Theory Chapter

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1 A Theory of Rebel Movement Structure

Why are civil conflicts sometimes contested by multiple rebel factions, while in other cases by a single, cohesive group? At a given point in time, I argue that it is the choice of ideologies and identities around which rebellions mobilize that determines whether they incorporate most of the dissidents in a society, or whether many dissidents are left to form their own groups. These arrangements are often fragile, however, as factors such as government repression can lead dissidents to become more receptive to new bases of organization. Drawing on the literature reviewed in Chapter 1, I identify three processes through which these individual dynamics shape the number of rebel groups in a civil war. First, entirely new groups can enter the conflict. Second, previously cohesive groups can splinter into multiple successor organizations. Finally, previously independent groups sometimes merge. 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 Theoretical Framework

I begin by laying out my assumptions about the relevant actors in a civil war, their interests, and the structure of their interactions.

1.1.1 The Dissident Pool

I start from the assumption that rebel groups are drawn from a broader pool of dissidents. By dissident, I simply mean an individual who opposes the government. Dissidents are grouped into a variety of potentially overlapping organizations. Some may belong to non-violent political organizations such as trade unions or political parties. Others may use violence as members of a rebel group. Hereafter I "rebel movement" as a term that encompasses all rebel groups, but excludes non-violent dissidents. In some cases this rebel movement will consist of a single group, if there is only one rebel organization associated with the dissident pool. In the American Civil War, for example, the dissidents were represented by a single Confederate Army, though even in this case there were several militias with only a loose attachment to the main rebel group. In other cases the rebel movement may contain several distinct rebel groups, such as the Shan State conflict in Burma, which has produced at least six rebel groups.

At the individual level, dissidents are likely to vary on several dimensions. First, individuals differ in their level of involvement in violence. Lichbach (1995, 17) identifies five gradations of participation which range from being constituents 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. For example, some elements of the dissident pool might specialize in non-violent actions such as boycott, others on conventional political channels such as elections, while others in engage in violence. 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 corruption or modernization programs. Some dissidents hope to take control of the central government, as the Houthi rebels have done in Yemen, while others hope to procure independence or greater regional autonomy as a consequence of the war, as the South Sudanese eventually did. 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. There are a limited

number of government positions, and material benefits such as oil rents are finite.

Beyond these variations in preferences, I see three key categories of dissident.

1.1.1.1 Dissident Constituents

I label dissidents who do not participate in violence, but support violent efforts to some extent as "dissident constituents." These constituents may support rebels in a variety of ways, including the provision of food, shelter, and information. This constituency is also likely to be a vital source of recruits for rebel groups. In cases where rebel groups are associated with a political party, these constituents will be a critical source of electoral support. Constituents have limited agency with respect to the array of rebel groups they can choose to support. Yet while rebel groups are sometimes able to coerce support, constituents generally have some ability to withhold support. For example, constituents could turn on a rebel group by becoming government informants (Kalyvas and Kocher 2007). Alternatively, constituents could flee an area and become refugees or internally displaced persons. Thus, while they tend to have little-or-no direct influence over rebel groups, rebel leaders nonetheless have incentives to be responsive to the interests of constituents.

The most fundamental interest held by dissident constituents during civil war is likely to be security. These are individuals who have elected not to participate in violence themselves. Avoiding violence is thus likely to be a high priority for them, leading them to value rebel groups that can provide protection or steer the fighting away from civilian areas. Secondary to this, dissidents are likely to have political preferences they would prefer to see represented by a rebel group. For example, in addition to opposing the incumbent regime constituents might like to see improved status for their ethnic group or land reform. If the rebel group a constituent currently supports does not have a platform that aligns closely to their interests and succeeds in providing protection, they should be receptive to appeals from other groups.

1.1.1.2 Rank-and-File Rebels

Rebel groups are generally hierarchical organizations, with the majority of members having little influence over their direction. I call the rebel group members who do not occupy leadership positions "rank-and-file rebels." Much like constituents, rank-and-file rebels have limited input in group decisions, but have what Hirschman (1970) calls the "exit" option. If members are sufficiently dissatisfied with the direction of a rebel group, they generally can leave to form a new splinter organization, or desert the conflict entirely. As losing a substantial number of members could devastate the fighting capacity of a group, rebel elites again have an incentive to be at least somewhat responsive to their members.

Individuals who join rebel groups often (though not always) do so out of deep commitment to a political cause (Humphreys and Weinstein 2008). Thus one dimension over which rank-and-file members is political action. If group leaders stray too far from their original platform, or are insufficiently forceful in advocating for it, they are likely to face internal dissent from rank-and-file. Rank-and-file members also tend to have connections to civilian family members and friends. Thus they are likely to support efforts to protect and oppose efforts to abuse civilians, at least from social groups with whom they share a connection. Failure to represent the interests of these rank-and-file members puts rebel leaders at significant risk of losing members through splintering or desertion.

1.1.1.3 Rebel Entrepreneurs

Finally, I call the dissident elites who lead existing rebel groups and form new ones "rebel entrepreneurs." I assume that rebel groups generally emerge through the efforts of these entrepreneurs, rather than, say, the spontaneous organization of protesters. Leading a rebel group is likely to be attractive for several reasons. First, leaders exercise significant, and sometimes total control over a rebel group's political platform. Even if a rebel group does not defeat the government, rebel entrepreneurs may be able to secure concessions on a few

of their favored issues in post-war peace negotiations. Rebel elites also frequently receive significant private benefits. During conflicts, rebel groups sometimes acquire control of natural resource production, or illicit trades such as drugs. While some of these funds are used to attract and retain rank-and-file soldiers, rebel elites often reap a significant amount of profit.

Maintain political leverage and control of private resources requires a reasonably strong rebel group. As these political and material benefits are often even more plentiful for rebel leaders who defeat the government, they should generally prefer to build a rebel group strong enough to win. Thus in general, leaders of existing rebel groups should elect to be responsive enough to rank-and-file members and constituents to prevent significant losses in members. At the same time, as some portion of the private benefits are often distributed to rank-and-file members, rebel leaders should seek minimum winning coalitions, rather than endlessly pursuing more power (Christia 2012). Thus rebel leaders may be willing to tolerate some loss of support, placing on constraint on the extent to which they are accountable to members.

Rebel entrepreneurs who do not currently lead their own rebel group should look for opportunities to do so. This might entail forming a new rebel group, by appealing to dissident constituents with a different platform than existing rebel groups offer, or by leading a group of rank-and-file members in the creation of splinter organizations.

1.1.1.4 Changes to the Dissident Pool

I generally treat the dissident pool as a fixed set of government opponents. In reality, however, it will often change in size over the course of the conflict. Throughout history civilians have often fled conflict in large numbers to become refugees. While one might reason that dissidents are somewhat less likely to do this than neutral civilians, in many conflicts the dissident pool 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 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 Iraq, for example, a 2007 counterinsurgency campaign by the Iraqi government and U.S. forces persuaded many previously dissident Sunni militias to join the government's fight against al-Qaeda.

In other cases the dissident pool 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 (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011). 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. At a less violent level, 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 pool may change in composition as well.

1.1.2 The Formation of Rebel Groups

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 insistent upon defeating the government. While doing so may be desirable in some cases if control of the state brings significant revenue streams, often rebels aspire only to preserve their control of revenue from sources such as drug cultivation. For example, the RUF in Sierra Leone controlled several diamond mines through much of the civil war there, procuring significant wealth for themselves and their external sponsors. Kalyvas (2006) similarly believes that rebel violence is often motivated by private concerns, though he sees personal animosities such as the Hatfield-McCoy rivalry in the US as a more common priority than material wealth.

I depart from the greed school and 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 as ends in themselves. The ultimate goal of rebel groups, then, are political outcomes 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 just strong enough to win the war (Christia 2012).

I conceptualize rebellion as emerging from the efforts of rebel entrepreneurs, who seek to recruit fellow dissidents to participate in violence. There are several challenges inherent to such a task. First, persuading individuals to participate in collective action is generally difficult, and especially so in the high-risk context of rebellion. Second, rebellions generally need to build capacity quickly, to ensure that they can survive government repression. In-

deed, Lewis (2016) finds that many rebel groups fail within a few months. Third, achieving political goals typically requires a cohesive rebel group that is able to avoid infighting and splintering (Staniland 2014). Finally, rebel entrepreneurs should prefer to organize groups on a basis that allows them to exclude some segments of the population from receiving private benefits (Christia 2012).

I expect that drawing on existing organizations such as political parties, religious organizations, student groups, or labor unions will solve many of these problems. Social networks with members who expect to interact in the future can often solve collective action problems by sanctioning individuals who decline to participate (Marwell, Oliver, and Prahl 1988). Many civil society organizations will produce such ties among members. For example, members of a teachers' union might expect to interact throughout their career, as would most members of a political organization representing the interest of a particular geographic area. Drawing from existing groups also offers the possibility of mobilizing a large number of people quickly, particularly if rebel entrepreneurs can gain the support of group leadership. Existing social organizations can also produce a cohesive rebel group, particularly if they have strong vertical ties between leadership and rank-and-file members, and strong horizontal ties between chapters or geographic areas, as this allows the central leadership to exert a high degree of command and control over members (Staniland 2014). Finally, building a movement by recruiting existing groups will often allow rebel entrepreneurs some control over group size, whereas recruiting individuals may not.

Consistent with these notions, my own data collection[1] 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 1).

[1]I begin with the set of all rebel groups in the Uppsala Armed Conflict data, 1946–2015 (Melander, Pettersson, and Themnér 2016). I code the primary origin of each rebel group by examining the social roles its leaders had prior to forming the group. The coding rules for each category are described in the Appendix.

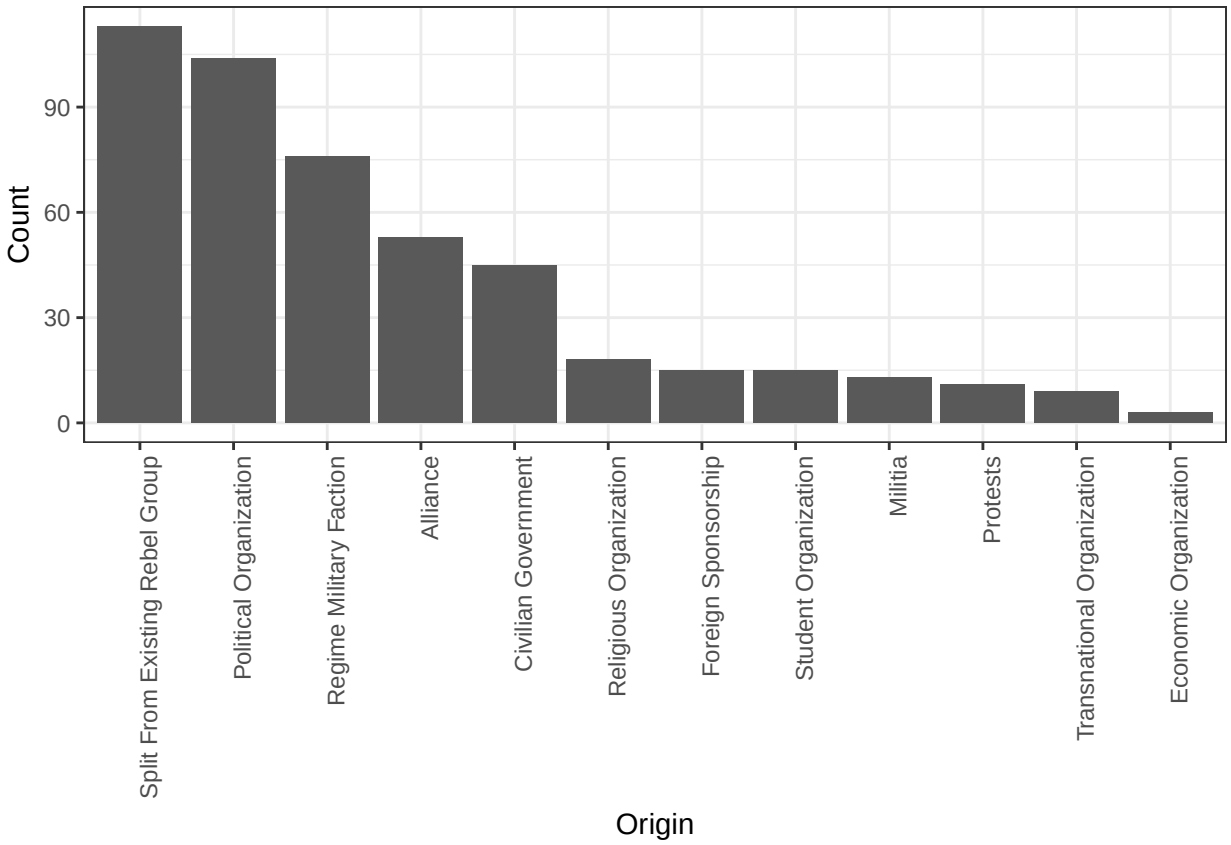

Figure 1: The Origins of Rebel Groups, 1946–2015

The implication of this argument is that initially, at least, the structure of rebel movements will reflect the structure of pre-war civil society. If a single organization connects most or all dissidents in a country, it may be possible for dissidents to build a unified group on that basis. For instance in a two-party system most regime opponents might share common membership in the opposition party. When no such unifying organization exists, the probability that multiple rebel groups will emerge is much higher. This argument also implies that the choice of basis on which entrepreneurs attempt to organize rebellions will be endogenous to the degree of prior organization around said bases. For example, in much of the Middle East freedom of assembly is granted only to religious organizations, meaning that religious identity is likely to form the basis of rebellions there, while ideological or occupational identities are unlikely to do so.

Staniland (2014) shows that the structure of these pre-existing organizations is a powerful determinant of the subsequent cohesiveness of the rebel groups they produce. Groups that have both strong vertical ties between leaders and members, and strong horizontal ties across different units prove to be very cohesive. Many of the organizations that spawn rebellion lack this attribute, however, meaning that in many cases division among members can lead rebel groups to splinter. Staniland (2014) also suggests that these social ties can be dynamic. Thus while the attributes of the originating organization shape those of the rebel group initially, it is possible for the social ties to strengthen or weaken over time. For example, repeated interactions may facilitate the formation of alliances between previously independent factions. Alternatively, certain counterinsurgency strategies, such as targeting individuals who serve as key social "bridges," might sow division within previously cohesive groups.

1.1.3 The Role of Individual Preferences

I argue that rebel structure is shaped by a bottom-up process in which the preferences of rank-and-file members and civilian constituents play a crucial role. Translating individual-level preferences to group-level outcomes is not straightforward, however. Logically, the properties of one level of analysis cannot directly explain outcomes at a higher level (Singer 1961). It is thus necessary for a bottom-up theory to specify how lower-level preferences aggregate. I argue that rebel leaders have strong incentives to be responsive to their members, though the mechanisms producing this incentive vary by group.

Some rebel organizations are integrated with political structures that provide some degree of democratic accountability. Hamas, Hezbollah, the Irish Republican Army, and the Karen National Union, to name but a few, have political wings that are often equal to or above the militant side of the group in the organizational hierarchy. In many cases these political wings compete in elections, creating a strong incentive to behave in a manner that is popular among a large portion of the population. The past behavior of the group's armed wing should often be an important consideration for voters, especially during periods of intense fighting. For example, Hamas' victory over Fatah in the 2006 Palestinian elections may be attributable in part to the latter's inability to end Israeli campaigns against Palestinian territories (Zweiri 2006). Rebel groups with this sort of connection to electoral politics should thus have an incentive to respond to the preferences of their constituents.

While rebel groups that lack a political wing may not be directly accountable to sympathetic civilians, they still have strong incentives to retain the favor of their members. Absent any connections to a civilian political structure, rebel groups are by definition fundamentally militarized organizations. As such, they tend to be very hierarchical in structure, and therefore undemocratic.[2] Yet, the ability to directly voice concerns to leadership is not

[2]Some notable exceptions do exist. al-Qaeda, for example, lacks a political wing and yet has a deliberately decentralized, flat structure with local cells following only loose direction from the central leadership.

the only way for rank-and-file rebels to exert influence in an organization. In general dissatisfied individuals also have the ability to exit an organization (Hirschman 1970). This is especially true in the context of rebel organization, as rebels frequently break away from their group to form new splinter organizations (see Pearlman and Cunningham 2011). While some rebel groups may be built upon sufficiently dense social networks to prevent such fragmentation (Staniland 2014), in many cases rebels should be able to demand accountability from their leaders by threatening to leave the group. This effect may be exacerbated by the presence of rival entrepreneurs promoting new groups built around differing ideologies or identities. Civilian constituents may also have exit options. While I expect that rebel groups usually emerge from existing social organizations, individuals often have several overlapping affiliations. If, for example, they are dissatisfied with the performance of a rebel group associated with their religion, they may be another rebellion associated with their political party that they could support instead.

As these individual-level preferences are translated to rebel group leaders through an informal mechanism, I do not expect the decision rules that determine when leaders will respond to members, and which preferences are represented when members disagree, are especially complex. Rather, leaders will respond in a way that simply minimizes the loss of membership. If group members disagree on an issue, leaders will follow a plurality rule, representing the preference of the largest group subset. If group members are divided on the question of accepting support from an outside state, for example, leaders are likely to side with the largest constituency. Leaders can adjust their ideologies, and sometimes even their religions. For example, many former Ba'ath Party officials in Saddam Hussein's Iraq moved from the secular ideology of that movement to become pious devotees of Sunni Islam in order to assume leadership roles in the Islamic State (McCants 2015). There are limits to the extent to which leaders can accommodate their members, however. While ideologies can be adjusted, leaders likely cannot claim to represent an ethnic group of which they are not members. There may also be limits to how far a leader can move their

ideology or identity without losing credibility. Finally, some member demands may be materially impossible to meet, such as a demand for payment in a group that lacks any revenue streams.

In short, I expect that rebel leaders have a strong incentive to be responsive to their members. When they fail to do so, or when members make demands that cannot be met, a reorganization of the rebel movement is likely.

1.2 Processes of Structural Change

These individual-level dynamics produce changes in the overarching structure of the rebel movement through three processes. First, they can drive the formation of entirely new rebel groups. Second, they can lead individuals who already belong to a rebel group to break away into splinter organizations. Finally, they can facilitate the creation of alliances among previously independent groups.

1.2.1 Group Formation

By "group formation" I mean the entry of entirely new groups to the conflict. I define a group as new if it did not originate as a faction of another rebel group. A rebel group that draws its leadership and members from a political party that did not previously engage in violence would constitute a new group if it were to take up arms. I would consider a faction of an existing rebel group that breaks away to form its own organization to be a splinter organization, discussed in the following section. At a minimum, group formation requires that two conditions be met. First, previously non-violent individuals must change their mobilizational calculus. This entails either participation in violence becoming more attractive, or remaining non-violent becoming less attractive.

Second, there must be a division among the dissident constituents. 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. For example, dissidents on opposite sides of a mountain range might choose to form independent organizations. 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.

As noted in the preceding discussion of individual-level dynamics, repression can satisfy both of these conditions. The application to the first condition requires little explanation. Repression should reduce the relative cost of fighting, as non-violence brings fewer assurances of safety. Thus, the pool of individuals willing to participate in violence should expand with the level of repression. The crucial question, then, is whether they join existing rebel groups, or form new ones. I argue that these new dissidents will often choose the latter. First, if significant numbers of civilians have been repressed, they may place some of the blame on existing rebel groups. If civilians provide material support to a rebel group, they may expect protection in return. Being repressed would be a strong indication that the rebel group is failing in this role. Alternatively, they may blame existing rebels for provoking the government into repressing. In either case, they are likely to hold negative affect toward existing groups.

I also expect that beyond changing the cost of fighting, repression should make individuals more inclined to emphasize sub-national identities such as ethnicity. Unless there are already rebel groups placing strong emphasis on ethnicity, a new group may be more able to appeal to these identities. A rebel group that previously emphasized a non-sectarian

ideological agenda, or drew support from a multi-ethnic coalition, will have difficulty credibly pivoting to an emphasis on a particular ethnic identity. Recall that I assume there is an ever-present set of rebel entrepreneurs seeking opportunities to build new groups of their own. These entrepreneurs should often be able to propose a new rebel group that makes ethnicity more central to its identity than previous organizations. The literature on ethnic outbidding suggests that these efforts should often be successful. Outbidding is a dynamic 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 choose ideal points at 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). In Sri Lanka, for example, parties representing the Sinhala majority proposed increasingly discriminatory policies against the Tamil minority (D. L. Horowitz 1985). 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 a single ethnic group. Other bases of mobilization, by contrast, tend to produce more heterogeneous 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; Chenoweth 2010; but see Findley and Young 2012). Thus as individual dissidents become more oriented toward ethnic identities, rebel groups making extreme bids should tend to attract more new members than moderate groups.

While this process should initially re-orient a subset of dissidents around the ethnic identi-

ties that are targeted with repression, the mobilization of one group can lead to similar behavior in others, even if the latter groups do not experience repression themselves. Kuran (1998) shows that ethnic identification is interdependent, meaning that if some members of society begin to emphasize ethnic identity more strongly, the probability that others will do so increases. Increased mobilization around one ethnicity can also pose a threat to members of other ethnic groups, leading them to mobilize for reasons of self-defense (Posen 1993). Perhaps for these reasons, several studies have found that contagion effects frequently cause a proliferation of both secessionist movements (Ayres and Saideman 2000) and ethnic conflict (Lane 2016).

I thus expect that repression will tend to ultimately lead to the formation of new rebel groups. A set of individuals who did not fight previously will be motivated to enter the conflict. Rather than joining existing rebel groups, however, these individuals will often look to form new ones. Repression should induce greater levels of ethnic identification, which will tend to make existing non-sectarian rebel groups unattractive relative to new, more explicitly ethnic groups.

From this argument I derive three testable hypotheses. First, the probability that a new rebel group will form should be highest when the level of repression in a country is highest.

Hypothesis 3: The probability that a new rebel group will form should increase with the level of repression in the country

Second, the ability of repression to create new rebel groups should be moderated by the number of ethnic identities available for mobilization. If a country has high levels of repression, but low ethnic diversity, we should not expect the mechanism elaborated above to produce new rebel groups. This effect should be captured by an interaction between repression and ethnic diversity. I expect that when ethnic diversity is low, the effect of repression on the probability of new rebel groups should be low, as there are few ethnic groups available for activation. When diversity is high, however, the effect of repression

should be large.

Hypothesis 4: There should be a positive interaction between repression and ethnic diversity

Finally, if the mechanism through which repression produces new rebels is in fact the activation of ethnic identities, we should expect to see this reflected in the characteristics of the new rebel groups. Specifically, the newly-formed groups should be especially likely to draw their support from a single ethnic group.

Hypothesis 5: Rebel groups that join ongoing conflicts should be more likely than others to draw their support from a single ethnic group

1.2.2 Splintering

I define a splinter organization as a new rebel group that was previously incorporated into a larger rebel group. Whereas group formation is a phenomenon driven by dissidents who did not previously engage in violence, splintering is driven by individuals who already belong to rebel groups. Often these splinter organizations are a relatively small subset of the original organization. For example, the Real Irish Republican Army was a subset of particularly hardline members of the Provisional Irish Republican Army, who left their parent organization in protest of its participation in a ceasefire preceding the Good Friday Agreement. In other cases splinter organizations may eventually surpass their parent organization. The Islamic State originated as a regional chapter of al-Qaeda, but eventually outgrew its parent organization by pursuing a more aggressive recruiting strategy.

While rebels are generally more likely than constituents to experience violence, they are likely to be targeted for being militants, rather than for belonging to particular ethnic group. Thus, violence will often not have a direct effect on the identity of rebel group members. Yet, rebels and especially rebel entrepreneurs should respond to changes in the preferences of dissident constituents. As discussed above, the leaders of a successful rebellion are likely

to accrue a variety of private benefits. They will typically exert substantial control over post-war political and policy outcomes, and may have opportunities to skim profits from the state. Even before the war ends, rebel leaders often enrich themselves through the control of natural resources or illicit trades (Collier and Hoeffler 2004). Thus, enterprising dissidents should look for opportunities to gain control of their own rebel group.

Shifts in the identities of dissident constituents might offer such an opportunity. Civilian support networks can be a key source of material resources and logistical support for rebel groups (Weinstein 2007; Parkinson 2013). If a new rebel faction could win over a substantial number of dissident constituents, their chances of building a competitive organization would be significantly greater than they would in the absence of such resources. A shift among dissidents toward greater ethnic identification creates the possibility that a new group could win their support through an outbidding appeal, as discussed above. Civilians who are facing violence are quite likely to prefer a rebel group that can offer protection. If these civilians increasingly see the conflict in ethnic terms, a rebel group making an explicit claim to represent their ethnic group is likely to be more credible than groups lacking such a connection. Thus, rebels who see members of their ethnic group being repressed should have an incentive to break away from their existing organization and create a more explicitly ethnic splinter organization.

Many rank-and-file rebels should be receptive to these new organizations as well. Although repression may not directly influence the identity of individuals who have already rebelled, these individuals may ultimately increase their orientation as well if they see their family members, friends, or home communities repressed on the basis of ethnicity. These rank-and-file members will likely wish to make protection of family members and constituents a greater priority in response to repression. An explicitly ethnic rebel group may be able to commit to this more forcefully than an organization with a diverse coalition, or a non-sectarian political agenda.

Similar to group formation, I expect that repression will induce greater ethnic identification among dissident constituents. Entrepreneurial rebel elites should respond to this change in attempt to attract the support of these constituents. For entrepreneurs who do not already lead a rebel groups, this is likely to entail forming a new splinter organization.

Hypothesis 6: The probability that rebels groups splinter should increase with the level of repression in a country

The mechanism proposed above assumes that pre-existing rebel groups are vulnerable to outbidding appeals because they are either multi-ethnic, or organized on a basis that does not emphasize ethnicity. If the original rebel group is strongly associated with a single ethnicity, however, it should be less likely to experience splintering.

Hypothesis 7: Multi-ethnic rebel groups should be at greater risk of splintering than mono-ethnic ones

Finally, this theory implies that splintering is done to create more explicitly ethnic rebel groups. Thus, I expect that splinter organizations should be more likely than groups that form though other means to be associated with a single ethnic group.

Hypothesis 8: Splinter organizations should be more likely than others to draw their support from a single ethnic group

1.2.3 Alliance Formation

Both group formation and splintering can increase the number of rebel groups active in a conflict. This number can decrease, however, when rebel groups form alliances. I define an alliance as substantial integration of capabilities and command by two or more previously active, independent rebel groups. Typically these alliances will result in the creation of a named umbrella organization to coordinate battlefield operations. For example, the Syrian Democratic Forces coordinates the actions of several Kurdish and Arabic forces in their

fight against the Islamic State. Note that this definition entails a deeper level of integration than most alliances between states. I choose to focus on this category for two reasons. First, named umbrella organizations are easily identifiable, whereas less comprehensive cooperative arrangements are often not well-publicized, as rebels lack formalized processes such as treaties for creating them, and may have incentives to hide such cooperation from the government. Second, mergers of this sort have a meaningful effect on the complexity of civil wars, as rebel groups often channel most or all of their activities through umbrella groups. Less formal alliances, by contrast, are often short-lived, and may entail a more circumscribed form of cooperation, such as a non-aggression pact.

I expect that alliance formation is driven by a similar underlying dynamic to splintering — as dissident constituents shift their identities and preferences, the rebel movement should change in structure to reflect these contours. While the increased levels of ethnic identification resulting from repression can lead existing rebel groups to splinter, they can also facilitate the formation of alliances among co-ethnic rebel groups. Ideological, religious, or other differences that might have previously inhibited collaboration between some rebel groups will become relatively less important as ethnicity increases in salience. Thus, repression can open new opportunities for ethnically-homogeneous alliances. These alliances could be valuable for several reasons.

First, one major drawback of splintering is that it tends to produce a new group that initially, at least, has less material capability than did the original organization. Alliances can offset these losses, as one of their primary effects is the aggregation and coordination of 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, however. 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 also 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 bargain-

ing 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.

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.

I do not expect that repression will directly affect the willingness of rebel groups to form alliances. If alliances are intended to aggregate or coordinate capabilities, external factors such as rebel strength relative to the government, or battlefield events should be the primary influences on the attractiveness of alliances. The experience of civilians should affect these calculations only insofar as they alter the level of resources available to rebel groups. I do, however, expect that repression will influence the choice of alliance partners, as it leads

the rebel movement to reorganize around ethnicity. Alliances with co-ethnic rebel have the benefits of aggregating capabilities and managing conflict among members. As rebel interests increasingly become tied to ethnicity, partnerships between co-ethnic rebel groups should avoid the cost of agenda dilution (see Christia 2012; Bapat and Bond 2012). Relatedly, ideological and other differences that might normally inhibit cooperation will become less important following a wave of repression. Thus, I expect that repression should tend to increase the incidence of ethnically-homogeneous alliances.

Hypothesis 9: The probability that new mono-ethnic alliances will form should increase with the level of repression

Partnerships with rebel groups of differing ethnicities should become less attractive, however, as these could undermine a rebel group's claims to represent its ethnic group, and leave it vulnerable to outbidding appeals. At the same time, factors that might otherwise serve as a unifying force such as shared ideology should decline in relative importance, and ethnic differences should become harder to overcome when pursuing alliances. Repression should thus make rebel leaders disinclined to enter into multi-ethnic alliances.

Hypothesis 10: The probability that new multi-ethnic alliances will form should decrease with the level of repression

I provide comprehensive tests of these hypotheses in the following three chapters.

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