The Logic of Rebel Strategies in Civil War

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This is a project about rebel groups and how competition affects their behavior during civil war. It starts from the observation that rebel groups often act quite differently from each other even when pursuing similar political goals. Some groups treat the local population well, providing social services and protection, while others treat the local population poorly. Some fight aggressively against competing rebel factions, while others cooperate or even merge with them. Some rebel groups pursue radical ideologies, while others promote no ideology at all. Additionally, rebel groups do not behave consistently over time. Groups can behave quite generously toward the local population early in the war, and then become less benevolent over time. They may also shift from attacking rival rebel groups to competing with them.

This project argues that the structure of the competitive environment in which rebel groups operate explains much about their behavior during civil war. The more competition rebel groups face from rival rebel groups, the more attention they are likely to pay to the needs and demands of their supporters. In addition, the greater the competition, the more likely rebel groups are to pursue strategies designed to eliminate or reduce rivals. This includes fighting other rebel groups, embracing extreme ideologies, or merging with similar groups. The particular characteristics of the competitive environment, therefore, likely influence the behavior of rebel groups in heretofore unexamined ways and could help explain at least some of the variation we see in their behavior.

The main innovation of this book is to offer a parsimonious theory of rebel group decisions during civil war. My goal is to show that market competition has much to say about

the number of rebel groups that emerge in a civil war, the way rebel groups treat local citizens, the quality of rebel group services and governance, their alliances, their treatment of each other, and their organization and ideology. Once one recognizes the influence of competition, it becomes easier to explain a number of empirical anomalies associated with rebel behavior: why they sometime espouse ideologies that are far more radical than the populations they seek to represent, why they sometimes fight similar rebel groups rather than align with them, and why they often govern as poorly and autocratically as the governments they fought to replace.

Two-thirds of all civil wars between 1989 and 2003 included more than one rebel group fighting the government.[1] Despite this, little is known about what determines the number of rebel groups in a civil war or why some succeed while others fail. We also know very little about how the number of rebel groups in a civil war affects government and rebel group behavior, and if it does, why it has this effect. As Sidney Tarrow aptly observed, "We don't yet really know who is interacting with whom in civil wars: who is killing whom or who allies with whom across which political or territorial divides."[2] The surprising and rapid success of ISIS in Syria and Iraq, the staying power of Boko Haram in Nigeria, and the spread of radical Islamist movements across the Middle East and North Africa have revealed how little we know about rebel groups and the mechanisms behind their success.

To date, scholarly research on civil wars has focused almost exclusively on the demand side of civil war – when and why populations become motivated to mobilize for violent change. Research by Fearon and Laitin (2003), Collier and Hoeffler (2004) Cederman, Wimmer and Min (2010) and others have shown that civil wars are more likely to break out in countries that are

[1] Source: UCDP/PRIO 2007. See also Seden Akcinaruglu, 2012. "Rebel Interdependencies and Civil War Outcomes, Journal of Conflict Resolution, p. 892.
[2] *Perspectives on Politics*, p. 596.

poor, badly governed and that exclude key ethnic groups from government. What scholars have yet to explain is the supply side of civil war – why different numbers of rebel groups arise in different civil wars – and why their behavior varies across space and time.

Part of the problem has been the absence of group level data on rebel factions. Until recently, there was almost no systematic data on the characteristics of civil war participants, their supporters, or their behavior. This is beginning to change. New datasets have been introduced that contain detailed information on the location of rebel groups and their military activity (Raleigh & Hegre 2005; Sundberg, Eck & Kreuz 2012), the attributes of rebel groups (Cunningham, Gledtisch, Salehyan 2013), inter-rebel group violence (Fjelde and Nilsson 2012) and rebel violence against civilians (Eck & Hultman, 2007).

Our theoretical understanding of the internal dynamics of civil wars has also begun to expand. Scholars such as Kalyvas (2006), Weinstein (2007), Christia (2012) and Wood (2014) have sought to explain a host of dynamics associated with rebel groups including their violent practices during times of war, their organization, their decision to abuse civilians, and their alliance behavior. What's missing, however, is a parsimonious theory that can explain a range of strategic decisions by rebel groups, not just a single decision.

This project offers a theoretical framework that helps illuminate how the structure of the competitive environment helps shape rebel behavior during civil wars. In so doing, it bridges the gap between the first wave of civil war studies, pitched at the macro-level and the second wave pitched at the more micro-level. What I offer is a mid-level theory that addresses the strategic interactions between rebels and the state, rebels and rebels, and rebels and civilians and offers an explanation for certain patterns of behavior.

The framework I develop is heavily informed by the theory of industrial organization in economics.[3] Just as industrial organization helps clarify elements of firm behavior based on the structure of a particular market, so too do I believe it will help illuminate elements of rebel behavior based on the structure of the market for rebellion. Ultimately, I hope to show how the degree of competition in a civil war determines how respectful rebel leaders will be of the interests and preferences of the local population[4], how cooperative or combative they will be with each other, and how autocratically they are likely to govern.

Scope Conditions[5]

Before continuing, I should be clear about what the project does not do. This is not a book about the origins of civil wars or the strategies governments pursue to try to prevent civil war. The theory presented in this book could be used to analyze the question of why some governments are able to avoid violence while others are not, but I leave the analysis of government strategies and decisions for another book.

This is also not a book about rebel performance during a civil war, although that is clearly an important topic as well. How a rebel group performs in combat – how many battles it wins and how much territory it conquers - is likely to be influenced by the strategies it pursues, the origins of which I analyze here. But it is also likely to be heavily influenced by the internal dynamics, institutions, and leadership of the organization itself, factors that my theory does not address. I leave the question of battlefield performance to another time as well.

[3] My innovation is on the question of competition. Bates, Weinstein and Beber and Blattman all use an industrial organization framework but they're looking mainly at supply/demand dynamics within groups in terms of recruitment of labor rather than at competition among rebel "firms".
[4] See Yuri Zhukov's work.
[5] I will need to separate out from the model what is time invariant (terrain, ethnic makeup/ fractionalization, state strength etc.) and what is likely to be affected by the endogenous dynamics of conflict.

The focus of this project is on *rebel* strategies and the factors that influence those strategies. My analysis begins after violence has broken out – a time when at least one rebel group has successfully mobilized and the government has chosen to respond by fighting back. This clearly truncates the set of cases to those where governments failed to deter challenges and were also unwilling to make concessions in return for peace. The goal is to see whether structural features of the competitive civil war environment affect rebel group decisions once civil wars have commenced in any meaningful way.

The Market for Political Change

What is a Rebel Group?

Civil war scholars talk about "rebel groups" as if it the concept were obvious. In fact, most existing studies treat rebel groups simply as extensions of the aggrieved populations from which they emerge. Identify the goals, grievances and motivations of the local population, and one identifies the goals, grievances and motivations of the rebel group that claims to represent them. The notion of a "rebel group", however, is by no means clear or simple. Who exactly were the "Serb rebels" who were fighting the "Croat rebels" or the "Sunni rebels" fighting the "Shia rebels"? The organization and characteristics of these groups, their relationship to the larger population, and the goals for which they are fighting remain surprisingly vague.[6]

I define a rebel group as a political organization, outside the legal realm of the state[7], which uses violence to compete for political power.[8] A rebel group need not be heavily

[6] One exception is Staniland 2014 who offers a lengthy discussion of what it means to be a rebel organization.
[7] Gates 2002, 112.
[8] Sarah Elizabeth Parkinson, Organizing Rebellion, 2013. Note that this definition does not include those rebel groups that are created solely for resource extraction. This is a sub-set of rebel groups that requires separate analysis.

structured or contain formal institutions, it merely requires a set of individuals who have organized themselves to pursue a specific goal and who employ violence to attain that goal. The term does not imply that rebel groups control territory, or are a certain size, or have consistent funding. There can be small, poorly funded, and badly organized rebel groups just as there can be large, well financed, and highly professional rebel groups.

The main purpose of rebel groups is to organize violent activity against the government in the *name* of political change.[9][10] Political change can be anything from political reform of the existing government, to the establishment of new leadership in government, to radical political and social change, to full independence from the state. Success will depend on a group's ability to obtain its desired outcome, either by convincing the government to make the desired changes (reform, political autonomy, or independence) or by defeating the government and taking full control of the state.

In order to understand the behavior of rebel groups during civil war one must first understand the market in which they are operating. Civil war can be viewed as a competitive game between the incumbent regime and rebel leaders who are seeking a share of their lucrative market. The object of the game – and the source of competition - is to gain political authority. Dominance in the market allows one to determine how political power and economic resources

[9] The actions available to rebel groups for achieving these goals are limited only by the capabilities of the organization and the vision of its leaders. Because rebel groups are banned by the state, they have the luxury to behave outside the bounds of the legal system and can utilize all forms of violence from conventional to unconventional, lawful or unlawful. This includes terrorism and the conscious targeting of civilians.

[10] This has been debated. Collier and Hoeffler's work, for example, has argued that rebels are motivated more by private gains in the form or looting and profit-taking than in any desire to generate public goods or political change.

will be distributed in a given territory. [11] Competition is not over supporters or recruits or resources or ideology – these factors are important in the performance of a rebel group - but they are a means to an end, not the end itself.

The main actors in the market are governments and rebel groups. Governments are political organizations that have been created to provide specific services to citizens of a country.[12] They fulfill the need for protection, order, security and the public goods that individual citizens cannot efficiently provide for themselves.[13] Governments, however, do not do this altruistically. In exchange for these services, governments receive benefits or "profits" in the form of authority over territory. Authority is the power or right to give orders, make decisions and enforce obedience.

Most of the time, governments enjoy a monopoly over the provision of services.[14] This means that they are the sole legal supplier of governance and protection in a country.[15] Sometimes, however, this monopoly is challenged by a rival political group or groups. This can happen because citizens demand change or because political entrepreneurs emerge and convince citizens to shift their support in favor of an alternate provider. If civil war breaks out it is because the government has chosen to respond to a challenge with violence and the challenger has the ability to fight back. Civil wars, therefore, can be thought of as situations where a

[11] Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," in Bringing the State Back In, Peter Evans, Rueschemeyr and Skocpol eds. Cambridge UP 1985. p. 172.
[12] Governments can be organized vertically or horizontally. Governments that are vertically integrated are likely to be more centralized, while those that are horizontally integrated are more decentralized. Think more about this.
[13] See Mancur Olson, 1993, "Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development," American Political Science Review.
[14] Governments may gain this monopoly in a variety of ways, from decolonization, to war, to…
[15] See Mancur Olson, Charles Tilly.

competitor or competitors have organized, attempted to enter the market for governance, and the government has responded by fighting back.[16]

The currency that rebel groups use depends on the customer. Local citizens are likely to be asked to pay for this service in the form of loyalty to the group, information to its leaders, and a safe haven from which the rebels can operate.[17] They are also likely to be asked to pay in the form of ceded authority to rebel leaders.[18] Business interests and foreign governments are likely to be asked to pay for rebel services in the form of resources and financing of the war effort.

The price rebel groups charge – how much of this currency they can command – will depend on supply and demand. The more demand there is for new governance, and the fewer groups available to supply this product, the higher price a rebel group can charge. For local citizens this is likely to include higher taxes, more resource extraction, more authority delegated to rebel leaders. For governments and business interests it is likely to include a demand for more resources and financing.

In theory, the number of rebel groups that emerge in a given civil war should depend on two factors: 1) the level of citizen demand for a different form of governance over a particular piece of territory, and (2) the costs of organizing and challenging the government. The level of demand, in turn, is likely to be affected by the popularity of the government and its policies. Governments that provide high quality services (safety, security, infrastructure, social welfare) to

[16] This is what Kilcullen 2010, p. 152 calls the "Theory of Competitive Control." Rebels are competing for control of the state. On the subject of what rebel leaders want, see Mancur Olson in Roving Bandits to Stationary Bandits, and Charles Tilly on the making of the state being like organized crime.
[17] The issue of information, most prominently addressed in Kalyvas 2006 would be good to elaborate on here, since provision of information to the rebel group and withholding of information from the state are the foundation of what citizens provide to groups beyond resources and labor.
[18] For a discussion of the complex governance structures that rebel groups can provide during civil war see Mampilly, p. xv.

a wide range of the population are likely to be more popular than governments that provide poor services to the population or limit their services to only a sub-set of the citizenry.

Demand could also be affected by the interests and preferences of citizens and the degree to which the government addresses those interests. The greater the number of social cleavages within society, and the more heterogeneous their preferences, the greater the likely demand for competing political representation. According to Alesina, "[a]s heterogeneity increases…more and more individuals or regions will be less satisfied by the central government policies. In fact many harsh domestic conflicts are associated with racial, religious, and linguistic heterogeneity and have threatened the stability of national governments."[19] The larger the population and the more varied the societal preferences, the greater the opening for multiple factions to form.

The number of rebel groups in a civil war should also depend on how costly it is to build a rebel organization capable of challenging the government. A number of factors are likely to be influential: the size and effectiveness of the existing government, the level of government policing, and the availability of financing. Well established governments with well developed institutions are likely to be more efficient at providing public services, extracting taxes, and providing security, making entry into these markets more costly and difficult. Markets that are heavily policed by the existing government and where protest and assembly are heavily repressed will also be more costly to enter. Finally, the costs of organizing are likely to be higher in those countries where the government enjoys a lock on financing. Governments can foreclose entrants' access to crucial financing by establishing relationships with key donors, or gaining control over key strategic and economic assets that are no longer available to new

[19] Alberto Alesina, The Size of Countries: Does it Matter? Joseph Schumpeter Lecture, p. 305.

entrants.[20] In short, all of these factors serve as barriers to entry into a government's market for governance; each serves to either suppress the demand for a competing product or increase the costs of supplying it.

Monopoly Power vs. Competition

Ideally, rebel groups would prefer to be the only group competing for political power with the government. A rebel group that faces few competitors in a high barrier to entry environment will be able to charge a higher price for its services than a group that faces many competitors. It will likely demand more loyalty from local citizens, more soldiers or more authority over decision making. Rebel groups that operate in an environment with low competition can also be expected to devote fewer resources to local populations. These groups are likely to deliver poorer public services and protection to their supporters and less preferential policies once in office. As long as barriers to entry remain high, existing rebel groups can extract relatively high rents from their supporters, while delivering less than high quality services.[21]

In a more competitive environment – one where the barriers to entry are low – strategic interaction becomes a significant factor.[22] In this case, rebel groups have a number of instruments they can use to reduce the number of competing groups while deterring others from

[20] See Tirole.
[21] Find source.
[22] From a modeling perspective, whenever there are more than two players, multiple equlibria becomes a potential issue. Do we conceptualize cases with different numbers of rebel groups as different equilibria for the same strategic interaction? And do transitions between them require exogenous shocks like outside intervention, end of the cold War, etc.? If, for instance, the violence between multiple groups represents a transition from one equilibrium to another stable one, this could have implications for empirical testing as cases of violence are qualitatively different from cases of stability when multiple groups exist peacefully.

joining the war. The four main instruments are: (1) short-run price competition, (2) product differentiation, (3) collusion, and (4) fighting.

Price is perhaps the easiest factor to manipulate. One of the first things a rebel group can do when competition increases is to lower the price it charges for its services or increase the quality of these services. Both have the effect of making their services more attractive to consumers and thus making it more costly for their rival to compete. Price can be manipulated by reducing taxes, lowering demands on constituent's time (i.e., eliminating conscription), increasing the amount of social services, or transferring more authority to the local level. Quality can be manipulated by producing better local security and higher quality public goods (i.e., health clinics, schools, more rapid and fair provision of justice).

Rebels can utilize a second instrument – product differentiation - to reduce or eliminate competition. Organizing a rebel group around an extreme ideology is a way for groups to distinguish themselves from an otherwise competitive field of similar-looking rebel factions. The more a rebel leader is able to create a unique product, the less competition there will be for supporters, and the easier it will be to maintain these supporters over time. Extreme ideology creates what could be considered a "market niche" for a rebel group, causing a particular population to remain loyal regardless of what the competition does or promises. This strategy is likely to be particularly attractive in situations where multiple rebel groups are competing to represent the same population and where the need for credible commitments to good governance is high. (Develop)

Rebel elites have a third strategy to reduce competition. Rebels that are unable to deter entry or encourage exit have the option to merge with a rival. This strategy should be less costly than

fighting if the groups could agree on a fair distribution of the spoils once in power and if they could credibly commit to sharing these spoils over time.[23] This requires relatively complete information about the value of assets that each side brings to the alliance, and the ability of the two sides to make it impossible for either side to restart the war and demand greater compensation.[24]

There is a potential downside to merging even if all sides are able to reach a deal that is enforceable over time. A rebel group that is willing to merge with another rebel faction rather than fight may develop a reputation for being weak in the eyes of other potential entrants. This, in turn, may convince other groups to enter the market knowing that if they enter, the existing rebel groups will likely share profits in their area.[25] Merging, therefore, is likely to be attractive (1) under high information, (2) when the two sides are of fairly equal strength, and (3) when the barriers to entry are so high that additional entry into the market is unlikely.

Existing rebel groups could also choose to directly attack their rivals and their rivals' supporters. Targeting their rival with violence is a way to increase the costs of remaining in the market and thus encourage a group to exit. It also sends a signal to local populations that supporting a rival group will be costly. This may explain why violence toward civilians might increase rather than decrease as competition increases.[26] Rebel groups that fight entry gain the added benefit of a reputation for toughness which helps deter additional entrants. Rebel groups

[23] McGee 1958, 80, Telser 1966, Bork 1978, and Christia 2012 have all argued this.
[24] See Tirole 321. See also Catherine Kelly's dissertation from Harvard who found this dynamic playing out among political parties in Senegal where low barriers to party formation and a tendency of the dominant party to buy off competitors has led to a proliferation of parties.
[25] Tirole 374.
[26] Note that it is possible that competition leads to more civilian abuses rather than fewer. It was the case for the RUF in Sierra Leone (as mentioned in Salehyan et al. IO article on rebel external sponsorship) Arguably, the competition between ISIS and al-Q is leading to more civilian abuses like beheadings and other extreme behaviors.

should be more likely to choose to fight their rival when the barriers to entry are low, when they do not have the resources to lower prices or offer better services, and when product differentiation is not possible.

Testable Hypotheses

The theoretical framework presented above allows us to make some predictions about how rebel groups are likely to behave given certain features of the competitive environment. Again, the theory suggests that their behavior is likely to be influenced more by the external structural environment in which rebel groups operate than by any internal characteristics of the group itself (e.g., leadership style, internal culture, institutional organization).

Barriers to Entry and the Number of Rebel Groups

H1: The higher the barriers to entry in a civil war, the lower the number of rebel groups.

When can you expect few rebel groups to form?

- When there is very little demand.
    - What determines demand? Dissatisfaction with existing government/policy.
        - Corruption
        - Bad governance
        - Discriminatory policies
        - Quality of life
        - Diversity of preferences, culture, language, "identity" of the population (Alesina argument) I think this will be key.
    - What are the conditions under which you could create demand?
        - Destabilize the country
        - Create a protection racket
        - Foment ethnic nationalism/fear
        - Promise a share of the spoils
- When it is very costly to organize.
    - What determines the costs of organizing?
        - Repression
        - availability of inputs: soldiers, arms, materials
        - Costs of inputs
        - Fixed costs: What are the costs a firm incurs in order to produce its product? Ethnic parties can form a barrier to entry because you

essentially have a long-term contract with a support group/customer.
        - Powerful outside patrons
- When there are few profits to be made from organizing.
    - Profits = amount of resources you can extract from a piece of territory and its residents. Resource endowment of a particular piece of land, size of population, gdp/capita (?).
    - *Potential measures of barriers to entry*: Weak governments. Large disaffected population. Small number of ethnic/identity groups. Rough physical terrain. Large country size. Low resource endowment. Poor governance. Government repression.

(I need a good exogenous measure of barriers to entry. Something that creates disincentives for a rebel group to form, but is also not correlated with behaviors such as service provision, protection, extreme ideology, rebel group fighting, rebel group alliance formation. What are the things that make it very hard for rebels to organize? I think I will ultimately use an exogenous shock that directly affects incentives to organize. The end of the Cold War may be a good place to start. Funding for rebels dried up between 1989-1991 making financing more difficult to obtain. The barriers to entry/organization suddenly became much higher. Think about this more.)

Rebel Group Behavior Toward Local Populations

H2: The higher the barriers to entry and the lower the number of rebel groups in a civil war, the fewer social services rebel groups are likely to provide to local populations.

a. *Potential measures of social services*: Establishment of health, education, and welfare systems, provision of basic services like water and electricity, and political governance structures. [27]

H3: The higher the barriers to entry and the lower the number of rebel groups in a civil war, the less protection rebel groups will provide for local populations.

a. *Potential measures of protection*: Establishment of a police force and legal and judicial mechanisms.

H4: The higher the barriers to entry and the lower the number of competing rebel groups, the more autocratically rebel groups will govern.

H5: The higher the barriers to entry and the lower the number of competing rebel groups, the less likely rebel groups are to espouse extreme ideologies.

[27] Reyko Huang's dissertation dataset also has systematic, cross-national measures of the types of institutions built and services provided by rebel organizations, though I don't know if she's willing to make it available yet.

Rebel Group Behavior Toward Each Other

H6: The greater the number of rebel groups and the lower the barriers to entry, the more likely rebel groups are to fight each other.

> H6a: Rebel groups are more likely to do this in countries where groups are undifferentiated – where groups share the same ideology, and service the same constituents.

H7: The higher the barriers to entry, the more likely rebel groups are to merge with each other.

> H7a: Rebel groups are more likely to do this in countries where groups are relatively evenly balanced.

- *Measure of "balance of power"*:
  - The demographics of a country; the number of soldiers, supporters on each side.

Plan of the Book

This paper will serve as Chapter 1 of a book entitled The Logic of Rebel Strategies in Civil War. Six additional chapters are likely to follow.

Chapter 2 will investigate the natural and strategic barriers to entry that I argue are likely to determine the number of rebel groups in a given civil war, which in turn determines how competitive the environment is likely to be. Natural barriers to entry include the level of demand for organized violence (determined in large part by the diversity of preferences, culture, language, and identity of the population and the representation of these differences within the government), the cost of organizing (determined in part by the level of government repression, government capacity, geographic features of a country), and the availability of inputs and financing (determined in part by the resource endowments of a country, the availability of soldiers, and the ease of access to internal and external patrons).

The chapter has two goals. The first is to conceptualize what is meant by "natural barriers to entry" in the civil war context and to develop measures of high and low barrier

environments. This will then allow me to determine the source material available on them. The second goal is to test whether a correlation exists between natural barriers to entry and the number of rebel groups that emerge in a given conflict. The universe of cases will be all civil war countries from 1946 – 2013 (Source: UCDP-PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset v. 4 – 2014). The dependent variable is likely to be the number of rebel factions in a civil war. (Source: Non-State Actors in Armed Conflict Dataset (NSA).[28] The main independent variables will be various measures of "natural barriers" including government popularity, quality of governance, government inclusion, societal heterogeneity, geographic concentration, access to raw materials, size of population and territory, and degree of government repression.

Chapter 3 examines the potential relationship between the competitive environment and rebel group treatment of local populations. A number of competing logics have been put forth in the literature to explain this outcome. Kalyvas (2005), Balcells (2010), and Lockyer (2008, 2010) stress the role of resource mobilization or capabilities to explain how rebels treat civilians. Weinstein stresses a group's source of funding. While Kalyvas (2006), Hultman (2007), and Wood (2010) emphasize the role of shifts in power. I model the treatment of civilians as a function of the amount of competition in a given conflict.

H2 through H4 are likely to be the main hypotheses tested in this chapter and the empirical strategy is likely to be twofold. First, I plan to conduct an analysis of a single rebel group in a single country by month. I am particularly interested in a case where an exogeneous event suddenly increased or decreased the level of competition in the war. This could be a natural disaster that eliminated the source of financing for some rebel groups, the end of the Cold War that eliminated proxy war financing, or the closing of a black market for drugs or

[28] How do I deal with factions emerging during the conflict? See Connor Huff's prospectus.

contraband (what about price shocks?). Did rebel group behavior toward local populations change significantly in the immediate aftermath of such an event?

Data on the group and conflict is likely to come from the Armed Conflict Location Events Dataset (ACLED) which contains data on conflict actors (including rebels, militias, ethnic groups, and active political organizations), location of rebel headquarters, and violence against civilians. Data on public service and security provision are likely to come from the MAROB (Minorities at Risk Organizational Behavior, Middle East and North Africa) dataset, although additional coding will be necessary to add rebel groups excluded from their list. Data on additional factors such as rebel group strength, local support, organizational structure, and external support will be obtained from the Non-State Actors in Armed Conflict Dataset (NSA) (Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2013).

I plan to conduct a separate analysis of civil war conflicts using state-rebel group dyad year as the unit of analysis. Again, the dependent variable will be the treatment of local civilians (measured in a variety of ways). Careful attention will be paid to the features of the competitive environment, most notably the barriers to entry and the number of competing rebel groups, as well as the institutional features of a group, its relative capabilities, leadership style, and sources of funding.

Chapter 4 will investigate the relationship between the competitive environment and how rebel groups treat each other. I am particularly interested in when rebel groups will choose to fight each other, and when they will choose to merge. The main hypotheses tested in this chapter will be H6 and H7. Again, a number of different mechanisms have been proposed in the literature to explain this behavior. Christia (2013) emphasizes the importance of the relative

distribution of power between rebel groups; rebel groups choose to form alliances based on tactical considerations of power politics (see also Nygard and Weintraub 2014). Others stress the role of ideology and identity politics (Meyer-Seipp 2012). Furtado (2007) and Ostovar & McCants (2013) highlight the importance of similar goals and relatively equal resource endowments. The main mechanism I point to is the level of competition in a conflict and its ability to increase or decrease rebel profits.[29]

A range of hypotheses will be analyzed using micro-level data of a single case as well as macro-level data of multiple cases over time. Data on the single case will again come from ACLED. Data on the first dependent variable – rebel alliance – will be drawn from NSA, while data on the second dependent variable – inter-group fighting – will be obtained from the UCDP Non-State Conflict Dataset. This dataset includes information on all communal and organized armed conflict where none of the parties is the government, including start and end dates, fatality estimates and locations. In terms of the independent variables, data on the level of competition, in particular the number of rebel groups, will come from NSA. Data on measures related to barriers to entry will be drawn from UCDP 2014 and Fearon and Laitin 2003. Additional data on the distribution of power, ideology, identity, goals and resource endowments will come from UCDP and NSA. (ISIS versus Al Qaeda would be interesting to think about.)

Chapter 5 will seek to better understand when rebel organizations are likely to espouse radical ideologies. H5 will, thus, be tested in this chapter. There are several existing datasets of civil wars but none code the rebel groups on any scale representing how extreme their goals are.

[29] Competition is directly affected by the levels of resources, capabilities and ideology, so a clearer explanation of how I conceptualize and measure competition would be helpful in this regard. Kalyvas measures it with territorial control. Others use casualty/violence levels etc. Think more about this.

This chapter will generate a new scale of extremism suitable for rebel groups based on their statements and manifestos. This will require conceptual innovation to develop a measure of extremism appropriate to rebel groups and the source material available on them. One helpful example is the Manifesto Project Database, which codes the manifestos of political parties on a variety of variables. Not all rebel groups have manifestos but all have public statements that contain some information about their goals. The plan is to develop a measure of how extreme rebel groups are based primarily on their announced goals, but possibly taking into account their choice of tactics or propaganda as well. This analysis may involve computer aided content analysis to quantitatively analyze public statements using a dictionary, tailored for specific content (Abedelal et.al. 2009).

Once a measure of extremism has been generated, I plan to use quantitative analysis to uncover the correlates of extremism. Relevant independent variables will include standard predictors of civil war such as gdp per capita, governance and rough terrain, but also more ideational variables such as the presence of Islam, ethnic distinctions and concentration, proximity to other states with extremist groups, as well as the number of competing groups.

Chapter 6 will examine the social welfare costs of rebel competition and the role of public policy in improving outcomes. All of the strategies discussed above, if successful, could have the effect of limiting the number of rebel factions serving the population and increasing the profitability of rebel groups at the expense of local populations. This would mean fewer social services, poorer governance, and more corrupt, authoritarian rule. It could also mean that rebel groups waste resources to achieve and maintain market share rather than directing these resources at fighting the government. [But it could also go the other way. Under certain circumstances, less competition could lead to better social services. Perfect competition doesn't

sound especially good for civilians/for the state? Oligopoly might be best of all.] The goal of this chapter, therefore, is to expose the social welfare implications of low and high competitive environments in an attempt to determine which parties have incentives to remedy them.[30]

Chapter 7 will conclude.

[30] (I also need to reconcile this policy implication with findings that a higher number of fighting groups increases conflict duration as well as levels of violence – all suboptimal outcomes for civilians. More groups allow the role for spoilers and veto players, also known to affect duration and levels of violence.) In short, I need to figure out if rebel competition is a good thing and when it is potentially bad.