

REBELS AND THEIR CAUSES

A plausibility probe into the evolving strategies of violent non-state actors in long conflicts

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Abstract

Asymmetrical civil conflicts are wars fought between a violent non-state actor (VNSA) and the regime or government of a nation. The strategy, identity and tactics of a specific VNSA can differ depending on the conflict it is active in. This thesis makes use of a proposed division of VNSAs in resource-based and ideology-based VNSAs. It is hypothesized that, over the course of a long conflict, either of the proposed archetypes will adapt its tactics. To test whether there is any merit to these hypotheses, a plausibility probe design has been drawn up. The cases of the plausibility probe consist of the LTTE in Sri Lanka and the RUF in Sierra Leone. Changes undergone by the VNSA are interpreted through indicators inferred from previous work on resource-based and ideology-based VNSAs. The case of the LTTE shows that it is possible for an ideology-based VNSA to adopt some resource-based indicators, while the RUF sticks to a strategy that is strictly indicative of a resource-based VNSA. The thesis concludes that further work is warranted, specifically on the evolution of ideology-based VNSAs in a long civil conflict.

1. Introduction

The Siege of Freetown

On January 6, 1992, inhabitants of the Sierra Leonean capital of Freetown were woken up by the sounds of gunfire and artillery shells. The city was being invaded by thousands of rebels; some looking like Sierra Leone army soldiers, others looking less orderly with simply an AK-47 or rocket-propelled grenade launcher in their hands. Many of the attackers were young, with reports of children as young as 8 playing an active role in the siege. Upon gaining control of parts of the city, the attackers started systematically looting the homes of families residing in Freetown. The rebels demanded money or other valuables, and indiscriminately tortured, raped or murder those who could or would not comply. Eyewitness reports speak of rebels attacking a mosque and opening fire on the mosque-goers, seemingly randomly massacring the population of Freetown. The Islamic school in the back of the mosque was not spared, as rebels surrounded it and slaughtered the children inside. The witness reports seeing over sixty corpses bodies in the streets after massacre, including seven children. (Human Rights Watch, 1999)

The rebels committing these atrocities were aligned to the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone, or RUF. The RUF were a group of fighters claiming to represent the people of Sierra Leone in its struggle against a failing regime, but its actions proved to be at least as fatal for the population of Sierra Leone as for those in power. The conflict between the RUF, the Sierra Leone Army and several other actors lasted over 11 years. The United Nations estimate that over 70,000 lost their lives in the violence, while 2.6 million people were forced to leave their homes. Countless more were robbed, raped and tortured. (Kaldor & Vincent, 2006)

The RUF is a violent non-state actor, or VNSA. VNSAs typically oppose the government in an asymmetrical civil conflict, relying on unconventional warfare tactics to stand a chance against the normally superior government forces. In the 1990s, over 20 percent of all countries were embroiled in a civil conflict. In the world's poorest region and home to the RUF, sub-Saharan Africa, this was true for almost a third of the countries. (Blattman & Miguel, 2010, p. 6) As evidenced by the case of the RUF, these are often some of the most violent and needlessly brutal armed conflicts.

Problem outline and research questions

Not all VNSAs are created equal. The strategy, identity and tactics of a specific VNSA can differ depending on the conflict it is active in, the geographical location, its membership, its leadership and countless other variables. These different types of VNSAs will have different motivations, goals and commitments. Those tasked with attempting to end civil conflicts will want to understand these motivations and incorporate them in their search for a solution to the fighting.

As shown in chapter 2 of this thesis, VNSAs and civil conflicts as a whole have been quite extensively researched in the past. Academics have theorized comprehensively on motivations for civilians to start a civil war, on the role of resources in civil conflicts and attempted to categorize VNSAs based on displayed traits. However, as many civil conflicts last longer than perhaps initially expected by the instigators of the rebellion, these traits are subject to change. Gaining an understanding of the evolution undergone by VNSAs over the course of a conflict can be crucial in expanding our knowledge of the phenomenon as a whole.

This is an exploratory work, and in attempting to add to the existing literature this thesis aims to research whether or not there is any merit in the following research question:

To what extent do the key identifying factors of the strategy of a VNSA evolve over the course of a long conflict?

This work is formatted as a plausibility probe research design, meaning that this research question is not answered exhaustively but tested for plausibility. This is explained in depth in chapter 3.

The sub-questions used to assist in addressing the main research question are:

- What different archetypes of VNSAs are identified in the literature?
- To what extent does each of these archetypes adopt traits of other types of VNSAs over the course of a long conflict?

Academic and Societal Relevance

The societal relevance of this thesis is rather apparent. Terrorism as perpetrated by rebel groups has captivated the world's attention for years. Particularly in the second decade of the 2000s the phenomenon of VNSAs has held a spot in the global political spotlight. The faction known

as Islamic State (IS) or Daesh¹ gained global prominence after it seized control of large portions of land in Iraq and Syria (McCants, 2015) (Barrett, 2014). Daesh was particularly visible – not in the least due to its global terrorist efforts – but groups such as Al-Qaeda, the Azawad National Liberation Movement (MNL) and the Taliban all still hold vast amounts of territory. By raising the curtain on the evolution undergone by such a VNSA over the course of a longer conflict, the global community could gain a better understanding of their innerworkings. Ultimately, this could lead to better capabilities for formulating a strategy to oppose VNSAs.

The academic relevance of this thesis stems from its expansion of currently existing work by attempting to incorporate a new phenomenon into the framework. By studying how a VNSA can stray from its original blueprint over the course of a conflict, a gap in knowledge could be filled. This work is by no means exhaustive in this attempt: it is an explanatory work employing a plausibility probe to determine whether or not its hypotheses are worth pursuing further.

Reading Guide

In this first chapter, an introduction to the problem at hand has been given. The research question and sub-questions have been introduced and the societal and academic relevance of the subject has been emphasized. In the next chapter, a theoretical framework presents the groundwork for understanding dynamics in a civil conflict. This framework funnels into a division of VSNAs, from which two hypotheses are drawn up. Chapter 3 is the methodology of this work; it shows the research methods employed and the indicators construed for testing the hypotheses. Chapters 4&5 span the analysis: case-studies of the LTTE and RUF respectively. Finally, chapter 6 consists of the conclusion in which the research questions are answered and the study is critically discussed.

¹ In the interest of further distancing the group from the Islamic religion, this thesis follows the tradition of referring to the group as 'Daesh'.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Understanding Rebellion

The English dictionary defines rebellion as ‘*An act of armed resistance to an established government or leader.*’ (Oxford English Dictionary) As such, rebellion is a form of political violence: violence perpetrated to achieve political goals. In the case of rebellion said political goal is likely to overthrow the current leadership, or at the very least alter the political course of the regime. Humans have employed rebellious acts against their rulers for as long as the collective memory spans, but academics and other observers are still attempting to fully understand *how* and *why* these rebellions take place.

One of the central tenets of Karl Marx’ philosophy is that revolution (or rebellion) takes place when the *proletariat* or working-class of a society feels exploited by the class that owns the means of production. In other words, according to Marxist doctrine the proletariat will attempt to seize the means of production and to overthrow the ruling *bourgeoisie* class once inequality between the classes reaches a certain boiling point. In essence, Marx’ proposed theory on rebellion is an extension of his observations on class conflict. (Boswell & Dixon, 1993, p. 682)

Ted Gurr subscribes to this Marxist insight in the sense that groups or individuals can turn to political violence if they feel a certain amount of inequality or unfairness. Gurr states: If intensely discontented, we are susceptible to new ideologies, and less complex beliefs, that assert the righteousness and usefulness of political violence. We also are likely to make calculations, whether shrewd or self-deceiving, about the gains we can achieve through violence. (Gurr, 1970, p. 193)

However, Gurr goes on to argue that the existence of intense discontent alone is not enough to justify resorting to violence for most people. Discontented people tend to act aggressively only when they become aware of the supposed source of frustration (or someone or something with whom they associate frustration) (Gurr, 1970, p. 199). Gurr hypothesizes that this is due to *relative deprivation*; discontent becomes actionable for most people only when they feel the status quo is unfair to them and owing to the (in)action of others.

Chalmer Johnson’s theories on the occurrence of rebellion are less psychological in nature than Gurr’s, and follow a more structuralist reasoning. Johnson writes: ‘So long as a

society's values and the realities with which it must deal in order to exist are in harmony with each other, the society is immune from revolution.' (Johnson, 1966, p. 60) Johnson views society as a set of social systems which must maintain an equilibrium. When equilibrated, these social systems function in harmony and together are able to form a successful society. However, all these social systems are evolutionary and subject to change. Social systems which were previously functioning in the society can move out of equilibrium and start to pose a threat. Purposeful changes must be undertaken to recreate an equilibrium between the systems, and according to Johnson's model rebellion or revolution can be one such purposeful change. If a new equilibrium is reached, it will likely differ vastly from the previous. (Johnson, 1966, pp. 60-68)

Charles Tilly observes a distinct lack of attention to the methods and means of mobilization in the academic discussion on the roots of rebellion. Tilly rejects the theories of what he calls 'model-builders' and does not see the value of Johnson and Gurr's 'retrospective models.' Tilly poses that the presence of Johnson's equilibrium can only be observed after the fact, and that his model has little practical, predicting value for policy-makers. Gurr's model receives a slightly more favorable review from Tilly, but Gurr's state of relative deprivation strikes Tilly as too vague and impractical. (Tilly, 1973, pp. 14-23)

Instead, Tilly focuses on the internal workings of the discontented party that is to start a rebellion. How strong are the ties between its members? How much overlap is there in the personal goals of the people that make up the group? Tilly sees this organizational cohesiveness as an element of paramount importance in the emergence of coordinated political violence. A feeling of discontent is not enough if the capacity to organize is insufficient. (Tilly, 1973, pp. 99-103)

2.2 Greed versus Grievance

In the academical framework attempting to make sense of rebellion, somewhat of a dichotomy has risen. Most political scientists adhere to the described Marxist tradition, which formulates that people will engage in violent protest when grievances are sufficiently acute. (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004, pp. 564-565) In economic theory however, some academics have a different conviction. This model, typified by Grossman, views rebellion as a quasi-criminal activity in which the prime motive for engaging in political violence is achieving personal (financial) gains. In the economic framework rebellion occurs when an atypical set of circumstances generates a profitable opportunity for revolt. Instead of grievances against a discontented party

being the prime reason for rebellion, the rebels are motivated by greed. (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004, p. 565)

Recently, this greed versus grievance debate has become dominated by discussion on a rational-choice model proposed by Collier & Hoeffler. The Collier-Hoeffler model finds several significant indicators that have proven valuable as predictors for the occurrence of civil war. Most of the significant indicators are economic in nature, with Collier & Hoeffler failing to find significant grievance-based indicators; hence giving merit to the greed-based explanations of civil conflict. (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004)

Frances Stewart offers a contrasting view and is seen as a proponent of grievance-based explanations of conflict. Stewart's case-studies on civil war find that 'Horizontal inequality is an important dimension of well-being, and it has economic and political consequences which can be highly damaging to development.' (Stewart, 2002, p. 34) Stewart poses that these horizontal inequalities are a 'powerful cause of civil wars', but she does not wholly reject the greed-based explanations. In fact, Stewart notes that 'greed can be a significant factor in civil wars, often interacting with grievances in complex ways.' (Keen, 2012) (Stewart, 2002) This is a stark contrast with Collier's stance, who is adamant about greed-based explanations and goes as far as to say that 'grievance-based explanations' are 'seriously wrong'. (Keen, 2012, p. 757)

David Keen rejects both Stewart and Collier, but is particularly harsh on Collier in his critique. Keen accuses Collier of oversimplifying the matter at hand and suggests his empirical data was wrongly interpreted. For example, Collier cites (lack of) access to education as a proxy for greed, even though this has been a key grievance motivating many fighters. (Keen, 2012, p. 761) Furthermore, Keen suggests that Collier's work has been particularly popular and well-received due to how politically convenient it is for those upholding the neo-liberal interventionist zeitgeist that has been present in the West (Keen, 2012, p. 767). Collier's work suggests that rebellions are born out of greed and not rightfully held grievances, which makes a useful argument for those attempting to delegitimize various uprisings. Moreover, the idea that inequality is apparently a non-factor in prevent violence is a rather convenient finding for those who support economic liberalism (Keen, 2012, p. 768).

Keen goes on to reject part of Stewart's analysis – stating that her results are not always neat – but praises her for emphasizing the multitude of reasons that can lead to a civil war and the complexity of their interconnectedness. Keen makes the convincing argument that both proponents of the grievance-based and greed-based explanations are guilty of attempting to oversimplify a very complex matter. According to Keen, the functions of 'warfare may be

political, economical and psychological' and he stresses that academics need to continue investigating the complexities of rebel motivation, instead of simply picking a side in either grievance-based or greed-based (Keen, 2012, p. 777).

2.3 The Role of Money in Intrastate Conflict

Whatever the exact reason for starting a civil war, rebellion is a costly endeavour. When a newly formed group of rebels starts waging war against the state, the balance of power will almost always be asymmetrical. Unless the state is significantly weakened, the violent non-state actor (VNSA) will be numerically and financially outnumbered. The logical first course of action for the rebels is to attempt to eliminate this disadvantage by procuring financial means to attract supporters and be able to provide them with supplies for the commencing conflict. The aim of this section is to gain an understanding of the financing options available to VNSAs

According to Mark Lichbach, one of the leading scholars on political conflict and intrastate rebellion in particular, any kind of organized rebellion suffers from a prisoner's dilemma-type problem. Due to the asymmetrical nature of the conflict, sympathizers have an incentive to free ride on the actions of the rebels, because an eventual successful rebellion would provide a public good for all (Lichbach, 1995). In order to make it worthwhile for sympathizers to actively participate in the rebellion, the rebel faction or VNSA must overcome this dilemma. By gaining funding and levelling the financial battlefield the VNSA can best this obstacle: only by being able to provide for their supporters the VNSA becomes a viable challenger of the state and can start recruiting supporters previously unwilling to commit to the cause (Burch, 2013, pp. 29-30).

In dissecting rebel financing methods, Burch offers a few helpful dimensions to frame the phenomenon. First, financing can be either transnational or subnational in origin. By transnational funding Burch refers to 'rents captured through interactions with other actors outside the state under rebellion', whereas subnational funding 'comes from sources located within the state.' (Burch, 2013, p. 30) Additionally, Burch recognizes that transnational or subnational funding can be construed as either criminal or non-criminal nature.

Popular financing is the most important method of subnational non-criminal financing. One famous example is the Cuban revolution led by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, who relied on food and shelter from the local population to launch their rebellion. In the case of the Cuban revolution this particular type of rebellion was successful, but Burch contends that groups relying on popular funding are rather vulnerable. As most donations are quite small and the

longevity of the support is unknown, the group is not completely autonomous and their survival is not guaranteed (Burch, 2013, p. 31). Furthermore, once the regime gets wind of the support offered by locals, they could start a retribution campaign against public supporters of the VNSA. The supporters are unlikely to be as adamant as the rebels themselves, so this is a potential weakness that can be exploited by the state.

Transnational non-criminal funding mostly refers to the previously discussed outside benefactors. Instead of being purely internal affairs, civil conflicts in modern times often have far-reaching effects for the international community. As a consequence of this countries, organisations or even individuals can start providing support to VNSAs to further their own position. This was especially visible during the peak of the Cold War, when both the US and the USSR had vested interests in various regional conflicts ranging from South America to South East Asia (Mumford, 2013). In recent times, we can observe this mostly in the various conflicts in the Middle East. The US, Russia and various countries in the region have actively backed or are still backing VNSAs in the Syrian Conflict. (Ryan, 2012). Although being backed by a powerful external actor might seem like a beneficial arrangement for a VNSA, there are some serious drawbacks. By relying on a small number of sources or even a single source income, the VNSA has to stay aligned with the interests of their outside benefactor. In a rapidly-evolving battlefield such as the one in Syria, these interests can quickly deviate from a VNSAs intended purpose.

Therefore, Burch comes to the conclusion that a VNSA striving to maintain a large degree of autonomy will often resort to crime (2013, pp. 35-37). A rebel faction not bound to serving the interests of either the local population or an outside benefactor and thereby retaining autonomy will likely have a secondary business in either subnational or transnational crime, or a combination of both. Subnational criminality often relates to extortion in one way or another. A prominent type of subnational extortion is taxation of the local population. Often, this type of taxation is an extension of popular support. When a rebel faction begins operating in a region, the local population might be inclined to provide support. As support starts to fade over time, either due to a changing political landscape or wrongdoing by the VNSA, the rebels are unlikely to let go of their prime source of income and will start forcibly collecting donations. The distinction is not always black and white: if a VNSA controls territory, it could well expect donations of the whole population. Those not intrinsically inclined to support the faction could choose to donate regardless, if only to personally stay out of trouble.

Of course, rebels could also rely on more overt forms of criminality. In the previous example the lines between extortion and voluntary support are blurry, but there are examples

of VNSAs occupying themselves with racketeering and other mafia-like practices to extort local business owners (Burch, 2013). Other forms of primarily subnational criminal activity that rebels may resort to are acts of kidnapping and robbery. Recently, Daesh has been a prominent example of a VNSA adopting kidnapping, robbery and other traditional criminal activity as method of securing funds (Napoleoni, 2016).

Finally, VNSAs can choose to participate in intrastate crime to attain funding for the realisation of their political objectives. It should be stressed that the dichotomy between subnational crime and transnational crime is not wholly accepted for the purpose of this thesis. For example, if a non-national of the state in which the rebellion is taking place is kidnapped by members of the VNSA, one could place this under the denominator of transnational crime instead of subnational crime. Such a distinction is not completely workable and frankly not very useful, so in this work transnational crime entails interactions between the VNSA and the larger international community at hand. Still, to declare certain criminal acts either subnational or transnational requires a bit of context. In the previous example, a non-national kidnapped by the VNSA could be regarded as a form of subnational crime. However, it could be argued that if the VNSA is specifically targeting non-nationals and even nationals of certain countries such kidnappings are to be suited under transnational crime.

Discussion on definitions aside, there are of course criminal acts employed by VNSAs that are undeniably transnational in nature. Groups involved in the smuggling of contraband such as natural resources, drugs or arms are a prime example. Such goods are not always illicit per se, as the VNSA can choose also to choose to smuggle gasoline, tobacco or food items. Human trafficking has also been exploited as a means of gaining funding by VNSA (Burch, 2013). Instead of restricting themselves to merely trafficking, some VNSAs have also opted for a more involved approach to the drug trade. The case of the FARC having an active role in the production of cocaine is an example.

2.4 Resource-based or Ideology-based?

As mentioned previously, would-be rebel leaders are faced with the ‘recruitment challenge’. This prisoner’s dilemma-type problem paints a grim picture of the likelihood of organized opposition to the state: since many of the potential benefits of a victory over the state actor will be realized independent of an individual’s participation, and the potential costs of participation are potentially massive, rebel leaders need to incentives to their supporters for a successful recruitment strategy. (Weinstein, 2005, p. 600)

2.4.1 Resource-based recruitment strategies

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, such incentives can work if they are in the form of money or otherwise materialistic. To gain control over such material wealth, rebel groups can choose to loot (natural) resources. Weinstein states that ‘rebel leaders [can] use looted resource wealth to buy arms and hire soldiers, making it possible to rapidly overcome the dramatic asymmetry of power with government forces.’ (Weinstein, 2005, p. 600) In fact, according to James D. Fearon the presence of valuable natural resources such as ‘cocaine, precious gems or opium’ leads to longer-running civil conflicts. (Fearon, *Why Do Some Civil Wars Last So Much Longer than Others?*, 2004)

Weinstein makes an observation that at first glance is slightly contradictory to Fearon’s; noting that the presence of economic endowments is a short-term blessing for leaders of VNSAs, but often leads to groups being flooded ‘opportunistic joiners who exhibit little commitment to the long-term goals of the organization’ (Weinstein, 2005, p. 599) This does not seem to be entirely consistent with Fearon’s theory that VNSAs that have access to valuable natural resources are able to wage longer civil wars.

Nonetheless, offering material incentives to would-be recruits is a valid recruitment strategy for rebel leaders, and a way to overcome the recruitment challenge. These resources do not necessarily have to come from natural sources – there are plenty examples of groups drawing upon income from the support of an external patron or diaspora remittances. For example, during the second half of the 20th century South Africa pursued a foreign policy in which it actively supported VNSAs waging civil war against rival regimes such as Angola or Mozambique. Civil wars with outside involvement have been observed to last longer, cause more fatalities and be more difficult to resolve through negotiations (Salehyan, Gleditsch, & Cunningham, 2011, pp. 709-713).

2.4.2 Ideology-based recruitment strategies

Although the availability of (natural) resources undeniably plays an important role in the emergence and enduringness of civil conflicts, rebel groups can surface without an economic base to fall back on. According to Weinstein, these groups ‘have met the logistical demands of insurgency through means other than the mobilization of material wealth.’ (Weinstein, 2005, p. 599) Fearon and Laitin offer one such method in the mobilisation of (socially constructed) ethnic identities to recruit supporters for the cause. (Fearon & Laitin, 2000) In Rwanda, the Hutu’s notoriously revolted against the ruling Tutsi class, resulting in violence of genocidal

proportions. The Hutu's offered little to no short-term material benefits to supporters of the rebellion, but instead drew on socially construed ethnic or class identities to build the base for the revolt.²

Groups drawing on social, ethnic or class ties to recruit supporters for their rebellion attract a different crowd than groups employing the previously discussed resource-based recruitment strategy. Instead of the opportunistic joiners seeking short-term rewards, the 'ideology-based' recruitment strategy draws supporters by making 'credible promises about the private rewards that will come with victory.' (Weinstein, 2005, p. 599) These supporters are more invested in the actual success of the rebellion, leaving groups employing this ideology-based recruitment strategy 'populated with activist recruits willing to invest their time and energy in the hope of reaping large rewards in the future.' (Weinstein, 2005, pp. 599-600)

2.4.3 Recruitment strategy and rebel group identity

In short, Weinstein typifies the differences between rebel groups as follows: 'Resource rich rebel groups offer short-term rewards, or *payoffs*, to motivate participants. Resource-constrained rebel groups rely on *promises* about the selective benefits that individuals will receive in the future.' (Weinstein, 2005, p. 603) Based on their economic endowments, rebel groups formulate a recruitment strategy and attract very different kinds of supporters in short-term, opportunistic fortune seekers for resource-based recruitment and long-term, committed individuals for ideology-based recruitment.

Given the far-reaching repercussions of the chosen recruitment strategy, it is not a stretch to assume that a rebel group's identity, strategy and tactics are influenced by it. Weinstein observes that groups employing the ideology-based recruitment strategy can often make use of the social and political ties between its members to develop an effective organisational structure, whereas resource-based rebel groups might encounter difficulties given the short-term-oriented behaviour of its members. (Weinstein, 2005, p. 622)

This can have significant consequences. Take for example the strategic use of violence, often the most powerful weapon a VNSA can employ. In a well-structured organisational environment violence can be applied tactically, but without clear mechanisms for coordinating and controlling the members things can get out of hand. Extreme violence against civilian

² At the time, the Hutu and Tutsi conflicts were misconstrued as ethnic violence. Instead, Hutu and Tutsi are class-designations stemming from colonial times.

populations is often an effect of the out-of-control members of a resource-based rebel group, lacking the organisational mechanisms to avoid such situations. (Weinstein, 2005)

2.5 Rebel recruitment strategy and identity in longer conflicts

Given the effect of the chosen recruitment strategy on the identity of the rebel group, its strategy and even the trajectory of the civil war, it is paramount for researchers to attempt to fully grasp this interaction. Weinstein's work focuses mostly on the funding strategy and appertaining recruitment strategy at the onset of the civil war, i.e. when the rebel group is just starting out. However, there are theoretical arguments to be made for VNSAs shifting their strategies over the course of a longer conflict.

A resource-based rebel group starting out with economic endowments could encounter several potential hurdles forcing them to change strategies. For example, if the group is smuggling illicit natural resources such as coca, opium, tobacco etc. their political enemies could close the smuggling routes or attempt to destroy the crops. In the case of non-replenishable natural resources such as oil, the resource could of course also simply run out over time. If a VNSA is relying on an outside benefactor for material support, the rebels are subject to the whims of that state, organisation or individual. As the civil war evolves, the goals of the rebels could drift from the goals of the outside benefactor, leading them to stop or diminish their support. International sanctions might also constrict the benefactor's options. Moreover, if the group is reliant on the financial support of the local population, that support can be expected to fade over time as the locals lose faith in the capabilities of the VNSA to achieve victory. (Burch, 2013)

On the other hand, ideology-based groups could also be forced to switch recruitment and funding strategies if they fail to achieve their goals over time. Although these groups likely consist of more invested and committed individuals who expect to be rewarded only once victory is achieved, their patience is sure to be tested in long-dragging conflicts. Furthermore, since these individuals are more likely to be socially, politically and ideologically invested in the cause, the support of the local population or their political peers is important. As the conflict drags on and the rebel group loses popular support, they could start to question their commitment.

Above are theoretical arguments on why VNSAs would be inclined or forced to change their recruitment and funding strategies over the course of a longer civil conflict. These theoretical arguments translate into the following hypotheses:

H1: Over the course of a longer civil conflict, ideology-based rebel groups will be inclined or forced to change strategies and adopt more aspects of resource-based rebel groups.

H2: Over the course of a longer civil conflict, resource-based rebel groups will be inclined or forced to change strategies and adopt more aspects of ideology-based rebel groups.

This research is guided by the hypotheses above, and the subsequent research methodology aims to provide a method for testing them.

3. Research Design

3.1 Plausibility Probe Design

The main focus of this study is to determine whether or not there is merit to the hypotheses that VNSAs are likely to shift their funding and recruitment strategies over the course of a longer civil conflict. For the purpose of this research, VNSAs have been divided into two categories: resource-based and ideology-based.

In order to achieve its main goal, this study is guided by a plausibility probe design. Plausibility probes are a type of case-study design and were proposed by Harry Eckstein. It is an ‘illustrative’ case study and can be employed by researchers looking to ‘sharpen a hypothesis or theory, or to explore the suitability of a particular case as a vehicle for testing a theory before engaging in a costly and time-consuming research.’ In the case of this study, the aim is not to fully explain the case or fully test the hypotheses. Rather, the aim here is to identify whether or not the theoretical propositions made in the previous section are relevant. A plausibility probe is therefore the correct vehicle for this exercise. (Eckstein, 1975).

3.2 Research Methodology

In order to test the hypothesized causal mechanisms, this study attempts to go beyond mere historical explanation in gaining an understanding of the civil conflicts explored in this plausibility probe. Since the study concerns within-case causal mechanisms, process tracing is chosen as the employed research technique. Process tracing was originally developed in the field of cognitive psychology and refers to ‘techniques for examining the intermediate steps in cognitive mental processes to better understand the heuristics through which humans make decisions.’ (Bennet & Checkel, 2012, p. 7) Process tracing makes use of ‘histories, archival documents, interview transcripts, and other sources to see whether the causal process a theory hypothesizes or implies in a case is in fact evident in the sequence and values of the intervening variables in that case.’ (George & Bennett, 2005)

Process tracing differs from historical explanation in the sense that the narrative will be both inductive and deductive. In the theoretical framework of this study several causal mechanisms are theorized, but none of them are conclusive. They could exist, not exist or work differently in practice. Through various iterations these theories could be accepted, rejected or

altered. This research aims to adhere to the three-part standard of good process tracing as proposed by Bennett & Checkel:

- 1) *Meta-theoretically*; the research is grounded in a philosophical base that is ontologically consistent with mechanism-based understanding of the social reality.
- 2) *Contextually*; it will make use of a pluralistic methodology to reconstruct the causal process carefully.
- 3) *Methodologically*; alternative pathways through which the outcome of interest has occurred will be considered carefully. (Bennet & Checkel, 2012)

Furthermore, the research will adhere to the further 10 criteria that are addressed by Bennett & Checkel. To discuss them here would be beyond the scope of this methodological framework, but they are often invoked in the analysis. (Bennet & Checkel, 2012, pp. 26-35)

3.3 Case Selection

Inherent in the research question is the length of the civil conflict: this research aims to study causal mechanisms in *long* civil conflicts, so first it needs to be defined what constitutes a long civil conflict. To do this, data on has been drawn from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, a data collection project on organized violence. Conflicts consisting of a state versus a violent non-state actor were subsequently ordered based on length, to determine which conflicts lasted the longest. This processed data can be found in the appendix. (Uppsala University, 2017)

Moreover, for the purpose of this plausibility probe it was imperative to select one case that contained a rebel group to be classified as a resource-based VNSA and one that contained an ideology-based VNSA. Furthermore, in an attempt to exclude other possible explanations for changes in recruitment and funding strategies, cases were selected based on the stability and constancy of the rebel group at hand. For example, the Islamist Sunni revolutionary movement in Egypt has undergone so many mutations in leadership, membership and name that it was excluded from this plausibility probe.

Ultimately, the cases of the LTTE in Sri Lanka and the RUF in Sierra Leone were selected as the cases in this plausibility probe. According to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (TLEE or Tamil Tigers) uprising in Sri Lanka is one of the longer documented civil conflicts. It consists of a VNSA that could be classified as ideology-based and has been relatively static and stabile over the course of the conflict.

Selecting a resource-based VNSA proved to be less straightforward. Not only is it difficult to conclusively classify a VNSA in a conflict as resource-based, but the civil conflicts in which a rebel group that was definitively resource-based was active were often significantly shorter than conflicts with active ideology-based groups. Eventually, the struggle of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) of Sierra Leone was selected. The case consists of a rebel group that depended heavily on economic endowments to mobilize its recruits, and waged an eleven-year civil conflict against the Sierra Leone government.

3.4 Operationalization

In order to operationalize the methodological framework presented here, a set of indicators was designed that point towards a VNSA employing either a resource-based strategy or an ideology-based strategy. These indicators stem mostly from Weinstein’s work: (Weinstein, 2005)

Resource-based	Ideology-based
Presence of material wealth	Mobilization of social ties
Looting of natural resources or reliant on external patron	Ethnic or social uniformity between its members
Recruitment by force or coercion	Building support among civilians
Lacks social bonds and organizational ties between its members	Strong social bonds and organizational structure between its members
Short-term oriented behavior that damages civilian populations	Greater capacity to use violence strategically

Table 1

In the analysis, particular attention will be given to these indicators and whether or not they remain present over the course of the conflict. If there is any merit to the hypotheses presented in the previous chapter, indicators belonging the ideology-based strategies will likely become visible in the resource-based case over the course of the conflict – and *vice versa*.

To fully flesh this out, the first part of the analysis will detail the identity, strategy and tactics of the VNSA in its early years. Subsequently, the role and actions of the VNSA in the conflict will be explored to see if the indicators identified upon the VNSAs inception remain present over the course of the conflict.

3.5 Data Collection and Sources

In the data collection for the plausibility probe, 3 of the common sources of case study evidence were used: documents, archival records and interviews. (Tellis, 1997) It should be noted that the interviews were not taken personally, but found in previously done academic work on the VNSAs.

In the set of sources of related to the LTTE in Sri Lanka there were mostly secondary sources available. For the purpose of this thesis, these secondary sources were judged to be of sufficient quality for use in this thesis. Moreover, sources by relatively impartial sources such as the United Nations or NGOs were used if applicable.

The set of sources related to the RUF was a bit more expansive; many researchers before have employed and published interviews with ex-RUF fighters. Excerpts from these interviews are used throughout the analysis to substantiate the findings done through secondary literature and archival records.

4. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka



Figure 1: LTTE Flag

4.1 Conflict Overview

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, better known as LTTE or Tamil Tigers, were founded in 1976 by Velupillai Prabhakaran. (Yass, 2014) Prabhakaran was an ethnic Tamil involved with various Tamil Nationalist parties. Many of the Tamil, an ethnic minority, believed they were being marginalized by the Sri Lankan government which consisted mostly of ethnic Sinhalese. (Dharmawardhane, 2013)

Sri Lanka, formerly known as Ceylon under British colonial rule, became independent in 1948. The colonial rulers are said to have displayed favouritism toward the Tamil minority, which in turn led to resentment among the Sinhalese majority. With the Brits gone, the Sinhalese assumed leading roles in the government, disenfranchised the Tamil and made Sinhala the official language. As the Sinhalese-dominated government introduced further exclusionary and Apartheid-like policies, ethnic and political tensions rose steadily. The Tamil started demanding an independent state in the North and East of Sri Lanka, dubbed ‘Tamil Eelam’. When various political efforts to achieve independence were thwarted by the Sinhala government, many of the Tamil started to accept the necessity of armed struggle. Around thirty revolutionary groups sprung up, with various degrees of organisational capacity. Through persuasion, coercion and sometimes violence these groups were soon annexed to form one, dominant independence movement: the LTTE. (Moorcraft, 2012)

1983 is recognized as the actual of the Sri Lankan conflict, as LTTE rebels ambushed an army convoy. 13 Sri Lankan soldiers were killed in the ambush, triggering nation-wide riots. Anti-Tamil violence ensued, and massacres and pogroms were organized and accumulated a total death toll of in the thousands.

Many Tamils fled Sinhalese-dominated areas, feeling even more disenfranchised than before. Moreover, the riots led to many young Tamil boys feeling extremely antagonistic toward the government and the Sinhalese as a whole – driving them into the hands of Tamil militant groups such as the LTTE. (Harrison, 2003)

The LTTE emerged as a serious challenger for the Sri Lankan regime, using terrorist tactics such as suicide bombings, kidnappings and the recruitment of child soldiers. The LTTE were particularly effective at suicide attacks, as they reportedly carried out close to 400 of them

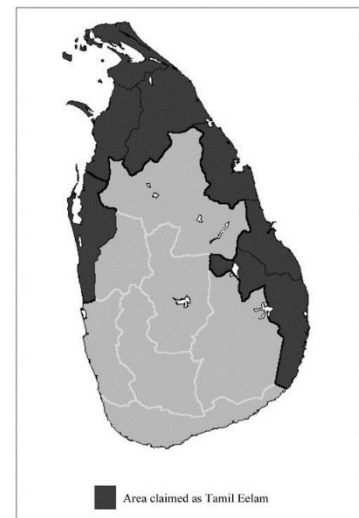


Figure 2: map of Sri Lanka, Tamil Eelam highlighted

over the course of the 26-year conflict. Various political figures were assassinated, but the LTTE also carried out attacks against Sinhalese civilians. (Ministry of Defence, 2011) As the conflict raged on, neighbouring India started taking a more involved approach in the conflict. India, home to a significant Tamil population itself, initially provided arms and training to the LTTE rebels. As India started assuming a more active role in supporting the rebels, negotiations were started by the Sri Lankan government. This led to an Indo-Sri Lankan accord, and in 1987 India deployed a peacekeeping force that intervened. The Indian Peacekeeping Force (IKPF) was supposed to disarm the Tamils, but the LTTE refused to give up its arms. The IKPF got drawn into an armed conflict with the LTTE, and had to leave Sri Lanka empty handed after 32 months of violence. (Bajoria, 2009)

The civil conflict would last until 2009, with various important events over its course. In 1991, Indian ex-prime minister Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated by a suicide bomber. Given the personal vendetta between LTTE leader Prabhakaran and Gandhi, it is heavily suspected that the assassination was the LTTE's doing. (Roberts, 2010) In 2008, Sri Lanka launched the so-called Northern Offensive, aimed at eradicating the northernmost Tamil strongholds. Prabhakaran was killed during this offensive, and in May 2009 the Sri Lankan conflict officially ended with a ceasefire. Nonetheless, successfully integrating the Tamil minority will remain a challenge for the Sri Lankan government for the foreseeable future. (Roberts, 2010) (Ministry of Defence, 2011)

4.2 LTTE Identity, Strategy and Tactics

The LTTE was formed as an ethnic secessionist force aiming to form an independent Tamil state in the northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka. Tension over inequality in the balance of power in regards to the ethnic Sinhalese had reached a boiling point in the late 1970s and had launched Sri Lanka into full blown civil war. This ethno-political imbalance, stemming from the colonial period under the British, was the prime *casus belli* for the LTTE.

The importance of the ethnic Tamil identity shows in the structure of the organization. The LTTE were 'perhaps the most lethal, well organised and disciplined terrorist force' in its active years. (South Asia Terrorism Portal, 2001) The organisation was highly hierarchical and the chain of command was pyramid-like, with Prabhakaran at the head of a two-tier structure that included a political and military branch. In these branches various sub-groups and lower-tier leaders existed, much like traditional governing or military organisations. In fact, the LTTE are recognized as the first terrorist organisation to set up a completely operating military

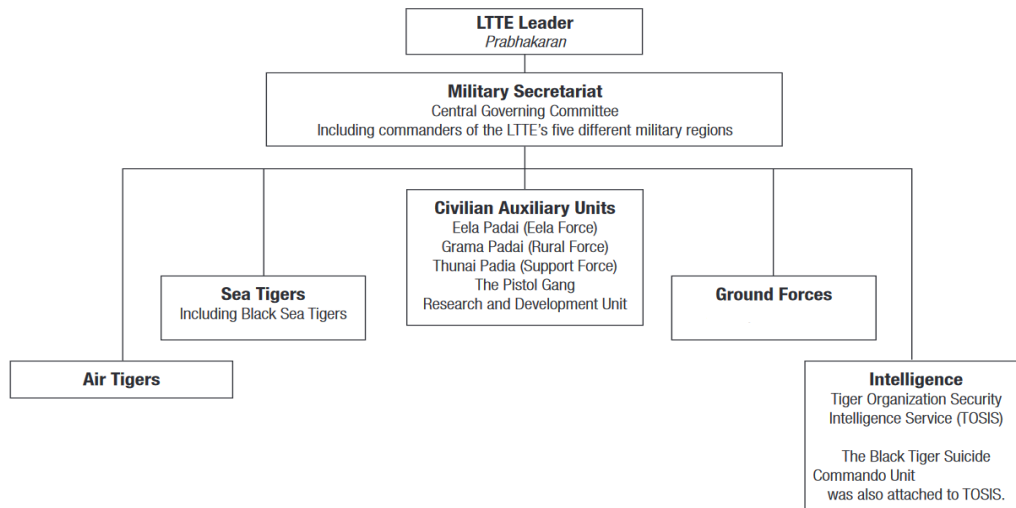


Table 2: LTTE Military Structure

branch. Not unlike the military of a nation, the LTTE's armed forces were divided in three branches: a ground force known as the Tigers, a navy called Sea Tigers and the Air Tigers were the air force. Finally, the military had a wing dedicated to carrying out suicide attacks called the Black Tigers. It is suspected that one such Black Tiger got to Indian ex-prime minister Rajiv Gandhi (Ziegler, 2017). The pyramid-like structure of the LTTE's military branch allowed these branches to carry out missions together effectively, but also to work independently if required.

It should be noted that although Weinstein identifies the presence of strong ethnic and social ties within a VNSA as a predictor for a well-structured organisation, this would be perhaps be an oversimplification of the LTTE's case. As noted before, India had taken up a significant stake in the Tamil conflict in Sri Lanka and provided organisations such as the LTTE with weapons and training. It is highly likely that the Indian support during the LTTE's formative years provided or at least aided them with the organisational capacity to setup their structure in such a way that it could rival a state. (Ziegler, 2017) (Chalk, 2008, pp. 99-102)

Nonetheless, in the ethnic uniformity and the emphasis on hierarchy and structure found in the LTTE, two indicators of an ideology-based VNSA are identified. Moreover, the LTTE has been actively involved in attempting to build and solidify a base of support among the Sri Lankan civilians. This popular support was mainly based on the disenfranchised Tamil civilians based in the north of Sri Lanka (specifically around the city of Jaffna), but later also on Tamils who escaped to the south of the country. (Rotberg, 2013, pp. 8-15)

Furthermore, the LTTE relied heavily on the Tamil diaspora abroad for funding. As the Sri Lankan conflict had erupted and escalated in the period 1976-1983, the effects of the war and the subsequent targeted ethnic abuse by the Sinhalese led hundreds of thousands Tamils to

flee Sri Lanka. (Becker, 2006, pp. 8-10) As the Tamils settled abroad, many had suffered or witnessed the ethnic abuse carried out by the Sri Lankan government, and felt a strong connection to the Tamil struggle. The LTTE quickly recognized the potential of its overseas support base: they sought control over Tamil institutions such as churches, community services and businesses in foreign countries. According to a Tamil residing in Toronto, one such overseas Tamil community: 'Whatever is happening in the Tamil community, they make sure their agenda is there.' (Becker, 2006, p. 10)

From their influence in strategic positions abroad the LTTE could ensure a steady flow of income from its diaspora in the period 1983-2000s. There was broad support among the Tamil community and the LTTE started seeking regular income by convincing Tamil families abroad to pledge monthly contributions. In the mid-1990s, this periodical diaspora support is estimated to encompass 80 to 90 percent of the LTTE's total military budget. (Byman, Chalk, Hoffman, Rosenau, & Brannan, 2001)

In Weinstein's model for ideology-based VNSAs, building support among civilians is an indicator for the strategy and identity of the group. However, although the LTTE have a solid support base among the Tamil still living in Sri Lanka, they are mostly reliant on the Tamil diaspora abroad. In the Weinstein-model, diaspora support is not specifically accounted for, but 'support from an external patron' is seen as a resource-based indicator. (Weinstein, 2005, p. 608) It could be argued rather convincingly that diaspora support from co-ethnics abroad is more akin to civilian support than it is to support from an external patron, but for the purpose of this plausibility probe diaspora support is not fully accepted as an indicator of an ideology-based VNSA.

The LTTE's use of violence was rather strategic and well-organized. As mentioned before, the military-like structure of the armed wing was unheard for a terrorist organisation at that time. Discipline was strict amongst the serving cadres – smoking, liquor and sex were forbidden. Weapon discipline was also notoriously strict, if a LTTE soldier lost their weapon he or she would never be armed again. There was even a specialized assassin unit dubbed the *pistol group*. This elite unit was trained to assassinate ranking individuals and to plausibly deny LTTE-involvement, as the members of the pistol group would not reveal any LTTE connections upon capture. (Moorcraft, 2012) (Richards, 2004)

To further demonstrate the LTTE's rigid discipline: members who passed basic combat training were handed glass vials containing cyanide as part of a graduation ceremony. They were instructed to bite the vials upon capture by the enemy, to prevent them from being interrogated or tortured and giving up information. (Richards, 2004, p. 20)

The LTTE displayed their military prowess on the battlefield as well. A notorious LTTE tactic was to ambush government forces and attack in ‘waves’. This meant that an LTTE unit would first surround their enemy and subsequently start employing suicide bombers to confuse and scare their opponent, attempting to break morale in the Sri Lankan government forces. (Stanford University, 2015)

Over the years, the LTTE carried out rather precise attacks on Sri Lankan security forces, the clergy government officers, politicians and intellectuals. Although there was often collateral damage in the form of casualties amongst civilians, it seemed as if the LTTE leadership was always in control of its forces. Indeed, the LTTE was known to go to extreme lengths to maintain this control: Stalin-esque purges would be carried out periodically by guise of counterintelligence. Various ranking LTTE-members were either victimized or pushed towards defection due to these purges. (Moorcraft, 2012)

In reflection of the indicators that the Weinstein-model provides to recognize an ideology-based VNSA, the LTTE displays at least four of five. As shown in this section, the organisation employs the mobilization of social ties to maintain a strong organisational structure. Moreover, by mobilizing members of the same social (and in this case, ethnic) group, there is a large degree of social and ethnic uniformity among its members. This well-structured, uniform VNSA is able to successfully employ strategic violence for its cause, without losing control over its heavily armed members. The only indicator not wholly present is the reliance on support among local civilians. That is not to say that the LTTE does not attempt to build a popular support base, but it is far more reliant on the Tamil diaspora abroad.

4.3 Observable changes in LTTE strategy over the course of the Sri Lankan conflict

In this section, changes in LTTE strategy over the course of the 26-year conflict are observed and critically assessed. In order to research whether hypothesis H1 presented in chapter 2 has any merit, process tracing will be employed to find out if the LTTE strayed from its ideology-based course towards a strategy more akin to those found in resource-based rebel groups. To quantify this, particular attention is given to the presence and evolution of the indicators as inferred from the Weinstein-model. Principally, the indicators of an ideology-based VNSA identified as present in the LTTE in section 4.2 are explored thoroughly to scan for notable changes.

It is important to note that propaganda was an essential aspect of the Sri Lankan civil war. Both the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government attempted to paint the opposing party as anti-humanitarian and guilty of war crimes. Therefore, in this analysis of the strategical changes or course-alterations undergone by the LTTE over the course of the conflict, the source of the information is taking into serious considerations. For example, accusations of rogue LLTE elements committing atrocities against civilians by the Sri Lankan government are not taken at face value, but are only included if reiterated by neutral third parties such as NGOs or other international organisations.

In the 26-year period spanning the Sri Lankan civil war, the LTTE's funding strategy changed significantly. In the early years, 1983-1990, the group relied mostly on internal funding to finance its struggle. In the mid-1980s, the LTTE went on a bank robbing spree in and around the city of Jaffna. Armed robbery was a critical aspect of its fundraising activities, as the group stated somewhat ignorantly that it was stealing from the 'public' and not the Tamil people – conveniently forgetting that Jaffna has historically always been a Tamil stronghold. (Clarke, *Terrorism, Inc. The Financing of Terrorism, Insurgency and Irregular Warfare*, 2015, pp. 51-54) (Canagarajah, 1995) Other than robbing banks, the organisation would pillage and plunder residential areas of predominantly non-ethnic Tamils. Moreover, LTTE members have sometimes been known to act as enforcers for other criminal organisations. For example, they would receive payment for providing security on international drug shipments. (Clarke, *Terrorism, Inc. The Financing of Terrorism, Insurgency and Irregular Warfare*, 2015, p. 53)

LTTE members were also more actively involved in drug trade – in the 1980s, Tamil drug rings were dismantled in Switzerland and Italy. Sri Lanka's proximity to the Golden Triangle of Laos, Myanmar and Thailand³ combined with the LTTE's extensive seafaring prowess made drug trafficking 'an obvious racket to pursue.' (Clarke, 2016) As LTTE members attained the specialized skills to smuggle narcotics, they branched out to moving other illicit wares such as arms, illegal equipment and people. Furthermore, LTTE members overseas are said to have been involved in counterfeiting currencies. (Clarke, 2015, pp. 53-54)

Over time, the LTTE's reliance on smuggling, counterfeiting and piracy for funding dwindled. As the Tamil diaspora grew – in large part due to Sri Lankan refugees settling overseas – the LTTE started getting a larger percentage of its funding from donations. These donations started out voluntarily, but quickly turned to extortion. The LTTE was known to

³ The Golden Triangle of heroin is the geographical area spanning Laos, Myanmar and Thailand that is known as one of the global centres of opium production. **Invalid source specified.**

maintain records of individuals or families that contributed. A London-based ex-collector for the LTTE tells Human Right Watch that: ‘If families didn’t give money, we would keep visiting them. We would tell them we would come back next month.’ (Becker, 2006, p. 12) If expatriate Tamils still had relatives living in LTTE controlled areas, they would often have their relatives threatened unless they contributed to the cause. This donation/extortion scheme was highly successful, as experts estimate this income flow to account for 80 to 90 percent of the LTTE’s military budget by the mid-1990s. (Becker, 2006, p. 11)

At its peak the annual budget for the LTTE was around \$200-\$300 million, mostly attained through the diaspora and illicit trafficking. (Stanford University, 2015) This budget left the LTTE more than capable of opposing the Sri Lankan government. As per the indicators derived from Weinstein, there was a definite ‘presence of material wealth’ in the LTTE.

As the conflict dragged on, popular support for the LTTE faded. Although effective in achieving its military goals, the LTTE *modus operandi* of carrying out suicide attacks on civilian, economic and military targets was bad for its reputation. In fact, the LTTE was the prime perpetrator of suicide attacks from its 1976 inception until the 2000s – more than Hezbollah or Islamic Jihadi’s. (Ziegler, 2017) Moreover, enlisting women and children and employing them as soldiers – often on suicide missions – was a hard pill to swallow for many, even for those who sympathized with the Tamil cause. (Moorcraft, 2012)

As the recruitment challenge intensified for the organisation, it started to rely more and more on forced recruitment. Although not often through actual violence, individuals were progressively drawn into the LTTE through social entrapment. For example, members of the organisation would enlist young Tamils into performing civil service-like jobs for the LTTE. In doing so, these individuals would be labelled ‘LTTE-affiliated’ by the Sri Lankan government, effectively restricting their movement to LTTE-controlled areas. By restricting their geographical mobility and social space, the LTTE swayed these people from passive to active cooperation.

In a study on LTTE recruitment/coercion methods, the researcher observes a shift in LTTE strategy around the mid-1990s. Instead of attempting to build attitudinal support or popular legitimacy for its cause among the civilians, the group started seeking for mere behavioural support (Lilja, 2009). In other words, the local population did not have to identify with the cause as long as they complied with LTTE demands. This is, again, a shift in one of the indicators from the Weinstein-model. Seeking for attitudinal support, as the LTTE did in its early phases, is an indicator of an ideology-based VNSA. However, coercing or

manipulating civilians into providing merely behaviour support and complying with the VNSAs demands is normally an indicator of a resource-based group.

The strategical manner in which the LTTE used violence to achieve its political goals has taken different forms over the course of the conflict. From its 1976 inception to 1989, the LTTE was predominantly occupied with ‘consolidating its supremacy over other Tamil groups also fighting for the rights of the Tamil people.’ (Mayilvaganan, 2009) During this period, the conflict against the government was mostly waged through guerrilla warfare, given the asymmetrical nature of the conflict.

After 1989, with the IKPF having returned back to India without having achieved its goals, the LTTE had attained military prowess that could more than rival the Sri Lankan government. This prowess was on display at the Battle of Elephant Pass, a four-day battle over the Sri Lankan army base at Elephant Pass. The LTTE launched a frontal assault on the army base, and was armed with artillery to frustrate the army’s aerial attempts to rescue its wounded soldiers. Eventually, the LTTE were pushed back as government reinforcements arrived. Nonetheless, the Battle of Elephant Pass marked a significant escalation in the conflict: it proved that the LTTE was capable of standing against the Sri Lankan army in conventional warfare. (Human Rights Watch)

The LTTE entered into an all-out war with the Sri Lankan government that would end in somewhat of a stalemate in 2000. (Mayilvaganan, 2009) The period 2000-2005 would mark a relatively peaceful period in the conflict, seeing the LTTE attempting to achieve its goals through political efforts rather than violence. This was likely in part due to international pressure: the United States had started its War on Terror, and the LTTE was declared a terrorist organization by most Western states. This made it significantly harder for the LTTE to pursue its goals; not in the least because new laws on terrorism financing meant th funding from the Tamil diaspora could no longer reach the LTTE as easily.

In the final years of the conflict, 2006-2009, violence intensified again. The LTTE were sufficiently weakened for the Sri Lankan forces to launch a final offensive, which led to the LTTE’s ultimate defeat in 2009. There are various reports of war crimes being committed – by both sides – during the finals months of the conflict. (BBC, 2008) (Human Right Watch, 2010) However, most documented war crimes committed by the LTTE seem to have been strategical in nature: willingly endangering civilians to achieve military objectives. In the Weinstein-model, uncontrolled violence against civilians is an indicator of a resource-based VNSA, but mostly because it can be a sign of a lack of control over the rebel group members. This does not seem to have been the case for the LTTE.

4.4 Conclusion

The analysis has shown how the LTTE evolved, from its inception in 1976 until Prabhakaran's death and the subsequent dissolution of the VNSA in 2009. Bearing in mind Weinstein's model, at least four out of five indicators of an ideology-based VNSA were identified as being present in the LTTE's strategy in its early years. However, over the course of the conflict at least 2 of those indicators changed (somewhat) to resemble indicators of resource-based groups.

The LTTE started out as a group that had to make use of its social and ethnic ties for recruitment, but amassed a rather vast amount of wealth over the years: first through funding it received from India, but later through money earned from its illicit activity and diaspora funding. As the group gained power, its recruitment tactics changed as well. The LTTE started relying on extortion, coercion and social entrapment techniques to gain support for its activities. This was quite a break with tradition, as the group had previously aimed at building attitudinal support for its cause. Both the presence of vast amounts of material wealth and recruitment by force or coercion are normally indicators of a resource-based VNSA, so we observe a clear shift in the identity and strategy of the LTTE over the course of the conflict.

The other indicators remained more or less the same. Given the cause and the nature of the conflict, membership of the LTTE remained exclusive to Tamils – thus ensure ethnic uniformity. There are no reports of organisational collapse in the LTTE, barring after heavy military defeats. It would perhaps be expected that the LTTE would lose some of its organisational capacity given its shift from voluntary-based recruitment to coercion-based recruitment, but it seems as if there were sufficient mechanisms in place to ensure obedience. Of course, a highly structured organisation adopting coercion-based recruitment after years of operating leads to a very different membership than a VNSA employing coercion-based recruitment from its inception. Over the course of the conflict, the LTTE remained adept at using violence strategically. Although its methods were at times horrific and the civilian population of Sri Lanka suffered, the LTTE's atrocities were part of its strategy and not the work of rogue foot soldiers.

5. The Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone

RUF is fighting to save Sierra Leone
RUF is fighting to save our people
RUF is fighting to save our country
RUF is fighting to save Sierra Leone

*Chorus: Go and tell the President, Sierra Leone is my home
Go and tell my parents, they may see me no more
When fighting in the battlefield I'm fighting forever
Every Sierra Leonean is fighting for his land*

Where are our diamonds, Mr. President?
Where is our gold, NPRC?
RUF is hungry to know where they are
RUF is fighting to save Sierra Leone

*Chorus: Go and tell the President, Sierra Leone is my home
Go and tell my parents, they may see me no more
When fighting in the battlefield I'm fighting forever
Every Sierra Leonean is fighting for his land*

Our people are suffering without means of survival
All our minerals have gone to foreign lands
RUF is hungry to know where they are
RUF is fighting to save Sierra Leone

*Chorus: Go and tell the President, Sierra Leone is my home
Go and tell my parents, they may see me no more
When fighting in the battlefield I'm fighting forever
Every Sierra Leonean is fighting for his land*

Sierra Leone is ready to utilise her own
All our minerals will be accounted for
The people will enjoy in their land
RUF is the saviour we need right now

*Chorus: Go and tell the President, Sierra Leone is my home
Go and tell my parents, they may see me no more
When fighting in the battlefield I'm fighting forever
Every Sierra Leonean is fighting for his land*

RUF is fighting to save Sierra Leone
RUF is fighting to save our people
RUF is fighting to save our country

The Revolutionary United Front's Anthem, as found in its manifesto 'Foothpaths to Democracy: Toward a new Sierra Leone'.

5.1 Conflict Overview

The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) were a rebel group, active in Sierra Leone in the civil conflict from 1991 to 2002. Much like Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone had been under colonial rule by the United Kingdom and had gained its independence in 1964. And much like other former European colonies, Sierra Leone's postcolonial transition was turbulent to say the least.

In the years following Sierra Leone's transition to independence, the country was plagued by 'a series of misfortunes, particularly corrupt leadership, a self-aggrandising neighbour and the powerful attraction of alluvial diamonds.' (Hirsch, 2001, p. 147) Particularly Siaka Stevens, who was elected prime minister in 1968, took advantage of Sierra Leone's fragile postcolonial democracy. The prime minister had a shrewd understanding of the patron-clientelist social dynamics present in the country and managed to cultivate patronage-like relationships with many high-placed individuals. This allowed him to effectively abuse incidents such as a failed attempt on his life and an unsuccessful coup d'état to consolidate his power and turn Sierra Leone into a single-party state, with Stevens as its autocratic leader. (Luke, 1988) In 1985, Stevens stepped down and put Major General Joseph Momoh in charge.

Initially, there was hope amongst the inhabitants of Sierra Leone that Momoh would carry out state reforms – hope that soon dwindled as they saw Momoh ignoring IMF demands for economic reform. (Harris, 2012) Meanwhile, in neighbouring Liberia a civil conflict had erupted. Warlord Charles Taylor had launched a successful uprising against sitting Liberian President Samuel Doe, leading to his abdication and death. (Sesay, 1996, pp. 36-39)

Charles Taylor was an acquaintance of Foday Sankoh, the founder of the RUF. The two met in Libya, where President Muammar Qaddafi provided them with arms and training as part of his policy to gain influence in West-Africa. When the state's failure to provide for its citizens reached an all-time high in 1991, a group of about 100 fighters invaded from Ivory Coast. Soon, a communique by the rebels made it apparent that Foday Sankoh had followed Charles Taylor's example: the Revolutionary United Front was to rid the people of Sierra Leone of its corrupt leaders. (Hirsch, 2001)

In its manifesto titled 'Footpaths to Democracy', the RUF explained in populist rhetoric its intentions. Their given ideals were threefold:

- 1.) to arm the people of Sierra Leone so they could rid themselves of their corrupt leadership,

- 2.) to empower the people by overhauling the political system towards a more participatory, democratic system,
- 3.) and to fairly redistribute the wealth of the natural resources that were found in Sierra Leone. (Revolutionary United Front, p. 1995)

The RUF strayed far from its supposed goals: to gain funding for its armed struggle, the rebels looked to quickly capture diamond-rich areas. These diamonds required no heavy machinery to mine, allowing the RUF to abuse Sierra Leone's resource base and accumulate vast amounts of wealth. The war against the government quickly turned into a war against the whole of Sierra Leone: the RUF occupied itself with the looting and pillaging of villages, coercing young men and children into joining their cause and mass, brutal violence against the civilians they were claiming to liberate. (Denov, 2010, pp. 63-64) (Bellows & Miguel, War and local collective action in Sierra Leone, 2009)

In July 1999, the Lome Peace accord was signed. It was an uneasy peace, and the United Nations stepped in to assist with the disarmament process and to enforce the terms of the accord. The United Nations Mission was vast: a record 17,500 troops were deployed. Nonetheless, various skirmishes with RUF-related factions took place and it was not before January 2002 that president Kabbah declared the Sierra Leonean conflict to be over. (Ibrahim & Shepler, 2011)

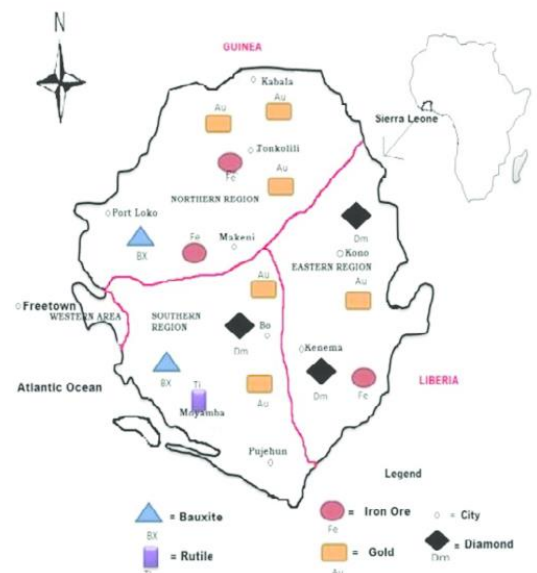


Figure 3: Map of Sierra Leone and its mineral reserves

5.2 RUF Identity, Strategy and Tactics

The RUF is not a typical VNSA. Although its manifesto says otherwise, it is hard to discover a clear ideology in its actions. On its inception, the 100-ish fighters were 'mainly borrowed commandos from the rebel National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and Burkinabe mercenaries leading Sierra Leoneans largely recruited in Liberia'. (Denov, 2010, p. 60) As their idealistic message resonated with the disenfranchised youth of poorly-governed Sierra Leone, the faction grew exponentially in the early years of the conflict. (Abdullah, Youth culture and rebellion: Understanding Sierra Leone's wasted decade, 2002)

After its initial membership boom, the RUF 'turned to a combination of forced recruitment and material bribes to maintain and expand its force.' (Weinstein, 2005, p. 618) The organisation recruited mostly in poor urban or rural areas, leading to the recruitment of

what Abdullah calls ‘lumpens’. The ‘lumpenproletariat’ is a Marxist term used to describe the underclass of the proletariat made up of ‘criminals, beggars and vagabonds.’ (Hayes, 1988) In the poorly governed state of Sierra Leone, where the educational system had collapsed and economic prospects were dire, these lumpens were numerous. In its recruitment strategy the RUF specifically targeted poorly educated youth, often drug users, and offered them short-term rewards. Instead of moulding them to share the RUF ideology, new recruits were promised a share of the wealth attained by resource extraction. (Weinstein, 2005, p. 618)

Although the early years of the Sierra Leone conflict are not well documented, it is likely that the RUF started employing forced recruitment alongside their reward-based recruitment strategy from the outset of the war. (Eck, 2014, p. 392) The RUF was known to abduct individuals – predominantly children or young adults – and carved ‘RUF’ into their skin to prevent them from returning to their home. The youth were often intoxicated with alcohol, crack cocaine or marijuana to achieve a dissociative state, and subsequently forced to commit atrocities against their communities or families, consolidating RUF membership. (Eck, 2014, p. 393) (Denov, 2010)

Unsurprisingly, this led to a membership makeup characterized by Abdullah as ‘the wrong individuals.’ (Abdullah, 1998, p. 219) The rebels wreaked havoc on the civilian population: mutilating, raping and murdering innocent women and children in the Sierra Leonean countryside. In a 2013 case against Charles Taylor by the Special Court of Sierra Leone it was found that: ‘the RUF/AFRC established a criminal system of abducting and controlling civilians in the forms of sexual slavery, forced marriage, forced mining, forced farming, domestic labour, forced recruitment and other forced labour.’ (Special Court for Sierra Leone, 2013, p. 99) Although the atrocities committed by the RUF are described as systematic, opinions differ on how much control the RUF leadership had over its conscripts. Abdullah finds that it is not completely certain how much of this seemingly random violence was part of the intended RUF strategy, as there are reports that RUF leadership was not always happy with the atrocities committed under their flag. (Abdullah, 1998, p. 226)

Moreover, the active involvement of Charles Taylor was important impetus for the conflict in Sierra Leone. Taylor was the leader of Liberia’s NPFL, and waged war in Liberia’s regime prior to ascending to the presidency in 1997. Although Liberia is rich in diamonds, they are of lower quality and lesser value than those found in Sierra Leone. Taylor recognized this, and had a vested interest in controlling some of Sierra Leone’s alluvial diamond mines to finance his own rebel group. Allegedly, Taylor provided assistance, arms and training to the RUF in exchange for diamonds. Likewise, by enabling the conflict in Sierra Leone, Taylor

further destabilized the region. The West-African peacekeeping force (ECOMOG) was stationed in Sierra Leone, and sparking a civil conflict there would severely weaken them. As such, Taylor and his NPFL had a vested interest in supporting the conflict waged by the RUF. (Marchuk, 2009, pp. 88-89)

In summary and in reflection of the Weinstein-model: the RUF more than fits the bill of a resource-based VNSA. The group both had access to natural resources and the support of an external patron. By mining diamonds and receiving both strategical assistance and arms from Charles Taylor, the group amassed significant amounts of material wealth. The group employed its material wealth to lure the disenfranchised, lower-class youth of Sierra Leone into supporting their cause by offering short-term rewards. Moreover, the group was known to forcibly abduct individuals and coerce them into joining the RUF. In turn, this led to a loosely organized membership, lacking in structure and therefore lacking in the ability to strategically employ violence for its political causes. Instead, short-term oriented behaviour by RUF members mostly targeted civilians; pillaging, looting, raping and murdering of innocent Sierra Leoneans. By these accounts, all the indicators for a resource-based VNSA from the Weinstein-model are present in the RUF.

5.3 Observable Changes in RUF strategy over the course of the Sierra Leone conflict

Much as in the previous chapter, this section of the analysis aims to research the plausibility of hypothesis H2, as presented in chapter 2. By employing process tracing to gain an understanding of if and how the RUF changed over the course of the Sierra Leone conflict, it is observed whether or not the resource-based indicators remain present in the VNSA. Particular attention is paid to whether or not the RUF starts displaying ideology-based indicators.

For almost anyone observing the Sierra Leone conflict, the first question that springs to mind must be: how could a band of around 100 fighters invade the country and gain control of over half the nation within a year? The answer is found in the collapse of Sierra Leone's institutions due to mismanagement in the years prior to the invasion. According to most reports, the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) suffered from a serious decline in discipline and organisation. (Bellows & Miguel, 2006) Feldman and Arrous describe the situation in the early years of the conflict as follows: ‘...the army was sometimes afraid of direct combat with the rebels [and]

often had difficulties locating their enemy. Frustrated, they would brutalize citizens suspected of being RUF members or sympathizers.’ (Feldman & Arrous, 2013, p. 68)

Naturally, committing atrocities against the population quickly turned civilians against the SLA – not only pushing them towards membership of the RUF, but also fighting back against the army. In turn, morale amongst SLA soldiers sunk even lower. Feldman and Arrous observe that the membership makeup of the SLA was not much different than that of the RUF: underprivileged urban youth without much in the way of job prospects. (Feldman & Arrous, 2013, pp. 68-69) As the differences between the members of the warring parties were not so obvious, many SLA soldiers turned to helping or joining the rebels to supplement the poor army pay. The term ‘Sobel’ was coined for these individuals: soldier by day, rebel by night. Their modus operandi was to attack and loot villages by night, disguised as rebels. Then, the next, the ‘army’ would show up offering protection from further attacks – for a price. (Feldman & Arrous, 2013)

Thus, quickly after the conflict had erupted in 1991, a dynamic was established in which neither of the opposing parties had much to gain by quickly resolving the conflict. The RUF was profiting handsomely of their involvement in diamond mining and trading, while a significant part of the SLA made a living as sobels. As such, with the SLA effectively castrated as a means of defeating the RUF, clashes between the parties were few and far between. By mid-1993, the ‘two opposing sides became virtually indistinguishable.’ (Erbrick, 2012)

With both the RUF and the SLA having lost virtually all support from the Sierra Leonean populations and effectively waging war on civilians, many communities organized local militias to defend themselves from the terror. Collectively, these groups became known as the Civil Defense Forces (CDF). (Bellows & Miguel, 2009, p. 1146) Aside from organized opposition, many ordinary citizens resisted the RUF as well. By one account, citizens of Kenema Town took up arms when RUF members attempted to thwart the 1996 elections. They took to the streets and pushed out the heavily armed rebels, enabling the inhabitants of Kenema Town to exercise their right to vote. (Bellows & Miguel, 2009, p. 1146)

This narrative serves to show that the rebels of the RUF never managed to regain popular support after losing its initial burst of popularity. Instead, the movement went on to commit ‘heinous acts’ against the population, ensuring that it would remain somewhat of a pariah movement. There are reports that RUF emissaries were sent to Guinea and Ivory Coast in an apparent attempt to address the Sierra Leone diaspora, but the movement failed to gain much outside support. (Hazen, 2013) This is in line with the predictors from the Weinstein-model: the RUF as a resource-based VNSA shows little or no commitment to the Sierra Leone

population, any many of its actions damage the populace. Over the course of the conflict, no change is detected in this regard.

With regards to the RUF recruitment strategy, forced and/or coerced recruitment strategies were employed over the course of the conflict. Although the disenfranchised population of Sierra Leone had ample reason to join the rebellion, the RUF was incapable of capitalizing on its initial momentum. Once the first reports of RUF atrocities had reached the population, the VNSA had to rely on forced and coerced recruitment.

Not all of the RUF's 'forced' recruits were abductees. As per the interview of an ex-RUF member:

You know, if we occupy a village or town, some people manage to flee, others stay behind. After we leave that town, the civilians who stayed behind at the first stage now want to come with us, because they are afraid that if the other civilians return with the soldiers or the Kamajors, they will be accused of [being] rebel collaborators, so they might be killed. (Peters, 2006, p. 60)

The RUF, not unlike the LTTE, used (and likely manipulated) the fear of the population concerning retaliation and being branded a collaborator to recruit soldiers for its cause. The same interviewee states about his own recruitment that he looked 'upon [his] situation and the past situation' and judged it better to join. This type of recruitment is perhaps not completely forced and in part voluntary, but it is not due to identification with the cause. Instead, these individuals can be described as opportunistic joiners and will, according to Weinstein, display short-term oriented behaviour.

Nonetheless, in a post-war survey of ex-RUF fighters, 88% described themselves as being abducted. (Eck, 2014, p. 392) This number is not to be taken at face value, for being abducted was likely the socially desirable answer, given the atrocities committed by RUF soldiers. It does however, serve to illustrate that abduction was a significant part of RUF recruitment strategies. Moreover, the recruitment and use of children aged 8-14 on the battlefield can only be described as forced recruitment.

There is barely any discernible evolution in the RUF recruitment strategy over the conflict. According to interviews with ex-RUF fighters, it seems as if ideology was a somewhat important factor in joining in the early years of 1991-1993. However, after 1993 there are barely any reports of voluntary conscription. (Eck, 2014, pp. 392-394) A possible conclusion is that the RUF had committed itself to forced recruitment after conscripting child soldiers and generally earning the hatred of the population – after all, it is hard to imagine voluntarily joining such a movement. The conclusion has to be that the RUF has shown barely any signs of a

change in recruitment strategy, and certainly not in a direction that would align it more with an ideology-based VNSA.

In Weinstein's model, a recruitment strategy based on forced recruitment and coercion seems to indicate a loosely organized VNSA lacking in social ties and structure. The RUF recognized this challenge and found ways to maintain some level of social coherence among its ranks. Chief among them is punishment. Not unlike their treatment of Sierra Leone's population, the RUF was indiscriminately brutal when disciplining its own. A former RUF commander describes their punitive system as follows:

If you are guilty, in the morning you will be brought in front of the mass parade. All the fighters then decide upon your punishment: to be 500 times flogged, to be sent for three months of labour on the swamp, to spend some time in the training-base to learn again about the ideology, etc. (Peters, 2006, p. 61)

Being subjected to a people's court as described by the interviewee above can serve to increase social coherence, as being held accountable for your actions by your peers suggests on some level a sense of community.

The RUF worked the carrot and the stick method, as apart from punishment there were also rewards handed out for displaying loyalty to the group. Given the poor background of many of the RUF conscripts, they were highly susceptible to the lure of material rewards. According to Peters, by arming them the RUF offered its recruits a way to command people. Moreover, when looting and pillaging the RUF could rob the Sierra Leonean populace as they saw fit. (Peters, 2006, p. 62) In a different interview, a boy explains how he was told that 'if the rebels succeeded, Foday Sankoh would compensate each and every one of us with money. I was happy about this. [It] gave me confidence and trust to fight with the rebels.' (Denov, 2010, p. 112)

Nonetheless, the social coherence in the RUF was something more than a simple system of punishments and rewards. In Sierra Leonean culture, the youth pay a great deal of respect to elders. By often recruiting its fighters at a very young age, the RUF had ensured itself of its way to use this dynamic. Among the youthful recruits Foday Sankoh was referred to as 'pappy' or 'pa', suggesting a father-like connection to him and perhaps a family-like connection to the RUF as a whole. (Peters, 2006, pp. 62-65)

However, the supposed family-like connection between the RUF members did not always translate to effectiveness on the battlefield. From an interview of an ex-RUF member about RUF battle preparations:

..after the prayers, they have to pick in these boys from the strike force to go at the front there, after the prayer, but when they go, really they are out of control, now, you see...because when they go they see these wines, this marihuana...so they got out of control, and even at times they won't obey their commanders. (Peters, 2006, p. 74)

The above quote illustrates how RUF commanders would sometimes lose control of their soldiers on the battlefield, exposing how the RUF's lack of organisational structure could negatively impact its battlefield effectiveness. Again, in the Weinstein-model a greater capacity to use violence strategically would be an indicator of an ideology-based VNSA. Over the course of the conflict, the RUF does not seem to have displayed this trait.

5.4 Conclusion

In this analysis of the RUF over the course of the Sierra Leonean conflict, the rebel group has been scrutinized by means of the indicators for resource-based and ideology-based VNSAs from the Weinstein-model. Given the use of the RUF as a prototype resource-based VNSA by Weinstein in his work (Weinstein, 2005), it comes as no surprise that the RUF ticks all the boxes on its inception.

The RUF started out as a rogue band of mercenaries, seizing an opportunity by filling the power vacuum left by the failing state of Sierra Leone. Ideology was always an afterthought, as illustrated by Abdullah: '[The RUF Manifesto] contains words and phrases lifted from Mao Zedong and Amilcar Cabral. Hurriedly drafted in London and tossed back to [the RUF headquarters] for approval.' (Abdullah, 1998, p. 223) Thus, although the RUF and its political ambitions were relatively popular in the early years of the war, 1991-1993, the lack of a clear ideological direction caused Sierra Leoneans to turn on them.

This was amplified by the atrocities committed by the RUF. The mass pillaging, looting, raping and murdering of seemingly innocent civilians perpetrated by the RUF could not be equated with its self-proclaimed goals of attempting to liberate and empower those same civilians. Soon, civilians started arming themselves and forming militias to protect themselves from RUF and SLA attacks. In fact, the CDF was a formidable opponent for the RUF and played an instrumental role in defeating the RUF. (Rosen, 2015, p. 173) In spite of this, no discernible effort has been made by the RUF to regain popular support. One could argue that the RUF had a clear motive for reconciling its ambitions with those of the civilians, but perhaps the slippery slope of forced recruitment and brutality against civilians was judged to be irreversible. Alternatively, there is minor evidence that the RUF leadership attempted to reverse its course, but could not exercise enough control over its members to stop them committing atrocities. (Abdullah, 1998, p. 226) In any case, the previous is mere speculation and for the purpose of this research the RUF has taken no actions to alter its trajectory in regards to popular support.

To ensure the expansion of its power would continue despite dwindling support, the RUF turned to forced and coerced recruitment strategies. This led to a membership composed of opportunistic,

short-term reward-seekers – not ideologically committed individuals. In turn, the capacity of the RUF to employ effective strategical violence lessened. This is the expected course for a resource-based VNSA in the Weinstein’s work, but the conscription of pre-adolescents and teenagers in a patriarchal state by the RUF had an unforeseen effect on the social cohesion of the group. There are reports that many of the youthful RUF members did not see themselves as mercenaries or slaves to the RUF, but as members of its family with Foday Sankoh as their patriarch. Notwithstanding this, the RUF still suffered from lessened combat effectivity due to its lack in organisational capacity.

In conclusion, the case of the RUF in Sierra Leone shows no evidence of a potential transition from resource-based VNSA to ideology-based VNSA over the course of long conflict. All the indicators remain characteristic of a resource-based VNSA. The only redeeming factor for hypothesis H2 can perhaps be found in the pivotal role played by the CDF in the eventual defeat of the RUF. The severe backlash experienced by the RUF due to its almost non-existent popular support displays a clear motive for a resource-based VNSA to change its course as the conflict drags on. Still, the RUF exhibited barely any willingness or capability to alter its direction in this regard, much like the other indicators.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Answers to research questions

This study grew out of an attempt to fill the gaps in existing knowledge on VNSAs and their methods and strategy. Specifically, this work aimed to answer to what extent the key identifying factors of a VNSA evolve over the course of a longer conflict. In doing so, two sub-questions were identified for the purpose of assisting in answering the main research question.

The first sub-question: ‘What different archetypes of VNSAs are identified in the literature?’ was answered by drafting up an extensive theoretical framework on VNSAs and civil conflict as a whole. A convincing argument was made predominantly by Weinstein, who identified two distinct brands of VNSAs: resource-based and ideology-based. The main difference between these two types was found in their recruitment strategy. Resource-based VNSAs rely on their material wealth to incentivise others to join their cause, whereas ideology-based VNSAs rely on their conscripts identifying with their political cause. From this, several identifying indicators relating to both types of VNSAs were drawn.

The second sub-question was answered by drawing up a plausibility probe consisting of two cases. The LTTE, active in the 26-year long Sri Lankan Civil War, served as an example of an ideology-based VNSA. The RUF, active in the 11-year long Sierra Leonean Civil war, was chosen as the resource-based VNSA to be studied.

By performing an analysis on the LTTE, hypothesis H1 ‘*Over the course of a longer civil conflict, ideology-based rebel groups will be inclined or forced to change strategies and adopt more aspects of resource-based rebel groups*’ was to be accepted or rejected. By employing process-tracing, the LTTE was identified as having changed its tactics slightly. In the early years of the conflict, the LTTE was particularly reliant on its social and ethnic ties for recruitment. As the conflict dragged on, coercive recruitment techniques started playing a more prominent role in the LTTE’s strategy. Moreover, the group had amassed a great deal of material wealth through its illicit activities and funding through its large diaspora. Both of these aspects are identified as indicators of a resource-based VNSA, so the LTTE changed its course at least partially. The other indicators – ethnic and social uniformity, a strong organisational structure and a great capacity to use violence strategically – remained more or less the same over the 26 years.

In the analysis performed on the RUF, hypothesis H2 '*Over the course of a longer civil conflict, resource-based rebel groups will be inclined or forced to change strategies and adopt more aspects of ideology-based rebel groups*' was tested for merit. The RUF, as a resource-based VNSA, relied heavily on forced or coerced recruitment. Although the organisation some popular support in the early years of the war, this support quickly dwindled once the RUF started to become known for committing atrocities and conscripting women and children. This situation was likely difficult to turn around, and the RUF did not manage or want to do it. All the resource-based indicators found in the RUF remained present in its strategy until the very end of the war. Hypothesis H2 must therefore likely be rejected, although a minor redeeming factor was found in the severe backlash experienced by the RUF due to its minimal popular support. It could be theorized that this would provide an incentive for a resource-based VNSA to adopt some ideology-based traits, but the case of the RUF did not exhibit this. This could perhaps be an avenue for further research.

As this research is guided by a plausibility probe, the main aim of the work is to study if performing more extensive studies related to its central research question is useful and feasible. The results of the case study performed on the LTTE in Sri Lanka is most promising in that regard; the ideology-based VNSA showed definite signs of adopting strategies normally belonging to resource-based groups in its use of forced/coercive recruitment and the wealth it amassed. Further research is warranted to establish whether these results are a one-off or if there is a causation.

The case study performed on the RUF shows little promise. Instead of changing its strategy as the conflict dragged on, the RUF seemed to get more determined to stick to its resource-based strategy. It could be theorized that it is more difficult for a resource-based VNSA to change its ways: it is not easy to regain popular support once you get a name for forced recruitment and committing atrocities. Expanding on this theory might be worthwhile for further research. Nevertheless, if the results of this plausibility probe are any indication, the central research question does warrant further research. The advice to those aspiring to do the research would be to focus predominantly on ideology-based VSNA's.

6.2 Limitations of this work

As with any case-study based research design, this work is limited in its generalizability. The division of VNSAs into two archetypes, resource-based and ideology-based, serves to partially overcome this: by simplifying matters in this way, other VSNAs can be treated as either akin to the LTTE or the RUF. This allows some of the findings presented here to be applicable to other civil conflicts in which a VNSA is active. In any event, complete generalizability was never the intended purpose of this thesis. Instead, by probing the plausibility of the proposed research question, this thesis hopes to expand the existing theoretical framework on VNSAs.

Moreover, studying civil conflicts is not an easy task. Most of the sources relied on are either secondary, biased or incomplete. In attempting to study civil conflicts as whole, one always risks not exhaustively using the source material. This is especially true for longer conflicts; it is nigh impossible to fully grasp the changes undergone by an organisation such as the LTTE over 26 years.

Finally, the indicators derived from Weinstein might suffer from endogeneity issues. In the case-study of the LTTE, it is shown how the VNSA accumulates large amounts of wealth and turns to forced/coercive recruitment – both of these are supposed indicators a resource-based group. The above leads us to the conclusion that the LTTE did indeed adopt some characteristics of a resource-based VNSA over the course of a long conflict. However, there might simply be a causal connection between the wealth of a VNSA and the implementation of forced/coercive recruitment, forgoing the importance of the duration of the civil conflict completely. It would be beyond the scope of this thesis to dive into this, but it may serve as grounds for further research.

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Annex 1 – Overview of Civil Conflicts since 1950, ordered by duration.

Party 1	Party 2	Year	Start date conflict	End date conflict	Total conflict Days
Government of Egypt	Harakit Sawa'id Misr, Jama'at Ansar al-Islam	2017	8-10-1981	30-12-2017	13042
Government of Turkey	PKK	2017	1-5-1983	31-12-2017	12480
Government of Sri Lanka	LTTE	2009	27-7-1975	4-7-2009	12217
Government of India	Kashmir insurgents	2017	6-2-1984	31-12-2017	12205
Government of Egypt	Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis	2014	8-10-1981	24-10-2014	11896
Government of Algeria	AQIM	2017	27-8-1985	7-11-2017	11590
Government of India	KCP, PREPAK, UNLF	2009	26-4-1979	28-12-2009	11042
Government of Pakistan	TTP	2017	11-2-1990	27-12-2017	10036
Government of India	ULFA	2010	31-12-1983	16-10-2010	9646
Government of Angola	FLEC-FAC	2017	3-6-1991	31-12-2017	9568
Government of Rwanda	FDLR	2016	1-10-1990	15-11-2016	9404
Government of India	NDFB-S	2014	16-2-1989	31-12-2014	9315
Government of India	NLFT-B	2004	9-7-1979	28-12-2004	9169
Government of Mali	CMA	2015	28-6-1990	18-5-2015	8960
Government of Liberia	LURD, MODEL	2003	12-4-1980	21-11-2003	8499
Government of Myanmar (Burma)	PSLF	2017	2-5-1994	26-6-2017	8334
Government of Congo	Ntsiloulous	2016	3-11-1993	10-12-2016	8317
Government of Senegal	MFDC	2011	31-12-1988	30-12-2011	8280
Government of India	NDFB - RD	2010	16-2-1989	8-11-2010	7822
Government of Somalia	SRRC	2002	18-1-1982	28-10-2002	7480
Government of Angola	UNITA	1995	11-11-1975	24-12-1995	7243
Government of Israel	Hezbollah	2006	30-9-1986	23-8-2006	7163
Government of Tajikistan	IMU	2011	5-5-1992	25-7-2011	6920
Government of DR Congo (Zaire)	BDK	2017	2-7-1998	31-8-2017	6899
Government of Mali	ATNMC	2009	28-6-1990	22-1-2009	6684
Government of India	ATTF, NLFT	1997	9-7-1979	7-11-1997	6598
Government of Turkey	MKP	2005	31-12-1987	17-10-2005	6407
Government of India	GNLA	2014	29-5-1997	27-11-2014	6298
Government of Egypt	al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya	1998	8-10-1981	2-11-1998	6144
Government of Indonesia	GAM	2005	2-5-1989	12-10-2005	5920
Government of India	NDFB	2004	16-2-1989	3-11-2004	5657
Government of Haiti	FLRN, OP Lavalas (Chimères)	2004	3-4-1989	19-11-2004	5626

Government of Myanmar (Burma)	NSCN-K	2007	31-12-1991	15-2-2007	5445
Government of Somalia	USC/SNA	1996	18-1-1982	20-12-1996	5372
Government of Mozambique	Renamo	1992	31-12-1977	19-10-1992	5329
Government of Morocco	POLISARIO	1989	1-9-1975	16-11-1989	5115
Government of Indonesia	Fretilin	1988	7-12-1975	31-12-1988	4704
Government of Central African Republic	anti-Balaka, Seleka	2013	27-5-2001	5-12-2013	4508
Government of India	Sikh insurgents	1993	20-9-1981	24-12-1993	4414
Government of South Africa	ANC	1988	1-2-1978	31-12-1988	3930
Government of Sierra Leone	RUF	2001	23-3-1991	20-12-2001	3867
Government of Liberia	INPFL, NPFL	1990	12-4-1980	31-12-1990	3859
Government of Eritrea	EIJM - AS	2003	16-12-1993	9-8-2003	3473
Government of India	TNV	1988	9-7-1979	12-8-1988	3273
Government of India	PULF	2008	20-6-2000	22-12-2008	3062
Government of Djibouti	FRUD-C	1999	12-11-1991	31-8-1999	2809
Government of Papua New Guinea	BRA	1996	6-4-1989	28-11-1996	2752
Government of Pakistan	MQM	1996	11-2-1990	4-9-1996	2363
Government of Uzbekistan	JIG	2004	16-2-1999	30-7-2004	1964
Government of Turkey	Devrimci Sol	1992	31-12-1987	7-12-1992	1777
Government of Syria	IS	2017	14-5-2013	28-12-2017	1664
Government of Mali	FIAA	1994	28-6-1990	18-12-1994	1610
Government of India	KNF	1997	12-10-1993	5-12-1997	1493
Government of Syria	PYD	2015	10-9-2011	25-7-2015	1395
Government of Serbia (Yugoslavia)	UCK	1999	22-4-1996	21-11-1999	1289
Government of Lebanon	IS	2017	25-6-2014	27-8-2017	1142
Government of Mauritania	POLISARIO	1978	10-12-1975	31-12-1978	1101
Government of Ethiopia	SALF	1980	31-12-1977	31-12-1980	1080
Government of Mexico	EPR	1996	1-1-1994	31-12-1996	1080
Government of Somalia	SNM, SSDF	1984	18-1-1982	31-12-1984	1063
Government of Kenya	Al-Shabaab	2017	13-3-2015	31-12-2017	1008
Government of Georgia	Zviadists	1993	22-12-1991	16-11-1993	684
Government of India	ABSU	1990	16-2-1989	31-12-1990	675
Government of Macedonia, FYR	UCK	2001	11-1-2000	17-8-2001	576
Government of Ethiopia	ALF	1976	30-6-1975	31-12-1976	540
Government of Suriname	SLA	1987	21-8-1986	31-12-1987	490
Government of Ethiopia	SLM	1983	31-12-1982	31-12-1983	360
Government of Guinea	RFDG	2001	1-9-2000	19-7-2001	318
Government of Niger	CRA	1994	19-1-1994	26-9-1994	247

Government of Moldova	PMR	1992	1-3-1992	31-7-1992	150
Government of Myanmar (Burma)	UWSA	1997	16-3-1997	15-7-1997	119
Government of Ukraine	LPR	2014	4-5-2014	26-8-2014	112
Government of Niger	FDR	1995	23-3-1995	10-7-1995	107
Government of Libya	IS	2017	14-3-2015	4-10-2017	