

**The fragmentation of rebel factionalization theory:
Building a new framework to combine existing theories**

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Introduction

The importance of factionalization

Since 1989, 44% of all rebel groups engaged in warfare have had segments of the group break away.¹ The splintering of rebel groups can have a significant impact on the process and outcome of a conflict. It can change the outcome of a given conflict, destabilise an existing equilibrium and create problems for peace negotiations by the emergence of spoiler groups.²

Since splintering can have a significant impact it is important to ask the question; why do rebel groups splinter? Despite the potential impact of rebel group splintering, the dynamics at play remain unclear and have not been the subject of extensive academic research.³ Luckily, we are not completely bereft of literature on the topic of rebel splintering.

In the existing academic literature, the focus has been on investigating individual aspects that influence the splintering of rebel groups. As a result of this focus, we have competing theories, each looking at one aspect which influences rebel splintering. This means that we have theories explaining why a rebel faction might wish to secede from the main rebel group and we have theories that provide explanations for why the leadership of the main rebel group might not be able to stop secession, but there is no overarching idea that combines the insights of these different theories and places them in a proper context. It is the goal of this thesis to combine the existing theories into a framework from which we can better understand rebel factionalization.⁴

To achieve our goal, we will first cover the existing theories in our literature review. Specifically, we will focus at understanding which aspects of factionalization the different theories can explain. After this, a framework will be presented in which we can place the existing theories which allows us to move beyond the focus on individual aspects of the existing literature.

The next step will be to decide upon the methods that will be used for this research. Here we will discuss why a qualitative comparative case-study analysis was selected as the method of analysis

¹ Olivier J. Walther and Patrick Steen Pedersen, 'Rebel Fragmentation in Syria's Civil War,' *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 31 no. 3 (2020) 445-474, 445-446

² Peter Rudloff and Micheal G. Findley, 'The Downstream Effects of Combatant Fragmentation on Civil War Recurrence,' *Journal of Peace Research* 53 no. 1 (2016) 19-32, 20-23

³ Christopher Blattman and Edward Miguel, *Civil War*, (UC Berkely, 2009) 18-21

⁴ With factionalization we mean the process of a faction within a rebel group breaking away from the central group to establish a new rebel group after breaking away. For a more in-depth definition see Micheal H. Woldemariam, *Why Rebels Collide: Factionalism and Fragmentation in African Insurgencies*. (PhD dissertation: Princeton University, 2011) 35

together with an expansion on the case-study selection criteria. I will also touch upon how the case-studies will be analysed in the typology.

The main part of this thesis will be devoted to the case-studies. Each case-study will be discussed both individually and in relation to the other case-studies. Ultimately, the case-studies must show that a.) the current academic literature fails short, and b.) that the structure that we build is the most suitable method for gaining better insight into factionalization.

In the conclusion, we will reflect back on our starting point and the research process before presenting the findings of the thesis. A short discussion of possible further research will also be placed in the conclusion.

Literature Review

The current literature on the factionalization of rebel groups is marked by lack of engagement between the different theories with each theory focusing on a different aspect that influences factionalization. For instance, the theories that seek to understand what it is that motivates a splinter to secede, do not engage with the theories that seek to explain why a rebel group might be able to prevent factionalization within its own ranks.

This lack of engagement between the different focuses does not prevent strong debates from emerging. However, these debates happen within the specific focuses. This lack of engagement between the different focuses will become clear throughout the literature review.

We can identify three main focuses in the literature. The first focus is centred on what ultimately motivates splinter groups, whether it is ideology or personal gains. The second focus looks at what sets off secession, what it is that leads to a splinter seceding at the moment that it does. The third and final focus seeks to explain why certain rebel groups are more susceptible to factionalization than others.

We will first discuss motivation for secession, after that we will move to what sets secession off, and finally we will close off by looking at the theories concerning susceptibility. This order comes from several key aspects of rebel factionalization being best introduced within the theories concerned with what ultimately motivates a splinter to secede.

Establishing motivation for factionalization

The debate on what motivates splinter groups can be regarded as one of the different versions of the debate on greed versus grievance in IR theory.⁵ The greed school of thought holds that we have to look at material gains and losses for understanding why rebel groups fragment. The grievance school focuses on explaining rebel factionalization by looking at ideological factors.

The basic premise of greed theory is that elites behave in a calculated fashion in order to maximise their own gains without being motivated by ideology, identity or religion. This means that factions with ideologically opposing goals might cooperate with one another in order to maximise their own gains.⁶ Simply put, ideology is not important when it comes to the formation of alliances and cooperation within rebel groups. Factional elites might use ideology as a tool for increasing their own gains, but they are not motivated by ideology.⁷

The greed theory holds that secession within a rebel group occurs through a similar process in which factional elites attempt to maximise gains and minimise losses. If a rebel group is perceived as incapable of serving the material interests of the factional elites, the factional elites will see no advantage in further participation within the rebel group.⁸

Certain factors, such as external support and relative strength of forces, influence the attractiveness of breaking away. If a faction can rely on receiving external support after breaking away, the attractiveness of secession increases due to increased gains and a decreased risk. The relative strength of forces decides how likely it is that a splinter group can survive after secession. After all, if there are strong enemy forces which by their presence decrease the chances of survival, the prospect of secession becomes less attractive.⁹

Problematic with greed motivation is the way in which ideology and factional elites are detached from one another. Factional elites feel no allegiance to ideology which raises the question why they are part of a faction in the first place and do elites lose all ideological bearing before becoming part of the elite or was there no ideological bearing to begin with.

The second type of motivation theory on factionalization is grievance motivation. Grievance theory focuses on ideology and sees past grievances as important factors in deciding whether or not someone takes up arms. Cooperation between different rebel groups or factions within one rebel

⁵ David Keen, 'Greed and Grievance in Civil War,' *International Affairs* 88 no. 4 (2012) 757-777, 757-759

⁶ Fotini Christia, *The Closest of Enemies: Alliance Formation in the Afghan and Bosnian Civil Wars*, 2008, 254-255

⁷ *ibid*, 254-255

⁸ Michael H. Woldemariam, 'Battlefield Outcomes and Rebel Cohesion: Lessons from the Eritrean Independence War,' *Terrorism and Political Violence* 28 no. 1 (2016) 135-156, 137-138

⁹ Woldemariam, *Why Rebels Collide* 69

group depends on the ideological closeness between the different factions and groups. This would also mean that secession occurs as a result from ideological disagreement between factions.¹⁰

At first glance it seems that there is a strong contrast between grievance and greed-based theories. However, just as in greed theory, factions in grievance theory are competing with one another. The difference between the two theories is that in greed theory factions compete for material gains while in grievance theory factions compete for ideological supremacy.

An important similarity between grievance and greed theory is the acceptance of ideology as a means for increasing a groups' or factions' power. Ideology plays a large role in the recruitment of members for most rebel groups. Through rhetoric and the adoption of popular ideological positions a rebel group can attempt to strengthen its own position.¹¹ In a similar vein, factions can use ideology as a means through which the own position can be strengthened within the rebel group.¹²

With ideology being both the purpose and the tool of the competition between factions, we do have to wonder how strong the ideological conviction of factional leaders is and to what extent it is decisive in leading to factionalization.

For instance, a large discrepancy in the availability of resources between different ideological factions within a rebel group has been proven to lead to an increase in ideological tensions. Factions will clash in an attempt to pull more resources to their respective sides despite ideological differences remaining the same.¹³

Ultimately, even in grievance-based theory, factions seem to behave according to behave in a calculated faction intended to strengthen a factions' own position. The only difference between greed and grievance theory is for what purpose the factional elites seek to strengthen their respective factions' position.

Grievance theory suffers from one major weakness when compared to greed theory. Grievance theory cannot easily explain regional commanders seceding without an ideological conflict between the regional commander and the central leadership. This despite the secession of regional commanders frequently occurring without an ideological cause.

¹⁰ Namrata Panwar, 'From Nationalism to Factionalism: Faultlines in the Naga Insurgency' *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 28 no. 1 (2017) 233-258, 235-243

¹¹ Michael Gabbay and Ashley Thirkill-Mackelprang, 'A Quantitative Analysis of Insurgent Frames, Claims, and Networks in Iraq,' *Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association*. Seattle (2011) 2-9

¹² Mohammed M. Hafez, 'Fratricidal Rebels: Ideological Extremity and Warring Factionalism in Civil Wars' *Terrorism and Political Violence* (2017) 2-5

¹³ Ethan Bueno de Mesquita, 'The Factionalization of Terror Groups,' in *Guns and Butter: The Economic Causes and Consequences of Conflict* ed. Gregory D. Hess (MIT Press, London 2009) 175-176

The emergence of rebel groups in Africa that disregard ideology in favour of pursuing wealth, also weakens the notion of ideological-based motivation. If rebel groups can function for years while lacking an ideology, then how can ideology be one of the most important factors in maintaining or destroying rebel cohesion.¹⁴

Ultimately, we can say that the greed and grievance theories see the secession of a faction as a decision made by the factional elite to increase the power of the elite. Similar mechanisms are embraced with both theories looking at internal competition within rebel groups as the reason for a splintering of a rebel group. If a faction believes it stands to profit more or have a higher chance of meeting ideological goals, the faction will break away.

However, this logic is not developed any further. We are made aware of the existence of a calculation that factional elites make before deciding to secede, but we do not receive any information on what this calculation looks like.

Setting off secession

The greed and grievance theories focus on understanding what motivates factions to secede. The setting off theories focus on analysing the factors which cause fragmentation to begin. For this, each setting off-theory looks at a different factor which is also declared as the single most important factor in determining whether or not secession takes place. For this paper, we will look at the two most important setting off theories, namely battlefield results and peace negotiations.

Through either battlefield losses or gains, the internal balance of power within a rebel group is disturbed. This leads to one faction either becoming powerful enough to set off on its own or one faction feels that it is becoming marginalized and thus deciding that it ought to secede to prevent becoming irrelevant.¹⁵

Peace negotiations work through a similar process. A faction might perceive their own interests as being hurt by agreeing to peace or is afraid that they will become marginalized once peace has been established. Consequentially, this faction might break away and become a dreaded spoiler.¹⁶

The setting off theories are an excellent supplement to the motivation theories. They even provide us with a similar train of thought on factional power as the motivation theories. However, the focus on one event as a single most important determinant limits these theories. Cases can easily be

¹⁴Jeffrey Gettleman, 'Africa's Forever Wars,' *Foreign Policy* 178 (2010) 73-75

¹⁵ Woldemariam, *Why Rebels Collide*, 69

¹⁶ *ibid*, 69

found where factionalization sets in without battlefield results or peace negotiations taking place. One such case is the FARC during the 1980's, a case that features in this paper.

Preventing secession

The third type of theories focus on understanding what can make a rebel group more susceptible to secession. For this, these theories look at structural factors such as intra-unit cohesion, geography, and centralization/decentralization of a rebel group. These factors inhibit factionalism through either raising or lowering the hurdles that a splinter needs to overcome to successfully secede.

Take geography for instance. A difficult geography can limit the ability of a rebels' group central leadership to oversee the developments in an isolated region of the rebel group. Consequentially, the central leadership might struggle to prevent the rebel leadership of this isolated region from seceding from the rebel group and setting up a new rebel group.¹⁷

The intra-unit cohesion theory follows a similar logic. Greater intra-unit cohesion increases the ability of a commander to defy the central leaderships' decisions and break away from the rebel group with his unit following him.¹⁸

Centralization/decentralization of a rebel group affects the extent to which a faction within the rebel group is dependent upon the rebels' group organization and involved with the decision-making process of the organisation. For instance, a faction that is heavily dependent on the central organization for its funding cannot easily break away. There is no financial structure in place for raising after secession. This stands in contrast with a decentralized organisation in which a faction is more likely to have its own sources of revenue. At the same time, a strongly decentralized organisation might allow a faction more of a say in the decision- making process thus lowering the motivation for secession.¹⁹

When it comes to structural factors, some scholars claim that structural factors have not received widespread attention while these factors are of great importance in deciding whether or not

¹⁷ Patrick Johnston, 'The Geography of Insurgent Organization and its Consequences for Civil Wars: Evidence from Liberia and Sierra Leone,' *Security Studies* 17 no. 1 (2008) 107-137, 109-112

¹⁸ Robert U. Nagel and Austin C. Doctor, 'Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and Rebel Group Fragmentation,' *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 20 no. 10 (2020) 1-28, 1-2

¹⁹ Woldemariam, *Why Rebels Collide*, 69

factionalism will occur.²⁰ During the research for this thesis, it did seem that the other two types of theories have received more attention.

²⁰Scott Gates, 'Recruitment and Allegiance: The Microfoundations of Rebellion,' *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46 no. 1 (2002) 111-130, 111

Building a framework

In the literature review we saw how the different types of theories can provide possible explanations for factionalization. However, our understanding of factionalization remains hampered. In the theories, little to no attention is paid to how the different theories can be connected with each other. Each theory seeks to explain factionalization purely through its own focus point. However, the existing theories do not have to exclude each other. As a matter of fact, they are perfectly supplementary.

What we will do is construct a framework which will allow us to use the existing theories in unison. We will be able to move beyond the narrow focuses of the existing theories and thus gain a deeper and broader understanding of rebel factionalization.

The framework that we will use is based upon the theory of Kricheli et al.²¹ The theory of Kricheli et al allows us to use the calculation-based motivation found in greed and grievance theory and flesh it out with the other types of theory. At its core, this will present calculation-based motivation as the determinant of whether or not factionalization takes place with the different theories identifying the variables that influence the occurrence of factionalization.

The theory of Kricheli et al is a political science theory which seeks to understand what is needed for people to take to the streets and protest in an authoritarian regime. There are significant risks to protesting in an authoritarian regime, yet protests do occasionally occur. Kricheli et al try to explain this by creating a calculation-based framework. On the one hand are factors that motivate people to protest, such as food shortages or unemployment. On the other hand, there are factors that increase the risks associated with protesting, such as police crackdowns or prison sentences. People start to protest once they perceive the potential gains of protesting outweighing the risks associated with protesting.²² For instance, a person that is starving due to food shortages can hope to gain a lot for protesting while the risks that come with protesting are mild when compared to starving to death.

By using this framework, we are able to contrast the factors that increase the desire for secession with the factors that increase the risks of secession. If the motivation for secession outweighs the risks associated with secession, secession will occur. Naturally, if the risks outweigh the benefits, secession will not occur.

²¹ Ruth Kricheli, Yair Livne, and Beatriz Magaloni, 'Taking to the Streets: Theory and Evidence on Protests under authoritarianism' *APSA 2010 Annual Meeting Paper* (2011) 7-10

²² *Ibid*, 7-10

Methodology

Research design

The existing theories which will be incorporated in our framework have already been proven several factors which play a role in factionalization. However, if we are to show that the theories can be used in unison, we need to look at the interaction between the variables identified by the different theories. Consequentially, we will need to compare multiple cases in which we can clearly track the influence that the different variables can have on factionalization. For this a comparative qualitative case-study analysis is the best method of research.

Case selection

The goal of this thesis is to understand why factionalization occurs. To understand why factionalization occurs we will have to look at cases where factionalization occurred as well as cases where factionalization did not occur despite the possibility of factionalization occurring. It is this second type of cases that will actually make up the majority of the cases which we will study. This because cases where factionalization did not occur have more changes in the relevant variables giving us a better look at the factors that influence factionalization.

The combination of cases in which factionalization occurred and cases where factionalization did not occur gives us a new angle. Existing theories have largely focused on cases where factionalization did occur which has left a large amount of potential insightful cases unresearched while also skewing research due to the only cases being investigated being cases where rebel groups splintered.

A second aspect for our case-study selection is the way that the leadership of a rebel group is organised. Leadership-style might influence the process of factionalization. Consequentially, we need a sub-division to see if there are different outcomes between the different types of leadership.

For the first three case-studies, the leadership is centred around a central committee without one leader clearly being in charge. The central committee makes the decision regarding the overall rebel group, but a large portion of autonomy is afforded to the regional commanders. For the second three case-studies, the leadership is centred around one person. This one person makes the decisions for the group.

To ensure a balanced perspective, both sets of leadership type have two case studies in which fragmentation did not occur and one case study where fragmentation did occur. A crucial note to

make at this point, is that we will not be comparing the effectiveness of the different styles of leadership with each other. We are trying to understand the interaction between different factors influencing factionalization, not bring down a verdict on effectiveness.

The case-studies that were selected for the central-committee type leadership are the FLN/ALN (Algeria) in 1955, the FARC (Colombia) during the 1980's, and the NPA (Philippines) around 1992. For the one-person leadership style, we are working with the NRA (Uganda) around the early 1980's, Hezbollah (Lebanon) in 1989, and the NPFL (Liberia) in the early 1990's.

All of the organisations existed for a longer period of time than the period that we are looking at. This narrowing down of the timeframe is a consequence of the availability of sources, the selected timeframe providing the best insight into fragmentation within the given organisations, and the limitations of a thesis project. By focusing on these timeframes, we will miss a couple of instances of fragmentation occurring within the organisations that we are investigating. To give an example, the FARC did fragment in the 2000's, but this period is less insightful than the period that we will be looking at.

An important note to make at this point concerns the number of case-studies. A qualitative comparative research necessarily means conducting several case-studies. I have decided to conduct six case-studies. Yet arguments can easily be made for either lowering or raising the number of case-studies.

If we were to lower the number of case-studies, we could do a more in-depth analysis of these case-studies. This might give us a closer look at all the different individual factors influencing factionalization. However, we are not trying to identify all the factors influencing factionalization. We are trying to understand the interaction between different factors with each factor having a different way of influencing the likelihood of factionalization occurring.

By raising the number of case-studies we would have more data which we could use for drawing comparisons. However, this would lower our ability to look closely at what is happening in each case-study. If we were to do these additional case-studies, we would have to either sacrifice in-depth research in the case-studies or run into issues with the confines of this thesis.

Typology

Throughout the thesis I will make use of two categories for identifying what sort of effect a factor might have upon the likelihood of factionalization occurring. This categorization is necessary to

operationalize the existing theories on rebel factionalization in an overarching framework.

A downside to this categorization is that some factors or actions are difficult to place within only one of the two categories. The division is a bit rudimentary with some factors fitting in both categories but in those cases more explanation will be provided.

The categories in which we will place the factors influencing factionalization are *motivating* and *disabling* factors. Motivating factors are the factors that influence the desire within a faction of the rebel group for secession. Disabling factors influence the chance of successful secession. These categories are based upon the existing theories and how they seek to explain the occurrence of rebel factionalization.

We will be concluding each case-study with a table in which the changes within the level of motivating and disabling factors are compared to each other. In these tables, the level of motivating and disabling factors will be given a value such as low, medium, or high. However, this value is highly subjective and not meant to be the focus point of this research. The values given to the factors are merely a tool used for clarification.

In the analysis section a similar table is used with numerical values instead of low, medium or high. Again, this is meant as a clarification, not as an attempt to quantify the exact value of the factors. By using numerical values, the calculation made by factions will be a lot clearer as opposed to sticking with values such as low, medium, or high.

Case studies: Leadership committees

The first three case studies share a similar leadership-style focused on a central decision-making committee. These groups do not rely on one single leader who decides the course of these rebel groups, instead a committee comprised of the most senior members directs the groups actions. Another similarity within the first three case-studies, was the type of fragmentation that threatened the groups. All three groups faced issues with regional commanders clamouring for greater autonomy or behaving largely autonomously. Of the three case-studies, two case-studies show the central leadership successfully dealing with the regionalist challengers. The final case-study shows the rebel group fragmenting.

FLN/ALN

The Algerian war of independence was fought between 1954 and 1962. On one side was France and on the other side the FLN with its military branch, the ALN. Due to the use of guerrilla and terror tactics by the FLN/ALN, the French government refused to call the Algerian war of independence a real war in an effort to delegitimize any claims made by the FLN/ALN in representing the Algerian populace.²³

The origins of the Algerian war of independence can be found in the colonization of Algeria in 1847. In 1847, France occupied Algeria after a brief war against local Algerian rule. Algeria was of strategic importance to France due to its closeness, the fertile coastal regions, and a large number of established European colonists.²⁴ The strategic importance of Algeria which had led to its colonization, also led to France refusing to leave its colony in the 1950's.

Throughout the war, the use of force by both sides escalated. France continued to send more troops into Algeria and even the use of torture was permitted. The FLN/ALN meanwhile increased the intensity of the violence it used against French troops and people loyal to France.²⁵ In this constant escalation of the conflict, France was successful in fighting the FLN/ALN, however due to the use of torture and other heavy-handed methods of suppression, France lost the support of the Algerian population and the Western international community.²⁶

Given the success of the FLN/ALN in winning the Algerian war of independence, it might be

²³Martin Alexander and J.F.V. Keiger, 'France and the Algerian War: Strategy, Operations, and Diplomacy,' *Journal of Strategic Studies* 25 no. 1 (2002) 1-32, 2-3

²⁴Lou DiMarco, 'Losing the Moral Compass: Torture and Guerre Revolutionnaire in the Algerian war,' *US Army War College Quarterly* 36 no. 2 (2006) 63-76, 65

²⁵Alexander and Keiger, 'France and the Algerian War,' 9-11

²⁶Ibid, 22-24

assumed that the FLN/ALN had little struggle within the own organization. However, the FLN/ALN did face several instances of internal unrest. Especially in the beginning of the Algerian independence war did factionalization roar its head.

In 1955 the political leadership of the FLN/ALN was in exile and outside of Algeria. Consequentially, the political leadership had few means of enforcing discipline among the regional commanders. The regional commanders were able to operate largely independently and go against party lines if they wished to.²⁷ Furthermore, the political leadership was riven with personal grudges between import political leaders.

With these issues, the FLN/ALN was in danger of being destroyed by two types of factional challenges, regional factionalism and personal factionalism.²⁸ However, the FLN/ALN leadership eventually managed to regain control and the threat of fragmentation subsided despite personal power politics continuing to take place.

In 1955 the central leadership was in no position to enforce its decisions among the regional commanders. To combat this, FLN-leadership loyalists were appointed to every region tasked with managing the funds of the FLN/ALN. By controlling the money that the regional commanders needed, the central leadership had a tool to enforce discipline among the regional commanders.²⁹

An incentive for working with the central leadership was also put in place. New power-sharing dynamics were created through which the regional commanders would have more influence in the FLN/ALN party lines. As a result, it became more attractive for regional commanders to follow party lines instead of operating on their own.³⁰

The issue of internal divisions within the leadership was resolved without internal actions from the FLN/ALN leadership. The old generation of leaders started to fall victim to French security forces or died off, thus creating space for a new generation of leaders which did not hold the personal grudges that the old generation had held.³¹

The factionalization threat from regional commanders and the subsequent response by the FLN/ALN central leadership showcases both motivating and disabling factors at work. By taking control over the finances of the regional forces, the central leadership was able to create a bigger

²⁷Alf A. Heggoy, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Algeria* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1972) 117-118

²⁸William B. Quandt, *Revolution and Political Leadership: Algeria 1954-1968* (Cambridge, The M.I.T. Press, 1969) 124

²⁹Heggoy, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Algeria*, 118-119

³⁰Quandt, *Revolution and Political Leadership*, 103

³¹Ibid, 124

dependence upon the central organisation from the regional commanders. Thus, if a regional commander was to secede from the central group, this regional commander would have to build a new financial structure and find new methods of acquiring the financial backing needed for maintaining a rebel group. Consequentially it became more difficult for regional commanders to set up their own group. A regional commander would have to be highly motivated before attempting to break away due to this new dependency. The risks and problems with breaking away had increased, making it less attractive.

At the same time, the central leadership allowed for more influence of regional commanders in the decision-making process. With this increased influence the motivation for breaking away from the central group for regional commanders decreased. The power that the regional commanders had was increased, and with this new influence regional commanders could ensure that their personal objectives would be met. Regardless of whether you view personal gains or ideology as the driver for motivating factors, giving the regional commanders more influence within the central organisation does ensure that they are more committed to the organisation than before.

	Likelihood of secession	Level of motivating factors	Level of disabling factors
<i>Situation prior to leadership action</i>	High	High	Low
<i>Situation after leadership action</i>	Low	Low	High

Table 1

In table 1 we can see how the situation looked prior the FLN/ALN leadership acting. The central leadership took an approach that addressed both motivating and disabling factors. By giving the regional commanders more influence within the FLN/ALN, the potential gains from secession decreased. This lowered the motivation for secession. At the same time, the FLN/ALN leadership took control over the financial flows that were needed for running a rebel group. By doing this, the FLN/ALN leadership raised the disabling factors and the difficulty of breaking away from the FLN/ALN increased.

The FLN/ALN case-study does not prove that a combination of motivating and disabling factors is needed to explain why secession occurred or did not occur. Someone who favours

motivating factors as deciding factors in explaining factionalization can claim that the threat of factionalism decreased solely through due to changes in the motivating factors while the same argument can be made by someone who looks exclusively at disabling factors.

We have been able to look at case in which there is a clear risk of secession and watching this risk disappear. While in this case we have not been able to prove that both motivating and disabling are needed, we have presented possible ways through which motivating and disabling factors can influence the likelihood of secession.

We have also showed how our framework places motivating and disabling factors next to each other. In our framework, motivating and disabling factors do not compete to provide a most likely explanation but instead work together. This combination allows us to understand why regional commanders did not attempt to secede and lost interest in secession.

FARC

The activity of the FARC as a rebel group dates back to 1964 when the first conflict related casualties between the FARC and the Colombian government were recorded. For a long time the FARC was regarded as the most entrenched rebel group within the Americas and it is only in recent years that the FARC has given up on the military struggle against the Colombian government even though several splinters continue to fight against the Colombian government.³²

The FARC was founded on Marxist-Leninist principles and claimed to fight on behalf of the Colombian poor. However, due to the participation of the FARC in drug trafficking, public support eroded. This participation in criminal activities caused numerous politicians and scholars to view the FARC as a criminal enterprise hiding behind a political message.³³

Overall, the FARC has been regarded as a well-organised rebel group with its strength based on the military discipline within its cadre. During the first years of the FARC, the FARC became known for protecting small scale farmers from the Colombian military and large-scale landowners. From 1965 until 1976, the FARC was able to expand the support it enjoyed among the poorer farmers which enabled the FARC to build an effective political base.³⁴

In 1974 the FARC was reorganised in an effort to increase overall efficiency and planning power. From that point on the FARC was commanded by a seven-member board called the Secretariat with a 25-member panel, the Estado Mayor Central (EMC) overseeing the regional blocs of the FARC. The regional blocs operated largely independent until reforms that were undertaken during the 80's.³⁵

It was at this point that the FARC was at its strongest. This lasted until the FARC command structure began to crumble due numerous FARC commanders being killed by Colombian security forces in the 2000's.³⁶

Before the reforms of the 1980's the FARC central leadership faced factionalization threats from numerous regional commanders, the so-called bloc commanders.³⁷ The 1980's reforms were

³²Vera Eccarius-Kelly, 'Surreptitious Lifelines: A Structural Analysis of the FARC and the PKK,' *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24 no. 2 (2012) 235-258, 236-237

³³Paul E. Saskiewicz, *The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia: People's Army (FARC-EP) Marxist-Leninist Insurgency or Criminal Enterprise*, (PhD diss., Naval Postgraduate School 2005), 9-11

³⁴Jenny Pearce, *Colombia: Inside the Labyrinth*, (Latin America Burea Limited, London, 1990) 166-167

³⁵Sean M. McCarthy, *Colombia's FARC: More than just Opportunistic Criminals*, (Air War College, 2013), 4-5

³⁶Eccarius-Kelly, 'Surreptitious Lifelines,' 250

³⁷Saskiewicz, *The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia*, 35-39

triggered in response to the growing independence of the different regional blocs and the increasing risk of splintering that came with this growing independence.

A large part of the problem that the FARC leadership faced from these highly independent bloc commanders was the financial inequality between the different commanders. The bloc commanders of some of the wealthier blocs lived a luxurious life while in other blocs FARC fighters were starving to death.³⁸ The central leadership was faced with the possibility of losing some of its wealthiest blocs to secession, leaving the central leadership with less resources while still needing to support the poorest blocs.

The FARC central leadership reacted to the risk of factionalization with numerous reforms. The first reform was military in nature and created military units directly under the command of the central leadership. These units, called mobile columns, were elite units with their own command structure without a regional basis from which to operate. The mobile units could be used by the FARC leadership to quickly reinforce points where the FARC was threatened or as a tool that forced regional bloc commanders into compliance with FARC central leadership-lines.³⁹

The second reform took away some independence from the regional blocs. Before the reforms the regional blocs had controlled the raising of revenue within their own region. The second reform created a centralized structure for raising revenue and took the ability to raise revenue out of the hands of regional commanders. By doing this the FARC central leadership gained control over the distribution of resources within the organisation.⁴⁰

Other reforms were also made. For instance, the FARC central leadership restructured the logistical system of the FARC. Like the financing, the regional blocs had been responsible for their own logistics with occasional support from the central command. After the reform independent companies within the regional blocs became responsible for logistics operation.⁴¹

The restructuring of the FARC in the 80's led to the a more centralized organisation with greater control for the central leadership. The restructuring had made a regional based factionalization threat virtually impossible due to the increased dependency of the regional blocs on the central organisation. The logistical and financial reforms took the resources needed for secession

³⁸Saskiewicz, *The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia*, 35-39

³⁹Angel Rabasa and Peter Chalk, *Colombian Labyrinth: The Synergy of Drugs and Insurgency and its Implications for Regional Stability*, (Santa Monica, RAND Corporation, 2005) 29

⁴⁰Saskiewicz, *The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia*, 35-39

⁴¹Rabasa and Chalk, *Colombian Labyrinth*, 29

out of the hands of regional commanders while the creation of mobile columns ensured that the central leadership could enforce its demands by force if need be.

The FARC central leadership did not seek to make changes to the motivational factors. However, if the FARC bloc commanders fall in line with the calculation-based theories for motivation, it is highly likely that the motivation for secession increased among the bloc commanders. Their power and influence were limited, yet they did not attempt to secede.

The reforms made by the FARC central leadership increased the strength of the disabling factors. The mobile columns gave the FARC leadership a military option for enforcing compliance while the financial and logistical restructuring ensured that a regional commander would have to set up a new financial and logistical structure while combatting the central FARC leaderships' mobile columns upon secession.

	Likelihood of secession	Level of motivating factors	Level of disabling factors
<i>Situation prior to leadership action</i>	High	Medium	Low
<i>Situation after leadership action</i>	Low	Medium (probably higher than in situation prior to leadership action)	High

Table 2

What we see in table 2 clearly shows that the motivating factors cannot be the sole factors deciding the likelihood of secession. The motivation for secession among bloc commanders was unlikely to have decreased by the FARC leadership actions. Yet, the likelihood of secession did decrease. This means that to understand factionalism, we cannot solely rely on motivating factors. Luckily, we can clearly see a change in the disabling factors which might provide the explanation needed for why the likelihood of secession decreased despite the motivation for secession not decreasing.

The FARC case-study is our first case in which we clearly see that one set of the variables is insufficient to explain why secession might occur and why it might not occur. By contrasting a medium level motivation for secession with a strong level of disabling factors we can see that from a

calculation-based perspective it is no longer logical to attempt secession by a regional commander. The risks have been raised and now outweigh the possible benefits.

NPA

The Philippines have seen numerous rebel groups. Perhaps the biggest and best known is the NPA. The New People's Army was founded in 1969 by the CCP. The CCP was a communist party which was founded one year earlier in 1968 by discontented members of another communist party, the PKP. The NPA was created by combining the political resources of the CCP with the military experience of Huk Commanders who had already had experience fighting as rebel forces.⁴²

The NPA was based around a central committee at the top which decided on all nation-wide activities. Subordinate committees existed at the regional, front, district, and section level. All of these subordinate committees had a large amount of autonomy. As Mediansky calls it, "centralized leadership and decentralized operations."⁴³

The early years of the NPA were fraught and marked by large swings in fortunes. Early on, the NPA quickly grew in terms of manpower and regional control but a government offense almost brought the NPA to its knees. However, the government did not finish the job due to other rebel groups in the Philippines demanding attention. This gave the NPA time to recover and in the early 1980's, the NPA reached its peak strength.⁴⁴

The fracturing of the NPA can be traced back to the late 1980's. Several fault lines and problems emerged. For one, while the NPA was growing rapidly, it was not able to ensure that all its new recruits were properly induced into communist thought. Ideological disagreements started to emerge throughout the organization.⁴⁵ In 1985 a first splintering occurred. A small group of NPA fighters broke away, claiming that they were the victims of discrimination due to their ethnicity. This combined with calls for more regional autonomy.⁴⁶

In this period, two other significant developments took place within the NPA which would contribute to the later splintering which is our focus point. First off, The NPA started to transition from a rebel group focused on smaller units to a rebel group seeking to take the fight from the countryside into the cities with larger units. This transition became heavily criticized later on and was widely regarded as a failure with some going as far as calling it military adventurism.⁴⁷

⁴² Miriam Coronel Ferrer, 'The communist insurgency in the Philippines,' in *A Handbook of Terrorism and Insurgency in Southeast Asia* ed. Andrew T.H. Tan (Edward Elgar Publishing, Massachusetts 2007) 407-409

⁴³ Fedor A. Mediansky, 'The New People's Army: A Nationwide Insurgency in the Philippines,' *Contemporary Southeast Asia Studies* 8 no. 1 (1986) 1-17, 5

⁴⁴ Ibid, 1-2

⁴⁵ Benedict J. Tria Kerkvliet, 'A different View of Insurgencies,' *HDN Discussion Paper Series* 5 (2005) 4

⁴⁶ Coronel Ferrer, 'The Communist Insurgency in the Philippines,' 422

⁴⁷ Teresa Lorena Jopson, 'Imaging Women and Compassion in the New People's Army: The

The other significant development was the conducting of purges within the NPA. There was fear that the government had infiltrated the ranks of the NPA during the period of rapid growth. To combat this, purges were conducted which created dissatisfaction and damaged the social cohesion of the NPA.⁴⁸

All of this resulted in a massive split of the NPA in 1992. One side, the reaffirmists, claimed that the transition had been a mistake and that the NPA needed to go back to its roots. The other side, the rejectionists, vehemently disagreed. Further disagreement centred on ideological issues. The reaffirmists claimed that among others ultra-democracy and populism needed to be disregarded entirely by the NPA.⁴⁹

This division would not be the end of rebel fragmentation. The rejectionists would splinter further into nine different subgroups over personal and policy differences.⁵⁰ The CCP itself became permanently fragmented as well. The discussions over strategy, tactics, and ideology undermined the cohesion of what had once by a largely unified communist movement against the government of the Philippines.⁵¹

The focus on centralized leadership and decentralized operations gave a large amount of autonomy to regional commanders and the fact that the Philippines constitute a large number of islands created difficulty with maintaining control over the regional commanders. As a consequence of this structure, it was relatively easy for regional commanders to work largely autonomously from the central organization which also made it easy for regional commanders to break away. There was little that could prevent the breaking away of commanders that pursued secession. The NPA leadership responded to secession with assassination of breakaway commanders but this was unsuccessful in preventing secession.⁵²

Communist Party of the Philippines' Construction of its Army's identity,' in *An Exercise in Worldmaking: The Institute of Social Studies Best Student Essays 2008/09* ed. Regina Macalandag et al. (The Hague, ISS 2009) 149

⁴⁸ Coronel Ferrer, 'The Communist Insurgency in the Philippines,' 418

⁴⁹ Ibid, 420

⁵⁰ Antonio G. Parlade JR, 'An analysis of the Communist Insurgency in the Philippines,' (Masters' Thesis: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2006) 55

⁵¹ William N. Holden, 'The Never-Ending War in the Wounded Land: The New People's Army of Samar,' *Journal of Geography and Geology* 5 no. 4 (2013) 29-49, 37

⁵² Coronel Ferrer, 'The Communist Insurgency in the Philippines,' 426

	Likelihood of secession	Level of motivating factors	Level of disabling factors
<i>Situation during 1980's</i>	Low/Medium	Low/Medium	Low
<i>Situation in 1990's</i>	High	High	Low

Table 3

Table 3 clearly points in the direction of motivating factors as the key to understanding secession in the case of the NPA. It was a change in the level of motivation for secession that would lead to the large-scale splintering of the NPA. The purges and disagreement over strategy created an environment in which the motivation for secession became very high if one disagreed with the NPA leadership.

At the same time, the low level of disabling factors allowed for easy secession. There was little to stop a regional commander from seceding if he or she believed that they could become the next victim of a purge. The assassination of breakaway faction leaders, while undoubtedly unpleasant for the people subject to it, is not a proper disabling factor. It does raise the risk of secession and while it might dampen the potential gains from secession, staying within the NPA was not necessarily safer.

With the NPA case-study we have seen our first case in which motivating factors are the factors deciding whether or not factionalization takes place. The disabling factors played little of a role in preventing factionalization from occurring. At the same time, we could look at the theory on the limitations that geography place upon rebel leaderships for understanding why the level of disabling factors were low in the case of the NPA.

Summary

After our first three case-studies, it already seems likely that we are on the right track with our framework. The first case-study, the FLN/ALN, was inconclusive on whether or not both motivating and disabling factors were needed to explain the risk of secession decreasing. It did seem likely that both were needed to explain the outcome, but it was not conclusive.

In the case of the FARC we saw how changes to the disabling factors, were the only possible explanation for the threat of factionalization subsiding. The level of motivation for secession stayed even or increased while the level of disabling factors increased. The only conclusion we can draw from that is that the disabling factors succeeded in bringing down the risk of factionalization.

The NPA case-study was different from the other two case-studies in that factionalization actually occurred in it. Yet the same principles for determining whether or not factionalization will occur seem to hold. In the 1980's overall motivation for secession was low while the disabling factors were also relatively low. Consequentially, there was not a lot preventing secession when the motivation for secession rose in the 1990's.

Case studies: Personal leadership and fragmentation challenges

In the first three case-studies we have started to build a case for the adoption of our framework for understanding factionalization. However, we have only conducted three case-studies so far and in these three case-studies we have only seen organisations with a similar type of leadership.

In the next three case-studies we will focus on a different leadership style, namely rebel groups where there is one figure who unifies/unified the entire group. The rebel groups are built around an almost larger than life figure. With the first two case studies we will see how a shock with regards to this figure leads to fissures appearing within the rebel group itself while the third case study shows the danger of a personal leadership model.

NRA

After the decolonization of Uganda, Uganda entered a volatile period in its history. Coups, dictatorships, and violent suppression quickly followed one another.⁵³ Ethnic tension flared, and this resulted in several rebel groups emerging.⁵⁴ In 1980 elections were held. Following the results, several rebel groups emerged which took up arms against Uganda's newly elected ruler, Milton Obote.⁵⁵ Among these was the National Resistance Army (NRA) led by Yoweri Kagute Museveni. The goal of Museveni was to overthrow the Obote regime.⁵⁶

For this effort, Museveni relied on the support of his own ethnic group and members of an earlier rebel organisation in which he had participated.⁵⁷ However, Museveni was not the only person starting a rebel group in this period. Numerous other rebel groups sprouted up centred around other big names in Ugandan politics. Cooperation between the various rebel groups proved difficult from time to time due to disagreement on politics and the fact that some of the rebel groups had supported the previous dictator against which many other rebels had fought.⁵⁸

At the start of the rebellion, the NRA consisted of a small group of fighters divided among four sections. In an effort to ensure unit cohesion and the effective operations of the different units,

⁵³T.V. Sathyamurthy, *The Political Development of Uganda: 1900-1986* (Gower Publishing, Vermont, 1986) 658

⁵⁴Ibid, 661

⁵⁵Pascal Ngoga, 'Uganda: The National Resistance Army,' in *African Guerrillas* ed. Christopher Clapham (Fountain Publishers, Kampala, 1998) 92-93

⁵⁶Ibid, 93-94

⁵⁷Sathyamurthy, *The Political Development of Uganda*, 659-663

⁵⁸Ibid, 671

the NRA leadership established several committees and a central command structure.⁵⁹ Further enhancing group cohesion were early efforts to give all recruits political education.⁶⁰

During the early stages of the rebellion, Museveni operated close to the front and even led the first few operations himself.⁶¹ Due to the early efforts at educating the rank and file, establishing a handful of critical structures early on, and the personal leadership of Museveni, the NRA did not have much problems from fragmentation threats in its first year. In the second year the threat of fragmentation emerged unexpectedly.

In its first year the NRA faced chronic issues stemming from a lack of weapons. To solve this situation, Museveni resolved to personally travel to Libya to obtain weapons from the Khadafi regime.⁶² However, during his absence tensions rose to the fore that had been simmering but never erupted while he was personally leading the NRA. These tensions erupted along ethnic lines and threatened to break up the NRA.⁶³

Upon the return of Museveni, a series of general meetings was organised by the NRA leadership in which wide-ranging discussions were held on topics from political purpose to structural organization.⁶⁴ During these meetings it was decided to restructure the NRA to better manage tensions. It was decided that a political commissar function would be established, and a new high command was founded in which all NRA commanders and the heads of the administrative departments would participate. Furthermore, regular meetings between the NRA leadership and the rank-and-file were institutionalized and an extensive penal code was written.⁶⁵

As mentioned before, Museveni had managed ethnic cleavages within the NRA. It is possible that upon his return, his presence decreased the motivation for secession among the different ethnic groups. Yet at the same time, the threat of secession could also have disappeared due to an effect on disabling factors. Museveni was hugely popular within the NRA making it more difficult for any would-be secessionist to actually gain the support needed to secede from the organisation. Consequentially, there is a lot of ambiguity to the exact effect that Museveni's return had upon the secessionist challenge.

⁵⁹Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, *Sowing the Mustard Seed* (Macmillan, Hong Kong, 1997) 128-133

⁶⁰Nelson Kasfir, 'Guerrillas and Civilian Participation: The National Resistance Army in Uganda 1981-86,' *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 43 no. 2 (2005) 271-296, 276

⁶¹Museveni, *Sowing the Mustard Seed*, 136-137

⁶²Ibid, 141-142

⁶³Ngoga, 'Uganda: The National Resistance Army,' 101

⁶⁴Ibid, 101

⁶⁵Ibid, 101-102

There is a lot more clarity in the NRA leadership response to the threat of fragmentation. The NRA leadership created greater incentives for cooperation within the NRA for commanders and administrators. At the same time measures were taken to provide a stronger basis for the rebel group from which to operate. The function of political commissar was created and codification of rules on the conduct of NRA members served to solidify the ideological basis of the organisation as well as legitimizing punishment against those who broke the rules of the organisation.

Institutionalizing regular meetings between the NRA leadership and the rank-and-file was also an interesting measure. By giving a voice to the rank-and-file the motivation for secession among the regular soldiers might decrease. They are listened too and can bring any issues they might have directly to the leadership thus increasing group cohesion.

	Likelihood of secession	Level of motivating factors	Level of disabling factors
<i>Situation prior to leadership action</i>	High	High	Low
<i>Situation after leadership action</i>	Low	Low	Medium

Table 4

In table 4 we can see how the situation changed for the NRA upon the return of Museveni and the actions taken by the NRA leadership. As mentioned before the return of Museveni is difficult to quantify and categorize. We could argue that his return lowered the motivation for secession due to his skilful management of ethnic tensions. Yet, his popularity also made it more difficult for regional commanders to secede since their own soldiers might have a strong allegiance to Museveni. This would increase the disabling factors.

Overall, the actions taken by the NRA leadership, and the return of Museveni, lowered the level of motivating factors while also increasing the disabling factors. Thus, the likelihood of secession within the NRA fell.

Hezbollah

Hezbollah, or 'Party of God'⁶⁶ is a difficult case. Hezbollah is not entirely a rebel group nor is it entirely a political party. Engaging in violence against Israel but at the same time running for political office in Lebanon, Hezbollah is a hybrid organisation.

Rising in prominence due to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, Hezbollah drew on existing simmering discontent among Lebanese Shi'ites.⁶⁷ The failure of other Islamist parties and backing from Iran allowed Hezbollah to quickly grow and organise itself.⁶⁸

The original focus of Hezbollah as stipulated by one of Hezbollah's most important speakers, Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, was the removal of Israel from Lebanon. Fadlallah described the Israelis as bent on the subjugation of the Muslim world. Fadlallah claimed that Israel was an extension of the American imperialist arm, consequently it was impossible to pressure the USA into public condemning Israeli actions.⁶⁹ For Fadlallah the only path open to Hezbollah was armed Jihad to drive out the Israeli's from Lebanon.

In this Hezbollah received strong support from Iran and the Ayatollah Khomeini. The bonds between Hezbollah and Ayatollah Khomeini were of huge importance to Hezbollah and upon the death of Ayatollah Khomeini the threat of factionalization emerged within Hezbollah.⁷⁰ It is precisely this moment that we will study.

The importance of the connection between Hezbollah and Ayatollah Khomeini cannot be stressed enough. Right from the beginning of Hezbollah until the death of Ayatollah Khomeini, the influence of the Ayatollah was noticeable in virtually every aspect of Hezbollah. Due to the dependence of Hezbollah on Iranian support, leaders within the Hezbollah were promoted not only on competence but also on personal loyalty to Ayatollah Khomeini.⁷¹

The threat of fragmentation emerged within Hezbollah in 1989 upon the death of Ayatollah Khomeini. The Ayatollah had been an important figure around which the different clerics could unify

⁶⁶Judith Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism* (I.B. Tauris, London, 2004) 1

⁶⁷Martin Kramer, 'The Oracle of Hizbullah,' in *Spokesmen for the Despised* ed. R. Scott Appleby (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1997) 85

⁶⁸As'ad AbuKhalil, 'Ideology and Practice of Hizballah in Lebanon: Islamization of Leninist Principles,' *Middle Eastern Studies* 27 no. 3 (1991) 390-403, 393

⁶⁹Kramer, 'The Oracle of Hizbullah,' 115-117

⁷⁰Magnus Ranstorp, 'The Strategy and Tactics of Hizballah's Current Lebanonization Process,' *Mediterranean Politics* 3 no. 1 (1998) 103-134, 118

⁷¹Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 52-54

and an important sponsor of Hezbollah itself. The Ayatollah Khomeini was replaced by a man who sought to make Hezbollah more pliable to Iranian purposes.⁷²

With this increased interference from Iran and the death of a personal symbol of unity the internal cohesion decreased. Multiple splinters threatened to secede from Hezbollah due to disagreement over the direction that Hezbollah was going in.

In response to this threat of fragmentation, several meetings were organised in which a restructuring of the organisation was discussed. Eventually an agreement was reached among the Hezbollah clergy. A new central decision-making organ was created. Alongside the new central organ, a politburo was formed tasked with dictating recruitment, propaganda, and support services.⁷³ With this reorganisation, Hezbollah became more centralized with less power for the individual clergy members.

Just as was the case with Museveni and the NRA, the effect that Ayatollah Khomeini had on Hezbollah is difficult to categorize along the lines of motivating and disabling factors. Personal loyalty towards the Ayatollah created both motivational problems as well as disabling problems for anyone who might have had an interest in secession.

Without personal loyalty to the Ayatollah, one would not come to be a high-level commander, thus ensuring that the people with a powerful base had little motivation to challenge the central organisational leadership. At the same time the personal loyalty to the Ayatollah made it difficult to secede from the organisation even if one had the motivation. With the entire organisation build around personal loyalty, it would be difficult to find supporters outside one's own direct base of support.

	Likelihood of secession	Level of motivating factors	Level of disabling factors
<i>Situation prior to leadership action</i>	Medium	Low/Medium	Low
<i>Situation after leadership action</i>	Low	Low/Medium	Medium

Table 5

⁷²Ranstorp, 'The strategy and Tactics of Hizballah's Current Lebanization Process,' 117-119

⁷³Ibid, 119-120

In table 5 we can see that the actions of the Hezbollah leadership were focused on disabling factors. The organisation was strengthened, and more uniformity was enforced through the establishment of a politburo. This was done without addressing the motivation for secession. This means the cost and risk inherent in a secession attempt were raised while the motivation for secession remained the same.

However, the fact that these reforms were agreed upon in several meetings of the Hezbollah leadership show that there was enough motivation within the organisation itself to continue operation as a unified organisation.

This leaves us with the question, to what extent was Hezbollah actually facing the threat of factionalization? It seems most likely that the motivating factors for secession were not all that high to begin with. The few disabling measures put in place ended the notions of secession that some had had.

This case-study does show that even if there is little motivation for secession, it can still occur if the disabling factors are very low. When the Ayatollah was around, the motivating factors for secession were even lower and the disabling factors were higher but upon his death, motivating factors and disabling factors drew even.

The fact that secession can occur even if the motivation for it is low also points at the fact that there are more factors that decide whether or not secession takes place than motivational factors. If Hezbollah had the same level of disabling factors as the FARC, secession would not have been a risk.

NPFL

The NPFL was a notorious rebel group in Liberia. Led by Charles Taylor, the NPFL became a by-word for brutal and systemic violence in a civil war that was widely known for the horrors that it unleashed upon the civilian population of Liberia. The Liberian civil war that Taylor initiated in 1989 would come to an end in 1997 with the election of Taylor as President of Liberia.⁷⁴

The origins of the Liberian civil war can be traced back to the de facto apartheid regime that ruled Liberia prior to 1980. Former slavers from the United States migrated to Liberia where they created a new nation. In the process of nation building process these former slaves, the Americanos, became the elite that controlled Liberia until a coup drove them out of power in 1980.⁷⁵

In this coup Samuel Doe came to power who promptly started to promote people of his own ethnicity over the other ethnicities present in Liberia. This policy spiralled and led to increasing violence against ethnic minorities.⁷⁶ It was upon this ground, fertile for rebellion, that Charles Taylor launched his attack on Samuel Doe.

The NPFL was off to a flying start when it raised the flag of rebellion in 1989. Within six months, most of Liberia was under control of the NPFL. Samuel Doe was holed up in the capital city surrounded by rebel forces.⁷⁷ However, not all was well for the NPFL and Charles Taylor.

Three months into the rebellion saw a splinter in the NPFL breaking away led by Taylors' second in command, Prince Johnson.⁷⁸ This new rebel group would not be around for long and disbanded, but nonetheless set a precedent.⁷⁹

It would not be the last time that a faction broke away from the NPFL and Charles Taylor. As a matter of fact, splinter movements regularly broke off from the NPFL.⁸⁰ The forces fighting against Taylor also frequently splintered leading to claims that Liberia had fallen into a stage of warlordism.⁸¹

The frequent splintering and the inability of any of the combatants to score a decisive victory contributed to the prolongation of the war until 1997. A major part of this inability also came from

⁷⁴ Morten Bøås, 'The Liberian Civil War: New War/Old War?' *Global Society* 19 no. 1 (2005) 73-88, 82-83

⁷⁵ Quentin Outram, 'It's Terminal Either Way: An Analysis of Armed Conflict in Liberia 1989-1996,' *Review of African Political Economy* 24 no. 73 (1997) 355-371, 357-360

⁷⁶ Yekutiel Gershoni, 'War without End and an End to a War: The Prolonged Wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone,' *African Studies Review* 40 no. 3 (1997) 55-76, 56

⁷⁷ Gershoni, 'War without End and an End to a War,' 55-56

⁷⁸ Stephen Elis, 'Liberia 1989-1994: A Study of Ethnic and Spiritual Violence,' *African Affairs* 94 no. 375 (1995) 165-197, 167-168

⁷⁹ Dave Peterson, 'Liberia: Crying for Freedom,' *Journal of Democracy* 7 no. 2 (1996) 148-158, 150

⁸⁰ Outram 'It's Terminal Either Way,' 361

⁸¹ Ibid, 361-365

the ECOWAS intervention force which was sent to stop Charles Taylor from taking over the country. It was ECOWAS that made it virtually impossible for Taylor to take over the capital while ECOWAS lacked the resources needed to decisively defeat Taylor.⁸²

The NPFL structure was rudimentary as best. Taylor had created an organisation which was difficult for him to control. He relied on multiple largely autonomous groups to control their own sector and which operated largely independent from one another. These groups were led by people that owed their position to Taylor. This was an attempt by Taylor to make the commanders of these groups' dependent upon himself.⁸³

To supplement this setup, Taylor often had popular leaders within the NPFL killed or disappeared. Furthermore, he relied on the loyalty that soldiers held to his own person in ensuring that secession would not occur. Especially child soldiers were indoctrinated in a manner that focused on establishing personal loyalty to Charles Taylor.⁸⁴

Despite these efforts focused on undermining the authority that a regional commander could have, the NPFL struggled to maintain control over its regional commanders.⁸⁵ The NPFL paid little attention to the structure of the organisation instead the focus was on personal loyalty to Taylor.

While Taylor's measures were restrictive and disabling, they also created motivation for secession. If a commander appointed by Taylor started to have some success, his own life would be in danger thus this commander would have every reason to split off.

At the same time, the personal loyalty of the rank-and-file to Taylor proved rather fragile. If a regional commander was successful in leading his troops, the allegiance of his troops would shift away from Taylor to this competent regional commander. Thus, eliminating the rank-and-file loyalty to Taylor as an obstacle to secession.

Taylor did nothing to address the motivation for secession and only put measures in place that increased the motivation for secession. Consequentially, it is hardly surprising that the NPFL fragmented regularly. As Outram put it "By the time of the Abuja Agreement of August 1995, which inaugurated one of many short-lived and uneasy peace's, the wars had reduced the NPFL to merely the most powerful of half a dozen warring faction."⁸⁶

⁸² Gershoni, 'War without End and an End to a War,' 55-57

⁸³ William Reno, 'Predatory Rebellions and Governance: The National Patriotic Front of Liberia, 1989–1992,' In A. Arjona, N. Kasfir, & Z. Mampilly (Eds.), *Rebel Governance in Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2005), 265-285, 267

⁸⁴ Reno, 'Predatory Rebellions and Governance,' 272-273

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 277

⁸⁶ Outram 'It's Terminal Either Way,' 355

	Likelihood of secession	Level of motivating factors	Level of disabling factors
<i>Situation prior to leadership action</i>	High	Medium	Low
<i>Situation after leadership action</i>	High	Very High	Low

Table 6

After we look at table 6, we can only wonder why Taylor thought that his measures would be successful in handling the threat of factionalization. His measures did little to prevent secession while raising the motivation for secession.

It is hard to find a bigger motivation for a regional commander to secede than the realisation that his or her own life is in grave danger as long as he or her stays within the organisation. Consequentially, the actions for Taylor only exuberated the issues that the NPFL faced.

There was little to stop a regional commander from secession once he or she had proved him or herself competent and gained the trust of the soldiers under their command. While the FARC created dependency upon the central organisation, the NPFL did not such thing. Regional commanders had total control over their own region, making it easy to secede.

While the splintering in this case might be explained purely through looking at motivation, by now it is clear that the ease through which commanders could secede also played a role in the splintering of the NPFL.

Summary

In the previous three case-studies we saw the same trends that we saw in the first three case-studies. Our first case-study, the NRA, proved difficult due to the difficulty with attributing whether the return of Museveni constituted a change in motivating factors or a change in disabling factors. At the same time, we saw changes to both motivating and disabling factors. At this point we can safely assume that both changes to the motivating and disabling factors resolved the threat of factionalization instead of looking at only one set of factors.

Hezbollah managed to strengthen the position of its central leadership. The level of disabling factors was raised while the motivation for secession remained relatively low. This resolved the threat of factionalization for Hezbollah and showed the importance of disabling factors in determining whether or not secession is feasible.

The NPFL failed at setting up structures that could prevent a commander from breaking away. The regional leaders operated autonomously and there was little to prevent a commander from secession. The threat of a violent death if a regional commander became too popular, probably increased the motivation for secession among all regional commanders. Consequentially, the policies of Taylor only flamed the desire for secession among NPFL regional commanders.

In general, we saw that both motivating and disabling factors were needed to explain the outcomes of the different case-studies. Neither category solely sufficed to explain why the NRA and Hezbollah did not fragment while the NPFL did. By combining the categories, we can find answers on the question of why the case-studies ended the way they did.

Analysis

Having conducted all our case-studies, it is time to analyse the findings of our case-studies. While we have already looked at all our individual cases and made summaries for our two-overarching case-study types, we have not drawn lines connecting all our case-studies with each other.

A first thing to note is that the case-studies can also be categorized according to the rebel leadership response. We have two case-studies in which the leadership tried to address the threat of factionalization by making changes to both motivating and disabling factors. We also have two case-studies in which the leadership addressed the threat of factionalization by focusing on increasing the level of disabling factors. Finally, we have two cases where the rebel leaderships failed to address the threat of factionalization. In these cases, the rebel leaderships took actions that either had unattended side-effects or took no action at all.

Our case-study selection was not done with this 2-2-2 division in mind. This has happened accidentally. Yet it does provide us with two case-studies for each of the leadership reaction types we have come across. It does also raise the question if there is also a fourth type of case in which a rebel leadership prevents the splintering of the group purely through making changes to the motivating factors.

The cases where the leadership only made changes to the disabling factors prove the necessity of looking beyond motivating factors for explaining factionalization. The FARC and Hezbollah did not address the motivation for secession, yet the threat of secession disappeared. The best explanation for this is that the potential gains from secession no longer outweighed the risks of attempting secession. The outcome of the calculation made by would-be secessionists shifted from favouring secession to favouring staying put.

In the cases that the rebel groups did splinter, we clearly show that the motivation for secession rose. The NPA and NPFL did little to counteract the rising motivation for secession. The level of the motivating factors increased while the level of the disabling factors stayed the same. These cases can only be understood through looking at the changes in motivational factors, which shows us that we need to take motivating factors into account for explaining rebel factionalization.

Our case-studies of the FLN/ALN and the NRA show rebel leaderships addressing the motivation for secession as well as making sure that secession became more difficult to achieve through increasing the level of disabling factors. It is in these case-studies that we clearly see that motivating and disabling factors are used in unison for combatting the risk of factionalization. The

ease with which the FLN/ALN and the NRA resolved their factionalist challenges point at the importance of using both motivating and disabling factors in combatting factionalization.

At this point it, we can safely say that both motivating and disabling factors have a role to play in explaining why certain rebel groups splintering and why some rebel groups stick together. However, we should take a moment to reflect upon the interaction between the two types of factors and how the respective level of the factors decides whether or not factionalization will occur.

The cases of the FLN/ALN and NRA are not suited for this since in these cases the motivation for secession was lowered while the level of disabling factors was raised. This means that both set of factors move independently from one another to lower the risk of factionalization.

The best case for studying the respective levels is the case of the FARC. We already looked at the FARC in this analysis section, but that was in relation to the standing when compared with the other case-studies. For the studying of the levels of motivating and disabling factors, a closer look at the FARC case is needed.

With the FARC we saw a rise in motivation for secession with a simultaneous rise in the level of disabling factors. The fact that the secessionist challenge disappeared clearly points at the how the two sets of factors interact with each other and shape the outcome of the equation of whether or not secession is worthwhile.

	Level of motivating factors	Level of disabling factors	Outcome equation
<i>Situation prior to leadership action</i>	2.0	1.0	Positive
<i>Situation after leadership action</i>	2.5	3.0	Negative

Table 7

Table 7 is based upon the table used in the FARC case-study (table 2). Instead of classifying levels of factors as either low, medium, or high, we are now using numerical values. If we take the calculation-based approach to why factions secede, we can use these numerical values to construct a simple equation. If the level of motivating factors outweighs the level of disabling factors, factionalization will occur. If the level of disabling factors outweighs the level of motivating factors, factionalization will not occur.

This allows us to explain cases like the FARC where the motivation for secession increased but secession nonetheless does not occur. It can also be used for cases like the NPA where factionalization does occur due to the value of one set of factors changing. Even for the more complicated cases of the FLN/ALN and the NRA we can use this formula to explain why the changes to both sets of factors contributed to lowering the risk of factionalization.

Let’s close off the analysis section by taking a look at table 8. In table 8 all our case-studies have been put in a table similar to table 7. In table 8 we can see how the equations fit in with the outcome of the factionalization threat observed in the case-studies.

	Level of motivating factors	Level of disabling factors	Outcome equation
<i>FLN/ALN prior to changes</i>	3	1	Positive
<i>FLN/ALN after changes</i>	1	3	Negative
<i>FARC prior to changes</i>	2	1	Positive
<i>FARC after changes</i>	2.5	3	Negative
<i>NPA prior to changes</i>	1.5	1	Positive
<i>NPA after changes</i>	3	1	Positive
<i>NRA prior to changes</i>	3	1	Positive
<i>NRA after changes</i>	1	2	Negative
<i>Hezbollah prior to changes</i>	1.5	1	Positive
<i>Hezbollah after changes</i>	1.5	2	Negative
<i>NPFL prior to changes</i>	2	1	Positive
<i>NPFL after changes</i>	4	1	Positive

Table 8

The cases where factionalization did occur show a positive outcome to the equation, both before and after changes made by the respective leaderships. The cases where factionalization did not occur saw the outcome from the equation shifting from positive to negative. Consequentially, the risk of factionalization decreased in these cases.

Conclusion

Findings

When we started this research, we set out with the goal of improving our understanding of factionalization of rebel groups. Now that we have arrived at the end of our research it is time to summarize our findings and draw conclusions.

The existing theories on the factionalization of rebel groups focus on specific aspects. This focus has given us insight into different aspects of factionalization, but little attention is paid to connecting the different theories with one another.

Consequentially, we have theories on what motivates factions to pursue secession, we have theories on factors that set secession off, and we have theories on what factors influence the ease with which secession can take place. Yet, these theories have failed to connect with each other leaving a gap in our understanding of factionalization.

To fill up the hole in our understanding of factionalization, we proposed a framework in which the existing theories could be placed next to each other. This framework would use the existing theories in unison and as result could provide deeper insight into our understanding of factionalization.

To prove the suitability of our framework we used two categories in which all factors influencing the likelihood of secession occurring. These two categories, motivating and disabling factors, reflect the different focuses and type of explanations found in the existing theories.

The category of motivating factors looks at the factors that motivate factions within a rebel group to secede. Factors such as personal power and ideological alignment with the rebel group can be found in this category.

The other side of the coin is the category of disabling factors. These factors influence how difficult it is for a faction to secede from a rebel group. To give an example, these factors are the dependence of a faction on the central organisation and the control that the central organisation has over its members.

In our framework, we can stack the factors influencing the level of motivation and the level disabling factors against each other. If the motivating factors outweigh the disabling factors, secession will occur. If the disabling factors outweigh the motivating factors, secession will not occur.

The crucial difference between the existing theories and the framework in which we place them, is the relativity of each individual factor. For instance, one existing theory looks exclusively at battlefield gains and losses for determining the likelihood of factionalization occurring. With our framework we can provide an explanation for why factionalization did not occur even if there are large battlefield gains or losses. We can also provide a deeper analysis than could be done by focusing solely on the aspect of battlefield gains and losses. We can see how the different factors interact with each other and understand why battlefield gains and losses are important in determining whether or not factionalization will occur.

To prove that our framework is an improvement on existing theories, we worked with a qualitative comparative case-study analysis. Six case-studies were selected to ensure that we had sufficient data upon which we could prove the usefulness of our framework.

Unlike the existing theories, we did not focus exclusively on cases where factionalization did occur, but also at cases where factionalization did not occur. In my eyes, it was a necessity to look at cases where factionalization did not occur since we are trying to understand the phenomenon in its entirety and not merely the cases where factionalization occurred.

Throughout the case-studies we clearly saw signs that the current theories fail to adequately explain the phenomenon of factionalization in rebel groups. The category of motivating factors was able to explain some instances of factionalization but failed with regard to other instances. The same was true for disabling factors.

Combining the two set of factors we were able to understand why factionalization occurs in some cases and not in other cases. To combine the two sets of factors, we constructed a simple equation. In this equation, we placed motivating and disabling factors against each other. The way this works is the following, if the motivating factors outweighed the disabling factors, factionalization would occur. If the disabling factors outweigh the motivating factors, factionalization would not occur.

This equation allowed us to understand why factionalization did not occur in four of the case-studies and why it did occur in two of the case-studies. With our framework we were able to move beyond one-factor explanations and gain a more in-depth understanding of what causes factionalization to occur. Factionalization does not occur due to a single set of variables, even if one set of variables can have a huge impact.

If we seek to explain cases like the NPA or NPFL, it is not enough to point at the motivating factors and say that changes to the motivation caused factions to break away. We have to look at the disabling factors as well. Even when the level of disabling factors is low, we have to talk about how

the low level of disabling factors made it possible that a faction became sufficiently motivated to take the risks associated with secession.

Further research

At the moment this research is limited to six case studies. This has limited our ability to do truly in-depth case-study analysis. Further research is needed to see if our framework can be used when every single factor influencing factionalization is individually identified and investigated.

There is also room for quantitative research. With more cases, it will be possible to better determine the correlation between structural strength, satisfaction/dissatisfaction within a rebel group, and many more factors

Furthermore, in our research we have seen two cases where changes to the disabling factors led to the threat of factionalization disappearing. We have no case-studies for changes to the motivating factors doing the same thing. Yet, such cases might exist. Research into this would be valuable.

Another important topic of research would be focused on how central leaderships manage to reform when the risk of factionalization is already present. In the case studies of Hezbollah and the NRA there was still a willingness among the different factions within the rebellion to work together towards a solution. In the FARC case-study this should not have been the case, the regional commanders that stood to lose the most ought to have resisted against the changes being made. Right now, we can only speculate that this secession did not happen due to the regional commanders perceiving the central leadership as capable of crushing any secession attempt even without the reforms.

Another interesting topic of research would be the connection between the identity of different factions and their motivation for secession. In greed-vs-grievance debate, both sides seek to establish a single theory to explain the motivation of all factions for secession. It might be the case that different factions have a different sort of motivation for secession based on how they identify themselves. For instance, a faction based on a common ideology might have a different motivation when compared to a faction centred on ethnic identity.

Final remarks

The topic of factionalization within rebel groups has not received as much attention as it perhaps should have. Rebellions, insurgencies, and guerrillas are the most common form of war nowadays

with inter-state war rarely occurring. As such, within the field of IR conflict studies it would be sensible to further investigate factionalization within the forms of irregular warfare. Studies in the use of divide-and-conquer strategies by governmental forces would go well with this increased focus on fragmentation within irregular forces.

The interaction between irregular forces and regular governmental forces should help us better understand the wars, insurgencies, and terrorist campaigns currently taking place in complex situations such as Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Yemen. Researching irregular forces can prove rather difficult due to the lack of bureaucratic material available, the changing perception of people upon the irregular forces, and the difficulty inherent with contacting these irregular forces. However, despite these difficulties the research in irregular forces provides invaluable insight into what makes a rebellion thick.

One final point to make concerns the use of certain literature for my case-studies. For the NRA case, I used a book written by Museveni. Naturally, I expected a bias in this book, and consequentially, I have tried to cross-check everything written in this book with other sources. While I could have done the research without it, it did provide valuable insight into how a person within a rebel group would view the threat of factionalization and possible ways to handle it.

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