

**Investigating Cohesion in Insurgent Groups: the case of the  
Kosovo Liberation Army**

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## **Introduction**

‘The reality is that in almost any political party, any political organisation, any political movement you care to think of in the history of humanity somebody has disagreed with the leadership at some point and gone off and done their own thing, and sometimes more than once.’ Looking at the wider image of political conflict, it is hard to disagree with these words by the senior I.R.A. member Richard McAuley (Morrison 2013: 13). Disagreements and splits are of prime importance for an insurgent group, since it turns its struggle to a dual contest: insurgents have to fight both for the aim of their organization and for securing their advantage over other factions and groups. Furthermore, research shows that insurgent fragmentation can influence the overall outcome of a conflict by prolonging its duration (Cunningham 2010) or by producing fragile peace settlements (Plank 2017). The concepts of cohesion and fragmentation have thus been placed in the centre of multiple studies, which attempt to answer why insurgent movements and organizations maintain their cohesion and why they fragment into different factions.

The present study seeks to apply the theoretical framework on cohesion in the case of the Kosovo Liberation Army. The KLA is a rare example of an insurgent group that managed to achieve its objective, which was independence for Kosovo. As a result, its members hold a key part in the contemporary politics of the country, and the history of the organization is visible in the everyday life of the country through monuments and publications. As is it possible for research to delve into the inner politics of the organization, the case of the KLA presents a good example for the testing and application of the theories on cohesion. The question that this paper asks is ‘how can we assess the cohesion of the KLA, and the movements that preceded it, from 1982 to 1999?’

In order for the question to be answered, this paper starts by discussing the main theoretical sources on the conceptualization of cohesion in insurgent organization. The paper then proceeds by identifying and analysing four competitive and interactive dynamics that literature (Bakke, Cunningham & Seymour 2016: 4, 2012, Krause 2014, Morrison 2013, Findley & Rudloff 2016: 20) deems responsible for the loss and gain of cohesion in insurgent groups. Namely, the focus here is on the social base of the organization, the economic incentives that might influence them, the degree of institutionalization in an organization and finally the changes in the balance of power. Next, a brief but comprehensive history of the Kosovo Liberation Army follows, divided in three periods. The concept of cohesion is applied on the case study in an analytical chapter by identifying

the four dynamics in the historical context. The interaction between the dynamics is then displayed, along with the causal link between the result and the empirical observation. Ultimately, this paper aims to clarify the existing theories on cohesion and apply them collectively on a case study. Furthermore, it seeks to use the existing literature on insurgent cohesion to illuminate some parts of the history of the KLA, which will enhance the English-speaking literature on the subject.

### **Conceptualizing Cohesion**

The concept of social cohesion has been identified since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century by Gustave LeBon and Emile Durkheim followed by a voluminous literature on the subject (Bruhn 2009: 32). However, there is lack of consensus among scholars on the definition, conceptualization and measurement of social cohesion (Moody & White 2003: 3, Bruhn 2009: 31). Some historical definitions of cohesion have included ‘the total field of forces which act on members to remain in a group’ (Piper et al. 1983: 96, quoting Festinger 1950), ‘the resistance of a group to disruptive forces’ (MacLeod & von Treuer 2013: 2, quoting Gross & Martin 1952), and ‘the group property which is inferred from the number and strength of mutual positive attitudes among members of a group’ (Piper et al. 1983: 95, quoting Lott and Lott 1961). To counteract complexity, some scholars have proposed more narrow definitions of cohesion, such as a ‘bond or uniting force’ (Piper et al. 1983: 95). Ultimately, these perspectives make a common point at defining cohesion as ‘how well a group is held together’ (Moody & White 2003: 5). Apart from academic criticism, this proliferation of definitions is also due to the fact that the concept of cohesion is employed in multiple disciplines, such as historical sociology, social psychology and psychology. As a result, the scope of research using the term is broad while the depth of social groups to which the concept is applied is fluid (Bruhn 2009: 1). Furthermore, the proposed approaches to measuring social cohesion encompass multiple methods, with some assessing the desire of members to remain in a group, while others focus on their performance in collective tasks. There are at least ten scales of measuring cohesion in the literature of sociology and psychology, but there is no consensus on which is definitive (McLeod & von Treuer 2013: 4).

For most researchers, the study of insurgent movements and organizations falls under the framework of social movements that use violence (Weinstein 2007: 35, Staniland 2014: 17, Bakke,

Cunningham & Seymour 2016: 4, Morrison 2013: 16)<sup>1</sup>. In this light, cohesion is treated as a property of the social structure that is the particular insurgent organization or movement (Kenny 2012: 534, Bakke, Cunningham & Seymour 2012: 266). The theoretical concepts that investigate cohesion have been applied to both insurgent organizations and movements, since scholars agree that ‘the internal dynamics of organizations closely resemble the coalitional politics of inter-rebel alliances’ (Woldemariam 2017: 137, Christia 2012). Following sociologists and psychologists, scholars ‘looking into the internal politics of organizations’ (Crenshaw 1987: 19) have favoured both narrow and extensive definitions of the concept. As an example of a narrow definition, cohesion in insurgent movements and organizations has been identified as the typical feature of a group remaining together (Tamm 2016: 600, Bakke, Cunningham & Seymour 2012, 2016, Lounsbery 2016). The opposite, fragmentation, is the breaking of an organization or movement in two or more parts which hold their own separate chains of command (Plank 2017: 177, Tamm 2016: 600). According to this view, cohesion in an insurgent movement can be measured by looking at the number of the organizations it consists of. Researchers that build on this definition of the concept have carried out N-studies based on the number of insurgent organizations in a particular conflict in order to prove which factors make a collective movement cohesive (f. ex. Lounsbery 2016, Bakke, Cunningham & Seymour 2015).

However, there have been suggestions that cohesion for both insurgent organizations and movements is dependent on more than the number of actors in a particular side of a conflict. Kenny (2010: 34) refers to an insurgent organization staying together as ‘structural integrity’ and to cohesion as ‘the creation and maintenance of cooperative effort towards the attainment of an organization’s goals’. Conversely, the opposite of ‘structural integrity’ is fragmentation, while that of Kenny’s cohesion is ‘disintegration’ – the prevalence of inner conditions that make an organization unable to engage in military or political activity (Kenny 2010: 35). These two concepts are according to Kenny’s analysis independent and can influence the conflict in different ways. An insurgent organization might be structurally fragmented, but if its actions are coordinated and reach a common aim, it is cohesive (Kenny 2010: 34). Additional elements in the definition of

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<sup>1</sup> Some authors also view insurgent organizations as states in the making (Weinstein 2007: 36). Barry Posen, for example, argues that rebellion is a result of a security dilemma (see “The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict,” in *Ethnic Conflict and International Security*, ed. Michael Brown (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) (Quoted by Weinstein 2007: 36). Furthermore, insurgent organizations and movements might perform state functions, such as the distribution of resources (Weinstein 2007: 36).

cohesion have been added by Bakke, Cunningham & Seymour (2012: 266), who define cohesion in insurgent movements as a product of three dimensions: the number of organizations in a given movement, the degree of institutionalization across them and the distribution of power among them. Researchers who favour the view that cohesion is traced by more than the number of factions, groups and organizations in conflict investigate the internal and external dynamics in insurgent groups as a means of measuring cohesion (f. ex. Bakke, Cunningham & Seymour 2012, Kenny 2010, Krause 2014). These arguments point to a more extensive interpretation of cohesion in insurgent movements and organizations.

The fact that the concept of cohesion has been employed with both a narrow and an extensive interpretation can make the production of a universal definition seem difficult. However, cohesion can be conceptualized *ex post*. A substantial part of research into the issue of cohesion in insurgent movements and organizations ultimately aims to describe patterns of behaviour between insurgent groups and adverse states or between the insurgent groups themselves. These patterns of behaviour can have important implications on how a conflict unfolds (Bakke, Cunningham & Seymour 2012: 265, Findley & Rudloff 2016: 20).<sup>2</sup> Empirical research shows that the organizations, which are deemed to be cohesive or fragmented, identify with specific patterns of behaviour. In particular, cohesive groups show maximum unity in the actions of their members. Discussing the case of the National Resistance Army (NRA) in Uganda, Jeremy Weinstein argues that it had built a reputation of cohesion because its soldiers as well as the civilians it was dealing with in insurgent-occupied zones came to expect certain norms of conduct from members of the movement (Weinstein 2007: 145). Because of this conduct, ‘members and supporters could trust that if they behaved, others would follow suit’ (Weinstein 2007: 146). Among others, this was due to the fact that the NRA provided political education to its members and maintained strong discipline within its ranks (Weinstein 2007: 145). The *ex post* point here is that the NRA displayed unity of action, and can therefore be deemed as cohesive by Kenny and the individuals the NRA was dealing with.

An example for the case of fragmentation can be drawn from the history of the Provisional I.R.A. and the Sinn Féin. In his 1994 speech outlining the emerging Peace Process that would end the

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<sup>2</sup> For example, in the case of insurgent movements studies show that these have most chances of success if they are dominated by one organization, because the proliferation of multiple organizations can create cases of infighting, outbidding and spoiling, something that can give the adverse state an advantage in conflict (Krause 2014: 74, 82, Bakke, Cunningham & Seymour 2016: 4, Akcinaroglu 2012: 880, Lounsbery 2016: 127)

period known as ‘the Troubles’ in Northern Ireland, Gerry Adams expressed Sinn Féin’s disapproval of the last IRA operations in Warrington and Shankill Road that had in total caused 12 deaths and over 100 injuries (Ó Broin 2009: 269). It should be noted here that the Sinn Féin was, essentially, the political wing of the I.R.A.<sup>3</sup> The public condemnation of one part of the movement can be deemed as an indication of differences of policy and action between the two organizations. According to a narrow interpretation of cohesion that encompasses only the structural integrity of groups, it is difficult to classify the ‘organization’ that Sinn Féin and the I.R.A. formed as fragmented at that point, since the two organizations remained together. However, the same movement cannot be labelled as cohesive, since apart from the discord between the actions of the two groups, the performance of the I.R.A. during 1994 did negatively influence the electoral results of Sinn Féin (Ó Broin 2009: 270) and thus harmed its political counterpart.

Returning to the conceptualization of cohesion, it is arguable that narrow definitions such as the one regarding the number of insurgent organizations within a particular movement risks disregarding basic facts. Therefore, it might ‘simplify the process of theorizing’ and may thus yield ambiguous results in large N-studies (Bakke, Cunningham & Seymour 2012: 267, Findley & Rudloff 2016: 20). As Bakke, Cunningham and Seymour (2012: 272) argue, ‘fragmented movements are not all the same, and...we can identify important patterns of fragmentation’. In the aforementioned case of Sinn Féin and the I.R.A., classifying the relation between the two organizations as cohesive - because they remained structurally intact - would not explain why they engaged in mutual disruptive actions. Rather, to summarize the condition in the relations between the I.R.A. and the Sinn Féin in 1994, the question would be ‘how cohesive was the movement at the given time? Conversely, ‘which dynamics produced the cohesive behaviour of the I.R.A. and the Sinn Féin at the time?’

### **Cohesion as an outcome of dynamics**

To adequately answer this question, researchers have conceptualized insurgent groups not as unitary actors but as ‘a shifting set of actors who share a central identity but who have malleable allegiances and potentially divergent interests’ (Bakke, Cunningham & Seymour 2012: 266). The

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<sup>3</sup> The IRA and the Sinn Féin were members of the same Republican movement, and many members of the IRA held positions in the Sinn Féin and vice versa – Gerry Adams was himself the Chief of Staff of the I.R.A. from December 1977 until February 1978 (Moloney 2007: 613). Moreover, the Sinn Féin was at times the public face of the I.R.A., launching campaigns to promote the political goals of the organization and tying its electoral results with the performance of the I.R.A. (Ó Broin 2009: 223, 262). See Ó Broin (2009), Moloney (2007), Morrison (2013)

organizational process theory, which investigates the complexities of insurgent behaviour, argues that the latter is an outcome of the internal dynamics of groups rather than strategic action (Crenshaw 1987: 19). The fact that an insurgent movement or organization maintains cohesion, falls apart, or splits into two or more groups is a result of the interplay between these dynamics (Bakke, Cunningham & Seymour 2016: 4, 2012, Krause 2014, Morrison 2013, Findley & Rudloff 2016: 20). So far, literature lists several dynamics, which encompass the formation and the activity of insurgent movements and organizations, ranging from pre-insurgency bases to the distribution of power among groups, factions and individuals. These dynamics take place from before the start of armed insurgency to its continuous course. Notably, this study analyses the social base from which insurgent organizations and movements are constructed (Staniland 2014, Morrison 2013, Weinstein 2007), the natural resources that the territory they operate in has (Weinstein 2007, Collier & Hoeffler 2004) the degree of institutionalization in a group or movement (Bakke, Cunningham & Seymour 2012), and the distribution of power among the different groups inside a movement or among the subgroups inside an organization (Bakke, Cunningham & Seymour 2012, Krause 2014, Tamm 2016, Plank 2017, Christia 2012).

In order to measure cohesion in an insurgent group, this theory suggests that we have to separately measure the dynamics that account for its existence. It is difficult, however, to qualitatively measure the distribution of power between different groups or the way certain norms of conduct are followed by factions and individuals. On the other hand, it is possible to qualitatively assess each dynamic and display the causal link between its function and the outcome. This is the method that this study uses to discuss the case study. The assessment of the function of the four dynamics is a result of comprehensive empirical and theoretical findings, which will be presented below.

### Social Base

A substantial part of the literature on the behaviour of insurgent organizations concentrates on the ‘pre-war’ aspects of rebellion in social and economic terms. Staniland (2014: 18-24) argues that the social base of an insurgent group at the start of armed action can determine whether it will be cohesive or fragmented in the course of the conflict. At the beginning of a conflict insurgent leaders convert their pre-war social networks into militant organizations. They start with a consolidation of their shared political visions and continue with the sharing of information and the creation of normative bonds for the organization. In this way a number of horizontal ties are established that

connect together different geographic and social sites. These ties might be strong, as in a political party that regularly meets in conventions, or weak, as in village strongmen who maintain loose links with other leaders in ethnic groups but rarely interact with them. After building horizontal ties, leaders set out to mobilize local communities to incorporate them in their political and social projects. They form vertical ties with these communities, which are characterized by bonds of trust, preference and flow of information. Local communities provide the social resources that leaders need to start an insurgency. Vertical ties can be strong when communities fully back the insurgency and weak when leaders face difficulties in penetrating a community to achieve support. The result of the relationship between vertical and horizontal ties produces a scale of four cohesive organizations at the start of a conflict (Staniland 2014: 23). Integrated organizations have both strong horizontal and vertical ties, and are the most cohesive forms of organization maintaining extensive bureaucracies and popular support. Vanguard organizations have strong horizontal ties between leaders but find it difficult to gain the support of local communities - an example can be a communist party trying to set up insurgency structures in an adverse territory, such as Che Guevara's actions in Nicaragua. Parochial organizations have weak horizontal but strong vertical ties, enjoying widespread popular support. These are compared by Staniland to various Islamist movements based on tribal institutions, such as the Taliban (Staniland 2014: 31). Finally, fragmented organizations have both weak horizontal and vertical ties and can be held together by coercion or personal gain. They are also potentially the less successful to mount a potent insurgency.

#### Economic Incentives & Recruits

The argument that the social bases that comprise insurgent groups has a direct influence on their cohesion during the conflict can be supplemented by a theory on economic incentives. The issue of material 'greed' against grievances and their role in the sparking of civil wars has been comprehensively discussed by Collier & Hoeffler (2004) who find that the presence of substantial economic resources provides opportunities for the start of rebellion (Collier & Hoeffler 2004: 588)<sup>4</sup>. These opportunities do not present themselves, however, in the cases where there are high

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<sup>4</sup> However, there also has been strong criticism against the idea that material 'greed' can provide enough incentives for parties to start civil wars. One study dismisses the concept as 'irrelevant' and argues that the determinants of political conflict lie in social fractionalization and the degree of democracy in a state or region (Bodea & Elbadawi 2007: 23)

grievances in the population of a particular region, making the start of insurgency less probable (Collier & Hoeffler 2004: 588). J. Weinstein (2007: 96-107) inserts the concept of economic opportunities into the social structure of rebel groups. Weinstein argues that insurgent leaders draw on various economic ‘endowments’ in order to attract support for their organizations. These can range from natural resources to taxation and criminal activity, and can act as motivation for individuals and groups to join an organization. Leaders of the groups that do not have access to financial resources rely on social endowments that are ‘tied to potential followers by means of ethnic, religious or ideological ties’ (Weinstein 2007: 10). Depending on the availability of resources the leaders have they might attract recruits with a variable commitment to the organization. Recruits that expect to gain short-term material rewards have a low commitment to the organization and are characterized as ‘consumers’. These are attracted mostly by leaders with access to considerable economic endowments forming. On the other hand, recruits that join organizations without substantial economic power exhibit high commitment because they do not focus on the material gains of aspect of rebellion; these are ‘investors’. Organizations formed mostly by ‘consumers’ are opportunistic and are apt to be less cohesive, showing lack of discipline to the norms and institutions of the organization and employing indiscriminate violence against civilians. Organizations formed by a majority of ‘investor’ recruits, however, built strong institutions and bureaucracies and punish defectors, something which makes them more cohesive (Weinstein 2007: 12).

### Institutionalization

The degree of cohesion that insurgent movements and organizations have can be significantly influenced by the form and the degree of institutionalization these groups exhibit. Under the term ‘institutions’ scholars have categorized both formal and informal rules and structures, norms, routines, customs and traditions (Bakke, Cunningham & Seymour 2012: 269). The role of institutions is to coordinate the actions of organizations, groups, factions and individuals inside an insurgent group (Bakke, Cunningham & Seymour 2012: 269) and ‘create mechanisms for long-term cooperative behaviour’ (Weinstein 2007: 131). The importance of institutions for cohesion lies in the degree these are binding to the membership of an insurgent organization or group. The status and quality of institutionalization can influence insurgency from its start, but it can also

change throughout the conflict. Bakke, Cunningham & Seymour (2012: 269) argue that the degree of institutionalization in an insurgent movement can be measured by looking at the breadth and depth of ties among groups and institutions. The breadth of ties implies the number of organizations in a particular movement that adhere to the institutional rules, while the depth looks at how constraining the rules are for members. Apart from forming collective strategies, the purpose of institutions is thus to maintain systems of monitoring and control, in order to ensure the uniformity of the actions of an insurgent organization or movement (Weinstein 2007: 132). Examples of institutions can include general staffs, formal and informal assemblies and councils, religious principles and informal tribal rules. The power of hierarchy is a crucial indicator of institutionalization. In terms of structures, the leadership of an insurgent group not only defines goals and strategies but coordinates the activities of multiple agents in conflict, allowing control over ‘multiple arms working in unison toward common objectives’ (Weinstein 2007: 132). Moreover, an example of a rule that is devised explicitly for maintaining cohesion in groups is the principle of democratic centralization, adopted by Marxist-Leninist parties. Democratic centralization implies that members can freely express their opinion within communist party meetings, but once a decision is taken by the general assembly they are bound and cannot criticize it in public. To quote V.I. Lenin, ‘The principle of democratic centralism...implies universal and full freedom to criticise, so long as this does not disturb the unity of a definite action; it rules out all criticism which disrupts or makes difficult the unity of an action decided on by the Party’ (Lenin 1962: 443).

Finally, the degree of cohesion that insurgent movements and organizations hold is influenced by changes in the distribution of power between their respective structural components. Power is a concept which widely denotes ‘the production, through social relations, of effects that shape the capacities of actors to determine their circumstances and fate’ (Bakke, Cunningham & Seymour 2012: 271). In more concrete terms power is examined by looking at material indicators such as military figures, economical assets and the ability to extract resources. It can also be traced through immaterial proxies such societal support, legitimacy and external support (Bakke, Cunningham & Seymour 2012: 272). The amount of power that an actor has can be identified ex post through the results of rivalries, battles, disagreements, bargaining and other political processes that occur during conflict (Bakke, Cunningham & Seymour 2012: 271). Acting in an environment of contentious politics, insurgent movements and organizations seek to maximize their power

(Christia 2012: 240). Their actions however are checked by other movements and organizations or states, which hold their own degree of power. Thus, in the politics of rebellion, power drives both actions and outcomes (Krause 2014: 74). Specifically regarding movements, cohesion is minimized when power is divided among multiple organizations that comprise a movement (Bakke, Cunningham & Seymour 2012: 271). In the case of organizations, the concept of the distribution of power has also been applied to individual leaders (Tamm 2016). These leaders might represent a particular faction that might cause a split in the event of disagreements (Morrison 2013: 18). However, when a group is coherent and there are no disagreements among its members we can assume that the distribution of power is institutionalized. This means that the factions and individuals that hold power do so because of the organizational structure of a group, which might vest certain groups with certain abilities. For example, the Provisional I.R.A. Army Council had the power to appoint a Chief of Staff, to maintain contacts with other organizations and make regulations regarding organization, training and discipline of the Army (Moloney 2007: 606).

#### Changes in the distribution of power

When the loss and gain of cohesion are conceptualized as ‘events’ (Findley & Rudloff 2016: 20) the distribution of power is the key factor to understanding why insurgent movements and organizations split. In the study of splintering researchers focus on movements and organizations in a specific period in time. At the start of the insurgency, the distribution of power is ‘set’ to be at a certain approximate point. For an event of fragmentation to happen, various mechanisms cause a change in the distribution of power which in turn influence the degree of cohesion and fragmentation a group has (Krause 2014: 74). For example, to investigate why the Real I.R.A. split from the Provisional I.R.A. in 1997 a point before the split must be set, and the processes that lead to the split must be traced from that point. This point can be, for example, the announcement of the four-month I.R.A. ceasefire of 1994 that alienated some senior members of the Provisional I.R.A. leadership (Morrison 2013: 155), or the announcement of in 1987 of the document ‘Scenario for Peace’ which oriented the aims of the Provisional I.R.A. and the Sinn Féin towards peace and alienated a number of Republican supporters. In any case, the distribution of power between the major actors is ‘set’ - for example it can be mentioned that in 1997 Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness were the dominant figures inside Sinn Féin and the majority of members supported their positions, but a group of senior I.R.A. leaders disagreed with the direction the group was

taking (Morrison 2013: 154). Then the 1997 ceasefire was voted in without the full consent of the 12-member Army Executive, the powerful advisory board of the Provisional I.R.A. (Morrison 2013: 158, Moloney 2007: 605). The vote and the legitimacy it carried changed the distribution of power by giving leverage to the Adams/McGuinness positions. Some of the members of the organization that disagreed eventually left the organization, forming the Real I.R.A.

However, changes in the distribution of power might constitute more complex phenomena than this brief example shows, because they influence and are in turn influenced by other dynamics. The distribution of power does not only concern the proportion of power among subgroups, but also the function that these subgroups perform in a group of movement. Indeed, for a complete discussion on the particular case one should look at more indications, for instance the fact that most of the dissidents that formed the Real I.R.A. held positions that were occupied with the armaments of the Provisional I.R.A. Cadres that are engaged with the acquisition and use of material resources are thought to have stronger motives to continue armed action in case of a potential peace agreement (Crenshaw 1987: 24). In this case, dynamics such as institutionalization might influence the process of the change in the distribution of power.

Apart from institutional incidents such as votes, researchers have identified a number of indicative events that might trigger a change in the distribution of power. Through these changes, insurgent movements and organizations might see a centralization or a dispersion of power among different factions. Respectively, the degree of cohesion they hold will be augmented or decreased (Bakke, Cunningham & Seymour 2012: 271). Since power drives causes and produces outcomes, I have classified these events as actions that are caused by insurgent movements and organizations themselves and actions that depend on the involvement of external factors, such as states.

Actions that insurgent movements and organizations undertake to increase group cohesion can be summarized as building a climate of organization inside their groups and establishing alliances with other groups. While taking the initiative in conflict, however, insurgent groups might lose their cohesion in cases of mismanaged expansion into local communities. The primary step that insurgent leaders take to increase their cohesion is the setting up of a climate of organization and discipline in their groups (Weinstein 2007: 134). This is accomplished through political and military training and mechanisms that monitor the behaviour of combatants. The training of group members ensures the commitment of individuals and subgroups to group leadership by

communicating the rules, norms and codes of conduct that shape the ideas of the particular group. The mechanisms that monitor the behaviour of combatants ensure that these norms are followed and that individuals and groups have an incentive to fight, since ‘bias in distributing punishment weakens efforts to set in place shared expectations about behaviour’ (Weinstein 2007: 135). By ensuring the uniformity of the conduct of its members and their loyalty to the leadership power is centralized, which in turn makes insurgent groups more cohesive (Weinstein 2007: 146).

In forming alliances, insurgent organizations look to their individual interests since they aspire to build up enough power in order to win the conflict. If victory seems possible, the alliances are formed in ways that will not inhibit the individual organizations’ share in post-war political control (Christia 2012: 240). This implies that groups might leave an alliance if they deem that other groups have dominant power within that alliance (Christia 2012: 35). Establishing alliances between insurgent organizations increases the centralization of power and contributes to movement cohesion, especially if there is an institution that coordinates the actions of organizations. The process of establishing alliances starts with the interaction between leaders where they gain trust and share experiences in collective action (Staniland 2014:50). The continuous interaction of leaders might bring about new coordinating institutions that organize the actions of collective insurgency. Strong institutionalization between groups may even lead to the forming of a new organization, provided that the separate organizations recognize the collective institutional authority. This case is exemplified by the case of the African National Congress, which at first formed an alliance with the Congress of South African Trade Unions, South African Communist Party and the Umkhonto we Sizwe group and later absorbed these groups into its institutional structure (Bakke, Cunningham & Seymour 2012: 270).

However, insurgent movements and organizations might face difficulties in maintaining cohesion while expanding. As an insurgent group starts gaining control of new territories it inevitably broadens its social base, since it cooperates with local communities and takes on new recruits. For the existing group, this might provide a challenge for the ‘homogenization’ of the new members (Staniland 2014: 41). If the leaders of the group do not take steps for the training and the monitoring of the behaviour of the new social bases, they might face an increase in the diversity of political demands from the new members. These can include disagreements over ‘whether to pursue independence, political autonomy, fiscal autonomy, or cultural rights’ (Bakke, Cunningham &

Seymour 2012: 5). Furthermore, if an insurgent organization or movement exhibits significant financial powers it might attract opportunist - what Weinstein (2007) lists as 'consumer' - individuals and groups to join its ranks. Motivated by the promise of material gains, these members will lack discipline and might employ violence against civilians (Weinstein 2007: 11). In some cases, disagreements among old and new members might include the ignoring of leadership commands or even internal violence and coups (Staniland 2014: 48).

In the context of armed conflict possible outcomes are influenced by a number of external factors. Insurgent groups fight against other groups and states, but they might also be sponsored by other states or called upon by international institutions on peace agreements. Events that occur from external actor implications, like intervention and leadership decapitation, change the distribution of power. However, research argues that they may yield varying results regarding insurgent cohesion.

Insurgent movements and organizations might find themselves at a point where they engage states or other armed groups in open confrontation. Both battlefield victories and defeats might, however, have negative effects for the cohesion of insurgent groups. Defeats in military action mean a significant loss of power for a group or a movement. If military losses are severe and pose a threat of survival to a group, the leadership of the group might be blamed and organizational changes may take place. This will additionally hamper the performance of the group and render it vulnerable to counterinsurgency tactics (Christia 2012: 44, Staniland 2014: 52). Furthermore, there is the possibility that the parts of the movement which suffer the most significant losses will break away, because the distribution of power within the group will be against their favour. Battlefield losses are thus a way that alliances will break (Christia 2012: 240, see also above about alliances). It is not only losses that might decrease the cohesion of a group, however. Research shows that battlefield victories might also bring about the same result. Naturally, victory for an insurgent group in the field might foster cohesion between its subgroups or organizations because it will convince them that they are on the winning side (Christia 2012: 44). However, a victory of insurgent groups will also lower the scale of external threats its members. This might be a chance for internal disagreements and unresolved political issues to arise (Woldemariam 2016: 137).

On this it should be noted that open confrontation between insurgent organizations or between states and organizations is rare; rather, states seek to undermine the structures of insurgent groups

through various counterinsurgency campaigns. The purpose of counterinsurgency tactics is to ‘effectively target leaders and at the same time impose pervasive state control at local levels’ (Staniland 2014: 39). The arrest or assassination of key insurgent leaders will undermine the central organizational processes of an insurgent group and damage its morale (Freeman 2010: 2). Among individual leaders and factions, the loss of a key cadre will change the distribution of power inside a group, something that might lead to the loss of cohesion (Tamm 2016: 598). Organizational disruption will also bring about cuts in the flow of information and undermine the military performance of groups (Staniland 2014: 40). Furthermore, the emergence of new leaders is generally difficult for organizations, because it requires the building of bonds of trust between members (Staniland 2014: 40), and there is the case that new leaders might lack the charisma to positively influence insurgent morale. For a state or an organization to carry out leadership decapitation attempts, however, intelligence from the field should be obtained. States and other organizations look for intelligence in local communities, where they enter to impose their presence and shatter the local base of insurgency (Staniland 2014: 41). Comprehensive state counterinsurgency campaigns include ‘social control and surveillance, and using local counterinsurgent forces and “flipped” former militants to target insurgent fighters and sympathizers’ (Staniland 2014: 40). The loss of local communities might mean that insurgent groups will not be able to draw on social and economic resources and enjoy legitimacy and popular support (Weinstein 2007: 132, Panwar 2017: 975). In a vicious circle, the erosion of the vertical ties between the leadership and the local population weakens insurgent group structures and makes it more vulnerable to decapitation attempts (Staniland 2014: 43).

Battlefield performance and counterinsurgency might have varying effects on insurgent cohesion. The views of the current research are supplemented by a broadly encompassing argument about the behaviour of insurgent movements under pressure. In particular, some researchers maintain that insurgent groups who come under military pressure and risk of failing to achieve their political goals might maintain their cohesion and improve their willingness to fight. According to M. Crenshaw (1987: 23) ‘The decline of the organization may produce a psychological dynamic in which complacency is succeeded by frenetic activism which goes beyond criticism of the leadership to desperate attempts to salvage the organization.’ This might happen because some groups require new recruits to ‘pay high costs’ of joining in, such as challenges of committing violent acts upon recruitment. The high cost of joining in makes exit from the organization unlikely

due to individual reluctance (Crenshaw 1987: 23). However, this view is mostly applicable to smaller groups, as the examples of the author show (for example the Red Army Faction and the Red Brigades - Crenshaw 1987: 22). Ultimately, state repression is generally associated with a greater degree of insurgent fragmentation (Bakke, Cunningham & Seymour 2016: 11).

Insurgent movements and organizations are frequently the recipients of aid from supporting states. This aid comes in forms of sanctuary, weapon supplies, fighters and ultimately military intervention on the behalf of the insurgency. The supportive behaviour of states significantly influences the power dynamics in conflict by altering the distribution of power in favour of the insurgents (Lounsbury 2016: 127). However, this might not be encouraging the cohesion of insurgent groups. In particular, external states that interfere in a conflict do so frequently promote their own agenda (Cunningham 2010: 117). They introduce their own demands to the insurgents about the aims of the conflict and the post-war political power sharing. When the agenda of the state differs substantially to the agenda of the insurgents, there might be serious disagreements among them which will undermine their cohesion (Cunningham 2010: 118, Bakke, Cunningham & Seymour 2016: 6). Moreover, states can choose to negotiate with individual insurgent leaders who will support their claims, creating divisions within an insurgent group. Tamm (2016) argues that the prevalence of an insurgent leader depends on an 'imbalance of power' in his favour, which is defined by the material and social support this individual enjoys within an organization. If this imbalance shifts in favour of a rival, the latter will be able to exercise a coup. Alternatively, a balance of power between individuals can cause of a split within the movement when disagreements occur. External states thus can have a hold of this balance of power by supporting individual leaders through the channelling of funds, weapons and fighters (Tamm 2016: 600). However, the sponsoring of insurgent groups by external states can have positive effects for cohesion, since external states can also push for unity between insurgent organizations and factions. This frequently happens in sanctuaries outside the territories of conflict, where leaders and factions are brought together to discuss the aims and strategy of insurgency (Staniland 2014: 50). However, even if a state does not directly interfere in the inner politics of insurgent group, its proxies might alter the distribution of power by other means. The introduction of foreign fighters, for example, might bring about 'new ideas about goals and tactics to the conflict, which can engender divisions if they clash with local preferences' (Bakke, Cunningham & Seymour 2016: 6). Nevertheless, a decisive means of changing the distribution of power in a conflict comes with the military

intervention of a state in favour of the insurgents. For the insurgent groups this might mean a proliferation of tactical choices, since their capabilities are improved with another factor at their side. They might, for example, abandon guerrilla tactics and openly engage a state in armed confrontation (Lounsbury 2016: 129). The improvement in capabilities along with the presence of another military power can give the insurgents the perception that they will win the war (Christia 2012: 44). In this case, insurgent groups are likely to increase their cohesion, because ‘splinter factions that do not collaborate risk being left out of the spoils of victory in a post-conflict scenario’ (Lounsbury 2017: 130).

Finally, research shows that the cohesion of insurgent groups and organizations is challenged at the presumed end of a conflict, namely at the negotiating table for peace. A peace agreement proposes an institutionalized distribution of power, which is then dependent on the consent of both the insurgent group and its enemies. After the signing of an agreement, all parties are committed to maintain it. However, not all parties involved might be satisfied with the provisions of the agreement (Findley & Rudloff 2016: 23). At this point, it is probable that disagreements among insurgents occur over the political goals of the particular movement or the organization (Crenshaw 1987: 15), if these do not match the terms of the peace agreement. However, there might also be discontent among the subgroups of a movement or organization because of the post-war provisions of the agreement, which some groups might find unfavourable. According to Findley & Rudloff (2016: 22), ‘an all-inclusive settlement may be more beneficial to some groups and not others, especially if a significant divergence of preferences characterizes the various groups’. As the insurgents are brought to the negotiating table, ‘each party fears the defection of others’ – the same happens when a final agreement is signed (Plank 2017: 178). Historically, a proposal for a final end to hostilities has been a cause for insurgent groups to split between a militant and a political faction, representing subgroups that want to continue armed action and subgroups that switch to political activity (Morrison 2013: 18). For an agreement to be potentially followed by all the insurgent subgroups and factions, Plank (2017: 192) argues that it must be inclusive for all insurgents in terms of ‘inner core provisions’, namely participation in the decision-making processes.

## **Methodology and Sources**

The previous section has attempted to cover the current theoretical framework on cohesion in insurgent groups, including the causes that are responsible for its gain and loss. In the next section, this theoretical framework will be applied in the case of the Kosovo Liberation Army. The purpose here is twofold: to establish the validity of the theories that were outlined in the previous chapter, but also to demonstrate, through the theory, the link between cohesion in the KLA and the behaviour of the organization throughout the conflict.

First, a comprehensive examination of the history of the KLA will be carried out. The history of the organization is divided in three parts, corresponding to major changes in the distribution of power within the group and between the group and the Serbian state. To delve into the inner politics of the organization, I have used an array of Albanian sources, something that seems to be missing from the current English-speaking literature on the subject (Perritt 2010 and Pettifer 2013).

In the Analysis that follows, I shall use the method of process tracing in an inductive examination of the events within the case (Bennett/Elman 2013: 183). Namely, I shall attempt to identify the causal mechanisms between the four dynamics discussed above and the concept of cohesion. The identification will take place in the historical context. Furthermore, the theories that accompany the concept of dynamics will be tested<sup>5</sup>. The choice to start the history of the KLA from its beginnings as an organization has been made to correspond to the pre-war dynamics, which Staniland argues as being the most influential (Staniland 2014: 30).

## **Case study: The Kosovo Liberation Army**

### First period: 1982-1993

In January 1944 Enver Hoxha, then leader of the Albanian partisans, met Tito in Bujan, Albania to discuss the future of Kosovo. Hoxha was given the promise that the region, which was in its high majority Albanian-speaking, would join with Socialist Albania after the war; however, this never materialized. Due to geopolitical changes and individual choices, the countries followed different political paths. In the Stalin-Tito split, Albania sided with the Soviet Union and later with China. After 1978, Albania broke diplomatic relations with all countries, gaining the image of a secluded

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<sup>5</sup> Such as, for example, Weinstein's theory that organizations might attract recruits of high and low commitment according to their access to financial resources (Weinstein 2007).

communist country. To sustain his vision, Hoxha developed an original version of Marxism-Leninism, which fused Socialism with nationalism. This fusion would be Albania's 'national project' for 45 years<sup>6</sup>. During his long tenure as head of state, Hoxha was always looking towards the situation in Kosovo, the most underdeveloped part of Yugoslavia. In 1968, the students from the University of Pristina demonstrated with the demand of further communal rights, such as an Albanian-speaking University and an equal status with the other Republics within the Federation. The demonstrations were put down by force, but Tito started to slowly accede to the demands: in 1970 an Albanian-speaking University opened in Pristina and in 1974 the new constitution of Yugoslavia gave some degree of autonomy to Kosovo, including the establishment of a Kosovo parliament and police. With the opening of the University a small thaw between the relations of the two countries occurred, which allowed mutual visits and cultural exchanges to take place. In turn, small clusters of Marxist-Leninist student groups began to appear in Pristina. These groups were clearly influenced by the Enverist ideology and Albania's national project, and placed the union of Kosovo with Albania at the center of their identity.

The 'official' beginnings of the KLA are placed by historians and by members of the organization itself in the student demonstrations of March 1981. The demand was again a Kosovo Republic as an equal part of Yugoslavia. The demonstrations were suppressed by the army, with result of dozens of dead, wounded and jailed civilians. The demonstrations gave the chance to Enverist students to come to the fore, with slogans against 'Serbian domination in Kosovo' (Judah 2000: 39). Other Enverists fled to Switzerland where they started, in an amateur manner, the publishing of the newspaper Voice of Kosovo ('Zëri i Kosovës')<sup>7</sup>. From Tirana, Enver Hoxha publically condemned the Yugoslav actions: 'You, sirs of Belgrade, sent in Kosovo sixty thousand soldiers to repress and kill the Kosovars and to threaten socialist Albania.... you speak with the language

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<sup>6</sup> Quoting Enver Hoxha, 'It was these high virtues of the Albanian people that the Party was able to transform and direct towards the strong economic changes that we have seen these later years' or elsewhere, 'the Albanian cannot accept the suppression of the honor of his sons and his daughter and their rights' or elsewhere 'the Albanian people have always celebrated with great joy the illustrious day of 28th of November 1912 (note: the Albanian national day) when the wise and patriot old man Ismail Qemali raised the flag in Vlore and proclaimed the independence of the country. It should be noted here that the history of socialist Albania is underresearched. (Enver Hoxha, speech to the electors – Tirana, 1982)

<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that the official newspaper of the Communist Party in Albania was 'Zëri i Popullit' – 'the Voice of the People'.

of violence while we speak with the voice of reason, but we can also speak with the language of violence' (Hoxha 1982).

In February 1982 the first predecessor of what was to become the KLA was founded in Istanbul in the presence of two Kosovan Enverists and the ambassador of Albania in Turkey. It was the 'Movement for an Albanian Socialist Republic in Yugoslavia' (Lëvizjen për Republikën Socialiste Shqiptare në Jugosllavi – LRSSHJ). Itself a union of different groups, it was essentially a Marxist Leninist Party with a 15-member Central Committee. In 1983 the group moved to Switzerland, where it took over the publishing of the 'Voice of Kosovo' and started coordinating actions to organize demonstrations in Kosovo, where it had supporters among various sympathetic student groups.

In 1987 the organization was reformed under the name 'Popular Movement for the Republic of Kosovo' (Lëvizja Popullore për Republikën e Kosovës – LPRK) and held its first general meeting in Zurich. Its main body was the General Council, which was the equivalent of a communist party's congress. According to the Program and the Statute approved, the structure of the Council provided for a chairman, a secretary, a chief financial officer and a chief executive officer, among other members. Furthermore, it appointed the editor of the party newspaper, the aforementioned 'Voice of Kosovo'. The group would continue with this structure until 1994 with the addition of a Presidency, to which the administrative functions of the organization would be delegated. General Assemblies would be held every two years, in Kosovo or Switzerland. According to J. Pettifer, during this period the group maintained links with the Sigurimi, the Albanian Intelligence Service. The contacts were mainly taking place in Switzerland, where the majority of Albania's foreign trade and finance payments were conducted (Pettifer 2013: 54, 61). The organization's financial needs were covered by the Albanian diaspora in Switzerland and the Albanian state (Pettifer 2013: 62). As parts of the Diaspora, most of the organization's members had daily jobs, such as Haradinaj who was working as a security guard at sporting events and concerts (Pettifer 2013: 65, BBC 2005). During its first years of existence the organization had scarce support, which came from small segments of the Albanian diaspora and the sympathetic students in the University of Pristina, where it organized demonstrations in favor of extensive Albanian rights in Yugoslavia. At this time a number of important members joined in which would stay in the 'inner core' of the LPK and later the KLA, such as Hydajet Hyseni and Xhavit Haliti (Pettifer 2013: 67). In particular, all of the

eight members of the leadership mentioned in the first LPRK meeting in Zurich in 1987 remained in the organization until its dissolution in 1999, and most of them remain in politics today (LPK Historiku 2002). Furthermore, the organization established contact with Adem Demaçi, an Enverist poet and novelist who was given lengthy prison sentences for his political action.

In 1989 the events that precipitated the dissolution of Yugoslavia started in Kosovo with the public speech of Slobodan Milošević in Kosovo Polje and his pledge to use ‘all political, administrative and compulsory means to fight against Albanian nationalism’ (Janjić/Pula 2009: 278). Milošević was acting against reports of what he called the imposition of a ‘Nazi policy’ on Serbians living in Kosovo by Albanians, which consisted of forceful expulsions of the former from the province (Milošević interview in ‘Death of Yugoslavia’, 14:13). These ‘means’ that Milošević referred to were applied in March 1989 as an abolition of the autonomy of Kosovo, its regional parliament, and the gradual dismissal of thousands of Albanian-speaking workers and civil servants. In response, members of the defunct regional parliament formed the Democratic League of Kosovo (Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës - LDK) headed by Ibrahim Rugova, which within a month gained half a million supporters (Janjić/Pula 2009: 280). Looking at the negative consequences of the Croatian and Bosnian Wars, Rugova adopted a policy of ‘passive resistance’ against the Serbian regime. This included the formation of a ‘parallel state’ and lobbying in Western governments for support. In the ensuing years, the LDK would prove to be, alongside the KLA, the main group inside the Kosovo autonomist movement. Meanwhile, the crumbling Communist regime in Albania condemned once again the Yugoslavian policies through its General Secretary, Ramiz Alia: ‘Belgrade has pursued an anti-Albanian policy inspired by archaic concepts and ideologies by the nostalgia of feudal romanticism and imperial euphoria...’ (Alia 1990). In 1991, Alia met with three leading members of LPRK in Tirana and proposed the cultivation of revolutionary circumstances in Kosovo after studying the case of the I.R.A. (Pettifer 2013: 55). Furthermore, he reaffirmed the support of the Albanian government to the organization.

#### Second period: 1993-1997

In July 1993 the LPRK held its 4<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in Pristina. Among the decisions taken was the change of the name of the organization to the ‘People’s Movement of Kosovo’ (Lëvizja Popullore e Kosovës – LPK). During this meeting the organization also approved the drafting of a new program, which proclaimed the armed struggle for the liberation of Kosovo as the instrument

to achieve its political goals. Furthermore, the Presidency decided the division of the organization into three different ‘sectors’. Each sector was granted autonomy of action but its leaders reported to the General Council. These were the Political Organization Sector, the Sector of Affiliation, which was responsible for the communications between Kosovo and Switzerland, and the Sector of Special Importance, which was tasked with creating and organizing the armed branch of the organization, which was given the name ‘Kosovo Liberation Army’. From the 11 people that are mentioned in the 1993 4<sup>th</sup> Assembly (LPK Historiku 2002), two died during the course of the conflict while eight of them have held various government positions after 1999.

To financially support the nascent armed group, the Presidency of the LPK decided to establish a fund, which took the name ‘Homeland Calls’ (Vendlindja Thërret). The fund was initially based in Geneva and later established parts in Germany and the United States. Its purpose was to collect capital from the Kosovan diaspora through the projection of the message of the KLA. For this reason members of the organization from Kosovo held various events in European countries<sup>8</sup>. The funds were used for the purchase of weapons, ammunition and other necessary materials for the start of an insurgency. Although the fund was controlled by the General Assembly, the coordination for the purchase of weapons was carried out by the sector of Special Importance, and particularly Xhavit Haliti (Perritt 2008: 94). Furthermore, the financial backing of the organization was supported by multiple smaller funds and groupings, ranging from village committees to organized crime groups. The latter appeared in Western Europe in the mid-90s taking over the cartels of cigarette, car and drug smuggling, as well as prostitution (Arsovska 2015: 46). It has also been alleged that a significant portion of the funds that ‘Homeland Calls’ managed came through coercion and the extortion of diaspora members (Arsovska 2015: 46). The total ‘legitimate’ amount of money collected through ‘Homeland Calls’ have been estimated, according to H. Perritt, at 75-100 million dollars (Perritt 2008: 92).

The ‘Homeland Calls’ fund marked the socialization of the KLA to the Albanian diaspora in Europe and the United States. Particularly to the later, the Marxist-Leninist ideas of the LPK were considered unpopular. In order to establish a branch of the fund in U.S., Florin Krasniqi asked in 1997 especially for the LPK and its Communist image to be absent (Judah 2000: 127). Therefore, in the United States the Enverist thought came only as an invocation of nationalist images and

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<sup>8</sup> Tim Judah (2000) was present in such an event in London in 1998.

symbols. Moreover, the collapse of communism in Albania revealed to some Kosovars the real situation in Albania, which could be much different than what they had imagined through ideological texts and writings. After the fall of Communism in Albania, Ramiz Alia's Party of Labor transformed into a Social Democratic Party abandoning the strong party organization and the ideas of planned economy. Surprisingly, however, the LPK still held on to old Marxist-Leninist symbolism and party tactics and structures: portraits of Ramiz Alia still decorated the walls and the principle of Democratic Centralization was still called upon in 1996<sup>9</sup>. However, the party paper 'Voice of Kosovo' started to water down its socialist discourse during this period by adopting more 'populist' opinions centered around the images of rural insurgency (Pettifer 2013: 121).

Once the organizational changes had been concluded and economic mobilization had started, the KLA began to focus on starting an insurgency in Kosovo. Its first step was to commence the smuggling of arms into the province. The arms were purchased from Hungary, Czechoslovakia and the European black market. In 1997 Albania faced an acute political crisis; with the collapse of the government the military depots were opened to civilians. A significant number of these arms were sold to the KLA at 'reasonable prices' (Haliti Interview in 'Fall of Milošević' 29:30). The arms were stored in depots and then smuggled to Kosovo through mountain passes, with the help of the Albanian army. However, no decisive military action was planned and undertaken. At the time, the leadership of the LPK was divided between the supporters of organizing a mass uprising in Kosovo and those who argued that guerilla warfare would be a more preferable strategy. None of the two materialized until 1998, since the KLA did not have any heavy weapons at its disposal and lacked the numbers to stand up against the Serbian police<sup>10</sup>. Thus, its actions came down to ambushes against policemen and terrorist actions, such as the grenade attack of a Serbian refugee camp in 1996 and the attempted assassination of the rector of the University of Pristina in 1997. The organization did not encompass many individuals at the time; some of the members that carried out terrorist attacks held key positions in the leadership, such as Rexhep Selimi, later Chief of Staff of the KLA.

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<sup>9</sup> In 1996 Ibrahim Kelmendi, chairman of the Homeland Calls fund in Germany, was asked for financial help from some KLA members in parts of Kosovo; when the aid was given directly to them, Xhavit Haliti complained that the decision violated the principle of Democratic Centralization by bypassing the General Council, since it was the Council that would, through its decisions, give freedom of action to the fund. [Ibrahim Kelmendi interview at GazzettaExpress 18-06-2015]

<sup>10</sup> In 1997 there were only 150 KLA members in Kosovo (Perritt 2008: 82)

### Third period: 1998-1999

At the start of 1998, the KLA stepped up its activity of ambushes and skirmishes with small police and military units. The Serbian government responded with a counterinsurgency campaign which targeted the suspected KLA supporting villages. The Serbian Special Forces, tasked with carrying out investigations, followed a tactic of terrorizing and murdering the civilian population; in one incident in February 24 civilians were killed. This setting, which would be repeated all over until the end of the war, was in fact a deliberate KLA strategy: in the words of Hashim Thaçi, ‘We could see the international community didn’t care about us. We agreed we had to force them to take an interest in Kosovo’ (Interview with Hashim Thaçi in ‘Fall of Milošević’ – 27.00). Apart from the attention of the international community, the Serbian reprisals attracted a flow of volunteers for the KLA. In March 1998 one of the ‘old guard’ of the LPK and a member of the KLA Adem Jashari was killed in his house, along with his family, after a siege by Serbian police and army forces. Details of the event were spread throughout Kosovo and prompted demonstrations in Pristina. As the news of the situation reached the international press, NATO member governments started to see a repetition of the same methods used in the Bosnian War. As Madeleine Albright said in March 1998, ‘our predecessors sat in this room and watched Bosnia burn’ (Interview with Madeleine Albright in ‘Fall of Milošević’ – 33.42). As yet, though, no one in the international community thought of the independence of Kosovo as a viable solution. The U.N. Security Council Resolution 1160 condemned both the ‘excessive use of force by the Serbian forces’ and the ‘acts of terrorism by the Kosovo Liberation Army’, and noted that any solution to the conflict ‘should be based on the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia’ (U.N. 1998: 1, 2).

Viewing an escalation of the conflict, the LPK and the KLA tried to adapt to the circumstances. In March 1998 the LPK set up headquarters in Tirana with the purpose of providing political, financial and logistical support to the KLA. The leadership had good relations with the Albanian government, which was now in the hands of the Socialist Party and was run by the old communist elites. Thus, the old connections were used to facilitate the function of the KLA; in this stage they were expressed through Xhavit Haliti, who had been close to the communist government. In turn, the KLA set up a General Staff and began contemplating on the implementation of the Maoist theory of insurgency (Pettifer 2008: 69). The General Staff had a leader – Suleiman Selimi – and members, but according to the Maoist and Albanian army practice, no ranks. Moreover, Kosovo

was divided into Operational Zones, with the assignment of a commander in each one. The base unit was the 'brigade'.

Following the crackdown of the Serbian forces in Kosovo militias started forming up in the villages. They called themselves as 'KLA' but in fact did not have any relation to the LPK or to the organization and the structure of the real KLA. Many of the militia members were even supporting Rugova, because he was the 'legitimate' leader and commanded respect, but were tired of his policy of passive resistance. The KLA could not cope with this sudden influx of people supporting the armed movement, and was not able to control the people in military, let alone in ideological terms. As a result, most of the KLA's organizational plans did not materialize. The fluid situation allowed 'official' KLA commanders to undertake their own initiatives. According to R. Haradinaj, commander of 'Operational Zone 3', 'There was little command and coordination among the brigades. The smartest guy would say: 'you go here, you go there', and I would know about it days later' (Quoted by Perritt 2008: 83, 84). Haradinaj himself has been mentioned on multiple cases as acting at his own initiative (Pettifer 2013: 154).

By the start of the summer 1998 the KLA produced a spokesperson, Jakup Krasniqi. He publically clarified the organization's goals, which were 'the creation of a Kosovan state within its ethnic boundaries and a free democratic order looking towards the West, like the other nations of Europe' (Quoted by Judah 2000: 158, 159). Naturally, this public statement diverted from the symbols and ideas, which until August 1998, as we shall see, were characterized by Enverist principles, using only the 'nationalist card'. In light of the circumstances, it was an attempt to gain legitimacy from the popular movement and appeal to Western governments.

In mid-summer 1998 the KLA launched its summer offensive in an attempt to create 'liberated zones' in the countryside and around towns. This was an attempt to implement the Maoist doctrine but also to bring the decentralized movement together as a 'propaganda by deed' (Pettifer 2013: 173). By mid-summer, the KLA was in control of key roads and most of the countryside in Kosovo, filling the 'vacuums left by weak or non-existent Serbian authority' (Judah 2000: 169). The 'opening up' of the KLA on the ground would prove to be a failed tactical choice, but it established the presence of the organization as the main force in the conflict. American and British diplomats touring the field sought contact with the leadership of the KLA, and this happened for the first time on the 29<sup>th</sup> of July (Judah 2000: 170). As an envoy of the State Department, Chris Hill had drafted

plans on the solution of the conflict and wanted to know of the aims of the KLA. The early contacts did not, however, produce a concrete result. Meanwhile, the Serbian regime responded by bringing in regular Army Units, which quickly overturned the situation. Lacking heavy weapons and military organization, the KLA soon lost all of the territory it controlled and retreated to the mountainous borders with Albania. The images of ravaged countryside and murdered civilians appeared on the international headlines; in October 13<sup>th</sup> and under threat of NATO bombing the Serbian government was coerced into declaring a ceasefire in Kosovo, known as the ‘Milošević – Holbrooke agreement’.

The events of the summer of 1998 marked the only ‘official’ operation by the KLA, and they were met with failure. The organization’s leadership responded by political means. This started by an attempt to win legitimacy in favor of the KLA, something which was attempted by placing a charismatic figure at the head of the organization. This was Adem Demaci, the former Enverist novelist and political activist who was imprisoned for a long time by the Serbian regime. Demaci had been a well-known figure of the Kosovar movement and his actions had won him the Sakharov prize in 1990. By the August 1998 he had abandoned the hardcore Marxist-Leninist beliefs in favor of a nationalist-populist ideology. Demaci would serve as the main political representative of the KLA in the months to come. Furthermore, the leadership of the organization established contact with American representatives in Geneva. In these, the leadership of the KLA grasped the chance of establishing the support of the United States government for their goals. In order to get this support, the KLA members presented a favorable image of their aims. As one of the representatives said, ‘I told them firmly, The KLA want a democratic Kosovo. Arguments about being left-wing or right-wing don’t matter when villages in Kosovo are being bombed or shelled’ (Interview with Bardhyl Mahmuti in ‘Fall of Milošević’ 42.29). The answer was that the Americans would ‘impose constitutional changes on Milošević which would bring independence to Kosovo in 3 to 5 years’ (Ibid: 42.57). After the meeting, the KLA set out to become more appealing to the West. The leading member of the KLA Xhavit Haliti remarks: ‘I urged the General Headquarters to remove anything identifying them with Communism, like the photos of Communist Leaders. I said they should shave off their beards and stop using the salute with the fist. I said they should salute with the flat hand – like the Americans’ (Interview with Xhavit Haliti in ‘Fall of Milošević’ 43.20).

These decisions were undertaken by a part of the leadership which was fundamental for the establishment of the KLA, namely the four people of the ‘Sector of Special Importance’. It is unclear whether the organization of the LPK still maintained the Sectors at this point, and whether the Presidency or the General Council had any role in the formulation of political decisions. Decentralization along with the personal initiatives of commanders in the field made the central decision-making process complicated and in fact impossible. Furthermore, by 1998 the LPK had become a supportive organization to the KLA General Staff. To claim legitimacy in the domestic and international field some members of the KLA leadership had agreed that the rhetoric had to be modified. For all these reasons by the end of 1998 the KLA established a ‘Political Directorate’, headed by Hashim Thaçi. Key members of the LPK were sidelined from the representation of the movement and disagreements erupted among the leadership, which resigned (BotaPress 2016, Interview with Muhamet Kelmendi). Nevertheless, the Political Directorate became the main representative organ of the KLA.

The ‘Milošević – Holbrooke’ agreement allowed the KLA to reemerge in Kosovo. However, the movement did not recognize the ceasefire, instead declaring its own ‘unilateral’ end of hostilities. Thus, the conflict started again following the same pattern as at its beginnings: ‘provocation killings’ from the KLA of Serbian soldiers and policemen and brutal retaliations from the Serbian security forces on civilians. The KLA exploited this pattern again. In the words of a commander, ‘We did not have the firepower to carry out any major actions. But it was easy to provoke the Serbs. We did it by just using snipers. Our aim was to get NATO to intervene as soon as possible.’ (Interview with Remi Mustafa in ‘Fall of Milošević’, 56.46). In an incident, the international mission assigned with the task of monitoring the Milošević – Holbrooke agreement entered a village finding dozens of dead civilians. The Račak massacre – as it became known - gained major publicity and prompted the conflict to become a prime subject in the United States, France, Germany, Britain and Russia. In a NATO initiative, representatives of the Kosovo-Albanians and the Serbian government were called in February 1999 in the castle of Rambouillet, Paris, for negotiations.

The Kosovar representation consisted of all the political forces in Kosovo at the time. Seven KLA members were present, including Hashim Thaçi, Xhavit Haliti - the ‘Political Directorate’ - and spokesperson Jakup Krasniqi. The members could count on some representatives from smaller,

moderate parties who did not command enough popular support such as the Parliamentary Party which was headed by the journalist Vetton Surroi. On the opposite side was the representation of the LDK led by Ibrahim Rugova himself. At the time, the KLA and the LDK were at odds, because of the latter's modest attempt to build up a military force in late 1998. However the FARK, as it was called (Forcat e Armatosura të Republikës së Kosovës – Armed forces of the republic of Kosovo) did not achieve any level of popular participation and support. This was also due to the sabotaging activities of the KLA, which assassinated FARK's 'Chief of Staff', Ahmet Krasniqi, in 1998.

Both the Serbian and the Albanian delegation were presented with a series of documents drafted by NATO. The documents mentioned that NATO would be able to enter all of Yugoslavia, making use of Serbian military facilities, which prompted the Serbian delegation to show a negative stance from the start of negotiations. Initially, there was no mention of independence - the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia would be maintained, although Kosovo would be given increased autonomy. Upon learning the content of the documents the KLA disagreements instantly erupted among the KLA leadership. The key members who stayed in Kosovo started applying pressure to the delegation in Rambouillet to refuse, since their main aim was independence. The pressure was applied mainly to Hashim Thaçi, who was the informal head of the KLA delegation and commanded sympathy from Madeleine Albright<sup>11</sup>. There was, naturally, no mention of socialist ideology, and it was clear that the U.S. officials could work with Thaçi, but he had to overcome the pressures at home. The leadership of the LDK with Rugova at their head expressed their full approval of the document. The KLA was caught between a rock and a hard place: if the agreement would be concluded, their presence in the parliament-to-be would be minor compared to the popularity of Rugova's LDK. Furthermore, NATO had made it clear that upon failure in the political process military intervention would ensue.

In late February there was a pause in negotiations. The Political Directorate of the KLA returned to Kosovo, with the aim of dealing with the renegade leadership, which pushed for independence as the only solution. Adem Demaci, who was the most vocal supporter of direct independence, was sacked from his post as political representative. Furthermore, the Chief of the General Staff

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<sup>11</sup> 'He presented his perspective of democracy and multiethnic cultures, seemed to be wise beyond his years, acted like a leader, looks like a leader, he's very tall, handsome young man, quite urban-looking' (Interview with Madeleine Albright in 'Fall of Milošević', 1.12.18).

Suleiman Selimi was also dismissed from his post, as he had close relations with Demaci. In his turn Agim Ceku, a Kosovo Albanian General who served as one of the heads of the Croatian Army during the successful last year of the War, was put in charge. Although he had no relations with the KLA leadership before, Ceku had important contacts inside NATO. In March, the delegations convened again in Paris. The representatives of the Serbian government refused to sign the document, while the Albanian delegation agreed to it in unanimity.

In the ensuing months NATO bombed Yugoslavia, the government of Slobodan Milošević capitulated, and a provisional government was set up in Kosovo under the auspices of the United Nations and NATO. The KLA was officially disbanded after the war. In June 1999 the LPK held a meeting, in which the formation of new political parties was discussed. Most of its members went on to disperse among the political spectrum, with the members of the 'Sector of Special Importance' ending up as the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK). The party initially presented itself as social democratic, but in 2000 adapted itself to a neoliberal discourse and image. Nevertheless, some leading members of the LPK, sidelined in the negotiations, carried on in a more social democratic tradition, eventually forming the party Vetëvendosje, which retains the social democratic image and ideas, calling for the industrialization of the country and the nationalization of all key enterprises in Kosovo.

### **Analysis**

Following the case study, this chapter aims to identify the dynamics that literature deems responsible for the loss and gain of cohesion in the historical concept. A causal relation between the dynamics and cohesion will then be established, enabling the testing of the current theories on cohesion in the case study. The brief history of the KLA discussed above has been divided in three periods according to major changes in the distribution of power, such as the transformations of the organization's structures after the 4<sup>th</sup> Assembly of 1993 or the start of the Serbian counterinsurgency in 1998. Consequently, the analysis will apply the concepts and test the theories for each period. However, the causal link will be maintained throughout the three periods, since they are interconnected with regard to changes in cohesion.

During the period from 1982 to 1993, the organization that would become the KLA established its social and institutional bases. The LPRK originated in the Enverist student groups of Pristina University and recruited members from the Albanian Diaspora in Switzerland. The group did not

enjoy large popular support at that time, as the number of members – 8 – at the first 1987 party meeting shows. The members could not look to a promise of immediate rewards, since economic support was limited and they had to keep daily jobs. The fact that they stayed in the organization until its dissolution shows that they held a high commitment to its aims. This evidence seems to validate Weinstein's theory that organizations without immediate access to financial means attract 'investors', individuals with high commitment (Weinstein 2007: 96-98). According to the accessible evidence, the positions within the organization were institutionally distributed through the assembly, and its meetings were scheduled to happen every year. Therefore, the outlook of the group at this period corresponds to what Staniland calls 'vanguard', with strong ties between the leaders but weak support from the population to which the group is appealing (Staniland 2014: 20). Furthermore, the organization held robust ideological and structural forms, derived from the Marxist-Leninist ideology. It is possible to hypothesize that the organization followed the methods of conform and control of the Communist Parties, notably democratic centralization at this period, since it is mentioned in 1996, a stage when the organization had moved away from its ideological roots. Consequently, it exhibited a high degree of institutionalization, which was binding to all the members of the group (Bakke, Cunningham & Seymour 2012: 269). However, during this period it is difficult to identify any major changes in the distribution of power. The group was still at a pre-war phase and outside a situation of conflict. Moreover, no major disagreements among the leadership members are mentioned in the sources. In sum, it is arguable that during the first period of its existence the LPRK was a cohesive organization, with a consistent social base and strong institutional structures.

The second period in the history of the KLA is marked by the decision to adopt the armed struggle as the means by which the goals of the organization would be achieved. This decision would bring about a significant change in the distribution of power inside the group, because of the organizational restructuring of the group and the establishment of the Homeland Calling Fund. In particular, the formation of the three Sectors, each with autonomy of action, presented clear dividing lines to the duties of the members of the organization. Although autonomy for the Sectors would mean a more versatile organization with the ability to adapt to conflict circumstances, it also meant that there would be less control for the actions of the Sectors (Weinstein 2007: 132). This ruptured the strong institutional ties that existed during the first period of the organization by reducing the extent of the institutional structures to the members (Bakke, Cunningham & Seymour

2012: 269). However, the Sector of Special Importance gained the most from the in-group distribution of power because it was able to control the financial resources of the organization, namely the Homeland Calling Fund. In turn, the establishment of the Fund influenced the institutionalization of the group, because the Enverist ideology had to be modified for the organization to appeal to the American-Albanian Diaspora. However, although the group's financial abilities increased during this period, it was still unable to effectively socialize its ideas to gather popular support in Kosovo. This is evident from the fact that the organization resorted to terrorist actions, in which some of its leading members directly participated. Still, the small nucleus of leaders remained consistent until 1999, which makes Weinstein's theory about financially strong organizations attracting recruits with low commitment not applicable for this case (Weinstein 2007: 96-98). Consequently, during these period institutional changes brought about a change in the distribution of power within the organization, which weakened the institutional ties between the members. The fact that disagreements erupted on how to proceed with the insurgency<sup>12</sup> shows that the organization had lost some of its cohesion during this period, something that would be more visible in 1998-1999.

What I have designated as a third period in the history of the KLA started with a significant increase in the popular support for the organization. The influx of support came because of the extreme counterinsurgency tactics employed by the Serbian government, which included the burning of villages and the killing of civilians (Pettifer 2013, Perritt 2010). Furthermore, the organization gained publicity because one of its leaders was killed in a particular incident – a 'siege' of his house by the Serbian army and police<sup>13</sup>. In this case, counterinsurgency and the loss of a leader turned to be beneficial for the KLA, which grew in size and did lose its cohesion. The argument of Staniland about counterinsurgency campaigns undermining the vertical ties between an organization and its base of support seems to be inverted at this case (Staniland 2014: 40). Moreover, the leader that was killed did not hamper the function of the group, since he was a member of the General Assembly (LPK Historiku 2003) but he did not exercise a vital function and did not belong to any of the Sectors. In this case, the arguments that the loss of a leader can cause the collapse of a group does not seem applicable (Tamm 2016, Freeman 2010).

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<sup>12</sup> See page 24.

<sup>13</sup> Jashari is effectively 'martyrized' in Kosovo, with images of him adorning government buildings and a sizeable memorial at the place where his killing happened.

With the influx of people joining the ranks of the KLA, the organization proceeded for its summer 1998 offensive. Essentially, it consisted of filling up the territorial vacuums that were left by the presence of the Serbian authorities in Kosovo. The offensive and its outcome seem to validate the case of ‘mismanaged expansion’ of a group, as argued by Staniland (Staniland 2014: 41). Although the organization benefitted from broad territorial control and social resources, it was not able to impose its control on the territories and homogenize its base. In most cases, the new recruits consisted of village militias which did sometimes even support Rugova and the LDK, while calling themselves the ‘KLA’. It would be difficult for the organization, which thought of insurgency in Maoist concepts and held no ranks, to politically and military train the population. As a result, there was minimal coordination between the various insurgent teams on the ground, while regional commanders resorted to taking personal initiatives, such as the case of Haradinaj<sup>14</sup>. In this case, Weinstein’s argument about the importance of politically and military training for ensuring discipline and cohesion seems to be applicable (Weinstein 2007: 134). Because of fragmentation on the ground and the fact that the KLA did not have any heavy weapons to counter the Serbian tanks and artillery, the gains of the Summer Offensive were quickly reversed. However, the operation gave the KLA enough publicity so as to start contacts for the first time with British and American diplomats, and in this case precipitated the sponsoring of the group from NATO.

Eventually, the KLA managed to achieve autonomy and independence for Kosovo because of NATO intervention. However, the organization had to institutionally adapt to the demands of its western negotiators. The changes included the abandoning of Communist rhetoric, symbols and military practices. The LPK, which was originally associated with Communism, was sidelined in favor of the KLA members which headed the talks with United States representatives, such as Xhavit Haliti and Hashim Thaçi. The new institutional shift was confirmed by the creation of the Political Directorate of the KLA. This chain of events provides a case for the theory of Cunningham that the cohesion of a group might be negatively influenced by the agenda of a sponsoring state (Cunningham 2010: 118). Furthermore, it shows that states which favor particular leaders within a group might cause a shift in the balance of power within the group (Tamm 2016: 600), since the members of the Sector of the Special Importance gained legitimacy from NATO in place of the other LPK members. The agenda of NATO caused more problems for the cohesion of the KLA in

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<sup>14</sup> See page 26.

the Rambouillet conference. Although the provisions of the Rambouillet agreement would give the KLA with a central role in the politics of post-war Kosovo, its members initially rejected it because it ruled out independence. It was only after the forced resignation of some leading members, including the General Staff, that the agreement was accepted by the KLA delegation, giving a reason for NATO to start its military campaign in Yugoslavia. The eruption of disagreements inside the KLA during the Rambouillet conference runs contrary to the argument that insurgent leaders make rational choices regarding the distribution of power (Weinstein 2007, Krause 2014). At the time, the ‘rational choice’ would be to adhere to the document drafted by NATO, since it was guaranteed by the U.S., the U.K. and France, and provided for a leading role for the KLA in postwar Kosovo. This choice was made by some members of the organization, but others – including leading members – decided to opt out of an agreement that would have potentially only positive results for the group. In this case, the argument of Crenshaw about ideological disagreements on the terms of a proposed peace agreement is rather applicable (Crenshaw 1987: 15).

## **Conclusion**

The study of cohesion in insurgent movements and organizations can illuminate important aspects of civil conflict, such as its duration (Cunningham 2010) or the viability of its negotiated outcome (Plank 2017). However, there has been considerable academic debate on the conceptualization of cohesion. Although it is difficult to find a clear definition of the term, in this paper I have argued that cohesion can be traced ex post, through patterns of insurgent behavior. Agreeing with the vast majority of scholars, I present cohesion as an outcome of social, economic, and institutional dynamics, as well as changes in the distribution of power. I have tested this theoretical framework in the case of the Kosovo Liberation Army, which presents a good case, as it underwent various phases of pre-conflict and conflict activity. From the beginnings of the organization until the end of the conflict I have been able to show how the dynamics interact with each other, in a way that is difficult to discern only one cause for a given outcome. For example, the KLA evolved as a de facto independent organization from the LPK because it dropped the original socialist ideology, because it originated from a subgroup – the Sector of Special Importance – which had been given more power than the other Sectors by institutional means, but also because it gained recognition and legitimacy from NATO. Consequently, this paper stresses out that the examination of cohesion should be carried out in a careful manner, taking into consideration both the social, economic and institutional causes, as well as the changes in the distribution of power among actors. Agreeing

with Staniland (2014), this paper also shows that pre-war aspects of rebellion, such as the social bases of an organization or its institutions, can have important influence on its wartime cohesion. Unfortunately, not all studies are taking into consideration the multitude of causes that account for the presence of cohesion in a group, especially in the case of N-studies and correlations. This study argues that examining whether one cause will change the cohesion of an organization or movement risks to ignore the special characteristics of - or dynamics that make up - that organization. However, these might be decisive for the outcome of the entire conflict.

## Appendix

### Cohesion in the KLA: A summarizing table

	<b>First Period</b>	<b>Second Period</b>	<b>Third Period</b>
<b>Social Base</b>	Small (Students, Workers, Diaspora)	Small (Students, Workers, Diaspora)	Wide (popular support all over Kosovo)
<b>Economic Incentives</b>	Scarce (Financial Support from Diaspora in Switzerland and the Albanian government), attraction of 'investor' members	Increasing (Channeling of financial means through the Homeland Calling Fund) however still attracting 'investor' members	Abundant (Support from multiple countries in the Diaspora through the Homeland Calling Fund), however attraction of recruits due to popular grievance
<b>Institutionalization</b>	Strong (Marxist-Leninist Ideas, clear delineation of duties)	Eroding (decentralization of the political structure, gradual ideological changes)	Weak (Delegation of powers at the Sector of Special Importance Members, weak control of the structures over individuals and groups)
<b>Changes in the Distribution of Power</b>			
<b>Training</b>	No popular support and scarce new recruits	No popular support and scarce new recruits	Little or no training for the village militias and the new casual recruits
<b>Alliances</b>	No alliances	No alliances	No alliances; Coexistence with Rugova's PDK and fight for legitimacy
<b>Expansion</b>	No expansion (work in the Diaspora)	No expansion (work in the Diaspora)	Rapid expansion with a quick loss of territory
<b>Battlefield Performance</b>	No battlefield performance	No battlefield performance	Summer offensive - failure (quickly reversed by the Serbian security forces)
<b>Counterinsurgency</b>	No presence in Kosovo	No presence in Kosovo	Strong Counterinsurgency
<b>Sponsoring from third parties</b>	Weak (support from the Albanian state)	Weak (support from the Albanian state)	Support from the United States, the U.K. and NATO
<b>Peace Negotiations</b>	No international interest in Kosovo	No international interest in Kosovo	Rambouillet Conference, central to the KLA political aims and decisive for Kosovo
<b>Results regarding Cohesion</b>	Coherent Organization	Coherence starts to unravel as initiatives are undertaken by the Sector of Special Importance	Members of the Sector of Special Importance taking control; Disagreements among members, resignations from parts of the leadership

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