findings also suggest several important second-order implications. One is that rebellion

seems to be more political and more responsive to the preferences of rank-and-file dissidents than much of the existing literature would suggest. A substantial number of scholars view civil war as largely apolitical, instead being driven by material greed (Mueller 2000; Collier and Hoeffler 2004) or personal animosities (Kalyvas 2006). I argue that dissidents have strong preferences over the content of rebellion, and find that repression tends to induce stronger preferences for rebel groups that represent the interests of a particular ethnic group. While I cannot rule out the possibility that rebellions are initially driven by material considerations, as war initiation is beyond the scope of this study, my findings do suggest that civil war violence tends to have a politicizing effect over time. I discuss the literature on rebel motives in greater detail later in this chapter.

This work also suggests that governments can exert a powerful influence on the structure of dissident organizations, as repression can heighten the salience of identities that divide dissidents. This contrasts with the most existing accounts of rebel movement structure, which tend to focus on factors mostly internal to the rebel movement such as relative power among rebel factions (Christia 2012), or the strength of pre-war social ties among dissidents (Staniland 2014). It also raises several interesting questions about government strategy in the face of dissent. My findings suggest that repression expands the pool of individuals willing to fight, which in a vacuum makes government repression puzzling. It is also unclear whether the other key consequence of repression I identify — the increased salience of ethnic identity — is a desirable outcome for the government. On one hand it could form the basis of an effective divide-and-conquer strategy. On the other hand, fighting multiple opponents could complicate the logistics of counterinsurgency, threaten the credibility of negotiated settlements, and undermine the prospects of a stable resolution to the conflict. While this calculation merits greater consideration that I am able to give it in this dissertation, my findings in Chapter **??** suggest that repression may be aimed at deterring dissidents from political activities other than rebellion, such as voting.

To test my hypotheses, I collected data on the origins of rebel groups. This allows me to distinguish between groups that splintered from existing rebel groups, groups engaging in violence for the first time, and coalitions of previously active groups. I suspect that the causal factors behind the emergence of each of these types are related, but as the processes are quite distinct they should be studied separately. Though I do not make much of the distinctions in this project, the data also distinguish between several categories of groups that were not previously engaged in rebellion, including political organizations, religious organizations, apolitical militias, and factions of the regime military. These categories should be useful for a variety of future studies on topics such as the durability of rebel groups, their probability of victory, and their treatment of civilians.

In addition to resolving a gap in the scholarly literature, a better understanding of rebel movement structure is of value to policymakers. As noted above, conflicts with multiple rebel groups are among the most severe. Simply being able to predict which conflicts are likely to become severe through this mechanism has several useful applications. Policymakers might be able to identify early on the conflicts that are most likely to benefit from peace operations. Humanitarian organizations could predict which conflicts are likely to produce large numbers of refugees, and distribute resources accordingly. This work also be the possibility of moving beyond prediction and solving the underlying problem. As the empirical analyses identify the repression of civilians as a key mechanism driving conflict complexity, it stands to reason that protecting civilians might be an especially valuable undertaking for non-governmental organizations or outside states.

In the next section I situate my dissertation in the literature to which it is most closely related. I explain in greater detail my contributions over the existing work on rebel structure, and also discuss the implications of this work for the literatures on repression and ethnic identification.

0.2 Previous Work on the Organization of Rebellion

The existing literature and empirical record suggest that the number of rebel groups active in a conflict is shaped by three broad processes. New groups can emerge when previously non-violent individuals mobilize and join the conflict. Alternatively, previously cohesive rebel groups can splinter into multiple successor organizations. Finally, the number of rebel groups can decrease when previously independent factions form alliances. I summarize the literature on each process in turn, and relate my contributions to the existing work.

0.2.1 Group Formation

Around 30% of conflicts have at least one rebel group that was neither active from its beginning, nor did it split from an existing rebel group. Yet few studies directly consider the phenomenon of new rebel groups joining ongoing conflicts. Even studies of civil war onset often leave the formation of rebel groups in a black box, instead making a leap from individual motives to war initiation. For instance, a large literature views rebellion as an essentially criminal activity, driven by greed (Mueller 2000; Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Lujala, Gleditsch, and Gilmore 2005). Yet these works generally have very little to say about the origins of rebel organizations. These groups could be pre-existing criminal organizations that initiate more violent activity in hopes of securing greater profit, they could form for the purpose of a greed-driven rebellion after a sign of weakness from the government, or they could begin as rebel groups with sincere political goals, which are later seduced into less noble pursuits. The grievance school similarly tends to neglect group formation. For example, Cederman, Wimmer, and Min (2010) offer a nuanced explanation of the conditions under which ethnic minorities are likely to rebel. Yet, they say little about the logistics of organizing a rebellion, and seemingly assume that ethnic groups have an inherent ability to spawn rebel organizations.

Scholars working at lower levels of analysis have come closer to explaining group formation. Kalyvas (2006) suggests that individuals are often already mobilized for small-scale violence such as personal rivalry, criminal activity, or ethnic conflict. Building a rebel group is thus an exercise in building coalitions from small, pre-existing organizations, and re-orienting individuals from localized issues to national-level political cleavages. Kalyvas gives little attention to this process, however, instead recommending it as an area for future research. Staniland (2014) also argues that rebel groups can trace their origins to pre-existing social organizations, though he sees larger, and often more political entities such as political parties or military units as the primary source of rebellion, rather than the localized and less formal groups emphasized by Kalyvas (2006). Staniland (2014) too devotes relatively little space to rebel group formation, instead focusing on linking the attributes of the originating organizations to rebel group outcomes such as durability. Lewis (2016) offers a somewhat contrasting view as she carefully documents the earliest activities of rebel groups in Uganda. She finds that rebel groups, including the Lord's Resistance Army, were typically founded by small number of entrepreneurial individuals, and initially tended to value stealth over broad mobilization. Only after the conflict began to escalate did groups seek to broaden their membership, in many cases by appealing to particular ethnic groups. Thus she sees scholars such as Cederman, Wimmer, and Min (2010) and Staniland (2014) as beginning their analyses after rebellion had existed for some time.

There is also a substantial literature on the contagion of civil war. For example, Gleditsch (2007) finds that transnational ethnic groups and political and economic linkages between states can provide channels for civil war to spread across international boundaries. Most of his cases, however, are pre-existing rebel groups moving into new geographic areas, rather than *sui generis* group formation. Other scholars find that entirely new rebel organizations can emerge through the contagion of secessionist (Ayres and Saideman 2000) and ethnic (Lane 2016) conflict. Such transnational processes might shape opportunities for multiple rebellions to emerge by increasing the availability of weapons, spreading tactical knowl-

edge, or diverting government attention to foreign conflicts. While contagion explains an important category of phenomena, these studies are primarily concerned with the spread of conflict to previously peaceful areas. This overlaps only partly with the scope of this project; I am also concerned with the emergence of new rebel groups in areas already experiencing conflict.

In short, surprisingly few studies have given much consideration to the formation of rebel groups. The few that do (e.g. Lewis 2016) focus entirely on groups whose origins coincide with war onset. While research on contagion effects sheds light on the expansion of conflict, it does not address the entry of new groups to existing conflict zones. I seek to resolve this gap.

0.2.2 Splintering

Existing rebel groups frequently splinter into multiple successor organizations. In 1968, for example, a faction led by Ahmed Jibril broke away from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) to form a new group, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC). While the two groups often collaborated against Israel, they maintain distinct organizational structures and membership bases, and operate in different areas. The split was allegedly motivated by differing views of Marxist ideology and military doctrine, with the PFLP pursuing a more extreme strategy of attrition. Similar splits have occurred within dozens of rebel groups, including the Communist Party of Burma, the Free Syrian Army and the Sudan Liberation Army. In many cases the result is more than a nominal separation. In Sri Lanka, for example, the Tamil Peoples Liberation Tigers not only split from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, but also defected to the government side in the conflict (Staniland 2012).

Compared to group formation, there is a relatively large literature on rebel group splintering. One subset of this research focuses on the role of external actors, and particularly

the government. For instance, McLauchlin and Pearlman (2012) find that government repression provides occasion for groups to evaluate their current leadership structure. Pre-existing divisions within groups are likely to be exacerbated, leading the group to move toward more factionalized leadership structures. When group members are satisfied, however, conflict tends to lead to even greater unity and centralization of authority. Whereas the preceding studies essentially treat government repression as exogenous to the internal politics of dissident groups, Bhavnani, Miodownik, and Choi (2011) present evidence that governments deliberately stoke tensions among their opponents, as they find that the Israeli government increased conflict between Fatah and Hamas by undermining Hamas' control of the Gaza and by tolerating Fatah's relationship with the Jordanian military. Tamm (2016) finds that support from outside states can alter the balance of power within rebel groups, in some cases entrenching existing hierarchies, while in others creating possibilities for fragmentation or coups. Finally, Staniland (2012) finds that the government can sometimes attract rebel groups to their side by offering greater resources during periods of infighting among rebel groups.

Another group of scholars emphasizes concerns about post-conflict bargaining as the key determinant of dissident group cohesion. Christia (2012) assumes that the winning coalition in a civil war receives private benefits, which might include any rents available to the state, and having some portion of its interests represented in the new government. Thus, rebels have an incentive to form minimum winning coalitions, so as to limit the number of coalition partners with whom they must share benefits. Wolford, Cunningham, and Reed (2015) develop a similar logic, theorizing that political factions have an interest in joining conflicts so as to maximize the likelihood of their preferences being represented in the post-war government, but the value of fighting decreases as the number of parties with whom they expect to share power increases. Yet, Christia (2012) suggests that this incentive to minimize coalition size is moderated by the risk of being outside the winning coalition, as there is a strong possibility of new waves of violence between victorious rebels and rival

rebel factions. She thus expects coalitions to change frequently in response to battlefield events, with factions bandwagoning with battle winners and shifting away from losing coalitions. Findley and Rudloff (2012) similarly find fragmentation to be most common among groups that have recently lost battles. This implies that fragmentation is essentially a process of weak actors becoming weaker.

A final category of explanations places the source of rebel group cohesion in underlying social structure. Staniland (2014) argues that insurgent organizations will be most stable when their central leadership is able to exercise both vertical control over its rank-and-file members, and horizontal control over its constituent groups. This is most likely to occur when insurgencies draw from existing organizations with extant social ties of this sort, which might include former anti-colonial movements or ethnic political parties. Organizations are likely to fragment when constituent groups have a high degree of autonomy or control over individual members is limited (Staniland 2014, Ch. 2-3). Asal, Brown, and Dalton (2012) emphasize similar factors, arguing that organizations with factionalized leadership structures are at risk of fragmentation, while groups with more consolidated power structures will tend to remain cohesive. Finally, Warren and Troy (2015) suggest that group size plays an important role, as small groups are able to police themselves and resolve conflicts, whereas larger groups are more likely to experience infighting.

The existing work in this field tends to feature impressive data collection or fieldwork, and makes important contributions to our understanding of rebel group cohesion. Yet, making predictions from existing approaches tends to require detailed information about a rebel group and its internal workings, which is difficult to acquire, particularly while a conflict is still active. Furthermore, this literature tends to be somewhat disconnected from work on other rebel attributes and behaviors, including alliance formation. This dissertation addresses these limitations by unifying the formation of new groups, splintering, and alliance formation under a single theoretical framework which relies on explanatory factors

that are relatively easy to observe, allowing for predictions about rebel group structure even during conflicts.

0.2.3 Alliance Formation

Empirically, alliances among rebel groups are both common and noteworthy. Many of the most successful rebel movements in history were coalitions of formerly independent organizations. For example, the Frente Farabundo Marti para la Liberacion Nacional (FMLN) was an umbrella organization uniting several left wing rebel groups in El Salvador, which eventually secured many concessions in the post-war peace process including a place as a major political party. Surpsingly, however, alliances among non-state actors have only recently begun to receive much scholarly attention.

Asal and Rethemeyer (2008) and Horowitz and Potter (2013) conduct network analyses of alliance formation among terrorist groups, arguing that such arrangement are used to aggregate capabilities and share tactics. Much of the other work in the field focuses on the downsides of alliance. Bapat and Bond (2012) assume that alliances carry two significant costs: the dilution of each constituent group's agenda, and the risk of having one's private information sold to the government by an ally. Consistent with this theory, they find alliances to be most common when an outside state can enforce agreements, and when all rebel groups involved are strong enough to avoid the temptation of defecting to the government side. Christia (2012) similarly emphasizes capability, arguing that neorealist balancing theory from international relations explains alignments in civil wars. When one coalition - a group of rebels or government-aligned forces - becomes too powerful, other groups will band together to prevent their own destruction. But similar to Bapat and Bond (2012), Christia (2012) argues that this mechanism is constrained by a desire to maximize one's share of the post-war spoils. Thus, rebels realign frequently, seeking to form minimum winning coalitions. While shared identity appears on the surface to be an

important determinant of rebel alignments, Christia views these narratives as post-hoc justifications aimed at legitimizing decisions that are really driven mostly by power.

The existing studies do much to advance our knowledge of relationships between non-state actors. Yet, some important aspects of alliance formation are beyond the scope of the existing studies, however. Namely, while relative power considerations can potentially account for why rebel groups form alliances, and when they will alter their ties, it does not explain why groups choose a particular partner. Horowitz and Potter (2013) do shed light on this question, finding that militants prefer to ally with powerful groups, but their focus is largely on transnational networks of terrorists and insurgents, rather than alliance formation within a particular conflict. I offer an explanation of alliance formation that can predict not only when rebel groups will seek alliances, but also with whom. Furthermore, I connect this process to the broader dynamics of rebel movement structure, particularly splintering.

0.2.4 Repression

As repression is central to the theoretical argument presented here, this dissertation is shaped by and contributes to the literature on the topic. The focus in the existing literature has been on explaining why repression occurs, and identifying factors that might prevent it. Davenport (2007) finds that there is a "domestic democratic peace," meaning that democratic regimes tend to refrain from using the most violent forms of repression. However, he finds that even democracies often engage in repression during civil and international conflicts. Others find that international human rights treaties often have a meaningful restraining effect on governments, reducing their use of repression (Hathaway 2002; Simmons 2009). Not all international influences are positive, however, as economic sanctions (R. M. Wood 2008) are associated with increased repression. An important generalization in the context of this study is that human rights practices tend to be shaped by domestic

and international political institutions that are likely to be largely exogenous to civil war dynamics.[3]

Another strand of the repression literature focuses on the consequences of repression, and especially the potential of repression to provoke escalation. In this vein Lichbach (1987) argues that repression should lead dissidents to substitute increasingly violent tactics for more peaceful ones, as they will calculate that violence is more likely to achieve their goals. Moore (1998) finds empirical support for this model, suggesting that repression has significant potential to escalate political confrontations. My findings in Chapter **??** add further support for this model, as I show that repression increases willingness to engage in violence, while decreasing the likelihood that individuals will engage in peaceful political activities such as voting. I also move beyond this debate to show that repression can shape not only the likelihood, but also the structure of civil war violence.

0.2.5 Ethnic Identification

Ethnic identity is central to the theoretical mechanism in this dissertation, and has long been an area of deep interest to scholars of comparative politics. This work is often predicated on the assumption that identity is dynamic. At a minimum, individuals can choose which of their several social roles to emphasize. For instance, individuals might orient primarily toward an ethnicity, a religion, an occupation, a region, or an ideology, and could potentially alter these choices over time. The majority of the work in this vein has focused on oscillations between ethnic and national identities. Early on this question was explored in discussions of statebuilding. Scholars in this area suggest that external threats such as interstate wars (Herbst 1990; Tilly 1992) or territorial disputes (Gibler, Hutchison, and Miller 2012) can provide a unifying influence, leading individuals to orient toward national identities and away from subnational ones such as ethnicity. Most other work in the area examines the role

[3]Long-running civil wars, however, might deter democratization and participation in human rights treaties.

of political institutions in incentivizing the use of particular identities (Posner 2005; Penn 2008). For example, Eifert, Miguel, and Posner (2010) find that ethnic identification tends to be strongest just prior to or just after competitive elections, suggesting that individuals interpret politics through an ethnic lens.

A striking feature of this literature is the degree of consensus that ethnic identity is malleable. This perspective is shared by a diverse range of scholars ranging from constructivists (e.g. Barnett 1995) to formal theorists (e.g. Penn 2008), and enjoys strong empirical support (e.g. Eifert, Miguel, and Posner 2010; Gibler, Hutchison, and Miller 2012). Thus, it provides a strong foundation on which to build my theory. This dissertation also contributes to the ethnic identification in two ways. First, while previous work has suggested that internal conflict might have an opposite effect to external wars, leading to increased ethnic identification (Kaufmann 1996), no existing work has demonstrated this systematically. My dissertation begins to resolve this gap, as Chapter **??** shows that both repression and the presence of civil wars are associated with heightened levels of ethnic identification. Second, whereas most prior studies examine individual-level ethnic identification in isolation (e.g. Eifert, Miguel, and Posner 2010), I connect the phenomenon to aggregate outcomes, namely the formation and restructuring of rebel groups.

0.2.6 Rebel Motives

An examination of the relationships between dissident groups is also likely to offer a new perspective on rebel motives. The literature on civil war has largely been dominated by debates over whether rebellion is fundamentally political, or done in pursuit of private benefits. The former views civil war as an effort to resolve economic or political inequality (Gurr 1970; E. J. Wood 2003; Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010), and has been labeled as the 'grievance' hypothesis (Collier and Hoeffler 2004). The latter is composed primarily of studies emphasizing the 'greed' hypothesis (Collier and Hoeffler 2004), which views

rebellion as little more than large-scale criminal activity aimed at bringing profits to its members (Mueller 2000; Lujala, Gleditsch, and Gilmore 2005; Ross 2004). Others have emphasized non-material private benefits as motive for individual participation in rebellion, such as the ability to act on family disputes or romantic rivalries (Kalyvas 2006).

This political-private motive debate has yet to be definitively resolved. A number of scholars have found greater support for the greed hypothesis than for grievance, with the presence of natural resources being a stronger predictor of civil war than economic or political grievances (Collier and Hoeffler 2004). Yet, these findings are not robust across different types of resources or even different measures of the same resource (Dixon 2009). Furthermore, several scholars have found that political factors such as hierarchical relationships between ethnic groups (Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010) and poor economic performance (Miguel, Satyanath, and Sergenti 2004) exert a strong influence on civil war onset. Other scholars eschew the dichotomy altogether, suggesting that while private benefits are useful to rebel recruiting efforts, this does not preclude the possibility that rebel elites ultimately have political motives (Lichbach 1995; Weinstein 2007). Similarly, Lujala (2010) finds that natural resources are associated with longer conflicts, implying that at least a portion of resource revenues are devoted to fighting rather than private benefits.

One factor that has limited progress on these questions of motive is the fact that the competing theories have been tested almost exclusively on a single outcome — a binary measure of the occurrence of civil war at the national level. Studying the relationships between dissident groups and how they vary is likely to provide insight to underlying rebel motives. For instance, if rebellion is fundamentally about maximizing the profits of its members, we might expect to see rebels form the smallest coalitions possible that still allow them to control resource flows. If rebellion is fundamentally political, however, we might expect rebels to pursue coalitions large enough to pursue victory. Additionally, if ideology and identity are not truly important to rebels, splintering and alliance formation

should be driven primarily by power calculations (see Christia 2012). If these factors do matter, however, they should shape the choice of alliance partners and the cohesiveness of individual groups. Ethnically homogenous rebel groups should be less prone to splintering in this case, and alliance should be more likely among groups with similar identities.

0.3 Project Summary

In Chapter **??** I articulate a theory of rebel movement structure. I begin with the assumption that rebel groups emerge from a broader pool of dissidents. While not all dissidents will be eager to participate in violence, each will prefer to be represented by a rebel group which advances their political interests and provides them with security. Thus, dissidents form a constituency that constantly evaluates the performance of rebel groups, and will consider switching their allegiance to new groups if the existing ones are lacking. In hopes of seizing on this dynamic, rebel entrepreneurs will look for opportunities to mobilize new groups by appealing to underrepresented identities and ideologies. These appeals should be especially effective in the wake of repression for two reasons. First, repression lowers the risk of fighting relative to remaining peaceful, leading new individuals to join the fighting. Second, as repression should induce greater levels of ethnic identification. Repression is often targeted on the basis of ethnicity, increasing its salience, and appeals for support from outside, co-ethnic states might be especially effective in the presence of human rights concerns. Thus repression not only creates a new pool of individuals willing to fight, it also stokes division among dissidents along ethnic lines. This should often lead individuals joining the fighting to form new groups rather than join existing ones, and individuals already in rebel groups to realign into more ethnically homogeneous configurations. This should manifest in the form of both the splintering of existing groups, particularly when existing groups are multi-ethnic, and the formation of ethnically-homogeneous alliances so as to replace the loss in capabilities due to fragmentation and streamline access to support

from co-ethnic outside states.

Chapter **??** tests the individual-level assumptions of the theory. Using a sample of over 150,000 Afrobarometer Survey responses, I find support for both of my key predictions regarding the effects of repression. Individuals who have experienced an attack in the past year are 30% more likely than others to express willingness to use violence themselves. Additionally, I find these individuals are 62% more likely to identify with their ethnic group than respondents who have not experienced an attack. While I am unable to completely rule out the possibility of reverse causality, the results hold after performing coarsened exact matching, showing that attacked individuals do not systematically differ from others on observable traits. These results suggest that my theory performs as expected at the individual level.

Chapter **??** contains tests of my predictions regarding the formation of new rebel groups during ongoing conflicts. I add my measure of rebel group origin to the Uppsala Armed Conflict Dataset, resulting in a sample of all civil wars, 1946–2015. I find that the probability of a new rebel group joining an ongoing conflict during a given year has a strong, negative relationship with changes in respect for human rights. The largest observed increases in repression are associated with more than a 60% chance of new rebel groups forming, while the probability is around 3% in years with no substantial change in human rights practices, and approaches zero in following improvements to human rights. Contrary to my expectations, I find no evidence that ethnic diversity places a scope condition on my theory; new rebel groups form in a variety of societies. I also do not find evidence that rebels groups which join ongoing conflicts are more likely than others to draw their support from a single ethnic group. However, this result seems to be driven by a large number of rebel groups with no discernible ties to an ethnic constituency, and I do find that these joining rebel are significantly less likely than others to be multi-ethnic coalitions. To supplement these quantitative analyses, I illustrate the causal logic of my theory in a

qualitative case study of the Mon separatists in Burma, and use the emergence of the All Burma Students' Democratic Front to explore the limits of my argument.

In Chapter **??** I explore two processes through which rebels reorganize — splintering from existing groups, and the formation of alliances. I find that increases in repression are associated with an increased probability of rebel group splintering, though the result is not entirely robust. I do not find evidence to support my hypothesis that rebel groups which draw support from multiple ethnic groups are more prone to fragmentation. This seems to largely reflect the fact that ethnically-homogeneous groups are disproportionately likely to fight long-lasting, low-intensity separatist conflicts. I illustrate both findings with a study of the Karen National Union, which originally split from the multi-ethnic Burmese independence movement to advance the interests of the Karen people, but later splintered itself along religious lines. Finally, consistent with my expectations I find evidence that repression increases the probability that new ethnically-homogenous alliances will form, while having no effect on the formation multi-ethnic alliances. Though less robust than the findings in previous chapters, these results suggest that repression can initiate a process of realignment whereby rebels tend to leave multi-ethnic coalitions and form new alliances centered around a particular ethnic identity.

Finally, I summarize the results in Chapter **??**, discuss their theoretical and policy significance, and propose several avenues for future research on this topic.

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