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Rebel Capital

How rebel leaders use social networks to shape organizations and war

Lukas Hegele



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Abstract

This dissertation examines how rebel organizations are affected by their leader's social capital. In conflict research, leader functions and roles have been diverse, for example solving coordination problems in collective action, or devising ideologies for broad public support. What is missing is relating inter-individual differences to the social context within which these differences are argued to matter. Studying leader-level variation across conflict stages enables the identification of how the abilities of a leader interact with the challenges at hand. Spelling out the social context within which both the leader and the rebel organization are embedded, allows for the identification of the socially conditioned advantages and constraints that produce and restrict the application of human capital. I argue that a rebel leader's social capital influences a rebel organization prior to and during conflict, and when parties consider ending conflict. To investigate the main research question "how are rebel organizations affected by their leader's social capital", this study makes use of newly collected data on all rebel leaders from 1946 -- 2023. The results of the analyses suggest that a rebel leader's social capital is correlated with slower conflict onset, less competitors during conflict, and a mixed relationship with the likelihood of negotiation onset. In addition to the empirical contribution, I add to the literature, as I re-consider and statistically examine three central concepts in the conflict literature. I conceptualize and operationalize conflict onset as a process, thus nuancing existing explanations of mobilization dynamics prior to and for the purpose of civil conflict. Second, explain the number of rebel organizations during conflict, or "insurgency cohesion", by highlighting that both types of competitor emergences take place in the same social space. Third, I consider negotiation processes both in their public and secret format and how they relate, thus studying them jointly as is closer to observations.

Keywords: *leadership, rebel leader, civil conflict, social capital.*

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Sammanfattning

Denna avhandling undersöker hur rebelliska organisationer påverkas av sina ledares sociala kapital. Inom konfliktforskning har ledarfunktioner och -roller varit olika, till exempel att lösa samordningsproblem i kollektiva åtgärder eller utforma ideologier för brett offentligt stöd. Det som saknas är att relatera interindividuella skillnader till det sociala sammanhanget inom vilket dessa skillnader anses ha betydelse. Att studera variation på ledarnivå över konfliktstadier möjliggör identifieringen av hur en ledares förmågor interagerar med utmaningarna. Att beskriva det sociala sammanhanget inom vilket både ledare och rebellorganisationer är inbäddade möjliggör identifiering av de socialt betingade fördelarna och begränsningarna som påverkar användningen av humankapital. Jag hävdar att en rebelledares sociala kapital påverkar en rebellorganisation före och under konflikten samt när parterna överväger att avsluta konflikten. För att undersöka huvudforskningsfrågan "hur påverkas rebellorganisationer av deras ledares sociala kapital" använder denna studie nyinsamlad data på alla rebelledare från 1946 till 2023. Resultaten av analyserna tyder på att en rebelledares sociala kapital är korrelerat med långsammare konfliktstart, färre konkurrenter under konflikten och en blandad relation med sannolikheten för förhandlingsstart. Utöver det empiriska bidraget lägger jag till litteraturen genom att ompröva och statistiskt granska tre centrala begrepp inom konfliktlitteraturen. Jag konceptualiserar och operationaliserar konfliktdebut som en process och nyanserar därigenom existerande förklaringar av mobiliseringsdynamiken före och under inbördes konflikter. För det andra, förklarar jag antalet rebellorganisationer under konflikt, eller "upprorssammanhållning", genom att framhålla att båda typerna av konkurrentuppkomst sker i samma sociala rum. För det tredje överväger jag förhandlingsprocesser både i deras offentliga och hemliga format och hur de relaterar till varandra, och studerar dem därför gemensamt för närmare observation.

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Abbreviations

COALESC	Conflict And LEader Social Capital
IS	“Islamic State”
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia
AQAP	Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
UCDP	Uppsala Conflict Data Program

Abstracts of Articles

As this dissertation is a compilation type thesis, an introductory chapter, or Kappa, presents the overall contribution to science, how the contribution is motivated, and how the 4 articles individually and jointly contribute to the overall contribution.

Article 1: This article presents the “Conflict And LEader Social Capital” (COALESC) data set. COALESC encompasses data on the rebel leaders of rebel organizations involved in intra-state conflicts between 1946 and 2019. Research on civil conflicts increasingly looks at individual level mechanisms and data to explain organization and conflict level dynamics. Consequently, research requires increasingly granular, “sub-unit” data, in order to compensate for the limitations of inference based on data on the environment within which organizations operate. This is particularly applicable, but not limited to dynamics of how organizations form and manage cohesion, and therefore the interdependence with variables typically linked with organizational cohesion, such as battlefield outcomes and negotiation onset. As a result, leaders have increasingly been the focus of theorization and data collection. Data collection efforts on leaders in rebel organizations have attempted to follow suit with data collection efforts on state leaders, in order to re-test theories on a new sample of leaders. This limited data collection in two ways: 1) data was collected on variables with a given operationalization in a different field (e.g. military experience, combat experience, etc.), or 2) limited in temporal scope due to an effort to capture more leader level measures. Therefore, this has limited the number of theories that could be tested, and the ability to test the generalizability of theories on inter-leader variation and related outcome variables of interest.

Article 2: What determines the pace at which conflict breaks out? After leaders form organizations for the purpose of fighting the state, based on data in this article, the range of time until conflict breaks out varies from a couple of months to more than 10 years. Existing literature on conflict onset emphasizes why rational actors choose conflict despite it being sub-optimal, and has produced a plethora of results illustrating which environments are most conducive to conflict. However, the timing of conflict has not been fully explored. The timing of civil conflict onset is a function of the interplay between organizational dynamics and environmental conditions. I argue that this interplay is moderated by a rebel leader's social capital. Rebel organizations are particularly vulnerable in the first years of their existence. Growth in capabilities is essential to a rebel organization's goal attainment, but increases a state's need to repress. Leaders with access to diverse social networks can select for committed supporters, thus form organizations based on trust, and can buy time until time environmental conditions are permissive and organizational capabilities are consolidated. Based on 29 cox proportional hazard models computed on a data set on all rebel leaders and rebel organizations from 1946-2013, I find that once a rebel leader has taken over an organization, a rebel leader's social capital influences the pace at which rebel organizations start fighting. Leaders, with social capital one standard deviation higher from the mean, are associated with a delay in fighting on average by 22% or 319 days. The highest social capital leaders are on average 133% slower to fighting compared to mean social capital leaders.

Article 3: I co-authored this paper with Joakim Kreutz. Elite-level social capital

facilitates both the mobilization and retention of participants in social movements and insurgencies. Well-connected rebel perceived as credible have advantages in constructing a functioning organisation and ensuring loyalty among followers. We argue that leaders' drawn from pre-conflict, reputable and elite families have several advantages when it comes to organizing insurgency. Such individuals will have greater visibility, credibility, and access to key networks which result in more viable rebel organizations. Consequently, these organizations will dominate the agenda and the social networks which will deter other attempts of rebel group formation. Following an analysis of all civil conflicts 1946-2018, we find support for our argument that the rebel leaders' family background influences the structures of contention in civil conflicts, which in turn have consequences for conflict duration, dynamics, and outcome. We identify a substitution effect; the importance of this intergenerational social capital is greatest for individuals with limited proven personal experience of politics or militancy.

Article 4: Why do some rebel leaders engage in secret negotiations and others do not? Why do some rebel leaders engage in public negotiations and others do not? In this article, I examine the impact of rebel leader variation between rebel organizations, particularly how the social capital of leaders influences a leader's propensity to engage in secret and public negotiations. I argue that social capital is a resource associated with a rebel leader which forces rebel group factions to support costly policy decisions such as negotiations. Using data on secret negotiations, peace negotiations and rebel leaders social capital from 1975-2013, I find that conflict level variables (e.g. duration) and organizational level variables (e.g. rebel strength) are robustly correlated with different

types of negotiation. Social capital is not consistently, or robustly correlated with either secret or public negotiations. However, when interacted with organizational and contextual level variables, social capital does seem to influence negotiation onset categories in the hypothesized direction.

I am the sole author of article 1. I am the sole author of article 2, which is currently under revision at the Conflict Management and Peace Science journal. Article 3, for which I am the principle, and for which Joakim Kreutz is the secondary and corresponding author, is currently under review at the British Journal of Political Science. I am the sole author of article 4.

1 Introduction

It was in early 2014, when the world saw what looked like the inspiration for the movie *Mad Max: Fury Roads*. I remember the pictures of sky-high clouds of dust in the background of an armada of pick-up trucks, laden to capacity with people, mounted machine guns, with raised flags with white writing on a black field. The self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS) organization announced they will be taking Mosul in Iraq, and in June 2014, they did. At the time, the organization was led by "the shadow", a recluse football enthusiast and scholar of Islam, known as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The Islamic State showcased how a number of smaller groups could amalgamate to become an organization capable of fighting a large scale insurgency and reach a level of proto-statehood within 6-8 years. IS fought their way into Syria, where hundreds of rebel outfits had been formed, most of which were gone just as quickly as they had emerged. What makes some groups emerge? Why do some groups emerge and consolidate, while others implode?

Manuel Marulanda Vélez (Pedro Antonio Marín Marín) founded the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, FARC) around 1964, and over the course of the next 50 years, lifted FARC out of an existence as smaller guerilla bloc into a formidable rebel organization with around 20.000 soldiers and holding vast territories. Within the group's lifetime, the FARC transitioned from a group that defensively protected inhabitants of rural land, to an organization with offensive goals: Seizing the capital was seen as not only aspirational but realistic. FARC's objectives changed numerous times, ping-ponged between fighting and peace talks. Ultimately, FARC leaders signed a historic peace deal, engaging in a drawn out peace process in the 2010s, effectively ending the decade long conflict between FARC and the Colombian government. Why can some groups devise new strate-

gic outlooks without compromising organizational capacities, while other groups fail to adapt?

1.1 Research gap and question

What explains within and between rebel organizational differences? What difference did Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and Manuel Marulanda Vélez make in their organizations? The main research question guiding this study is: How are rebel organizations affected by their leader's social capital?

The responsibility of relating organizational and environmental demands to each other is often times attributed to the leader of the rebel organization (rebel leader), i.e. the individual at the top of the hierarchy with ultimate responsibility, decision-making and delegatory power. In conflict research, leader functions and roles have been as diverse as solving coordination problems in collective action (Popkin, 1980), devising ideologies for broad public support (Roemer, 1985), providing selective incentives to entice participation in collective action (Lichbach, 1993), devising military strategies for guerilla warfare (Wickham-Crowley, 1992), creating perceptions of legitimacy among constituent populations (Malthaner, 2015), framing threats (Shesterinina, 2016; Granzow et al., 2015). It is the organization's leader who is theorized to decide what to do given the circumstances (Mampilly, 2017).

Literature on leaders of non-state actors, such as terrorist and rebel organizations, has thus far mostly focused on indirectly testing leader efficacy and organizational constraints on leader behaviour (Jordan, 2009; Price, 2012; Abrahms and Potter, 2015; Tiernay, 2015; Tominaga, 2019; Gallagher Cunningham and Sawyer, 2019; Prorok, 2016, 2018). One caveat is that inferences on the function or influence of a leader is that while theory describes the leader level, leaders remain essentially interchangeable for the leader-organization dyad and

the leader-context interaction (Ahlquist and Levi, 2011). Likewise, researchers of civil conflict have followed and find that the biographies, i.e. individual political and military experiences of leaders influence their policy choices, ability to lead cohesive organizations, and conflict outcomes (Prorok, 2016, 2018; Doctor, 2020; Silverman et al., 2023). Research is now back to using inter-individual differences to explain outcomes of interest, but does so more systematically. This research has focused on *human* capital.

What is missing is relating inter-individual differences to the social context within which these differences are argued to matter. How, why, and under which circumstances do inter-individual differences matter, and how do leaders make these differences matter? Different stages of civil conflict come with different challenges for a leader and their organization. Therefore, studying leader-level variation across conflict stages, enables the identification of how the abilities of a leader interact with the challenges at hand. Moreover, spelling out the social context within which both the leader and the rebel organization are embedded, allows for the identification of the socially conditioned advantages and constraints that produce and restrict the application of human capital.

I argue that a rebel leader's *social* capital influences a rebel organization prior to and during conflict, and when parties consider ending conflict. Therefore, the research questions are: 1) How does a rebel leader's social capital affect mobilization prior to civil conflict; 2) How does a rebel leader's social capital affect the number of rebel competitors during conflict; 3) How does a rebel leader's social capital affect the propensity of secret and public negotiation onset.

2 The social capital argument

Social capital affects how a rebel leader mobilizes prior to civil conflict. Social capital influences how a rebel leader crowds out rebel competitors and builds a cohesive insurgency during conflict. Social capital influences how a rebel leader can pay audience costs associated with secret and public negotiations.

I turn to social capital as a social network based theory, because evidence is mounting, that in the context of civil conflict, social networks matter for organizational growth, resilience against outside infiltration, cohesion, and securing foreign support (Staniland, 2014; Holtermann, 2016; Larson and Lewis, 2018; Huang et al., 2022). Furthermore, it is well established outside the context of civil conflict that an individual's ability for purposive and goal oriented action is a function of their position within and between networks (Granovetter, 1973; Coleman, 1988, 1994). Social capital conditions individuals' ability: to identify opportunities, to attain jobs, to increase their wealth and political power, to gather new and determine the accuracy of information, and to exchange non-identical resources (Ben-Porath, 1980; Burt, 1995; Lin, 1999; Tindall and Cormier, 2008; Cainelli et al., 2015; Torche, 2015). At the same time, this has not been studied in the context of conflict, nor with a focus on the the interplay between a leader, the organization, social networks, and the wider socio-political environment.

Therefore, the overarching research question to this dissertation is: How does a rebel leader's social capital affect rebel organizations? I contend that the within and between rebel organization variation in behaviours from even prior to the onset of conflict, to the resolution of conflict is correlated with a rebel leader's social capital. Rebel leaders use social capital, or the ability to access and secure benefits from social networks: 1) to recruit the right human capital at the time that specific human capital is needed; 2) to build cohesive, trust-based

organizations resilient against splintering; 3) to dissuade rebel competitors from outside the organization; 4) to force factions within the rebel organization to continue their support despite their opposition; 5) to improve their bargaining position vis-à-vis the state.

2.1 Dissertation structure and contributions

The remainder of this introductory chapter to this dissertation is structured as follows. First, after this brief description of the structure, I will highlight some contributions and main findings. Second, I outline previous literature on conflict onset, conflict fragmentation, pre-negotiations/formal negotiations. Third, the overarching theoretical argument is developed. The literature on social capital theory underpinning the argument is presented with respect to the dissertation over-arching research question: "How does a rebel leader's social capital affect rebel organizations given temporal variation in organizational capabilities and environmental demands".¹ Fourth, in order to test the overarching hypothesis that a leader's social capital structures the way they can form, consolidate, maintain and transform a rebel organization for the desired purposes, I derive a quantitative research design. Fifth, the data used for this observational study is presented. This study makes use of newly collected data on all rebel leaders from 1946 – 2023. Sixth, I present summaries of the individual articles that constitute the main body of work for this dissertation. Overall, the articles make use of various methods associated with descriptive statistics, and suggest that a rebel leader's social capital, as well as the social capital they inherit from their parents, is correlated with slower conflict onset, less competitors during

¹I do not use "capabilities" in a strictly or exclusively military sense (for example the setup logistics, the amount of weaponry, knowledge of terrain, or how to encounter the enemy). Rather, I use capability in the sense of an organization's ability to operate and work towards fulfilling its purpose. Rebel organizations are military organizations, but not exclusively so (see literature on rebel governance Arjona et al., 2015; Arjona, 2016; Mampilly, 2017; Cunningham and Loyle, 2021; van Baalen, 2021)

conflict, and a likelihood of negotiations.

2.1.1 Contributions

This dissertation makes several contributions to existing research on conflict onset, the number of rebel organizations fighting a conflict (insurgency cohesion), and peace negotiations. The first contribution is empirical, as I re-consider and statistically examine three central concepts in the conflict literature. First, the civil conflict onset has thus far been treated as a dichotomous, battle-related death threshold based measure, or as a possible end to escalatory dynamics of the repression-dissent-mobilization nexus. I conceptualize conflict onset in regards to the time elapsed between a rebel organization's foundation, the time a leader takes on the role as leader in that organization, and the time at which the minimum 25 battle-related deaths threshold in a calendar year is reached. In doing so, I provide a way to nuance existing explanations of mobilization dynamics prior to and for the purpose of civil conflict. Second, the number of rebel organizations during conflict has thus far been conceptualized as a function of either intra-organizational competitors (splinters) in existing organizations, or as the emergence of extra-organizational competitors (i.e. new organizations). I explain the number of rebel organizations during conflict, or "insurgency cohesion", by highlighting that both types of competitor emergences take place in the same social space. In doing so, I provide a link between disconnected explanatory paradigms. Third, negotiations have been considered as public processes that either take place or not. I consider the secret phases prior to public negotiations, and systematically and jointly study the secret and public portions of negotiations in civil conflict.

The second contribution is theoretical as I consider the specific role of social capital with respect to three distinct conflict phenomena. In the phase prior to civil conflict onset, a rebel organization must first be formed, and rebel leaders

have to balance the need to grow a rebel organization and the risk of being uncovered and repressed. A leader's social capital allows a leader to mobilize in a way that reduces detection and subsequent repression, thus buying time for the ripe time to strike. As a result, this dissertation provides a new insight into the temporal scope of dynamics of escalation and mobilization, i.e. necessary conditions of civil conflict. During civil conflict, rebel leader's have incentives to lead a cohesive organization and suppress competition. Intergenerational social capital allows a rebel to reduce intra- and extra-organizational competitors' ability to appropriate social networks for their own goals, while also increasing trust from recruits that their decision to stick with their current rebel organization is correct. Third, a rebel leader's social capital allows a rebel leader to implement unpopular policies such as secret negotiations, and gives a rebel leader leverage for public negotiations. Here, social capital functions as a political instrument to coerce compliance by factions, and as a way for the rebel leader to appear committed to negotiations.

These contributions build on a new, global data set, covering the years 1946-2019, with quantities on those leaders of rebel organizations who lead their rebel organization at the time the rebel organization entered civil conflict. While other data sets on rebel leaders exist, they either: are narrower in scope in terms of time, coded information, or both. The most comprehensive data sets on leaders cover the years 1980 – 2011 (Acosta et al., 2023), and 1989 – 2014 (Doctor, 2020). Therefore, this dissertation adds a period of 40 years in which conflict parties and rebel leaders were active and recorded, while retaining the granularity of coded information at the leader level, and expanding included information by including information on rebel leaders' parents. This leader data together with data on secret negotiations (Doyle and Hegele, 2021) and parent organizations of rebel organizations (Braithwaite and Gallagher Cunningham, 2019), served

as basis for the analysis of the dynamics prior to and during conflict, as outlined above.

3 Previous Literature

First I will present existing explanations or accounts of civil conflict onset, the number of parties to a conflict, and negotiations, as these respective conflict stages represent the standard segmentation of conflict. After the gaps relevant for this dissertation have been identified, I present the approaches and theoretical arguments to address these gaps. These reviews are to be taken with the following research question in mind: How does a rebel leader's social capital affect rebel organizations?

3.1 Civil conflict onset: the mobilized and the mobilizer in group formation

Armed intra-state conflict is a category of organized, political violence, fought between the government of a state and a non-state actor over a territorial and/or governmental incompatibility, resulting in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a given calendar year.² Theories explaining the onset of civil conflict are typically

²Intra-state conflicts are therefore delimited from: 1) inter-state conflict that involves two states (e.g. United States of America and Iraq) and 2) non-state conflicts that involve two non-state actors of the same organizational level (e.g. communal conflict between two social identity groups) (Sundberg et al., 2012). The definition excludes criminal violence associated with cartels who typically do not have stated political objectives, such as a secession or a substantial change to the government. Lastly, this definition of armed conflict excludes 'one-sided violence' or the deliberate targeting of civilians (Eck and Hultman, 2007). Armed conflict and civil war are, in their most reduced measure, violence-based phenomena. In terms of measurement, the main difference between civil conflict and civil war being that civil war requires at least 100 (Sambanis, 2004), 200 or 1000 battle deaths per calendar year, and others yet still look at the minimum number of deaths per year on average and a cumulative number across the number of years of conflict (Fearon and Laitin, 2003). The most widely used measurement standard to observe an armed conflict is a minimum total of 'battle-related deaths', produced by two organized actors through armed violence (Pettersson et al., 2019; Harbom et al., 2008; Sarkees and Wayman, 2010), although other measurements exist (e.g. Heidelberg school, HIIK, 2020). The pros and cons of such definitions and of counting the dead are discussed elsewhere (Sambanis, 2004; Lacina et al., 2006; Spagat et al., 2009; Gohdes

categorized in resource mobilization, opportunities and grievances to the onset of civil conflict (Blattman and Miguel, 2010; Cederman and Vogt, 2017). For a civil conflict to occur, the motivations for actors and opportunities for action need to be present. The weak state hypothesis generally argues that state incapacity allows rebel organizations to operate within its borders (Wickham-Crowley, 1992; Goodwin, 2001; Skocpol, 1979). That is, rebel organizations will operate where a state is unable to repress (Fearon and Laitin, 2003). At the same time, greed-based explanations attribute the ability and desire of rebels to enrich themselves with lootable resources as reason why rebel organizations escalate violence while contesting the state over control of said resources (Tilly, 1975; Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Lujala et al., 2005; Lujala, 2010). Grievance-based explanations identify that people need to have the motivation to form rebel organizations in the first place. Individually experienced deprivation serves as emotional trigger for action (Gurr, 1971). However, violence at the level of civil conflict or war involves organized groups and is not a spontaneous outburst of frustration of loosely connected individuals, and instead requires organizations and mobilizable ‘systematic economic and political inequalities between ethnic, religions or regional groups’ (Østby, 2013, 207).

There is good evidence to suggest that greed, weak-state, and grievance based explanations have their merit, as some measure of the respective explanatory theories are robustly correlated with civil conflict (Hegre and Sambanis, 2006; Dixon, 2009; Cederman et al., 2013). There is also good evidence for existing criticism of these explanations (Kalyvas, 2003; Ward et al., 2010). A recurring theme of criticism is that explanatory mechanisms are black-boxed, and that theorized concepts and their operationalizations are not congruent (Kertzer, 2017). For example, the function of explanatory variables in the above and Price, 2012; Lacina and Gleditsch, 2013; Weidmann, 2013; Fazal, 2014; Salehyan, 2015; Weidmann, 2016; Fast, 2017; Croicu and Kreutz, 2017).

discussed explanatory paradigms is causal. At the same time, research examining the relationship between explanatory variables such as the availability of resources or politicized identity groups have identified narrower conditions in which explanations hold, or even found that explanatory variables are instrumental or intermediary, not causal (Ross, 2004; Lewis, 2017).

Moreover, this research rather shows the interdependence between explanatory paradigms and variables. For example, the combination of lootable resources in regions with neglected groups of the population matters for mobilization (Østby et al., 2009). However, the fundamental question to mobilization remains unaddressed: how the identified explanatory variables lead to the emergence of actors who mobilize (Metternich et al., *ming*). This is because mobilization theories and empirical accounts have emphasized the analysis of those who are mobilized (Gurr, 1971; della Porta, 1988; Heghammer, 2006; Weinstein, 2007; Ugarriza and Craig, 2013; Bloom, 2017; Gupta, 2020). Yet, even when those who are mobilized are differentiated at the group level, for example by ethnicity, or socio-economic background (Humphreys and Weinstein, 2008), explanations for the individual recruit are still missing. In short, the re-consideration of mobilization dynamics has contributed to a better understanding of civil conflict dynamics, and a shift from mobilized to mobilizers can further advance our understanding.

3.2 Coarse scope of mobilization theories

Scholars have not systematically considered the role of those who mobilize, or used the mobilizer, typically the leader, to render their theory plausible. For example Stewart (2000, 5) contends that: "Group inequality provides powerful grievances which leaders can use to mobilise people to political protest, by calling on cultural markers (a common history or language or religion) and pointing

to group exploitation.” For horizontal inequalities to feed into conflict, there need to be: ‘identity, motive and opportunity’ (Hillesund et al., 2018, 464), which ethnic entrepreneurs use to construct narratives for mobilization (Østby, 2013). Here, the mobilized are mobilized through increasing the salience of their experienced identity group based inequalities. The leader, or political entrepreneur, is attributed with the responsibility to increase said salience of perceived inequalities and take advantage of it by mobilizing on the basis of this. However, direct tests of leader efficacy are by and large lacking.

This approach to mobilization is adequate for mass mobilization for the purpose of war, but obfuscates that organizations need different human capital at different times, and that mass mobilization is not always in the best interest of rebel organizations (Gates, 2002; Heghammer, 2013). Nascent rebel organizations that have not yet begun opposing the state at levels used to observe civil conflict differ in capabilities compared to those rebel organizations that are engaged in and may want to escalate during an ongoing civil war. For example, rebel organizations fighting civil war, by definition, are visible to the state, whereas rebel organizations preparing to oppose the state have incentives to remain hidden until they have the capabilities required for civil conflict (Lewis, 2020).

As a result, it remains unclear how once emerged rebel organizations consolidate and what this process requires. Due to the coarse scope of explanations of mobilization for civil conflict, links between collective identification (based on e.g. grievances) as a precursor to collective action (mobilization) and the escalation of collective action (fighting an armed conflict) are missing (Bartusevičius and Gleditsch, 2019). However, considerations of the causes of organizational failure and success, and considerations of what strengthens organizations vary depending on the organizational capacity at a given time (Quinn and Cameron,

1983; Bloom, 2017; Byman, 2007). As a result, it equally remains unclear how once emerged rebel organizations consolidate and what this process requires. In other words, group formation, and how groups achieve their capabilities are black-boxed processes.

Who joins an organization and when - or, why do some people join an organization at time t , while other join at time $t+x$ - are equally important questions as the typically asked questions of why do people generally join a rebel organization. From a leader perspective, it matters who and for what purpose the leader recruits, and when they recruit (Bloom, 2017). A leader has to consider the costs and benefits of recruitment, and different types of recruits are more or less costly, and more or less beneficial (Gates, 2017). Since organizations' ability to mobilize varies in time, leaders have to adjust their mobilization strategies to the environment at a given time (Heghammer, 2013). Thus, organizational formation processes prior to conflict require mobilization efforts that differ from mobilization processes typically accounted for in literature on collective action in civil war.

In general, regarding the formation of rebel organizations, explanations of conflict onset are too simplistic in their temporal considerations (Dafoe and Lyall, 2015), and too focused on mass mobilization and those who are mobilized. Work on conflict onset considers organizations as monolithic, and thus cannot account for temporal variations in organizations' needs, for example: when is which mobilization needed? Instead, I posit that the mobilizer's, or rebel leader's organizational considerations vis-à-vis goals and environment at a given time are important, if we want to accurately explain and empirically consider the escalatory dynamics leading up to civil conflict. In other words, group formation processes and associated mobilization efforts require different theoretical accounts than are required for mobilization process during civil war

fought by established rebel organizations. Shifting the focus to the rebel leader in relation to organizational needs at specific times points, may help nuance our understanding of mobilization efforts.

3.3 Insurgency cohesion: challengers from inside and outside the rebel organization

How does a rebel leader's social capital affect rebel organizations? Some civil conflicts are fought by multiple rebel organizations while other civil conflicts are fought by a single rebel organization-state dyad. The number of rebel organizations fighting a civil conflict is typically viewed as a product of organizational splintering, or inside-competitors, or the emergence of new organizations, or outside competitors. On the one hand, inside-competitors emerge from rebel organizations already fighting in the conflict. On the other hand, outside competitors emerge alongside already existing organizations. The production of inside- and outside competitors has thus far been addressed from differing theoretical perspectives.

3.3.1 Conflict actors and cleavages

Once an organization is established and fights the state, requirements shift more firmly towards maintaining military capabilities, but more so to maintaining organizational cohesion, and preventing competitors outside of the rebel organizations to arise (compare Sinno, 2011, 92). In short, retaining and further developing organizational operability. The less competitors for political and military influence a rebel organization has, the better for its prospects to achieve victory (Cunningham, 2006, 2013b; Wood and Kathman, 2015; Mahoney, 2020). Simultaneously, there are a multitude of competing processes that can lead to the fragmentation of insurgencies (Bakke et al., 2012). In other words, during

conflict, rebel leaders have an interest in keeping the numbers of competing rebel organizations low, but have to be able to address many sources of fragmentation.³

I contend that processes regarding group cohesion and splintering, and the emergence of rebel competitors outside of the rebel organization that started a conflict are linked. This link, I argue, is represented in the fact that both splintering processes and emergence processes require the same social sources and social resources. These social resources found in social networks exist prior to and independently of conflicts.

There are two main explanatory perspectives regarding the number of rebel organizations fighting a civil conflict. The first perspective holds that enabling structures and the number of salient social cleavages that predate the onset of conflict determine the number of rebel organizations (Kalyvas, 2003, 2008). This perspective holds that conflicts can be considered market places in which the feasibility of resource mobilization determines the number of rebel organizations. In essence, the cost-benefit analysis of political entrepreneurs to enter a civil war is determined by incentives and constraints. A large population with diverse political demands not incorporated by government policies represents a large pool of mobilizable people. The greater and diverse the proportion of population that seeks to be represented, i.e. the greater the demand for political representation, the lower the costs for a rebel group and thus the higher the number of rebel groups during civil war. At the same time, the costs to supply the demanded political services is determined by a state's and competing rebel organizations' strength (Fjelde and Nilsson, 2018; Walter, 2019).

³I use fragmentation and factionalization interchangeably

3.3.2 Preference divergence and Organizational quality

The second perspective explains the number of rebel organizations in a conflict as a function of organizational quality. Across studies on insurgency cohesion, organizational quality can be understood as the ability of an organization to adapt to internal and external pressures without compromising the operability of an organization. Factionalization risks compromising organizational operability, because of increases in distances between commanders and commanded, i.e. heightening of principal-agent problems, resulting in non-compliance (Gates, 2002). At the same time, it is an empirical regularity that non-state actors such as rebel organizations are not unitary actors (Pearlman and Gallagher Cunningham, 2012). This means, that preferences within rebel organizations are heterogeneous, which leaders need to manage in order to prevent outcomes (e.g. splinters/factions) compromising organizational operability (Shapiro and Siegel, 2012; Shapiro, 2013). Preferences may diverge due to disagreements over resource allocation, tactics, leadership and ideology (Sinno, 2011).

Preferences within organizations and in alliances between organizations may diverge due to commitment problems and concerns over survival. Battlefield victories do not favour every member-organization of the alliance equally, therefore alliance member-organizations defect, because they cannot be sure that they will get their demands met while in the alliance. Likewise, organizations splinter during losses, because considerations for survival take priority, leading to challenges to the incumbent leader of a rebel organization (Christia, 2012). At the same time, rebel organizations (not inter-organizational alliances) splinter after battlefield victories, due to a loss of a unifying threat (Woldemariam, 2016). At the same time, in the Horn of Africa, organizations splinter also splinter due to territorial losses. Likewise, stalemates between warring parties allow members to view their organization as viable and necessary due to the constant

threat, which incentivizes collaboration (Woldemariam, 2018). Yet, as time and therefore military campaigns drag on, chances for stalemates and impasses in rebel campaigns increase, and thus fragmentation probability increases (Doctor, 2020). Another key are perceptions of organizational viability and necessity, which may be moderated by how the sub-commanders of a rebel organization view the rebel leader (Lidow, 2016, 224). Rebel leaders with a combat history may be perceived as more trustworthy by sub-commanders in terms of their ability to navigate rebel campaigns. As a result combat experience reduces the risk of organizational splintering, however, inter-leader variance in military and political experience starts to matter after on average 4 years of conflict (Doctor, 2020).

3.3.3 Leaders and organizational quality

Results on the impact of battlefield outcomes on fragmentation are inconclusive. However, the importance of organizational quality as a function of cohesion is theoretically well motivated and empirically substantiated. Likewise, organizational quality determines an organization's capabilities on the battlefield (Weinstein, 2007; Lockyer, 2010; Fjelde and Nilsson, 2012; Balcells and Kalyvas, 2014; Mahoney, 2020). Leaders and leadership structures are consistently argued to condition organizational quality. Leadership structures indicate how prone an organization is to succumb to the emergence of multiple factions (Asal et al., 2012). These leadership structures themselves are a result of how leaders are embedded in the social networks supporting the rebel organization (Staniland, 2014). Relatedly, Fjelde and Nilsson (2018) also recognize that any new competitor must compete with existing distributions of support as determined by social network endowments. But these networks need not be reduced to ethnic, religious, ideological or other types of identity constituting dimensions. Instead, rebel leaders with access to social networks abroad, for example due to

their history of studying, working, or military training abroad, are more likely to secure external support (Huang et al., 2022). This external support in favour of an incumbent rebel leader fosters rebel group cohesion (Tamm, 2016). Networks serve as conduits to diffuse grievances as method for mobilization and the creation of new rebel organizations (Mosinger, 2018). In the context of Nicaragua, control over access to these networks has been shown to influence whether leaders are challenged, and thus how likely organizational splinters are (Mosinger, 2019).

All things considered, the challenge remains to square explanations focused on extra-organizational factors with those explanations focused on intra-organizational factors. Insurgency fragmentation or cohesion as a function of within and outside rebel organization competitors, may be best addressed by focusing on how leaders attain access to, and appropriate social networks for their efforts. This, in turn, signifies an integration of time-invariant factors external to organizations - the existence of social cleavages and related, appropriable social networks - with intra-organizational factors - a leader's unique position within those networks. Put differently, insurgency cohesion may be best re-considered within the social space that affects all mechanisms underlying within-conflict rebel organization emergence.

3.4 Civil conflict resolution: audience costs in secret and public negotiations

Civil conflicts are currently considered to be linked episodes of violence that can occur and end in several ways: victory for either side, ceasefires, peace agreements, or other types of outcomes (e.g. violence receding to under 25 battle-related deaths) (Kreutz, 2010). One explanatory paradigm considers conflicts to be bargaining failures (Walter, 2009). That is, the link between conditions con-

ductive to conflict and the outbreak of fighting is not deterministic, but has to be considered with regards to the array of possible interactions between state and rebel organizations. This bargaining perspective has encouraged re-examining why conflict occurs and not occurs in similar conditions. In this paradigm, the resolution of conflicts through negotiations is a function of the cost-aversion or inability of actors to overcome commitment problems. However, the assumption that bargaining is the default optimal strategy for conflict actors, has not been explored for asymmetric environment of civil conflicts, where incentives of actors not to bargain differ from those in inter-state conflicts (Ari, 2023).

3.4.1 Paths to negotiations

Organizational qualities also influence the dynamics leading up to and during negotiations. How does a rebel leader’s social capital affect rebel organizations given temporal variation in organizational capabilities and environmental demands such as negotiations? Intra-organizational features are relevant for negotiation onset and outcomes. Organizational features constrain leader preferences (Prorok, 2016), and serve as signals to negotiation counter-parts how likely it is that the organization can follow through on agreements (Gallagher Cunningham and Sawyer, 2019). In addition, negotiation counter-parts may take advantage of intra-organizational factions, and induce splintering by suggesting negotiations (Fjelde and Nilsson, 2018). Consequently, like conflict, negotiations come with their own risks to the organizational operability which need to be managed by the rebel leader.

Organizations can also transform, shift operations that support fighting, and adapt to the possibility as operating as a political party (Ishiyama, 2018; Daly, 2021; Manning et al., 2022). Transformations of organizations are not uniformly beneficial or detrimental to the organization’s ambitions (Akçinaroglu, 2012). Yet, despite evidence that within-organizational dynamics determine the

onset of negotiations, much research has focused on either the process towards negotiations, or the context within which the process takes place (Irmer and Druckman, 2009). To consider the risks of negotiations, it is worth considering the path towards negotiations, as problems for the rebel organization arise along this path. Conflict parties need to first realize that there is a problem they have to solve (Zartman and Berman, 1982). Parties may identify a problem based on the pre-existing environment or context (Jackson, 2000), or due to exogenous shocks to the relationship (Druckman, 1986). In civil conflicts, a mutually hurting stalemate in combination with a perception of an impending catastrophe due to either party's inability to solve the problem unilaterally, is one situation in which context and external shocks align, and can induce the consideration of mediation or negotiation (Iji and Vuković, 2022; Zartman, 2022). Conflict parties need to realize that negotiations are an option (Saunders, 1985). Along this non-linear path of problem diagnostics, problem framing, towards setting procedures and rules for formal negotiations, conflict parties may engage a number of behaviours that may induce a move away from antagonism Stein (1989a,b); Zartman (1989); Doyle and Hegele (2021). A sticking point remains, however, that it remains unclear when contexts and processes interact in a manner that drives the process towards negotiations (Druckman, 2020).

3.4.2 Organizations, negotiation risks, and leader interests

Organizational features, such as the relative power of factions within rebel organizations determine whether an organization will consider negotiations. Likewise, negotiation counter-arts such as states may use organizational cohesion as information that pursuing negotiations is worthwhile. In addition, states may pursue negotiations in order to weaken organizations by taking advantage of internal discord. Organizational cohesion is conditioned by the social networks within which organizations exist. Likewise, rebel leader social networks

condition the degree to which a leader will be seen as culpable and thus the likelihood of being punished after a peace agreement. Since social networks condition both rebel cohesion and a leaders interest, looking at the leaders social networks should provide insights into when negotiations are more likely. In other words, the social networks of leaders are likely a determining factor in why negotiations occur.

3.5 Persistent questions and existing data

Many scholars on violent non-state actors (rebel organizations, terrorist groups, etc.) have researched leader related effects, mostly by measuring leader change or removal in one way or another (assassination, voting etc.) (Jordan, 2009; Price, 2012; Freeman, 2014; Tiernay, 2015; Tominaga, 2019; Gallagher Cunningham and Sawyer, 2019; Lutmar and Terris, 2019). However, data on inter-leader variation in leader-level traits is relatively recent. First attempts to collect systematic data on leader characteristics go back to Mumford et al. (2007)⁴, but have remained largely disconnected from literatures more focused on rebel or terrorist groups (notable exception van Leeuwen and Weggemans, 2018). Yet, some evidence suggests that established theories of transformational or neo-charismatic theories have viable applications in research on terrorist groups (Hofmann and Dawson, 2014; Hofmann, 2017). Since then, more systematic data collections have gone underway, pointing to new gaps in the research on leaders in civil conflict (Blair et al., 2022; Doctor et al., 2023).

Doctor (2020) collected data on rebel leaders' political and military experiences for the years 1989 - 2014 to test whether these variables are indicative of how much trust particularly sub-commanders bestow upon the rebel organization leader, as measured by the risk of group fragmentation during civil conflict. Doctor (2020) Finds that the longer a civil conflict drags on, the more

⁴With (Wickham-Crowley, 1992) also having collected some data for his cases.

the difference between politically and militarily experienced leaders increases, with military leaders' groups exhibiting lower levels of fragmentation risk at any given time. Interestingly, this divergence in risk of fragmentation only becomes measurable after 4 years of fighting. Because there are no apparent differences between military and politically experienced leaders in the first couple of years in a civil war, the question remains whether these variables have an impact in any way on the formative years of rebel organizations: or rather, does timing matter?

It is peculiar that the military nature of a rebel campaign punishes political leaders more than military leaders. If the rebel organization elite, ante bellum, thinks that a military leader is the most capable, then why are they not more punished than politically experienced leaders without implicit claims about their military capabilities? In addition, if political leaders know that they do not have the military knowledge to see through a rebel campaign, then they would be more likely to recruit the human capital necessary to substitute for the lack in military knowledge. Furthermore, we cannot determine whether leaders' military and political experiences are moderating trust, because measures of trust and battlefield gains and losses are missing. Lastly, exactly because of the importance of sub-commanders that Doctor (2020) emphasizes, we should also theorize what sets a leader apart from the sub-commanders who can be equally part of and essential in building a cohesive organization. If a leader doesn't have the military experience to build an organization based on the principles of "discipline and centralization of command", then why can't they delegate that to a sub-commander who can?

These points highlight that measures of political experience and military experience may be indicators of some more fundamental characteristic associated with the respective leader measures. This is further buttressed by Acosta

et al. (2023), Huang et al. (2022), Silverman et al. (2023) who contribute much needed data on individual level characteristics of leaders of rebel organizations, and enabling more comprehensive testing of inter-individual variation. The core contributions of the articles based on Acosta et al. (2023) data, which capture a variety of biographical data of rebel leaders from 1980 - 2011 is that leader characteristics matter. The correlations between leader characteristics and conflict related outcomes are robust: Leader age and conflict outcomes, and leaders' abilities to foster networks abroad prior to conflict and receiving foreign support. At the same time, the authors insist that their arguments are probabilistic and not deterministic (Silverman et al., 2023, 5), motivate this statement with interventions in their testing, but formulate a theory that draws a direct line between "system level" observations (civil conflict outcomes) without specifying how leader behaviour may be affected by other individuals inside and/or outside the organization. Yet, leaders do not act in a vacuum and the relation between leader variation and contextual factors such as other individuals, the organization they lead, or the environment they operate, needs to be specified (Ahlquist and Levi, 2011; Eptropaki et al., 2017).

In summary, the literature on leaders in the context of civil war has only recently directly tested the effects of variation in leader characteristics. What we have learned is that there seems to be a connection between the position of an individual at the top of a hierarchy of an organization, and the function of the role of leadership - a leader - in an organization vis-à-vis members of the organization, non-members of the organization and the context within which the organization operates.

4 Theory: social capital

The above section laid out the gaps in the respective research fields, with notable foci on mobilization, insurgency cohesion, and negotiation onset. Considering the conditioning effect of social networks on all discussed aspects of conflict, I posit that looking at a rebel leader's social networks can provide insights into each of the identified gaps. The underlying idea is that one theoretical framework lends itself to explaining three different, but linked conflict related phenomena. How does a rebel leader's social capital affect rebel organizations? This can be further compartmentalized into: 1) How does a rebel leader's social capital affect mobilization prior to civil conflict; 2) how does a rebel leader's social capital affect the number of rebel competitors during conflict; 3) how does a rebel leader's social capital affect the propensity of negotiation onset. In the following section, to address each of the above questions I develop the theoretical argument which can be summarized with the propositions: A) Organizational features condition the way organizations function internally and how they interact with their environment; B) A rebel leader's ability to condition organizational features is moderated by their access to social networks.

4.1 Social capital vis-à-vis existing research

This section discusses social capital and makes preliminary points about social capital within the dynamics of rebel organization's. These points are taken up in greater detail in the respective articles. Social networks enable trust-based recruitment and covert mobilization, because access to, and the ability to mobilize resources from those networks is granted or denied based on the history of engagement within those networks. Because resources are finite, leaders who appropriate networks for their cause early on in their life compared to competitors, will see less competition inside and outside the organization, making state

repression, splintering, and generally withdrawal of support less likely.

The advantage of social capital theory is that social aggregation and purposive individuals are essential to the theory, and therefore no additions need to be made for the theory to be relevant to the questions of this dissertation.

Lin (2008): "That is, individual actors and their relations form the basis of social capital, and these relations have microconsequences for the individuals as well as macroconsequences for the collectivity."

Moreover, due to the focus in social capital theory, it fits neatly with the already established horizon of knowledge in research on civil war, particularly the theoretical microfoundations. The assumptions and insights from social capital theory fit already established perspectives, and can nuance established knowledge while highlighting the direct connections between what new things social capital theory brings to light and what other theories did not address.

This is true, for example, for the relevance of social networks in emergence of rebel organizations (Larson and Lewis, 2018), the consolidation of rebel organizations (Holtermann, 2016) and their cohesion (Staniland, 2014), as well as how groups enter negotiations (Pearlman, 2009; Duursma and Fliervoe, 2021). There already exist bodies of knowledge on phenomena relevant to the temporal variation of rebel organizations, and therefore gaps that need to be filled, which lend themselves to the exploration through the lens of social capital theory.

Hence, 1) the integratability of social capital theory with existing research on civil war and leadership in civil war, 2) the fact that social capital theory directly addresses the theoretical challenges outlined above, and 3) the fact that adequate data is feasible to collect, justify the investigation of the question relevant to this study with a social capital theory in mind. Lastly, in the manner of abductive practice, the exploratory data collection efforts regarding rebel leaders also strongly suggested, that social capital theory is relevant, testable

and will deliver new insights (Swedberg, 2017).

4.2 Theoretical foundations of social capital

”[S]ocial capital stands for the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures” (Portes, 1998). It is therefore the configuration of an individual’s relationships through which an individual is attributed with social capital. While social capital can therefore be pro-actively fostered (Bourdieu, 2011), the reception of resources due to social capital are bound to the motives of those in the relationships, those composing an individual’s networks (Portes, 1998). On the other hand, the application or function of social capital as something used by an individual to achieve something, is bound to the goal-oriented individual managing their relations (Coleman, 1988). An individual’s goals are bound to the motivations of the resource providers.

The key to how social capital is distinguished from other capital, such as financial capital, which can equally be used to mobilize resources, is that: 1) social capital is fungible but cannot be transferred via a transaction and 2) social capital achieves its value through its generation process. That is, firstly, the ability of an individual to use their social capital, rests on the fact that the social ties through which resources are mobilized, provide what is requested, due to the norms that govern the nature of the ties. Norms of reciprocity, trust, shared values are paramount (Coleman, 1988; Ben-Porath, 1980; Putnam, 2000). Secondly, the individual requesting resources from their social ties may not reciprocate the value they were given with the same type of resources: an individual requesting money may pay back with a costly favour (Ben-Porath, 1980).⁵

⁵(compare Portes, 1998, page 7)

On the other hand, like other forms of capital, social capital and the production process behind it generate an excess in value within the social relations due to investment made into the relations (Lin, 2008). Social capital may be defined by configurations of social relations, but forms of social capital are influenced by the settings that influence "a society's culture (norms, attitude, values), institutional framework, and by its endowments (amount of human and other forms of capital, space and other natural resources, technology) (Schiff, 1992). In addition, social capital generation and outcomes related to the use of social capital depend on the configuration of the social network (Portes, 1998). The configuration of a person's network is best understood by looking at the social ties of that person and the ties between individuals within the network of the person of interest. Another way to look at social capital is as value generated by network configurations which themselves are indicated by several dimensions.

4.3 Social capital dimensions and social ties

Social capital is a multi-dimensional concept. Sabatini (2009) identify 5 main dimensions of social capital: "strong family ties (i.e. bonding social capital), weak informal ties (bridging social capital), voluntary organizations (linking social capital), active political participation and civic awareness." Other work has further aggregated social capital dimensions into 1) the propensity of individuals to engage with individuals who are similar in social categories (e.g. comparable level of income), 2) the degree to which connections between individuals in a network are clustered into "cliques", and 3) the degree of civic engagement (Chetty et al., 2022). Central to social capital is that it represents the adherence to norms and exchange of values by connected individuals in a network, where the way people are connected with each other determines how norms are re-enforced, which values are exchanged, and what can be achieved due to these

connections (Coleman, 1988). For example, the degree to which an individual's network is cohesive impacts how accurately information is aggregated, i.e. how accurate the information held by an individual about other individuals is.⁶ This is, because the distance between information source and recipient in a cohesive network is shorter and consequently less prone to be erroneous (Alatas et al., 2016).

4.3.1 Strong ties

An example of such strong ties are "f-connections" (Ben-Porath, 1980). In the family, ties and exchanges therein are characterized by: long, undefined time periods, apply to a wide range of activities, are "contingent on events and decided sequentially" where rules guiding the behaviours are derived from rules superseding one particular family (e.g. culture), obligations due to ties cannot be evaluated individually or in aggregate, balances in obligations or exchanges are approximate and can be outstanding for a long period of time, enforcement is internal to the ties (or family), ties create collective identities which themselves affect exchanges and their costs, and lastly, "[t]he most important characteristic of the family contract is that it is embedded in the identity of the partners, without which it loses its meaning. It is thus specific and nonnegotiable or nontransferable (Ben-Porath, 1980)."

Strong ties come with other advantages. For example, individuals of a reputable family, with a record of engagement in a certain political or economic domain, will be judged based on the values associated with the family name (Feinstein, 2010). In other words, in the absence of an individual's track record of performance, appraisals will be based on what the individual's family name stands for. If a family is a political family, then someone from that family

⁶An individual's network is cohesive, for example when in person A's network, person A's friend is friends with a friend of person A.

will be expected to perform well politically. Strong tie relationships also foster cohesion, mutual support and well-being (Granovetter, 1973). Strong ties also facilitate publication in academic journals: for the context of economists in Italy, the more co-authors a researcher has, the more they will collaborate in the future; the more a researcher collaborates, the more they publish (Cainelli et al., 2015).

Strong ties also come with their disadvantages. For one, obligations and forced trust can lead to outcomes not favoured by the individual. Secondly, informal mechanisms of enforcement can be found in fear and violence. Thirdly, when strong ties, particularly when a network of strong ties, are linked to collective identities, and outside people judge behaviour of a given individual, it is likely that the judged individual's collective identity is used as heuristic, and negative appraisals thus affect the whole collective identity, and therefore individuals within a network associated with that collective identity. Bad actors are costly to all actors in a social network with strong, dense ties: the inverse of associating positive traits with a family name (Ben-Porath, 1980). Furthermore, cohesive networks of strong ties tend to produce accurate, albeit redundant information, thus limiting the ability of identification of opportunities outside of the tightly knit network, i.e. a limitation of new information (Burt, 1995).

4.3.2 Weak ties

Such draw backs are not associated with weak ties. Weak ties are connections between individuals that do not necessarily belong to the same network and are characterized by comparatively low levels of resource investments of individuals into the relationship (Granovetter, 1973). Yet, these weak ties are crucial for the diffusion of information. Individuals with an abundance of weak ties, i.e. with abundant access to new information, are, for example, more likely to find jobs (Granovetter, 1973; Lin, 1999). More diverse networks are also

associated with greater political engagement (Tindall and Cormier, 2008), and researchers with an abundance of weak ties, are even more productive than those with predominantly strong ties (Cainelli et al., 2015). In short, wherever there is space between networks, weak ties can serve to overcome such "structural holes" (Burt, 1995) and through novelty of input generate surplus value, such as exposure to new data on available job positions.

In sum, social capital is a resource embedded within a social network, the access to which is privileged to some individuals more than others. While individuals cannot "possess" social capital, they're position within a network, and access to networks enables them to engage in resource transactions other individuals cannot engage in. Individuals benefit from both strong and weak ties, where strong ties are particularly beneficial in contexts where informal enforcement mechanisms are particularly advantageous (e.g. Mafia), whereas weak ties facilitate overcoming network redundancies (e.g. available information).

4.4 Social capital, leaders and organizational demands

4.4.1 How leaders form organizations and enable clandestine mobilization

As this section will recapitulate, networks have been shown to serve as the operational basis of rebel organizations. This means concretely, that networks serve to supply resources, serve to shield group against infiltration, and depending on the integration of rebel organizations signal the leadership structure and cohesiveness of a rebel organization. Arguably crucial indicators for a rebel organization's operations. Ethnic kinship networks, for example, have been shown in the context of Uganda, to serve the function of dispersing reliable information about a rebel organization's capabilities to prospective recruits and supporters, while circumventing information leakage to state spies (Larson and Lewis, 2018).

Therefore, ethnic kinship networks serve two purposes: propaganda, and rebel organization growth.

The interlocking dynamics of successful propaganda and rebel organization growth, while being shielded from state repression, has been made evident by Lewis (2020). Lewis (2020) shows that regions in Uganda with ethnically homogeneous networks produce rebel organizations that are more likely to transition from a nascent rebel organization stage of essentially political irrelevance to a rebel organization capable of contesting the state. Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), for example, recruited out of networks with network-exclusive costly signals that would allow the identification of committed recruits. For example, only former Mujahideen would be able to volunteer certain information or behaviours, something not available to government spies, or individuals without high commitment to the cause (Heghammer, 2006, 2013).

Even in state-controlled territory, social networks can subvert the state and ensure that even particularly weak rebel organizations can rally until they have met a minimum capability requirement. This is, because rebel organizations embedded in a local context have access to local networks, for which incentives to collaborate are known. On the other hand, "foreign" (non-local) government forces are not capable to identify possibilities for co-optation and collaboration. This is compounded by the fact that rebel organizations already contribute to their support networks (Holtermann, 2016). In other words, in the nascent stages of rebel organizations, when they are militarily the weakest, their social influence through their embeddedness in social networks is particularly salient.

4.4.2 How leaders of consolidated organizations crowd out competitors

Once conflict is underway and rebel organizations consolidated, new challenges will present themselves. The rebel organization is now subject to direct re-

pression (fighting) and such political contexts are ripe for the production of additional rebel organization competitors and therefore additional vectors of violence. Consequently, rebel organizations will be subject to setbacks and the emergence of factions. While military considerations are necessarily important for the operations of rebel organizations, the degree to which a rebel organization can operate is also a function of how cohesive the rebel organization is. Likewise, how strong a rebel organization is depends on how well they can attract the resources necessary for fighting, i.e. how well they can ensure that the state or competitors do not have access to such resources. In short, it is imperative for a rebel organization to minimize within-group and outside of group competition.

To minimize conflict fragmentation, or the number of actors fighting a conflict, groups can lean on the way and degree they are integrated in social networks. Staniland (2014) identifies four kinds of ways in which leaders can be integrated in networks, which are also the types of organizations that are consequently produced: integrated, vanguard, parochial and fragmented. The way organizations are horizontally and vertically integrated determines the four types.⁷ Key here is that the strength of decision-making, institution building, recruitment and combat as part of the organization can vary. Centralized, strong control is able to 'coordinate its strategy and retains the loyalty and unity of its key leaders as it implements strategy.' Moreover, managing human resources as well as the organization's propaganda, and 'distributing resources' are all part of the organization's capability. Organizations with a lack of strong control processes, on the other hand, will see factionalization and leader defection, with weak discipline and no single 'party line'.

⁷As a result: 1) Integrated organizations, with robust central and local control; 2) Vanguard organizations with strong central command but fragile local control; 3) Parochial organizations with weak central, but strong local control; and 4) Fragmented organizations with both weak central and local control.

The nature and degree of dissent is a function of both types of control, thus integrated organizations see only minimal dissent, and vanguard organizations see dissent between local and central authority. In parochial organizations, dissent is commonly seen between factional commanders, and dissent is 'pervasive' in fragmented organizations. Since networks pre-date conflicts, this theoretical framework also suggests that network configurations prior to conflict, will have an influence on dynamics during conflict. More cohesive rebel organizations, which are better integrated in social networks, should also be able to crowd out outside competitors.

Social networks, and resources within them, are finite. Therefore, rebel organizations who pioneer the appropriation of social networks for their cause should be at a competitive advantage, raising the "barriers of entry" for other groups, thus making competitors less likely (Fjelde and Nilsson, 2018). Hence, rebel leaders with intergenerational social capital, who were introduced to and found a hold of social networks earlier on should be tough to compete with. Such political dynasties have time on their side, as fostering relevant social networks can take decades. Leaders who come from a family with access to notable social networks, will be introduced to these networks early on in their life (Dal Bó et al., 2009).

Leaders from such families are at a social capital advantage in at least two crucial ways: the networks have already been invested in for years, and leaders enter these networks earlier on in their life than others. As a result, leaders can start fostering relationships earlier on, and in addition, information about them can be dispersed with more credibility. In addition, due to the effect of collective identities in strong tie networks, leaders who come from a noble family are expected to meet demands of their support networks. Leaders, with such incentives for hereditary rule, i.e. who inherited their political position

from their family and want to ensure that the family rule will stay in place, are thus expected to perform in a way that benefits their supporters. Consequently, leaders from noble families tend to be favoured compared to political competitors without such hereditary pedigree (Besley and Reynal-Querol, 2017): Social capital is indicative of a leaders political potential, but also of their political obligations.

4.4.3 How leaders get buy-in from audiences to engage in negotiations

With the changing nature of the context as a conflict progresses, challenges change, too. rebel organizations founded to oppose the state, and who fought to remain cohesive and crowd out competitors, may face circumstances when they have to change course. Considerations of negotiations are no longer a mere option, but necessary. Situations in which negotiations impose themselves onto the warring parties are necessarily associated with an admission that they cannot win by the means employed hitherto. Since negotiation processes catalyze factionalization the leader has to evaluate whether they are in a position to suggest policies such as negotiations that would compromise their position as leaders: if negotiations are unpopular, and the leader's position weak, they cannot afford to suggest negotiations.

First, consider that there are secret and public negotiations processes. Secret negotiations, or pre-negotiation processes, typically represent the path towards formal, public negotiations. As a result, secret and public negotiations will have different audiences. Secret negotiations will involve only the core leadership of a rebel organization: The rest of the organization is not involved and may not even know that the organization's leadership is engaged in a negotiation process. Formal negotiations, on the other hand, are known to everyone inside the rebel organization, as well as to the broader public. As a result of the

varying audiences exposed to the negotiation processes, a rebel leader will deal with different audience costs. In other words, the audiences involved determine which type of audience costs are payed.

Audience costs are costs a leader pays for making public statements on policy, such as the choice to enter negotiations (Fearon, 1994b). For secret negotiations, the audience is represented in the leadership of the organization, and thus is likely to represent factions within organization. Thus, even secret negotiations can bring with them the risk of splintering, as factions see an opportunity to represent secret negotiations processes as weakness of an incumbent leader. At the same time, the logic behind the ability of a leader to enter negotiation processes follows that of reducing fragmentation chance: factions who consider withdrawing support from the leader, also have to consider whether they will be able to co-opt the social support networks allowing them to operate. Leaders with strong connections to their networks, will be able to outperform competitors in this regard and therefore can afford entering negotiation processes.

For public negotiations, a leader can use social capital as leverage. Leaders who are well integrated in local social networks, are more aware of the grievances and policy positions of the constituents. This leader social capital therefore allows a leader to gather information on the public's stance on formal negotiations (Nepstad and Bob, 2006). The secondary outcome of this leader social capital is that audience costs are higher. The larger the represented constituencies, the higher the audience costs. The result of higher audience costs is that leaders have better bargaining positions. Leaders can increase their bargaining leverage as public statements are costly, thus signal commitment (Kertzer and Brutger, 2016). Public commitments to formal negotiations are even more costly, since the public punishes particularly those political figures who make statements of one sort, but act out in another, i.e. promise some form of agreement or to

enter negotiations, but do not follow through (Tomz, 2007). Thus, leaders with a broad support network will pay particularly high costs for not delivering on promises, which makes their commitments to negotiations and therefore their bargaining position more credible (Leventoğlu and Tarar, 2005). Because their bargaining position is more credible, high social capital leaders will be more confident and therefore more likely to enter negotiations.

In short, social capital ensures that a leader can force intra-group bandwagging for secret negotiations. Social capital increases audience costs for a leader, thus their bargaining position is particularly strong, consequently their likelihood of entering negotiations higher (irrespective of whether a leader actually intends to deliver (Clayton et al., 2023)).

5 Research Design

The research design is guided by the following research question and its sub-questions. How does a rebel leader's social capital affect rebel organizations? How does a rebel leader's social capital affect mobilization prior to civil conflict? How does a rebel leader's social capital affect the number of rebel competitors during conflict? How does a rebel leader's social capital affect the propensity of negotiation onset? To explore how leaders influence organizations, I adopt the view that organizational requirements and conflict stages are interdependent. Three conflict stages are of interest: the pre-conflict phase, the peri-conflict phase and the phase in which leaders make decisions as to whether they want to continue fighting or settle the conflict in negotiations. In this sense, it is assumed that stages of conflicts are sufficiently indicative of organizational requirements: 1) For the pre-conflict stage, it can be assumed that organizations are still developing capabilities; 2) for the time during conflict, organizations have consolidated and now face challenges exclusive to the time fighting the

state; 3) and for considerations of negotiations, organizations are faced with new considerations not available to them at the outset or at the beginning of a rebel campaign.

Each article adopts a research design adequate for answering the research question of the respective article. The overarching research design, however, is based on the identification that no data adequate for answering the research question was available. Thus, to be able to model causal explanations and test them, new data had to be gathered. Moreover, the emphasis is on theory to provide the justification for why observational data is causally related. This is primarily because of the fact that data on and the study of leaders in conflict is only now emerging. In short, there is a necessity for and primacy of both theory development and data gathering.

5.1 Why an observational, large-N study?

In light of the primary goals of this dissertation, this study prioritized regression-based, observational studies where the real world relationship between explanatory variable X (social capital) and Y (outcome variable of the respective study) is approximated with a function $f(X) = Y$, or $Y = f(\beta X + \epsilon)$. Each article adopts a function best suited to approximate the real world relationship for which the research question in the respective article is formulated. The emphasis in this dissertation is on the effect size of the leader coefficient $\hat{\beta}$ in a given model.

The robustness of the correlations is tested, and issues of endogeneity and omitted variable bias are as best as possible discussed and addressed. Therefore, this dissertation seeks to substantiate theoretical claims with statistical control. As a result, the conclusions derived from this study, are estimates of confidence to which degree the association between leader constructs and outcome constructs are random, and whether association between variables is not only

statistically significant, but "substantial" (for example, the variance in days a conflict onset takes given certain leader measures). In other words, the task here is to arrive at statistically derived descriptions of leader-outcome associations, the direction of the correlation, and their strength.

Theory development is often associated with a more qualitative approach, whether deductive or inductive (Flyvberg, 2006). The advantage of process tracing and structured focused comparisons are that they enable the identification of a variety of criteria used to judge whether a causal narrative or mechanism is active or not (Collier, 2011; Slater and Ziblatt, 2013). In turn, case studies allow for appraisal of whether a theory is plausible and to what degree observable, particularly with respect to a particular "causal pathway" (how does X cause Y), thus allowing for the identification to what degree a theory is explanatory (when this is desired) (Levy, 2008; Saylor, 2018).

However, the goal of this dissertation is to find whether, in general, there is a non-random association between explanatory variable and outcome variable (King et al., 1994). That is, what is on average the "effect of causes", irrespective of a particular causal pathway (Mahoney and Goertz, 2006). One of the goals of this research is to find to what degree variation in leader social capital matters, and quantitative approaches better capture covariation due to variability in measures of interest across a number of cases. In addition, much of the accounts of leaders in the existing literature are anecdotal, thus a quantitative approach is adequate to test the generalizability of anecdotally attributed leader efficacy.

This also signals that causal inference designs and prediction designs are not ideal for the goal of this study.

Causal inference studies by design sacrifice generalizability. To be able to isolate the causal effect of a variable/parameter/treatment, scope of studies is often times deliberately reduced in order to identify experimental settings in

which selection bias is addressed, and therefore error in the estimation of the treatment effect between groups can be reduced (Cunningham, 2021). For causal inference designs, a second set of data collection would be necessary, in order to gather enough information to motivate the adequate experimental design or find a natural experiment. This second step in data gathering was beyond the scope and resources of this dissertation (Galit Shmueli, 2010). Moreover, the core issue is that the task at hand is to collect data on the population of leaders of rebel organizations recorded in standard civil conflict data. This means concretely, making use of population data that is systematically censored, as it only includes "successful" cases of organizations, i.e. organizations that at some point were viable enough to fight the state to a degree that it qualified inclusion in the data. Therefore, there is not systematic data on "failed" cases of rebel organizations, i.e. organizations that emerged but never met inclusion criteria, nor is there data on organizations that were about to but failed to form. Therefore, the control groups for experimental/causal inference designs are missing (Hernán et al., 2019). Importantly, I have no way to assess whether organizations randomly sort into organizations included in data sets or not, or whether they systematically sort into ones meeting inclusion criteria or not. Data on failed cases exists for the African continent after 1989, however leader data for that spatio-temporal scope is missing (Lewis, 2020). This means, overall, that I do not have a way to randomly or with some other design, assign the treatment of leader characteristics to organizational outcome categories (Hernán et al., 2019; Cunningham, 2021). In short, isolating the causal effect of the leader is reserved for future studies. To summarize, the goals of this dissertation do not align with the purpose of causal inference designs.

In terms of predictive modelling, the number of observations in the leader data used in this dissertation does not allow for the procedures essential in

predictive modelling. That is, the goal of predictive modelling is to arrive at an estimate of the the predictive power of a predictive model. This requires the ability to cross-validate, or the use of training and hold out (re-test) data. Constraints in the number of cases preclude these procedures. In short, the leader data does not fulfill data quality criteria for predictive modelling (Galit Shmueli, 2010). Moreover, the goal of this dissertation is not to find the "true model" predicting outcome variables of interest, but rather approximate the effect size of leader variables in a given model (Galit Shmueli, 2010). In other words, the emphasis in this dissertation is on the effect size of $\hat{\beta}$ rather than on finding the best model for predicting a (potential) outcome $\hat{\gamma}$ (Grimmer et al., 2021; Mullainathan and Spiess, 2017). To summarize, the goals of this dissertation do not align with the purpose of predictive modelling.

A final point on key concepts and operationalizations: the outcome variables of interest are operationalized in the respective articles and adhere to standards found in the respective literatures. The data used, and the main independent variable of interest, social capital, are exhaustively discussed in the research note (article 1).

6 Summaries of articles

6.1 Article 1: Introducing COALESCE: A dataset on leaders of rebel organizations and their social capital 1946 - 2023

This article presents the Conflict And LEader Social Capital (COALESC) data set. COALESC encompasses data on the rebel leaders of rebel organizations involved in intra-state conflicts between 1946 and 2023. Research on civil conflicts increasingly looks at individual level mechanisms and data to explain organiza-

tion and conflict level dynamics. Consequently, research requires increasingly granular, "sub-unit" data, in order to compensate for the limitations of inference based on data on the environment within which organizations operate. This is particularly applicable, but not limited to dynamics of how organizations form and manage cohesion, and therefore the interdependence with variables typically linked with organizational cohesion, such as battlefield outcomes and negotiation onset. As a result, leaders have increasingly been the focus of theorization and data collection. Data collection efforts on leaders in rebel organizations have attempted to follow suit with data collection efforts on state leaders, in order to re-test theories on a new sample of leaders. This limited data collection in two ways: 1) data was collected on variables with a given operationalization in a different field (e.g. military experience, combat experience, etc.), or 2) limited in temporal scope due to an effort to capture more leader level measures. Therefore, this has limited the number of theories that could be tested, and the ability to test the generalizability of theories on inter-leader variation and related outcome variables of interest.

COALESC data covers the years 1946-2023 (therefore adds 40 years to existing data), with quantities on founding leaders of rebel organizations. This will allow for a re-testing of existing studies in intra-state conflicts, theories developed for state leaders in international conflicts. The data contains 439 unique leaders, for 505 unique rebel organizations constituent of 538 unique conflict dyads in 214 conflicts. First, I will motivate the relevance of this data set. Second, I will describe the central concepts of the data (e.g. what is a leader), which data I collected and how I collected it. Next, I compare descriptive statistics generated with this data to data on leaders in comparable data. Then, I will illustrate the use of this data by reproducing existing studies with the new data, which show how existing results can be nuanced.

The replication study conducted in this article increases confidence in existing findings: Despite differences in temporal scope and coding decisions, analyses on the basis of COALESC largely reproduces existing results.

6.2 Article 2: Fighting, fast and slow: rebel leader social capital and the pace of civil conflict onset

The conflict onset literature has predominantly examined conflict onset as a binary observation for any given year. From a quantitative perspective that is informed by macro-level data, such an approach is sensible. However, whether conflicts occur is determined by both macro-level monolithic and slow-moving variables, as well as micro-level dynamics. Particularly the group level is important to study: for a rebel organization to be able to violently challenge a state, there are many steps that need to be taken. One of these steps or obstacles is striking a careful balance between increasing capabilities and not being detected by a state. The tension between capabilities and secrecy is inherent: the more capable a rebel organization - more recruits, better military means - the more likely that they will be detected. On the other hand, if a rebel organization does not grow the capabilities necessary to achieve their goals, they will by definition fail to reach them: they remain clandestine because they remain irrelevant.

A rebel leader's social capital eases the tension between rebel organization growth and detection. Social capital, defined as the ability to access social networks and secure benefits exclusive to that network, enables leaders to filter out those recruits that would increase the risk of being detected. This is, because membership in social networks is associated with: 1) the ability to spread information, 2) the ability to disperse information to trusted individuals, 3) the identification of trusted individuals based on costly signals exclusive to that social network. Rebel leaders with social capital can recruit based on trust, and

therefore can wait for intra-organizational and extra-organizational dynamics to develop favourably. Trusting and trusted recruits are less likely to defect in times of hardship, for example when organizational development does not progress as fast as projected and spoils of war remain distant, or when state repressive capacities do not allow further growth at a particular point in time.

The logic can be summarized as such: a leader has incentives to seize windows of opportunity, which are represented in a constellation where intra-group dynamics and extra-group conditions are ideal for action. Rebel leaders high in social capital can use trust based networks to develop their organization, but what is imperative is their ability to purchase time for the ideal moment to present itself. Other types of leaders may be able to recruit and develop capable organizations, but may have to act even though the environment is not permissive. Therefore, high social capital leaders are more likely to take more time until they fight compared to leaders who are low in social capital.

This hypothesis is tested on rebel leaders of rebel organizations involved in conflicts between 1946 and 2013. The dependent variable is the time between the year in which a rebel leader assumes the position of leader of a group prior to the initiation of conflict and the year in which the conflict-dyad year is recorded. The cox proportional hazard models lend robust support to the hypothesis. High social capital leaders are slower in fighting initiation than low social capital leaders of leaders with exclusively military backgrounds. While holding all covariates constant, and setting social capital to its minimum value of 0, the mean duration to conflict is 765 days: Increasing social capital by one standard deviation, increases the expected mean duration by 438 days. At mean value of social capital (0.342), the mean duration to conflict is 1433 days. A one standard deviation increase from social capital's mean value yields a mean duration to conflict of 1704 days. Whether these changes are substantive is

subject to interpretation. For context: across models, a one standard deviation increase from the mean is associated with a mean increase in days to fighting of 319 days (or 87% of a year's total days). Likewise, the highest social capital level is associated with, on average, an increase of mean expected duration to conflict of 658 days (almost two years) compared to mean social capital leaders. Considering the risks of detection, I would argue that increasing the time to conflict by half a year is already noteworthy.

6.3 Article 3: Parents of the Revolution: Leaders' inter-generational social capital and insurgency cohesion

This article⁸ examines whether and how the family background of rebel organization leaders influences whether a conflict will be fought by multiple rebel organizations. Some conflicts are fought by a number of rebel organizations, while other conflicts are fought almost exclusively by one rebel organization and the state. The number of rebel organizations can be a result of group splintering, where a faction of an existing rebel organization splinters off and operates independently, or because other groups emerge independently.

We argue that leaders who come from reputable families have intergenerational social capital, i.e. the connection to social networks, and a family brand name that is associated with trust. Leaders with intergenerational social capital can create more cohesive groups and make it difficult for other leaders to tap into the social networks which enables the operations of a rebel organization. Reputable families, or families with a history of involvement in independence movements, religious functions, political parties, or similar, will generate rec-

⁸This article was co-authored with Joakim Kreutz. I am the main author. Joakim Kreutz is the secondary and corresponding author. I was responsible for situating the research/paper, researching and discussing previous research, deriving the theoretical argument and hypotheses, and the interpretation of the minority of results. Joakim Kreutz was responsible for situating the research/paper, streamlining the argument, the research design, executing the quantitative analysis and interpretation of the majority results.

ognizable family names. Family names that are associated, for example with engagement in politics, will be recognized as such, and the political abilities of an individual associated with that name will be inferred by others through the association of the individual with the family name.

Moreover, families with such histories have had more time to pro-actively manage social networks, i.e create new connections and foster old ones, in order to enhance trust and consequently facilitate the exchange of values. Leaders who come from such a family will be introduced to relevant social networks early on in their life, and thus have an advantage over other individuals who have to gain access to these social networks through other means, which is resource intensive. In addition, rebel leaders rely on recruits, and recruits themselves make a decision on who they want to be recruited by. A wide social network into which a rebel leader can project their reputable family name, makes it easier to attract recruits: makes it easier for recruits to choose the leader. In other words, social capital ensures that recruits hear of the rebel leader, and that they hear of the rebel leader in a favourable manner. In short, intergenerational social capital makes a leader more visible, more credible and trusted, and makes it more difficult for competitors to appropriate for their own purposes, thus making "inside competitors", or splinters, as well as "outside competitors" from independently formed organizations less likely.

This hypothesis that rebel leaders with high intergenerational social capital will be less likely to be challenged is tested on a data set that includes rebel leaders and their families from 353 rebel organizations in conflicts fought between 1946-2018. We find evidence that rebel leaders with high intergenerational social capital will be challenged less, i.e. conflicts (conflict-years) will be less likely to exhibit additional rebel organizations. Independently, rebel leaders with military and political experience are more likely to be challenged. These results

nuance existing research on the impact of rebel organization characteristics on rebel organization dynamics, as previous relationship formulated a positive linear relationship between an individual's military and political experience and group cohesion. The dampening effect of intergenerational social capital on the number of rebel organizations in a conflict year is particularly pronounced in the first years of a conflict, but remains substantial throughout conflict, even after 20 years. This is further evidence for the perspective on which this paper is based: the conditions as the outset of the conflict - particularly in terms of social networks, have bearing on within conflict dynamics. Therefore, this paper also nuances existing research on conflict related measures which are typically argued to be exclusively determined by dynamics endogenous to conflicts.

6.4 Article 4: Offers you cannot refuse: How rebel leader social capital influences the onset of public and secret negotiations during civil conflict

This article argues that rebel leader social capital is a determinant in why conflict parties engage in secret and public negotiations. Secret negotiations pose a risk for the rebel leader, since secret negotiation is associated with: 1) contexts that force parties to re-consider their stance, and 2) opportunities for dissenting faction to position themselves to favour their own position. Therefore, factions whose support may be waning in the wake of secret negotiation, may fully withdraw support from their leader if the leader decides on a path forward not favoured by competing factions.

At the same time, competing factions depend on the same support structures as incumbent leaders: social-networks. Withdrawing support and acting closer to ones ideal preferences may be costly, when this results in acting without support in social support structures. Since leaders have to probe how stable

their position is, secret negotiation is not just a risk but also an opportunity. If dissenting factions have to bandwagon due to the strong connections of an incumbent leader with the rebel organizations social support networks, then a rebel leader strengthens their position when opting for engaging in unpopular secret negotiation processes. Moreover, when a rebel leader is firmly established in their social support networks, it will also be difficult for competitors to start viable splinter-factions, as the incumbents firm establishment in social support networks prevents competitors to infiltrate and appropriate the social support networks essential for rebel operations.

For public negotiations, the rebel leader high in social capital can make costly signals regarding their commitment to a public negotiation process and what they seek to get out of it. Costs and audiences are linked, but little attention has been paid to which type of audiences are associated with which costs (Kertzer and Brutger, 2016). Leaders can make public statements regarding policy to an audience, thus creating audience costs, by exposing themselves to punishment by the audience if the leader does not follow through on their promises (Fearon, 1994a). Public audiences punish leaders particularly when the leader does the opposite of what they promise publicly (Tomz, 2007). Due to these costs, leaders' threats and commitments are more credible, giving them bargaining leverage (Leventođlu and Tarar, 2005). The intra-organizational leverage social capital provides for secret negotiations also works for public negotiations. In addition, states who see a rebel leader as representative of a broader constituency and with a good hold on intra-organizational factions, will be more likely to count this as indicative that negotiations are worthwhile. Social capital give the leader knowledge of the wider public, gives them leverage within the organization, and signals reliable information to the state (Gallagher Cunningham and Sawyer, 2019), making public negotiations more likely.

The logistic and multinomial regressions employed to test these arguments show mixed results. The claim that there is a robust, statistically significant relationship between a rebel leader's social capital and types of negotiation onset cannot be substantiated. However, the results do suggest that there is a relationship between social capital, organizational level variables, and contextual variables, that in tandem influence negotiation onset dynamics. However, more data is required to investigate this further, as data on particularly secret negotiations is limited. The results also suggest that conflict dynamics and organizational characteristics, such as conflict intensity or rebel group strength, supersede the influence of social networks. This interpretation is in line with existing research linking conflict dynamics and organizational characteristics to negotiation onset (Clayton and Gleditsch, 2014; Cunningham, 2013a; Nilsson and Svensson, 2023).

7 Conclusions

The main argument investigated in this dissertation is that a rebel leader's social capital, or access to and ability to secure benefits from social networks allows a rebel leader to form, consolidate and politically maneuver rebel organizations. First, for the formation of a rebel organization, the social capital of a rebel leader enables a rebel leader to grow a rebel organization while remaining hidden from the state. This is, because rebel leaders with access to relevant social networks can recruit committed individuals who have the human capital necessary to launch a rebellion. Moreover, the recruitment process is built on mutual trust, which translates to a resistance to pressures to fight, allowing the rebel organization to wait for the ripe moment to fight: when the organization is ready and when the environment is permissive.

Second, during an ongoing civil conflict, rebel leaders have incentives to

be the sole rebel organization fighting a conflict. Thus, competitors from inside the rebel organization and outside the rebel organization pose a challenge. Social capital of a rebel leader, particularly when inherited from the leader's parents, gives rebel leaders an advantage in appropriating social networks for their causes. Since social networks and their resources are finite, thus leaders who are introduced to social networks early on in life, have an advantage that is prohibitively expensive to compete with.

Third, when rebel leaders consider whether negotiations are viable policy options or not, the leader's social capital allows them engage in secret negotiations and improve their position going into public negotiations. A leader's social capital forces factions in the executive group of the rebel organization to bandwagon with a leader's unpopular policy choices. Leaders with social capital represent a major component in securing resources essential to an organization's operations. Therefore, withdrawing support through leader removal or splitting off is costlier than supporting secret negotiations that at least allow plausible deniability with the rest of the rebel organization. For public negotiations, leaders with high social capital have two advantages: they have a better grasp on the incurred hurt by conflict, and leaders incur higher audience costs when announcing negotiations. As a result, leaders can make credible commitments, and improve their leverage going into negotiations.

The findings support these general claims of the influence of social capital on conflict dynamics, with the important caveat that the research designs do not support causal claims. Considering the emerging literature with similar leader metrics, and the consistency in results, it is at least unlikely that the correlations between a rebel leader's social capital and conflict measures are a coincidence. The three main findings are that: 1) conflicts that are fought by a rebel organization led by a high social capital leader are associated with,

on average, all else equal, prolonged onset periods. In other words, the time between organizational formation and fighting is on average longer; 2) conflicts fought by rebel organizations led by high social capital leaders are on average, all else equal, associated with fewer conflict parties; 3) conflicts with rebel organizations led by a high social capital are associated, on average, all else equal, with a higher likelihood of secret, or pre-negotiation occurrence.

In terms of generalizability, the results are based on all recorded conflicts and negotiations. However, these analyses were conducted on a systematically biased sample, where literature currently does not know what the true population is. In other words, for all intents and purposes data represents the population of phenomena of interest. To expand on this, results may change with data on civil conflicts prior to 1946 which is not systematically available.

7.1 Future research

In terms of future research, I see three main avenues: 1) nuancing prediction models, 2) collecting empirical material on conflict social network nodes, i.e. individual composing social networks connected to the rebel leader or the rebel organization, 3) nuancing types of social capital used for conflict purposes. First, findings on the disaggregated onset dynamics of conflict can help address one of the toughest challenges for conflict onset research: the prediction of rebel organizations, when they become viable, and when they fight the state (Metternich et al., 2013). While I do not derive models for the prediction of when actors become viable or not, using insights from this dissertation could help with defining scope conditions or temporal windows for predictions (Dafoe and Lyall, 2015; Çiflikli et al., 2020). In turn, this may find applications in predicting conflict as such. Data such as Hegre et al. (2020)'s candidate events data contains conflict actors and events that may qualify for inclusion in other Uppsala Conflict Data

Program (UCDP) data. With insights of this dissertation, it may be possible to derive models that allow for prediction of *when* actors become viable and consequently more accurate predictions of when conflict breaks out (Hegre et al., 2019).

The second avenue for future research is to expand on social network data. That is, this dissertation uses proxies measures of access to social networks. However, to better capture network structures and dynamics, it is necessary to capture data on people in the network beyond the rebel leader. This includes, other executives in rebel organizations, general members in rebel organizations, other people a leader may be connected to (e.g. leaders of states who support the rebellion). This would an analysis of how individuals are connected, which enables the analysis of network structures. Taken together, such data would enable network from more vantage points and could nuance findings and define new research questions.

The third avenue for future research is to investigate whether there are certain types of social capital that matter more in certain circumstances. While this dissertation emphasises the importance of network access variety as determinant of securing benefits, it is also possible that an access to specialized networks is beneficial. For example, it is possible that leaders have to specialize in accessing a single, exclusive resource rich network, and therefore do not seek variety in life experiences, but specific life experience. Concretely, leaders who train in some extremist ideology and build a reputation as respected scholar, may be able to networks where access is a function of a specialized "cultural capital" (Bourdieu, 2011).

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