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Organizational Fragmentation and the Trajectory of Militant Splinter Groups

Abstract

Militant organizations commonly break down and split apart, with new groups emerging from the ranks of existing organizations. From Syria to Iraq to Afghanistan, militant groups have splintered and proliferated in this way, creating fragmented oppositions that significantly complicate the conflict landscape. This process of organizational splintering historically has created some of the deadliest and most well known organizations including Al Shabaab, Black September, and the Real IRA. However, at other times the new organizations have quickly disappeared, failing to impact the conflict in any meaningful way. What explains this variation in the trajectory of militant splinter groups over time? Specifically, this dissertation explores why some organizational fractures produce new groups that are durable and increasingly radicalized, while others merely fall apart. This is an important topic that has ramifications for how academics and policymakers alike understand the behavior of specific actors and also the evolution of fragmented conflicts around the globe.

I develop a new theory to explain variation in rates of survival and radicalization that focuses on the content and the consistency of internal organizational preferences. I argue that the content of group preferences can explain relative rates of radicalization and tactical change whereas the consistency or alignment of those preferences influences their chances of survival. Splinter groups that attract tactical and strategic hardliners are most likely to radicalize while inconsistent internal preferences lead to feuding, a lack of cohesion, and a lower likelihood of survival. Although impossible to directly observe, I show that different pathways of organizational breakdown, which one can observe, strongly shape the distribution of group preferences. In other words, different pathways of group formation have enduring effects on organizational behavior.

I test my theory with a mixed-methods research design. The empirical results from analyzing a new data set provide robust cross-national support for my theory while my case study of republican militants in Northern Ireland - supplemented by three months of field work in Belfast, London, and Dublin - demonstrates the theory's causal mechanisms in action. These findings confirm that the conditions leading to group formation play an enduring role, driving group behavior well into the future.

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ORGANIZATIONAL FRAGMENTATION AND THE
TRAJECTORY OF MILITANT SPLINTER GROUPS

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ORGANIZATIONAL FRAGMENTATION AND THE TRAJECTORY OF MILITANT
SPLINTER GROUPS

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ABSTRACT

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Evan Perkoski

Michael C. Horowitz

Militant organizations commonly break down and split apart, with new groups emerging from the ranks of existing organizations. From Syria to Iraq to Afghanistan, militant groups have splintered and proliferated in this way, creating fragmented oppositions that significantly complicate the conflict landscape. This process of organizational splintering historically has created some of the deadliest and most well known organizations including Al Shabaab, Black September, and the Real IRA. However, at other times the new organizations have quickly disappeared, failing to impact the conflict in any meaningful way. What explains this variation in the trajectory of militant splinter groups over time? Specifically, this dissertation explores why some organizational fractures produce new groups that are durable and increasingly radicalized, while others merely fall apart. This is an important topic that has ramifications for how academics and policymakers alike understand the behavior of specific actors and also the evolution of fragmented conflicts around the globe.

I develop a new theory to explain variation in rates of survival and radicalization that focuses on the content and the consistency of internal organizational preferences. I argue that the content of group preferences can explain relative rates of radicalization and tactical change whereas the consistency or alignment of those preferences influences their chances of survival. Splinter groups that attract tactical and strategic hardliners are most likely to radicalize while inconsistent internal preferences lead to feuding, a lack of cohesion, and a lower likelihood of survival. Although impossible to directly observe, I show that different pathways of organizational breakdown, which one can observe, strongly shape the distribution of group preferences. In other words, different pathways of group formation have enduring effects on organizational behavior.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1 The Puzzle

A group of militant Irish nationalists formed the Irish Volunteers in 1913 in the British-held territory of Northern Ireland, largely in response to their sociopolitical rivals creating the Ulster Volunteer Force less than a year before. In the following decades, splits within the ranks of the Irish Volunteers would ultimately spawn at least a dozen new, independent militant organizations including groups like the Official IRA, the Real Irish Republican Army, the Provisional Irish Republican Army, and the Continuity Irish Republican Army. Many of these splinter groups have managed to persevere and conduct attacks despite internal disagreements, government repression, and waning domestic support, and they expose how remarkably resilient and impactful splinter organizations can truly be. As John Horgan, a terrorist researcher and IRA specialist, notes, “These splits have not just shaped Irish Republicanism, they have lead to some of the most significant and influential events in recent Irish history.”¹

While splits among republican militants in Northern Ireland produced a number of durable, diverse organizations that were able to influence the trajectory of the movement in meaningful ways, splintering in other contexts has often precipitated group decline, spawning weak, short-lived organizations that accomplish relatively little. This was the case with the group known as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-External Operations (PLFP-EO). The PLFP-EO is considered one of the more successful groups of the 1970s and its leader, Waddi Haddad, is responsible for significant innovations in aerial hijacking operations.² Nonetheless, after successive Israeli interventions and Haddad’s assassination by Israeli intelligence services, the PLFP-EO fell apart and three splinter organizations emerged: PLFP-Special Command, May 15th, and the Lebanese Armed Revolutionary Factions. Together, these

1. John Horgan, *Divided We Stand: The Strategy and Psychology of Ireland’s Dissident Terrorists* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 21.

2. Yoram Schweitzer, “Innovation in Terrorist Organizations: The Case of PFLP and its Offshoots,” *Strategic Insights* 10, no. 2 (2011): 23–24.

groups accounted for only 17 attacks and 3 fatalities, and they were inactive within just 5 years.

Existing research on the topic of militant fragmentation might lead us to expect one of two things: first, that splinter groups will be more radical than their parents, since most models of group splintering assume that it is the hardliners who decide to break away and form new groups that are increasingly dangerous. Second, however, since states often aim to fragment and divide militant group as part of their strategy to defeat them, one might expect splinters and their parent organizations to be weaker and short-lived. Clearly, these expectations are at odds. Sometimes the first is correct, as was often the case with Irish militants producing radical, durable splinter groups like the Real IRA and the Continuity IRA. Other times, however, the second expectation is correct and group fragmentation leads to virtually inconsequential, short-lived organizations like the PFLP-EO splinters. This highlights the important puzzle motivating this dissertation: what explains variation in the trajectory of splinter organizations over time? Specifically, I am interested in the understudied variation surrounding rates of survival and radicalization among militant offshoots. Thus, this dissertation seeks to understand two important questions: first, why do some splinters survive and even thrive post-split while others die out relatively quickly? And second, what explains variation in the rates of extremism and radicalization among militant splinter organizations?

Why, how, and when militant organizations splinter has been a growing topic of interest in the political science community, although the precise questions above—questions that are primarily concerned with outcomes and not causes of group fragmentation—have yet to be asked. This reflects not only the field’s acceptance of new paradigms that view nonstate actors as significantly more nuanced and dynamic than previously thought, but it is also indicative of the growing threat from splinter organizations around the globe. Indeed, political science research and especially in-

ternational relations often mirrors developments in the real world, and scholars are motivated to better understand new problems facing the international community. Militant fragmentation is precisely one of these new problems about which more information is needed, and with this dissertation I hope to contribute to a more thorough understanding of this complex phenomenon.

Among studies closest to this topic, militant fragmentation is most often viewed in one of two ways: first, as an outcome or an end unto itself, and scholars endeavor to explain organizational schisms as primary dependent variable.³ This is problematic since we know that splintering is not just the end of one terrorist group, political party, or business firm, but it is also the start of an entirely new organization. The scholarly bias of viewing fragmentation primarily as a terminal organizational process has come to mean that researchers know virtually nothing about how splintering impacts the trajectories of these organizations moving forward: both the parent group that survives the split, and the newly-formed splinter that is created. Second, fragmentation is arguably most commonly studied as a conflict-level variable, meaning that scholars analyze whether a conflict is “fragmented”—contains a plurality of oppositional actors—or unified.⁴ While this might help understand scenarios where multiple

3. Paul Staniland, *Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse* (Cornell University Press, 2014); V. Asal, M. Brown, and A. Dalton, “Why Split? Organizational Splits among Ethnopolitical Organizations in the Middle East,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56, no. 1 (February 2012): 94–117; Michael H. Woldemariam, “Why Rebels Collide: Factionalism and Fragmentation in African Insurgencies” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2011); Paul Stephen Staniland, “Explaining cohesion, fragmentation, and control in insurgent groups” (PhD diss., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2010); Paul D. Kenny, “Structural Integrity and Cohesion in Insurgent Organizations: Evidence from Protracted Conflicts in Ireland and Burma,” *International Studies Review* 12, no. 4 (December 2010): 533–555.

4. Kristin M. Bakke, Kathleen Gallagher Cunningham, and Lee JM Seymour, “A plague of initials: Fragmentation, cohesion, and infighting in civil wars,” *Perspectives on Politics* 10, no. 02 (2012): 265–283; K. G. Cunningham, K. M. Bakke, and L. J. M. Seymour, “Shirts Today, Skins Tomorrow: Dual Contests and the Effects of Fragmentation in Self-Determination Disputes,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56, no. 1 (February 2012): 67–93; Kathleen Gallagher Cunningham, “Divide and conquer or divide and concede: how do states respond to internally divided separatists?,” *American Political Science Review* 105, no. 2 (2011): 275–297; Cunningham, “[Divide and conquer or divide and concede](#)”; David E. Cunningham, “Veto Players and Civil War Duration,” *American Journal of Political Science* 50, no. 4 (2006): 875–892.

actors are vying for a movement's control, it overlooks the more nuanced group-level effects that can explain the behavior of individual organizations. Indeed, since this critical piece of the puzzle is missing, it is inadvisable to blindly promote militant fragmentation as there is no information on how the process will unfold and what types of organizations will be produced. Without a systematic analysis at the group level one cannot know for sure, and anecdotal evidence from major splits is likely to do more harm than good: it will provide a perception of splintering that might very well be inaccurate, furthering incorrect assumptions and ultimately contributing to ineffective or even countereffective policies.

This dissertation seeks to rectify these important gaps in our knowledge by applying theoretical and empirical rigor to the study of militant fragmentation at the organizational level. I argue that the consistency and content of a splinter group's internal preferences are key to explaining variation in survival and radicalization. Consistency, or the extent to which a group's internal preferences are aligned, is critical to survival. Organizations lacking consistent, aligned preferences are more likely to experience unsanctioned behavior, infiltration, internal feuds and defection, and they are forced to spend additional energy and resources monitoring their agents in the field, decreasing their level of security as a result. These issues pose serious challenges to group survival, ultimately meaning that organizations with aligned internal preferences should be increasingly durable and more likely to survive. On the other hand, variation in rates of radicalization can be explained by the content of a group's internal preferences; groups breaking apart for strategic reasons, which tend to occur over the continued or expanded use of violence, tend to draw in greater numbers of disaffected hard-line militants. Their preference for more radical violence directly and indirectly influence the organization's strategic decision-making towards the extreme, resulting in deadlier and more lethal behavior.

Although internal preferences cannot be directly observed, I propose a new model

of militant fragmentation that leverages the manner in which militants break apart to provide inferences about the preferences of group members. To summarize, I argue that militants can rupture in one of two ways: *factionally*, when subgroups coalesce around a single strategic, personal, or ideological disagreement, or *multidimensionally*, when subgroups converge either absent a single disagreement or with a multitude of disagreements. Groups that form factionally around a common disagreement are increasingly likely to attract members with similar goals and preferences, where groups that form multidimensionally tend to have a more heterogeneous mix of dissidents. Furthermore, I argue that the nature of factional disagreements provide additional information about the type of individuals that splinter groups will attract, shedding light on the content of their internal preferences. In other words, disagreements over ideology, strategy, or personality should attract different subsets of defectors with particular preferences for their organizational future. Ultimately, this theory capitalizes on the unexplained and underexplored variation in the *process* and in *motivations* of group fragmentation to explain variation in outcomes.

This model marks a departure from existing research both on organizational fragmentation but also more particularly on militant fragmentation. Although scholars of business firms, religious groups, political parties, and other organizations have indeed recognized the importance of studying group schisms through the lens of their initial disagreements, this model adds a new facet by considering how multidimensional disputes alter group trajectory, and also by considering how various disagreements will attract particular subsets of individuals. Indeed, I argue that who joins the movement is just as important as why they break away in the first place. Furthermore, this research advances our understanding of militant fragmentation by refocusing on the groups and the schisms themselves. While much work has examined why groups split in the first place and how fragmented conflicts are different from non-fragmented conflicts, this is the first project to systematically compare the different logics of

internal schisms and how these various logics produce particular types of splinter organizations.

Ultimately, the evidence presented in this dissertation strongly supports my model of organizational breakdown and more generally, my theory of splinter group behavior and survival. Combining both quantitative and qualitative studies, I find that the underlying logic and process of organizational schisms is crucial to understanding how these events unfold and how the new splinter organizations are likely to evolve. multidimensional schisms generally lead to quick downfalls and significant decreases in violent activity, while only certain types of factional splits—namely, those over strategic disagreements—produce new organizations that are both longer-lived and deadly. Consequently, this research sheds light on the internal processes contributing to group behavior, organizational fragmentation, and ultimately, splinter evolution. This has important ramifications for academic research on the organizational dynamics of violent nonstate actors, but it should be equally significant to policymakers who can leverage these insights to construct more effective counterterrorist and counterinsurgent policies.

The remainder of this dissertation proceeds as follows. In the following pages of this chapter I place the topic of militant fragmentation within a broader context of ongoing research, and I trace the development of the field to identify areas where more research is needed. I also construct a new typology of organizational transformations that are commonly considered instances of “group splintering” or “fragmentation.” This is important for this project to accurately define the boundaries of the phenomenon I am interested in studying, but also for future research so that different organizational processes are not conflated. Researchers in the field have tended to ignore these types of conceptual issues and the resultant literature has become remarkably disjointed.

In Chapter Two, I present my theory of militant organizational fragmentation that I briefly describe above, and I outline the observable implications and the hypotheses

that result. This chapter ends with a short discussion of the project's research design which is more thoroughly discussed in Chapter Three. In brief, to test my hypotheses I conduct a combination of quantitative and qualitative research. First, in Chapter Four I present a qualitative examination of two Irish republican militant organizations. Specifically, I examine how the formation of two splinter groups, the Irish National Liberation Army and the Real IRA, conforms to my theoretical expectations. This case study is supplemented by archival research in Belfast, Dublin, and London. Not only is this case useful for testing my theory, but it allows me to examine in detail the relationship between formation, organizational dynamics, and long-term trajectory. Then, in Chapters Five and Six, I subject my hypotheses to empirical testing. These analyses utilize a new data set of splinter group formation that I constructed by carefully tracing the history of over 300 randomly selected militant organizations to determine first, if they themselves formed by splitting from another group, and second, if they ever subsequently split during their lifespan. I focus on organizational survival in Chapter Five and radicalization in Chapter Six. Finally, in Chapter Seven I present the conclusions from my research and I examine how my theory can be applied to other types of actors (e.g. nonviolent movements) and also how it can explain other types of outcomes that scholars are commonly interested in (e.g. intergroup conflict). I then consider how the results from this study might affect the trajectory of academic research and policy formulation moving forward.

2 Fragmentation in Subnational Violence

The topic of militant fragmentation has inspired a wealth of research in recent years. This is partially due to the important realization that fragmentation critically alters two relationships in a subnational conflict that we often take for granted:

first, between militant organizations, and second, between militants and the state.⁵ With regards to the first, relationships between militants are typically under-theorized compared to other dyads in a conflict scenario. The relationship between warring and even cooperative states, and even militants and the state, have typically commanded significantly more attention from conflict researchers. Until recently most scholars would largely ignore inter and intra-militant dynamics or, if they were the focus of examination, they were used to explain particular outcomes like the diffusion of technology, the use of suicide bombing, or group lethality, but they were rarely connected to the conflict's broader outcomes.⁶ Inter-militant relationships, however, are especially important in fragmented conflicts. For one, different factions might vie against one another for control, generating unique conditions and distinguishing it from environments that lack this additional complication. Furthermore, while competitive intergroup behavior is common to many multi-party conflicts, groups that were once unified might act particularly competitive towards one another, especially in their formative years as they try to stake out a unique position or make a name for themselves. This adds an important new element to current theories of "outbidding" and group interactions that has so far been ignored.⁷ Second, fragmented conflicts also encounter a unique dynamic between militant groups and the state since the state is no longer dealing with a single actor or movement but rather with multiple organizations. This will significantly affect the government's strategic calculus in many ways, but especially as it tries to bargain or negotiate its way out of the conflict. Combined, fragmented conflicts generate what Bakke, Cunningham, and Seymour

5. Cunningham, Bakke, and Seymour, "Shirts Today, Skins Tomorrow," 68.

6. Ami Pedahzur, *Suicide terrorism* (Cambridge Univ Press, 2005), See, for example: Michael C. Horowitz, "Nonstate Actors and the Diffusion of Innovations: The Case of Suicide Terrorism.," *International Organization* 64, no. 1 (2010); Asal, Brown, and Dalton, "Why Split?"

7. Audrey Kurth Cronin, *How terrorism ends: Understanding the decline and demise of terrorist campaigns* (Princeton University Press, 2009); Mia M. Bloom, "Palestinian suicide bombing: Public support, market share, and outbidding," *Political Science Quarterly* 119, no. 1 (2004): 61-88; Mia Bloom, *Dying To Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* (Columbia University Press, 2005); Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic groups in conflict* (University of California Pr, 1985).

call a “dual contest”—the first between competing militant groups, and the second between militants and the state.

Table 1.1. Overview of existing research.

Research on the Effects of Militant Fragmentation		
Group Decline and Survival	Conflict Outcomes	Patterns of Violence
E.g. Morrison 2014, Horgan 2013, Jones and Libicki 2008, Asal et al 2012	E.g. Nillson 2012, Cunningham 2011, Driscoll 2010, Stedman 1997	E.g. Cunningham 2012, Kalyvas 2006, Bueno de Mesquita 2005, Bloom 2005

In light of these realizations, scholars have been pushing to better analyze and re-analyze important conflict dynamics with these insights in mind, making use of new frameworks and more granular data in an attempt to both incorporate and study fragmentation in broader contexts. I categorize most of these existing studies of fragmentation as falling into one of three camps according to their ultimate focus: organizational survival, conflict termination, and patterns of violence. This research is summarized in Table 1.1.

First, scholars like Jones and Libicki portray organizational splintering as a key development in the process of group decline. As they note, “The critical issue for splintering is that the end of a group does not signal the end of terrorism by its members.” While this last part is certainly true—the members who exit the group during an internal schism will often continue to engage in terrorist activities elsewhere—they ignore the fact that splintering does not universally contribute to a group demise. As John Morrison aptly notes, “A split need not constitute the end of the parent organisation, as by definition it is only a section of the membership which is leaving, and therefore the parent organisation can, and often does, still remain in existence.”⁸ Ter-

8. John Morrison, “To Split is Not to End: The Development of a Process Model of Splits in

rorists, insurgents, and militants are like many other types of actors that change and evolve over time, and fragmentation is one among a host of other important organizational processes: businesses, political parties, and religious groups commonly break apart and spawn new splinters and iterations, yet both the parent and the splinter commonly survive⁹

The second set of studies focuses on how fragmentation affects conflict outcomes by altering government tactics and the ability of nonstate actors to credibly commit to a settlement. This line of research examines fragmentation at the conflict level, where the main explanatory variable is the number of rebel actors active in a given environment. Conflict fragmentation can significantly affect a government's strategic calculus by presenting a means for them to further divide or to coopt segments of a particular movement. Both Nilsson¹⁰ and Driscoll¹¹ find evidence in separate conflicts that governments have incentives to win away particular factions with conciliations when faced with multiple adversaries. In these circumstances, states see an opportunity to decrease the number of active fronts by essentially buying off smaller groups to better focus on the larger, more threatening organizations. Similarly, Kathleen Cunningham finds evidence of nearly the same dynamic at work in a novel large-N analysis of oppositional fragmentation.¹² She finds that states are more likely to provide concessions to divided rather than unified movements, the logic being that concessions are an instrumental part of the bargaining process. Her work differs from most accounts of conciliations in subnational violence since she argues that concili-

Terrorist Organizations" (San Francisco, CA, April 2013).

9. John Morrison's work is important development in this regard; by applying lessons from organizational theory, he is one of the first to convincingly demonstrate how splintering is a significantly more complicated and nuanced process than most existing scholars give it credit for.

10. Desiree Nilsson, "Turning Weakness into Strength: Military Capabilities, Multiple Rebel Groups and Negotiated Settlements," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 27, no. 3 (July 2010): 253–271.

11. J. Driscoll, "Commitment Problems or Bidding Wars? Rebel Fragmentation as Peace Building," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56, no. 1 (April 2012): 118–149.

12. Cunningham, "Divide and conquer or divide and concede."

ation can be used strategically “without attempting to settle underlying disputes.” This ultimately marks a departure from existing research that predominantly views conciliations as a means to simply end the conflict.¹³

Fragmentation at the conflict level can further affect outcomes by introducing “spoilers” into potential peace processes and negotiations. In this sense, spoilers are “leaders and parties who believe that peace emerging from negotiations threatens their power, worldview, and interests, and use violence to undermine attempts to achieve it.”¹⁴ Spoilers affect conflict outcomes when they maintain the ability to unilaterally continue a conflict, thereby disrupting and possibly ending ongoing negotiations.¹⁵ Terrorist and other militant groups sometimes splinter when they are presented with a negotiation since the offer divides hard-liners and moderates within the organization; the moderates will favor the terms of the agreement, while hard-liners (radicals) would prefer to keep fighting.¹⁶ These hard-liners can become spoilers when they either break away from the group or even stay within the organization but launch unauthorized attacks in attempt to derail negotiations. This dynamic has become quite common to a range of conflicts from terrorism (e.g. the Israel-Palestine Peace Process¹⁷) to traditional civil wars.¹⁸

Third, and finally, fragmentation has been causally linked to particular patterns of violence, and this research represents a combination of organizational and conflict-level analyses. Fragmentation can lead to more intense and more frequent acts of

13. Cunningham, “[Divide and conquer or divide and concede](#),” 95.

14. Stephen John Stedman, “[Stedman, Spoiler Problems in Peace Settlements.pdf](#),” *International Security* 22, no. 2 (1997): 5.

15. Cunningham, “[Veto Players and Civil War Duration](#),” 895.

16. Ethan Bueno de Mesquita, “Conciliation, Counterterrorism, and Patterns of Terrorist Violence,” *International Organization* 59, no. 01 (February 2005); Ethan Bueno de Mesquita, “The Terrorist Endgame: A Model with Moral Hazard and Learning,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, no. 2 (April 2005): 237–258.

17. Wendy Pearlman, “Spoiling inside and out: internal political contestation and the Middle East Peace Process,” *International Security* 33, no. 3 (2009): 79–109.

18. Stedman, “[Stedman, Spoiler Problems in Peace Settlements.pdf](#)”; Kelly M. Greenhill and Solomon Major, “The Perils of Profiling: Civil War Spoilers and the Collapse of Intrastate Peace Accords,” *International Security* 31, no. 3 (January 2007): 7–40.

violence through several mechanisms, one of which being inter-group outbidding. Outbidding is a conflict dynamic that presents in situations where multiple nonstate actors are active in the same immediate environment. Stemming from their close proximity and access to limited, shared resources, groups escalate their violent behavior to gain support, notoriety, publicity, resources, and to establish their hardline or “nationalist credentials.”¹⁹ Similarly, competition between factions—especially of the same movement—can also produce other negative externalities that include increased violence against the civilians that the groups are competing over. When multiple groups compete for support they can use violence to enforce loyalty and punish disobedience.²⁰ This is distinct from outbidding, however, which aims to *attract* loyalty with increasingly daring and destructive acts, while this second dynamic is more concerned with imposing it. Similarly, Humphreys and Weinstein²¹ as well as Wood²² note that intragroup factionalization is also significant to explaining patterns and types of violence, and not just severity. Both works underscore that internal divisions and the inability to control and police member behavior has contributed to civilian victimization in Sierra Leone and El Salvador, respectively. Lastly, interfactional competition can also influence the level of violence *between* organizations. As Lilja and Hultman note, “Intraethnic fighting. . . may also stem from factionalization and struggles be-

19. Cunningham, Bakke, and Seymour, “Shirts Today, Skins Tomorrow”; Bloom, *Dying To Kill*; Horowitz, *Ethnic groups in conflict*; Andrew H. Kydd and Barbara F. Walter, “The strategies of terrorism,” *International Security* 31, no. 1 (2006): 49–80; Jack L. Snyder, *From voting to violence: Democratization and nationalist conflict* (Norton New York, 2000); Monica Duffy Toft, “Getting religion? The puzzling case of Islam and civil war,” *International Security* 31, no. 4 (2007): 97–131.

20. Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The logic of violence in civil war* (Cambridge Univ Press, 2006); Reed M. Wood and Mark Gibney, “The Political Terror Scale (PTS): A re-introduction and a comparison to CIRI,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (2010): 367–400; Jannie Lilja and Lisa Hultman, “Intraethnic Dominance and Control: Violence Against Co-Ethnics in the Early Sri Lankan Civil War,” *Security Studies* 20, no. 2 (2011): 171–197.

21. Macartan Humphreys and Jeremy M. Weinstein, “Handling and Manhandling Civilians in Civil War: Determinants of the Strategies of Warring Factions,” in *conference, Techniques of Violence in Civil War, PRIO, Oslo, Norway* (2004); Macartan Humphreys and Jeremy M. Weinstein, “Handling and manhandling civilians in civil war,” *American Political Science Review* 100, no. 3 (2006): 429.

22. Elisabeth Jean Wood, “Armed groups and sexual violence: when is wartime rape rare?,” *Politics & Society* 37, no. 1 (2009): 131–161.

tween meso-level local elites.²³ Since civilian supporters are often viewed as critical element of success, rival factions may fight one another for territorial and civilian dominance.

Ultimately, these studies demonstrate that fragmentation can, and in many ways, impact the severity and types of violence occurring in conflict situations. Certainly, they confirm that fragmentation is a significant element of subnational conflict at many different levels, and it adds explanatory and predictive power to our understanding of group behavior and conflict evolution.

3 Conceptualizing and Defining Organizational Fragmentation

The preceding discussions demonstrate how fragmentation in armed conflicts has wide-reaching and important effects, but it also shows how this term has come mean many different things. As I mentioned, fragmentation is typically studied at either one of two levels—the organization or the conflict level—but scholars are not always clear about which one they are interested in. Moreover, another issue is that fragmentation at the organizational level is commonly used to describe a variety of group-level events that in many cases should not be lumped together. This is problematic since advancing our collective understanding of militant fragmentation has been hampered by the diversity of ways in which terms like “fragment” or “splinter” have been used. Failing to define the scope of our research and to consider broader conceptual issues of fragmentation has limited the ability for one study to speak to another, and resulted in problematic conceptual stretching.²⁴ The goal of this section is therefore to explore

23. Lilja and Hultman, “Intraethnic Dominance and Control,” 190.

24. Giovanni Sartori, “Comparing and miscomparing,” *Journal of theoretical politics* 3, no. 3 (1991): 243–257; David Collier and James E. Mahon, “Conceptual \Stretching” Revisited: Adapting Categories in Comparative Analysis,” *American Political Science Review* 87, no. 04 (1993): 845–855.

the differences between the diverse phenomena that are commonly lumped together in order to construct useful boundaries for future research and indeed, for this project in particular.

There are four different events that scholars commonly included under the fragmentation catch-all: 1. movement diversification, 2. organizational decentralization, 3. organizational specialization, and 4. organizational splintering.

Typology of Organizational Fragmentation	
Movement Diversification	Political, ideological, or social movement with multiple actors and veto players
Organizational Decentralization	Decentralizing organizational transformations: delegation of command and control, regional spread
Organizational Specialization	Creation of semi-autonomous subgroups (e.g. militant wings, death squads)
Organizational Splintering	Creation of new, independent group from segment of preexisting organization

First, movement diversity is possibly the most common among academic studies. Fragmentation in this context is intended to signal strategic or ideological movements with multiple actors. Used in this way, fragmentation distinguishes between a unitary and non-unitary opposition: in other words, a movement with a single actor claiming to represent the entirety of the opposition, or a movement characterized by cooperating or competing independent organizations working towards similar goals. Recent research that I describe above demonstrates that this type of fragmentation, measured as the number of actors in a movement or campaign, is a significant and meaningful explanatory variable, suggesting that this information should be incorporated into new and existing models to improve their accuracy.²⁵²⁶

25. Cunningham, Bakke, and Seymour, “Shirts Today, Skins Tomorrow”; David E. Cunningham, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and Idean Salehyan, “It Takes Two A Dyadic Analysis of Civil War Duration and Outcome,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53, no. 4 (August 2009): 570–597; Pearlman, “Spoiling inside and out.”

26. There are two issues that merit more further development in this area. First, fragmentation

As an example, consider how the Israeli-Palestinian conflict might differ from the struggle for Basque Independence. The Palestinian movement has generated, according to data by Cunningham, Bakke, and Seymour, 22 separate violent organizations, while the Basques have traditionally been represented by only one group, ETA.²⁷ Palestinian groups have at times had to compete against each other for support, recruitment, and even in pursuit of divergent goals, while at other times they coordinated their actions and policed their members to facilitate important negotiation with the government.²⁸ The Basque conflict, on the other hand, is largely devoid of these intra-movement dynamics that ultimately add an important though entirely septate element to the conflict.

Second, militant groups decentralize their operational network for a variety of reasons, chief among them to reduce the effectiveness of their adversary's security operations. Flat, decentralized networks are much harder to destabilize and to decapitate than are similar hierarchal networks, which is indeed not unique to militant groups but is true of organizations in general.²⁹ Militant groups will also commonly decentralize as they expand, since maintaining strict hierarchy across large swathes of territory combined with a need for secrecy is extremely difficult to balance. As before, it makes

is almost always used as a pejorative term to describe an oppositional movement that is internally fractured. However, it could be that this type of fragmentation is actually the norm in most subnational conflicts while a single representative is less common. Indeed, in many environments multiple actors appears to be quite common, particularly in protracted conflicts where costs mount and citizens become dissatisfied with their options. Second, more work needs to be done to understand the dynamics of competition or cooperation among movements with multiple actors. Contemporary researchers often use counts of one side versus another as a proxy for movement unity, but the utility of this approach is obviously limited, as they themselves will often note. It says nothing about how internal cooperative or competitive dynamics might produce certain types of behavior or affect the bargaining process in distinct ways. While this is surely the next frontier of this research, it is virtually impossible with existing data.

27. Though to be sure, they fought with the GAL (which later was uncovered that they were funded by the Spanish government) during the 1980s and there was moderate tension between ETA-PM and ETA-M during the 1970s after a split.

28. Bloom, *Dying To Kill*.

29. This is a well-known insight from literature on military command and control. E.g. Stephen Biddle, *Military power: Explaining victory and defeat in modern battle* (Princeton University Press, 2010); Ryan Grauer and Michael C. Horowitz, "What Determines Military Victory? Testing the Modern System," *Security Studies* 21, no. 1 (2012): 83–112.

sense to delegate authority in these circumstances. However, as Michael Woldemarian points out, “To the outside observer, this reduction in coordination across rebel units may be interpreted as the rebel organization having fragmented, but to the parties involved, this is a tactical maneuver that has little to do with any underlying factional dispute.”³⁰ Indeed, groups undergoing these types of organizational transformations are often called fragmented or split when in reality they have merely gone through a process of decentralization that is both strategic and intentional.

Fragmentation in this way is commonly used when discussing Al Qaeda’s evolving core structure, especially after 9/11. Testifying at a congressional hearing after the death of Osama Bin Laden, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper noted that “sustained pressure from the United States and its allies will probably reduce Al Qaedas remaining leadership in Pakistan to “largely symbolic importance” over the next two to three years as the terrorist organization fragments into more regionally focused groups and homegrown extremists.” The Times later notes that this pressure is “likely to fragment this already decentralized movement.”³¹ Conflating decentralization and fragmentation is not limited to the press, but it is even common in academia.³² The main problem is that scholars and pundits often view regional advancement, delegation of authority, and network transformations not as evidence of threatening and rather intelligent advancements by certain nonstate actors in response to US counterterror operations—which in reality they are—but rather as evidence of the *success* of these policies.³³ Although we know that decentralized networks make it harder to launch complex missions like 9/11, we do not yet know if these new or-

30. Woldemarian, “[Why Rebels Collide](#).”

31. Eric Schmitt, “Intelligence Report Lists Iran and Cyberattacks as Leading Concerns,” *The New York Times*, January 2012, chap. World.

32. Brian Fishman, “After Zarqawi: The Dilemmas and Future of Al Qaeda in Iraq,” *Washington Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (2006): 19–32; Paul R. Pillar, “Counterterrorism after al Qaeda,” *Washington Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (2004): 101–113.

33. Success here refers to degrading organizational capabilities, though these policies could be successful insofar as they force groups to decentralize

ganizations are more or less likely to fail on their own, or if they are easier to defeat, both of which are ultimately the main objectives.³⁴

Third, militant groups sometimes face incentives to create specialized semi-autonomous entities that remain broadly under the control of the parent group but that conduct operations typically more radical than the parent group would support. There is little research into this precise topic, though there is substantially more on the related question of why political parties develop their own parallel militant wings or terrorist groups.³⁵ Nonetheless, a group might create these types of organizations for two reasons: first, the majority of supporters might not condone more radical operations (like suicide bombing campaigns) so an armed wing provides a level of deniability and distance but it nonetheless produces the desired tactical capabilities. Second, groups might form armed wings to create avenues for more radical supporters to join their organizations over another. This allows the parent group to maintain control over these individuals and increase their own numbers all the while decreasing the level of support for their rivals. Without an armed wing, a group might lose out to its rivals who offer radical supporters a more suitable alternative. Overall, these types of organizations are distinct in their semi-autonomous nature and in their purposeful creation to fulfill a specific niche, and they are therefore distinct from other types of militant “fragmentation.”

The best example of this is Fatah and their militant wings, Tanzim and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade. Fatah was founded in 1959 as a political movement seeking Palestinian independence, becoming an official Palestinian political party in 1965. Fatah has always been careful to balance their role between militant organization and political party since they are rightfully worried that swaying too far to one side will

34. Jacob N. Shapiro, *The Terrorist's Dilemma: Managing Violent Covert Organizations* (Princeton University Press, 2013).

35. For example: Nancy Susanne Martin, “From parliamentarianism to terrorism and back again,” 2011,

isolate a significant portion of the Palestinian community, compromise their credibility, or incite Israeli aggression. In response, they have created distinct armed wings that aim to ameliorate this strategic dilemma. With regards to Tanzim, Assaf Moghadem notes that “Fatahs formation of the Tanzim must be seen in the context of its attempt to channel and focus the passions of many Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza away from Islamist groups.”³⁶ The creation of Tanzim therefore fulfills the second duty mentioned above, where an armed wing allows a group to win recruits it would otherwise be unable attract. The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade was formed for similar reasons, and it clearly demonstrates why militant wing formation cannot be viewed as a signal of organizational breakdown or collapse. Moghadem cites an FBI terrorism analyst who says that “the infrastructure, funds, leadership, and operatives that comprise the Al Aqsa Martyr Brigades and facilitate the groups activity all hail from Fatah. . . Fatah is, by its own admission, Al-Aqsas parent and controlling organization.”³⁷ Militant wings might therefore be more indicative of success and strategic foresight than actual fragmentation and organizational breakdown.

Fourth and finally is organizational splintering, which is the type of fragmentation motivating this study. This refers to members of a nonstate group breaking away from their original organization and establishing a new group that is entirely independent from their predecessor; it is the formation of a new, independent, violent nonstate actor from the ranks of an existing organization. What distinguishes this phenomenon from militant wings and other forms of organizational fragmentation is the autonomy these groups possess: splinters are independent and no longer under their parent’s jurisdiction or control. Militant wings like Tanzim and Al Aqsa, in contrast, might receive some operational autonomy, but their parent maintains executive constraint on their activities while often providing funding, weapons, and recruits. The splinter,

36. Assaf Moghadam, “Palestinian Suicide Terrorism in the Second Intifada: Motivations and Organizational Aspects,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 26, no. 2 (March 2003): 82-83.

37. *Ibid.*, 82.

on the other hand, fends for itself.

Few have studied this exact type of fragmentation or, if they have, they rarely consider the definitional challenges of separating this phenomenon from other types of organizational changes. Michael Woldemariam's work is one of the few that does. His dissertation asks why rebel groups fragment in the first place, though is unconcerned with variation in outcomes like I am concerned with here. Nonetheless, he convincingly argues that fragmentation is a function of individuals' perceptions of their security: battlefield losses demonstrate vulnerability, while victory is reassuring and it serves to strengthen internal cohesion. Woldemariam defines fragmentation as an "event where a segment of a rebel organization, formally and collectively exits that rebel organization and either a) establishes a new rebel organization, b) joins an existing rebel organization, or c) joins the incumbent government."³⁸ Obviously, Woldemariam mentions a larger subset of "organizational fractures" than I am concerned with here, but he later notes that the latter two—joining another group and joining politics—are extremely difficult to identify, so he focuses solely on . . . those splits that result in the creation of a new rebel organization.³⁹

Although fragmentation is indeed atypical in the sense that it is outside the bounds of ordinary militant group politics,⁴⁰ this does not mean that it is uncommon organizational process. Groups tend to break up, merge, and die out at an alarming rate. Descriptive analyses shows that 10% of groups listed among the universe of nonstate actors by UCDP were formed by splintering from a preexisting organization. Even greater, the Minorities at Risk - Organization Behavior dataset finds that just over 32% of actors have splintered at some point in their existence, while it is closer to 37% for violent actors alone. The new data set generated specifically for this study finds that for terrorist organizations, around 1/3 splinter at some point in their lifes-

38. Woldemariam, "Why Rebels Collide," 35.

39. *Ibid.*

40. *Ibid.*

pan. Despite its commonality, knowledge of this topic is primarily limited to why and when militants break up, and we know almost nothing about how fragmentation influences the trajectories of these newly-formed groups that emerge from internal contestation and division.

Overall, when presented in this way it may seem that organizational fragmentation is only one small piece within the broader puzzle of organizational dynamics. Indeed, fragmentation is certainly only one facet of a group's broader organizational narrative, but this is an area where the value of new information cannot be understated. The lack of knowledge on this subject is truly surprising especially given its relevance to current events. Consequently, the goal of the following section is to describe existing research on this issue. The common thread that runs throughout these studies is their failure to view fragmentation in the broader context of organizational change. Although changes in alliances, leaders, structure, and financing is well studied, scholars have so far failed to analyze internal fragmentation and splinter formation in the same way. Thus, while the topic of organizational fragmentation might seem narrow, it actually has wide reaching implications.

4 Militant Splintering: What We Know

As I mentioned, it is relatively common for militant organizations to splinter, producing new groups while the parent continues to thrive and conduct attacks. The conditions that make these groups more or less likely to split is something scholars know a good deal about. The predominant view is that organizations that are fundamentally weak cannot effectively monitor, manage, or control their members, increasing the chance that a disagreement will arise leading to the splintering of the broader group. Indeed, it is often the inability of an organization to effectively handle

internal disputes that sets the stage for a group fracture.⁴¹ The general explanations for group cohesion generally fall into one of two camps: external events that divide groups and exacerbate differences, or group characteristics that are intrinsically detrimental to cohesion. In other words, most approaches to cohesion and disintegration center around external or internal factors that decrease organizational unity.

First, with regards to external stimuli, scholars often find that both conciliation *and* repression can negatively affect cohesion, though in very different ways. Scholars who work in this area recognize that militant organizations are products of the environments in which they operate and the pressures that they face. These pressures and opportunities can exacerbate intragroup differences or present means for subgroups to manipulate power dynamics and their position within the group, ultimately weakening the bonds that hold them together.

Repression can have important effects on the cohesion of nonstate actors but it is unclear in which direction it acts. Just as Ekkart Zimmerman wrote in 1980, “there are theoretical arguments for all conceivable basic relationships between government coercion and group protest and rebellion, except for no relationship.”⁴² Research suggests that at varying times, repression produces both positive (unifying) and negative (fragmenting) effects on militant groups. In the unifying camp are scholars like Simmel, for instance, who argues that conflict can serve as a socialization mechanism, binding members of a group together out of fear, concern for their safety and security, and to collectively resist a threat.⁴³ Or as Lewis Coser argues: “conflict serves to establish and maintain the identity and boundary lines of societies and groups,” which helps reinforce group identity and cohesion. In this way, conflict and state repres-

41. Morrison, “[To Split is Not to End: The Development of a Process Model of Splits in Terrorist Organizations.](#)”

42. Ekkart Zimmerman, “Macro-comparative research on political protest,” *Handbook of Political Conflict: Theory and Research*, 1980, 191.

43. George Simmel, “Conflict (KH Wolff, Trans.),” *Glencoe, IL: The Free Press. (Original work published 1908)*, 1955,

sion can once again strengthen internal unity and reduce the odds of organizational splintering.⁴⁴ Although others have continued to refine these theories since their early inception,⁴⁵ the same basic logic remains: groups facing an external threat will often bind together instead of falling apart.

On the other hand, political scientists commonly argue that violence directed against a rebel organization will negatively affect a group's internal cohesion, making it more likely to splinter and fall apart. Indeed, this is the common view held by governments around the world that direct force against their nonstate actor opponents. The first way of conceptualizing violence's negative effect is through the lens of individual calculations. Drawing on Mancur Olson's seminal work on collective action, one can think of private benefits as the sum of personal incentives and disincentives to join an organization or movement. In this case, repression and the potential for personal harm can serve as a strong disincentive and ultimately decrease group unity by prompting individuals to reconsider their allegiance.⁴⁶ In a similar manner, Charles Tilly, in *From Mobilization to Revolution*, argues that individual choices to join a movement are affected by the costs of collective action. Anything that raises this cost will deter mobilization, while actions that lower this cost are facilitative. As before, it is easy to understand how government repression will raise the cost of collective action and discourage organizational unity.⁴⁷ Finally, Jacob Shapiro in his book, *The Terrorist's Dilemma*, presents another means of conceptualizing violence's fragmenting effects by showing how repression can promote *conscientious*, strategic changes to group structure that have a unintentionally decrease cohesion. He argues that state repression complicates internal control and forces groups to move from a

44. Lewis A. Coser, *The functions of social conflict* (New York: The Free Press, 1956).

45. For example, Stein argues that organizational leadership and capacity must be present for conflict to generate the positive effects described above Arthur A. Stein, "Conflict and Cohesion A Review of the Literature," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 20, no. 1 (1976): 143–172.

46. Mancur Olson, *The rise and fall of nations: Economic growth, stagflation and social rigidities* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982).

47. Charles Tilly, *From mobilization to revolution* (McGraw-Hill New York, 1978).

centralized, tightly monitored command structure to one that is substantially less hierarchical in order to survive. These types of flatter structures disadvantage organizational control, and by extension, organizational capability, yet they make the group significantly less prone to the destabilizing effects of government infiltration or leadership decapitation. Shapiro’s work pertains to fragmentation since centralized organizations are more capable of internal policing and enforcing member restraint, which, if left unchecked can lead to more significant internal disagreements and ultimately organizational splintering.⁴⁸ Facing repression, then, groups will choose to decentralize but an unintended side effect will be diminished cohesion.

Not all agree with this monotonic view of repression having a one-way effect, either increasing or decreasing unity. DeNardo, for instance, believes the relationship is more complicated: he argues that repression has an “inverted U-shape” effect, whereby both very low and very high levels of violence increase collective action (and consequently, unity), but mid-levels of repression can undermine organizational coherence and individual mobilization.⁴⁹ This sort of approach makes sense since it seems overly simplistic to argue that repression has either one effect or the other, and he helps make sense of why these effects might vary across space and time.

Recent empirical research on this topic has produced mixed results. Asal, Brown, and Dalton analyze organizational splintering among groups listed in the MAROB dataset, finding that state repression is uncorrelated with the likelihood of an internal schism.⁵⁰ Instead, factionalized leaderships seem most problematic for group unity. McLaughlin and Pearlman similarly seek to understand the connection between repression and unity, looking specifically at the Kurdish and Palestinian national movements. They find that “The effect of repression on movement unity is contingent on

48. Shapiro, *The Terrorist’s Dilemma*.

49. James DeNardo, *Power in numbers: The political strategy of protest and rebellion* (Princeton University Press Princeton, NJ, 1985).

50. Asal, Brown, and Dalton, “Why Split?”

the preexisting consensus on a movement's institutional equilibrium."⁵¹ If groups are satisfied with the current power and resource distribution then repression will make the group stronger. However, when a group is not in equilibrium, the unhappy segments will capitalize on the uncertainty and seek to establish institutional reforms that pose a challenge to vested organizational interests. McClaughlin and Pearlman commendably move this discussion towards testable causal mechanisms and they avoid overanalyzing the role of the conflict's "master cleavage."⁵²

Lastly, in addition to unilateral government actions against an organization, dyadic relations also matter. In other words, how well a militant group is faring in combat against the state affects its level of internal cohesion. When a group is doing well, it is more likely that individuals remain unified and the group stays together. However, when failure and loss of territory prevails, individuals begin to question their allegiance. As Michael Woldemariam argues,

In settings where a rebel organization is losing territory, often through a set of major shocks, the incentives to cooperate are reduced, as battlefield losses suggest that the collective enterprise that is organized rebellion no longer guarantees the survival of the organizations constituent units. Put differently, losing territory prompts an organizations constituent units to question the cooperative bargain that is at the heart of the rebel organization. All things equal, fragmentation is more likely in such contexts.⁵³

Fotini Christia finds evidence a similar pattern with regards to intergroup alliances during multiparty civil wars. Based on traditional international relations theory, her research uncovers that alliances are a function of power relations and post-conflict

51. Theodore McLaughlin and Wendy Pearlman, "Out-Group Conflict, In-Group Unity? Exploring the Effect of Repression on Intramovement Cooperation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56, no. 1 (2012): 44.

52. *Ibid.*

53. Woldemariam, "Why Rebels Collide," 3-4.

payouts. In other words, “group seeks to form wartime intergroup alliances that constitute minimum winning coalitions: alliances with enough aggregate power to win the conflict, but with as few partners as possible so the group can maximize its share of postwar political control.”⁵⁴ Although this research is primarily concerned with allied organizations, it nonetheless reinforces similar conclusions about the inner workings of singular militant groups as well.

Second, a major factor contributing to organizational disunity is particular group and structural characteristics that ultimately diminish control or that allow internal factionalism to take hold. This line of thinking draws heavily on ideas first conceived with regards to businesses, firms, religious organizations, and even political parties. Paul Staniland has produced some of the most insightful research in the area. His book, “Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse,” begins with the premise that militant groups mobilize and draw membership from their local social networks to initially form their organization. When militants can properly assimilate into their local institutions they should be much more effective than choose not to do so. As he notes,

Organizations built around “bonding” network social bases that are characterized by dense embeddedness both within and across local communities will be most likely to construct robust institutions characterized by elite consensus at the top and local control on the ground. Organizations built on the basis of “coalition” network social bases (either collections of localized warlords, or groups of leaders unlinked to the communities they are mobilizing) are likely to instead suffer from higher levels of internal feuding and disobedience.⁵⁵

54. Fotini Christia, *Alliance formation in civil wars* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 239-240.

55. Staniland, “[Explaining cohesion, fragmentation, and control in insurgent groups](#),” 12.

Militant groups embedded within local social institutions will draw membership from a more homogeneous base of recruits with similar worldviews, greater trust, and more effective policing. This makes it more likely for a cooperative, rather than pragmatic, leadership to form, and these organization should ultimately have a greater chance of developing robust internal institutions that help ward off feuds leading to an organizational fracture.

Structural characteristics like a factionalized leadership and decentralized authority should also increase the likelihood that an organization will splinter. With regards to leadership, Victor Asal and co-authors note that “Organizations with factional or competing leadership act to precipitate the organization into fission and schism because they allow for a plurality of potentially competing opinions, objectives, and priorities, and thus are more likely to break apart under external stressors.”⁵⁶ Decentralized authority is expected to work through virtually the same mechanism: since the leadership has less control over the organization, it is easier for conflicts to develop and diverse opinions to take hold. And when this happens, leaders under the decentralized authority have even less ability to hold the group together, punish defectors, and maintain control.⁵⁷

Finally, Paul Kenny points to an interesting relationship between burden sharing and organizational cohesion. In two careful studies of the Irish Republican Army and the Karen National Union (and their related splinter groups), he finds that one of the single most important factors that allowed both groups to stay together and to keep fighting despite government resistance was their shared sense of burden. As he notes, “...disintegration was highest when there was a perception among the rank and file that commanders in the base areas were not sharing an equal portion of the burden of war.”⁵⁸ This suggests once again that a group’s broader organizational and structural

56. Asal, Brown, and Dalton, “Why Split?”

57. Shapiro, *The Terrorist’s Dilemma*.

58. Kenny, “Structural Integrity and Cohesion in Insurgent Organizations,” 552.

choices have important effects on their ability to maintain cohesion.

Together, these views suggest how organizational splitting is most likely to occur. Scholars view fragmentation as the result of weak institutional control combined with external stressors that motivate internal dissent. When this dissent can no longer be controlled or contained then an internal faction is increasingly likely to break away and form a new group. This dissertation relies on this literature as a baseline for understanding organizational fractures, yet it goes beyond what has been asked so far: while most research examine why and when splits occur, I am interested in how these splits affect organizational behavior moving forward. In this way, group schisms are flipped from the dependent to the independent variable in order to understand how they influence other outcomes like group behavior and survival.

5 Policy Implications and the Flawed Logic of Fragmentation as a Military Strategy

One of the key findings from the previous discussion is that state repression has important effects on the organizational politics of nonstate actors. Both direct (e.g. leadership decapitation) and indirect (e.g. state battlefield success) state interventions against nonstate actors can significantly affect levels of internal cohesion. Direct actions in particular are often intentionally designed to foment internal disagreement and fracture militant groups since splintering is often conflated with defeat. This is problematic since organizational splintering does not always produce outcomes that are beneficial to the state. In response, this dissertation will have important ramifications for US policies that specifically target terrorist organizations.

Much of the US' Army's counterterrorist and counterinsurgency operations are based on Field Manual 3-24 (FM 3-24), which was updated by General David Petraeus and General John Amos in 2006. The manual, at its core, emphasizes a general

strategy to defeat irregular threats that is based on two overarching objectives: first, understand the enemy, and second, undermine the enemy.

Understanding the enemy is nothing new. Clausewitz famously noted that the first step towards victory “is to identify the enemy’s center of gravity” so that force can be concentrated on that point, crippling the adversary’s abilities to resist.⁵⁹ Sun Tzu similarly notes that “If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. . . If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.”⁶⁰ You must know the enemy and yourself so that you can devise a successful strategy that advantages your own strengths while capitalizing on the enemy’s weaknesses. Although these lessons were devised with interstate conflict in mind, they are just as relevant to conflicts with subnational enemies as well. Traditional counterinsurgent theorists like B.H. Liddel Hart, David Galula, and more recently, David Kilcullen, all echo these same ideas, that intelligence, information, and a keen understanding of the enemy are essential to victory against irregular opponents.⁶¹⁶²

This leads to the second part of FM 3-24 that deals with undermining the enemy and using information to construct tailored strategies to defeat them. One of the main strategies identified in the Army’s manual is what one might call the “divide and conquer” approach: if one can fragment a subnational organization and split them apart, then it should ultimately become easier to defeat. The authors note that

59. Carl Von Clausewitz, *On war* (Digireads. com Publishing, 2004).

60. Sun Tzu, *The art of war* (e-artnow, 2012).

61. Basil Henry Liddell Hart, *Strategy: the indirect approach* (Faber, 1967); David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*. (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006); David Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2010).

62. Echoing these ideas, FM 3-24 notes that: Effective counterinsurgency operations are shaped by timely, relevant, tailored, predictive, accurate, and reliable intelligence, gathered and analyzed at the lowest possible level and disseminated throughout the force. Without accurate and predictive intelligence, it is often better to not act rather than to act. Gaining situational understanding before action is often essential in avoiding long term damage to mission objectives. In environments where commanders do not have situational understanding, the first action they should take is to use forces to gain that understanding while not creating unintended and lasting harm to the mission.

“Rifts between insurgent leaders, if identified, can be exploited. . . Offering amnesty or a seemingly generous compromise can also cause divisions within an insurgency and present opportunities to split or weaken it.”⁶³ The manual argues that this approach is beneficial since low-density (fragmented and less connected) networks and organizations are less capable of launching complex attacks, which is indeed a claim that recent research would support.⁶⁴

The divide and conquer approach has worked its way into counterterrorism and counterinsurgent discussions from where it originated in the field of interstate warfare. When fighting other governments, states will target the command and control centers of their enemy’s armed forces to prevent coordination and incite general disorder. This was the realization underlying Blitzkrieg doctrine that made the German military offensive so successful, and it was echoed even more recently when the United States invaded Iraq. Indeed, the logic of interstate conflict is such that a fragmented state or military is a weakened one; a fragmented state cannot bring its maximum power to bear on its adversary, and the balance of power thus swings in the opposite direction.

Several problems arise when ones tries to translate the logic of divide and conquer from interstate conflicts to subnational conflicts. First, it is clear how a fragmented state is significantly weakened: states are large, bureaucratic organizations whose warfighting capacity is a product of their coordination. Since modern combat units require extensive support and logistical networks to function effectively, disrupting rear operations significantly degrades their combat ability. Militants, on the other hand, operate quite differently; although certain groups like pre-9/11 Al Qaeda, the Provisional Irish Republican Army, and the Tamil Tigers were highly institutionalized at different points in time, they are not nearly as dependent on internal operations as states. Consequently, while splintering and internal divisions should decrease the

63. David H. Petraeus and James F. Amos, *US Army US Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (Signalman Publishing, 2009).

64. Shapiro, *The Terrorist’s Dilemma*.

likelihood of complex missions that rely on structural hierarchy, it is unclear how the logic of fragmentation will contribute to a group's decline more specifically besides simply causing them to lose members.

Second, even though fractured organizations might be unable to launch more complex missions immediately after an internal split, this discounts their ability to transform into a more dangerous and more capable organization in the future. Certainly, fledgling organizations of almost all types are inherently weaker since they lack experience, structure, and networks of support. Yet splinter groups, with their battle-hardened members and previous training, might actually be increasingly capable of ultimately *developing* into deadlier and more resilient groups, deadlier than even their parent organizations. Fragmenting policies might therefore be trading short-term solutions for long-term insecurities, setting the stage for even greater threats to emerge in the future.

Third, although a state may endeavor to fracture an irregular opponent, not every organizational split is indicative of military success; on the contrary, organizational splintering might occur within a broader strategic logic to blunt the efficacy of government operations. Jake Shapiro, for instance, argues that terrorist organizations will often decentralize when facing government repression and infiltration, trading the ability to conduct complex missions (that require organizational hierarchy) for simple security.⁶⁵ Likewise, FM 3-24 even notes, "... a single insurgency may be in different phases in different parts of the country. Advanced insurgencies can rapidly shift, split, combine, or reorganize; they are dynamic and adaptive."⁶⁶ Consequently, organizational splits might not only occur when groups are defeated, and they could instead signal that an irregular group is evolving. This suggests that one should not view organizational splits as an inherent good or victory.

65. Shapiro, *The Terrorist's Dilemma*.

66. Petraeus and Amos, *US Army US Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*.

Fourth, and finally, history has shown that the universe of splinter groups is highly diverse: some have gone on to be among the deadliest groups of the 20th century while others have quickly died out and faded into the past. The initial anecdotes cited above highlight a stark contrast between IRA splinters like the Provos, a group that was active for nearly 30 years, and the PFLP-EO splinters, each of which only managed a few attacks in their short lifespans. Before organizational splitting becomes doctrine we need to understand the factors that contribute to this variation and that conditions under which fragmentation ultimately produces weaker, less durable, and less stable organizations.

The success of divide and conquer approaches in interstate wars has biased the expectation of its utility in counterinsurgency conflicts, which helps explain its prevalence in recent debates. While there is a wealth of information attesting to its efficacy in interstate wars, there is much less to suggest that the same is true against less developed and less bureaucratic enemies whose strategy require substantially less control and coordination to function. Indeed, the precise logic of how this strategy is expected to work is rarely articulated and the questions raised above are generally ignored. One way to explain this is with cognitive bias, which basically means that individuals' preexisting beliefs shape how they process information. When an individual is seeking a particular goal or expects a certain outcome then supportive information is weighted more heavily in the decision-making process. Consequently, preexisting beliefs can seriously disadvantage the quality of strategic decision-making by swaying the expected utility of particular actions and in some cases, contribute to suboptimal outcomes.⁶⁷ In this case, when military commanders believe that a fragmenting

67. Dale Griffin and Amos Tversky, "The weighing of evidence and the determinants of confidence," *Cognitive Psychology* 24, no. 3 (July 1992): 411–435; Roselies Eisenberger, "Decision making in action: Models and methods, Klein, G.A., Orasanu, J., Calderwood, R. and Zsombok, C.E. (eds). Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1993, 480 pp. ISBN 0-89391-794-X (pb)," *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making* 8, no. 3 (September 1995): 218–219; Charles R. Schwenk, "Cognitive simplification processes in strategic decision-making," *Strategic Management Journal* 5, no. 2 (April 1984): 111–128.

strategy is best, largely because they know how effective it is in interstate wars, they are already more likely to enact it regardless of whatever future information might arrive.

This discussion again points to the important fact that more information is needed about the outcomes of these crucial events. One of the goals of this project is therefore to help understand the conditions under which fragmentation would be most effective as a policy tool against nonstate actors, producing groups that are ultimately weaker than their parents, posing a diminished threat both to the state and to civilians. The new model of organizational fractures presented in the following chapter, and also the quantitative and qualitative studies in Chapters Four, Five, and Six, should thus be of interest not only to the academic community, but also to those in the policy community for whom this information will prove especially useful.

Chapter 2

A Theory of Organizational Fragmentation and Splinter Trajectory

1 Introduction

Militant groups are tenuous organizations. The pressures, failures, and extreme conditions faced by their members on a daily basis wear away at personal allegiances and magnify disagreements, weakening the group from the inside out. As a result, terrorist and insurgent organizations commonly splinter and break apart, their members departing their current organization to form a new group of their own.

Interestingly, the outcomes of group fragmentation are highly variable and surprisingly misunderstood. Sometimes these new groups are weak and fall apart, as happened with the PFLP-EO and many other groups that would likely be unrecognizable. This outcome is what governments hope for when they aim to fragment militant adversaries through force and by exploiting internal fissures. Other times, these splinter groups can develop into deadly, durable threats that are ultimately more significant than their parents. Organizations like the Real IRA, the Abu Nidal Organization, and Hezbollah, for instance, have often outlasted their parents and surpassed them in almost all measures of lethality and destruction. Since splinter organizations span the spectrum of lethality and durability, conforming to expectations of radicalization and weakness at various points in time, what explains the variation in their ultimate trajectory? In other words, why are some militant splinter groups short lived and weak while others are long-lasting and deadly?

To answer this question I look internally for variation in these schisms at the group level—something that most scholars have overlooked—to leverage against the unexplained variation in rates of survival and radicalization. In short, I argue that the *consistency* of internal preferences combined with the *content* of those preferences are key to understanding the trajectory of militant splinter groups over time. The consistency of a group's internal preferences, in other words the extent to which their internal preferences are aligned, is a major predictor of organizational survival

and durability. My theory also suggests that the content of a group's internal preferences provide important information about its future behavior. Splits over strategy predominantly occur over the continued or the expanded use of force and as such they draw into the group greater numbers of hard-line members who both directly and indirectly influence strategic decision-making towards the extreme.

Although it is difficult, if not impossible, to perfectly capture the consistency of a group's internal preferences, the process by which militant organizations break apart can either increase or decrease the odds that consistency is achieved. Comparing numerous cases of organizational fragmentation, I identify two ideal-type pathways by which militants groups fragment: either *factionally* or *multidimensionally*, and splinters from factional schisms tend to experience significantly more consistent, aligned internal preferences. In the *factional* pathway subgroups form around a single disagreement with their parent organization—for strategic, personal, or ideological reasons—and they ultimately break away to fulfill their shared vision of their organizational future. In *multidimensional* schisms, however, the splinter either has a diverse set of disagreements or no particular disagreement at all, often motivated instead by security concerns. The common disagreement motivating factional schisms functions to align internal preferences and attract disaffected members with highly similar goals, creating splinter organizations with more consistent internal preferences.

Consequently, this theory suggests that there is no single logic of group fragmentation and splinter groups are not universally expected to be *either* weak or radical, durable or short-lived. Rather, weaker and less durable organizations are expected from multidimensional splits, while only strategic splits should produce increasingly deadly and radical militant groups. As this demonstrates, the different logics of internal schisms, which has until now been ignored in favor of conflict-level approaches, plays a crucial role in determining how organizational fragmentation influences the trajectory of these newly formed groups.

Overall, this theory, that I present more fully in the following pages, significantly advances existing research on militant fragmentation and it ultimately suggests several important changes to our current understanding of militant dynamics. First, the theory makes a significant contribution to existing research by shifting the focus of fragmentation away from the conflict-level and back to the group-level. By tackling the question in this way, my theory is ultimately able to explain differences in organizational behavior that cross-national research fails to address. Indeed, it is surprising that most scholarly work on fragmentation has failed to systematically compare the effects of different types of internal disputes—something that I argue is crucial to understanding why groups behave in particular ways. Second, and as a result of looking at the schisms themselves, my theory suggests that one cannot predict how splintering will impact a group unless one understands the internal political processes that are responsible for the original disagreement. In other words, scholars and policymakers should avoid focusing on the external events that merely precipitate organizational breakdown and instead look internally at why the group is actually breaking apart and what types of individuals the new group is attracting. Whether something like leadership assassination inspires internal feuding along strategic, personal, ideological, or multidimensional lines has important ramifications for how the new group is likely to act. Third, and finally, when considering fragmentation as a counterterrorist or counterinsurgency goal, scholars and policymakers alike should more carefully consider the types of groups that could be created. While fragmentation inherently weakens the parent organization through a loss of both manpower and resources, it can also create a breakaway group that is ultimately more dangerous and more resilient.

The remainder of this chapter proceeds as follows. First, I discuss fragmentation within current understandings of militant dynamics. Group splintering is one among a host of factors that influence and drive organizational behavior, and scholars would be remiss to ignore it moving forward. Second, I then show how fragmentation is

a rational process. Drawing on individual and group-level research, I discuss how these events can be modeled rationally since the choices individuals make during the process are influenced by factors and calculations that we can approximate in our own research. Third, and finally, I present the model of militant organizational splintering that, as I have mentioned, departs from existing models of group breakup in several key ways. The chapter ends with the observable implications of this new model and an overview of the research design that is more thoroughly discussed in the following chapter.

2 Fragmentation in the Context of Organizational Dynamics

Characteristics of group formation play a major role in organizational evolution and long-term success. Research from related fields shows that how groups form matters to new businesses, where the experience and leadership of individuals within the group can profoundly impact their likelihood of success; it matters to religious organizations and political parties, where existing credibility and legitimacy can help them get off the ground; and it matters to militant groups as well, since experience, connections, and local support can ultimately mean the difference between success and failure. These characteristics of group formation and whether they form from new or experienced members can severely impact the abilities and the trajectory of new organizations.

The characteristics of group formation are, however, only one of many different organizational dynamics that exert a powerful influence on the entire group, shaping and structuring the organization in perceptible and imperceptible ways. Scholars have embraced the idea that relatively common organizational dynamics—the basic features and structures that influence the inner workings of groups of individuals—are

significant to understanding the behavior of violent nonstate actors. This realization is based on the assumption that militant groups are actually quite similar to other types of organizations about which we know much more, particularly legal, nonviolent groups like businesses, firms, religions, and political parties. From these other fields scholars know that certain organizational dynamics alter group behavior, ranging from their capacities to survivability and even their prospects of success. Scholars researching militant groups and subnational conflict can leverage this information to their advantage.

As I mentioned, understand the behavior of violent nonstate actors through the lens of organizational dynamics is ultimately founded in the idea that militant groups are not entirely distinct from other types of societal actors. These groups actually share a host of similarities since they are at their core collections of individuals working together towards a common goal and repeatedly interacting, and researchers can understand a much greater proportion of their violent behavior if they do not view them as unique and instead recognize and leverage these similarities. Some might find this hard to believe; indeed, in certain ways the use of violence and the clandestine nature of militant groups certainly differentiates terrorist and other violent organizations from legal, nonviolent entities. But as Jake Shapiro notes, "...terrorists themselves are not that different from individuals working in traditional institutions. The willingness to kill civilians as a legitimate means to a political end is certainly radical, but terrorists are every bit as, if not more, venal, self-important, and shortsighted as the rest of us."¹ Looking within organizations and ignoring their objectives one can indeed identify similar processes, problems, and concerns: interpersonal interaction, self concern and self survival, management, delegation, and growth, to a name a few. To be sure, political scientists have accepted that violence complicates the translation of certain analogies and findings from other fields to the study of mili-

1. Shapiro, *The Terrorist's Dilemma*, 2.

tant groups, but in many cases there are still useful insights at the nexus of seemingly diverse literatures.

Although the general idea of placing violent nonstate actors within a broader context of legal and illegal actors is not new, the pace has substantially quickened in recent years. In the 1980s, Martha Crenshaw and Kent Oots both labored under the premise that militant groups are essentially a class of political actors, opening up an array of useful synergies between these fields.² This trend has continued as scholars have found other meaningful comparisons between their own research on particular aspects of militant group behavior and literature from economics, military bureaucracy and cohesion, alliance politics, and, in addition, organizational dynamics.³ A brief survey of research in this area demonstrates how profoundly some of this work has influenced the study of militant organizations and contributed to our collective understanding, and these research programs are a model for future investigations including this one.

First, a large body of research suggests that organizational structure has important effects on militants' capabilities and behavior. Structure is one facet of an organization that matters virtually regardless of what type it is or what activities it partakes in. Researchers most often think of the structure of militant actors as conforming to one of two ideal-type categories, either hierarchical or decentralized

2. Martha Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism," *Comparative Politics* 13, no. 4 (July 1981): 379–399; Martha Crenshaw, "An organizational approach to the analysis of political terrorism," *Orbis* 29, no. 3 (1985): 465–489; Kent Layne Oots, "Organizational perspectives on the formation and disintegration of terrorist groups," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 12, no. 3 (1989): 139–152.

3. Horowitz, "Nonstate Actors and the Diffusion of Innovations"; Shapiro, *The Terrorist's Dilemma*; Schweitzer, "Innovation in Terrorist Organizations"; Brian J. Phillips, "Terrorist group cooperation and longevity," *International Studies Quarterly*, 2013, For a few notable, recent examples, see: Brian J. Phillips, "Enemies with Benefits? Violent Rivalry and Terrorist Group Longevity," *Journal of Peace Research*, *Forthcoming*, 2014, Staniland, "Explaining cohesion, fragmentation, and control in insurgent groups"; David B. Carter, "A blessing or a curse? State support for terrorist groups," *International Organization* 66, no. 01 (2012): 129–151; Joseph K. Young and Laura Dugan, "Survival of the Fittest: Why Terrorist Groups Endure," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 8, no. 2 (April 2014).

(also called networked), though there are certainly many degrees between the two.⁴ Not surprisingly, both decentralized and hierarchical structures have pros and cons: for hierarchical groups, it is easier to manage operations, delegate—though still oversee—certain actions, and conduct long-term strategic planning, all of which facilitates the planning and execution of increasingly complex missions.⁵ Yet one downside is that highly centralized groups might also be easier to spot, easier to infiltrate, and as a result, easier to destabilize, making them prime targets for state counterterrorist and counterinsurgent operations.⁶ On the other hand, decentralization might seem to make more sense for covert organizations: flatter structures increase a group’s flexibility to operate across wide swaths of terrain, they facilitate tactical and operational experimentation, and they are more effective at deterring against the effects of leadership decapitation since command and control is more highly dispersed. This means that decentralized organizations are often more resilient in the face of operations aimed specifically against their leadership.⁷ Certainly, organizational choices like this one are extremely important when it comes to explaining a group’s macro-level behavioral patterns, but research also suggests that such decisions influence more micro-level decisions as well. With regards to target selection, Kilberg (2011) finds that centralized groups are significantly more likely to attack hard targets but especially in their formative years when these groups tend to be more capable of complex

4. Brian A. Jackson, “Groups, networks, or movements: A command-and-control-driven approach to classifying terrorist organizations and its application to Al Qaeda,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 3 (2006): For example, within the network category experts often cite three different models of group structure: the chain, hub-and-spoke, and all-channel network. These are thoroughly discussed in.

5. Shapiro, *The Terrorist’s Dilemma*.

6. Shapiro, *The Terrorist’s Dilemma*; Jenna Jordan, “When Heads Roll: Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Decapitation,” *Security Studies* 18, no. 4 (December 2009): 719–755; Bryan C. Price, “Targeting top terrorists: How leadership decapitation contributes to counterterrorism,” *International Security* 36, no. 4 (2012): 9–46; Patrick B. Johnston, “Does Decapitation Work? Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Targeting in Counterinsurgency Campaigns,” *International Security* 36, no. 4 (April 2012): 47–79; Jenna Jordan, “Attacking the Leader, Missing the Mark,” *International Security* 38, no. 4 (April 2014): 7–38.

7. Joshua Kilberg, “Organizing for Destruction: Does Organizational Structure Affect Terrorist Group Behavior and Success?,” March 2011,

attacks.⁸ Thus, while the majority of scholarly work suggests that groups select into certain structures to achieve particular goals (like evading government infiltration), Kilberg’s work shows how structure has even more unintentional effects that affect behavior in more nuanced ways.

Second, scholars have increasingly focused on how an actor’s organizational capacity (or capital) influences its ability to innovate and to survive. Michael Horowitz, in his book *The Diffusion of Military Power*, was one of the first security scholars to translate this concept to the study of terrorism from where it originated in economics. Organizational capacity, as he puts it, “refers to the previously intangible aspects of organizational strength that firms draw upon when facing periods of industry transition. . . Organizations with a high degree of organizational capital are much better able to take advantage of new innovations and transform themselves successfully for the future than organizations with a low degree of organizational capital.”⁹ Traditionally, economists have used organizational capacity to explain variation in the way firms adapt to innovations in their field.¹⁰ Some are able to embrace change and restructure their operations to fit the new environment while others resist and remain stuck in antiquated operational patterns. The decision, and indeed the ability, to adapt and to innovate is partly a question of motivation and desire, but at the same time, a critical barrier is whether or not groups possess the necessary capacity—the ability—to evolve; in other words, flexibility is paramount to adaptation.¹¹

With regards to violent nonstate actors, organizational capacity affects a group’s ability to adopt new violent tactics and strategies, particularly those that are disruptive to existing systems—in other words, those tactics and operations that significantly depart from existing capabilities. Horowitz demonstrates this effect with

8. Kilberg, “[Organizing for Destruction](#).”

9. Horowitz, “[Nonstate Actors and the Diffusion of Innovations](#).”

10. Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of innovations* (Simon / Schuster, 2010).

11. Horowitz, “[Nonstate Actors and the Diffusion of Innovations](#).”

convincing evidence surrounding the diffusion of suicide bombs. Since mastery of suicide bombing requires significant organizational and procedural restructuring, not every group was equally likely or equally able to embrace the tactic and incorporate it into its tactical repertoire. Rather, it was the youngest groups that were most likely to do so as they were increasingly able to embrace the necessary internal reshuffling. Age was used to proxy for organizational capacity since older groups are more likely to experience entrenched routines and embedded interests, making them especially conservative and ultimately low on the spectrum of organizational capacity. As with group structure, this research shows that organizational capacity is an important characteristic that influences a militant group's behavior in meaningful, though possibly unintentional ways.

Together, this research demonstrates how group dynamics influence organizational behavior in significant ways. My theory of the content and consistency of organizational preferences is similar in this regard: though groups do not overtly consider these aspects of their organization, they nonetheless influence internal decision-making and ultimately, their observable behavior. This project takes the view that the conditions surrounding organizational formation are one piece of the broader puzzle that exert a major influence on militant organizations well into the future, just as do the factors discussed above.

2.1 Are Splinter Organizations Unique?

So far I have focused on militant organizations as a whole, but this project is focused on one particular subset of these groups: those that are formed by splintering or breaking away from a preexisting organization. In many ways, militant splinter groups have an advantage over organizations that form more naturally from the ground up, and in this way they merit further attention from the academic and policy communities.

First, splinter groups are unique from nonsplinter groups in that they natively possess a higher level of collective experience upon their initial formation. In other words, militant splinter groups tend to have a much greater level of experience at day one than do nonsplinter groups that are comprised of individuals with either little or no past experience in clandestine, violent organizations. This ultimately makes splinter groups distinct from nonsplinter groups and uniquely positioned to succeed, particularly in their formative years when the differences in experience are maximized.¹² This idea is well founded in extant research on the formation and evolution of business firms. In particular, a number of studies have found that either the wealth or the lack of collective experience within a new organization is a crucial variable in its long-term viability.¹³ “Congenital experience,” as it is often referred to, has a profound, positive impact on the likelihood of risk-taking and more broadly, the success of firms as a whole.¹⁴ Studying variation in the success rates of young firms at internationalizing their operations, Bruneel and co-authors write that

This type of congenital learning arising from the knowledge stock brought into a firm at founding through its founders past experiences will have an important imprinting effect on the firms strategy. Previous actions and their outcomes are retained in the memory of the founders, resulting in interpretations and generalizations that can be drawn upon in decision making.¹⁵

Certainly, it would be foolish to think that one’s past experiences would not be

12. In other words, before the nonsplinter group has a chance to gain any experience.

13. For an excellent overview of this literature, see: Kent Eriksson and Sylvie Chetty, “The effect of experience and absorptive capacity on foreign market knowledge,” *International Business Review*, Learning in International Business Networks, 12, no. 6 (December 2003): 673–695.

14. For the seminal work on this topic, see: George P. Huber, “Organizational learning: The contributing processes and the literatures,” *Organization science* 2, no. 1 (1991): 88–115.

15. Johan Bruneel, Helena Yli-Renko, and Bart Clarysse, “Learning from experience and learning from others: how congenital and interorganizational learning substitute for experiential learning in young firm internationalization,” *Strategic entrepreneurship journal* 4, no. 2 (2010): 167.

brought to bear on the conduct and operations of a new organization. Rather, it provides a pool of knowledge that groups can draw upon during times of uncertainty, providing a significant comparative advantage vis-a-vis nonsplinter organizations. In particular, Bruneel et al argue that “An important aspect of experiential knowledge is that it provides the framework for perceiving and formulating opportunities...[it] makes it possible to perceive “concrete” opportunities—to have a “feeling” about how they fit into the present and future activities¹⁶”. In this way, experience is utilized internally, improving the quality of internal decision-making that ultimately benefits the entire organization and improves its likelihood of success.

Additional research on the topic of prior experience, or experiential knowledge as it is sometimes called, has uncovered other benefits as well. For instance, Sapienza and colleagues find that experienced leaders not only bring their own personal expertise to bear on business operations, but they also bring with them well-developed social networks that firms can leverage to their benefit.¹⁷ Firms can utilize existing social networks to facilitate expansion, establishing new business operations and more generally, these ties tend to mitigate a firm’s aversion to entering a new market.¹⁸

It is easy to see how these same principles translate to the success and the survivability of new militant organizations. Since the odds of survival and success are already incredibly small, members’ collective experience should make splinter groups both more capable and more likely to persist than similar nonsplinter organizations. Using their experience, they can begin to form their organization and devise a strat-

16. Jan Johanson and Jan-Erik Vahlne, “The internationalization process of the firm—a model of knowledge development and increasing foreign market commitments,” *Journal of international business studies*, 1977, 28.

17. H. J. Sapienza et al., “A capabilities perspective on the effects of early internationalization on firm survival and growth,” *Academy of Management Review* 31, no. 4 (October 2006): 914–933; Jan Johanson and Jan-Erik Vahlne, “The mechanism of internationalisation,” *International marketing review* 7, no. 4 (1990).

18. Sapienza et al., “[A capabilities perspective on the effects of early internationalization on firm survival and growth.](#)”; Helena Yli-Renko, Erkki Autio, and Harry J. Sapienza, “Social capital, knowledge acquisition, and knowledge exploitation in young technology-based firms,” *Strategic management journal* 22, nos. 6-7 (2001): 587–613.

egy in response to the challenges and deficiencies they have faced in the past. And, as Sapienza et al point out, existing social networks can be leveraged to the benefit of these organizations: they can help to secure funding, rally local support, and recruits new members, utilizing existing contacts and building on pre-established trust. Of course, nonsplinter groups will need to accomplish these same tasks to survive, though their lack of experience in these matters ultimately puts them at an immediate disadvantage.

From a tactical standpoint, previous experience provides organizations with technical know-how that is often missing in fledgling nonsplinter organizations. Consider the experiences of the Red Brigade and the Real IRA: before conducting their first violent operations, the Red Brigades had to learn the basics of how to simply *be* a revolutionary organization. Their initial members, many of whom were students, had almost no idea how to manage a clandestine group and even less about how to defeat a state, so they first read books and manuscripts from revolutionaries in Latin America and even sent leaders abroad for training. On the other hand, when a group like the Real IRA formed by splintering away from a preexisting group, the Provisional IRA, it was able to almost immediately launch combat operations as its members had significant experience that they could draw upon. For instance, two of the Real IRA founding members were Michael McKevitt, the former Quartermaster General of the IRA whose specialty was arms procurement, and Frank McGuinness, a pseudonym for the IRA's deadliest and most notorious bomb-maker. This contrasts sharply with the initial inexperience of the Red Brigades and it demonstrates how the disparity in experience between splinter and nonsplinter militants might influence their operational patterns.

Second, militant splinter groups are, by definition, formed by members of a pre-existing organization who are generally departing for a common reason. This means that these individuals already know each other and have likely fought alongside one

another. Even more, the history of numerous splinter organizations shows that the first members to band together and depart are often those with preexisting ties. They break away after forming distinct sub-groups that have more allegiance to each other than the broader organization. For instance, consider the formation of the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) as it was still within the IRA: “Having been alienated from the Official IRA leadership for some time Costello [the leader of the INLA] had anticipated his departure and in the final months deployed Official IRA personnel sympathetic to his ideas to carry out robberies to fund to new organisation.”¹⁹ As this demonstrates, the future members of the INLA had banded together years before their eventual departure, both in terms of armed operations and as a voting bloc within the Official IRA, solidifying their commitment to one another and building trust over time. Extant research finds that this type of repeated interaction and more simply working together breeds trust amongst the individuals involved. “A stable pool of focal team members,” which is often the case for small organizations and factional subgroups,” allows for frequent and continual partner interaction which serves as a basis for assessing predictability and, hence, for the formation of trust.”²⁰ Or, as Gulati and Snych write, “direct interpersonal contact fosters non-calculative trust not only through enhanced learning about the partner, but also through increased identification.”²¹ Consequently, one would therefore expect that individuals within many splinter organizations would have a higher endowment of initial interpersonal trust than do nonsplinter organizations.

Why does trust matter and what role does it play in a militant organization? Put simply, “When people trust each other transaction costs in economic activities are

19. Stephen Bloomer, *The History and Politics of the I.R.S.P & I.N.L.A.: From 1974 to the Present Day*, 1988, 6.

20. Indre Maurer, “How to build trust in inter-organizational projects: The impact of project staffing and project rewards on the formation of trust, knowledge acquisition and product innovation,” *International Journal of Project Management* 28, no. 7 (October 2010): 629–637.

21. Ranjay Gulati and Maxim Sytch, “Does familiarity breed trust? Revisiting the antecedents of trust,” *Managerial and Decision Economics* 29, nos. 2-3 (2008): 171.

reduced, large organizations function better, governments are more efficient, financial development is faster: more trust may spur economic success.”²² In other words, trust tends to improve the inner workings of large organizations by facilitating interpersonal cooperation and coordination. Certainly, this initial endowment of interpersonal trust and experience provides a massive benefit to splinter groups over nonsplinter groups. To highlight this fact, one can think of the problems that would arise when militant organizations lack trust: when leaders do not trust their members to follow through with orders, they must expend additional resources to monitor their behavior, “[leading] to wasteful, inefficient resource allocation from a leader’s perspective.”²³ As a result, “it is critical that (in addition to the requisite skills and knowledge) the soldiers of a unit build strong mutual bonds of trust and affection.”²⁴

This research underscores why militant splinter groups are uniquely capable organizations. Although they still encounter many of the same problems and difficulties as nonsplinters, the nature of their organizational formation generally provides them a meaningful advantage. This idea underscores both the importance of studying these groups more thoroughly, but also the utility in seeking out other organizational dynamics that can contribute to our understanding of militant actors.

2.2 The Rationality of Militant Splintering and Behavior

So far this project has implicitly assumed that militant violence and organizational breakdown both operate as rational processes but it is worth discussing why this is in fact true. By rational I mean that process follows a rational calculation; in other words, there is a coherent logic underlying these events. Those familiar with the literature on terrorism and insurgency will recognize that this assumption is widely

22. Alberto Alesina and Eliana La Ferrara, “Who trusts others?,” *Journal of Public Economics* 85, no. 2 (August 2002): 208.

23. Shapiro, *The Terrorist’s Dilemma*, 49.

24. Laurence R. Iannaccone, “The market for martyrs,” *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 2, no. 4 (2006): 11.

held, with the vast majority of existing research employing what is called strategic or rational models of group behavior. As Martha Crenshaw first outlined in 1981:

The argument that terrorist behavior should be analyzed as “rational” is based on the assumption that terrorist organizations possess internally consistent sets of values, beliefs, and images of the environment... The terrorist organization engages in decision-making calculations that an analyst can approximate.”²⁵

Following from her initial lead, the majority of recent scholarship on militant behavior is underpinned by the notion of rationality at the organizational and even the individual levels. In other words, scholars tend to believe that the actions of terrorist and other militant actors follow a strategic calculus and that their behavior more generally conforms to the logic of a cost-benefit analysis that one can indeed approximate and even understand. Scholars accept this type of strategic or rational approach for several reasons.

First, most studies of individual terrorists and militants find them to be rather ordinary. They are not, as popular perception might suggest, crazed, irrational lunatics bent on destruction, but on the contrary their backgrounds are often indistinguishable from ordinary citizens.²⁶ Although, there is considerable debate surrounding those who engage in suicide terrorism with some scholars arguing that this behavior itself classifies as irrational, this is difficult to study since one can only observe and interview bombers who failed their mission or who changed their mind, and might

25. Crenshaw, “[The Causes of Terrorism.](#)”

26. Louise Richardson, *What terrorists want: Understanding the enemy, containing the threat* (Random House Digital, Inc., 2006).

ultimately provide a biased sample.²⁷²⁸

Second, militant groups have demonstrated remarkable strategic planning and foresight that in some cases has helped to achieve their goals. With regards to terrorism in particular, scholars find that some groups have had a surprisingly high success rate: Robert Pape, for instance, calculates that suicide campaigns between 1980 and 2003 achieved substantial concessions nearly 50% of the time.²⁹ This suggests that we should not view the use of terrorist tactics or political violence as irrational, but rather as a calculated means to achieve a goal. As Kydd and Walter note, “Hijacking planes, blowing up buses, and kidnapping individuals may seem irrational and incoherent to outside observers, but these tactics can be surprisingly effective in achieving a terrorist groups political aims.”³⁰

Militant groups also respond in rational ways to changes in their strategic environment, supporting the argument they themselves are rational actors. Notably, there is strong evidence of a substitution effect in militant tactics: when one tactical approach is compromised, groups will shift to another mode of attack. Walter Enders and Todd Sandler convincingly demonstrate this phenomenon with evidence surrounding the

27. Adam Lankford, “Do suicide terrorists exhibit clinically suicidal risk factors? A review of initial evidence and call for future research,” *Aggression and violent behavior* 15, no. 5 (2010): 334–340; Adam Lankford, “Could suicide terrorists actually be suicidal?,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 34, no. 4 (2011): 337–366; Ariel Merari, “The readiness to kill and die: Suicidal terrorism in the Middle East,” *Origins of terrorism* 192 (1990); Ariel Merari, “Suicide terrorism,” *Assessment, treatment, and prevention of suicidal behavior*, 2004, 431–454.

28. Those who believe that suicide bombers are rational (or at least not irrational) commonly cite three facts: first, that viewing the act as a self-sacrifice for a greater good makes it easier to logically justify the act; second, that a bomber’s family will often receive compensation, which is more than what an individual could provide on his or her own; and third, that group pressure and socialization might be the key link between a rational individual and a suicide bomber, though again this would not make them irrational. Mohammed M. Hafez, “Suicide Terrorism in Iraq: A Preliminary Assessment of the Quantitative Data and Documentary Evidence,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 6 (September 2006): 591–619; Bloom, *Dying To Kill*; Jerrold M. Post, “When Hatred is Bred in the Bone: Psycho-cultural Foundations of Contemporary Terrorism,” *Political Psychology* 26, no. 4 (August 2005): 615–636; Robert A. Pape, “The strategic logic of suicide terrorism,” *American political science review* 97, no. 3 (2003): 343–361; Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Terrorism* (New York: Random House, 2005)

29. Pape, “The strategic logic of suicide terrorism.”

30. Kydd and Walter, “The strategies of terrorism,” 1.

use of aerial hijackings, finding that groups shifted to other tactics with the introduction of metal detectors at airports, the obvious effect of which was to decrease the chance that the operation succeeds.³¹ Scholars have also found that groups vary tactics in accordance with public opinion and support for particular actions. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, for instance, there is strong evidence that the use of suicide bombings closely follows popular sentiments. Hamas and Fatah will moderate the number of suicide missions they launch as support wanes and waxes. Together, these points demonstrate that violent nonstate actors tend to react rationally to environmental stimuli and are therefore rational actors.

These points underscore how the actions, responses, and calculations of both individual militants as well as collective organizations fit within traditional notions of rationality. These studies show that groups and individuals respond in rational, logical ways to state actions and other environmental factors, suggesting that we can be confident in our approximations of their decision-making calculus. By approximating their own costs and benefits, outsiders can gain insight into the strategic calculations of militant organizations.

It is important to note that assumptions of rationality do not imply that militant groups make perfect strategic calculations or that they should somehow always be successful. What makes them strategic is that the actors adhere to an underlying strategic *logic*, and not whether or not their logic is in fact perfect. Ordinary humans are also rational, strategic actors but of course they are not perfectly successful either. One critique of the strategic understanding of terrorist behavior argues that “. . . terrorisms political ineffectiveness has led scholars to question its rationality and motives” since the author finds in a previous study that terrorists only achieve their

31. Walter Enders and Todd Sandler, “The Effectiveness of Antiterrorism Policies: A Vector-Autoregression-Intervention Analysis,” *American Political Science Review* 87, no. 04 (1993): 829–844.

goals 7% of the time³²³³. Ignoring the fact that only 28 groups are examined, each of which is listed on the highly political and unrepresentative list of actors classified as foreign terrorist organizations by the US State Department, this logic is flawed. An individual or a group can indeed be rational without coming to the perfect solution to achieve their goals and even without achieving their goals at all. One would not say that a state is irrational because it lost a war: judgment can be clouded both by misinformation and simply a lack of information, but this would not constitute irrationality as long as there was an underlying logic to the decision-making process. Assuming that militants should always be successful is similarly problematic since the information they possess about their opponents' capabilities and resolve is surely far from perfect. It is also wrong to impose a threshold of success since militant leaders might know that their chances of success are small, but they nonetheless believe that alternative options are exhausted. Indeed, resorting to terrorism or insurgent violence might not be an organization's first choice, but they might nonetheless believe that is their *only* choice.

Rather, what we should be focusing on is whether or not a terrorist or militant organizations adheres to a strategic *logic*, and not whether they achieve strategic *success*. The studies I have just discussed above demonstrate how militants adopt certain tactics for specific reasons, how that they adjust their strategy in response to changing environments, and how they evolve their organization in response to threats. This shows that they do in fact follow a strategic logic that outsiders can approximate.

Turning to the topic of fragmentation, one can extend the logic of individual and organizational rationality to assume that intragroup decisions and even organizational splintering are similarly rational processes. In support of this idea, John

32. Max Abrahms, "What terrorists really want: Terrorist motives and counterterrorism strategy," *International Security* 32, no. 4 (2008): 78–105; Max Abrahms, "Why terrorism does not work," *International Security* 31, no. 2 (2006): 42–78.

33. The author cites six more reasons why the strategic model is flawed, though this is the first and presumptively the strongest critique.

Morrison argues that a subgroup's decision to break away is a function of internal calculations: factions do not form randomly but in response to a perceived injustice or disagreement, and they carefully judge the ideal time to break away by examining their chances of success based on a multitude of factors.

The event of organisational exit and split takes place when one of the factions deems their presence within the terrorist organisation no longer tenable and that they are ready to move away from the parent organisation. This may be brought on by the completion of a satisfactory preparation for split whereby the dissidents believe that their future organisation has sufficient levels to support, membership and resources to both survive and be successful in their aims.³⁴

Membership, support, and sufficient resources are critical to the survival of these new organizations. Splinter organizations face a tremendously difficult task of establishing themselves among existing organizations and in many cases they face retribution as well. And similarly, Jones and Libicki likewise argue that “terrorist groups [that are about to splinter from their parent group] conduct some form of implicit cost-benefit analysis”³⁵ to determine if the effort is worthwhile and if they can reasonably, successfully part ways.

Overall, the idea that the behavior of militant organizations, and even subgroups or factions of these organizations, follows a strategic, rational logic is well-founded. Academics have demonstrated the rationality of organizational decision-making by focusing in on observable implications such as reactions to changes in the strategic environment, while historical examples and first-hand accounts further underscore the

34. Morrison, “[To Split is Not to End: The Development of a Process Model of Splits in Terrorist Organizations](#),” 13.

35. Seth G. Jones and Martin C. Libicki, *How terrorist groups end: lessons for countering Al Qaeda* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2008).

strategic calculations that are involved in the decision-making processes. Although there are still those who object to this view, strategic models of organizational behavior are nonetheless the dominant approach in the field.

3 Why Preferences Matters

As I briefly outlined in the initial pages of this chapter, I argue that variation in the consistency and content of organizational preferences can be used to explain variation in the survival and behavior of militant splinter groups, respectively. In this section I present my argument for how preferences shape and influence these two facets of group trajectory. To briefly summarize, preference alignment is essential to survival: groups with convergent preferences face a decreased risk of unsanctioned behavior and internal feuds, and as a result it is easier to decentralize command and control. Militant groups with divergent internal preferences are more likely to experience infighting, defection, infiltration, and because they find it hard to decentralize, these events will be much more destabilizing on average. Then, to understand why only certain types of organizational schisms should produce more radical splinters, I focus on the types of individuals drawn to militant splinter groups. In short, splits that draw in tactical and strategic hardliners—and notably, not all do so to the same extent—are the most likely to radicalize as these individuals both directly and indirectly influence tactical and strategic decision-making towards the extreme.

3.1 Preferences and Survival

The alignment of internal preferences is beneficial to the survival of all militant organizations. This is especially true for militant splinter groups that face an acutely hostile and difficult environment immediately after forming. These groups often experience hostility and direct competition from their parent organization and they need

to gain legitimacy and establish themselves among the local population. In many cases their task is not simply to establish themselves but to win away support from preexisting groups that the population is already familiar with. The early days of a splinter group's life are indeed difficult, tenuous, and uncertain. However, militants forming with cohesive, preference-aligned members have a significant advantage that bolsters their durability both in year-one and beyond.

First, organizations with divergent preferences experience lower rates of internal cohesion, increasing the odds of defections, infiltration, and feuding and splits of their own. This is ultimately because compliances with internal preferences absent strong oversight is typically due to desire for nonpecuniary rewards, and "Groups that can offer nonpecuniary rewards, both functional and solidary rewards, ceteris paribus, exhibit higher levels of benefits for cooperation."³⁶ In other words, individuals who strongly share the same preferences and the goals with the rest of organization benefit in nonmaterial ways from compliance and cooperation, and it makes them more likely to cooperate for the greater good. As a result, militant organizations with strongly shared preferences are less likely to see deviant behavior and internal feuds that can jeopardize the entire organization.³⁷

Although nonpecuniary awards are difficult to identify, one example is how ideological groups often "[rely] on the nonpecuniary rewards of fighting the "good fight," to motivate their members. In other words, nonpecuniary benefits refer to the personal, immaterial, and intangible benefits that individuals derive from contributing to the organization's broader objectives. Nonpecuniary benefits help motivate and to compel individuals to support to the organization's strategic objectives absent positive (material rewards) or negative (punishment) inducements by the leadership. This lies in stark contrast to loot-seeking organizations that are based on the distribution

36. Scott Gates, "Recruitment and Allegiance The Microfoundations of Rebellion," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46, no. 1 (2002): 115.

37. Asal, Brown, and Dalton, "Why Split?"

of material awards to generate compliance and control. Seminal work by Weinstein (2006) illustrates how organizations built upon material benefits and not ideological or ethnic causes are acutely susceptible to this type of unsanctioned behavior.³⁸ Although all organizations tend to be motivated by a mixture of rewards and punishments, militant organizations with more internally aligned preferences can more easily and more steadily draw upon nonpecuniary awards to motivate their members and keep them in line. This only happens with shared preferences because “For agents to derive solidary benefits or functional benefits, they must derive utility from working for and associating with the group.”³⁹ If individuals do not agree with the rest of the group or with the leadership, then there is little chance of nonpecuniary rewards and cooperation.

Second, the increased risks of defection and unsanctioned behavior in groups with inconsistent internal preferences force the leadership to spend greater resources and greater time monitoring their agents. This often leads them to adopt more centralized, hierarchical structures as a result. As Shapiro notes,

When the preferences of leaders and agents are not completely aligned, the covert nature of terrorist groups necessarily implies agents can take advantage of the situation to act as a preferred, rather than as their principles would like. . . The costs for terrorist groups are obvious; monitoring agent activities requires additional communications and recordkeeping, which thereby increases the risk of death or imprisonment for everyone in the group.⁴⁰

Most significantly, greater monitoring requires a larger chunk of organizational resources including both both time and money. Leaders might have to spend more of

38. Jeremy M. Weinstein, *Inside rebellion: The politics of insurgent violence* (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

39. Gates, “[Recruitment and Allegiance The Microfoundations of Rebellion](#),” 115.

40. Shapiro, *The Terrorist's Dilemma*, 26.

their own time checking in on operations and on local leaders to ensure that strategic directives are being followed. The organization might also choose to devote individuals to the task of internal monitoring, taking them away from roles where they could have a larger impact. Since clandestine organizations generally operate on fewer resources than most legal, visible organizations—or at least resources are generally harder to acquire—this type of waste can pose a serious threat.

Inconsistent preferences do not only exact a toll on physical resources like time and money. The organizational changes that are necessary to enforce more fine-grained control and monitoring over individual militants often exposes the leadership to additional security risks. “...monitoring the agents reduces leaders’ security because it requires additional communications and creates links between leaders and those most likely to be identified and captured by the government or antiterrorist efforts.”⁴¹ Under these conditions, militant leaders are likely to adopt more centralized, hierarchical organizational structures so they can more carefully monitor individual behavior. At the same time, these same leaders will find it difficult to devolve command—even if they want to—when there is substantial preference heterogeneity.⁴² Doing so could raise the risk of insubordination or fragmentation. As Shapiro notes, “The more that the preferences of principals and agents in terrorist groups diverge, the worse it is for the principals to have operatives doing what they want.”⁴³ Overall, when internal preferences diverge, militant organizations face trade-offs between security and control, and actions that increase control—such as more rigorous local monitoring and adopting centralized structures with clear chains of command—have serious security repercussions that ultimately threaten the entire organization and negatively affect the likelihood of long-term survival.

41. Shapiro, *The Terrorist’s Dilemma*, 31.

42. William A. Gamson, *The strategy of social protest* (Dorsey Press Homewood, IL, 1975); Deborah B. Balser, “The impact of environmental factors on factionalism and schism in social movement organizations,” *Social Forces* 76, no. 1 (1997): 199–228.

43. Shapiro, *The Terrorist’s Dilemma*.

Third, and as a result of the first two points, organizations beset by divergent internal preferences are acutely susceptible to defection, infiltration, and government targeting. This stems from the fact that they are more likely adopt centralized structures that are themselves increasingly vulnerable to security risks. Why are centralized militant structures particularly susceptible? If authorities manage to infiltrate an organization or win over a defector, then the information they provide will likely be significantly more useful and more damaging to the group as a whole. Analyzing different network patterns, Enders and Su note that in a hierarchical chain-structure organization, “Since communication links to the leadership are all direct, [it] is not especially secure, since every node has the possibility of providing useful information about the location of the leadership.”⁴⁴ On the other hand, decentralized, cellular militant networks are more effective at blunting the effects of infiltration and defection as they aim to compartmentalize both their operations and their units on the ground. Under these conditions, “Efforts at sowing discord and dissension within terrorist groups will probably be less effective on cells which are only very loosely connected with other cells and leadership through one member or another.”⁴⁵ Gaining information or access to a single unit that is part of a decentralized group does not necessarily risk bringing down the entire organization; rather, those who do defect or provide information do not necessarily know about the group’s broader plans or even about who is involved.

Furthermore, militant groups that maintain a hierarchical structure are also more susceptible to the use of restrictive and repressive operations against central figures. Organizations that overly rely on these individuals for leadership—whether it be operational, aspirational, or even ideological—are less likely to survive their arrest or

44. Walter Enders and Xuejuan Su, “Rational terrorists and optimal network structure,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51, no. 1 (2007): 38.

45. Steven Hutchison and Pat O’Malley, “How terrorist groups decline,” *Trends in Terrorism Series* 1 (2007): 3.

assassination. As Hutchison (2007) notes,

... leadership interdiction is also more likely to be successful for groups which are more hierarchically organized than networked. Current Middle Eastern terrorist groups and Islamist extremist organizations can sustain operations in the face of leadership interdiction because their organizations decentralized. Many newer illicit organizations are networked rather than hierarchically organized (though recently there has been some reversal of this shift) and the elimination of one node in the network—or even of the leadership hub—will not paralyze the organization.⁴⁶

Although there is mixed empirical evidence on this topic,⁴⁷ the underlying theoretical idea makes intuitive sense and receives support in related literatures. Consequently, groups that are more able to adopt flat, decentralized structures are expected to be more resilient, giving an advantage to militants that can devolve command and control.

Overall, militant splinter groups with consistent, aligned internal preferences are therefore better prepared to endure as an organization. They are less prone to internal feuds, defection, and infiltration; they can more easily delegate tasks to subordinates, freeing up time and resources; and they can adopt organizational structures that are less focused on monitoring and that are more resilient to internal and external security threats. Of course, there are numerous factors that I have not discussed that will simultaneously exert an influence on organizational longevity, and the precise calculus that determines survival and failure is more nuanced than theories would suggest. However, as I have demonstrated here, the alignment of internal preferences

46. Hutchison and O'Malley, "How terrorist groups decline," 6.

47. Although the problem with much of this research is, as Price admits, the difficulty inherent in measuring or coding organizational structure. Price, for instance, operationalizes decentralized groups as those without only a single leader. Price, "Targeting top terrorists."

within militant splinter organizations is a critical factor that can profoundly impact how long they survive.

3.2 Preferences and Radicalization

Just as there is significant variation among levels of violence and radicalization across ordinary terrorist, insurgent, and militant organizations, there is an equal amount of diversity among militant splinter groups as well. To understand why some splinters become increasingly radical and others do not, I argue that researchers can leverage information about their disagreements with their parent organizations. Ultimately, the preferences of individuals drawn to militant splinter groups will drive their violent behavior. Groups that attract greater proportions of tactical and strategic hardliners are more likely to evolve into some of the most radical, deadly militant organizations, while those that do not are more likely to moderate in comparison.

Militant organizations do not adopt tactics and strategies randomly. They are rational actors and the choices they make—even the choice to use violence at all—are likewise rational and conform to internal cost-benefit calculations. Consider the case of the Tamil Tigers adopting suicide bombings, a tactic that Crenshaw writes “[serves] the political interests of identifiable actors, most of whom are non-states opposing well-armed states.”⁴⁸ Velupillai Prabhakaran, the leader of the LTTE in the 1980s, decided to seek out suicide bombs and to employ them in his own struggle after he witnessed the efficacy of Hezbollah’s 1983 suicide attack against a US Marine barracks in Lebanon. As he argued, “With perseverance and sacrifice, Tamil Eelam can be achieved in 100 years. But if we conduct Black Tiger [suicide] operations, we can shorten the suffering of the people and achieve Tamil Eelam in a shorter period of time.”⁴⁹ This shows how preferences are a key driver group behavior; without Prab-

48. Martha Crenshaw, “Explaining suicide terrorism: A review essay,” *Security Studies* 16, no. 1 (2007): 133–162.

49. Bruce Hoffman and Gordon H. McCormick, “Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack,” *Studies*

hakaran's explicit desire to bring suicide bombs to Sri Lanka, it is uncertain whether the tactic would have otherwise diffused on its own. Certainly, the Tigers are quite different from many of the organizations that are often defined by their use of suicide attacks. Although tactical diffusion and adoption is not entirely about preferences; as Horowitz notes, "sometimes desire is not enough to adopt an innovation."⁵⁰ Maybe not sufficient, but preferences certainly seem necessary.

Militant organizations that contain greater numbers of tactical and strategic hardliners with extremist preferences are likely to radicalize for two reasons. First, and most obviously, these individuals will directly influence group discourse and decision-making, especially when they hold positions of power. When meetings are held and potential plans discussed, these individuals will cast their votes for more radical and more deviant tactical and strategic actions. In other words, the expectation is that actions will flow logically from the majority's preferences. Ethan Bueno de Mesquita, for instance, shows that conciliatory actions that draw moderates away from an organization ultimately leave more extremist members in control. When this occurs, the level of violence perpetrated by the group will increase in turn.⁵¹ Consequently, militant splinter groups that fill their ranks with disaffected hardliners are most expected to radicalize.

Second, militant organizations will often enact policies to satisfy particular subgroups in order to maintain unity and ultimately, to survive. In his model of terrorist fragmentation, John Morrison notes that

In relation to terrorist organisations it is observed that in order to avoid the departure of significant sub-groups of an organisation a formerly moderate membership may at times have to radicalise their tactics and strate-

in *Conflict & Terrorism* 27, no. 4 (July 2004): 259.

50. Horowitz, "Nonstate Actors and the Diffusion of Innovations."

51. Bueno de Mesquita, "Conciliation, Counterterrorism, and Patterns of Terrorist Violence."

gies. Therefore at certain stages the terrorist actions may aid in the survival of this organisation. This is a complex role for the organisation to play as if they over radicalise they risk losing the more moderate membership and external support. However, if they are not radical enough the risk lies in losing the more radical elements of the membership and support.⁵²

In other words, when militant organizations possess greater numbers of hardliners they are more likely to adopt policies that appease their interests for the sake of organizational cohesion. They seek to avoid either a split or an armed takeover by enacting policies that placate the particular interests within their ranks. Under conditions where there is a large subset of militant hardliners, policies will therefore tend to be more extreme, leading to an observable increase in group radicalization.

With this in mind, the conventional wisdom that splinter groups will universally tend towards the extreme falls apart. Militant groups make intentional strategic and tactical choices and not every splinter group will adopt the same operational patterns. Rather, one would only expect those groups with the internal preferences and the desire to radicalize to ultimately do so. Organizations might avoid changing their operational pattern out of uncertainty and risk (and cost) aversion, sticking with tried and true methods they already know. Furthermore, if groups contain greater proportions of relatively moderate militants then the mechanisms discussed above will work in the opposite direct and the group would be expected to de-radicalize or moderate in response. Consequently, the militant groups most likely to radicalize are those driven by the extremist preferences of their members. Absent the backing and the desire of their membership, militants are unlikely to take the costly, risky steps of escalating their violent behavior.

52. Morrison, "To Split is Not to End: The Development of a Process Model of Splits in Terrorist Organizations," 14-15.

4 A Model of Militant Fragmentation

The problem with using preferences to explain group behavior is that they are nearly impossible to directly observe. Capturing the preference distribution within a militant splinter group would require analysis and investigation of individual members which is, of course, nearly impossible. However, I argue that how and why militants break apart provides important information about the distribution of their internal preferences. Notably, only some schisms will produce splinters with a high likelihood of aligned internal preferences, while others will have varying chances of attracting hardline dissidents. In the remainder of this section I propose a typology of organizational fractures that I use to construct testable hypotheses about the survival and radicalization of militant splinter groups based on the preferences of their individual members.

To briefly summarize, I argue that militant organizations split along one of two general pathways resulting in what can be called factional or multidimensional splits. In the first, factions, or subgroups, form within a militant organization around a shared disagreement. This period is crucial as individuals communicate their preferences, identify shared interests, and ultimately break away to form a new group to address their common grievance. This class of organizational fractures can be called “factional” since the underlying cause of the schism is internal organizational factionalism around a single shared idea based on individuals’ preferences within for the future. The split among the Provisional IRA in 1997 when the Real IRA emerged is an example of a factional split: the members who left to form the Real IRA disagreed over the utility and necessity of negotiating with the government, and they believed that a continued and more radical campaign of violence would ultimately achieve success. The dissenters were lead by Michael McKevitt, who had “assembled a group of confidantes who would meet in secret to discuss IRA policy and the future direction

of the underground army,” all of whom were united in their shared vision that “the IRA was headed for military oblivion.”⁵³

In the second pathway of multidimensional splits, some event or latent internal strife will cause members of an organization to reconsider their allegiance to the group and they subsequently depart to form one or even several new organizations. Compared to factional splits, these events are sometimes less premeditated, but at other times they are indeed premeditated though they involve a multitude of disagreements with their parent. The term multidimensional is used since this class of organizational fractures are not the product of internal, faction-based splits that are motivated by a common grievance. There is oftentimes no overarching idea, ideology, or manifesto that is uniting these individuals but rather, their discontentment is often the product of disappointment, failure, or organizational duress.

For an example of a multidimensional split one can look to the internal fragmentation among the Red Brigades in the early 1980s. The group was forced to split up after they kidnapped and subsequently murdered the former Italian Prime Minister, resulting in an immense government crackdown and the imprisonment of most of the organization’s leadership. This power and leadership vacuum combined with the overall government restriction that posed a threat to even low-level members caused the group to fall apart, prompting the formation of two splinter groups that hoped to disassociate themselves with their predecessor: the Red Brigades Fighting Communist Party (PCC) and the Union of Fighting Communists (UCC). Ultimately, the impetus for their break with the Red Brigades was due to the elevated and continual threat and lack of leadership authority and not any tangible internal disagreement or preference divergence among the members.⁵⁴ Similarly, the Irish National Liberation

53. John Mooney and Michael O’Toole, *Black Operations: The Secret War Against the Real IRA* (Virago Press, 2003), 29-30.

54. Major Victor H. Sundquist, “Political Terrorism: An Historical Case Study of the Italian Red Brigades,” *Journal of Strategic Security* 3, no. 3 (2010): 5; Michael Y. Dartnell, *Action Directe: Ultra Left Terrorism in France 1979-1987* (Routledge, October 2013); Stephen E. Atkins, *Encyclopedia of*

Army (INLA) exhibits the other type of factional split where dissidents are motivated by numerous disagreements. Seamus Costello, the first leader of the INLA, formed his new organization with peers that disagreed with their parent group over a variety of ideological and strategic issues. Their agenda was, unlike the RIRA, highly diffuse.

Differentiating organizational schisms according to their factional or multidimensional nature is important to explaining variation in their post-split trajectories. I expect factional splinter groups to have greater levels of internal preference alignment which, as I describe above, contributes to increased rates of durability and survival. The singular disagreements motivating a factional schism attract like-minded members with similar preferences for their organizational future. multidimensional schisms, on the other hand, create militant groups that are not particularly internally aligned. With either no overarching disagreement or with a multitude of issue-areas, these organisations attract a more varied membership with oftentimes competing goals.

Furthermore, scholars can leverage the nature of factional disagreements to better understand the types of preferences among members joining the new group. I develop a typology of factional feuds that occur around three issue areas—strategy, ideology, and personal/power disputes—and I argue that only splits resulting from strategic disagreement should produce increasingly radical offshoots. These feuds tend to take place over the decision to increase or continue the use of violence and they subsequently draw in large numbers of disaffected tactical and strategic hardliners as the splinter presents a more appealing outlet for their violence.

Overall, this theory takes aim at the severely under-theorized and over-generalized topic of militant fragmentation. It opens up the black box of group splintering to help explain the variation in outcomes and preference distribution that are crucial to understand.

Modern Worldwide Extremists and Extremist Groups (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004).

Factional Splits

Factional splits most commonly come to mind when thinking about organizational fractures. Whether it is political parties, religious groups, businesses firms, or even nations, the majority of fractures are the culmination of internal disagreements between collections of like-minded individuals resulting in intra-group disputes that lead to the breakdown of authority. For instance, Max Weber, in his seminal works on bureaucracy, social movements, and organizational transformation, views factionalism and group schisms as part of the natural order of organizational evolution.

Scholars of religious movements have an exceptionally well developed literature on organizational schisms and much of this work is analogous to the study of violent nonstate actors. Rodney Stark and William Bainbridge's seminal work, *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival, and Cult Formation* is exemplary in this regard. The pair endeavor to understand religious schisms, viewing them as logical, predictable processes that stem from internal preference heterogeneity. They argue that "Schisms in organizations or groups are most likely to occur along lines of cleavage. That is, when internal conflicts break out in a religious organization, they usually do so between subnetworks that existed prior to the outbreak of dispute."⁵⁵ Factional splits, as they suggest, are predated by internal factionalism and disagreement. Feuds amongst the leadership, competing strategic visions, and other disagreements prompt members to gravitate towards subgroups of like-minded individuals, setting the stage for their departure.

Factions are well studied in the realm of politics. For instance, Raphael Zariski studied factional party politics in the 1960s, and he defines a faction as "Any intra-party combination, clique, or grouping whose members share a sense of common identity and common purpose and are organized to act collectively—as a distinct

55. Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *The future of religion: Secularization, revival, and cult formation* (Univ of California Press, 1985), 102.

bloc within the party—to achieve their goals.”⁵⁶ Richard Rose, in his seminal study of British politics, later notes that factions are drawn together by their ideology and shared values. “This serves as a means of cooperation and coordination between groups with a level of idiosyncrasy.”⁵⁷ In addition, an important feature of factions is that they are not organized in the same way as the broader organization; rather, they are substantially more informal in the sense that they are collections of like-minded individuals without any proper institutionalization.⁵⁸ This serves to distinguish them from the larger organizational apparatus that they nonetheless remain part of—until they break away.

Factions within militant organizations operate and develop in similar ways. Notably, their formation typically involves an important process of preference alignment that occurs while the parent group is still united. Subgroups begin to form when there is a significant disagreement within the group and members coalesce around shared preferences and common grievances. Of course, disagreements within militant groups are common. “Scholars who have done extensive interview work with terrorists report their organizations are torn by strife and disagreement.”⁵⁹ However, the creation of subgroups around shared disagreements ultimately acts to align members who are similarly disaffected. This process is part of the reason why factional splinter groups tend to have higher rates of preference convergence upon forming. The other reason, as I have alluded to before, is that the disagreements motivating factional splits act as a signal to other individuals about the group’s preferences and objectives for the

56. Raphael Zariski, “Party factions and comparative politics: some preliminary observations,” *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, 1960, 33.

57. Richard Rose, “Parties, Factions, and Tendencies in Britain,” *Political Studies* 12, no. 1 (1964): 33–46.

58. Dennis C. Beller and Frank P. Belloni, “Party and faction: modes of political competition,” *Faction politics: Political parties and factionalism in comparative perspective*, 1978, 419–422; Julian Bernauer and Thomas Bräuninger, “Intra-party preference heterogeneity and faction membership in the 15th German Bundestag: a computational text analysis of parliamentary speeches,” *German Politics* 18, no. 3 (2009): 385–402.

59. Shapiro, *The Terrorist’s Dilemma*, 26.

future. Dissidents with a clear, singular disagreement are therefore much more likely to attract new members that share their views, the underlying logic being that individuals rationally choose to join particular organizations that closely align with their own views and interests.

One might be tempted to place casual blame on externally-motivated stressors like leadership assassination, imprisonment, conciliation, or other acts of state repression—events that temporally precipitate a split. However, as research suggests that scholars must be careful to avoid confusing correlation for causation. As Finke and Scheitle write in their study of religious fractures, “we must be careful not to let the manifest drama of a schism distract us from its latent causes,⁶⁰” which is in fact the factional, internal disagreement or discontentment that these events sometimes—though not always—produce. Although external stimuli can influence the likelihood of a schism by increasing or even generating organizational factionalism, it is the underlying preference divergence that is ultimately responsible for group breakdown. Counterfactually, organizations are likely to remain united in the face of external stressors if internally they are strongly aligned. Another reason for not focusing purely on external events that precipitate splits is the fact that the same event, like strong governmental resistance, can easily foment multiple types of internal disagreement: disagreement over who should lead but also over strategy and how to respond. Obviously, this information about *why* groups actually break up contributes important information that both scholars and policymakers can leverage to their advantage.

One can look to Pakistan to see why external events are insufficient to explain organizational schisms. Pakistani militants experienced harsh repression in recent years at the hands of both the Pakistani and American governments, and this violence has prompted numerous militant fractures for a variety of reasons. Lashkar-e-Jhangvi

60. Roger Finke and Christopher P. Scheitle, “Understanding schisms: theoretical explanations for their origins,” in *Sacred Schisms: How Religions Divide* (2009), 12.

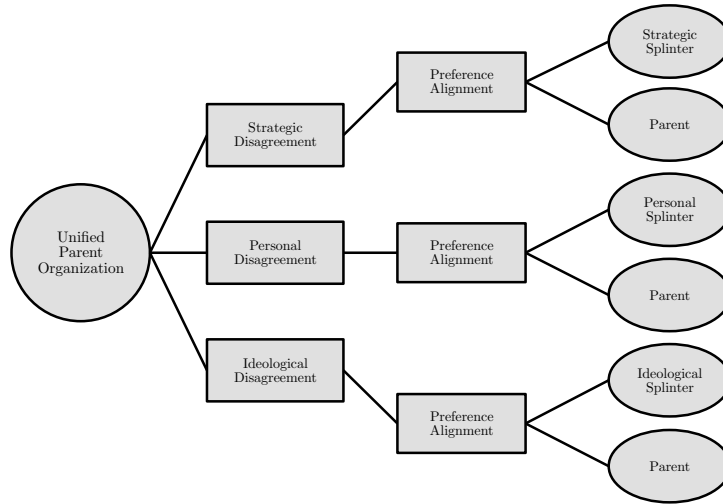
splits were mostly personal, “centered around previously little-known figures in its hierarchy following the killing of its top leaders.” Fractures within Tehrik-e-Khudam-ul-Islam and Jamaat-al-Dawaw also “split along personality lines” with the former “giving rise to Jamaat-ul-Furqa under the leadership of Masood Azhars former lieutenant Abdul Jabbar.” The Pakistani crackdown likewise prompted elements of Lashkar-e-Taiba to disagree over matters of funding, with the exact timing of the split—while one of the leaders was meeting financial supporters in Saudi Arabia—“indicates that Iqbals policy of seeking more funds from the Arab countries was one of the stimuli for the split.” This was necessary due to renewed Pakistani efforts to block citizens from providing monetary support to nonstate actors. Thus, from this one example it is clear that Pakistan’s attempts to crack down on domestic militant organizations have not just inspired one type of internal disagreement. Rather, the crackdown forced groups to rethink many aspects of their organizations, from leadership, to structure, and even financing. External shocks alone would be insufficient to explain this variation.

The Causes of Factional Splits: A Typology

I have so far argued that factional splinter groups form around particular preferences for their organizational future, preferences that somehow diverge from those held by the rest of their organization. I also suggested that different types of factional disagreements will influence the trajectory of the splinter group in very different ways. In this section I develop a typology of factional disputes that are based on the underlying grievances with the parent organization. By leveraging information about these factional disputes including who is likely to join the group and how its members hope to reform their organization, I argue that scholars can better understand the likely trajectory of these newly-formed militant splinters.

Although militant groups are commonly afflicted with a variety of internal disagreements, I find that three issue-areas can explain the majority of faction-based

Figure 2.1. Factional organizational schisms.



disagreements leading to fragmentation—disagreements over strategy, ideology, and personality or power. Although other types of disagreements exist, not all are sufficient to actually divide militant groups. Overall, the pathways discussed below represent the dominant issue areas that capture militant disagreement and dissolution.

Strategic splits, as the name would suggest, are the result of internal group feuds that stem from differences in opinion relating to tactical or strategic decisions. Tactical disagreements have to do with specific operational decisions involving the type of attacks to launch and the type of targets to select. Strategic disagreements, on the other, are more focused on the broader plan of action to achieve the group’s goals. This would include the use of violence in general, the utility of attacking civilians, or the value of accepting a ceasefire or negotiation. In other words, these disagreements tend to occur over the utility of force.

Strategic disagreements in militant organizations most commonly occur over the decision to escalate or continue the use of violence, with breakaway factions tending to be more extremist than their parents. Put another way, splinter organizations that break away to *moderate* their tactical behavior are unlikely. Empirically, cases of

militant factionalism suggest this is true, with virtually all of the militant fragmentation in Northern Ireland, Spain, and Israel conforming to this pattern. Theoretically, however, this can be explained by the fact that organizations that are more moderate than militant groups already exist, or as Ethan Bueno de Mesquita writes, “the reason moderate splinters are uncommon is because the more moderate end of the ideological spectrum is already dense with political organizations.”⁶¹ While this suggests that defection to more moderate groups is a plausible occurrence, it is unlikely that militants will splinter and create a more moderate organization.

Disagreements over the escalation or continued use of violence draw into the new organization a specific subset of militant operatives. Splinters forming from strategic disagreements are themselves more extremist and more hard-line and they subsequently attract defectors who are equally hard-line, extremist, and dissatisfied with their parent organization’s tactical and strategic choices. Empirical cases also suggest that the creation of a more extremist organization can also draw defectors not only from its original parent group, but also from other organizations as well. The Irish National Liberation Army, for instance, was at first comprised of disaffected members of the Official IRA, but their narrative of opposing the 1972 ceasefire also appealed to members of the Provisional IRA. The PIRA was also on a ceasefire at this point in time but no splinter group of their own existed to challenge the status quo.

Next, ideological splits are the result of, as one might imagine, ideological disagreements. I take a broad view of ideology as to incorporate group identity, goals, religion, and beliefs. In other words, these splits occur over differences in opinions or beliefs regarding the organization’s ideology or goals. This can be instigated by the adoption of new ideologies—as was often the case in the 1960s and 1970s when Marxism was on the rise, leading to internal disagreements over its relative merits

61. Ethan Bueno de Mesquita, “Terrorist Factions,” *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 3, no. 4 (December 2008): 403.

and its incorporation into group doctrine. Though ideological disagreements often erupt over dedication to existing goals and ideologies as well. For example, one of the reasons that Al Shabaab split from the Islamic Courts Union in 2004 was over the Courts' perceived waning commitment to Sharia law—something they believed to be fundamental to their goals and to their identity.⁶²

Splinter groups forming from ideological disputes undoubtedly attract members who sympathize with their ideological narrative. However, as I explain above, this ideological narrative is not just about religion: it can be much broader, involving specific disagreements over post-conflict aspirations and even economic principles like Marxism and socialism. Furthermore, many of these ideological disputes tend to occur over degrees of ideology and not outright changes. It would be rare, to say the least, for members of a Jihadist militant group to break away and adopt Shiite views. Rather, most of these disagreements take place over the incorporation of new objectives or ideologies, or conversely, over degrees of contention surrounding existing objectives or ideologies. As such, this view of ideological differences means that the results of this research are less directly relevant to questions about the comparative differences in survival and radicalization between particular ideologies⁶³.

Finally, personal splits are easy to recognize. They stem from interpersonal disagreements that lack any underlying context about the direction of the organization. For instance, they do not refer to disagreements between competing leaders stemming from divergent strategic plans. Rather, they occur over disputes about who should be the leader, whether one person is sufficiently respected or listened to, or even matters that do not concern the broader organization such as simple disrespect or feuds over

62. Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, "The Strategic Challenge of Somalia's Al-Shabaab," *Middle East Quarterly*, September 2009, Rob Wise, *Al Shabaab*, technical report (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2011).

63. Nonetheless, for future research it would be beneficial to think about how internal disagreements over religion, goals, etc, result in different organizational trajectories and different chances for intergroup cooperation and conflict.

women. If the disagreement between two individuals is couched in terms of a broader ideological or strategic disagreement then the split ceases to be personal.

Preference alignment with personal splinter groups is centered on dedication, respect, or agreement with particular individuals. In this way the preferences of group members might form the weakest bonds of all three factional disagreements. Rather than breaking from their parent group over differences in strategy, tactics, or ideology—all of which frame, contextualize, and align actions and beliefs to a certain extent—these individuals are instead motivated only by their personal allegiances.

Multidimensional Schism

Organizational schisms among militant groups predominantly take place over a single issue area: either ideological, strategic, or personal. Many of these are precipitated by some exogenous shock or significant failure like the assassination of a leader or a government negotiation, that forces the group into distinct factions based on their shared underlying preferences. This is generally how most types of societal actors break apart: after coalescing around common preferences for their organizational future.

Militant organizations, however, are complicated groups that face conditions unmatched by most legal, nonviolent actors in society. Certainly, religions, political parties, and firms do not endure the type of repression and need for secrecy that militants commonly experience due to the uncertain nature of their survival. Even states, that are bolstered by long-standing norms of territorial integrity and sovereignty, face a less severe form of anarchy. Therefore, militant groups truly seem to operate in an environment of self help where they can readily be eliminated and there is no one to guarantee their survival.⁶⁴

As a result, militant fragmentation will not always follow the factional pathway

64. Christia, *Alliance formation in civil wars*.

described above. Splits will not only take place over one of these issue areas. Instead, splinters will sometimes form with numerous disagreements involving multiple issue areas described above. Other times, they will form without any overarching disagreement at all, breaking away out of fear or worry for their own survival, or more simply due to the failure of the organization to make any progress toward its ultimate goals.

Lacking a single disagreement that motivates their schism, multidimensional splinters fail to attract members with homogeneous preferences. Splinters that form from multiple disagreements often manage to attract a wide range of disaffected members: some are drawn to one disagreement and some to another. When multiple disagreements overlap it is not always the case that every member is equally supportive of every one. Take the case of the Irish National Liberation Army in Northern Ireland, which is a perfect example of how organizational schisms involving multiple disagreements can attract diverse supporters. The group split from the Official IRA in 1974 partly in opposition to a ceasefire they established two years prior, but also because they sought to unite Ireland under a socialist republic—something they felt the Officials were not doing. As a result, the INLA attracted two types of members: the first, hardline militants who were attracted by their opposition to the ceasefire. These were guys who “were just keen to get into the Brits and the Prods. They were at heart sectarian. They couldn’t resist the temptation to hit out at the loyalists.”⁶⁵ These members came from both the OIRA and also the PIRA, who were also on a ceasefire at the time, and these individuals were simply radicals who wanted to resume their violent struggle. Second, the INLA’s socialist slant made them appealing to leftists “who were enthused by the emergence of the IRSP,” the INLA’s political wing, “seeing it as having the potential to become a mass revolutionary party.”⁶⁶ Many of these

65. Jack Holland and Henry McDonald, *INLA, Deadly Divisions: The Story of One of Ireland’s Most Ruthless Terrorist Organisations* (Torc, 1994), 47.

66. Brian Hanley and Scott Millar, *The lost revolution: The story of the Official IRA and the Workers’ Party* (Penguin UK, 2010), 286.

leftists disapproved of the militant campaign but nonetheless joined the INLA/IRSP due to their common bond of socialism.

Likewise, organizations that form without any central disagreement find themselves equally unaligned. While multiple disagreements manage to attract multiple types of disaffected members, the conspicuous lack of a unifying disagreement often results in groups that form circumstantially out of familiarity or convenience. And, as before, the process of breaking away differs from factional splits in that the preferences of these individuals are not necessarily shared.

Consequently, multidimensional group schisms will produce organizations that look very different from those emerging from factional schisms. Specifically, the likelihood that their members share a common disagreement that aligns the preferences of their members is much lower, resulting in a greater chance of preference divergence within militant groups forming multidimensionally.

Hypotheses

First, multidimensional organizational schisms lack the factional development and ultimate preference alignment that is a signature of factional breaks. The particular arrangement of individuals into multidimensional breakaway groups are less commonly built around common, shared preference; they lack the strong, binding cohesion and aligned preferences that are typical of factional splinters.

H1: Militant splinters emerging from factional schisms are more likely to endure; splinters from multidimensional schisms are less likely to endure.

Second, researchers can use the logic of various splits to better understand how groups will develop and act in the future. Notably, strategic schisms will create organizations that attract greater proportions of tactical and strategic hardliners. These individuals are drawn to strategic splinters that offer a more violent outlet and they

will ultimately influence strategic decision-making towards increasingly radicalized behavior. Other splits do not attract hardliners to the same extent and I expect them to moderate in comparison. Furthermore, strategic splinter groups that form with a preference-aligned core of hardline recruits are also likely to exhibit greater levels of intragroup cohesion, organizational capital, and interpersonal trust—a characteristics of groups emerging from factional schism. This cohesion is especially significant in the context of strategic splinters as it strongly facilitates the conduct of increasingly violent armed operations. The combination of a desire for radicalized behavior along with internal preference alignment produces an internally coherent militant organization that is united behind a shared view of their organizational future, and this increases the odds that the organization will be able to realize their objectives and translate their preferences into tangible actions on the ground.

H2: Strategic schisms will produce increasingly radical splinter groups.

5 Types of Militant Actors

So far in this project I have focused on militant organizations as a whole but there are indeed many different types of militants ranging from terrorists, to insurgents, to rebels engaged in more traditional civil wars. Some will undoubtedly wonder whether my theory is limited to only certain types of groups (e.g. terrorists in particular). On the contrary, since my theory focuses on the internal organizational dynamics of these organizations, I argue that it should equally apply to all types of violent nonstate actors operating under a wide variety of contexts. The mechanisms I identify should easily carry across a range of actors.

My theory of militant fragmentation and formation presented above focuses on how the inner workings of militant organizations contribute to their short and long-term trajectories. All of these organizations are at their core groups of individuals

seeking to survive and attain certain goals, and my theory leverages this basic nature of collective organizations to make predictions about their future behavior regardless of their operating environment. Of course, it is possible that different scenarios influence the relative likelihood of internal fissures and even the type of schisms that are most common, but the ultimate effects are expected to be relatively constant across group types and across conflict environments. Whether groups split factionally or multidimensionally, for personal, strategic, or ideological reasons, I expect them to evolve and react in constant, predictable ways.

Although the effect of internal schisms should remain constant, it is nonetheless plausible that different contexts might influence the probability of particular types of disagreements. Notably, civil wars and especially those fought over secession and regime change might experience fewer ideological splits and greater numbers of strategic disagreements, especially during prolonged wars where victories are few and far between.⁶⁷ As I mentioned above in my discussion of existing research into the factors associated with militant cohesion and collapse, my theory is largely unconcerned with the precipitants of organizational collapse beyond the underlying motivations that prompt individuals to break away. While some groups will be more or less likely to split for one reason or another, I theorize—and demonstrate—that the characteristics of particular splits drive the variation I am concerned with. Thus, strategic schisms among terrorists, insurgents, or rebels should produce splinter groups with similar characteristics and preference distributions. However, it is important to remember that my theory is probabilistic in the sense that I expect variation in splinter formation to *influence* the likelihood of radicalization and collapse, and other factors endemic to different types of conflicts might also exert an influence either in the same or even the opposite direction. For instance, even multidimensional splinters in a civil war that manage to control territory and attract external support might be able to

67. christia2014; Woldemariam, “[Why Rebels Collide.](#)”

survive despite their high levels of internal preference divergence. The point is that internal preferences are expected to influence group trajectories in particular ways regardless of other circumstances. I am neither arguing that my theory will always produce the expected outcomes nor am I commenting on the *relative* influence of different factors across conflict environments.

Consequently, in the discussions and analyses that follow I focus on militant actors in the aggregate. In the empirical models I examine of mix of different actors though I run robustness tests where I include covariates that attempt to capture potentially important differences across conflict environments, many of which seek to proxy for the level and intensity of conflict taking place. Significantly, these additions do not influence the estimates of my primary independent variables, thereby supporting the intuition that my theory holds across group types.

6 Observable Implications & Overview of the Research Design

The preceding discussion suggests that whether a militant organization splinters along a factional or multidimensional pathway will have important effects on their future development. While factional splits generally increase the survival of the resultant groups, the nature of their behavior is conditional upon the specific motivation behind their decision to break away: in other words, it is the consistency and the content of their internal preferences that determine the survivability and the radicalization of militant splinters.

This model represents a probabilistic approach to the puzzle of organizational fragmentation insofar as it does not argue that a strategic split, for instance, will *assuredly* produce a more radicalized splinter.⁶⁸ Rather, the model posits that certain

68. The distinction between probabilistic and deterministic models is worth noting: the former implies relationships based on likelihood and increasing odds (if A is present, B is more likely to

types of splits will either *increase* or *decrease* the chance of observing a particular outcome. Outside of the hard sciences, probabilistic models more closely approximate the relationships and phenomena that we experience in the real world.⁶⁹ While physicists, for example, can definitively know how far an object will travel given a certain velocity and environmental conditions, political scientists must contend with murkier relationships that are very often complicated by individual choice. In this case, while the logic of a strategic split might suggest that the splinter will radicalize and adopt new tactics, this might not occur if some influential member is able to advance a different agenda. Certainly, when modeling outcomes that are either wholly or partially the product of social interaction and individual choice scholars must be careful to frame their expectations in terms of probabilities.

It is also worth noting that this is a highly simplified model of a process that in reality is extremely complex. An easy critique is that this model ignores a number of factors that might affect the process of splinter formation. While I agree that these outcomes are pushed and pulled in different directions by myriad factors (e.g. individual discourse, who joins), it is the precise aim of a theoretical model to simplify something that is too complex to understand in the aggregate. It is simplified precisely in order to deal with a more manageable piece of the broader process while intentionally ignoring everything else; as Kenneth Waltz notes in his *Theory of International Politics*, “A theory indicates that some factors are more important than others and specifies relations among them.”⁷⁰ The reason scholars do this, he argues, is to “[isolate] one realm from all others in order to deal with it intellectually”⁷¹ and hopefully to advance our understanding of a critical dynamic. Thus, even though important factors are omitted from the conceptual model outlined above, it is pur-

happen), while the latter is concerned with invariant relationships (if A is present, B occurs).

69. Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Cornell University Press, 1997), 8.

70. Kenneth Waltz, “Theory of international politics,” *Boston: Mac-Grau Hill*, 1979, 8.

71. *Ibid.*

posefully doing so to focus in on what I believe to be a critical step in the process of organizational fragmentation—a step that can help explain a significant portion of the unexplained variation.

Nonetheless, the preceding discussion suggests the observable outcomes of militant fragmentation will vary in accordance with the typology of organizational fractures outlined above. The following table summarizes the primary implications that are outlined in the hypotheses above.

Table 2.1. Observable implications of factional and multidimensional schisms.

<i>Outcomes</i>	Factional Splits			Multidimensional Splits
	Strategy	Ideology	Personal	Other
Splinter Radicalization	X	—	—	—
Increased Durability	X	X	X	—

H1 concerns the survivability or longevity of militant organizations. This outcome is relatively simple to represent conceptually since it is highly correlated with the duration of a group’s activities. Of course, how long a group survives is a function of many different variables: government pressure, achieving their goals, competition with other organizations, internal politics, and many others. While not much is written on this exact topic, it is safe to assume that all militant groups face varying combinations of these factors. Consequently, for any single organization it would be tremendously difficult to identify one factor in particular and say that it is responsible for their organizational trajectory, but in the aggregate these trends that hasten or prevent group decline should be easy to identify. Overall, I expect to find that all else being equal, factional splinter groups tend to outlast their multidimensional counterparts and survive for greater amounts of time.

H2 is concerned with group radicalization. This is the most difficult to define con-

cisely but the qualitative and quantitative examinations in the next chapter make use of multiple operationalizations to help deal with this problem and to establish robustness. To reiterate, I hypothesize that strategic splinters should be the most likely to radicalize and adopt increasingly extreme forms of violence while others—ideological, personal, and multidimensional groups—should be significantly less likely to do so. Although radicalization is somewhat of a loaded term, it connotes behavior that is increasingly deviant, violent, and destructive. A group can become more radical by managing to kill more people while still using the same tactics, but it can also become more radical by adopting tactics that are themselves considered higher on a spectrum of deadliness or destruction. In this sense one could say that suicide bombings are more radical than assassinations because of the attacker’s suicide and the increased number of casualties. With this in mind, I expect to find that strategic splinter groups tend to launch deadlier attacks on average, kill more citizens in the aggregate, and also adopt increasingly lethal, destructive forms of violence.

To test my hypotheses I employ a multi-method research design. In recent years political scientists have come to recognize, intuitively, that we can increase the confidence in our findings by studying a puzzle from both quantitative and qualitative points of view. Both methods have their respective strengths and weaknesses and the two can be leveraged to produce results that are greater than their individual sums. While quantitative methods are well-suited to identifying broader trends and correlations that might not be visible in a small-n design, qualitative studies can help unpack these correlations and more easily identify causal pathways; in other words, the in-depth examination of a single case can help to make sense of what the quantitative results suggest. Although both methods ultimately have the same goal of testing our theoretical predictions, “combining the two approaches aims to improve the quality of conceptualization and measurement, analysis of rival explanations, and

overall confidence in the central findings of a study.”⁷²

Similar to Lieberman’s nested analysis approach, I combine a large-n quantitative examination with a small-n. qualitative case study. The large-n empirical study is based on a new data set of 300 randomly selected militant organizations. I then researched each of these 300 groups in depth, tracing their histories to determine, first, if they themselves are splinters, and second, if they ever splintered during their lifetimes.

Using this new data I conduct a number of empirical tests to better understand patterns of survival and radicalization. However, it is important to note early on that these empirical tests are being conducted on all 300 organizations unless otherwise noted. This is an intentional decision to ensure that the results are generalizable to the universe of militant organizations and not just the universe of splinter groups. Studying rates of survival only among militant splinters would raise questions about selection bias, generalizability, and ultimately, whether or not the findings are somehow unique to this particular subset of organizations. Consequently, this setup can determine if splinter groups as a whole typically have a shorter lifespan or are more radical than their non-splinter counterparts, but it can also discern between different types of internal schisms. This is important for advancing and understanding arguments about how the macro *and* microdynamics of internal organizational processes affect group behavior in the aggregate.

Then, for the qualitative case study, I compare the trajectory of two organizations in Northern Ireland, the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) and the Real IRA (RIRA), to test the causal logic of my theory. Both organizations formed in opposition to ceasefires by their parent organizations, though the INLA also developed a political wing to advance its strongly socialist agenda. The RIRA, on the other hand, was

72. Evan S. Lieberman, “Nested analysis as a mixed-method strategy for comparative research,” *American Political Science Review* 99, no. 03 (2005): 436.

strongly dedicated to the resumption of violence against the British, largely eschewing politics. As such, the INLA is an excellent example of a multidimensional split whereas the RIRA is strongly factional.

Overall, my goal with this particular research design is to study splinter groups in comparison to splinters and non-splinters alike in order to produce valuable findings for both policymakers and academics. I explain the research design in more detail in the following pages of Chapter 3, while in Chapters 4 and 5 I present my empirical findings related to organizational survival and radicalization, respectively, and in Chapter 6 I present the case study of Northern Ireland. Finally, in Chapter 7, I present the conclusions from this study and I consider two extensions of my theory including first, how it applies to other types of actors like nonviolent resistance movements, and second, how it can help to explain other outcomes such as the likelihood of conflict between splinter groups and their parent organizations.

Chapter 3

Research Design

1 A Mixed Methods Research Design

In Chapter Two I present a theory of militant organizational fragmentation that can account for the very different outcomes that commonly result from organizational schisms. In this chapter I present the mixed-methods research design that I will be using to test my theory. The overall design is similar to a nested-design approach that was outlined by Lieberman in 2006.¹ For each of the two concepts I am interested in studying—survival and radicalization—I first conduct a large-n empirical design that aims to identify meaningful correlations that persist across both space and time. Both the nature of the topic and the reliance on observational data place important limitations on my ability to identify casual relationships through empirical means. Although using time series data is useful, this part of the research design is most intended to capture these broad correlations that I will then study more in depth through detailed case studies.

Notably, the quantitative analyses presented in the Chapters 5 and 6 utilize a new data set that details the nuanced characteristics of group schisms across 300 randomly selected militant organizations active between 1970 and 2012. I leverage the details of group schisms to test my hypotheses while controlling for a wide range of additional covariates that could simultaneously influence the outcomes of interest. In the following pages of this chapter I describe in more detail the process used to choose these organizations and, subsequently, how I coded and researched the characteristics of group fragmentation.

Following these individual empirical chapters on radicalization and survival, I then conduct a longer and more in depth case study of militant Republican fragmentation in Northern Ireland. This case study is complemented by archival research I conducted throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland between June, July, and August 2015.

1. Lieberman, “[Nested analysis as a mixed-method strategy for comparative research.](#)”

The goal of this case study is to better understand the precise causal mechanisms at work that contribute to variation in the trajectory of militant splinter organizations.

The goal of this research designed is to integrate the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research into a single, unified approach. As Lieberman notes,

The strategy of combining the two approaches aims to improve the quality of conceptualization and measurement, analysis of rival explanations, and overall confidence in the central findings of a study. The promise of the nested research design is that both [large-n analysis] and [small-n analysis] can inform each other to the extent that the analytic payoff is greater than the sum of the parts.

The large-n analysis is useful for identifying cases that do and do not conform to my theory, evaluating rival hypotheses, and highlighting important but potentially overlooked correlations, while the small-n analysis is useful for conceptual development, model specification, and casual understanding. A mixed methods approach is particularly important in this context since the data is strictly observation and likely suffering from a number of important but unavoidable biases, both of which raise the prospect of identifying incorrect or over/under-inflated statistical correlations. Together, these methods provide a nuanced yet broad understanding of organizational fragmentation, splinter formation, and the effects of group formation on long-term trajectory.

1.1 Part I: Empirical Strategy

There are essentially two concepts that I intend to study with regards to organizational fragmentation and the creation of new splinter groups: longevity and radicalization. My theory predicts differing rates of longevity and radicalization ac-

ording to the reasons responsible for the initial group schism. I therefore conduct two multi-pronged empirical assessments to understand these relationships.

With regards to organizational longevity, I conduct a series of empirical tests that predominantly use the Cox Proportional Hazards Model. I use this to evaluate the duration of a group's violent activity with respect to the manner in which it initially formed—my main theoretical variable—but also a host of other factors that theoretically could simultaneously influence group duration. I first begin by looking at the distinction between factional and multidimensional splinter groups which is the overarching typology behind my theory, and I then proceed to distinguish between the various types of factional splinter organizations.

In the second empirical chapter I examine the extent to which different organizations radicalize. Radicalization is obviously a tricky concept to pin down. Scholars have come to employ the term for a variety of purposes in recent years, ranging from ideological alignment to tactical choices and strategies. However, I focus on observable behaviors that correlate with increased lethality and attack frequency, but I also examine variation in the adoption of suicide bombing which is generally considered to be the most radical tactic available to militant organizations.

To study variation in attack lethality and frequency I model organizational behavior using various iterations of negative binomial regressions. As before, each model assesses the extent to which my main theoretical variable is correlated with rates of radicalization while I simultaneously account for factors that might concurrently influence the outcomes. I examine group behavior at two levels: first, in a groups first year of recorded activity; and second, throughout a group's entire lifespan at the group-year level. This initial analysis is new to studies of militant group behavior but it provides a unique vantage point from which to study the behavior of militant splinter and nonsplinter organizations. This is because organizations in their first year are unlikely to have developed connections or altered their goals which might influ-

ence their patterns of behavior. At the same time, one would expect the differences between splinter and nonsplinter organizations to be most pronounced in this early time period since both groups are relying on their innate capabilities and experience, and one would expect splinter groups—that form with members who already have experience in a militant organization—to be well suited to hit the ground running and therefore be more capable in year one. This analysis is intended to capture the immediate effects of experience on group decision-making, and the group-year analysis that examines an organization’s entire violent history is intended to identify the lasting effects of group formation over time.

For the analysis of the adoption of suicide bombing, I collapse the data to examine whether an organization adopted the tactic at any point in its existence. Thus, the dependent variable takes on a value of one if they ever used a suicide bomb and 0 otherwise. The focus of this analysis is therefore not if an organization uses a suicide bomb in any particular year, which might be a function of many different factors, but rather, if it ever undertook the strategic decision to incorporate suicide bombs into its arsenal. I use logistic regression to model the binary dependent variable.

In addition, I also use this opportunity to test the marginal predictive power of my primary theoretical variable. I do this by using a method called out-of-sample validation. First, I split the data into two samples—groups that form pre-2000 and groups that form post-2000. Then, using my statistical models I generate predictions for the post-2000 groups using only data on the pre-2000 groups. However, I use two models to generate predictions: first, a full model with every theoretically-driven variable; and second, a restricted model with everything *except* my primary independent variable. By comparing how well these predictions match up with the actual data I can measure how much predictive power my theory adds to existing explanations. It is nearly impossible to perform similar tests when the dependent variable is continuous, so I aim to leverage the binary dependent variable as much as possible.

Ultimately, if I uncover evidence that my theory adds significant predictive power to the restricted model then I can be confident that it is capturing a meaningful factor of militant organizational dynamics that can also be used to explain other facets of group behavior.

1.2 Part II: Qualitative Strategy

In Chapter Four I conduct a detailed case study of fragmentation and organizational formation among Republican militants in Northern Ireland, and I focus on two groups in particular: the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) and the Real Irish Republican Army (RIRA). These two groups are chosen in particular because they share many similarities that ultimately help rule out a variety of alternative explanations for variation in group cohesion, collapse, and radicalization. For instance, both groups were formed by strong, charismatic leaders; both groups formed from the dominant organization of the time, and they sought to influence their parent groups before breaking away; both groups were partially inspired by parent groups adopting ceasefires; and finally, both groups formed under a pretext of increased cooperation and potentially compromise between militants and the British government.

There are other reasons to focus on Northern Ireland as well. Notably, it is a crucial case for studying militant fragmentation since the collapse and resultant creation of militants from existing groups was a critical component of the conflict decades-long conflict. There are few other cases where fragmentation has played such a central role, with John Morrison writing that “To suggest that splits have typified the development of Irish Republican militant groups is an understatement... These splits have not just shaped Irish Republicanism, they have led to some of the most significant and influential events in recent Irish history.”² Consequently, it is important that my

2. Horgan, *Divided We Stand*, 21.

theory be able to explain developments in Northern Ireland if it is to be useful.

Furthermore, Northern Ireland provides an excellent vantage point from which to study militant fragmentation due to the wealth of information available on the conflict. Indeed, there are innumerable books, articles, and reports, but there are also declassified documents both from the Irish and British governments as well as independent commissions and even documents from militants themselves (communications, reports, newspapers, etc). In total, the extraordinary amount of information on Northern Ireland overshadows other cases and it provides ample evidence to understand how group formation has played a role in the conflict's evolution.

The goal of the case study is to test my theory and to understand if the proposed mechanisms are in fact at work, driving variation in rates of survival and radicalization. The main difference between these two groups is that the RIRA formed factionally through a strategic disagreement with its parent group, the Provisional Irish Republican Army, whereas the INLA resulted from a multidimensional schism in then Official Irish Republican Army. Whereas the RIRA intended to resume a violent campaign to reunite Ireland by force, the INLA was motivated by both ideological and strategic concerns.

The case study presented in Chapter Four is supplemented by three months of research in Belfast, Dublin, and London. During this time I searched private and public archives in all three locations, looking for declassified government documents, internal group letters and communications, interviews, news reports, and academic publications that shed light on the inner working and decision-making process of these organizations. This research was vital, and it ultimately enhances my ability to understand the trajectory of both groups.

2 Building a Data Set of Organizational Fractures

Since data on militant fragmentation is not available in any existing database, I had to collect this information for the first time on my own. The resulting data set of organizational fractures is therefore the first of its kind and it should have many more uses beyond this specific project.

I first sought to understand the type and structure of a potential data set that would allow me to test my theory and provide satisfactory, credible results. There were three basic criteria that my data set would have to meet: first, it needs to contain data on both splinter *and* nonsplinter organizations; second, it needs to be time-series; third, there need to be enough observations to support empirical estimation. The first point, that the data must contain both splinter and nonsplinter groups, is probably the most important. If I were to only examine splinter organizations then my results would be severely biased and the project would only tell me about the relative effects of different splintering conditions. Without a representative sample of *all* militant organizations, I would be unable to empirically evaluate how splinter groups compare to the average, nonsplinter organization, and this is crucial for testing my theory. Indeed, many argue that Robert Pape's seminal study of suicide terrorism suffers from this exact flaw of selecting on the dependent variable.³ Ashworth, Meirowitz and Ramsay write that "As a result, [Pape] cannot elucidate the causes of suicide terrorism; he cannot determine why some groups choose suicide tactics rather than other forms of resistance; and he cannot answer questions about the implications of various foreign policy choices on the incidence of suicide terrorism."⁴ Avoiding this pitfall is therefore a primary aim of my data collection effort.

Next, it is also important to collect time series data for this project. This allows

3. Pape, *Dying to Win*.

4. Scott Ashworth et al., "Design, inference, and the strategic logic of suicide terrorism," *American Political Science Review* 102, no. 02 (2008): 269–273.

me to construct a more fine-grained picture of organizational evolution and group fragmentation that is representative of the underlying causal narrative. Furthermore, time series data opens the door for a wider range of future projects that rely on the temporality and timing of events to explain, for example, group downfall and intergroup conflict. Many existing data sets on the characteristics of militant groups are cross-sectional, and they consequently limit researchers' investigative ability.

And finally, producing robust and accurate empirical estimates requires sufficiently large samples. The precise number of observations will depend more on the number of parameters being estimated but in general, one cannot go wrong by having a larger sample. However, the desire for a larger sample has to be balanced with the feasibility and time requirements of coding. This is especially a concern for this particular project since I am collecting this data for the first time, and identifying how each of these organizations form and when they subsequently splinter—if at all—is a difficult, time consuming task. Nonetheless, I ultimately chose to randomly-select 300 observations (militant organizations) for the empirical analyses. This is feasible to code in a reasonable time frame while still providing sufficient observations for empirical estimation and enough geographic and temporal variation to make the results generalizable across space and time.

To construct this data set I began with the universe of groups identified by the Global Terrorism Database. I then removed numerous actors that do not conceptually adhere to what I am interested in studying. First, I removed individual and unknown groups. Since my theory is specific to militant *organizations*, it should not apply to individual actors or unorganized groups of students or protesters. Second, I also remove organizations that never managed to kill a single individual. In other words, I subsetted the data to only those violent actors that managed to cause at least a single fatality throughout their lifetimes. I do this because I am not interested in studying organizations that never conducted a single fatal attack, but rather

this project is concerned with the evolution of nonstate actors that intentionally use violence against civilians to further their political, social, or economic agenda. In addition, groups that do kill civilians and those that never kill anyone are likely very different actors employing unique strategies of violence. Combining them into a single analysis and assuming a similar evolutionary trajectory would surely be problematic for the veracity of my findings.

Once these groups were removed the Global Terrorism Database, I merged the remaining information with data from the RAND-MIPT project on Terrorist Organizational Profiles (TOPs). This database details group ideology, goals, home country, maximum size, and other relevant information and characteristics. A major downfall for this data set is its cross-sectional nature; in other words, it lacks time series information such that the number of group alliances is not calculated by year but rather it is the maximum number of alliances involving a particular organization. Despite this, TOPs is generally assumed to be the best and most comprehensive source of information on the subject of militant organizational characteristics. Following this merging process I was left with around 800 organizations that were subsequently included in both the GTD and the RAND-MIPT databases.

Each of these 800 organizations were randomly assigned a number from 0 to 800 using a random number generating process in STATA and the first 300 organizations were chosen for this study. I chose 300—out of the full sample of 800—militant organizations for this project largely for the sake of feasibility. Coding these 300 organizations was a time-consuming, difficult task that required many months of work. Coding the full sample of 800 would have been infeasible given that I also did field work in Northern Ireland. However, for future iterations of this project I hope to expand the coding to a much larger sample.

Once the random sample of organizations was created, I meticulously researched every organization to identify two main things: first, how the group formed. Did it

form by splintering away from another group? If so, I researched why it occurred, when it occurred, and who the original parent group was. Second, I then researched if this group itself had splintered at any point in its existence, and if so, into whom, when, and why. Thus, for each of these 300 organizations the data set details if the group itself was a splinter and whether or not that same group ever splintered throughout its existence. The variables accompanying these two events—why and when the splits occurred—are crucial to testing the hypotheses derived from my new theory of militant fragmentation.

2.1 Coding Procedures

Once I had the sample of organizations I was prepared to begin coding their formation and fragmentation. As I outlined in Chapter Two, I code group splits according to whether they are multidimensional or factional. Then, if they are factional, I code whether the split occurs for ideological, personal, or strategic reasons.

multidimensional schisms occur under two conditions: when there is no overarching disagreement among members of the parent organization, or when members break away with *numerous* disagreements. For example, when Harakat-ul-Mujahideen split from their parent organization, Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami, they did so “due to the increased need for improved cover of their operations.” This split did not follow any internal disagreement but rather, some members broke away simply to begin anew. On the other hand, the Irish National Liberation Army’s split from the Official Irish Republican Army is also multidimensional because it occurred for both ideological and strategic reasons. Disaffected members held opposing views on socialism, the value of political operations (and having a political wing), and also over the use of violence.

Ideological splits take place over disagreements with respect to worldviews or religious, political, social, or economic goals. These can be differences over an existing

worldview, such as when certain leaders of Jemaah Islamiyyah charged their peers “with having Shiite and Sufi tendencies and therefore straying from Salafi teaching.” However, it can also occur with the adoption of new worldviews, as was the case in the 1970s when Marxist and leftist thought in general was gaining popularity, and its introduction divided many militants organizations. Notably, ideological splits occur over the ideology itself, and not how the ideology or objectives are (or are not) being met.

Strategic splits occur when members of a militant group disagree over tactical choices, targets of attack, or other decisions such as whether or not to escalate or resume violent operations. In other words, strategic splits take place over disagreements concerning the use of force. Tanzim Qaedat al-Jihad’s split from Jemaah Islammiya in the early 2000s is a good example. “Jemaah Islamiyyas decision to focus on dawa [ministry activities] alienated its hardline members, who advocated a more aggressive approach. Noordin Top wanted to continue bombings, and [Jemaah leaders] had their own plans in the southern Philippines. Eventually, these divergent opinions led to Jemaah Islamiyyas fragmentation...” Although one group leader was later quoted as saying “I have a different understanding of jihad than [Noordin Top] does,” the difference in opinion was really about the use of force and not about the ideology.⁵

Finally, personal splits are the result of interpersonal disagreements that are not couched in strategic or ideological differences. Rather, these splits happen when there are feuds amongst individuals, often leaders, that generally have to do with control, leadership and power, or betrayal. Numerous groups have split when there is a opening for a new leader to emerge and multiple individuals vie for the position, oftentimes following the death of the previous leader. But groups can also split when their members feel betrayed. For instance, with regards to the formation of Fatal al Islam: “Al Abssi, a senior leader, felt betrayed after [the parent group] Fatah al Intifada

5. Shapiro, *The Terrorist’s Dilemma*.

leaders handed over two of his men to Lebanese intelligence and he went on to form his own organization in response.”

When the reasons motivating a group split were identified, I used a categorical variable to code the schism: zero for nonsplinter; one for ideological; two for multidimensional; three for personal; and four for strategic. With this system it is also easy to construct dummy variables for post tests in each of the empirical chapters.

Of course, this coding criteria is not perfect and in some cases the picture I can create of an organizational split will turn out to be incorrect. This is a persistent problem with working with data on violent nonstate actors about whom often little is known. Nonetheless, I still believe that the vast majority of splits that I code will be correct, and hopefully incorrect coding will be randomly distributed and overshadowed by the number of splits that are correctly identified.

Coding these group splits was a difficult and time consuming task. To make sure that my coding was correct, I consulted as many sources as possible to triangulate the true reason motivating the schism. I mainly relied on written histories of individual organizations, news reports, and analyses of particular leaders and particular country-eras (e.g. accounts of the Troubles in Northern Ireland). For news articles I searched archives like Factiva and LexisNexis for relevant information about each group, looking for words like split, splinter, break, disagreement, fracture, depart, and others. This revealed news stories about particular instances of group fragmentation, often less significant, that might not have made it into other works and biographies. And finally, I would search the broader web and academic databases for other references to group breakdown. Using this method I was able to triangulate most group splits and whenever possible I would cross-reference each account with multiple sources.

Constructing this new data set revealed a number of problems with existing data sources. Most significantly, a number of splinter organizations identified during this endeavor are not listed amongst active organizations in the Global Terrorism Database

or other sources. Often times, attacks by these groups are simply, though incorrectly, attributed to the parent organization with no mention of the splinter group. This is highly problematic for empirical analysis since this practice masks the subtle variation I am interested in studying, and by over-attributing attacks to the parent group it could easily skew the results. In cases where this occurs, these organizations are dropped from the statistical analyses, resulting in fewer than 300 observations (groups). This is another reason why the qualitative study is important to developing insights and testing hypotheses regarding the breakup of violent nonstate actors.

3 Overview of New Data on Organizational Splintering: Comparing Splinter and Nonsplinter Groups

Before delving further into what the data has to say with regards to survival and radicalization, it is worth examining the data aggregate since this is the first time that data on the causes of group fragmentation has ever been collected. Thus, we can see how likely ideological versus strategic splits are, and whether some types of groups are more likely to split than others, and whether or not the data is balanced with regards to the types of groups that ultimately splinter. This new information paves the way for myriad new questions to be answered beyond what I am interested in here. Furthermore, it is also important to establish any differences in the frequency of militant fragmentation, either among groups or over time, that could influence the statistical findings.

First, how do groups that splinter compare to those that never splinter? In other words, are there meaningful differences between organizations that splinter and those that manage to remain unified throughout their existence? Significant differences could obscure empirical findings since the underlying data would be biased, leading

to incorrect estimates or findings that are not generalizable to the broader population of militant organizations. Ideally, organizations that both do and do not splinter would be roughly the same across all quantifiable metrics. This would be the best possible outcome for observational data as it is impossible to assign the “splintering condition” randomly, akin to an experimental design.

Among the 300 randomly selected organizations I find evidence that nearly 85 splintered at some point in their existence spawning new breakaway groups, which is nearly 28.3% of the entire sample.

Analyzing this information, I find that groups that splinter—the parent organizations that spawn breakaway groups—tend to last longer than those that do not. Subsetting the analysis to groups that are no longer active in 2012—the final year for which attack data is available (and thus we cannot know if these groups have ended or not)—I find that groups that never splintered have a mean age of nearly 5.6 years, while groups that *did* splinter lasted on average 14.9 years. Thus, there is a significant difference between the two of nearly 9 years and t-tests confirm that the difference is statistically meaningful at $p=.000$.

This finding is, however, not entirely surprising for two reasons: first, older organizations have simply had a longer period during which internal fragmentation is possible. As I discuss in Chapter 2, the available evidence suggests that virtually all violent nonstate actors have some level of internal disagreement and this only increases over time as individuals gain experience. Indeed, this experience is often used to critically evaluate the group’s relative successes and failures.⁶ Second, considering that organizations cease to exist once their objectives have been accomplished—which is itself a major assumption—then older groups have a longer period of relative failure which might translate to internal discontentment and ultimately, fragmentation. Though, to be sure, very few groups ultimately achieve their full strategic objectives

6. Shapiro, *The Terrorist’s Dilemma*.

so it is likely that the former explanation carries more weight.

However, comparing rates of survival across splinter and nonsplinter organizations, so in other words groups that do and do not form by breaking away from a preexisting organization, I find that rates of survival are roughly equal. The mean endurance for nonsplinter organizations is 9.9 years while for splinters it is 8.2 years, and t-tests find that the differences are insignificant. If one discounts groups that are still active in 2012, the difference is still insignificant, but with nonsplinters lasting 8.1 years and splinters lasting 6.8 years. Ultimately, this is more significant for my analyses than is the difference between groups that do and do not fragment.

Table 3.1. Differences across splintered and nonsplintered parent organizations.

<i>Category</i>	<i>Splintered</i>	<i>Never Splintered</i>	<i>Significance</i>
Mean Age	15.586 (.601)	14.933 (1.541)	.000
Mean Fatalities	144.931 (55.010)	383.766 (184.980)	.096
Mean Standardized Fatalities	20.465 (5.545)	21.050 (6.736)	.950
Mean Casualties	285.735 (92.594)	808.55 (375.265)	.054
Mean Standardized Casualties	50.373 (13.855)	43.164 (13.28)	.751
Mean Attacks	48.310 (20.014)	187.333 (61.101)	.005
Mean Standardized Attacks	6.835 (1.875)	9.882 (2.171)	.338

Metrics standardized by group age. Standard errors in parentheses. Groups active in final year of data set (2012) omitted.

Other differences between groups that do and do not splinter largely disappear when age is taken into account. For instance, groups that never splintered launch on average 48.3 attacks with a standard error of 20.014, while splintering groups launched 187.33 with a standard deviation of 61.101 and the difference is therefore significant at the .00 level. However, if we standardize the number of attacks by group age then the difference becomes statistically insignificant (p=.338). The same occurs for total fatalities and casualties as well. These findings are displayed above in Figure 3.1.

In terms of group identity, there are no meaningful differences between groups that do and not splinter. In other words, there appear to be no meaningful patterns of group fragmentation due to organizational goals or identity. Using chi squared tests to compare binary indicators of group identity, not a single one registers any meaningful difference across splintering and nonsplintering organizations. These results are displayed in Figure 3.2.

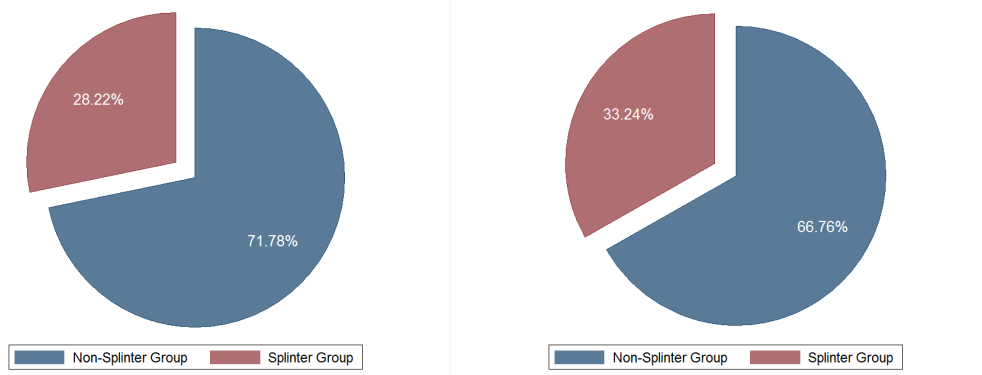
Table 3.2. Frequency of splintering across common group identities.

<i>Identity</i>	<i># Splintered</i>	<i># Never Splintered</i>	<i>Significance</i>
Communist-Socialist	39	15	.682
Leftist	20	6	.751
Nationalist-Separatist	75	32	.170
Racist	6	1	.485
Religious	47	20	.350
Total Observations	174	60	—

Groups active in final year of data set (2012) omitted.

These balance tests confirm that the phenomenon of organizational splintering is not unique to a particular subset of organizations. Rather, internal schisms can seemingly affect any and all militants. Of course, fragmentation tends to occur more frequently in older groups, which makes intuitive sense, though I find no meaningful correlations with either attack behavior or identity. This finding bolsters the relative utility of empirical analysis as it demonstrates that the population being investigated is not systematically different from the broader population of militant organizations. In the following pages of this chapter I compare similar statistics across splinter and nonsplinter organizations, though the key difference is that I *expect* these statistics to differ. Indeed, my theory actually predicts it. In contrast, my theory says nothing about the types of groups that splinter and we would expect, and hope, that they are unremarkable from the broader population.

Figure 3.1. The frequency of organizational fractures.

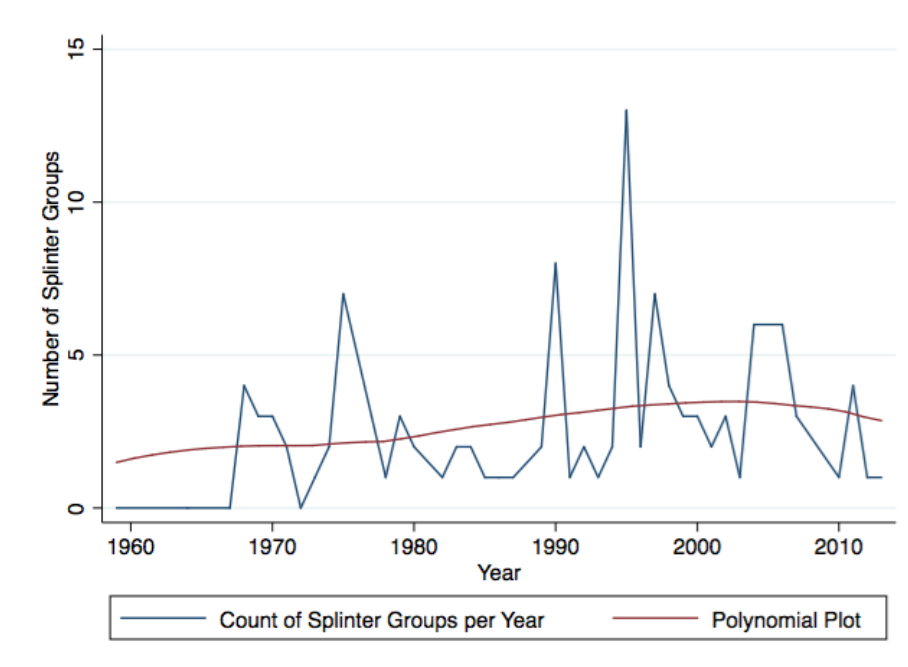


Moving on, how common is it for organizations to form by splintering away from a preexisting group? While this data set does not compile information on the universe of militant organizations, a random sample of 300 groups should nonetheless provide a relatively accurate picture that can generalize up to all organizations. There are two ways of looking at this: first, we can examine how many of the 300 groups formed by splintering from another organization. Figure 3.1 displays this information graphically, and we can see that 28.22% of organizations in this sample formed not from the ground up, but by splintering away from an existing group. This is a rather larger percentage, suggesting that more than one in four groups are themselves splinters.

Another way to approach this data is by studying groups' "family trees" and including them into the analysis. In other words, we add to the sample every group emanating from one of the original 300 in the sample. This was completed, as before, by carefully tracing the history of all 300 groups to identify where they came from and who they split into. As we can see in Figure 3.1, if we add these subsequent splinter groups then the sample goes up to 349 organizations and, as one would imagine, we get a slightly larger number, suggesting that that 33.24% of groups form by splintering, while 66.76% of groups form naturally from the ground up.

Second, has splintering been a consistent phenomenon over time? If organizational splintering only became common in recent decades, for instance after the Iraq War

Figure 3.2. Splinter formation over time.



when states' cooperation on counterterrorism matters drastically increased, then these types of splits might somehow be unique from previous generations. Or, conversely, if splintering was most common in the 1970s and 1980s and waned in previous years then one might question the significance of this research and its generalizability to the present day. Fortunately, it is easy to gage the frequency of splintering over time.

Figure 3.2 plots the formation of militant splinter groups over time. The blue line is a count of the number of new splinter groups each year while the red line is a polynomial regression line against the data to better approximate trends over time. Since the late 1960s when the data begins, organizational splintering has occurred at a relatively constant pace. This is evident in both the raw count and also polynomial plot, which is relatively flat over time.

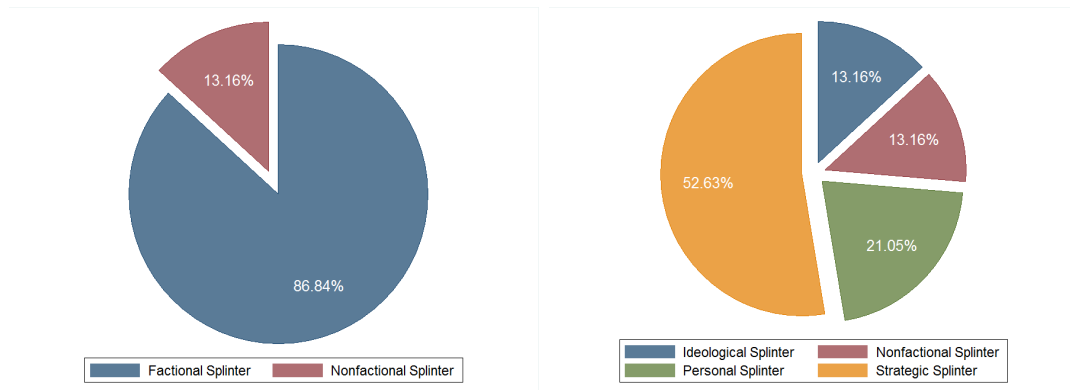
There are, however, several points in the data where splintering seems to have occurred at a slightly increased rate: the late 1970s, the mid 1990s, and the mid 2000s. This is not all that surprising. During each of these periods there was some shift in

the international system, broadly defined, that would have impacted the cohesion of nonstate actors. First, in the 1970s that would have been ideological debates, particularly regarding Marxism and other leftist ideologies that many oppositional actors were grappling with. There are numerous of examples of how Marxist influences contributed to group factionalism during this period—for instance, the Provisional IRA. Second, the growth in splinter formation during the 1990s could result from the decreased availability of external assistance following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. After 1991, neither the Soviets nor the Americans had the same strategic incentives to support nonstate actors around the globe since their ideological struggle had largely subsided. Third, and finally, the mid 2000s witnessed renewed American military intervention in the Middle East and significantly more coordinated and more ambitious counterterrorism campaigns as the US and its allies embarked on the Global War on Terror. This increasingly hostile environment for violent nonstate actors could very well have contributed to the increased number of group fractures during this period.

Third, and finally, this data set sheds light on the relative frequency of the various reasons for which groups splinter. Since I code the underlying logic of each split identified among the random sample of 300 organizations, it is easy to gage the likelihood of splintering due to different reasons. As before, one would expect these statistics to generalize up to the population of militant organizations worldwide.

Using the most basic distinction, I can separate group splits into factional and multidimensional camps. The data suggest that the overwhelming majority of organizational schisms are faction-based, following intense internal disagreement and sub-group alignment around shared preferences. This is not entirely surprising as this is how the vast majority of other types of organizations, legal and otherwise, tend to break down. Indeed, with most organizations there is some underlying internal disagreement that encourages defection and separation.

Figure 3.3. Relative frequencies of organizational schisms.



However, it becomes more interesting when I disaggregate the factional splinters according to the cause of their disagreement. This reveals that strategic splinters are the most likely cause behind factional splits. In 52.63% of cases, factional group splits were motivated by internal strategic disagreements. The second most popular cause is personal disagreements, often between leaders of the organization. In these cases, individuals within the group either stay with the parent group or break away according to their allegiance for a particular individual or group of leaders. And finally, ideological and multidimensional splits are the least likely, with both contributing to 13.16% of organizational organizations.

4 Conclusion

To briefly summarize, the mixed-methods research design presented in this chapter is aimed at combining both quantitative and qualitative analyses to test my theory of militant organizational fragmentation. The combination of the two is intended to provide a more comprehensive, robust test than could either on its own. Certainly, both methods have their strengths and by utilizing both I hope to compensate for their respective weaknesses.

I conduct these examinations in the following three chapters. In Chapter Four, I

present the case study of the INLA and the RIRA. From there I empirically analyze group survival (Chapter Five) and group radicalization (Chapter Six). Ultimately, this research provides strong support for my theory and I consider the conclusions and implications of this work in Chapter Seven.

Chapter 4

Conflict in Northern Ireland: A Case Study of Republican Splinter Groups

1 Introduction

Militant organizations commonly fragment, break down, and produce new splinter groups from within the ranks of existing organizations. This process has become so common, occurring in virtually all conflicts involving nonstate militants, that is difficult to think of a single case where fragmentation has never occurred. However, there is indeed significant variation in terms of the *quantity* and the *impact* of group fragmentation on various conflict dynamics. Oftentimes there will be one major split—for instance, when the Basque terrorists ETA split in 1970s into ETA-militar (ETA-m) and ETA-politico-militar (ETA-pm)—while in others it happens much more frequently, producing myriad large and small splinters alike. Fragmentation and splinter formation in Northern Ireland falls into the latter category. As John Horgan notes,

To suggest that splits have typified the development of Irish Republican militant groups is an understatement. Throughout history Irish Republicanism has continuously split and factionalized. These splits have not just shaped Irish Republicanism, they have led to some of the most significant and influential events in recent Irish history. A split led to the formation of the two historically dominant Irish political parties, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael. Splitting has also been the catalyst for the intensification of paramilitary violence and played a major role in the recent politicization of the majority of the Republican movement. And the current dissident groups owe their origins to recent splinters within the Republican movement.¹

Northern Ireland is a crucial case for both studying and explaining militant fragmentation. Not only was organizational splintering common but it was also meaningful to both the conflict landscape and the conflict's outcomes. Interestingly, these groups

1. Horgan, *Divided We Stand*, 21.

also vary in important ways; they “vary in their size, geographic location, strategies, ideologies, structures, and, not least, personality.²” Consequently, Republican violence in North Ireland provides an ample vantage point to study the trajectory of militant splinter organizations over time. The context of the Troubles and the quest for Irish reunification provide numerous cases of group fragmentation and splinter formation, and the splinters themselves are surprisingly diverse. Ultimately, the variation on the independent variable—the character and consistency of group preferences—combined with variation in strategy and longevity among splinter organizations is ideal for understanding the complex relationship between group formation and organizational trajectory and survival.

In the following pages of this chapter I present a case study of militant fragmentation and splinter formation in Northern Ireland. I first begin with an overview of the conflict that includes a discussion of grievances and a brief time line of events. I then move on to the two primary focus of this study: the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) and the Real Irish Republican Army (RIRA). I set out to understand how the character and the consistency of their internal preferences ultimately influenced their overall trajectory. To do this I utilize group documents, interviews, government assessments, and other materials that I uncovered during nearly three months of archival research in Belfast, Dublin, and London. These materials are essential to understanding the phenomenon of organizational breakdown and, subsequently, to identifying why and how groups acted in particular ways.

To briefly summarize the following case studies, the INLA formed in 1974 in response to steps taken by its parent organization, the Official Irish Republican Army (OIRA), to move away from violence. Those in charge of the Official IRA came to question the utility of their violent campaign, leading to a major ceasefire in 1972. Those who sided with Seamus Costello, the breakaway INLA’s first leader, strongly

2. Horgan, *Divided We Stand*, 21.

disagreed with the leaderships' strategic logic and felt that violence was indeed necessary to accomplish their ultimate goals. However, Costello and other members of the INLA did not merely seek a return to violence, but rather they also hoped to advance their idea of a socialist Irish republic through both political and military means. The INLA therefore splintered for both strategic and ideological reasons. Interestingly, the RIRA formed for some similar reasons: their discontent arose out of a disagreement with the leaders of their parent group, the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA), to negotiate with the British government and ultimately to disarm. While giving up their weapons was itself an affront to those who sided with Michael McKevitt, the leader of the RIRA, the dissenters also opposed the negotiation since it would clearly not end with a British withdrawal from Northern Ireland. Thus, members of the RIRA sought to resume their waning violent campaign in order to both derail the current peace process and to achieve their ultimate objective of a unified Ireland free of British occupation. The RIRA therefore formed factionally from a singular strategic disagreement within the Provos.

The similarities and indeed the differences between the INLA and the RIRA facilitate a structured comparison. Notably, the two groups share several important characteristics: for instance, one can directly trace the formation of both organizations to concrete steps towards deescalation taken by their respective parents. In addition, both groups were initially led by charismatic dissenters who strongly shaped the doctrine and organizational structure of their new organizations; both groups initially sought to influence their parent group before breaking away; and they both split from the dominant organization at the time and formed with both political and military wings. On the other hand, one of the key differences between the two groups concerns their goals and their disagreements with their respective parent organizations: while both the RIRA and the INLA were founded upon the idea of returning to violence, the INLA also had a strong socialist and political agenda. Therefore, while the violent

rhetoric of both organizations can explain the hard-liners who were drawn to and ultimately influenced the strategic direction of both groups, the INLA's diffuse agenda attracted a varied group of socialist and politically-minded individuals who held very different views from the militant hard-liners. This resulted in significant feuds within the INLA that ultimately belied their organizational cohesion and their durability, precipitating their decline into a group that soon became "simply a flagpole around which warring factions rallied." On the other hand, the RIRA's relatively high level of internal homogeneity and preference consistency allowed it to devolve authority and to adopt a decentralized organizational structure, and its internal feuds were minor compared to the disagreements that plagued the INLA. Initial RIRA recruits were drawn from a relatively homogeneous pool of hard-line, militant Republicans who had little appetite for traditional politics.³ Consequently, the two cases of the INLA and the RIRA not only provide evidence for the causal logic of my theory but they also clearly illustrate the mechanisms linking the consistency and character of organizational preferences to group trajectory.

Ultimately, this case study is intended to elucidate the mechanisms that link particular patterns of splinter formation with divergent organizational trajectories. This is important to demonstrate the nuances and explanatory power of my theory, and also to provide context for the empirical analyses presented in the following chapters.

2 The Historical Roots of Irish Republicanism

The conflict in Northern Ireland is largely about two separate though interrelated conditions: first, the partition of Ireland that took place in 1921 and continues to this

3. Of course, criminal elements were a problem with both organizations, and many of them simply joined the Republican movement for personal profit. Ultimately, however, these actors actually conform to my theory as their negative effects on the organization can largely be traced to their divergent preferences.

day; and second, the British presence in Northern Ireland. The partition of Ireland is significant as it ended the United Kingdom's direct control over the Irish island which was first established in 1800. The British reigned over Ireland until 1921 and though some regional powers were devolved, the island witnessed repeated armed rebellions to restore independence—in 1803, 1848, 1867, and finally in 1916. This final armed revolt, termed the Easter Rising or the Easter Rebellion, began on Easter in 1916 and was the most successful of all. The United Kingdom quickly moved to contain the revolt and their violent suppression along with the crackdown on those involved galvanized the Irish population and ultimately lead to the Irish War of Independence that began several years later in early 1919. The war raged for nearly three years with thousands dead on both sides.

A breakthrough came in 1921 when the British offered a peace treaty to the leaders of the Irish rebellion, though it was far from the proposal that the Irish were hoping for. The treaty did not grant full, unqualified Irish independence. Rather, it established the partition of Ireland by creating a 26 out of 32 county Irish Free State, and for “qualified autonomy” wherein the country would remain part of the British Commonwealth.⁴ The treaty polarized those fighting for Ireland: as English notes, “The Treaty was not the republic, but it offered significant freedoms, and if it was rejected then how long would the IRA be able to hold out, if faced with intense war?”⁵ Those in the pro-treaty camp ultimately won out and the Anglo-Irish Treaty was officially signed into law in London on 6 December 1921. Of course, the treaty and the failure of the anti-treaty forces was not easily accepted and the Irish Civil War soon erupted, with pro and anti-treaty forces battling for dominance. The war was short lived in part because the anti-treaty forces were significantly outnumbered, but also because the pro-treaty forces were supported with British weaponry, allowing

4. Richard English, *Armed struggle: The history of the IRA* (Oxford University Press, 2004), 30-31.

5. *Ibid.*, 32.

them to quickly overtake their foes and finally end the conflict in May of 1923.

Modern republican militants can trace both their organizational and their ideological lineage back to at least the Easter Rebellion. Ideologically, Irish militants have always opposed the British presence in any part of Ireland and following the Anglo-Irish Treaty they have also consistently opposed the partitioning of the Irish island. It is for this reason that groups like the IRA are called *republican* militants: they are ultimately fighting for a united Irish republic that incorporates all 32 counties of the Irish island. Organizationally, republican militants can trace their roots to the Irish Volunteers that formed in 1913 just before the Easter Uprising that precipitated the Irish War of Independence. From there the Irish volunteers moved on to their next evolution—the Irish Republican Army—fighting the British, and then finally to the anti-treaty forces that opposed the acceptance of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. These anti-treaty forces were part of the army that ultimately defected from the rest of the organization and eventually morphed into a guerrilla force conducting targeted assassinations and other acts of sporadic violence aimed at upsetting the status quo and building momentum for their cause.

Irish republican militants have therefore been active for over 100 years. While levels of violence have waxed and wane over the years, some of the worst violence of the entire conflict took place over a span of thirty years from the late 1960s to 1998. During this period known as the Troubles, militant violence was at a fever pitch. By most estimates over three thousand individuals were killed and many more permanently injured or scarred.⁶ Republican organizations were fighting with one another for dominance; they were fighting with the British military and police forces; and they were fighting against loyalist, protestant paramilitary organizations. Loyalist forces have

6. For more on the Troubles, refer to: Paul Bew and Gordon Gillespie, *Northern Ireland: a chronology of the troubles 1968-1999* (Gill & Macmillan Ltd, 1999); Marie-Therese Fay et al., *Northern Ireland's troubles: The human costs* (Pluto Press, 1999); David McKittrick and David McVea, *Making sense of the troubles: The story of the conflict in Northern Ireland* (New Amsterdam Books, 2002); English, *Armed struggle*.

an equally long tradition in Northern Ireland and, as one might expect, their ultimate objective is to resist republican pressure and to maintain Northern Ireland's status as a British-controlled territory. The loyalist forces are overwhelmingly Protestant due to their historical roots in England and, combined with the fact that republican forces embody a strong Catholic identity, this has caused to conflict to take on a religious subtext as well.

The Troubles came to an end in 1998 with the Good Friday Agreement, a major political agreement between republicans, loyalists, and both the British and Irish governments. Although the agreement in part devolved additional responsibilities to the regional government of Northern Ireland, it is most notable for laying a democratic foundation to determine the future of Northern Ireland and whether or not is ultimately reunited with the Republic of Ireland. According to Article Three, "a united Ireland shall be brought about only by peaceful means with the consent of a majority of the people, democratically expressed, in both jurisdictions in the island."⁷ The agreement also recognizes that "while a substantial section of the people in Northern Ireland share the legitimate wish of a majority of the people of the island of Ireland for a united Ireland, the present wish of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland, freely exercised and legitimate, is to maintain the Union."⁸

Although the Good Friday Agreement was hailed as a political breakthrough, precipitating the disarmament and decommissioning of major paramilitary organizations like the Provisional IRA and the Ulster Volunteer Force, there are still those who remain unsatisfied. Since 1998 both new and existing paramilitary organizations have continued to pursue violence with the ultimate goals of undermining the current peace and achieving their unfulfilled goals of Irish reunification. Since the overwhelming majority of the population supported the Good Friday Agreement, with 71% of

7. *The Northern Ireland Peace Agreement*, April 1998, 5.

8. *Ibid.*, 3.

votes in Northern Ireland and 94.4% in Ireland in approval, these groups have found little support among the local population and they have been unable to mount the same type of sustained, destructive campaign as did their predecessors. This is not to say that these organizations do not continue to pose a threat but it would appear that the type and the pace of violence that was characteristic of the Troubles is certainly over.

3 Formation, Preferences, and Trajectory of The INLA and the RIRA

The INLA and the RIRA are two republican militant organizations that share the common objective of Irish reunification. Due to several key similarities, these two groups present an excellent vantage point from which to study the influence of organizational preferences on rates of survival and radicalization. Nonetheless, these groups still exhibit variation on the main variable I am interested in, namely the consistency and the character of their internal organizational preferences, which allows me to understand how this variation contributes to differences in group trajectory. Ultimately, this comparison provides strong evidence in support of my theory and it suggests that internal organizational preferences play a key role in driving group behavior. Rather than simply being a product of their environment, these groups were shaped by internal factors as much as external factors.

Although both groups formed for very similar reasons—notably, the cessation of violent activities by their respective parent organizations—the overly broad agenda and diffuse identity of the INLA precipitated its downfall. Lacking a clear, concise agenda lead the INLA to incorporate a wide range of socialist and politically-focused recruits into its organization. The divergence in preference among these members ultimately pulled the group in myriad directions and spawned internal feuds that

proved to be devastating. Also stemming from this internal contestation, the INLA was forced to maintain a more hierarchical organizational structure with the group's first leader, Seamus Costello, keeping a firm grip over most decisions. This, of course, is detrimental to clandestine organizations and especially those that are beset with defections and police informants as the INLA was. On the other hand, the INLA's intermittent foray into radical Republican violence can be traced to its opposition of the Official IRA's ceasefire of 1972. This opposition and the resulting pro-violence narrative had the effect of attracting hard-line members of both the Official IRA and the Provisional IRA into its ranks. It was ultimately these members who either directly perpetrated or heavily influenced some of the deadliest violence of the entire conflict. Overall, the history of the INLA underscores how the strength of a group's organizational identity and the nature of its dissatisfaction with its parent group can shape the durability and trajectory of militant splinter groups. Certainly, the contrast with the Real IRA and even the Official IRA, its parent group, demonstrate the necessity of including this information into analytical models of organizational behavior. If one were to look no further than the group's opposition to the OIRA ceasefire of 1972, they would indeed be missing a significant portion of the story that is key to explaining their behavior.

Similar to the INLA, the evolution of the Real IRA demonstrates how variation within internal preferences has important effects on group trajectory. The RIRA, like the INLA, formed out of opposition to a ceasefire. Their parent group, the Provisional IRA, announced a cessation of violence in accordance with the Mitchell Accords, a new framework for future negotiations with the British government. Unlike the INLA, the RIRA's oppositional narrative was entirely focused on resuming their armed struggle; there was neither a political nor a socialist element to the new group and as a result the organization attracted a relatively homogeneous group of militant Republican hard-liners. Neither political, nor socialist, nor any other elements were attracted to

the organization because the RIRA's objectives were both clear and singular. Consequently, its membership exhibited high levels of internal preference consistency. This made it possible to decentralize and devolve group operations while also limiting internal dissent and intraorganizational feuding. Furthermore, the strategic behavior of the RIRA is once again explained by the preferences of its core membership which is ultimately revealed by its opposition to the PIRA's ceasefire. The RIRA was born out of a revulsion to politics as usual and their membership was eager to return Irish republicanism to its militant roots.

Although both organizations turned out to be particularly violent and similarly pushed the boundaries of dissident activity, I demonstrate in the following pages how this was not inevitable. Their radicalization and their use of especially extreme violence was not simply a function of being splinter organizations but it is due to their particular strategic disagreements. Their dissatisfaction with their parent organization over the decision to cease violent operations shaped both their own strategic logic and also the type of recruits drawn to each organization. Their radicalization was therefore a function of their strategic disagreements over the use of force.

Overall, variation in each group's dissident narrative is responsible for attracting either a homogeneous (RIRA) or heterogeneous (INLA) mix of disaffected militants. The alignment of internal preferences allowed the RIRA to prevail and even thrive in spite of strong governmental resistance, whereas for the INLA the inconsistency of their internal preferences prompted feuding almost immediately upon its formation, precipitating its decline as a coherent militant organization. Otherwise, the extent to which both groups adopted particularly violent, radical tactics can also be explained by the hard-line militant preferences that were represented in both groups stemming from their opposition to ceasefires. Although the fact that both groups were motivated by ceasefires and strategic disagreements ultimately provides less leverage over ideological and personal splits, it nonetheless rules out competing explanations about

the relative durability of different splinter organizations.

3.1 The Irish National Liberation Army

*“It is necessary to have clarity about the objectives for which we strive, otherwise the fruits of our struggle could slip to counter revolutionaries.”*⁹

The INLA owes its creation to one man, Seamus Costello. Costello was born in County Wicklow in the Republic of Ireland in 1939 and he joined both the Irish Republican Army and Sinn Féin at the age of 16.¹⁰ Costello was a bright, charismatic leader and he quickly rose throughout the ranks of the IRA, becoming Adjutant General, Chief of Staff, and Director of Operations of the Official IRA, and even Vice President of Sinn Féin. Costello managed to reach the pinnacles of both organizations and he became a driving force behind a number of key political and military decisions.¹¹ However, although he was an ardent supporter of the republican movement as whole, Costello soon came to find himself at odds with the other leaders of the Official IRA.

Costello’s disagreements resulted from various sociopolitical forces and conflict realities that came to a head in late 1960s. These realities ultimately lead many in the Republican movement, especially the OIRA and PIRA, to believe that their armed campaign against the Loyalists and against the British was hurting rather than helping their chances of achieving their ultimate goals. As a result, many within the republican movement began to question the efficacy and the logic of violent operations.

The Official [IRA] leadership refused to accept that a struggle against imperialism in the North of Ireland was in progress. They developed the idea

9. Quotation from the IRSP publication, *The Starry Plough*. Quoted in: Bloomer, *The History and Politics of the I.R.S.P & I.N.L.A.: From 1974 to the Present Day*, 2.

10. The Starry Plough, INLA newspaper

11. Bloomer, *The History and Politics of the I.R.S.P & I.N.L.A.: From 1974 to the Present Day*, 5.

that the armed struggle had the effect of dividing the working class along religious lines, so the first step toward defeating imperialism had to be the uniting of the working class the stages theory as it became known. This strategy directly opposed anything they had previously argued, indeed it was a contradiction of their past strategies...¹²

Certainly, this was a radical shift away from the ideals that had for decades formed the basis of not just the OIRA but of the Republican movement as a whole. Consequently, the magnitude of this shift had the effect of dividing the organization with many feeling betrayed by the leaders of the OIRA. These differences were especially pronounced between the governing Army Council, who were most strongly in favor of abandoning violence, and members of the rank-and-file who tended to be more hard-line in their approach. To explain the leadership's change of heart, however, one has to examine two events in particular that had recently occurred.

First, the constant back and forth violence between republican and loyalist forces during the late 1960s had wreaked havoc on many neighborhoods throughout Northern Ireland but particularly in Belfast. As Ed Moloney writes in *A Secret History of the IRA*, "There was...war weariness in many Catholic districts of Belfast. The shootings and bombings had transformed many nationalist areas into terrifying war zones, where people ran a daily risk of running into gun battles or being caught up in nerve-jangling bomb explosions."¹³ Neighborhoods, families, and individuals were permanently scarred by Republican and Loyalist violence in the years since the Troubles began in 1968, and people living within this areas were wondering when it would all end. This feeling was not only held among the population but it trickled up through the ranks of the Official IRA, forcing many to rethink their current strategy.

12. Bloomer, *The History and Politics of the I.R.S.P & I.N.L.A.: From 1974 to the Present Day*, 33.

13. Ed Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA* (WW Norton & Company, 2003), 112.

The second event that contributed to a revision of Official IRA tactics was the imposition of direct rule from Britain, the effect of which was to curtail Northern Ireland's already-limited home rule in favor of direct management from London. This was a momentous event that on face value might seem like a setback to the cause of Irish reunification. In reality, however, this was an unequivocal Republican victory—maybe not towards reunification, but definitely for more everyday politics. Before the decision, Northern Ireland's regional parliament at Stormont had long been dominated by loyalists. Protestants outnumbered Catholics nearly two to one at this point in time and they could easily leverage their population advantage into political dominance, forcing out Catholic and republican voices from most discussions. As Bell writes in the *Review of Politics*,

Fearful of the larger Irish state to the south, fearful of the minority Catholic population of Ulster, the [Protestant] majority ruled with outward arrogance, determined to maintain their privileges and their way of life. As one Loyalist spokesman indiscreetly admitted, Northern Ireland was a Protestant state for a Protestant people. The Protestant establishment, the Unionist Party within Stormont and the Orange Order without, suspected their minority population to be disloyal, agents of Rome, advocates of the IRA.¹⁴

Though neither nondemocratic or illegal, Protestants could easily impose their will and dominate regional politics. When the British government therefore passed a resolution to transfer control to London and away from Stormont, the Republicans were elated: the imposition of direct rule curtailed the Loyalists' significant hold on Northern Ireland. Many actually viewed this a concession by the British government.

14. Jr. Bell J. Bowyer, "The Escalation of Insurgency: The Provisional Irish Republican Army's Experience, 1969-1971," *The Review of Politics* 35, no. 3 (July 1973): 398-411.

On the other hand, as one might expect, this act enraged the loyalist community and just one day after the law was passed, 10,000 dock workers took part in a protest and marched throughout the center of Belfast.¹⁵

Meanwhile, although many Republican supporters believed their violent campaign had directly contributed to this success,¹⁶ the imposition of home rule ultimately had the effect of decreasing support for additional violent operations. Combined with the war weariness after several year of nonstop attacks, much of the populace and even many Republican fighters themselves believed that their future goals could now best be met through politics and not through more violent operations.

Public war-weariness mixed with the suspension of Unionist rule at Stormont suggested a change of tactics might be necessary. This idea was further ingrained among members of the Official IRA after a failed attempt to retaliate against the British army in response to the Bloody Sunday massacre where members of the armed forces shot 26 unarmed civilians, killing 13 immediately and one more several months later. Spearheaded by Costello, the Officials decided to strike back with a bombing attack on the Parachute Regiment's headquarters in Aldershot, England, targeting the regiment directly responsible. The bomb ultimately went off as planned but missed its target, killing six cleaning women and an Army chaplain."¹⁷ This failure and the resulting public backlash "Confirmed the fears of those on the [Official] Army Council who viewed the "armed campaign" as a political liability." This bolstered those within the OIRA who favored a political over a violent approach, giving them the upper hand in the internal debate.

It is this debate over the cessation of violence that would soon divide the orga-

15. J. Ditch, "Direct rule and Northern Ireland administration," *Administration* 25 (1977): 328–337.

16. Bernadette C. Hayes and Ian McAllister, "Sowing Dragon's Teeth: Public Support for Political Violence and Paramilitarism in Northern Ireland," *Political Studies* 49, no. 5 (December 2001): 901–922.

17. Holland and McDonald, *INLA, Deadly Divisions*, 12.

nization. On one side were the members of the Army Council who strongly opposed future violent operations. Opposite them were the rank-and-file members, many of whom—though not all—were not yet ready to abandon violence altogether.

Members of the rank and file who opposed the Army Council soon began to coalesce around Seamus Costello and Joe McAnn, who was ultimately killed by British troops in 1972 just before the INLA would break away. At first, Costello, McAnn, and their supporters “. . . came together to try and change Official IRA policy” from the inside. Their initial instincts were not to break away, but rather to reason with the Army Council and steer the organization back to its violent roots through political pressure, utilizing preexisting, democratic organizational channels (e.g. votes at the organization’s annual meetings). A former associate of Costello’s named Gerry Roche noted that “[Costello] wanted to win out through that structure. The last thing I think he wanted to do was to leave the officials because to splinter weakened your position.¹⁸” They saw the split not merely as detrimental to the Official IRA but detrimental to the movement as whole, highlighting further divisions and disunity among the Republicans. The last major split had taken place in 1968 when the Provisionals broke away from the Officials and Costello was hesitant to follow the same path. Nonetheless, forces within the OIRA were moving towards a showdown, and Costello could only do so much to keep the organization together.

At successive Ard Fheis (general organizational) meetings in 1972 and 1973, Costello—with widespread support—proposed a document called “A Brief Examination of the Republican Position: an Attempt to Formulate the Correct Demands and Methods of Struggle.” Along with co-author Sean Garland, the document outlined the logic and methods that would support a renewed arm struggle. Costello planned to put the document up for a vote as he thought most members would support him. To his credit, the plan did succeed and it was approved but from there it

18. Holland and McDonald, *INLA, Deadly Divisions*, 33.

needed to be passed by the Army Council and unsurprisingly, it failed. Upon hearing the news and realizing that he could only steer the organization insofar as the Army Council would allow, “Costello realised that this had in fact been the ideal time to leave the Officials...”¹⁹

Although he later realized that he should have departed the organization in 1972, Costello waited another two years while he struggled to make his voice heard. However, not everyone was keen on what he was doing and he soon attracted the attention of the Army Council who was now well aware of his intentions. The Council accused him of organizing a voting block, something that he argued was actually not against any rules, and a committee designed to investigate his behavior voted to suspend his membership in Sinn Féin for six months and bar him from standing in local elections.²⁰ As one might expect, Costello flaunted the punishment and ran in local elections anyway as an *independent* Sinn Féin candidate. This was the final straw for the OIRA leadership and they voted to dismiss him outright in the Spring of 1974.

“The expulsion only formalised what was already fact—the parting of the way between the revolutionary element and the mainstream reformists.”²¹ The seeds of the INLA had been planted almost two years prior as Costello and some of his closest associates had begun preparing for the split, conducting unsanctioned missions to fund their new organization.²² Certainly, Costello and his closest associates knew that it might very well come to this so they had been slowly preparing for the worst-case scenario: another split among a major Republican organization.

At a meeting at the Spa Hotel on December 8th, 1974, two organizations were officially conceived: the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP) and the Irish Na-

19. Bloomer, *The History and Politics of the I.R.S.P & I.N.L.A.: From 1974 to the Present Day*, 3.

20. Holland and McDonald, *INLA, Deadly Divisions*, 28-29.

21. Bloomer, *The History and Politics of the I.R.S.P & I.N.L.A.: From 1974 to the Present Day*, 4.

22. Michael O’Higgins, “The INLA Devours Itself,” *Magill*, March 1987, 16–26; Bloomer, *The History and Politics of the I.R.S.P & I.N.L.A.: From 1974 to the Present Day*.

tional Liberation Army (INLA). Although the organizations would work in tandem, pursuing the same broad goals, the IRPS was tasked with the political activities while the INLA was responsible for violence and agitation. The IRSP and the INLA were ultimately like different sides of the same coin, with many simply calling them together the Irish Republican Socialist Movement. Nonetheless, Costello wanted to keep the two organizations separate, at least at first, as he hoped to give the IRSP time to mature into a respectable political organization while behind the scenes he would begin acquiring the weapons and money necessary to launch INLA operations. Although the IRSP was announced soon after that initial meeting, Costello kept the INLA a secret for almost two years, denying its existence at every opportunity.

3.2 Internal Preferences of the INLA and IRSP

My theory of splinter formation posits that groups forming factionally around a single shared disagreement will tend to have higher levels of internal cohesion. Groups forming in this way, recruiting and building their membership base around core preferences, are more likely to endure and succeed as an organization. These shared preferences minimize internal disputes and allow for decentralizing transformations that bolster survivability. Then, one can understand the new group's trajectory by examining the nature of their dispute with the parent organization. This provides important information about the goals of the new organization and the type of individuals that will comprise its ranks.

The INLA is an interesting case of splinter formation that began factional, based around Costello and his closest allies who dissented with the OIRA Army Council primarily over the ceasefire, but then soon lost their cohesive advantage by broadening their agenda around socialist objectives, worker rights, and political pressure. Their evolution strongly highlights the problems associated with a diffuse organizational identity. However, it is from this identity that one can also understand the

broader trajectory of the organization: since the group was one of the few opposing a ceasefire and advocating a renewed armed campaign it managed to attract some of the most hard-line members from both the OIRA and PIRA, since the PIRA was also on a ceasefire at the time. These anti-cease-fire hardliners sometimes lobbied the leadership for increasingly confrontational policies while at other times they simply launched their own unsanctioned missions, leading to some of the deadliest violence of the Troubles and spurring intra-organizational feuds that would soon tear the organization apart. Also as a result of the internal feuding, the organization was forced to remain hierarchical in an attempt to exert and to maintain control. As one report from the British Independent Monitoring Commission notes, “The INLA is a very volatile mix of people from many and varied terrorist backgrounds. It has a reputation for extreme violence and internal feuding centered round leadership disputes which regularly lead to fragmentation of the group.”²³

On the socialist-political side of things, the INLA/IRSP attracted a “curious mixture of socialists, republicans and trade unionists, most of whom joined the movement as a protest against the positions adopted by the Provisionals and the Officials.”²⁴ A wide variety of leftists from across the political spectrum, many of whom were disaffected with their own organizations, joined the IRSP. A consequence of such a wide range of political ambitions was that the IRSP was never able to pin down their precise ideological views. This persisted throughout the duration of the IRSP with the organization fluctuating between various strains of Marxism and socialism over the years. This was noticeable even in the group’s first year when much of the original leadership quickly resigned upon realizing that there was no easy way to resolve the diversity of the group’s political beliefs.²⁵

Things were no better on the military side of the INLA either: Costello’s break

23. Independent Monitoring Commission, Report #1

24. Bloomer, *The History and Politics of the I.R.S.P & I.N.L.A.: From 1974 to the Present Day*.

25. “IRSP—Third Offspring of the Split.” 6 October 1977

with the OIRA, which was largely couched in terms of his antipathy towards the ceasefire they enacted in 1972, attracted some of the most hard-line militants with either little or no appetite for politics. Many of these hard-liners were simply criminals who wanted to cause as much pain and destruction as possible while others viewed the violent campaign within a broader Republican strategy. Certainly, the catalyst for these individuals was the violent outlet that the INLA provided. Two major republican organizations, the OIRA and the PIRA, were on ceasefires, and the INLA's formation was highly celebrated by some of the most militant individuals around.

Divergent preferences among the INLA/IRSP manifested themselves in three ways: first, as tension within the IRSP which could not pin down its ideological stance; second, between the IRSP and INLA on how to achieve their goals and the role of violence in their broader strategic calculus; and third, within the ranks of the INLA between the most hard-line rank-and-file members who wanted an immediate, all-out violent campaign, and the leadership, including Costello, who advocated a level of strategic restraint. These internal disagreements ultimately belied the internal unity of the organization and each once can be traced to the diversity of preferences among individuals who were initially attracted to the INLA/IRSP.

First, the IRSP's internal divisions were significant. Although a socialist organization that ultimately sought to unite Ireland under a 32 county socialist republic, the exact brand of socialism was never fully realized. Initially, the IRSP sought to cast a broad socialist net and it would often use general leftist-socialist rhetoric in its publications and announcements. For instance, describing the IRSP to an Italian journalist, Seamus Costello said that "We are a revolutionary socialist party and our objective is to create a revolutionary socialist state in Ireland." No more specifics were provided. The IRSP also had the tendency of foregoing its own identity to focus on the problems with others: "Despite many references to Connolly, and to a lesser extent Marx, Engels and Lenin, the politics of the party became defined in terms of

differences between its ideology and that of the Official and Republican movements. In other words the IRSP was content to define its political outlook in terms of what it disagreed with.²⁶” By taking this approach, the group ended up attracting individuals with a wide range of opinions. Although the IRSP only recruited from the left side of the political spectrum, this was a diverse field in the 1970s including dominant strains of thought by Marx, Stalin, and Trotsky, among others. These divisions are reflected in the different groups that were initially drawn to the IRSP:

The far left were enthused by the emergence of the IRSP seeing it as having the potential to become a mass revolutionary party... People’s Democracy also welcomed the formation of the IRSP, and some of its members joined it. Those alienated by the Officials’ increasing embrace of Eastern Europe saw the IRSP as potentially ‘anti-Stalinist’. Others hoped it would provide an open forum . . . But few within the IRSP, beyond those with a background in the leftist groups, had any knowledge of Marxist ideology.²⁷

The negative effect of these unaligned preferences can be seen in the events at the groups’ first Ard Fheis in December 1975 where 11 council members resigned in protest over the inability to reach a common, coherent doctrine. Upon her departure, Bernadette McAliskey, a significant figure in the Socialist movement at the time, observed “the IRSP to be objectively indistinguishable from the other strands of republicanism and possibly combining the worst elements of both.” Even more, in an op ed published after the split, the Derry chapter leader of the IRSP noted that he approved of the resignations, saying that the group’s policies were only “a mish-mash

26. Bloomer, *The History and Politics of the I.R.S.P & I.N.L.A.: From 1974 to the Present Day*, 8.

27. Hanley and Millar, *The lost revolution*, 286.

of nationalism and vaguely radical rhetoric...”²⁸

Second, there was significant preference divergence *between* members of the INLA and the IRSP and their disagreements generally concerned the utility of violent operations. The hardliners who had defected from the Officials and the Provos swarmed the ranks of the INLA and they were constantly at odds with those who joined primarily for the IRSP. One OIRA member who resisted joining Costello noted that “Many of the people that went with the Erps [IRSP]... were just keen to get into the Brits and the Prods. They were at heart sectarian. They couldn’t resist the temptation to hit out at the loyalists. I felt this would be a disaster.”²⁹ Another major source of hard-line recruits came from a withering organization known as Fianna Éirann, an IRA youth wings with a hard-line streak. According to a former member:

The Fianna was a big problem for the [IRA] leadership. I was in the Fianna at the time. There was a really militant crowd in the Fianna. I remember one meeting the Fianna was called to in Cyprus Street in 1973. The OIRA quartermaster for Belfast was there. He asked members to tell him how many weapons they had. He couldn’t believe what he was hearing. Fianna units reported having heavy machine-guns, explosives, rifles, and handguns. He nearly fell off his chair as he took stock of our weapons. Many of those that later went With the Erps [IRSP] came from the ranks of the Fianna. I was like them at the beginning. All we wanted to do was bang away at the Brits.³⁰”

Many of the hardline extremists who initially joined the IRSP/INLA were only interested in violence and retaliating for the perceived injustices against the Catholic

28. “Derry Backing for IRSP Resignations,” *Newspaper Clipping* (British National Archives), December 1975,

29. Holland and McDonald, *INLA, Deadly Divisions*, 47.

30. *Ibid.*, 39-40.

community in Northern Ireland. As one founding member put it, “We were a body of individuals prepared to wage war against the British machine in Ireland.³¹” These hardliners strained relations within the INLA/IRSP as they had little in common with the group’s more politically-minded recruits. “This manifested itself as a series of disagreements between the socialist-republican element and the militant nationalists within the INLA. By the Late 1970’s,” not even five years after their formation, “factions within the INLA openly struggled for supremacy.”³² The different preferences for violence that manifested themselves in intraorganizational feuds constantly bedeviled the organization, exacting a harsh toll on the unity, stability, and survival of the group as a whole.

Third, in addition to the significant differences in opinion and preference *between* members of the IRSP and the INLA, there were even problems *within* the INLA itself. Most significantly, Costello and other INLA leaders had a difficult if not wholly impossible time controlling their rank and file members and exerting negative control—in other words, making them refrain from using violence when ordered to stand down. The leadership’s biggest concern was with the most hardline members of the INLA who were predominantly concentrated in the North and especially in Belfast. On a number of occasions the Belfast contingent conducted operations against Costello’s explicit instructions which, unsurprisingly, created problems: notably, Costello was not planning to announce the INLA until he could fully fund and equip the new organization, but also not until the IRSP could establish itself as a legitimate organization. As he vehemently argued (and lied) in January 1975, just months after the IRSP and the INLA were formed, “We are not involved in any kind of military action but are solely a political group.”³³ While this plan might have made the most strategic sense,

31. English, *Armed struggle*, 177.

32. Bloomer, *The History and Politics of the I.R.S.P & I.N.L.A.: From 1974 to the Present Day*, 5.

33. Sunday Independent, 26 January 1975

it was not realistic in light of the INLA hardliners who were rearing to use violence. Certainly, Costello's plans now seem naive in light of the type of individuals that the group managed to attract: "Why would gunmen who had grown restless because of the three-year ceasefire join another organization that did not offer them some military role?"³⁴ Resultantly, Costello would soon find himself in a difficult position, negotiating between the IRSP, the INLA hardliners, and his own strategic vision that was situated somewhere in the middle. More problematically, however, he would soon be unable to control his own organization.

3.3 INLA & IRSP Preferences: Explaining Collapse and Radicalization

How did this significant divergence in preference both between and among members of the IRSP and INLA contribute to the demise of the entire organization? And how did the characteristics of their preferences influence their tactical behavior?

First, preference divergence among the INLA/IRSP generated feuds that beset the organization from its beginning. Even in 1975, a year after forming, "divisions within the movement were showing themselves. The first was between Belfast and Dublin: the Dublin-based leadership was not in control of the actions of its members a hundred miles to the North. This was a fault line that throughout the history of the INLA and IRSP would again and again threaten to pull the movement asunder. While the feud between Dublin and Belfast was a product of differences between the leadership and the most hard-line rank-and-file members, there was another feud brewing as well but this time it was entirely among the leadership based in Dublin. "The other crack that was opening was between McAliskey on the left wing of the IRSP and the core around Costello in a dispute over the very role of the military wing and the armed

34. Holland and McDonald, *INLA, Deadly Divisions*, 55.

campaign.³⁵” Although Costello was trying to exert control over the level of violence in the north—and he felt that a violent struggle was a necessary component of their strategy—he was also battling the leadership over the very idea of using violence at all. These two fronts, within Dublin and between Dublin and Belfast, would never be resolved and they ultimately meant that at times the leadership had little to no control over its organization. The units in the north often did whatever they pleased and those in Dublin were forced to respond: many times, Costello would have to take credit for actions that damaged the reputation of the IRPS since the alternative—denying the attack—would underscore the internal problems and insubordination plaguing the organization. These feuds also made it impossible for Costello and other members of the leadership to carry out a coherent strategic vision.

The Dublin-Belfast feud within the INLA/IRSP was the most dangerous, the most damaging, and the most enduring. It reflected the staunch differences in opinion between the most hardline members and everyone else (who indeed had disputes of their own). The hardliners, as I mentioned, largely came from the ranks of the Officials and the Provos to wage war against British and Loyalist forces, and they planned to do so with or without Costello’s support. For example, when Seán Garland, a member of the OIRA’s Army Council, was shot and nearly killed in 1974 when the INLA was not even a year old, Costello reportedly asked an IRSP comrade who he thought was responsible. His friend answered “I think we did,” and Costello replied in disbelief, “We fuckin’ did?” Costello was in disbelief as he had explicitly commanded the organization to refrain from using violence and his orders had been blatantly and nearly immediately ignored. The leadership was quickly coming to find it “impossible to exercise any effective control over the Belfast units. They wanted to fight their own war their own way, and to a large extent they did so.”³⁶

35. Holland and McDonald, *INLA, Deadly Divisions*, 60.

36. *Ibid.*, 63.

These feuds continued to work their way through the organization. With every successive act of unsanctioned violence the different factions moved further and further apart with cooperation becoming impossible to come by. Ultimately, by the early 1980s the killings in the North combined with Dublin's unsettled view towards the violent struggle turned the IRSP/INLA into an umbrella organization of independent units. The IRSP's political ambitions were doomed by the reckless violence of the INLA, who they could never entirely disassociate themselves with, while the INLA itself could agree on nothing except more violence. All of this came to a head when "In early 1985 many spectators believed that both the IRSP and the INLA had ceased to function—both were leaderless and factionalised, the IRSP Cumann had been dissolved and the INLA Army Council stopped meeting in January."³⁷ Members of the IRSP were in hiding and the INLA was factionalized in the North, both on the streets of Belfast and even within the jails. This period known as the INLA feud witnessed some of the deadliest intragroup feuding and ultimately ended with two separate groups claiming legitimacy over the INLA name.³⁸ In only five years after the INLA formed at the Spa Hotel, the group was unable or at least unwilling to act as a single, cohesive organization, refusing to cooperate and work together. The divergent, heterogeneous preferences at the core of the INLA/IRSP ultimately tore it apart.

Second, resulting from the disagreements and preference divergence within the IRSP/INLA, the group was unable to decentralize its operations and was instead forced to maintain hierarchy. When Costello was alive he actually did the opposite and he centralized his position to maintain control over the group. Members of the INLA even called him "authoritarian"³⁹ in reference to his grip over the organization.

37. Bloomer, *The History and Politics of the I.R.S.P & I.N.L.A.: From 1974 to the Present Day*, 8.

38. *Ibid.*

39. "A man who aroused strong passion." The Starry Plough.

Costello maintained strict hierarchy as he was unable to trust others to effectively lead the organization. For those who were promoted to positions of power “Costello chose only those men he could manipulate.⁴⁰” According to his own calculations, the INLA needed a centralized organizational structure to maintain control over the various elements within the group including the purely political members in Dublin and in the IRSP, the hardliners in Belfast, and those like himself who favored a combination of the two. It is then no surprise that after Costello was assassinated in 1977, members of the INLA immediately began fighting to become the leader, seeking to consolidate power and enforce their own strategic vision.⁴¹

Combined with the tight hierarchy and internal feuds, the INLA found itself beset by informers that compromised many of its plans. Many of these informers were either enticed by government forces with offers of leniency or cash, while others willingly gave up information to take down opponents within the group. Many of these informers were willing to cooperate because “There was widespread disillusionment among [members of the INLA] who had grown weary of the divisions and disagreements permeating the organisation.”⁴² Members who were either disillusioned or losing interest were then easy targets for security forces. As one confidential government report from 1979 notes, “the greater risk of arrest and possible conviction will increase the pressure on less committed INLA members and will increase the constraints on activists.”⁴³ Even if these individuals were not sought out by the government, they often provided information willingly. Simply put, in the words of a headline from 1982, “Feuds breed informers.” The article notes that “Internal feuding within the Irish National Liberation Army and the resulting defections have led to a series of arrests in Northern Ireland. . . It is believed that the breakthrough results largely

40. Holland and McDonald, *INLA, Deadly Divisions*, 39.

41. “The INLA Devours Itself.” Magill: Current Affairs, March 1987

42. “The INLA Devours Itself.” Magill: Current Affairs, March 1987

43. “Proscription and Deproscription Associations and Organisations/Political Activity.” May 1979 - December 1980. Northern Ireland Office, Records and Information Management.

from the decision of a senior figure within the organization, who recently survived an assassination attempt from a rival internal faction, to cooperate with the security forces.”⁴⁴ It is unclear who the informer was at this point in time but this example underscores how internal feuding was a catalyst for defection and infiltration.

Finally, the behavioral trajectory of the INLA can be explained by its strategic disagreement with the Officials over, as is typically the case, the decision to use and expand their violent campaign. The final straw for Costello and his original members of the INLA was the OIRA’s unilateral ceasefire. Consequently, the organization made it their core objective to resume violence and to continue the armed struggle in Northern Ireland. While this explains their initial use of violence, it does not entirely explain their radicalization. This can instead be explained by the hard-line recruits drawn to the organization from the OIRA, PIRA, and the general population. Many of the deadliest acts of violence by the INLA were perpetrated by these hard-liners, either as delegated by Costello or by their own doing. These hard-liners within the organization also forced Costello and other leaders to engage in more radical behavior than they might otherwise have chosen in order to maintain their support. In several instances INLA leaders were also forced to accept and approve of unsanctioned operations by hard-liners for the sake of their reputation and organizational unity—such as when INLA forces from Belfast drove to Dublin and assassinated a member of the OIRA.⁴⁵

Alternative Arguments

There are two plausible alternative explanations of the downfall of the INLA though I argue that neither is sufficient. First, some argue that Seamus Costello’s death, a key figure within the IRSP/INLA, precipitated the organization’s demise; and second, direct and indirect competition between the INLA/IRSP and the Official

44. Beresford, David. “Feuds breed informers, says Ulster police.” *The Guardian*, 25 March 1982.

45. Holland and McDonald, *INLA, Deadly Divisions*, 52-53.

IRA, its parent group, hurt the organization and undermined its internal stability.

First, the argument that losing Seamus Costello—the group’s charismatic founder—precipitated the downfall of the organization is insufficient since the heterogeneous mix of IRSP/INLA preferences caused significant feuding and discord even before he was assassinated. Costello was assassinated by the Official IRA in 1978 but even before that time Costello’s leadership was insufficient to hold the group together. While he was in charge there was a resignation en masse from the IRSP, before the INLA was even announced, at their first political meeting in 1975. Then, within the next two years Costello also found himself unable to control the hardline elements within the INLA, especially those in Belfast who largely undertook whatever actions they desired. Certainly, as I have already shown, it is these divergent preferences within and across the INLA/IRSP umbrella that lead to major internal disagreements and outright feuds that brought down the organization as a whole, and these forces were dividing the group even when Costello was around. Furthermore, some have theorized that Costello’s death might have actually benefited the organization as it relinquished the group of his strict control. As one newspaper reported, “His death—through regretted by the organization—actually brought greater unity to it.”⁴⁶

A second plausible argument is that the indirect and even direct competition between the Official IRA and the INLA/IRSP created an inhospitable environment for a fledgling organization that contributed to internal feuding and collapse. However, this argument is belied by the fact that during the deadliest period of violence directed at the INLA/IRSP, the organization was actually at its height. Although internal elements were already showing signs of disagreement, between 1973 and 1976 the group was actively and successfully recruiting members, expanding its ranks, raising money, and acquiring weapons. As one British intelligence corroborates,

46. Holland, Jack. “Deadly Initials: INLA.” 8 September 1979.

The Officials were determined not to let the IRSP grow without a struggle, the mistake they felt in retrospect they had made with the Provisionals. It is indicative of the support for the IRSP that despite constant harassment from Officials the party quickly blossomed. Soon after its foundation the IRSP made deep inroads into Official IRA membership in Northern Ireland, particularly in Belfast and Londonderry, and by the Spring of 1975 it was claiming a membership, almost certainly exaggerated, up of to 800.

Far from faltering at the hands of the Officials, the IRSP/INLA actually emerged relatively unscathed and the available information suggested that they could soon develop into a real, capable threat. As British Intelligence again noted, “If their numbers grow, if the international implications of their philosophy were developed and if they match current ruthlessness with co-ordinated, carefully planned attacks, they IRSP could shortly present a very substantial problem to the authorities in both parts of Ireland.” Although this failed to materialize, it was certainly not the OIRA campaign against them that is to blame.

3.4 The Birth of the Real Irish Republican Army

The formation of the Real Irish Republican Army (RIRA) can, just like the INLA, be traced to a ceasefire. This is important for causal, comparative analysis as one can essentially hold this factor constant across both cases, ruling out explanations that groups that do and do not form during periods of violent deescalation are somehow different. Rather, differences in organizational trajectories can be better explained by conditions that vary across the two groups. In this regard, I argue that the RIRA’s singular focus on resuming violence is responsible for their greater internal alignment, their survival, and ultimately their militant trajectory. While the INLA had a broad socialist, militant agenda, the RIRA’s more narrow focus managed to attract a homo-

geneous group of members who strongly shared the same vision of their organizational future. This resulting preference alignment bolstered internal cohesion, control, and ultimately, group durability. Likewise, the opposition to the ceasefire shaped their strategic course and attracted hard-liners who supported and ultimately launched some of the deadliest militant operations in the country's history.

The RIRA is a splinter organization that emerged from within the ranks of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) which throughout the 1980s and the 1990s was the dominant and most widely supported republican organization. The PIRA had been around since 1969 when itself split from what was at the time the Irish Republican Army, though many contest whether or not this was an actually an organizational split but more akin to an organizational evolution.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, the PIRA was not only active militarily but also politically with a sibling political organization known as Sinn Féin.

Despite the PIRA's violent history and dedication to armed struggle for nearly 30 years, forces and events within Northern Ireland ultimately prompted group leaders to rethink their strategic direction in the late 1990s—just as the INLA had done in the late 1960s leading to their own ceasefire in 1972. During this time period many within the organization had begun to question whether continued violence would actually help to achieve their goals. Richard English, an IRA historian, identifies three reasons that contributed to this drastic change: the PIRA felt they had reached a military stalemate with the British; PIRA leaders could see definite benefits from ending violence and halting their “pariah state status”; and finally, Republicans had come to recognize some of the harsh realities of Northern Ireland that they had since overlooked or more consciously ignored.

First, the PIRA had largely reached a military impasse. By the mid 1990s the

47. Robert W. White, “The Irish republican army: An assessment of sectarianism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 9, no. 1 (1997): 20–55.

organization was heavily infiltrated, carefully monitored by the British security forces, and many within the group could no longer see the continued utility of a violent campaign. As Martin Ferris, a Sinn Féin candidate, noted in 1997, “The truth was that Northern Ireland was trapped in a vicious circle. On one hand, the IRA could continue with the war and get nowhere. On the other hand, the British were relentless in their pursuit of IRA volunteers.⁴⁸” Ferris picks up on two key points: first, that the IRA were failing to achieve meaningful success with their violent operations. Rather than fulfilling their goal of “[creating] such psychological damage to the Brits that they’ll withdraw,” the campaign had devolved into a tit-for-tat cycle where “we can’t defeat them in a military sense, no more than they can beat us. So there’s kind of a stalemate.⁴⁹” Although the Provos and other Republican groups could still manage to conduct attacks against British and Loyalist fighters, strategically they were getting no closer towards their ultimate objectives. Indeed, tangible progress was virtually nonexistent and there was little evidence to support the continuation of the status quo violent strategy.

In addition, it was becoming increasingly clear in the late 1980s that the British were gaining an advantage over the Provos. Over time the British had built up a formidable security and intelligence apparatus in Northern Ireland and the Provos were feeling the pressure: “the intelligence war had involved agents and informers and the penetration of the IRA in ways that did limit its capacity. By the mid-1980s the capacity of the security forces to constrain Provisional activity through surveillance, arrests and so on was more impressive than it had been in the 1970s.⁵⁰” Combined with their seemingly stalled progress, the British security offensive that noticeably curtailed IRA operations prompted many within the Republican movement to begin questioning the utility of more violence.

48. Mooney and O’Toole, *Black Operations*, 38.

49. Tim Pat Coogan, *The IRA* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 604.

50. English, *Armed struggle*, 307-308.

Second, not only did violence seem unlikely to garner any more success but actually *giving up* and *renouncing* violence might bring about the most good. Summing up this opinion at a conference in 1990, John Hume noted that "If there are [IRA leaders willing to abandon armed struggle] and they have the moral courage to change to totally peaceful methods, then no single act in this century would do more to transform the atmosphere on the island and to begin the process of breaking down the barriers between our people, which are the real problem to this island today and which are the real legacy of our past and which are in fact intensified by the IRA campaign."⁵¹ Abandoning violence would, according to many observers at the time, usher in a new era where previously unimaginable compromises would finally become possible. The PIRA's reputation for violence was hurting Sinn Féin's bargaining position and more simply, it remained a barrier to many potential settlements: both the US and British governments would not work with Sinn Féin as long as the PIRA was engaged in violence. Completely renouncing violence was therefore a critical step towards attaining some level of progress, though indeed it was not a panacea that would merely usher in total success. Rather, "it did offer the prospect of a stronger, far less isolated Sinn Féin and of greater equality and power for republicans in the north."⁵²

Third, Republicans in the north came to recognize a few key facts about Northern Ireland: that even if the British were driven out the Unionists would still remain; and that far from deriving resources and wealth from Northern Ireland, the British were actually putting in more than they were getting out.⁵³ The first point, that no matter what happened there would still be Unionists in Northern Ireland, was not much a new revelation as it was a gradual understanding. For decades the Republicans were so concerned with defeating the British and forcing them out of Northern Ireland that

51. Quoted in Brendan O'Brien, *The long war: the IRA and Sinn Féin* (Syracuse University Press, 1999), 229-230.

52. English, *Armed struggle*, 310.

53. *Ibid.*, 313-314.

they failed to consider what would happen next. “When you’re engaged in a struggle, you fight with the basics in mind. It’s a united Ireland or nothing; the unionists are basically tools of British imperialism; they don’t know what they’re doing; they’ll come into a united Ireland like sheep once you break the will of the British.⁵⁴” Now, however, Republicans were realizing that even if by some nearly impossible chance that the British did ultimately leave, the country would still be home to a sizable population that would nonetheless oppose Irish reunification. Consequently, the next best option seemed like a compromise. The second point about Northern Ireland’s economic situation was also coming to light during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Within predominant Republican thinking the British were seen as foreign occupiers who derived taxes and other economic benefits from controlling the region, but this picture was belied by economic realities on the ground: Northern Ireland was unable to independently meet its financial needs and Britain had been stepping in to cover the difference. Rather than extracting wealth, Britain was paying to support the regional economy. Absent their support, according to one spectator, “. . . it is wrong to believe that the economy would cease to exist..it would probably step back to closer to third-world levels though probably a ‘better-off’ third-world type of level.⁵⁵” Consequently, Republicans were increasingly uncertain about the economic success of an independent Ulster and exactly where the money would come from to fund a potential reunification.

Together, these factors contributed to PIRA leaders becoming more receptive to the idea of a permanent ceasefire and some sort of compromise with the British. Without delving entirely into the history of how talks between the two camps progressed, it ultimately culminated in the Good Friday Agreement. This was a monumental deal that involved a number of groups from Northern Ireland, the Republican of Ire-

54. English, *Armed struggle*, 312.

55. Quoted in *ibid.*, 314.

land, and the United Kingdom. The agreement recognized that a majority of people in Northern Ireland desired to remain part of the United Kingdom and it would thus remain so until a majority favored reunification. In other words, it solidified the democratic determination of Northern Ireland's territorial status. The agreement also contained provisions related to the decommissioning of paramilitary organizations and the release of their prisoners. Before these talks could even begin, however, every party involved had to first agree to the Mitchell Principles. It was these principles, and not the Good Friday Agreements, that are most directly responsible for the RIRA's break with the PIRA.

The Mitchell Principles were a document written up by the United States Senator from Maine George Mitchell and they represented a framework for future talks on the status of Northern Ireland. The Principles required each party to agree to the following:

First, To democratic and exclusively peaceful means of resolving political issues;

Second, To the total disarmament of all paramilitary organizations;

Third, To agree that such disarmament must be verifiable to the satisfaction of an independent commission;

Fourth, To renounce for themselves, and to oppose any effort by others, to use force, or threaten to use force, to influence the course or the outcome of all-party negotiations;

Fifth, To agree to abide by the terms of any agreement reached in all-party negotiations and to resort to democratic and exclusively peaceful methods in trying to alter any aspect of that outcome with which they may disagree; and,

Sixth, To urge that "punishment" killings and beatings stop and to take effective steps to prevent such actions.

The first point is what caused the most divisions with the PIRA. Agreeing to ex-

clusively peaceful means “had the effect of demoralising rank and file IRA members whose dedication to armed insurgency against the British in Northern Ireland was proverbial.”⁵⁶ For many individuals within the IRA, who dedicated their lives to the organization and risked everything they had, they could not fathom how group leaders were so willing to disarm for the prospect of talks that could only end without the British withdrawing from Northern Ireland. In addition to their political rejection of the accords, others felt that the act was “an infringement of the organisation’s constitution and the negation of the IRA’s claim to be fighting a legitimate ‘war’ against British ‘colonial’ occupation,⁵⁷” largely because the organization’s constitution explicitly forbade such activities short of a complete British withdrawal. Consequently, many within the PIRA opposed the Mitchell Accords and felt their leaders were betraying the very fundamentals and traditions of their esteemed organization. These individuals were unpersuaded by the logic presented above that ultimately convinced the leadership to abandon their resistance to a compromise.

The debate over strategy soon created two oppositional camps within the OIRA with the majority, headed by Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, favoring compromise and deescalation. Hardliners were represented by Michael McKevitt, Seamus McGrane, and “Frank McGuinness,” a pseudonym for the PIRA’s top bomb-maker. By the time another ceasefire was approved in accordance with the Mitchell Principles, hardliners like McKevitt had already been preparing: as far back as 1994 McKevitt had been “[assembling] a group of confidantes who would meet in secret to discuss IRA policy and the future direction of the underground army. This select group talked a good deal among themselves; the common denominator was that none trusted the Army Council. All watched [Gerry] Adams’ pronunciations with frightening attention,

56. Mooney and O’Toole, *Black Operations*, 23.

57. Martyn Frampton, *Legion of the rearguard: Dissident Irish republicanism* (Irish Academic Press, 2011), 91.

analysing his comments and public statements with microscopic interest.⁵⁸ McKevitt had been working behind the scenes to assemble a group of close confidantes who were united in their opposition to the softening approach of the PIRA leadership.

McKevitt, like Costello to the INLA, was key to the group's formation. McKevitt had been a member of the IRA for most of life, joining the group as a teenager and rising through ranks where he came to be known as a lethal, notorious operative. At the end of his tenure in the PIRA he held the position of Quartermaster General where he was tasked with arms procurement, training, and weapons storage. Of course, these skills would prove to be quite useful in his new position within the RIRA, enabling his group to be especially productive and successful in their first years of operation.

McKevitt's ambitions for his new organization were straightforward: he "aimed to uphold any uncompromising and uncompromised Irish republicanism, and to oppose anything emerging from the 1997 party talks that should fall sort of Irish unity and independence."⁵⁹ The core issue at stake for him and his supporters was, as I mentioned, the ceasefire and the decommissioning of IRA weapons which they felt was antithetical to the group's constitution. As far as they could tell, the upcoming talks and certainly a permanent ceasefire would never be able to achieve British withdrawal from Northern Ireland, so he strongly opposed the entire peace process. Instead, McKevitt and his supporters firmly based their ideas on militant republican traditions and refused to believe that their struggle had been in vain.

Also like Costello, McKevitt had at first hoped to steer PIRA policy from the inside, voicing his opinion and making his case against the proposed ceasefire. However, it soon became obvious that the leaders of the PIRA had out-manuevered the hardliners and were moving forward with the Mitchell Accords. Realizing this, in November of 1997 McKevitt and his supporters decided to break away and form their

58. Mooney and O'Toole, *Black Operations*, 29.

59. English, *Armed struggle*, 316.

own organization where they could oppose the ceasefire as they desired.

3.5 The Internal Preferences of the RIRA

The RIRA was born out of a strong, singular disagreement with the Provisional IRA: they opposed the ceasefire and the abandonment of the revolutionary armed struggle in pursuit of a reunited 32-county Ireland. “Our goal is the same as the IRA’s has always been—to force a British withdrawal. We’re no different than the men and women of 1916, 1919, or 1969.”⁶⁰ Whereas the PIRA leaders were willing to negotiate with the British and disarm for the sake of a negotiated compromise, those in the RIRA Army Council “cannot envisage a ceasefire in any circumstances other than in which a declaration of intent to withdraw from the occupied Six-Counties is made by the British Government.”⁶¹ The original constitution of the PIRA strictly forbade any decommissioning short of a British withdrawal and as such, McKeivitt and his followers felt “they had remained faithful to the IRA’s Constitution; [and] they were the Real IRA.”⁶²

The goal of the RIRA was straightforward and clear: “to disrupt the peace process. By their attacks, these ‘rejectionist’ republicans hoped to create and maintain a state of instability in Northern Ireland.”⁶³ The RIRA “had a vision or belief in pursuing a “military” campaign until they achieved a united Ireland,” while in contrast “the Provisionals appeared to be edging toward an interim compromise of some kind, prompting traditional Republican fears of a sell out.”⁶⁴ The assessment by the British government was equally as clear: the RIRA “was formed by defecting members of PIRA who were opposed to the 1997 ceasefire and later to the Belfast

60. Breen, Suzanne. “War back on—Real IRA.” *Sunday Tribune*, 3 February 2007.

61. Okado-Gough, Damien. “Interview with the Army Council of the Real Irish Republican Army.” 28 January 2003.

62. Mooney and O’Toole, *Black Operations*, 28.

63. Frampton, *Legion of the rearguard*, 94.

64. James Dingley, “The bombing of Omagh, 15 August 1998: the bombers, their tactics, strategy, and purpose behind the incident,” *Studies in conflict and terrorism* 24, no. 6 (2001): 454.

Agreement.”⁶⁵ The RIRA planned to launch violent operations to initially derail the current negotiations then in pursuit of their ultimate republican objective: the reunification of Ireland. Unlike the PIRA, the only event that could possibly precipitate a RIRA ceasefire would be “A declaration of intent by the British to withdraw their military presence from Ireland and to cease all parliamentary activity here.”⁶⁶ The RIRA was certainly a hard-line organization with uncompromising beliefs focused on using violence to derail the current trajectory of negotiations and to ultimately achieve their success of a united Ireland.

McKevitt and other founding members of the RIRA had little appetite for politics and they could hardly envision any meaningful solution that could arise from political compromise and negotiation. Not surprisingly, McKevitt was deeply offended by the PIRA’s strategic decisions in the late 1980s and early 1990s: he had “chastised the Army Council, and accused them of betraying the IRA by proffering the idea that Sinn Féin politics should take precedence over IRA operations. He believed politics, or even the acceptance of political debate on the status of Northern Ireland, weakened the IRA.”⁶⁷

Despite this sentiment, McKevitt and others still recognized that they could benefit from a legitimate political organization that could debate Sinn Féin in public. For this reasons, the RIRA split “coincided with the separation from Sinn Féin of the 32 County Sovereignty Committee (now 32 County Sovereignty Movement), a group commonly thought to be the political voice of RIRA.”⁶⁸ The party started out as a bloc within Sinn Féin—calling itself a committee—but within a year the members had been expelled from the organization after they were physically barred from entering a Sinn Féin ard fheis (annual meeting) in 1998. From this point on they formed an in-

65. Independent Monitoring Commission, Report #1, Page 15

66. Breen, Suzanne. “War back on—Real IRA.” Sunday Tribune, 3 February 2007.

67. Mooney and O’Toole, *Black Operations*, 23.

68. John Horgan and John F. Morrison, “Here to stay? The rising threat of violent dissident Republicanism in Northern Ireland,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 23, no. 4 (2011): 642–669.

dependent organization, changing their name from 32 County Sovereignty *Committee* to the 32 County Sovereignty *Movement*.⁶⁹

The new party, otherwise abbreviated as 32CSM, was comprised of disaffected Sinn Féin members who, like their RIRA counterparts, were unenthused by the prospects of a political settlement. The 32CSM was initially lead by a formidable Republican with equally formidable credentials: Bernadette Sands-McKevitt, whose brother was Bobby Sands, famous for leading the INLA hunger strike in 1981 during which time he ultimately passed away. The group was also led by Francie Mackie who became the group's first chairperson. Mackie was known for his hard-line, militant views, and as Frampton notes, "Mackey's uncompromising message of support for 'armed struggle' and his undiluted vision of Irish 'sovereignty' came to define the 32CSC/32CSM. . ."⁷⁰

Those within the 32CSM were very different from those who remained in Sinn Féin and they were unique from most other political parties at the time. Although they are often considered a political party in the same way that Sinn Féin is, those who left to join 32CSM were barely interested in politics at all. "This was not a political party in the traditional sense, but rather its members viewed themselves, in the formulation of Sands-McKevitt' as 'watchdogs over Ireland's sovereignty.'"⁷¹ The party's core ethos was summarized by Sands-McKevitt when, during a radio interview in December 1997, she ended the conversation by reading a passage from her brother's diary during the hunger strike:

I'm standing on the threshold of another trembling world. . . I am a political prisoner. . . I believe in the God given right of the Irish nation to sovereign independence and the right of any Irish man or woman to assert this right in armed rebellion. . . there can never be peace in Ireland until

69. Frampton, *Legion of the rearguard*, 97-98.

70. *Ibid.*, 99.

71. *Ibid.*, 98.

the foreign oppressive British presence is removed. . .

Although 32CSM is often considered the political arm of the Real IRA, their ideal solutions for the question of Northern Ireland were far from political. Scholars therefore suggest that the true aim of the 32CSM was to rally support for the violent campaign being waged by members of the RIRA.⁷² They did this in two ways: first, by launching attacks against both the Provisionals and Sinn Féin, accusing them of betraying their republican ideals; and second, by reminding the public of the inadequacy of negotiated settlements like the Good Friday Agreement that kept a British presence firmly established in the north. As Michael McKevitt once confided to an FBI agent, “32 were all military people and were put there for that purpose to keep army politics in the hands of the military.”⁷³

The RIRA and the 32CSM therefore had very similar if not complementary goals. The RIRA pursued the objectives of the violent campaign on the ground, launching the actual operations and attack. The RIRA’s clear, concise message to potential supporters was useful in this regard as it attracted a group of dissidents with similar preferences for their organizational future. As Mooney and O’Toole argue, “McKevitt had conducted a relatively successful recruitment drive. He amassed a formidable force of volunteers. The recruits were hard-line republicans; they saw the IRA not as a political organisation but as a religion.”⁷⁴ These were individuals who were opposed to negotiations with the British and strongly supported the use of violence. Their mission was to support RIRA members on the ground, working in tandem with their violent campaign. Because these individuals held the same basic vision for their organizational trajectory, internal disputes and defection were initially minimized. This stands in stark contrast the relationship between the INLA and their political wing, the IRSP,

72. Frampton, *Legion of the rearguard*, 100-101.

73. *Ibid.*, 100.

74. Mooney and O’Toole, *Black Operations*, 29.

who were constantly at odds.

3.6 RIRA Preferences: Explaining Radicalization and Survival

The character and consistency of preferences within the Real IRA help to explain both the durability and the behavior of the entire organization. As I mentioned, the RIRA's strong, vocal opposition to both the PIRA's ceasefire and the British presence in Northern Ireland made it clear what the organization hoped to achieve. As such, the organization attracted a core group of some of the most ardent hard-liners disaffected with the PIRA. These individuals lent their support to leaders like Michael McKevitt who held equally hard-line and militant views, and they were attracted by the dissident, violent narrative that motivated the RIRA's departure. They saw the RIRA as the perfect outlet, as a group that would embrace their radical strategic vision. Many of these initial recruits "studied Irish history and would often refer to men like Padraig Pearse, the leader of the 1916 rebellion who sacrificed his own blood for his dream of a United Ireland."⁷⁵

Whereas the RIRA's vocal disagreement to the conciliatory measures outlined in the Mitchell Accords guaranteed that hard-line militants would be drawn to the new organization, it also meant that only a very specific type of recruit was attracted. Those joining the RIRA held neither a political nor socialist agenda but rather, they joined to reignite the militant brand of republicanism they believed was key to achieving a unified Ireland. The RIRA made no mistakes about position on the utility of nonviolent means and the resulting preference alignment bolstered the survivability and the durability of the organization in several discrete ways.

First, the group was able to adopt an organizational structure with devolved authority and a parallel shadow council that was ready to take over in the event that

75. Mooney and O'Toole, *Black Operations*, 29.

the current leadership was imprisoned or killed. As Frampton notes, “By this stage [around the year 2000], the RIRA leader claimed that a ‘shadow council’ had been set up, ‘to run things in case the main players went inside.’ They could, McKevitt contended, withstand arrests and still maintain violent activity.⁷⁶” This was a significant move that supported the survivability of the organization. “If a group is highly institutionalized and has clear lines of succession, then the loss of a leader would presumably be less likely to cause major changes in its direction.⁷⁷” Furthermore, it is also less likely that the organization will descend into chaos as potential leaders vie for power in the event of significant arrest or death. This is not to say that organizations lacking clear succession plans are doomed, but rather that “a clear line of succession [facilitates] success.⁷⁸”

Furthermore, the RIRA also adopted a decentralized organizational structure that delegated significant autonomy to local units operating throughout Northern Ireland. Numerous sources suggest that the Real IRA utilized an embryonic, cell-like structure similar to that of the Provisionals. Under this setup, major decisions were made by a governing body consisting of an Army Council and an Army Executive but individual operations were planned and carried out by smaller Active Service Units⁷⁹. As one Independent Monitoring Commission Report notes, the “RIRA lacks an organised structure so that individual units have a considerable degree of autonomy. There is little central strategy although there is input from leadership figures in terms of authorising or overseeing attacks.” This sort of compartmentalization provides important benefits to militant groups largely because it helps minimize the effects of both government infiltration and operative defection—something that all Republican

76. Frampton, *Legion of the rearguard*, 117.

77. Lisa Langdon, Alexander J. Sarapu, and Matthew Wells, “Targeting the leadership of terrorist and insurgent movements: Historical Lessons for Contemporary Policy Makers,” *Journal of Public and International Affairs* 15 (2004): 68.

78. *Ibid.*, 71.

79. IHS Jane’s Intelligence Review, “Fresh troubles - Dissidents rise again in Northern Ireland.”

organization have struggled with over the years.

The RIRA was able to both decentralize its operational command and create a shadow council that could take over in case of widespread arrests because of its internal preference alignment. McKevitt knew that the group of militants under his control could be trusted with a certain degree of operational autonomy and he also knew that he could create the back-up council that would continue the group's mission in his absence. Indeed, as Shapiro notes, "The more that the preferences of principals and agents in terrorist groups diverge, the worse it is for the principals to have operatives doing what they want."⁸⁰ There was little to lose from devolving autonomy since the organization had highly aligned internal preferences and agents could be trusted to carry out operations and even lead the organization without strict oversight. Not surprisingly, this type of transformation would have been unthinkable with the INLA, a group that remained largely hierarchical throughout its history and even witnessing direct, deadly feuds between competing leaders. Ultimately, that McKevitt was able to structure the RIRA in this way allowed it to withstand infiltration and arrests by the British government.

Second, the types of arguments that did arise within the RIRA were generally minor compared to those within the INLA. This had two effects: the disagreements within the RIRA tended to be about degrees of strategy and not necessarily alternatives, and these feuds did not result in direct intragroup conflict for dominance. Consider, for example, one particular feuds that beset the RIRA at its first organizational meeting:

There was deep division about how best to proceed. 'McGuinness' wanted to adopt a new approach and was very clear sighted about the situation. As the republicans listened with placid attention, he said a mur-

80. Shapiro, *The Terrorist's Dilemma*.

derous campaign against British soldiers and police would be the best approach. 'McGuinness' argued against using car bombs to destroy towns and commercial targets. Such attacks were useless and didn't advance the cause... Campbell thought otherwise. Large bombs made an impact and sent a clear message to the British government; bombings made Northern Ireland ungovernable. He also argued that there was a greater chance of success with a car bomb than trying to shoot a British soldier, or shoot down a helicopter.

The matter was ultimately discussed and decided upon by the army council without issue. "Campbell was permitted to run whatever military campaign he felt was necessary" and 'McGuinness' was satisfied once there was a relentless onslaught against the British; he was content to let the matter rest." Compared to what the IRSP/INLA experienced in its first year, including the resignation en masse of much of the IRSP governing council, this can barely be considered a division. The general internal agreement and preference alignment of the RIRA meant that disagreements and feuds were minimized. As was the case with the INLA, internal feuds can also breed defection and infiltration. Though to be sure, there was also infiltration and defection within the ranks of the RIRA but significantly these events were not driven by internal feuding as was the case with the INLA.

In addition, this case demonstrates how individuals with radical preferences can indirectly influence group strategy towards the extreme. McKeivitt allowed both Campbell and McGuinness to conduct their own operations. By doing so, he appeased the more radical of two—Martin McGuinness—which helped maintain group cohesion, but as a result the group would be responsible for even more destructive acts.

81. Another division arose in 2002 after much of the RIRA leadership was imprisoned following the atrocity of the Omagh Bombing. On August 15th, 1998, a car bomb exploded in the city of Omagh,

Third, and finally, McKevitt's strategic disagreement with the leaders of the PIRA provides insights into the organization's trajectory. The RIRA's initial break with the PIRA over the ceasefire virtually ensured that they would undertake violent actions. As Mooney and O'Toole note, "With no political agenda other than to collapse the ongoing peace negotiations, there was no doubting the threat the RIRA represented."⁸³ Members of the RIRA, and especially those who initially joined the organization with McKevitt, were ready, if not anxious, to begin launching violent operations against the state to derail the negotiations that they so strongly opposed. Yet just as with the INLA, their vocal opposition to the ceasefire, and more generally to politics at all, attracted some of the most ruthless republicans. These were individuals looking for an outlet to conduct armed operations against British and loyalist targets and indeed they had found one. The RIRA ultimately attracted "battlehardened terrorists in its ranks who are unlikely to be deterred from future violence by the Omagh tragedy"—even though Omagh, a bombing gone wrong that killed 29 and injured over 300, had even made McKevitt and other members of the Army Council rethink their violent strategy. Ultimately, as the example above shows, these members both directly and indirectly influenced group behavior towards the extreme. Consequently, it was not inevitable that the RIRA developed into the relentless militant organi-

Northern Ireland, killing 29 and injuring over 300. Although the RIRA bore the brunt of the blame it was later revealed that the bombing was actually co-conducted by members of both the RIRA and the Continuity IRA (and older PIRA splinter group). There was major backlash against the RIRA and the entire Republican movement. As a result, the RIRA announced a complete ceasefire on 7 September 1998, though still refusing to disband or disarm.⁸² As the group noted in a prepared statement, "As a direct result of the Omagh tragedy and also in response to the appeals of Bertie Ahern [Irish prime minister] and others we are currently embracing on a process of consultation on our future direction Horgan, *Divided We Stand*, 34." The Omagh bombing, combined with waning local support and increased pressure from the security forces, ultimately created tension within the organization, resulting in either an actual organizational split or some defection. Around this time a new group called Oglai na hEireann (ONH) was formed, though it is unclear whether the organization actually split from the RIRA, from the CIRA, or if it was merely a subgroup within the RIRA. Either way, it is important to note that there was no feuding around this new organization IMC8; Horgan, *Divided We Stand*; Morrison, "To Split is Not to End: The Development of a Process Model of Splits in Terrorist Organizations."

83. Mooney and O'Toole, *Black Operations*, 37.

zation it ultimately become. Rather, it flowed logically from the preferences of the leaders and of the individuals who joined the new dissident group after it split from the PIRA.

4 Conclusions

In this chapter I aim to show how preference divergence within the INLA contributed to its downfall and conversely, how the preference homogeneity of the Real IRA supported and bolstered group survival. While the Real IRA was more steadfastly radical and determined to use violence, I show how neither group's actions were inevitable but rather that they flowed logically from the preferences of the members attracted to each organization.

The INLA's ability to survive was undermined by internal conflicts and an almost necessary hierarchical structure. Costello hoped that centralizing authority would bolster cohesion and control, though it only did so minimally and at a significant cost. Maintaining a top-down, centralized structure left the group vulnerable to arrests, infiltration, power-feuds—all of which were already more likely due to the internally divergent preferences of group members. On the other hand, the Real IRA capitalized upon the like-mindedness and preference alignment of its members, decentralizing their operations, creating a cell-structure that was difficult to penetrate, and a shadow leadership that could take over in an emergency. This helped to ensure the continuation of the group even after the current leaders are gone. The RIRA was able to decentralize precisely because their operatives could be trusted and because there was minimal disagreement between them. Event though there was a much lower chance of feuds and defection, the group was more resilient to their pernicious effects precisely due to this flatter organizational structure.

Both the INLA and the RIRA were strongly shaped by the character of preferences

held by those individuals attracted to each organization. Tactical and strategic hardliners that drawn to both groups in response of their anti-ceasefire, anti-compromise narrative based around the use of violence. For the INLA, their tactical behavior was a mix of highly radicalized, deadly operations like the assassination of Airey Neave, the British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, in 1979, and more steadfastly political operations as well. The INLA pursued a political path that was lead by core members drawn to the organization predominantly due to their political and socialist rhetoric and they had little appetite for violence. The mix of hardline and more moderate positions within the group lead them down a path that embraced a range of strategies, from extreme violence to political lobbying to uniting the work class for a potential socialist revolution.

The Real IRA's singular focus on violence and their strict opposition to political compromise attracted a more focused core of extremists with decidedly hardline preferences. Unlike many of those who joined the INLA early on, these individuals were uninterested in politics and they were united by their shared desire to reunite Ireland by force. Consequently, the RIRA's behavior is consistently radical, and there were rarely internal debates suggesting that the group should moderate and embrace a more subtle, political approach.⁸⁴ Not surprisingly, the Real IRA is responsible for the deadliest attack of the Troubles, the Omagh Bombing, which left 29 dead and over 200 injured.

Ultimately, the evidence presented in this chapter lends strong support for the correlations identified in the empirical analyses. The comparison of the Real IRA and the INLA demonstrates how militant groups are strongly influenced by the preferences of their members. First, preferences determine the type of actions that groups will launch. One of the most important tasks for the leader of a militant organization

⁸⁴. The only time this debate occurred was several years after some of the main leaders were arrested.

is to preserve unity, so leaders often seek to appease the dominant interests of their members. In the cases of both the INLA and the RIRA, Costello and McKevitt ramped up or merely accepted more radical violence out of concern for organizational unity. Preferences also shape group decisionmaking in more direct ways by skewing internal discourse. For instance, Real IRA discussions were dominated by disaffected hardliners since their organized lacked members who held more moderate points of view.

While preferences provide insights about how the group will act, they are also essential for understanding variation in survival. Militant groups that are comprised of members with very different views of their organizational future will find it difficult to maintain cohesion and survive. Many members of the INLA held strategic visions that starkly differed from those of their peers. Some were staunch militants, while others were opposed to violence and sought victory through more political means. These individuals had little reason to work together and their antipathy and disillusionment ultimately lead to feuds, defection, and other unsanctioned behavior. The RIRA was advantaged by a core group of similarly-minded militants, and they experienced greater cohesion and were able to decentralize into a cell-like structure as a result. AS these cases show, internal cohesion is critical to the survival of clandestine organizations.

Overall, the INLA and the RIRA demonstrate the explanatory power of my theory. While the empirics presented in the following two chapters uncover correlations across space and time that support my theoretical intuition, I can only uncover and verify the causal mechanisms through qualitative research. This case study is therefore critical to demonstrating the significance of organizational formation, and to understanding how the character and consistency of group preferences drive variation in survival and behavior.

Chapter 5

Organizational Survival

1 Introduction

The durability and longevity of militant organizations poses a puzzle to both political scientists and policymakers. Empirically, the puzzle is about why organizations survive and collapse at varying rates with some able to withstand government pressure and the passage of times while others, even in relatively permissive environments, are unable to maintain cohesion. This puzzle has clear policy implications as well: understanding the factors contributing to variation in group longevity can help policymakers to construct initiatives that are most likely to contribute to group decline and then focus these policies on the groups most likely to pose enduring challenges. However, simply understanding these factors even if they do not provide immediate, actionable policy recommendations is nonetheless important. Such information can help identify the types of organizations that are likely to disintegrate on their own, absent direct state intervention.

Organizational longevity is an especially important topic with regards to militant splinter groups. Breakaway organizations that emerge from existing groups often have the capacity to evolve into especially deadly, capable militants since their experience and their knowledge provide an immediate advantage. For instance, the Islamic State's evolution from Al Qaeda in Iraq into one of the deadliest and most successful militant groups with profound staying power is partly due to its preexisting knowledge base, battle-hardened and trained recruits, and existing infrastructure in northwest Iraq. They were not starting from scratch like many anti-Assad opposition groups, who certainly have been much less successful and much less cohesive, but instead they have a significant advantage stemming from their experience and their organizational history. Furthermore, many splinter organizations emerge when conflicts are winding down. Ongoing negotiations and ceasefires often provide the impetus for personal, ideological, and strategic disagreements to be raised, and militants that break away

can undermine tenuous peace agreements and extend conflict sometimes in an attempt to increase their own share of the post-war spoils.¹ Understanding which of these organizations are likely to pose durable, long-lasting challenges shed light on the conflict's trajectory.

In this chapter I empirically examine how variation in the consistency of internal organizational preferences influences the longevity of militant splinter groups. The theory presented in Chapter Two suggests that militant splinters will experience differential rates of survival according to the mechanisms leading to their formation. Groups that splinter factionally should be increasingly likely to endure and to survive since the militant offshoots are more internally aligned, increasing levels of organizational capital, cooperation, and allowing for successful decentralization. Conversely, organizations that split multidimensionally are left worse off and I expect them to fail at an increased rate. In addition to my theoretical expectations, I also find evidence that to support the correlation between group formation and durability in the case study of Irish militants presented in Chapter Four.

Of course, a host of factors influence how long militant groups are able to survive and I account for several alternative explanations in my empirical analyses. External factors like government pressure (e.g. leadership decapitation, repression, restriction) have important affects on group cohesion and sustainability.² Other factors like the number of peer competitors also has an effect, with some arguing that competition increases survivability in a struggle for the survival of the fittest. Some posit that competition facilitates mobilization and inspires innovation³). Others, however, believe that *fewer* groups and *less* competition is more desirable since each individual group receives a greater share of the limited resources in the surrounding environ-

1. For example. Christia, *Alliance formation in civil wars*.

2. Jordan, "When Heads Roll"; Price, "Targeting top terrorists."

3. Phillips, "Enemies with Benefits?"

ment.⁴ Scholars also find that organizational politics play a key role: groups with external alliances seem better able to withstand the passage of time though the exact mechanism is unclear.⁵ It could be that these linkages provide material and financial support that bolster organizational durability, especially during periods of waning local support and government crackdown when resources are in short supply.

In the following pages of this chapter I present the empirical analysis of militant longevity. I begin by discussing the concept of organizational survival and how I operationalize it to construct the dependent variable. From here I investigate trends in the data and present several preliminary findings that emerge from descriptive statistics. Next, I discuss the methodology underpinning the empirical investigation and I present the findings. The chapter ends with a discussion of the conclusions that can be drawn from this work and its implications for my theory.

Ultimately, the results suggest that why and how militant groups break up has important consequences for group duration. Utilizing the Cox proportional hazards model, I find evidence of significant differences in expected rates of survival across factional and multidimensional splinters, with strategic splinters being the most long-lived on average. On the other hand, multidimensional and personalist groups tend to die out at a significantly quicker pace. Controlling for a variety of confounding factors I find that factional splinter groups are nearly 20% more likely to survive past their first year than are multidimensional organizations. This different only widens with time, and at ten years of age factional groups are nearly 35% more likely to endure. Overall, these results strongly support my theoretical intuition that internal preference consistency, as proxied by the factional-multidimensional nature of group schisms, plays a key role in determining the longevity and durability of militant organizations. These findings call into question the accepted wisdom of using fragmentation as a potential

4. Young and Dugan, “[Survival of the Fittest.](#)”

5. *Ibid.*

strategy to defeat militant organizations.

2 Conceptualizing and Surveying the Duration of Militant Splinter Groups

Measuring how long an organization survives is a difficult task and there is no single metric that exists without flaws. I conceptualize a militant group's survival or its longevity, which I use interchangeably, as the duration of its violent activities. In other words, the length of time that the group is actively engaged in violence; the difference in time between when a group first begins violent activities and when it commits its last attack. As Young and Dugan⁶ aptly point out, this is a useful proxy that should provide a consistent estimate of an organization's life span.

There are, however, conditions under which this metric not accurately capture a group's longevity. In general, this would occur when an organization is no longer launching violent attacks but it still exists in some other capacity. For instance, some militants have transitioned away from violent activities but they continue to exist as a political party or some other type of nonviolent organization. An organization could also be on a ceasefire and biding its time before relaunching its armed campaign. For example, the Taliban has at various times been a violent nonstate actor and also the government of Afghanistan. Thankfully, these occurrences are in the vast minority.

This brings up another issue: measuring organizational duration in this way disregards success or failure. Groups might turn into political parties, they might achieve secession and become the government, or they might otherwise realize their social or political objectives and disband. As was the case above, these examples are exceedingly rare: one study finds militant organizations achieve success less than 10% of the time. "When they have achieved victory, it has usually been because they had narrow

6. Young and Dugan, "Survival of the Fittest."

goals, such as policy or territorial change. No terrorist group that sought empire or social revolution has achieved victory since 1968.⁷” Even if militants do ultimately succeed, their efforts generally take years to accomplish and this provides ample time to evaluate relative rates of group durability.

Despite these shortcomings, it is still useful to model the duration of a group’s violent activity. While there are certainly conceptual problems that arise, since militants can survive and exist even when they are no longer conducting attacks, it nonetheless provides insights into how long these groups remain as violent actors.

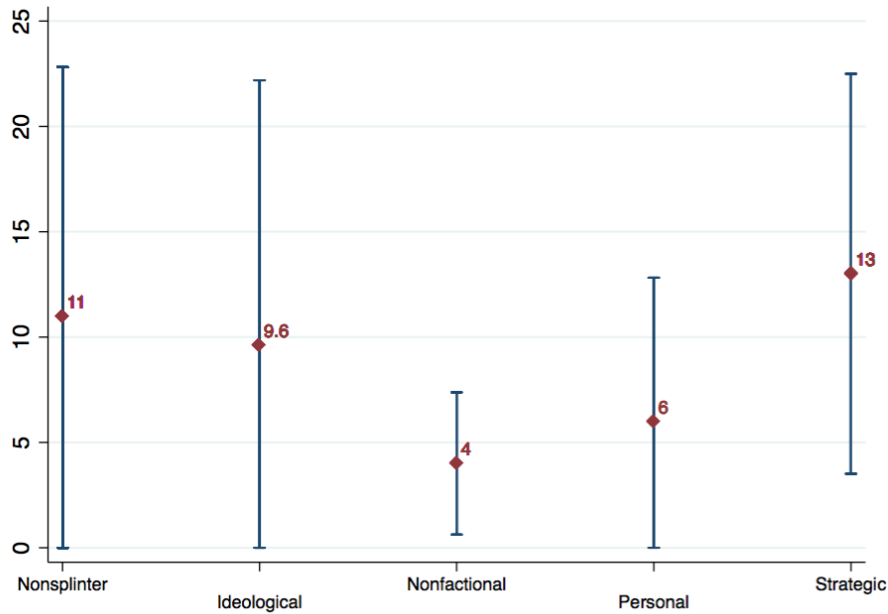
To construct this variable I begin with the same set of 300 randomly-selected militant organizations about which I collected new data. While I now have information on who these organizations splintered from and why the splits occurred, I utilize existing data from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) to calculate group duration. Using individual attack statistics I can easily construct ages for each organization in years, and groups “fail” when they are no longer committing violence. Though GTD has data on the specific days on which attacks occurred, I aggregate this information up to the yearly level so that I can more easily incorporate other variables that are not available at more granular units. Moreover, one has to expect some level of error in any data set so it is unclear how accurate a sub-year picture of group endurance would actually be.

2.1 Preliminary Investigation

Before modeling this data I first examine more basic trends in organizational endurance that might provide preliminary evidence of whether or not different types of splinter groups tend to survive at different rates. The major problem with comparing averages in this way is that alternative arguments and important covariates are unaccounted for. Nonetheless, because this is a random sample and because there is no

7. Jones and Libicki, *How terrorist groups end*, 33.

Figure 5.1. Mean duration of militant splinter groups.



evidence suggesting that certain group characteristics are correlated with particular splinter motivations, this should provide relatively reliable evidence.

Figure 5.1 plots the mean duration and standard deviation of militant organizations according to my typology of organizational formation. It is important to note that this graph only accounts for a sample of militant groups that form *before* 2003. This to ensure that there is sufficient time, nearly ten years, to observe each organization. By only examining groups forming before 2003 I can be increasingly confident that the picture of organizational durability is accurate. For groups that formed after 2003 there would be insufficient evidence to understand patterns in their rates of survival and decline.

Several things stand out in this figure. First, nonsplinter groups tend to last about 11 years on average. This might seem long though this is likely affected by the selection criteria for inclusion into this study: to be included, a group must cause at least one fatality. Among the broader sample of militants in the GTD including groups that

never managed to cause a single fatality, the mean duration is likely much lower. Second, ideological splinters endure at a rate that is very similar to nonsplinter groups, lasting around 9.5 years on average with a similar confidence interval. Thus, while the mean is slightly different the overall range is very similar.

Strategic splinters appear to be the most resilient. These groups last 13 years on average which is nearly three and a half years longer than their ideological counterparts and two years longer than nonsplinter organizations. Even the confidence interval is indicative of their resilience, with the lower bound at around 4 years. In other words, this implies that 95% of strategic splinters among the sample last at least 4 years, while this number includes zero for all other organizations. It therefore seems that strategic splinters have the lowest chance of failure in their formative years.

Finally, multidimensional and personal splinters tend to die out the quickest lasting 4 and 6 years, respectively. These groups also have a significantly lower and more constrained confidence interval, bounded by zero and seven and a half for multidimensional groups and zero and thirteen for personalist groups. This implies that these pathways of organizational formation are associated with less durable and less long-lived militants.

Significant differences?

The graph presented above is merely descriptive and it does not tell us whether or not the observed differences are meaningful. I run a simple bivariate OLS regression to test whether these apparent differences are in fact statistically significant. The dependent variable is the number of years that a group survives and the main independent variable is why they split.⁸ As before, this analysis is subsetting to groups that formed before 2003 as to provide sufficient observation time. The results are

8. The reference category is nonsplinter groups, and robust standard errors are clustered at the country level. There are virtually no differences when clustering on other variables or when not clustering at all. Similar results are obtained with a negative binomial regression as well.

Table 5.1. Preliminary Regression Analysis of Group Duration

	Model 1	Model 2
Factional Splinter	0.561 (1.997)	
Nonfactional Splinter	-6.977*** (1.545)	
Ideological Splinter		-1.377 (3.846)
Nonfactional Splinter		-6.977*** (1.552)
Personal Splinter		-3.727* (1.936)
Strategic Splinter		2.023 (2.082)
Constant	10.98*** (0.995)	10.98*** (1.000)
Observations	224	224

Standard errors in parentheses

Standard errors clustered by country.

* $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

presented in Table 2.1.

Model 1 in Table 2.1 compares rates of duration across factional and multidimensional splinter groups with the reference category being nonsplinter organizations. The significant, negative coefficient on multidimensional groups implies a correlation with lower lengths of survival. Interestingly, the dummy indicator for groups that form factionally fails to reach significance though it is still in the expected direction. This implies that there is no meaningful difference in rates of organizational failure between factional splinter groups and nonsplinter organizations. Rather, they die out and persist at roughly equal lengths of time.

Model 2 disaggregates factional splits, now using dummy indicators for strategic, ideological, and personal schism. The results suggest that not all splinters experience similar rates of survival. Ideological and strategic splinters tend to last nearly the same length of time as nonsplinter groups. The insignificant effects on these coeffi-

cients imply that we cannot reject the null hypothesis that these groups endure the same amount of time. The dummy indicator for multidimensional and personal splinters are significant, however, producing a meaningful negative coefficient for each. The finding for multidimensional groups is much stronger with $p=.000$. Compared to nonsplinter groups, multidimensional splinters are expected to last nearly 7 years less and personal splinters almost 3.7 years less. This strongly supports the notion that militant organizations emerging from multidimensional schisms find it much more difficult to survive and, more generally, that how organization form is significant to explaining patterns of survival and failure.

The next step towards testing my theory is to empirically model the data so that I can control for other factors that might influence group longevity. The information presented above does not account for potentially confounding factors like group identity, state conditions, and other variables that might increase or decrease the likelihood of a group ceasing its violent activities.

3 Empirical Strategy

Empirically modeling data on organizational longevity presents a number of challenges. First, one has to carefully consider the type and distribution of the underlying data and then choose both a model and functional form that are appropriate. Data on group longevity are non-negative counts meaning that the values never go below zero and it is a count of the number of active years. This rules out the possibility of using some relatively simple empirical methods like ordinary least squares regression and others that are most efficient when the underlying data are real-valued along an interval scale.

Second, some of the observations in the data set are right-censored meaning that they lack information on when they terminate. The sample of organizations under

observation range from 1970 to 2012—the last year that data is available from the Global Terrorism Database—but for those groups still active in 2012 one cannot know how long they will endure. In the preliminary analyses above I solved this problem by only examining organizations that formed before 2003 but there are more efficient statistical tools that can deal with this problem. Instead of ignoring these organizations, I can use statistical methods that take into account organizational duration at the point of censoring.

I use the Cox Proportional Hazards Model, a form of survival analysis, to estimate the survival rate of militant organizations. The Cox model estimates the survival function which provides information about the likelihood of failure (groups ending) in a given year. The underlying idea is that different factors or covariates shift the hazard up or down, increasing or decreasing the chance of failure at a given point of time. The model is proportional in the sense that the estimated effects are assumed to be consistent over time. For instance, it assumes that the effects of operating under an autocratic regime are the same for organizations in the first year of activity and also in their tenth year of activity.⁹

The Cox model is designed for count data and it can incorporate time-varying covariates and information on censored observations, making it ideal for this specific task. It is a semi-parametric estimator that makes few assumptions about the underlying data generating process and the functional form of the hazard function than related parametric models. If this information is known then parametric survival analysis is be more efficient. However, failing to correctly specify the distribution of hazard function can produce incorrect and misleading results. For instance, if one could assume that the underlying data generation process followed a Weibull or Poisson distribution then a parametric estimator would be a better choice. However, with the Cox Model scholars need not make assumptions about how the hazard functions

9. Paul D. Allison, *Survival analysis using SAS: a practical guide* (Sas Institute, 2010).

is distributed and it can more flexibly model data about which little is known.¹⁰

As a result, the Cox Proportional Hazards Model has been gaining popularity in recent years. Political scientists in particular have recognized its utility and have used this method to explore a number of different questions. For instance, Dugan and Chenoweth (2012) and Perkoski and Chenoweth (2010) use it to analyze the time between terrorist attacks to determine the efficacy of various counterterrorist interventions;¹¹ with regards to group longevity, Carter (2012) examines how state support influences terrorist longevity while Price (2012) examines the effect of leadership decapitation;¹² and David Cunningham, Gleditsch and Salehyan analyze the duration of civil wars.¹³

The dependent variable in the coming analyses is, as I have discussed, the length of an organization's lifespan. This is measured as the time in years between the first recorded attack and the last recorded attack using data from the GTD.

The primary independent variable is the factional-multidimensional nature of an organizational schism and, if it is factional, the reason underlying the split. Though the entire sample of 300 militant organizations and their splinters are analyzed in this study, only about 30% are actually splinters which still provides sufficient variation to understand how these conditions influence their longevity. Furthermore, by comparing splinters to a random sample of non-splinter groups then the findings reveal how splinters relate to the general population of militant organizations and not just compared to other splinter groups, though I also use post-estimation techniques to

10. For more information on the Cox Proportional Hazards Model, see: Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier and Bradford S. Jones, *Event History Modeling: A Guide for Social Scientists* (Cambridge University Press, March 2004).

11. Laura Dugan and Erica Chenoweth, "Moving Beyond Deterrence The Effectiveness of Raising the Expected Utility of Abstaining from Terrorism in Israel," *American Sociological Review* 77, no. 4 (2012): 597–624; Evan Perkoski and Erica Chenoweth, "The effectiveness of counterterrorism in Spain: a new approach," in *International Studies Association annual meeting, New Orleans, LA, USA, March* (2010), 15–17.

12. Carter, "A blessing or a curse?"; Price, "Targeting top terrorists."

13. Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan, "It Takes Two A Dyadic Analysis of Civil War Duration and Outcome."

understand the more particular relationships between splinter groups. If one were to only examine longevity among a sample of splinter organizations then the estimates would suffer from severe selection bias.¹⁴ The results from such a setup might suggest that strategic splinters tend to last longer, but this would only be in reference to *other* splinter groups. By subjecting the full sample to empirical analysis the results from this study speak to how splinters behave in relation to non-splinter groups, making the resultant conclusions more useful and more generalizable to the broader population of militant organizations.

I also include country and year fixed effects in every model. This is to account for unexplained and unmodeled differences in organizational longevity between countries and over time that are not directly accounted for.

3.1 Alternative Explanations

In addition to the primary independent variable, I include other variables to account for alternative explanations of group longevity. This significantly bolsters the strength of the conclusions I can draw from the analyses. By including other variables into the equation I can be more confident that it is in fact the nature of a group split and the consistency or inconsistency of internal preferences that are affecting group duration and not something else.

First, I include dummy variable indicators representing different group identities. An organization's identity and goals might affect their longevity by providing a means to unite existing members while also enabling group leaders to reach a particular pool of recruits. The group identities I account for are: nationalist-separatist, communist-socialist, religious, anarchist, or leftist. In this system, groups can belong to several different identities at once so an organization can be both nationalist-separatist and

14. For a discussion see Ashworth et al., "[Design, inference, and the strategic logic of suicide terrorism.](#)"

communist-socialist, for example. Scholars have found that group identities can affect organizational endurance through a number of mechanisms. With regards to militant groups, however, the precise theoretical link between identity and survival is rather underdeveloped. For instance, Blomberg et al (2011) argue that “Terrorist ideology may also play a role in a groups success; however, this influence is at bottom really an empirical question that can be answered only by seeing how other ideologies fare against religious groups.¹⁵” Nonetheless, it is plausible that religious organizations, for instance, can use their shared faith to enhance cooperation and unify the group in a way that bolsters their survivability.¹⁶

Second, I include variables that are aimed at capturing particular state characteristics. Existing literature finds strong theoretical and empirical links between regime type and both group proliferation and states’ capacity to fight militants. Some argue that terrorism is more likely to proliferate in democracies since the institutional arrangement incentives conflict between competing actors and interests.¹⁷ However, with regards to group duration, there are several competing hypotheses. Young and Dugan argue that because “democratic societies offer institutional recourse for aggrieved individuals, people have formal mechanisms for resolving their anger towards the state”,¹⁸ and the resulting terror groups should be short lived. Although this would seemingly suggest that militant groups would also form less often in democracies—which is not the case—it nonetheless implies that violent nonstate actors

15. S. Brock Blomberg, Khusrav Gaibulloev, and Todd Sandler, “Terrorist group survival: ideology, tactics, and base of operations,” *Public Choice* 149, nos. 3-4 (October 2011): 450.

16. Richard Sosis and Candace Alcorta, “Militants and martyrs: Evolutionary perspectives on religion and terrorism,” *Natural security: A Darwinian approach to a dangerous world*, 2008, 105–124.

17. Erica Chenoweth, “The Inadvertent Effects of Democracy on Terrorist Group Proliferation” (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Colorado, 2007); Erica Chenoweth, “Democratic competition and terrorist activity,” *Journal of Politics* 72, no. 1 (2010): 16–30; Quan Li, “Does Democracy Promote or Reduce Transnational Terrorist Incidents?,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, no. 2 (April 2005): 278–297; William Lee Eubank and Leonard Weinberg, “Does democracy encourage terrorism?,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 6, no. 4 (1994): 417–435.

18. *Top Syrian Official Defects*, <http://www.voanews.com/content/activists-say-20-killed-in-syrian-government-shelling/1572334.html>, 2014.

within democratic countries have additional pathways of abandoning their violent tactics, making them more short-lived on average.

Scholars also debate whether or not democracies make better¹⁹ or worse²⁰ counterinsurgents. Those in the positive camp might argue that the armed forces of democratic nations are superior and they should therefore be more effective against all enemies, even nonstate actors. On the other side of the debate, those who argue that democracies are worse counterinsurgents might contend that democratic publics are averse to long, costly, casualty-prone wars and as a result they are less dedicated and worse off than equally-equipped autocratic regimes. Either way, it is theoretically plausible for regime type to impact group longevity in meaningful ways so I include dummy variables for autocracy and democracy. Similar to the motivation behind regime type, I also include the regime's durability—the total number of years since the most recent regime change.²¹ Regime durability could be connected to organizational longevity through several mechanisms but most significantly, more durable regimes might be better prepared to combat nonstate actors. It is likely that more stable states have increasingly developed armed forces, more capital to fund their military, and more developed police forces to quickly detect extremist elements. Consequently, greater regime durability should correlate with decreased group longevity.

Also at the state level I include measures of a country's GDP per capita and its population. GDP might influence militant survivability in several ways. Some argue that poor economic performance and low development are correlated with militant

19. Dan Reiter and Allan C. Stam, "Democracy and battlefield military effectiveness," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42, no. 3 (1998): 259–277; Dan Reiter and Allan C. Stam, *Democracies at war* (Princeton University Press, 2002).

20. As pointed out by Lyall (2010), this argument rests on the assumption that democratic publics are particularly casualty-averse and sensitive to large-scale attacks on civilians. Ethan Bueno de Mesquita, "Politics and the suboptimal provision of counterterrorism," *International Organization* 61, no. 01 (2007): 9–36; John Mueller, *Policy and opinion in the Gulf War* (AAPOR, 1994).

21. Marshall, Jagers, and Gurr, *Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2011*, <http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm>, February 2013.

activity and violent extremism.²² These environments create grievances that motivate individuals to take up arms, they provide fodder to recruit new members, and they also lower the cost of joining the militant group when there are fewer opportunities for employment. These mechanisms are expected to work in the opposite direction as well: greater economic prosperity should reduce popular grievances and subsequently the support for militant organizations, raising the likelihood that they forgo their violent activities. According to this logic, GDP per capita should be negatively correlated with militant organizational survival. However, a higher GDP per capita could also be correlated with decreased group longevity since more developed states (with higher GDPs per capita) are expected to be increasingly able to successfully combat violent extremism. These states should have more money and more resources to devote to counterterrorism and policing, increasing the odds that groups are quickly defeated. Similarly, Fearon and Laitin (2003) argue that states with higher GDPs will correlate with greater road penetration, ultimately meaning that rural areas are more easily within the reach of the central government. This is similar to the proposed effect of regime durability though there is still some variation between the two. Finally, Blomberg et al (2011) conceptualize GDP in another way: as they write, “GDP provides a target-rich environment,” and it “may also provide more skilled recruits,” ultimately making groups more resilient. Though this view is in the minority it nonetheless provides a compelling explanation for why militant groups in more prosperous countries could actually persevere. Data for GDP per capita and population come from the Penn World Tables.

The final variable related state characteristics that I also included is a logged estimate of the percent of a country’s terrain that is mountainous. Scholars have used

22. James A. Piazza, “Poverty, minority economic discrimination, and domestic terrorism,” *Journal of Peace Research* 48, no. 3 (May 2011): 339–353; Andreas Freytag et al., “The origins of terrorism: Cross-country estimates of socio-economic determinants of terrorism,” *European Journal of Political Economy* 27 (2011): S5–S16; Bueno de Mesquita, “[Conciliation, Counterterrorism, and Patterns of Terrorist Violence.](#)”

this measure in recent years as a means of proxying for the conditions that favor insurgencies though the logic should equally apply to terrorists and other types of militants just as well.²³ Rough terrain provides terrorists, guerrillas, and insurgents a means of evading detection and a space to more easily train and plan operations. States will find it difficult to police and monitor these areas, so when they exist in high quantities they should bolster the survivability of nonstate actors.

Third, group competition might make it harder and less likely for individual groups to survive. A more competitive environment could lead to a group's early demise since resources and recruits are more difficult to come by, and also because direct intergroup competition might weaken personal commitment and cause individuals to rethink their dedication to the group. I approximate these dynamics with several measures: first, with the number of active groups in a country-year, second, with whether or not a militant organization is the "top dog" in a single year, and third, whether or not the Cold War is ongoing.

The number of active militant group in a given country-year is intended to capture the possibility of group outbidding—a dynamic that is theorized to occur when multiple nonstate actors exist in the same environment. Since most resources are zero-sum, groups are necessarily in competition with one another for recruits, popular support, etc. Bloom (2005) was the first to theorize the effects of outbidding and she argues that groups will compete both with more and more severe violence to "gain credibility and win the public relations campaign."²⁴ The outbidding phenomenon is most commonly used to explain the level of violence in a particular country but Young and Dugan extend this logic to group survival as well. As they write, "While a competitive environment may encourage terrorism, it also likely dampens group survival as other organisations drain the pool of potential recruits. Thus, similar to interest groups

23. James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, insurgency, and civil war," *American political science review* 97, no. 1 (2003): 75–90.

24. Bloom, *Dying To Kill*, 95.

operating in competitive environments, some will succeed and some will fail.²⁵ The presence of multiple groups should correlate with outbidding, and outbidding should then produce resource scarcity which drives down the ability of groups to survive.

Young and Dugan also introduce the idea that being a “top dog”—the most active organization in a country—will correlate with group resiliency. Using an analogy to firms in the marketplace, groups that already have a strong base of support should be more established and consequently more resilient than others, making it less likely that they die out in any particular year. While there are a few problems with this logic—for instance, does being the top dog also attract the most government attention which can actually lower the odds of survival?—the theoretical link between top dog status and group survival, at least in a single year, seems plausible and they find strong supporting evidence in their own research.

4 Empirical Results I: Organizational Survival and Factional-Multidimensional Schisms

Table 4 displays the results from the first analysis of organization longevity that includes important group and country characteristics and whether or not a group was a factional or multidimensional splinter. The next analysis will disaggregate factional splits into the precise reasons causing the schism but this is a baseline test of my model. Each successive model in this table adds additional variables to the equation until Model 5, which includes everything.

It is important to note what these coefficients mean since they are different from ordinary least squares. Since the dependent variable is the time until group failure the model is estimating the *hazard* rate—or in other words the likelihood that a group fails in a given year. A coefficient greater than one means that the hazard rate

25. Young and Dugan, “Survival of the Fittest,” 3.

increases and a group is *more* likely to fail. Coefficients below one imply that a group is *less* likely to fail and instead more likely to survive.

Model 1 is the most basic including only a categorical variable indicating whether a group is a nonsplinter, factional splinter, or multidimensional splinter, as well as year and country fixed effects. The results suggest that there is a significant difference in longevity between these groups. The significant and positive coefficient on multidimensional splinters suggests that they are much *more* likely to fail in a given year than nonsplinter groups, while the coefficient below one on factional splinters implies they are *less* likely to fail. Both of these estimates are statistically significant at the 10% level and they are significant in relation to each other as well (Wald test, $p=.000$). This provides evidence of the baseline differences between groups according to how they form, conforming to the initial expectations of my theory. However, more covariates are needed to truly understand if this relationship is robust.

More variables are added in Models 2 and 3. Model 2 adds dummy variables for different group identities and goals: whether or not a group is nationalist-separatist, communist-socialist, religious, anarchist, or leftist. Model 3, on the other hand, adds country characteristics to the equation: whether a group is operating in an autocracy or democracy,²⁶ the durability of the current regime, logged GDP per capita, logged population, and the logged percentage of mountainous terrain. The coefficients below one on communist-socialist groups implies that these organizations last longer than others—the omitted categories such as environmental, racist, right-wing, anti-globalization, etc. On the other hand, the model finds that leftist groups fail at a much greater rate.

With regards to country characteristics, there is mixed evidence that groups in autocracies tend to last longer, lowering the hazard of failure in any given year. Although

26. The omitted category is thus anocracies, or countries that are a mix of autocratic and democratic structures but do not fall entirely into either camp.

Table 5.2. Cox Proportional Hazards Model of Organizational Longevity

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Baseline	Group	Country	Environment	Full
Factional Splinter	0.682*	0.625**	0.673*	0.684*	0.622**
	(0.143)	(0.133)	(0.143)	(0.143)	(0.134)
Nonfactional Splinter	1.619*	1.917**	1.586*	1.726**	1.908**
	(0.454)	(0.625)	(0.440)	(0.476)	(0.581)
Nationalist-Separatist		0.803			0.808
		(0.142)			(0.140)
Communist-Socialist		0.572***			0.585**
		(0.120)			(0.123)
Religious		0.855			0.878
		(0.197)			(0.201)
Anarchist		0.644			0.648
		(0.393)			(0.391)
Leftist		2.929***			2.826***
		(0.745)			(0.718)
Autocracy			0.417*		0.498
			(0.186)		(0.242)
Democracy			1.031		1.161
			(0.281)		(0.329)
Regime Durability			0.989		0.991
			(0.009)		(0.009)
GDP Per Capita (log)			0.939		0.794
			(0.326)		(0.296)
Population (log)			1.401		1.390
			(0.304)		(0.305)
Pent. Mountainous (log)			1.308		0.940
			(0.958)		(0.711)
Terrorist Competitors				1.019	1.014
				(0.015)	(0.015)
Lead Organization				0.915	0.972
				(0.156)	(0.164)
Observations	2912	2912	2912	2912	2912

Standard errors in parentheses (clustered by group). Coefficients reported as hazard ratios.

Country and year fixed effects included in every model.

* $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

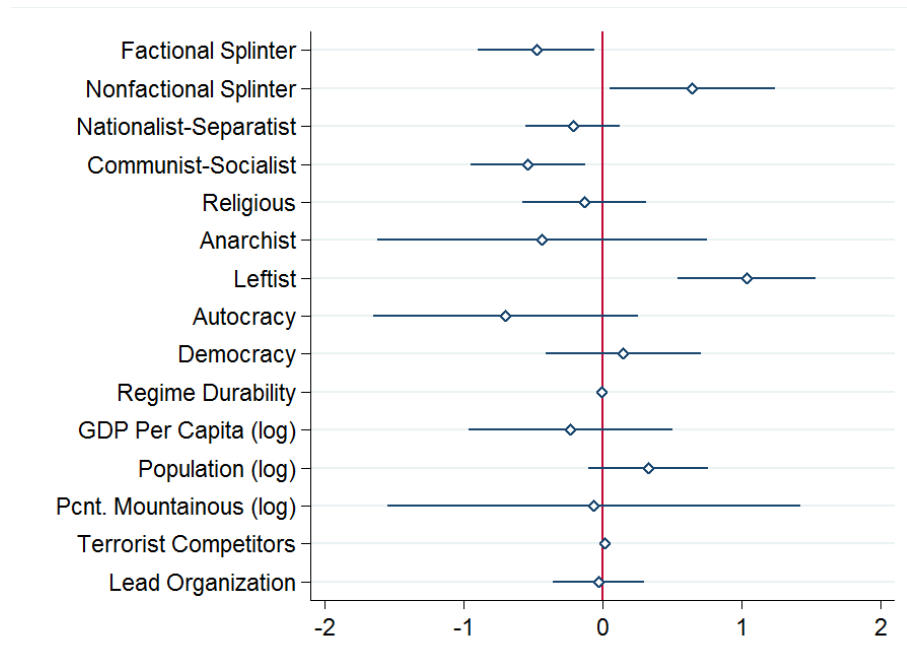
the coefficient estimate is nearly similar in Models 3 and 5, it is only significant in the former. Neither the democracy dummy, the measure of regime durability, nor any other country-level factor produces a meaningful effect. This implies that one cannot reject the null hypotheses that there is no relationship between group duration and regime durability, GDP per capita, population size, and the proportion of rough terrain. In terms of the primary independent variables, however, there continues to be a strong relationship between factional/multidimensional formation and the likelihood of failure.

Model 4 introduces variables relating to a militant group's operating environment: in other words, certain conditions that affect how it conducts itself. This focuses on the number of other active militant groups in its home state and whether or not it is the lead organization in a single year (conducting more than 50% of attacks). These variables fail to generate any meaningful effect and their inclusion barely changes other estimates in the model.

Finally, Model 5 includes every variable from the first four analyses, representing the most complete model yet. Several things stand out: first, the dummy indicators for communist-socialist and leftist identities maintain their significant effects, with communist-socialist groups lasting longer and leftist dying out quicker. The dummy for autocratic countries, however, loses significance and is no longer meaningful at the 10% level. And, notably, the estimates for factional and multidimensional dummies actually increase in significance to under 5%. As before, groups forming factionally have a much lower hazard of failure in any given year, and groups forming multidimensionally experience a much higher hazard and overall, a lower chance of survival.

These results strongly support my hypothesis that factional splinters tend to be more durable than are similar multidimensional splinter groups. The dummy indicators for groups that form factionally and multidimensionally surprisingly reach statistical significance in every model despite which variables are introduced. This is

Figure 5.2. Coefficient plot: duration of factional and multidimensional splinters.

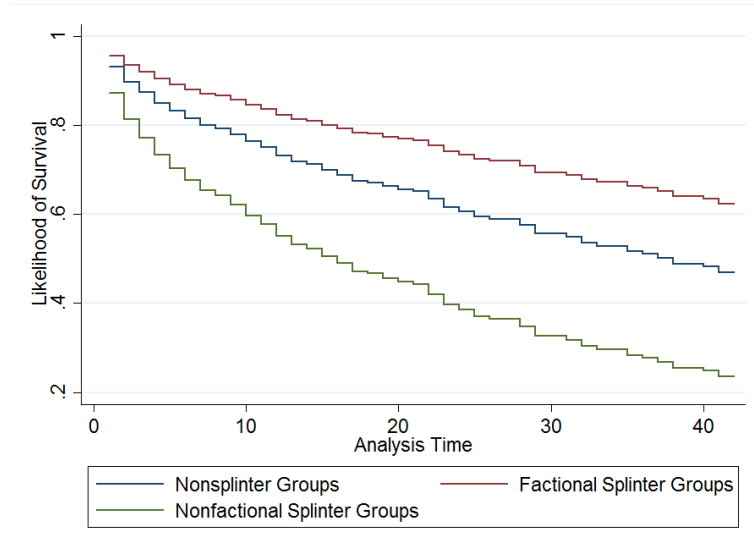


testament to the robustness of this relationship between the consistency of internal preferences and the ability for militant organizations to endure. It is also interesting that both indicators are significant in reference to *nonsplinter* organizations and not just to each other. This suggests that the effects of variation in splinter formation are not only limited to differences between splinters, subtly influencing their ability to survive, but rather that it produces a larger, more general effect that is noticeable even amongst the broader population of militant organizations.

4.1 Visualizing the Results

To make these results more easily interpretable, Figure 5.2 plots the estimated coefficients and 95% confidence intervals for each variable. Estimates that cross zero are statistically insignificant and one cannot be certain that they have a non-zero effect. From this graph it becomes immediately clear that splintering either factionally or

Figure 5.3. Survival function of factional and multidimensional splinters.



All other variables held at their mean.

multidimensionally has a profound impact on group survival. Both coefficients work in opposite directions and exert a strong influence on the likelihood of cohesion or collapse. Otherwise, leftist groups face a very uncertain future with greatly increased rates of failure, whereas communist-socialist groups and nearly nationalist-separatist groups tend to be more long-lived. The logged country population is nearly significant—possibly suggesting some weak link between population size and the ability for militants to perverse—and the dummy for nationalist-separatist groups is likewise close to significance as well.

Figure 5.3 graphically portrays the likelihood of group survival in a given year according to how it forms: either factionally or multidimensionally. The survival function is calculated with other variables held at their means using Model 5 in Table 4—the full model with all covariates and country and year fixed effects. In other words, this image plots the likelihood of groups surviving as they age.

Several things stand out: first, immediately upon formation in year one, multidimensional and factional splinters immediately have a very different likelihood of

survival: multidimensional groups are nearly 10% less likely to make it to their second year, and factional groups are even more likely than nonsplinters to survive. Interestingly, this gap widens with time. At year ten, multidimensional groups are about 50% likely to survive while factional splinters have nearly an 80% chance—a 30% difference in the likelihood of dyeing out. Overall, this image shows the effect of being either factional or multidimensional is highly influential; it exerts a drastic effect on the chance that groups endure, and groups created through factional pathways are given a major advantage in organizational cohesion that makes them increasingly durable threats.

4.2 All Splinters are Created Equal?

To further prove that not all splinter groups are created equal, Model 1 in Table 4.2 replicates the full model above but instead of identifying whether a splinter is factional or multidimensional, this new model simply includes a dummy variable denoting whether an organization is a splinter group at all. If the logic is correct that fracturing militants is a beneficial counterinsurgent and counterterrorist policy then these organizations should fail at a higher rate than nonsplinter organization regardless of whether they are factional or multidimensional.

The model estimates a highly insignificant coefficient, implying that there is virtually no discernible effect of being a splinter organization. In other words, it is neither detrimental nor beneficial; groups that emerge in this way do not exhibit strong patterns of either increased or decreased longevity.

Table 5.3. Cox Proportional Hazards Model of Organizational Longevity:
Splinter/Nonsplinter Dichotomy

	(1) Model 1
Splinter Group	0.763 (0.144)
Nationalist-Separatist	0.789 (0.137)
Communist-Socialist	0.601** (0.128)
Religious	0.879 (0.201)
Anarchist	0.745 (0.521)
Leftist	2.654*** (0.675)
Autocracy	0.565 (0.266)
Democracy	1.199 (0.334)
Regime Durability	0.991 (0.009)
GDP Per Capita (log)	0.821 (0.305)
Population (log)	1.529 (0.442)
Pent. Mountainous (log)	0.907 (0.685)
Terrorist Competitors	1.012 (0.014)
Lead Organization	0.982 (0.165)
Observations	2881

Standard errors in parentheses (clustered by group). Coefficients reported as hazard ratios.
Country and year fixed effects included in every model.

* $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

These findings imply that militant splinter groups are more nuanced than many current theories might suggest. The evidence shows that simply fracturing an organization neither produces significantly more nor significantly less durable group. Rather, these militants fail at rates similar to any other organization. However, I do find evidence of differential rates of survival when I consider variation within the splits themselves. Namely, factional splits produce much more durable organizations than do multidimensional splits, which I argue is due to the preference alignment that takes place when militant groups split factionally around a shared idea.

5 Empirical Results II: Disaggregating the Effects of Organizational Schisms

So far this empirical analysis has focused on the more basic intuition of my theory: that factional and multidimensional splintering pathways will correlate with very different likelihoods of success. I theorize this is because factional splits more consistently align the internal preferences of new splinter groups. Their singular disagreement attracts a more homogeneous and preference-aligned group of individuals that bolsters the durability of the group, making it more likely to persevere. Indeed, the results so far show this to be true: multidimensional splinter groups have a much lower chance of survival starting in year one and they become weaker as time goes on. On the other hand, there is also evidence that factional splinter groups work in the opposite direction and these splits produce organizations that are even more durable than nonsplinters and multidimensional splinters alike.

To understand the influence of different factional disputes I re-run the analyses above while disaggregating even further the type of factional splits into the reasons underlying their initial disagreement. I include dummy indicators for whether or not the split resulted from strategic, ideological, or personal reasons, in addition to whether

it was multidimensional. The reference category remains nonsplinter groups and the coefficients provide information about how splinters fare compared to nonsplinters. Post tests are used to determine differences *between* various splinters.

Table 5.4. Cox Proportional Hazards Model of Organizational Longevity:
Disaggregating Group Schisms

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Baseline	Group	Country	Environment	Full
Ideological Splinter	0.776 (0.311)	0.697 (0.256)	0.698 (0.283)	0.789 (0.316)	0.656 (0.250)
Nonfactional Splinter	1.614* (0.455)	1.935** (0.635)	1.588* (0.444)	1.719* (0.476)	1.927** (0.589)
Personal Splinter	0.934 (0.327)	0.910 (0.354)	1.047 (0.351)	0.925 (0.329)	0.994 (0.385)
Strategic Splinter	0.613* (0.155)	0.563** (0.139)	0.602** (0.155)	0.615* (0.154)	0.558** (0.139)
Nationalist-Separatist		0.797 (0.142)			0.804 (0.141)
Communist-Socialist		0.562*** (0.119)			0.574*** (0.122)
Religious		0.850 (0.197)			0.882 (0.204)
Anarchist		0.595 (0.348)			0.594 (0.339)
Leftist		2.885*** (0.743)			2.788*** (0.717)
Autocracy			0.423* (0.192)		0.508 (0.251)
Democracy			1.013 (0.277)		1.148 (0.327)
Regime Durability			0.989 (0.009)		0.991 (0.009)
GDP Per Capita (log)			0.928 (0.324)		0.783 (0.295)
Population (log)			1.464* (0.313)		1.452* (0.312)
Pent. Mountainous (log)			1.300 (0.954)		0.933 (0.709)
Terrorist Competitors				1.019 (0.015)	1.014 (0.015)
Lead Organization				0.922 (0.158)	0.981 (0.165)
Observations	2912	2912	2912	2912	2912

Standard errors in parentheses (clustered by group).

Country and year fixed effects included in every model.

Coefficients reported as hazard ratios.

* $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

Table 5 replicates each model above using the disaggregated factional split dummy variables. First, it appears that multidimensional splits generate a similar coefficient as before and remain significant in every model despite varying the controls. Additional covariates are once again introduced throughout each model.

With regards to the factional dummy variables, however, the results provide evidence against the idea of a monocausal factional effect. On the contrary, different types of factional splits have very different influences on rates of survival.

First, and most notably, only strategic splinters are associated with an increase in longevity when compared to nonsplinter organizations. The dummy indicator generates a hazard ratio that is well below one, implying that these groups have an increased chance of survival at any given point in time. This finding maintains significance throughout every model specification.

On the other hand, indicators for groups produced by ideological and personal schisms are never significant at the 10% level. In other words, these groups do not experience unique patterns of failure or survival. When they are created, they are simply expected to endure at a rate similar to any other organization.

It is interesting that the factional dummy itself was consistently significant, though it turns out when disaggregated only the strategic indicator produces a meaningful effect. This implies that factional groups as a whole are roughly similar to or more durable than nonsplinters, though the groups that are most cohesive and most likely to endure are only those from strategic splits. It appears as if this correlation was possibly driving the meaningful effect from factional dummies in the previous analyses.

Third, multidimensional splinter groups are again associated with a significant increase in the hazard of organizational failure. When a group forms multidimensionally, without a common goal for its new organization, it is much more likely to fail in any given year.

Fourth, and finally, when factional group schisms are disaggregated there are mi-

nor changes in the effects of certain control variables. While the majority remain the same—moderating effects from nationalist-separatist groups and autocracies, and increases in the hazard ratio from leftist groups—population size now generates a meaningful coefficient. Groups in more populous countries seem more tenuous and have an elevated risk of organizational failure.

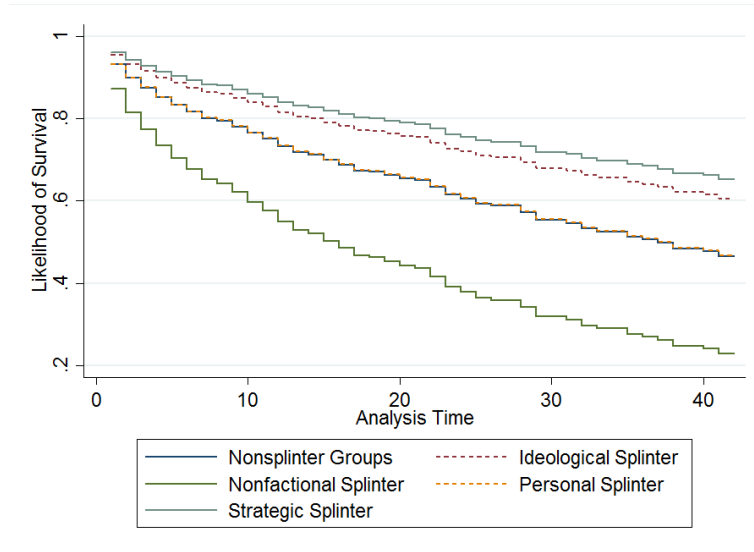
5.1 Visualizing the Results

To visualize how various types of factional and multidimensional disagreements impact survivability, Figure 5.4 plots the survival function of each while holding all other variables at their means. This graph demonstrates how different methods of group formation are associated with survival and failure while holding all other factors constant. Significant estimates are displayed as solid lines, with dashed lines being insignificant (in relation to the reference category of nonsplinter organizations).

Examining this graph, it becomes increasingly clear that there is a hierarchy of survivability. The line consistently at the top of this chart represents splinter groups that arise from strategic internal disagreements. Individuals within these groups break away from preexisting organizations to form new groups that are dedicated to reforming their actions along new, accepted strategic lines. The vast majority of these organizations form over the decision to continue or to renew violent operations, and this often happens in the context of negotiations or ceasefires, though not always. Many of the IRA splinter groups that developed in response to the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, for instance, formed in this way.

Although I originally hypothesized that all factional splits would create organizations that highly likely to survive, these results instead suggest that ideological and personal schisms produce groups that tend to survive and fail at similar rates to nonsplinters. This is still an interesting result that cuts against conventional wisdom. Rather than being weaker, these organizations are no more or no less likely to fail.

Figure 5.4. Survival function: disaggregating factional schisms.



Solid line represents statistically significant estimates at $p=.1$; dashed line for insignificant.
All other variables held at their mean.

It is important to note, as before, that ideological disputes do not only pertain to religion, but also other ideologies and worldviews such as socialism, Marxism, and changing organizational objectives. However, post-tests do reveal that although these groups act similarly to nonsplinters, they are in fact significantly more durable than groups emanating from multidimensional schisms.

The line that is consistently at the bottom of this plot represents the estimated survival of splinter groups that emerge multidimensionally. When internal preferences are largely unaligned, groups are associated with decreased survivability. multidimensional schism occur when new organizations emerge that are either the product of no overarching dispute or a multitude of disputes, and as such they attract into their new organization a varied group of individuals with wide-ranging preferences for the future. This diminishes cohesion, control, and forces then group to remain hierarchical, all of which works against their survival. These results suggest that they cease their violent activities at a much faster rate than others: at year ten, for example, they

have nearly a 20% lower likelihood of survival than a nonsplinter group and about a 30% lower likelihood than a strategic splinter group.

5.2 Further Analysis: Testing the Differences *Between* Factional Schisms

The graph above visually demonstrates how organizational formation plays a key role in driving group survival, proving that the manner in which militants form is a key component of their long-term trajectory. The space between each of these lines implies a degree of difference between rates of decay among various splinter groups. In line with my theoretical expectations, not all splinter groups exhibit similar trajectories and patterns of survival.

However, the estimates above are constructed in relation to the reference category: nonsplinter groups. Each estimate therefore provides information about the patterns of splinter longevity in relation to the mean survival of organizations that do *not* form by splitting away from a preexisting group. Consequently, these results do not shed light on the ways in which militant splinters compare to one another.

Table 5.5 displays the results from Wald tests to help understand the differences between different groups created in various types of factional and multidimensional schisms. This is equivalent to replicating the full model above in Table 5 while changing the reference category. The results suggest that there are meaningful differences between strategic splinters and both multidimensional and personal splits, with the latter two correlating with a significantly lower likelihood of survival. In other words, there is strong evidence that strategic splinter groups outlast similar multidimensional and nonsplinter organizations, all else being equal.

The Wald tests suggest that the estimates for ideological and multidimensional splinters are different from one another ($p=.023$). In other words, one can be confident that ideological schisms produce groups that tend to last longer than multidimensional

schisms. However, these tests also find no significant difference between ideological and personal, strategic, and nonsplinter groups as well.

Table 5.5. Wald tests of differences between factional splinter groups.

	Personal	Ideology	Strategy
multidimensional	.173	.023	.001
Personal	—	.277	.161
Ideology	—	—	.702

Estimates in bold are significant. Obtained from the full model in Table 5

With this information the hierarchy of organizational durability receives additional support. At the top of this is strategic splinters that appear to be the most robust, closely followed by ideological and nonsplinter groups. Then on the negative side are personal and finally multidimensional organizations.

Combining the insights from the rest of this chapter, it becomes increasingly clear that there are major differences among the survivability of splinter organizations according to how they form and the reasons motivating their initial. This analysis has proved that splinters are from being a homogeneous group of organizations and in the aggregate, internal schisms do not necessarily produce weaker, less durable militants.

6 Conclusions Regarding Organizational Survival

In this chapter I set out to empirically test my theory of organizational fragmentation on a random sample of 300 groups between 1970 and the present. Each group was researched and coded according to how it formed—either by splintering away from a preexisting group or otherwise—and if it was indeed a splinter, I coded the reasons underling the internal feud. I then used this information to empirically test how different modes of group formation covary with the likelihood of organizational survival which I operationalize as the duration of a militant group’s violent activities.

As I discuss earlier in this chapter, this operationalization is not without its flaws but it should be highly correlated with the concept I am interested in studying.

The preceding empirical analyses use iterations of the Cox proportional hazards model to understand variation in the longevity of militant organizations. The analyses control for a host of important factors that theoretically might influence group survival and endurance. For example, I include variables relating to group identity; country and operating characteristics including GDP per capita, population, competition; and indicators for regime type and regime durability.

With regards to these alternative explanations and additional covariates, I find some evidence that autocratic countries tend to experience militant groups that are increasingly durable. I somewhat expected the inverse, though it could be that militants in these countries find greater support for their dissident activity and this helps them to persevere. On the other hand, states increasing in population size appear negatively correlated with militant survival; in other words, groups in countries with higher populations, as measured by the log of the number of citizens in a given year, are more likely to cease their violent operations. This effect is somewhat surprising and more research would be needed to untangle the underlying mechanisms in action. Finally, particular types of organizations also seem to be especially durable, with nationalist-separatist and communist-socialist tending to survive to greater extents than others. Only one type of group is estimated to die out more quickly and that is leftist organizations.

These results strongly support my theory of militant group formation and survivability. My original hypothesis (H1) is that groups with more aligned internal preferences—those emerging from factional schisms—should be the most durable, as their preference consistency increases cooperation, decreases feuding and defection, and allows for decentralized organizational structures that bolster resilience. On the other hand, multidimensional groups have a greater chance of preference divergence

leading to more feuds and lower in-group unity. Consequently, I expect these organizations to be the least durable of all.

Across every model, organizations that formed multidimensionally were consistently and significantly more likely to fail at any given point in time. This was evident in the empirical models but also in more simple data visualizations and descriptive statistics presented at the beginning of this chapter. By simply averaging how long groups endure I find that multidimensional splinters last on average 4 years while for nonsplinter groups it is almost 11 years. This finding cannot be attributed to unique operating conditions since I control for a range of other theoretically-relevant factors that might influence group longevity. I also test for balance between splinter and nonsplinter organizations in Chapter 3 and I find that there are no major differences between organizations and the frequency and type of internal schisms that occur.

To further verify this results, in models listed in the appendix I also explore whether or not human rights violations, as a proxy for government repression, might influence this finding. I control for the occurrence of extrajudicial killings, disappearances, political imprisonment, and torture since it is possible that more repressive states experience more frequent multidimensional splits and, stemming from their repression, more short-lived organizations. Even with these additional covariates the results hold, with strategic splinters surviving longer and multidimensional splinters collapsing more quickly.

Interestingly, I find that factional splits do not generate a monocausal effect. In other words, the precise type of factional split conditions its influence on group survival. Although in preliminary analyses, when restricting the independent variable to either factional or multidimensional dummies, I nonetheless found a significant, enduring influence. However, when I disaggregate factional splits according to their underlying disagreements I find that not every one is associated with greater longevity. Rather, ideological and personal schisms are associated with militant splinters endur-

ing at rates similar to the mean nonsplinter organization, and only strategic schisms experience a meaningful, positive bump in durability. Although post-tests reveal that ideological groups are still more durable than multidimensional splinters, it is impossible to distinguish between groups from personal schisms and both multidimensional and nonsplinter organizations.

Ultimately, this evidence shows support for a hierarchy of splinter durability. Strategic schisms produce new militants that are the most resilient, with ideological and personal splinters trailing closely behind. Though noticeably, they are no less durable than a nonsplinter organization which is itself a meaningful finding. Finally, at the bottom of the hierarchy is multidimensional splinters that are less durable than other factional splits and also nonsplinter organizations.

Why might strategic schisms produce some of the most durable militant splinter groups? Though not directly anticipated in my theory, it could be that these fractures create organizations that are the most aligned with respect to their future actions and group behavior. When militants strongly share their views for their organizational behavior and actions on the ground, it decreases even further the chances of deviant behavior, dissatisfaction, or feuding, and it might also facilitate decentralization even more. When militants form around shared ideological or personal preferences, they do not necessarily hold similar strategic views that guide their behavior. Though groups might agree in their dissatisfaction with their parent's commitment to religious doctrine, there might still be underlying disagreement over their particular strategic direction or goals. Consequently, the type of preference alignment taking place in strategic fractures seems to be most beneficial to the survival of militant organizations.

The ultimate takeaway from this chapter is that rates of survival and failure significantly vary across militant splinter organizations according to the logic of their initial formation. Understanding why and how groups form is therefore crucial to understanding their organizational trajectory and the likelihood that they will survive

and pose a threat to both states and civilians. Militant splinter groups are not all closer to failure; while some are more likely to fall apart, other schisms produce organizations that are actually increasingly durable.

The importance of these findings from a policy perspective should be clear: fracturing groups should not be seen as an unqualified victory. On the contrary, doing so can create new organizations that are even more durable and more long-lived than the groups they depart. Instead of blindly fomenting internal feuds, policy makers should carefully consider the long term ramifications of their actions. Creating a breaking point that rallies individuals behind a common cause might ultimately be counter effective.

Chapter 6

Organizational Radicalization

1 Introduction

Under the leadership of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the Islamic State Organization broke away from Al Qaeda Central in late 2013. There were significant differences between the al-Baghdadi and Ayman al-Zaqahiri, the head of Al Qaeda, mainly over IS's strategy, behavior, and territorial expansion into Syria.¹ Al Qaeda central command even put out a statement saying "Al Qaeda announces that it does not link itself with (IS)... It is not a branch of the Al Qaeda group, does not have an organizational relationship with it and (Al Qaeda) is not the group responsible for their actions."² Within the next two years the Islamic State would develop into one of the most radical and most deadly militant organizations of the 21st century, overcoming even Al Qaeda in the brutality and the scale of its violent behavior.

The recent history of the Islamic State reveals an important question: why are some militant splinter groups more radical than others? Existing academic research fails to provide a compelling explanation for the massive variance in behavior exhibited by these organizations. Many studies implicitly assume that splinter groups will tend towards increasingly radical organizational behavior though as I discuss in Chapter Two, this logic ignores the diversity of reasons for which groups initially break apart; just as one does not expect all militants to act the same way and adopt the same tactics, one should neither expect splinters to do the same. Although there is indeed existing research on group radicalization more broadly, it tends to focus on environmental and organizational factors while ignoring how formation and the types of members drawn to the organization might ultimately influence their trajectory and decision making.

1. Liz Sly, "Al-Qaeda disavows any ties with radical Islamist ISIS group in Syria, Iraq," *The Washington Post*, February 2014,

2. Jamie Dettmer, *Al-Qaeda Denounces Syrian Jihadist Group ISIS*, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/02/03/al-qaeda-denounces-syrian-jihadist-group-isis.html>, February 2014.

This question, and its answer, has important policy implications as well. If states can understand which groups are likely to develop into increasingly capable threats to their security then they can devote more resources and enact policies earlier to counter their violent extremism before it takes hold. Understanding the conditions that lead some groups to radicalize can also help states develop more effective counterterrorism and counterinsurgent policies that avoid these types of internal fractures in the first place and even promote fractures that lead to the formation of less radical and less deadly militants.

In the following section of this chapter I more clearly delineate my concept of radicalization and I propose several means to operationalize it. I then discuss alternative hypotheses and expectations from extant research that might explain levels of radicalization either beyond or in addition to my theory of group fragmentation proposed in Chapter 2. I then outline the strategy for my empirical investigation before finally presenting the results and conclusions from this research.

The empirics presented below focus on testing the characteristics of organizational violence both in the first year of a militant group's recorded activity and then throughout their entire lifespan. I examine variation in the frequency of attacks, the number of fatalities, and the average lethality of individual attacks. I then examine the likelihood of militant groups adopting suicide bombings. In this analysis I use of out-of-sample predictions to gauge the added explanatory power of my key theoretical variable. This provides an important test of the real-world predictive power of my theory, ultimately providing one of the most robust empirical tests.

Overall, I find strong evidence to support the idea that how a group forms is intimately connected to its tactical and strategic decision-making and, overall, its observable behavior. When compared to non-splinter groups, factional splinter organizations appear much more prepared and more suited to immediately conduct deadly operations. Their operational abilities in year one alone suggest that they are

indeed unique from nonsplinter organizations in important ways and they tend to pose a much greater initial threat. I also find that *why* a splinter group breaks away provides important information about its future development. Groups emerging from strategic schisms tend to be the most deadly on a per-attack basis. On the other hand, personal and multidimensional splinters are expected to be the weakest in terms of per-attack lethality, cumulative organizational lethality, and even attack frequency. Finally, I find that the different reasons motivating splinter behavior are connected to their tactical choices and in particular the choice to adopt suicide bombings. Groups forming over ideological disagreements tend to use suicide bombs at a much greater rate than other organizations. I also find that the addition of my theoretical independent variable adds meaningful explanatory power, boosting predictive power by nearly 10%.

2 Conceptualizing and Operationalizing Group Radicalization

Before delving into this research it is important to revisit the conceptual definition of radicalization. Surveying the extant literature it is clear that scholars employ “radicalization” to mean several different things. Radicalization is often used at the individual level to describe the process of joining a terrorist or other militant organization and justifying ones involvement in the group.³ As Mandel writes, this focus on radicalization is concerned with the “motivational or cognitive preconditions ripe for terrorism.”⁴ Scholars also study radicalization in terms of the beliefs, worldviews, and interpretations that organizations and individuals employ to justify their violent actions. For instance, most Islamist and Jihadist organizations cite the same texts

3. John Horgan, “The Search for the Terrorist Personality,” in *Terrorists, Victims and Society*, ed. Andrew Silke (John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2008), 1–27; Thomas Hegghammer, “Terrorist recruitment and radicalization in Saudi Arabia,” *Middle East Policy* 13, no. 4 (2006): 39.

4. David R. Mandel, “Radicalization: What does it mean,” 2010, 101.

as do nonviolent Muslim organizations but they interpret these writings in a fundamentally different way. Scholars often label these violent, marginalized interpretations that deviate from the masses as “radical”.⁵

In addition, radicalization is often used to define particular patterns of group behavior. This is primarily what I am concerned with here and it refers to both the use and subsequently the escalation of violent activities by an organization. Although all militant groups can be considered radical to a certain extent there is nonetheless significant variation in group behavior including the types of tactics groups use and how active and deadly they become.⁶ For instance, Robert Pape and James K. Feldman, in their book *Cutting the Fuse: The Explosion of Global Suicide Terrorism and How to Stop It*, develop a theory of progressive group radicalization that culminates in the use of suicide terror that they (and many others) view as the most *radical* form of violence.⁷ This reflects one way of viewing radicalization, through the lens of tactical choices, though certainly there are other ways as well. For instance, an organization that kills significantly more citizens than its peers can equally be considered radical when compared to similar groups that pose less of a threat.

I identify four ways in particular that organizations can move up the ladder of radicalization towards the extreme: attack frequency, organizational lethality, average attack lethality, and tactical choices including the likelihood of adopting suicide bombs. I am therefore interested in uncovering the factors associated with militant groups killing more people, attacking more frequently, and using suicide bombs in their tactical arsenal.

First, radicalization can be examined in terms of attack frequency. One can think

5. Scott Atran, “The moral logic and growth of suicide terrorism,” *Washington Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (2006): 127–147; John L. Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (Oxford University Press, March 2002).

6. Bueno de Mesquita, “[Conciliation, Counterterrorism, and Patterns of Terrorist Violence](#)”; Bueno de Mesquita, “[Terrorist Factions](#).”

7. Robert A. Pape and James K. Feldman, *Cutting the fuse: The explosion of global suicide terrorism and how to stop it* (University of Chicago Press, 2010).

of groups that launch more attacks as being increasingly radicalized as they are ramping up the production of violence, causing more destruction and more terror with each incident. Certainly, simply conducting more attacks does not mean that a group is necessarily radicalizing since their attacks might avoid civilian fatalities, though combining this information with other facets of radicalization should produce a holistic image of radicalized organizational behavior.

Second, a useful way of examining the relative radicalization of militant organizations is to compare the aggregate number of fatalities they cause in a given year. Militant organizations that produce increasing numbers of civilian fatalities can be considered more radical than others as they are able, and willing, to cause greater destruction and loss of human life. Of course, the organizational fatalities is also a function of other factors like age and experience so in the following analyses I attempt to control for a wide range of possibly confounding factors.

Third, attack lethality is relatively simply means of observing organizational radicalization. This metrics aim to shed light on the deadliness and destructiveness of specific acts of violence by examining the effects (fatalities) of individual incidents. The implicit assumption here is that those groups that kill increasing numbers of individuals with their average acts of violence are more radicalized than others. Interestingly, many who have studied this issue in the past tend to avoid using the term radicalization and focus instead more narrowly on the factors increasing or decreasing fatality levels. Since most researchers, including myself, conceptualize militant decision-making as a rational, strategic process, then the choice to increase attack lethality is also rational, strategic, and intentional. As a result, groups that undertake the decision to increase the lethality of their actions can also be described as climbing the ladder of organizational radicalization.

It is also worth noting that these statistics might also increase when militant organizations are becoming more efficient. In other words, militants that, either through

experience or external assistance, are increasingly able to kill greater numbers of civilians or launch more attacks in a single year. This is certainly true and I attempt to control for the influence of learning and assistance in two ways: first, I include covariates in my empirical analyses that control for group age and external alliances that aim to directly capture variation in experience and assistance; and second, I perform a number of analyses on group behavior in their first year of recorded activity when differences in experience, alliances, and other factors are minimized. I discuss this in more depth in the following sections.

3 Competing Explanations of Group Radicalization

My theory of militant fragmentation and organizational behavior posits that splinter groups emerging from strategic disputes are the most likely to radicalize. Strategic schisms tend to take place over the increased or expanded use of violence and militant groups arising out of these circumstances attract hardliners both from their parent organization and from other groups that seek an outlet for their violent behavior. Consequently, strategic splinter groups should radicalize to the greatest extent whereas other types of factional and multidimensional splinters are unlikely to stand out.

Of course, there are numerous alternative explanations for why a militant organization might radicalize and seek out even more violent behavior. This question has not gone unstudied and there is a wealth of research on the factors that either correlate with or more directly cause a group to escalate its activities. It is important to account for these factors in the coming analyses to ensure that they are not responsible for variation in rates of radicalization and that I can in fact isolate and correctly estimate the influence of splinter formation. Surveying the extant literature, the alternative explanations for group radicalization generally fall into three camps:

competition, state characteristics, and group characteristics.

First, among all the existing explanations for why groups escalate their behavior, chief among them is intergroup competition. The underlying idea is that multiple groups in the same environment (typically conceptualized at the state level) will prompt groups to up the ante of violence and conduct increasingly violent, destructive acts in an attempt to consolidate control and prove their dedication over rivals. In other words, groups “engaged in outbidding use violence to convince the public that the terrorists have greater resolve to fight the enemy than rival groups, and therefore are worthy of support.⁸” Organizations will therefore radicalize and escalate their behavior as a means of signaling their comparative dedication and resolve.

Quantitative and qualitative evidence lends credibility to this theory, demonstrating that groups do in fact compete with one another for the support of their local communities. Bloom studies group dynamics in Palestine, Sri Lanka, and elsewhere, and she finds that competition between groups in each of these locations was a mechanism that lead to tactical escalation and ultimately the use of suicide bombings. “The more spectacular and daring the attacks, the more the insurgent organization is able to reap a public relations advantage over its rivals and/or enemies.⁹” When groups compete, she argues, they are more likely to adopt suicide bombings into their tactical arsenal since it proves their utmost dedication and willingness to achieve their goals. There is empirical evidence to support the idea of outbidding as well. Stephen Nemeth finds that the number of active militant organizations is positively correlated with the quantity of attacks by individual groups,¹⁰ though he also finds an important interaction with identity. Certain types of groups are disproportionately more likely to attempt to outbid with one another, and in particular nationalist and religious

8. Kydd and Walter, “[The strategies of terrorism](#),” 51.

9. Bloom, *Dying To Kill*, 100.

10. Stephen Nemeth, “The Effect of Competition on Terrorist Group Operations,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 2013,

groups show the highest proclivity. On the other hand, Joe Young and Mike Findley find almost no evidence of intergroup outbidding at work in a cross-national empirical assessment, calling into question the claim that is a universal phenomenon amongst militant organizations.¹¹ Despite the mixed empirical conclusions, I nonetheless control for the presence of active organizations in a state.

Second, state characteristics and actions profoundly impact the strategic decision-making of violent nonstate actors. Scholars in this camp recognize that violence is dually constructed: states influence militant violence through offensive and defensive counterinsurgent and counterterrorist policies, while militants respond in turn and react to actions by the state.

There is an extensive body of work on why and how the basic characteristics of autocratic and democratic governments influence the dynamics of subnational violence. Although the specific actions that governments take to repress and to restrict militant networks undoubtedly influences their strategic calculus,¹² these studies focus more on the innate characteristics of particular regime types and how they affect the likelihood of attacks and groups' ability to launch violent acts in the first place. For instance, the debate over whether or not democracy encourages terrorism hinges on whether interest group competition incentivizes the use of violence. Chenoweth (2010) argues that democratic political structures, which pit competing interests against one another in the political arena, ultimately lead groups to seek non-political means to achieve their goals. This is especially true for groups within an ethnic, religious, or political minority that have little chance of realizing their ultimate objectives.¹³

11. Michael G. Findley and Joseph K. Young, "More Combatant Groups, More Terror?: Empirical Tests of an Outbidding Logic," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24, no. 5 (2012): 706–721.

12. J. Lyall, "Does Indiscriminate Violence Incite Insurgent Attacks?: Evidence from Chechnya," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53, no. 3 (February 2009): 331–362; Jason Lyall and Isaiah Wilson, "Rage against the machines: Explaining outcomes in counterinsurgency wars," *International Organization* 63, no. 1 (2009): 67–106; Dugan and Chenoweth, "[Moving Beyond Deterrence The Effectiveness of Raising the Expected Utility of Abstaining from Terrorism in Israel](#)"; Perkoski and Chenoweth, "[The effectiveness of counterterrorism in Spain](#)."

13. Chenoweth, "[Democratic competition and terrorist activity](#)."

Others argue that the values exalted by democracies, like civil liberties and both press and personal freedoms restrict the the range of potential responses available to liberal government. In the end, this facilitate terrorist operatives who can move around, meet with others, and plan attacks with less oversight.¹⁴ As Martha Crenshaw writes, it could be that “democratic states whose desire to protect civil liberties constrains security measures¹⁵” and this eventually makes the production of terrorism comparatively easier.

In addition, some scholars argue that the nature of popular decision-making makes democracies and especially their citizens disproportionately more attractive targets for militants. Robert Pape argues that democracies are more commonly targeted by suicide terrorism for three reasons: first, the public is especially vulnerable to coercive punishment; second, democracies will be more restrained than autocracies in their response; and third, suicide terrorism—and terrorist attacks more generally—are easier to organize in democracies than they are in tightly-monitored non-democracies.¹⁶ This suggests that organizations in democracies are both more likely and more able to launch increasingly radical and violent attacks. Though there are some theoretical links between democracy and attack severity, as Pape demonstrates, the empirical evidence is rather scant. Wade and Reiter find no correlation between regime type and suicide terror though they do find a small effect when interacting democracy with the number of religiously-distinct minorities. Similarly, neither Horowitz and Potter (2012) nor Asal and Rethemeyer (2008) find any meaningful correlation between a country’s polity score and the severity of violence.¹⁷ Notwithstanding, I include indicators of regime type in the following analyses since is there some theoretical evidence

14. Li, “Does Democracy Promote or Reduce Transnational Terrorist Incidents?”

15. Crenshaw, “The Causes of Terrorism,” 383.

16. Pape, “The strategic logic of suicide terrorism”; Pape, *Dying to Win*.

17. Michael C. Horowitz and Philip BK Potter, “Allying to Kill Terrorist Intergroup Cooperation and the Consequences for Lethality,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 2013, 0022002712468726; Victor Asal and R. Karl Rethemeyer, “The nature of the beast: Organizational structures and the lethality of terrorist attacks,” *Journal of Politics* 70, no. 2 (2008): 437–449.

to suggest that a relationship exists despite competing mechanisms.

I also include proxies for wealth and regime durability. GDP per capita, for instance, might interact with radicalization in three ways: funding for militants might be greater in wealthier countries, making it easy for groups to purchase weapons and other supplies. Though on the other hand, wealthier countries might have more established and better equipped police forces which can more easily confront violent organizations. Lastly, if one believes that militant violence a function of economic grievances then wealthier nations with higher GDPs per capita might experience less and less severe subnational violence. With respect to regime durability (the age of the current political regime), older and more established regimes with more developed institutions might be better able to combat violent extremists and even less likely to witness violence in the first place.

Third, particular properties and characteristics of individual militant organizations are commonly connected to organizational lethality and tactical and strategic choices through a variety of mechanisms. Most significantly, scholars have found that tactical knowledge is key drivers of group lethality. When organizations possess increasing numbers of inter-organizational alliances they can share the information and skills they have learned, contributing to the diffusion of tactical capabilities across organizational lines.¹⁸ Numerous empirical studies attest to this effect. Some studies find that alliances promote the diffusion of specific tactics, like suicide bombings, aerial hijackings, and IEDs,¹⁹ while others find that groups with more alliances tend to generate higher numbers of civilian casualties over their lifetimes.²⁰ Based on this research one would subsequently expect that organizations with greater numbers of linkages and with increasing access to outside information should radicalize at a faster rate and to a greater extent.

18. Horowitz, “[Nonstate Actors and the Diffusion of Innovations.](#)”

19. *Ibid.*

20. Asal and Rethemeyer, “[The nature of the beast.](#)”

In addition to group linkages, many scholars also argue that group identity plays an important role in shaping organizational behavior. Scholars have found that particular types of organizations tend to be more lethal than others and this is especially true for religious groups. Asal and Rethemeyer, for instance, find that religious and religious/ethnonationalist organizations produce significantly more civilian casualties over the course of their existence than other groups, even when controlling for age and other important factors. The mechanism responsible for this effect is less clear, though they propose two explanations. First, that religious organizations are motivated by a supernatural audience and as a result they are less concerned with their perceived legitimacy or self-restraint. Second, and somewhat related to the first, with religious organizations there is a clear dividing line among the population: either you follow their beliefs and their religious doctrine or you do not. Consequently, “If there is a clear dividing line between members and “others”- as there is in ethnic and some religious conflicts then ideologically there is no reason to discriminate when killing.²¹” Together, they suggest that religious organizations are relatively unconstrained with their use of violence and they will tend to be more indiscriminate with their attacks when there is a clear distinction between those who do and do not subscribe to their beliefs. This should make religious organizations more deadly than similar non-religious groups. Though to be sure, other types of organizations can be just as indiscriminate and lethal as religious groups, but one would expect a higher concentration of religious organizations to seek out radical, indiscriminate tactical options.

Finally, I also include a measure of whether or not militant groups conduct attacks in multiple countries in a single year, and how old they are . The intuition behind the measure of transnationality is that groups that are able to operate across borders

21. Asal and Rethemeyer, “[The nature of the beast](#),” Citing Mark Juergensmeyer, 2003, “Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence.” 3rd edition. Berkeley: University of California Press.

might have greater capabilities and access to resources that make them more likely and more able to escalate their attacks. With regards to age, scholars find that the age of a militant organization plays a key role in its ability to adopt new tactics.²² Older groups that have more time and more experience might be more efficient militants, leading to deadlier operations that stem from their technical know-how.

These three categories of alternative explanations—competition, state characteristics, and group characteristics—represent potentially confounding rationales for group radicalization. In the empirical analyses that follow I attempt to account for the influence of these factors across groups and over time to ensure that they are not driving the observed variation in rates of radicalization. In the next section I discuss my empirical strategy and how I intend to operationalize these concepts.

4 Empirical Strategy: Measures and Methods

To test my hypotheses and the alternative explanations listed above, I employ a multifaceted empirical research design that focuses on organizational behavior in two distinct time periods.

First, I examine group behavior in an organization's initial year of activity—in other words, their first recorded year of violent operations. Second, I examine the evolution of group behavior over time across every year they are active. By comparing splinter and nonsplinter organizations in their first year of violent activity I hope to obtain a clear picture of how group formation influences organizational behavior. This first year provides a crucial view of group behavior since militants are relatively uninfluenced by factors such as intergroup alliances (which are unlikely to have formed yet) and other social, political, and organizational evolutions that occur over time. Rather, this first year is a useful measure of innate organizational capabilities and

22. Horowitz, "Nonstate Actors and the Diffusion of Innovations."

strategic goals.

On the other hand, militant organizations might not fully develop their capabilities in a single year so I complement this first-year analysis with a more traditional approach, examining group behavior over their entire lifespan. I use panel data on militant behavior to examine the entirety of group operations. With this broader perspective I am able to test whether or not group formation has a lasting impact on organizational behavior, or conversely, whether or not these effects are limited to the first few years when differences in experience between splinter and nonsplinter groups are at their maximum.

Combined, these two perspectives provide comprehensive picture of organizational radicalization. Both perspectives complement each other: the first demonstrates how groups have chosen to act initially, relatively immune to external pressures and organizational changes. However, this first year could nonetheless be unrepresentative of an organization's overall trajectory since many tactical abilities take time to develop. Examining group behavior over the course of its entire duration of violent activity can therefore reveal broader organizational trends and a clearer, more representative image of its operational pattern.

Lastly, in addition to examining yearly changes in attack characteristics, I also examine the adoption of suicide bombing. Drawing on existing research, I control for a number of factors that should influence whether or not groups incorporate suicide attacks into their tactical arsenal. Furthermore, I also use the case of suicide bombing as a means of testing the explanatory power of my theory through out-of-sample validation. In other words, I stratify my data in two and I test how my main theoretical variable influences the ability to predict the diffusion of suicide bombing across militant organizations. While the analyses above are intended to identify correlations between militant formation and unique patterns of violence, this latter method focuses on whether or not my theory actually enhances and adds to explanatory

power—something that one cannot tell from p-values and correlations alone.

4.1 Operationalizing and Modeling the Dependent Variables

To construct the dependent variables I primarily rely on attack-data from the Global Terrorism Database. In terms of the first-year analysis I focus on the number of fatalities (deaths resulting from all of a group's violent activities in its first calendar-year of activity), the number of attacks, and the average number of fatalities per attack. Fatalities provide a sense of how destructive the group is, whereas the number of total incidents gets at the organization's level of activity. The fatalities per attack, however, sheds light on how deadly the group's average attack is in a single year. In other words, it examines the relative lethality of a typical attack as measured by the total number of fatalities divided by the total number of attacks. One would expect more radical groups to cause more fatalities but also be more efficient in their individual attacks, killing more civilians with every single incident. At the group-year level I analyze the same statistics as before: group fatalities, attacks, and average attack lethality. The only difference is that these measures are constructed for each group in a particular year.

Finally, I examine whether or not there is a relationship between organizational formation and the adoption of suicide bombing which I also use to capture the level of radicalization. My theory predicts that splinters emerging from strategic disputes should be the most likely to radicalize and therefore the most likely to incorporate suicide bombs into their arsenal. To test whether or not this true, I model the likelihood that organizations ever use suicide bombings over the duration of their violent behavior. I construct a dichotomous dependent variable taking on a value of one if a group ever used a single suicide bomb and zero otherwise. As before, this variable is constructed from attack information contained in the GTD.

I model data on the frequency and lethality of militant violence with negative binomial regressions. Since each dependent variable is a non-negative count it would be improper to use another, more simple form of analysis like ordinary least squares that is not designed to handle this type of distribution. In the year-one analyses I cluster standard errors by country and I also include region and starting-year fixed effects to account for unmodeled differences across space and time that my analyses are not directly picking up.

In the group-year analyses I cluster standard errors by organization and I include country and year fixed effects. The country fixed effects account for spatial variation while the yearly fixed effects capture for unmodeled differences over time. This helps to account for variations in tactical creation and acceptance over time. For instance, some tactics like suicide bombings did not yet exist in the 1970s so there is likely a starting bias for groups that formed before the 1980s. There are other reasons to expect that rates of radicalization and group behavior have varied over time—e.g. the proliferation of terrorism might make populations more accepting of nonstate violence as a legitimate tool to achieve social change.

In the analysis of suicide bombing adoption I model the dichotomous dependent variable using logistic regression with standard errors clustered by country.²³ I also include region and starting-decade fixed effects in every model, though they are omitted from the table.

4.2 Independent Variables

The data on group formation comes from the new data set of militant organizational splintering that I discussed in more detail in Chapter Three. This data set contains information on when, how, and why militants groups splintered in a ran-

23. Although clustering the standand errors by group does not change the results in any significant way

dom sample of 300 organizations that managed to cause at least one fatality during their recorded lifespan. Data on other aspects of group characteristics, operations, and state-level variables is drawn from a variety of sources.

To account for the effects of regime type I use the Polity IV data set.²⁴ I use their measure of a country's polity score that ranges from -10, most autocratic, to 10, most democratic. Some scholars have found evidence of nonlinear relationships between a country's polity score and various aspects of militant violence, though in my own analyses the quadratic term never reached levels of significance so it was dropped from the models. The measure of regime durability also comes from the Polity project.

Data on groups identity and alliances is taken from the RAND-MIPT project on Terrorist Organizational Profiles (TOPs). To account for the influence of group identity on rates of radicalization I include dummy variables indicating nationalist-separatist, communist-socialist, religious, anarchist, and leftist ideologies. Group alliances are counted as the total number of other organizations that a particular group was known to have links to. Both the measures for group ideologies and alliances are measured cross-sectionally and do not change over time. Additionally, groups can be listed under several different ideologies at once.

To proxy for outbidding, I use the Global Terrorism Database to generate a count of the number of active organizations in a given country-year. To create this measure I first removed attacks by unknown actors and also from perpetrators that were not part of an actual group (e.g. nondescript attacks by "students" or "protesters"). I then summed the number of groups in a country-year that committed at least one attack and subtracted one to remove the group being analyzed. However, to account for the possibility that it is not *any* group that prompts outbidding behavior, but rather only groups that are relatively active, I also include the number of organizations in

24. Marshall, Jaggers, and Gurr, *Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2011*.

country-year that are responsible for at least 10 separate incidents. These groups that are especially active might represent more realistic threats to local support, prompting an escalation of violent behavior as they vie for local control. On the other hand, groups that launch fewer than ten attacks in a single year are unlikely to represent meaningful competitors and are therefore less likely to stimulate outbidding.

I also use attack statistics from the GTD to construct the dummy variable indicating transnational capabilities. Groups that launch an attack in at least two countries in a given year are coded as one, and zero otherwise. Data for GDP per capita and population comes from the Penn World Tables.

5 Violent Behavior in Year One

Why might the behavior of splinter and nonsplinter organizations differ in their first year of violent activity? Most significantly, one would expect the founding members of splinter organizations to be unique from those of non-splinter organizations since, on average, the first members of a splinter group will already have experience in clandestine non-state violent organizations. These individuals consequently bring with them important skills and technical know-how that should enable splinter groups to more plausibly “hit the ground running.” However, this dichotomy—with splinters forming with experienced members and non-splinters without—is certainly not universally true. Individuals with experience in insurgent or terrorist violence can also form an entirely new organization or even join a pre-existing group. This is one reason to explain the considerable success and ability of groups like Al Qaeda and the Taliban: both organizations benefited and even capitalized upon the experience and training their members received from their involvement in past conflicts. Most prominently, former members of the Afghan Mujahideen joined both of these groups following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, bringing with them tacti-

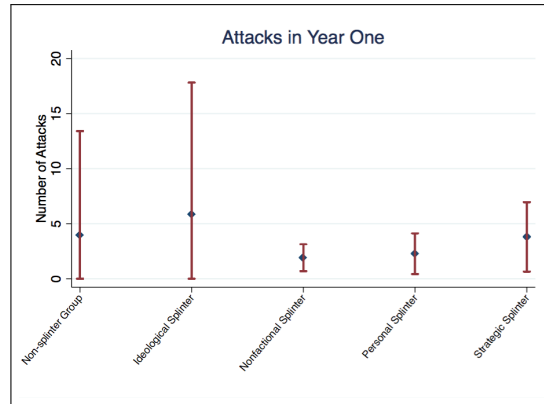
cal and operational expertise that positively contributed to the capabilities of their new organization.

Since the founders of militant splinter groups will, by definition, have experience, then one might subsequently expect the initial trajectory of splinter groups to be different from that of nascent non-splinter organizations that only *sometimes* form with experienced members. This initial gap in experience should most have its greatest impact and be most clearly visible in a group's formative years since this is should generally be when experience is at its lowest. This is further compounded by the fact that many other variables that might also influence group behavior are equally minimized in these first few years which bolsters the utility of an initial comparison. For instance, interorganizational alliances are important causeways for the diffusion of knowledge between groups²⁵ but many of these connections are unlikely to exist during these early years. And finally, as groups progress they will often expand, alter their objectives, or evolve in any number of meaningful ways, and these different events will all influence group behavior. An initial comparison will minimize the chance that these type of organizational developments will obscure our findings and consequently, this initial activity should provide a useful indication of an organization's innate capabilities and desires.

Specifically, experienced militants bring to the table technical and strategic know-how that should augment a group's killing capacity, allowing them to conduct more complex missions and increasing the efficacy and likelihood of success of individual operations. Although all splinter organizations should have increased experience vis-a-vis nonsplinter groups, only those seeking to radicalize should be most likely to

25. Horowitz and Potter, "Allying to Kill Terrorist Intergroup Cooperation and the Consequences for Lethality"; Horowitz, "Nonstate Actors and the Diffusion of Innovations"; Asal and Rethemeyer, "The nature of the beast"; Pedahzur, *Suicide terrorism*; Ami Pedahzur and Arie Perliger, "The Changing Nature of Suicide Attacks: A Social Network Perspective," *Social Forces* 84, no. 4 (June 2006): 1987–2008; Assaf Moghadam, *The globalization of martyrdom: Al Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the diffusion of suicide attacks* (JHU Press, 2008).

Figure 6.1. Mean incidents in year one; casualties per attack in year one.



capitalize upon the experience of their members.

I begin by using descriptive statistic and figures to compare militant organizations in their initial year of recorded activity. First, in Figure 6.1, I find that most splinter and non-splinter groups tend to launch similar numbers of attacks in their first year. There is rather little variation across group means and each organization is estimated to conduct between 2 and 5 attacks in its first year, with ideological groups slightly above the mean and multidimensional and personal splinters slightly below. However, the differences between these means are also statistically insignificant²⁶, suggesting that different pathways of militant formation does not have an immediate effect on their levels of activity.

Second, Figure 6.3 plots the mean levels of fatalities caused by splinter and non-splinter militant organizations in their first year according to data obtained from the Global Terrorism Database. This graph shows that strategic splinters both have a significantly higher mean and range compared to non-splinter groups. T-tests confirm that the difference between splinter groups and all others is significant at $p=.05$, suggesting that they indeed tend to be more radicalized and more deadly in their first year of recorded activity. Ideological groups are unremarkable ($p=.80$) compared

26. ANOVA, $p=.80$

Figure 6.2. Mean levels of fatalities in year one.

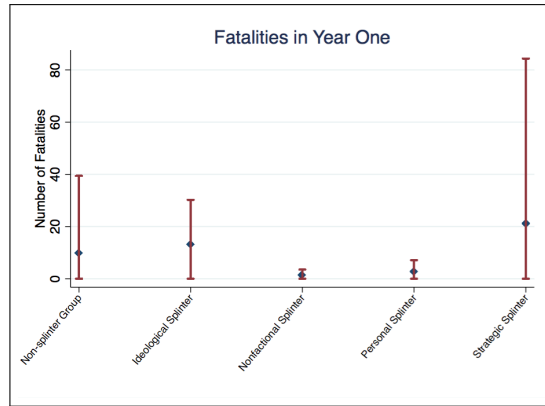
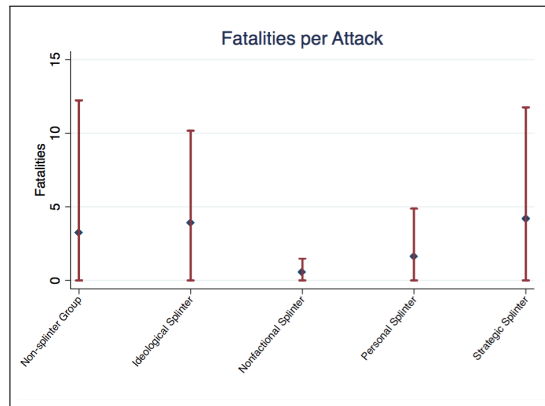


Figure 6.3. Mean fatalities per attack in year one.



to all others, while personal and multidimensional groups cause significantly fewer fatalities than strategic splinters in particular, though when compared to all other groups they are statistically indifferent ($p=.36$ and $p=.42$)

Third, and finally, I further hypothesized that experience should contribute to the conduct of more efficient and more deadly attacks. In other words, groups with experienced operatives should be increasingly able and likely to carry out attacks that are able to harm a greater number of individuals in a single event. To assess whether or not this is true, Figure 6.1 plots the average number of fatalities per attack produced by these groups in their first year. This sheds light on different groups' destructive capacity and their ability (or willingness) to conduct increasingly violent acts.

This graph suggest that there is little variation among the per-attack lethality of militant organizations upon formation. I hypothesize that splinters should be able to cause increasingly greater amounts of damage in terms of fatalities per attack. However, the evidence suggests that attacks by militant groups are relatively similar in year one and statistically indistinguishable. However, some differences arise when comparing different types of splinters. For instance, groups from strategic schisms are more lethal than multidimensional groups, and multidimensional groups are significantly less lethal than nonsplinter and ideological groups as well.

Table 6.1. Negative Binomial Regression: Initial Organizational Behavior

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Incidents	Casualties	Avg Attack Lethality
Ideological Splinter	0.680 (0.489)	0.800 (0.508)	0.753 (0.556)
Nonfactional Splinter	-0.561* (0.330)	-1.126*** (0.351)	-1.004** (0.416)
Personal Splinter	-0.244 (0.296)	-1.129*** (0.404)	-0.584 (0.369)
Strategic Splinter	0.199 (0.193)	1.140** (0.476)	0.758* (0.419)
Nationalist-Separatist	-0.060 (0.161)	0.368 (0.230)	0.172 (0.189)
Communist-Socialist	0.018 (0.253)	-1.018*** (0.353)	-1.210*** (0.246)
Religious	-0.097 (0.250)	-0.764** (0.327)	-0.564*** (0.215)
Anarchist	-0.625 (0.563)	-2.807** (1.114)	-2.773*** (0.938)
Leftist	-0.962*** (0.304)	-0.802 (0.595)	-0.733* (0.433)
Polity Score	-0.020 (0.017)	-0.077*** (0.028)	-0.033 (0.025)
Observations	286	286	286

Standard errors in parentheses (clustered by country).

Region and starting-decade fixed effects included but omitted from the table.

* $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

of militant organizations though they do not account for potentially confounding factors like group identity that might influence strategic decision-making even in year one. In response, I empirically model this data to better understand the drivers of these observable differences. Table 5 displays the results from empirical analyses that control for baseline group factors that might influence organizational activity: group identity, a country's Polity score, and region and decade fixed effects to account for differences across countries and over time.

The results largely confirm what was suspected above even when modeling the data with additional covariates. The dummy indicator for personal and multidimensional splinters generates a negative and statistically significant effect across nearly every model. On the other hand, ideological splinters are largely unremarkable from nonsplinter groups (except for the number of fatalities they generate), while the dummy for strategic splinters results in a positive, significant coefficient in two of the three models: fatalities and fatalities per incident, though not for the cumulative number of year-one incidents. This was to be expected as I posited that experience would result in augmented attack capabilities but not necessarily a greater frequency of attacks.

Stepping back and taking stock of this information one can infer some important differences between the manner in which splinter and non-splinter organizations behave in their first year of activity. What stands out most prominently from this analysis is that experience does not universally create more effective militant organizations. I initially theorized that the added experience that splinter groups bring to bear should enable them to be more effective purveyors of violence. However, I find strong evidence that this is not universally true: only some splinter groups were able to, or possibly desired to, capitalize upon the added experience of their members. Groups emerging from strategic schisms tend to be the deadliest and the most likely to adopt some of most radical organizational behavior. They tend to cause greater

fatalities and have a higher per-attack fatality level than all others. One could also argue that the added organizational cohesion allows these groups to capitalize upon this experience and translate it into more effective attacks. However, it might also be that intentions matter just as much: the theory presented in Chapter 2 posits that strategic splinters are the most likely to radicalize since the majority of these disagreements arise over the use of *more* or *more severe* violence. Thus, it is potentially a combination of both the ability and the desire to radicalize that produces the observed results. It is difficult to determine from this single analysis which interpretation is correct though the case studies in the following chapter shed light on this question. Either way, the information presented above makes it clear that even initially, the trajectories of militant organizations are strongly shaped by their initial formation.

6 Yearly Patterns of Violent Behavior

In this section I examine organizational behavior over the entire lifespan of militant organizations, focusing on patterns of attacks in every single year. For each of the dependent variables I run five separate models: the first includes only splintering characteristics in addition to country and year fixed effects (which are in every model but omitted from the tables); the second adds more group-level factors to the equation including age, identity, and whether it is transnational; the third model omits these group level factors to focus on country characteristics including Polity score, regime durability, GDP per capita (logged), population (logged), and finally, the number of competitors, which is disaggregated into those groups conducting fewer than 10 and more than 10 incidents in a given year. Finally, model 5 includes all of these variables as well as a numeric indicator describing the number of alliances an organization ever forged. This is included last since it reduces the number of observations due to missingness.

As I mentioned, since each of the dependent variables are non-negative counts I employ negative binomial regressions with standard errors clustered by group. For the sake of time and space, I will not discuss every model and variable individually but rather I will focus on the main takeaways from each analysis and end with a discussion of the overall findings.

6.1 Attack Frequency

The first analysis is presented in Table 6.1. The unit of analysis is the group-year, and I examine the total number of organizational attacks in a single year. In line with H2, I would expect militant groups forming from strategic schisms to be the most active.

The results find evidence of a relationship between group formation and attack frequency. In terms of splintering characteristics I find strong evidence that multi-dimensional and personal splinter groups launch fewer attacks over their lifetimes. These findings remain significant throughout every model despite the addition of different controls, a testament to the robustness of their influence. Although I also found that these groups are the most short-lived, this should have no direct influence on the number of attacks in a single year. Also, I control for group age precisely to account for this effect. Nonetheless, it could be that personal and multidimensional splinters, those with the lowest levels of internal cohesion and organizational capital, find it difficult to launch sustained campaigns of attack.

Conversely, the dummy indicators for ideological and strategic splinter groups fail to generate any meaningful effect so one cannot reject the null that their patterns of attack are unequal to those for nonsplinter groups.

Moving on, introducing group and environmental characteristics into the models slightly diminishes the effect size of personal and multidimensional splinters though the magnitude is indeed quite small. The significance, however, remains the same.

Table 6.2. Negative Binomial Regression: Yearly Attacks

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Ideological Splinter	-0.254 (0.394)	-0.178 (0.298)	-0.363 (0.356)	-0.263 (0.270)	-0.225 (0.249)
Nonfactional Splinter	-1.113*** (0.330)	-1.126*** (0.287)	-1.108*** (0.255)	-1.127*** (0.287)	-0.992*** (0.328)
Personal Splinter	-1.937*** (0.345)	-1.624*** (0.231)	-1.712*** (0.282)	-1.420*** (0.200)	-1.413*** (0.250)
Strategic Splinter	-0.351 (0.336)	-0.254 (0.172)	-0.334 (0.225)	-0.221 (0.168)	-0.170 (0.182)
Group Age		0.030*** (0.011)		0.033*** (0.011)	0.028** (0.013)
Nationalist-Separatist		0.303* (0.165)		0.336** (0.159)	0.254 (0.182)
Communist-Socialist		0.478** (0.198)		0.540*** (0.188)	0.515** (0.202)
Religious		0.389** (0.181)		0.427** (0.170)	0.315* (0.177)
Anarchist		1.051*** (0.349)		1.054*** (0.385)	0.953** (0.405)
Leftist		0.118 (0.305)		0.118 (0.307)	0.183 (0.378)
Transnational		1.321*** (0.119)		1.270*** (0.117)	1.188*** (0.117)
Polity Score			0.048*** (0.015)	0.049*** (0.016)	0.036** (0.017)
Polity 2 Squared			0.004 (0.004)	0.003 (0.003)	0.004 (0.003)
Regime Durability			0.003 (0.011)	0.008 (0.009)	0.012 (0.009)
GDP Per Capita (log)			-0.604** (0.271)	-0.214 (0.253)	0.187 (0.280)
Population (log)			0.415*** (0.144)	0.413*** (0.152)	3.367*** (0.669)
Low-Level Competitors			0.008 (0.013)	0.008 (0.012)	0.005 (0.013)
High-Level Competitors			0.092*** (0.020)	0.076*** (0.017)	0.058*** (0.017)
Organizational Alliances					0.040 (0.050)
Observations	2019	2019	1991	1991	1877

Standard errors in parentheses (clustered by group).

Country and year fixed effects included but omitted from the results.

* $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

Otherwise, there is evidence that both certain country and group-level factors have an effect. Group age, the substantive effects of which are plotted in Figure 6.4, appears to be positively correlated with attack frequency. Certain types of organizations are also more active: nationalist-separatist, communist-socialists, religious, and anarchist. This is in reference to omitted categories such as environmental, racist, right-wing, and anti-globalization. Transnational groups also attack more frequently. Finally, and somewhat surprisingly, militants with increasing number of intergroup alliances appear no more or less likely to launch attacks in a given year. Although there are few theoretical links between connections and attack frequency since groups do not necessarily need tactical know-how to simply launch an attack.

In terms of country characteristics, the Polity score variable is estimated to have a positive effect, such that more democratic countries experience greater numbers of attacks. The log of population is also positive and significant, implying that militants in larger countries more frequently launch attacks. Finally, I also find evidence that outbidding is not universally associated with any organizations, but rather only by those groups launching at least ten attacks in a single year. Though there is little precedence for this in existing research, this supports my intuition that it is only legitimate competitors that cause their peers to escalate their violence to win over local support.

6.2 Fatalities

Moving on, I next examine the total number of fatalities that groups cause in a given year. I run models identical to those above, with the same variables in the same progression, to facilitate comparison.

As before, in the most restrictive model with only splintering characteristics and country and year fixed effects, the results suggest that splinters from multidimensional and personal schisms cause significantly fewer fatalities in a given year. The coefficient

Table 6.3. Negative Binomial Regression: Yearly Fatalities

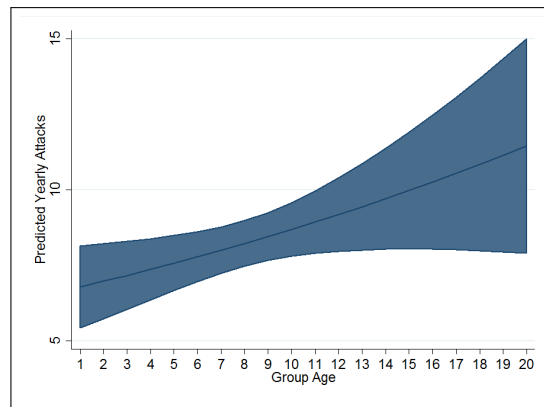
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Ideological Splinter	-0.194 (0.805)	-0.074 (0.372)	-0.386 (0.574)	-0.222 (0.341)	0.077 (0.304)
Nonfactional Splinter	-1.393*** (0.281)	-1.183*** (0.390)	-1.567*** (0.356)	-1.415*** (0.428)	-1.354*** (0.426)
Personal Splinter	-2.077*** (0.573)	-1.880*** (0.491)	-1.791*** (0.529)	-1.639*** (0.523)	-2.224*** (0.593)
Strategic Splinter	0.021 (0.535)	-0.001 (0.235)	-0.045 (0.317)	0.044 (0.228)	0.006 (0.219)
Group Age		0.020 (0.016)		0.026* (0.016)	0.013 (0.016)
Nationalist-Separatist		0.049 (0.253)		0.101 (0.242)	0.005 (0.237)
Communist-Socialist		-0.033 (0.268)		0.004 (0.254)	-0.033 (0.251)
Religious		0.321 (0.243)		0.323 (0.231)	0.227 (0.244)
Anarchist		1.145** (0.459)		1.255*** (0.460)	0.995** (0.417)
Leftist		-0.888* (0.533)		-0.944* (0.550)	-0.482 (0.671)
Transnational		1.496*** (0.137)		1.423*** (0.137)	1.255*** (0.124)
Polity Score			0.026 (0.017)	0.033** (0.017)	0.020 (0.019)
Polity 2 Squared			0.007 (0.004)	0.007* (0.004)	0.009** (0.004)
Regime Durability			-0.010 (0.011)	-0.004 (0.008)	0.002 (0.008)
GDP Per Capita (log)			-0.564* (0.324)	-0.239 (0.307)	-0.177 (0.307)
Population (log)			0.519*** (0.178)	0.494*** (0.167)	4.353*** (0.887)
Low-Level Competitors			-0.034** (0.017)	-0.042** (0.018)	-0.041** (0.019)
High-Level Competitors			0.190*** (0.026)	0.166*** (0.023)	0.155*** (0.024)
Organizational Alliances					0.080* (0.042)
Observations	2019	2019	1991	1991	1877

Standard errors in parentheses (clustered by group).

Country and year fixed effects included but omitted from the results.

* $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

Figure 6.4. Predicted number of yearly attacks and group age.



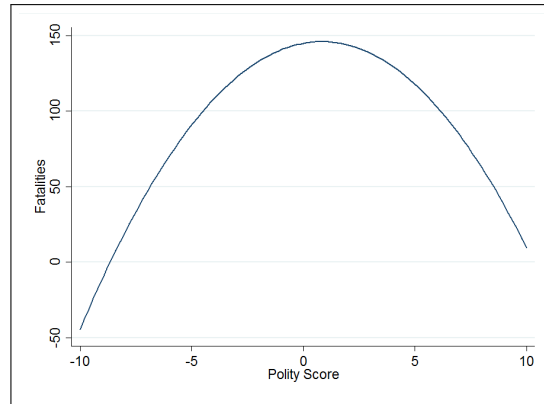
on strategic and ideological splinters is very close to zero and highly insignificant, suggesting no meaningful difference between these organizations in terms of fatalities from their attacks. These findings hold as successive covariates are introduced.

Otherwise, as one would expect, group age generates a positive effect though this drops out when alliances are added in Model 5. However, this could be due to dropped observations as well. Otherwise, anarchist and transnational groups tend to have higher fatality counts, while those for leftist groups is much reduced.

The measure of regime type as proxied by polity score and the significant coefficient on its quadratic term suggest that regime type has a nonlinear effect. This relationship is plotted in Figure 6.5. This shows that militants in anocratic states, those that are partly autocratic and partly democratic, are the deadliest and cause the most fatalities in a given year. Groups in pure autocracies, with a polity score of -10, seem the least destructive, followed by those in pure democracies (polity=-10). Population also has an important effect on group lethality, with larger populations being associated with more active militant groups. This is highly significant across every model.

Finally, the model also finds an interesting relationship between group competition and the escalation of violence. Notably, low level and high-level competitors generate

Figure 6.5. Predicted number of yearly attacks and polity score.



meaningful, though different, effects on group behavior. Greater numbers of low-level competitors are correlated with fewer fatalities in a given year, while high-level competitors drive up the lethality of violent behavior. It could be that in conflicts with many low-level competitors, each individual group is not as pressured to escalate violence since only minor escalations allow them to stand out. Conversely, when there are many active, high-level competitors, groups are forced to launch greater and more frequent attacks in a given year to make themselves known. Nonetheless, this finding adds nuance to current theories of outbidding.

Model 5, as before, introduces the organizational alliances variable that drops the total possible number of observations. Interestingly, I find that it only has a small and barely-significant impact on group lethality though it does generate a coefficient in the expected direction (positive). As anticipated, groups with increased numbers of linkages tend to kill more civilians in a single year.

6.3 Attack Lethality

My final analysis of group behavior focuses on the relationship between formation and the per-attack lethality of militant organizations. If my theory is correct, strategic splinter organizations should have the highest average lethality of all organizations

as they capitalize upon the experience of their members to launch more effective and more deadly acts of violence. Similar to before, I run a series of five models with increasing numbers of controls that mimic those presented above.

With only splintering characteristics and region and year fixed effects the model estimates that the per-attack fatalities from multidimensional splinter organizations tend to be significantly lower. This effect remains throughout every model despite controlling for a host of country and group-specific factors. The fact that this estimate is consistently significant below the .05 level is testament to the robustness of this relationship. Interestingly, the dummy indicator for groups emerging from personal schisms generates a negative effect but it only reaches significance at the 10% level in the final model with full controls. Together, these findings once again suggest that personal and multidimensional militant splinter groups tend to be the least radicalized and the least deadly.

Interestingly, and in line with my expectations, the dummy indicator for strategic splinter groups produces a positive and statistically significant effect in four of the five models, and it only misses significance in Model 1 where it nonetheless generates nearly the same coefficient. This suggests that the attacks stemming from these organizations tend to be much more efficient in their killing capacity.

Otherwise, in terms of the control variables, communist-socialist and leftist groups tend to conduct less lethal attacks, while those with transnational capabilities appear to be significantly deadlier. This is understandable as groups that are able to operate across borders are likely to be more developed and have greater resources at their disposal.

Some interesting findings emerge from the country characteristics as well. Militant groups operating under more durable nations, as defined by the age of the current regime, tend to launch less deadly attacks in a given year. It could be that these countries are more effective at reducing casualties after an attack or penetrating

Table 6.4. Negative Binomial Regression: Yearly Average Attack Lethality

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Ideological Splinter	0.236 (0.380)	0.262 (0.225)	0.208 (0.243)	0.228 (0.210)	0.426* (0.227)
Nonfactional Splinter	-0.641* (0.361)	-0.610* (0.314)	-0.750** (0.362)	-0.737** (0.341)	-0.904*** (0.336)
Personal Splinter	-0.448 (0.358)	-0.419 (0.358)	-0.224 (0.386)	-0.208 (0.406)	-0.670* (0.406)
Strategic Splinter	0.311 (0.208)	0.351** (0.155)	0.315** (0.145)	0.365** (0.149)	0.231* (0.139)
Group Age		-0.000 (0.010)		-0.001 (0.010)	-0.009 (0.010)
Nationalist-Separatist		-0.231 (0.164)		-0.184 (0.155)	-0.207 (0.138)
Communist-Socialist		-0.486*** (0.188)		-0.512*** (0.181)	-0.558*** (0.189)
Religious		-0.028 (0.146)		-0.090 (0.141)	-0.039 (0.131)
Anarchist		0.067 (0.290)		0.214 (0.276)	0.142 (0.238)
Leftist		-1.058*** (0.298)		-0.984*** (0.289)	-0.818*** (0.320)
Transnational		0.273*** (0.103)		0.269** (0.109)	0.139 (0.107)
Polity Score			-0.020 (0.013)	-0.021* (0.013)	-0.018 (0.013)
Polity 2 Squared			0.003 (0.003)	0.004 (0.003)	0.005 (0.003)
Regime Durability			-0.011** (0.005)	-0.009* (0.005)	-0.009* (0.005)
GDP Per Capita (log)			-0.439* (0.243)	-0.414* (0.241)	-0.592** (0.245)
Population (log)			0.366 (0.257)	0.276* (0.157)	0.752 (0.682)
Low-Level Competitors			-0.064*** (0.012)	-0.069*** (0.012)	-0.059*** (0.011)
High-Level Competitors			0.115*** (0.018)	0.113*** (0.018)	0.111*** (0.017)
Organizational Alliances					0.055*** (0.008)
Observations	2019	2019	1991	1991	1877

Standard errors in parentheses (clustered by group).

Country and year fixed effects included but omitted from the results.

* $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

militant groups to disrupt their attack capabilities. The same is true for GDP per capita which generates a negative, significant effect in every model.

Finally, I find the same relationship as before between high and low-level militant competitors and the level of violence. Greater numbers of high-level competitors, as defined by groups that launch 10 or more attacks in a single year, are associated with an increase in the average lethality of militant violence. The opposite is true of low-level competitors that launch fewer than 10 attacks in a single year that are associated with less lethal attacks. And, as expected, organizational alliances are associated with more deadly violence, possibly because these alliances help to transfer knowledge and capabilities that translate to greater lethality.

6.4 Conclusions: Organizational Behavior in Year One and Beyond

What do these findings so far suggest about the patterns of behavior of splinter and nonsplinter militant organizations? The results are summarized in Table 6.5.

Table 6.5. Summary of findings: splinter formation and patterns of radicalization.

	Attack Frequency		Casualties		Attack Lethality	
	Year 1	Total	Year 1	Total	Year 1	Total
Ideological Splinters	—	—	—	—	—	—
Strategic Splinters	—	—	↑	—	↑	↑
Personal Splinters	—	↓	↓	↓	—	—
Multidimensional Splinters	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓

Only significant estimates shown.

First, and foremost, these analyses demonstrate that multidimensional splinter organizations often operate in a manner that is distinct both from other splinter organi-

zations and also from nonsplinter groups as well. Across each of the metrics explored above—yearly attacks, yearly fatalities, and average attack lethality—nonfictional splinter groups are associated with a decrease in each, both in their first year of activity and also well into their future. In other words, they tend to conduct fewer attacks in a any given year, kill fewer people, and their typical attack is on average less deadly. This influence persists throughout their entire lifespan and it suggests that the heterogeneous mix of individuals attracted by the group that negatively affects cohesion—as I demonstrate in Chapter Five—also poses an enduring challenge to the group’s operational capabilities.

Personal splinter organizations tended to follow similar patterns to multidimensional splinters though the evidence is less overwhelming. In virtually every model, the dummy indicating multidimensional status was typically significant and negative, though the same is only sometimes true for personal splinters. Specifically, the empirical results suggest that militants emerging from personal disputes tend to launch slightly fewer attacks and kill slightly fewer individuals when compared to nonsplinter organizations. In terms of the average attack, however, their killing capacity appears comparable to others.

Ideological splinters were almost never estimated to act differently from nonsplinter organizations though post-tests reveal that they are generally both more active and deadlier than personal and multidimensional militant splinter groups. This is interesting though not all that surprising: my theory suggests that only strategic splinters will radicalize as they attract greater proportions of tactical and strategic hardliners, though there is nothing to suggest that ideological splinters will attract a distinct membership base. Although their membership might be united by a shared ideological interest, it is not certain that these individuals will also hold distinct tactical or strategic views. Consequently, it is no surprise that they act similarly to the mean nonsplinter organization.

Some of the most interesting results concern the patterns of behavior of strategic splinter organizations. The empirical results suggest that strategic splinters are largely comparable nonsplinter organizations in the frequency of their attacks. However, they tend to kill significantly more individuals in their first year of activity though this effect dissipates over time and they again appear similar to nonsplinters. Yet, both in their first year and beyond, militant groups from strategic schisms tend to launch deadlier attacks. The average number of casualties stemming from individual attacks was significantly higher both in the first year and also throughout the group's entire lifespan.

My original hypothesis is that strategic splinter organizations would be the most likely to radicalize across all three metrics. I did not expect the other type of militant splinters to act in a manner distinct from the average nonsplinter group since they are not particularly driven by the overwhelmingly radical preferences of their members. Overall, the hypothesis receives moderate support since the per-attack lethality of militant splinters is significantly higher. It could be, for instance, that tactical hardliners press for deadlier attacks though not necessarily for more attacks. This is something I will seek to understand further in the case study that follows in Chapter Six.

Why might multidimensional splinter groups be less radical and less deadly than other groups? As I briefly mentioned above, it could be that the weaker internal cohesion of these organizations negatively affects their operational capability. Militants that are beset by internal feuding and low cooperation might find it increasingly difficult plan and successful launch attacks, and especially complex missions that manage to kill a large number of individuals. Consequently, these groups might not necessarily choose this path though their level of internal preference inconsistency prohibits them from escalating their operations and sustaining the use of violence.

Finally, these results demonstrate that the effects of group formation are neither

limited nor short lived. While some effects only appear in year-one and others only in the cumulative analysis, the same general patterns were evident throughout a groups' entire lifespan. For instance, although strategic splinters killed the most individuals in year one, their attack lethality was consistent throughout both year one and beyond. Personal and multidimensional groups also showed diminished rates of radicalization at both time periods, while ideological groups were indistinguishable from nonsplinter in every analysis and again in both time periods. Ultimately, this suggests that group formation does indeed generate an enduring, long-lasting effect on the behavior of militant organizations.

7 The Adoption of Suicide Bombing

The above analyses demonstrate that splinter organizations have very different organizational trajectories that correspond to the nature of their the disagreement with their parent. In this section of the paper I examined whether or not this pattern extends to their tactical choices and in particular, the adoption of suicide bombing.

In the following analyses I examine whether or not an organization ever adopts suicide bombings at any point during its entire lifespan. Thus, the data is cross-sectional and the dependent variable takes on a value of one if a particular group ever launches a suicide bombing mission, and zero otherwise. I include many of the same dependent variables as before though I make two minor modifications. First, and most broadly, since the data is no longer time series I cannot make use of yearly indicators relating to GDP and regime type. However, I still want to include many of these variables so instead of using their yearly level, for each group I take the maximum value witnessed over their lifetimes. I use the maximum Polity score, regime durability, GDP per capita, population, and the number of high and low-level domestic competitors. I chose to use the maximum value, over the minimum or even the mean,

Table 6.6. Logistic Regression: Adoption of Suicide Bombing

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Ideological Splinter	0.474 (0.787)	0.238 (0.961)	1.167 (0.725)	1.095 (0.794)	1.970** (0.775)
Nonfactional Splinter	-0.098 (1.116)	-0.150 (0.911)	0.745 (1.018)	0.918 (0.567)	1.313** (0.621)
Personal Splinter	-0.231 (0.660)	0.754 (1.567)	0.187 (0.789)	1.122 (1.869)	1.425 (1.494)
Strategic Splinter	-0.137 (0.587)	-1.203 (0.854)	-0.329 (0.669)	-1.410* (0.831)	-1.934*** (0.625)
Group Duration		0.347*** (0.057)		0.354*** (0.087)	0.302*** (0.090)
Group Duration Squared		-0.006*** (0.002)		-0.005** (0.003)	-0.004* (0.003)
Nationalist-Separatist		0.069 (0.549)		0.514 (0.685)	0.227 (0.693)
Communist-Socialist		0.681 (0.489)		1.173** (0.598)	0.636 (0.673)
Religious		1.863*** (0.480)		1.817*** (0.504)	
Anarchist		-2.456*** (0.941)		-1.084 (1.113)	-1.767 (1.330)
Leftist		-0.420 (0.958)		-0.580 (1.078)	0.480 (0.997)
Transnational		0.767* (0.398)		0.765* (0.430)	0.767 (0.510)
Max Polity Score			0.038 (0.042)	0.006 (0.049)	-0.036 (0.044)
Max Regime Durability			0.021 (0.018)	0.016 (0.017)	0.018 (0.014)
Muslim Majority Country			2.778*** (1.005)	2.748*** (0.891)	3.102*** (0.916)
Max GDP Per Capita (log)			0.104 (0.268)	0.060 (0.310)	0.303 (0.228)
Max Population (log)			0.052 (0.101)	0.091 (0.098)	-0.029 (0.067)
Low-Level Competitors			-0.062* (0.032)	0.007 (0.038)	0.009 (0.026)
High-Level Competitors			0.543*** (0.163)	0.075 (0.091)	0.047 (0.085)
Organizational Alliances					0.165* (0.097)
Observations	286	286	286	286	235

Standard errors in parentheses (clustered by country).

Region fixed effects included but omitted from the results due to space limitations.

* $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

to capture the most extreme conditions that these organizations face. Though I also rerun these models using the minimum and mean values and the results are virtually the same.

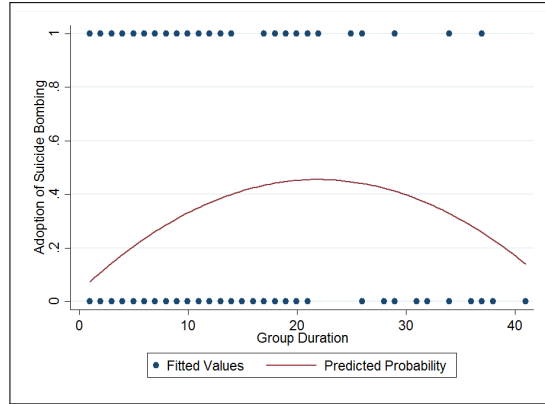
Second, I include whether or not a militant group's home country is majority Muslim. Some have argued that suicide terrorism has a specific connection to Islam over other religions. Certainly, the recent history of suicide terrorism invokes an anecdotal connection to Muslim states and religious violence. I therefore include a dichotomous measure representing whether a country is predominantly Muslim. Although it is worth noting that this variable looks at a country's population and not whether the group perpetrating the attacks is itself Islamic. As others have aptly pointed out, this might produce a significant result if, for instance, the groups using suicide terror are merely most active in majority-Muslim states. In other words, this analysis cannot on its own distinguish between alternative explanations for a possible correlation.

I model this data using logistic regression with standard errors clustered by country, and for each model I include region and starting-decade fixed effects. This is designed to account for the very different rates of suicide bombing usage across regions and over time. Middle Eastern organizations that formed after the 1980s are much more likely to use and to be exposed to this tactic, so I used fixed effects to account for this temporal and spatial variation.

7.1 Empirical Results: Suicide Bombing Adoption

The results are presented above in Table 7. Notably, I find very different rates of adoption between splinter organizations. Most prominently, strategic splinter groups are significantly less likely to adopt suicide bombs as a tactic of violence over the course of their existence. The coefficient on strategic splinters is consistently negative but it only reaches significance in the final two models when the most controls are added. On the other hand, ideological groups appear more likely to use suicide bombs

Figure 6.6. Likelihood of adopting suicide bombings by group age.



with a significantly increased probability in the final model. This is a a substantively largely effects as well.

However, I am not entirely confident in these two findings, specifically the relationship between strategic and ideological splinters and the use of suicide bombings, as the statistically significant effects only appear in Model 5 when organizational alliances are introduced. Adding this variable drops the number of observations significantly so I am worried that the results are influenced by missingness.²⁷ Although the number of observations drops, it is reassuring that the same general patterns are visible in multiple model specifications which lends some additional credibility.

Otherwise, the results are largely consistent with existing research: religious groups, those in Muslim-majority countries, and those with transnational operations are all associated with higher rates of suicide bombing usage and adoption. There is also moderate evidence that competition plays a role, with high level competitors producing a positive effect and low-level competitors producing a negative effect. In other words, groups are more likely to adopt suicide bombing when the environment is home to a greater number of highly-active militant organizations.

27. I cannot re-code the number of alliances and fill in the variable's missingness since there is no documentation on the precise manner in which this variable is coded. When better data is available I plan to update these analyses. Until that time, however, this is the best option.

There is also a consistent relationship between organizational duration and the use of suicide bombing that is plotted in Figure 6.6. It is important to note that this variable refers to the duration of a group's violent activities and not the age at which the tactic was adopted, which is how others (e.g. Horowitz 2010) conceptualize it. The graph shows that the likelihood of adopting the tactic increases until groups reach about 25 years of age, at which point the probability decrease. This is in line with existing work that finds that younger organizations, that are more organizational flexible, are the most likely to adopt this particularly disruptive tactic.²⁸

7.2 Assessing Explanatory Power through Out-of-Sample Validation

These results demonstrate that group formation is important to consider when predicting the spread of suicide bombing and also to explaining variation in rates of radicalization more broadly. However, relying on p-values and correlations to generate policy-relevant findings is problematic for two reasons. First, statistical significance in observational studies informs us about correlations *among* the data being studied. This can be problematic when the results do not generalize beyond the cases that are contained within one's data set. As Hill and Jones write, "researchers may be discovering a relationship that is the result of the unusual features of a particular dataset rather than a meaningful, generalizable relationship... It has been demonstrated elsewhere that selecting sets of covariates based on p-values can result in models with significant (at the 0.05 level) coefficients for variables whose relationship with some response variable is truly random."²⁹ This is obviously troublesome: if statistical findings do not extend from a sample to the broader population then the results are of little value to either academics or policymakers who are concerned with

28. Horowitz, "Nonstate Actors and the Diffusion of Innovations."

29. Daniel W. Hill and Zachary M. Jones, "An Empirical Evaluation of Explanations for State Repression," *American Political Science Review* 108, no. 03 (2014): 665.

cases not contained in the original sample.³⁰ Second, focusing purely on p-values obscures the relative predictive power of different covariates. A higher or lower p-value is evidence of a correlation, but it says nothing about the utility of this specific variable in predicting or anticipating future outcomes or even outcomes not contained in the data set. Michael Ward and colleagues aptly summarize the problem with relying on p-values:

If the models have succeeded in capturing the underlying relationship between the independent and dependent variables, then the models should continue to perform well when presented with a new set of data. If, however, the models merely provide a detailed description of the relationships that happen to exist in the original dataset without capturing their underlying causal relations (in other words, if the models suffer from overfitting), their ability to make correct predictions in a new dataset will turn out to be much poorer.³¹

In this section I aim to tackle this question head-on and to find out if my theory does in fact improve predictive capacity. If it does not, then this information is of little use since other variables can provide more information about the types of groups that are likely to employ suicide bombs at some point in their existence. However, if my theoretical distinction between nonsplinter and various types of splinter groups *can* improve explanatory capacity then this would strongly suggest that scholars can leverage this information in their own research to improve their explanatory and predictive abilities.

I test my theory's relative explanatory power by assessing the marginal predictive power of my main independent variable. Essentially, I examine how the predictive

30. Michael D. Ward, Brian D. Greenhill, and Kristin M. Bakke, "The perils of policy by p-value: Predicting civil conflicts," *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 4 (July 2010): 364.

31. *Ibid.*, 370.

power of Model 5 in Figure 7—the full model—changes when my main independent variable is excluded compared to when it is included. If my theory has meaningful predictive power then the full model should significantly outperform the restricted model.

As I mentioned, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to test my theory’s predictive power by simply comparing correlations and p-values within and between statistical models. I therefore opt to use a method called out-of-sample validation. Although this has been popular among many fields to assess a model’s predictive power, it is relatively new to political science in particular.³² I test my model’s predictive power by subsetting the data into two samples and using estimates obtained from the first sample (the in-sample population, also called the training set) to predict the outcomes of the second sample (the out-of-sample population). Ward and colleagues used this method to test the predictive capacity of variables related to the onset of civil war, and Chenoweth and Ulfelder use it to test different predictions related to the onset of nonviolent resistance,³³ and Hill and Jones have used it to compare the utility of models predicting state repression.³⁴

Out-of-sample validation provides a number of benefits over more traditional methods of comparing model performance. First, by testing predictive power, it is ultimately verifying the model’s ability to provide the type of information that policy-makers want. If one can be sure that a model has predictive power then it can be used to understand new and evolving situations and ultimately derive policy-relevant conclusions, but one cannot be confident in predictive ability with p-values and r-squared values alone. As Hill and Jones note, “statistical significance is neither necessary nor sufficient for predictive validity.”³⁵ Rather, “Predictive heuristics provide a useful,

32. Ward, Greenhill and Bakke (2010) provide an excellent introduction to out-of-sample validation in political science.

33. Erica Chenoweth and Jay Ulfelder, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, forthcoming

34. Hill and Jones, “[An Empirical Evaluation of Explanations for State Repression.](#)”

35. *Ibid.*, 676.

possibly necessary, strategy that may help scholars and policymakers guard against erroneous recommendations.”³⁶ Second, out-of-sample validation combined with the approach to vary the main independent variable provides an unbiased assessment of how that variable influences predictive power. The results of this still will not only tell me about the relative predictive power of the entire *model*, but it will tell me important information about the utility of my theory in particular. This method is therefore an important tool to understand the validity of my theory and its ability to improve existing research.

To begin, I first subset my data into two samples—creating an in-sample and out-of-sample population—based on the year of group formation. The in-sample population includes organizations formed before 2000, and the out-of-sample population includes groups formed after the year 2000. There are about 200 observations (organizations) before 2000 and 85 after, so there is a sufficient number of observations in each sample.

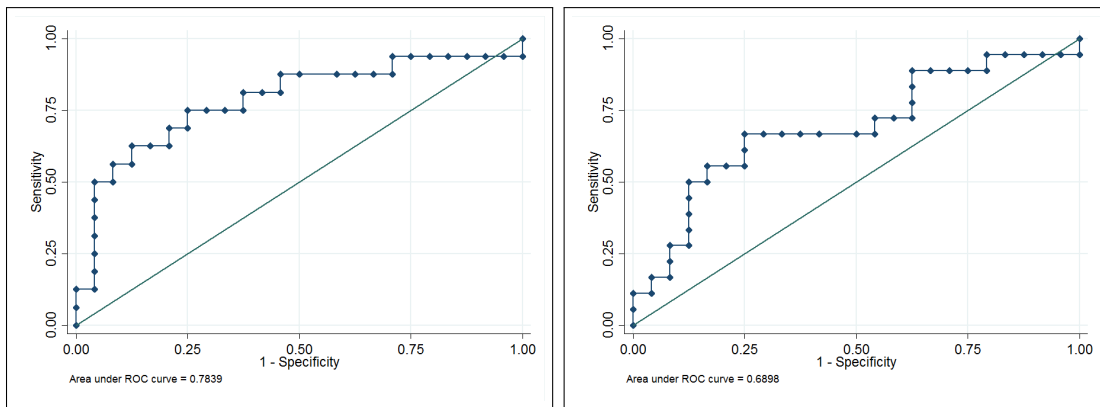
I then create two models: the first, Model A, is the full model in Table 7. The second, Model B, is the exact same but my main independent variable is *omitted*. The two models, in simplified form, are thus:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Model A : } \ln(\text{Odds}(y)) &= \\ &\beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{SplinterVar}) + \beta_2(\text{GroupVars}) + \beta_3(\text{CountryVars}) + \varepsilon \\ \text{Model B : } \ln(\text{Odds}(y)) &= \\ &\beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{GroupVars}) + \beta_2(\text{CountryVars}) + \varepsilon \end{aligned}$$

Next, I run both Model A and Model B on the pre-2000 in-sample population and I then use these estimates to generate predictions for the *out-of-sample* cases. In other

36. Ward, Greenhill, and Bakke, “[The perils of policy by p-value](#),” 364.

Figure 6.7. ROC plots: suicide bombing adoption.

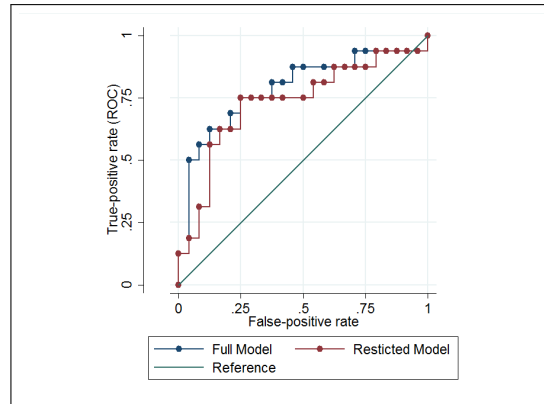


Model A: ROC plot with splintering IV. AUC = 0.784 Model B: ROC plot *without* splintering IV. AUC = 0.689.

words, I am predicting the likelihood of post-2000 organizations using suicide bombing based on pre-2000 data. By comparing the predictive capacity of Model A (which includes my main theoretical variable) and Model B (which does not include the it) I can assess the degree to which the inclusion of the splintering variable increases or decreases the model's relative predictive power. If the model *with* the splintering independent variable generates significantly better predictions than the model without it then I can be confident that this information is contributing to my explanatory and predictive capacity. If the full model does not outperform the restricted model, then we can be confident that the splintering variable is not contributing any additional explanatory power.

The results are displayed graphically in Figure 6.7 and Figure 6.7. These images are receiver operating characteristic (ROC) curves, and they plot the rate of true positives over false positives in my out-of-sample predictions. In other words, they plot the rate at which my model correctly predicts uses of suicide bombing over the rate at which it predicts false-positives, or groups that I predict would use suicide bombing but do not. A greater area under the curve implies better predictive power and, overall, a more accurate model. The line across the diagonal is called the line of no

Figure 6.8. Bootstrapped ROC plots.



Bootstrapped ROC plot comparing predictive power of full and restricted model. Full model AUC = 0.784, restricted model AUC = 0.689; significant at $p < 0.05$

discrimination and it represents the probability of a correct prediction with a random guess, so it would achieve a rate of true-positives to false-positives of 50%—i.e. it can explain 50% of cases. Models that are increasingly better at predicting out-of-sample cases would be in the top-left quadrant of graph, while models that are worse-off are in the the bottom right.

These two figures demonstrate that my key explanatory variable adds significant predictive power to the model. The restricted model accurately predicts 68.9% of cases, while the full model can predict 78.4% of cases—an increase of nearly 10%. This is a large and meaningful addition to predictive power that I can attribute entirely to the introduction of the splintering independent variable.

Finally, to further test the robustness of this finding I simulate the ROC tests above with a bootstrapped sample. In other words, I run the same comparison between Model A and Model B but on 1,000 different draws of the out-of-sample population. This is useful since it tests my explanatory power while varying the observations used to test the predictions, and it further guards against the possibility that my findings are driven by particular observations. The results are displayed in Figure 6.8. As

one can see, the full model still outperforms the restricted model to a statistically significant degree ($p < 0.04$, though this varies between 0.02 and 0.05 due to variation in the bootstrap) and it again improves the cumulative predictive power, going from an AUC of .729 in the restricted model to 0.784 in the full model—a difference of .055 or 5.5%. Consequently, this further confirms that my theory can significantly contribute to existing research, especially the adoption of suicide bombing, and it can ultimately contribute policy relevant suggestions to help with new and evolving threats from nonstate actors.

8 Conclusions

At the most basic level, these analyses confirm that the conditions that shape group formation have a profound impact on the trajectory of militant splinter organizations. Far from being homogeneous, these groups exhibit major differences in their patterns of attack both in their formative years but also throughout their entire lifespan. The influence of group formation on tactical and strategic decision-making appears to carry over time, shaping these organizations and influencing their behavior in meaningful ways.

More specifically, the most robust empirical finding is that splinter organizations that emerge from multidimensional internal schisms tend to launch attacks that are significantly less frequent, less lethal, and overall, they manage to kill fewer individuals over their lifespans. Although I did not originally anticipate this effect, it nonetheless makes sense in light of my original theory. These groups are expected to experience greater internal preference divergence, which might ultimately make it more difficult to sustain and launch violent operations. In related research on military efficacy, scholars similarly find that unit cohesion is a driving force behind the ability to sustain operations, to control subordinates, and ultimately to be successful on the

battlefield.³⁷

On the other hand, the patterns of behavior for strategic splinter organizations is quite different and it provides support for my theory that these groups are increasingly likely to adopt radical tactics and behaviors. While the results suggest that they tend to kill similar numbers of individuals and conduct similar numbers of attacks as the mean nonsplinter groups in a given year, they have significantly increased per-attack lethality. In other words, they might not attack more or kill more people on a yearly basis, but they are much more efficient with their individual operations.

Interestingly, there was minor evidence that ideological splinters groups have a higher rate of suicide bombing adoption and this goes against my original hypotheses. Why might this be the case? First, it is important to note that an examination of the parent groups of the ideological splinters that ultimately adopted suicide terror reveals that not one had ever used suicide terrorism prior to their organizational schism. In other words, these ideological splinter groups have all developed the tactical ability on their own *after* the split took place. Second, it is also worth noting that this focus on ideological splinters is unique from a large body of existing research that examines the links between suicide terror and particular ideologies like Salafi-Jihadism.³⁸ The research presented above is not focused on the ideological character of these organizations—though the analyses do control for the underlying religious character of these organizations—but rather, whether or not they formed due to an ideological disagreement with their parent organization. Third, and finally, additional research finds a connection between *religious* ideological splinter groups and the adoption of suicide bombing. While less than half of all ideological splinter groups are religious,

37. Staniland, *Networks of Rebellion*; Kenny, “Structural Integrity and Cohesion in Insurgent Organizations”; Weinstein, *Inside rebellion*; Edward A. Shils and Morris Janowitz, “Cohesion and disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (1948): 280–315.

38. Pedahzur, *Suicide terrorism*; Hafez, “Suicide Terrorism in Iraq”; Mohammed M. Hafez, *Suicide bombers in Iraq: The strategy and ideology of martyrdom* (US Institute of Peace Press, 2007).

three quarters of the ideological splinters that adopt suicide bombing are religious. In other words, a disproportionately high percentage of ideological splinter groups that adopt suicide terrorism have an identity formed around religious beliefs. Returning the initial question about why ideological splinters have a higher proclivity of adopting suicide terror, it is possible that ideologically-opposed organizations face the most acute forms of intergroup competition for recruits and local support. Since most ideological splits occur over degrees of interpretation, these groups are forced to distinguish themselves and one way to do so is through tactical escalation. Indeed, the general idea that groups outbid one another in this way is far from a new idea³⁹ but more recent research further suggest that competition is particularly likely among ideologically similar organizations that are competing for even a more limited, bounded group of potential supporters—what Nemeth (2013) calls ideological markets.⁴⁰ Ultimately, when splinters emerge over degrees of ideological disagreement with their parent group, they might employ suicide bombing to distinguish themselves—especially when the parent does not itself launch suicide missions.

Taken together, these findings have important implications for policymakers considering strategies to fragment their violent nonstate adversaries. First, the available evidence suggests that it would be unwise to blindly fragment ones opponents. Contributing to the production of strategic splinter groups is dangerous since it can produce organizations capable of launching some of the deadliest attacks. Furthermore, fomenting internal debate regarding group ideology can also produce organizations that are more likely to use suicide terrorism.

However, this is not to say that fragmentation cannot be a useful tactic against these enemies. On the contrary, actions that can lead groups to split up multidimensionally or over personal disagreements appear most likely to produce weak, short lived

39. Crenshaw, “The Causes of Terrorism”; Bloom, “Palestinian suicide bombing”; Bloom, *Dying To Kill*.

40. Nemeth, “The Effect of Competition on Terrorist Group Operations.”

militant organizations. By breaking apart groups in this way, the resulting splinter organizations themselves will be relatively weak, while the parent organization will lose part of its membership base which itself diminishes their capacity. Operations that lead to internal personal disagreements and multidimensional schisms might therefore be most effective from a counterterrorist or counterinsurgent standpoint.

Finally, disregarding the effect that this information can have on the formation of US policies to fragment and break apart their militant opponents, the results of this study shed light on the connection between group formation and their ultimate trajectory. This can help lawmakers and academics alike to more fully understand and predict group behavior. In particular, this research has profound implications for groups that emerge during periods of negotiation or ceasefire. Many of these groups, such as those like the Continuity IRA and the Real IRA, split for strategic reasons and in opposition to the deescalation of violence. The resultant groups are therefore expected to be highly radicalized and attract disaffected members both from existing organizations and also from society. This makes them highly internally homogeneous and these spoilers, as they are often called, can pose serious, enduring threats to stability.

Chapter 7

Conclusions, Implications, and Future Research

1 Overview and Main Findings

This dissertation seeks to understand how variation in the formation of militant splinter groups contributes to variation in their observable behavior. It is common, both in academic and popular writing, to make generalizations about splinter groups that emerge and break away from preexisting terrorist, insurgent, and militant organizations. Often times these groups are expected to follow a common trajectory, becoming more radical and more durable and complicating the conflict landscape. Other times they are expected to be weak and fall apart, and their initial fragmentation is used as evidence of their instability. Although the addition of new actors into a given environment surely complicates the conflict landscape, there is little reason to expect these groups to all follow a common trajectory.

I develop a theory to explain variation in rates of survival and radicalization among the groups emerging from schisms in militant organizations. In brief, I argue that the consistency of their internal preferences has implications for survival and cohesion, while the content of those preferences influences the extent to which they ultimately radicalize. Consistent, aligned internal preferences make the organization more resilient by decreasing feuds and supporting decentralization. Then, groups that attract greater proportions of tactical and strategic hardliners ultimately make the organization more likely to radicalize to a greater extent. Consequently, the behavior of militant splinter groups is neither random nor fixed, and these organizations will evolve in predictable ways that flow logically from their initial disputes.

In Chapter Four I present a comparative case study of two Irish republican militant organizations: the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) and the Real Irish Republican Army (RIRA). These groups share a host of similarities though they differ in their factional-multidimensional formation. This ultimately makes for an ideal structured comparison. The INLA formed multidimensionally around strategic and

ideological disagreements with its parent group, the Official IRA. As a result, the members drawn to their organization had varying aspirations, often conflicting with others in the group and leading to both verbal and physical altercations. Internal feuds ultimately tore the organization apart and never allowed it to decentralize or even function without strong top-down command. Even more, the centralization of command within the INLA inspired further feuding as many coveted the top spot. On the other hand, the RIRA is an exemplary case of factional formation that took place over disagreements in strategy: their predecessors, the Provisional IRA, engaged in ceasefires and compromises that angered hardliners who desired violence and agitation. The members of the RIRA were dogmatic in their singular hardline beliefs and while this increased their resiliency and permitted decentralizing transformations, it also explains their violent trajectory. Ultimately, this case study demonstrates the precise mechanisms by which the consistency and the content of preferences within a militant group influences their trajectory, driving variation in survival and radicalization that is empirically observed in the following chapters.

In Chapter Five I empirically test my predictions about group survival. My first hypothesis posits that groups forming factionally around a shared disagreement will survive longest. Although preferences cannot be directly observed, these groups are the most likely to experience internal alignment. Using survival analysis and controlling for a battery of covariates that might also influence rates of endurance, I find strong evidence that factional splinters greatly outlast both multidimensional and nonsplinter groups—those organizations that form not by splintering but from the ground up. I then disaggregate factional schisms to further examine this relationship. While personal and ideological groups survive and fail at rates similar to nonsplinters, militants emerging from strategic schisms tend to endure the longest. I theorize that this might stem from the fact that strategic schisms produce organizations with more internally aligned preferences for future actions and behavior. Ideological and

personal schisms unite individuals around preferences that do not necessarily motivate day-to-day actions. Consequently, these groups might experience the greatest in-group cohesion, finding it is easier to decentralize command and control as their members are united in their tactical and strategic thinking. Finally, in these section I also examine whether or not there is an effect associated with splinter groups as a whole; in other words, I rerun the analyses while only including a dummy indicator for splinters and nonsplinters. The model returns a highly insignificant coefficient estimate, suggesting that viewing splinter groups as a single unit is meaningless. In other words, there appears to be no single trajectory common to militant splinters and as a whole, they appear to be neither more nor less durable.

Finally, in Chapter Six I examine variation in rates of radicalization. In my second hypothesis I theorize that schisms from strategic splits will produce the most radicalized groups: as they overwhelmingly take place over the decision to expand or to renew violence, they attract significant portions of tactical and strategic hardliners that influence their decision-making towards the extreme. I focus on radicalization through the lens of attack frequency, fatalities, mean-attack lethality, and the adoption of suicide bombing. I test the first three metrics of attack behavior together and I examine them both in a group's first year of recorded activity and then throughout their entire lifespan. The first-year approach captures group behavior before factors like experience and alliances can alter group behavior and provide varying advantages and motivations to particular organizations. The cumulative approach at the group-year level, however, helps to understand if the influence of formation is short-lived or if it persists and influences behavior in the long-term. I find evidence that formation has both and immediate and enduring effects; specifically, in both year-one and beyond, strategic schisms tend to experience unique operating patterns. multi-dimensional and personal schisms tend to be the weakest and the least radicalized, generally killing fewer individuals, attacking less, and having a lower mean lethality.

While supporting my theory, this also suggests that internal cohesion, which is lowest in multidimensional and personal splinters to a lesser extent, is crucial to sustaining violence. More likely than not, groups burdened by internal feuds and noncooperation will find it increasingly difficult to conduct attacks.

With regards to suicide bombing I find mixed evidence. Interestingly, there is a slight positive association between ideological splinters and the use of suicide terror and a slight negative association for strategic splinters. I theorize that using suicide bombing as a proxy for general radicalization might be flawed since there is not an equal affinity for groups to incorporate it into their tactical arsenals. Rather, many organizations have eschewed it altogether and it is most common in religiously-motivated conflicts particularly, though not limited to, the Middle East. Consequently, the correlation with ideological splinters is understandable. Finally, I use this opportunity to evaluate the relative predictive power of my theory using a method called out-of-sample validation. I find that when my theoretical variable is included, my ability to predict usage of suicide bombings increases by nearly 10%. These findings demonstrate that my theory adds valuable explanatory power to existing research and that my initial intuition was indeed correct: militant groups emerging from strategic disputes tend to be deadlier and launch more lethal attacks than those arising from other types of internal disagreements.

Overall, this project leverages variation in the fragmentation of militant organizations to explain the variation in behavior among groups emerging from these schisms. Both the schisms themselves as well as splinter trajectory are extremely undertheorized and understudied. Consequently, this project, which proves how group behavior can be understood through the lens of organizational preferences, adds much needed theoretical and empirical development to a pressing topic in international security.

2 Implications

The findings from this project have implications that go far beyond the original puzzle motivating this project. First, this study sheds light on how group formation and behavior are linked. While this makes intuitive sense, scholars have so far ignored how militant organizations proliferate and how this affects both conflict and organizational dynamics. Second, the findings from this research have implications for assessing fragmented conflicts around the globe. Rather than comparing conflicts by merely counting how many groups are active, my research suggests that understanding the relationship between these groups, among other things, can add important context. Third, there are direct policy lessons to be learned from my research.

2.1 Formation and Group Trajectory

Political science research has virtually ignored how different methods of group formation might influence or at least be associated with variation in group trajectory and behavior. In other words, scholars tend to view group formation as a relatively fixed or maybe even insignificant factor within the development of violent nonstate actors, focusing instead on other characteristics of both the group and conflict environment. However, as I show here, group formation does indeed exert a long-lasting effect on the behavior of militant organizations and knowing how or under what conditions groups form adds to our knowledge of their behavior and their future evolution. In this regard, I view this project as part of a broader effort to understand the pathways of militant proliferation and its effects on organizational and conflict dynamics.

In the introduction to this project I briefly presented a typology of ways in which the term “fragmentation” is commonly used. Although this was a descriptive exercise with the goal of helping me focus in on the exact type of organizational process I am interested in studying, this ultimately reveals a variety of ways in which militant

groups come to exist. Splintering is only one among many, and the strong effects I find stemming from variation in splinter formation can ultimately be seen as evidence of a broader relationship between formation and organizational evolution.

Several of the most commonly studied topics with respect to violent nonstate actors could benefit from a conceptual framework that takes into account characteristics of group formation. Consider research on tactical diffusion: significant work focuses on understanding the drivers of technological adoption, whether it is suicide bombing, improvised explosive devices, aerial hijackings, etc.¹ These analyses treat militant organization as independent units but many are not: militant wings and splinter groups take with them tactical and strategic know-how. Groups like the Islamic State do not “adopt” suicide terror in the same way that the Tamil Tigers did, wherein the latter had to seek out groups to learn the tactic and to be trained. Rather, those who founded IS were well versed in the usage of suicide bombs and they likely had operatives waiting to give their lives. Also consider how advanced tactical usage by militant splinter groups would inflate or obscure empirical findings of tactical diffusion: significantly, it would affect correlations between group age and intraorganizational alliances. Militant splinters at a very early age could be using highly advanced tactics with little to no outside assistance. Basically, forming with preexisting tactical know-how would undermine some of the theoretical mechanisms that scholars commonly view as critical drivers of diffusion and innovation. Since I find that nearly a third of militant groups form by splintering, the effects of incorporating

1. For example, consider notable work by: Horowitz, “[Nonstate Actors and the Diffusion of Innovations](#)”; Bader Araj, “Harsh state repression as a cause of suicide bombing: the case of the Palestinian–Israeli conflict,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 4 (2008): 284–303; Pedahzur, *Suicide terrorism*; Bloom, “[Palestinian suicide bombing](#)”; James A. Piazza, “A supply-side view of suicide terrorism: A cross-national study,” *Journal of Politics* 70, no. 1 (2008): 28–39; S. J. Wade and D. Reiter, “Does Democracy Matter?: Regime Type and Suicide Terrorism,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51, no. 2 (April 2007): 329–348; Robert T. Holden, “The contagiousness of aircraft hijacking,” *American Journal of Sociology*, 1986, 874–904; Philip Potter, Evan Perkoski, and Michael C. Horowitz, “The Life-Cycle of Terrorist Tactics: Learning from the Case of Hijacking” (2013); Laura Dugan, Gary LaFree, and Alex R. Piquero, “Testing a rational choice model of airline hijackings,” in *Intelligence and Security Informatics* (Springer, 2005), 340–361.

this information could be substantial.

Ultimately, understanding more about group formation has implications far beyond what I present here. It is likely that the way in which militants come to be can add significant detail and precision to a wide range of research topics, not just on tactical diffusion but also for intergroup cooperation, conflict, and outbidding, among others. For this reason, scholars should continue to investigate how militant groups form and what affects that might have beyond own individual behavior.

2.2 Understanding Fragmented Conflicts

The information gained from this research project have implications for understanding and assessing the trajectory of ongoing, fragmented conflicts around the globe. Indeed, fragmentation is an increasingly common aspect of contemporary irregular conflicts and some of the most notable and destructive theaters—including Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan—are severely fragmented. Additionally, many of the organizations active in these conflict have arisen through processes of organizational splintering. Consequently, my research can shed light on the trajectory of some of these organization. It can potentially provide insights into which groups are likely to escalate and radicalize, and which are likely to preserve and pose enduring challenges.

Furthermore, as I discussed above, militant splinter groups are unique from other nascent organizations. Regardless if they are strategically, ideologically, or otherwise motivated, they nonetheless begin their life with experience, knowledge, and battle-hardened members. The models and findings I present above are probabilistic, so although personalist groups are not expected to be as dangerous as splinters from strategic schisms, the formation of these groups is something that governments should not take lightly. They should use their resources to ascertain the cause of the schism and the types of people they are recruiting and attracting to get an idea of how the

group is likely to develop.

This is important because it can help prevent instances where governments are surprised by the development, growth, and radicalization of militant organizations. Of course, probably the most notable example is the recent rise of the Islamic State that caught much of the world off guard. The Islamic State was not a nascent, ground-up organization but rather one that flowed from preexisting groups and experienced fighters. It was this experience, knowledgeable, preparedness, along with favorable political and geographical environments, that explain its evolution into its current form.

2.3 Policy Lessons

Policymakers can benefit from the findings of this research. First, negotiations with militant organizations that are internally divided can be dangerous. Compromising or negotiating with militants will often crystallize preferences within the group, forcing individuals to coalesce into camps supportive or oppositional camps. When those dissenters who favor violence break away, producing the type of spoilers about which much is already written, they can pose serious challenges to ongoing negotiations and more broadly, to the likelihood of achieving lasting peace.² These splinters are generally strategically-motivated and as I find, they tend to be the most enduring, radicalized groups of all. Consequently, governments should carefully consider if their militant adversaries are in a position to remain united if presented with negotiations, and if not, if the ultimate negotiations are worth the risk of group fragmentation.

Second, my research suggests that multidimensional schisms tend to produce the least radical and the least durable militant splinter groups. Yet personalist splinters—those resulting from power feuds, betrayals, and other interpersonal disagree-

2. Kydd and Walter, “The strategies of terrorism”; Greenhill and Major, “The Perils of Profiling”; Stedman, “Stedman, Spoiler Problems in Peace Settlements.pdf.”

ments—are neither particularly radical nor long-lived. They tend to be less radical than a random sample of nonsplinter groups and roughly as durable as well. Consequently, governments might want to focus their efforts on promoting interpersonal disagreements and possibly in conjunction with ideological or strategic feuds as well. Of course, the latter will likely prove difficult to accomplish and states should be weary of any any actions that could ignite hardliners to coalesce and break away on their own. However, beneficially for states, it is likely that personal disagreements and multidimensional splits based on security concerns are the easiest to foment. Defection, infiltration, arrests, and leadership targeting are potentially effective, though harsh repression might actually inspire strategic debate and galvanize hardliners. Coincidentally, these sorts of targeted, restrictive policies that might lead to personalist and multidimensional splits are also estimated to be the most effective at reducing terrorist violence more broadly.³

Furthermore, governments can utilize information about preference divergence to their advantage. Policymakers can leverage the preferences of group members to construct policies, and especially psychological operations, that play to these underlying disagreements. Capitalizing on latent divergence among group members can present ways to further weaken and divide the organization. These policies are likely to be particularly successful against organizations emerging from nonfactional schisms, and less effective at internally aligned groups emerging from factional schisms.

Finally, the results from this project have implications for how states allocate their resources in a given conflict environment. I find that different types of splinter groups have different propensities for evolving into complex and enduring military threats. As a result, governments can use this information to focus their efforts on

3. Dugan and Chenoweth, “[Moving Beyond Deterrence The Effectiveness of Raising the Expected Utility of Abstaining from Terrorism in Israel](#)”; Perkoski and Chenoweth, “[The effectiveness of counterterrorism in Spain](#)”; Gary LaFree, Laura Dugan, and Raven Korte, “The Impact of British Counterterrorist Strategies on Political Violence in Northern Ireland: Comparing Deterrence and Backlash Models,” *Criminology* 47, no. 1 (2009): 17–45.

those groups most likely to become a challenge, ideally halting their growth before they develop capabilities and staying power. Inversely, my findings also point towards certain groups deteriorating more rapidly. Though governments will not want to ignore these groups entirely, it is possible that they will require fewer resources and less energy to eliminate.

3 Extensions and Future Research

Working on this project and considering its implication for ongoing policy challenges has revealed a number of additional questions worth researching and also some potential extensions of my theory that could help explain the behavior of other types of actors.

3.1 Extensions to Other Actors

My theory of splinter formation and behavior is not necessarily limited to violent nonstate actors. On the contrary, it is possible, and even likely, that fractures among other types of organizations might follow a similar trajectory and that the consistency and content of the breakaway members will shed light on their future behavior.

In particular, my theory might help explain the outcomes of organizational fractures within nonviolent movements. Nonviolent social movements are often plagued by divergent preferences and radical subgroups, often called radical or militant flanks. Subgroups will commonly break away and one can use the nature of their split to understand who will be attracted to this new group and who will remain with the parent. Furthermore, preference inconsistency can help explain survival and whether or not the group is likely to maintain a strictly nonviolent strategy.

One key difference is that nonviolent movements are not necessarily engaged in an existential conflict with the state (though indeed many times they are). As a result,

these groups generally face lower threats from defection and infiltration. And inversely, nonviolent movements might actually desire a more hierarchical structure that is more useful in maintaining strict nonviolence, whereas for clandestine militants it is the opposite. Although the mechanism might therefore be different, considering the role of internal preferences as a driver of group behavior should produce meaningful avenues for future research.

3.2 Extensions to Other Outcomes

Finally, in this project I only focus on two outcomes: the radicalization and survival of militant splinter groups. However, there are strong reasons to believe that my theory can be extended to explain other outcomes like intergroup conflict and parent group survival.

First, it is likely that the chances for intergroup conflict between parents and splinter offspring are in part a function of the original schism. Different types of intragroup feuds should correspond with different likelihoods that the parent and splinter either directly or indirectly (e.g. outbidding) compete with one another. Notably, personal feuds might be the most likely to inspire direct fighting as leaders of both might continue to hold a grudge against their former partners and against those who did not side with them during a feud. On the other hand, ideological splinters that share similar, though not identical, beliefs might face the greatest likelihood of outbidding for local support since they are essentially competing over the same pool of recruits. And finally, long-term cooperation might be possible when militants split strategically as they still share the same goals though they only differ over how to achieve them. Overall, these conjectures are based on the underlying rationale of militant feuds, and this underexplored area of research has significant potential for future investigation.

Second, in this project I focus on splinter groups while ignoring the parent organizations from which they emerge. However, there is a need to develop this research

further and to explain different outcomes with regards to those parents. Notably, in some cases the parent organization goes on to survive alongside the splinter whereas at other times it dies out relatively soon after the split. What are the factors that influence the longevity of parent organizations following an internal schisms? My theory of splinter behavior might be useful; notably, if one knows which types of individuals are attracted to a splinter group then this same information can be used to extrapolate the type of individuals who will remain with the parent. There is already some research on how government conciliation, for instance, draws away moderates from an organization, leaving the radicals in charge.⁴ This is similar to what I am proposing here though it can be extended to also consider the homogeneity of the members who stay behind and how that influences not only the likelihood that they radicalize but also whether or not they endure.

3.3 Group Proliferation and Formation

Finally, as I alluded to before, this project pushes political science research towards understanding the ways in which militant formation influences their ultimate trajectory, and I view this project as the first step towards this broader objective. In many ways this research has acted as a proof of concept, demonstrating that formation and behavior are indeed linked in meaningful ways, and that understanding this can enhance our explanatory and predictive capacity. Consequently, other modes of organizational conception should also correlate with particular patterns of group behavior and researchers can leverage this information to understand more about how and why groups act in certain ways. This reflects a broader trend among research in international security where scholars are coming to recognize important differences among conflicts and among actors that, although challenging to existing paradigms and to more simplified approaches, ultimately increase explanatory power and help

4. Bueno de Mesquita, “[Conciliation, Counterterrorism, and Patterns of Terrorist Violence.](#)”

make sense of emerging challenges.

Chapter 8

Appendix

Table 8 replicates my models of militant survival while adding additional covariates that measure the level of domestic repression. Notably, the estimates for multidimensional and strategic splinters are roughly unchanged. multidimensional splits continue to be associated with decreased group longevity whereas strategic splinters tend to be more durable. The repression variables are, as one would anticipate, associated with a slight increase in the likelihood of group failure. In other words, under more repressive conditions—measured by disappearances, extrajudicial killings, and torture¹—militant groups are increasingly likely to fail. These variables are omitted from the main results since they drop the number of observations. The repression data is not available for all years.

1. Political imprisonment fails to reach significance.

Table 8.1. Cox Proportional Hazards Model of Militant Organizational Longevity: Government Repression

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Hazard	Hazard	Hazard	Hazard
Ideological Splinter	0.487 (0.232)	0.474 (0.229)	0.478 (0.227)	0.472 (0.233)
Nonfactional Splinter	2.100** (0.735)	2.105** (0.738)	2.088** (0.726)	2.121** (0.751)
Personal Splinter	0.771 (0.291)	0.763 (0.282)	0.755 (0.278)	0.791 (0.297)
Strategic Splinter	0.569** (0.155)	0.571** (0.156)	0.569** (0.156)	0.571** (0.156)
Nationalist-Separatist	0.918 (0.178)	0.933 (0.182)	0.941 (0.183)	0.913 (0.178)
Communist-Socialist	0.525** (0.141)	0.540** (0.144)	0.543** (0.144)	0.534** (0.143)
Religious	0.934 (0.225)	0.938 (0.226)	0.936 (0.225)	0.950 (0.227)
Anarchist	0.792 (0.649)	0.815 (0.667)	0.832 (0.673)	0.762 (0.634)
Leftist	3.530*** (0.982)	3.247*** (0.906)	3.247*** (0.902)	3.246*** (0.910)
Autocracy	0.587 (0.334)	0.520 (0.297)	0.519 (0.289)	0.581 (0.327)
Democracy	1.411 (0.519)	1.381 (0.500)	1.328 (0.476)	1.567 (0.604)
GDP Per Capita (log)	0.627 (0.259)	0.717 (0.302)	0.673 (0.284)	0.887 (0.395)
Population (log)	1.539** (0.331)	1.495* (0.324)	1.514* (0.325)	1.530* (0.371)
Pcnt. Mountainous (log)	0.238*** (0.108)	0.245*** (0.111)	0.244*** (0.110)	0.236*** (0.113)
Terrorist Competitors	1.014 (0.019)	1.013 (0.019)	1.015 (0.019)	1.004 (0.020)
Lead Organization	0.913 (0.166)	0.903 (0.164)	0.901 (0.164)	0.898 (0.162)
Disappearances	1.002* (0.001)			
Extrajudicial Killings		1.003** (0.001)		
Political Imprisonment			1.000 (0.001)	
Torture				1.012** (0.006)
Observations	2362	2362	2362	2362

Standard errors in parentheses (clustered by group). Country and year fixed effects included. Coefficients reported as hazard ratios.

* $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

Table 8 replicates my models of militant survival while adding an additional covariate that measures the number of fatalities a militant group causes in a given year. These models replicate the full models in Chapter 5 while adding a single additional covariate. This is done to investigate whether the intensity of the conflict might somehow influence my theoretical mechanisms. For instance, it is plausible that in conflicts where militants are causing more fatalities in a given year—a proxy for high-intensity conflicts—they are more likely to persevere despite high levels of internal preference divergence. The nature of the conflict and the existential threats posed to the organization might substitute for cohesion, keeping the organization together.

The results in Table 8 demonstrate that my theory—and in particular how it relates to the survival of militant organizations—seems to function regardless of the conflict’s intensity. The estimates of both factional and nonfactional splinters, as well as those on the disaggregated factional typology, retain roughly the same effect size and the same significance level as before. Interestingly, the estimate of yearly fatalities is also significant with a moderating effect; in other words, groups that manage to kill greater numbers of individuals in a given year are more likely to survive. Although the precise mechanism between the two is unclear, it could be that this measure is proxying for group capacity—in which case more capable groups are less likely to fail in a given year—or it could be how I originally theorized: that higher intensity conflicts are associated with greater militant durability as these organizations bind together in the face of external threats.

Table 8.2. Cox Proportional Hazards Model of Militant Organizational Longevity: Yearly Fatalities

	(1) Hazard	(2) Hazard
Factional Splinter	0.631** (0.129)	
Nonfactional Splinter	1.765* (0.514)	
Nationalist-Separatist	0.836 (0.142)	0.834 (0.142)
Communist-Socialist	0.616** (0.129)	0.608** (0.128)
Religious	0.932 (0.211)	0.937 (0.214)
Anarchist	0.697 (0.420)	0.660 (0.376)
Leftist	2.510*** (0.629)	2.492*** (0.626)
Autocracy	0.453 (0.233)	0.455 (0.238)
Democracy	1.084 (0.301)	1.078 (0.300)
Regime Durability	0.991 (0.009)	0.991 (0.009)
GDP Per Capita (log)	0.822 (0.317)	0.815 (0.315)
Population (log)	1.615* (0.444)	1.660* (0.434)
Pcnt. Mountainous (log)	1.002 (0.767)	0.993 (0.763)
Terrorist Competitors	1.018 (0.015)	1.018 (0.015)
Lead Organization	1.346* (0.229)	1.355* (0.231)
Yearly Fatalities	0.984*** (0.006)	0.984*** (0.006)
Ideological Splinter		0.609 (0.232)
Nonfactional Splinter		1.776** (0.519)
Personal Splinter		0.904 (0.345)
Strategic Splinter		0.589** (0.139)
Observations	2912	2912

Standard errors in parentheses (clustered by group). Country and year fixed effects included. Coefficients reported as hazard ratios.

* $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

Figure 8.1. Test of proportionality: ideological splinters.

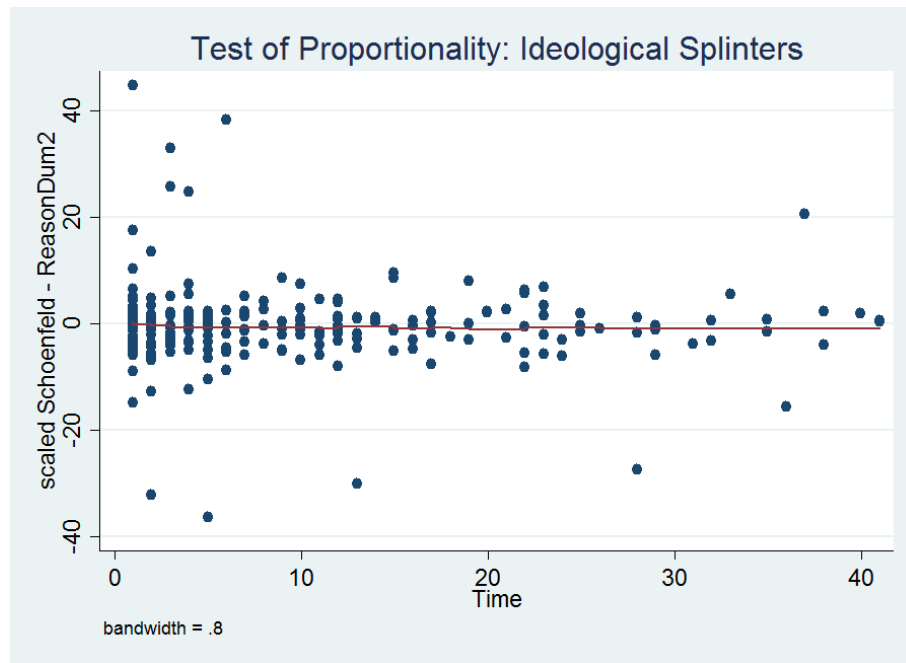


Figure 8.1, Figure 8.2 , Figure 8.3, and Figure 8.4 plot post-tests of the proportionality assumption that is crucial to using the Cox Proportional Hazards Model. I test for proportionality across each of the different types of splinter organizations. If proportional, the residuals should be clustered around zero. As each graph shows, the mean residual is indeed zero and this holds across time. This strongly supports the use of Cox model to analyze the duration of militant organizations, and it also suggests that organizational formation has a constant, enduring effect on rates of cohesion and collapse.

Figure 8.2. Test of proportionality: multidimensional splinters.

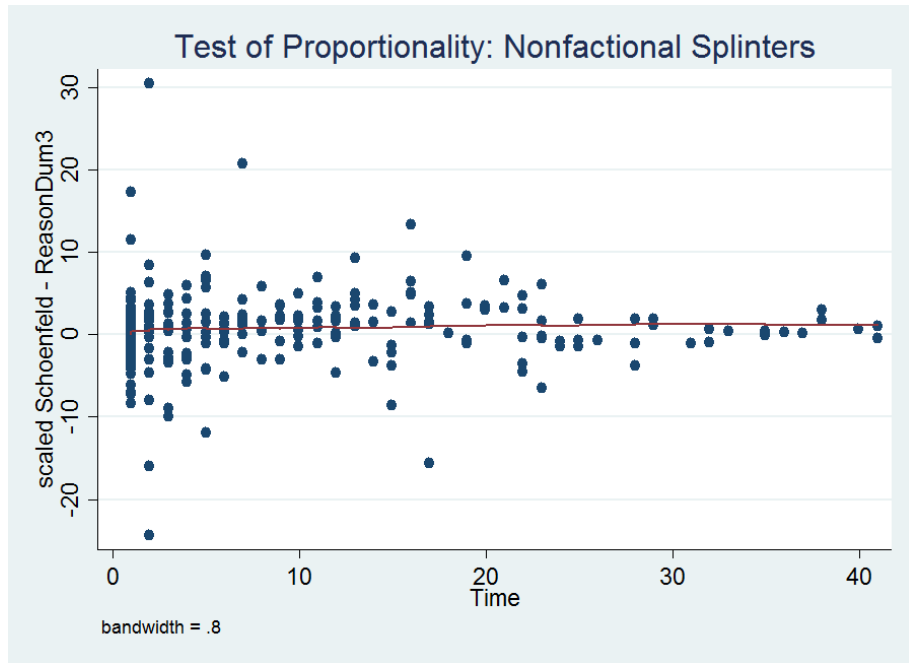


Figure 8.3. Test of proportionality: personal splinters.

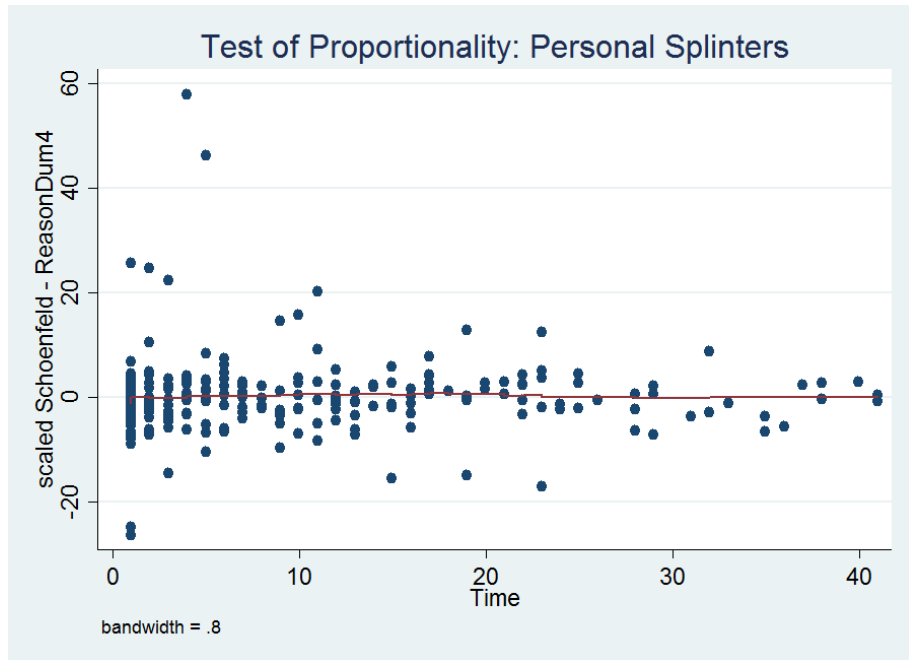
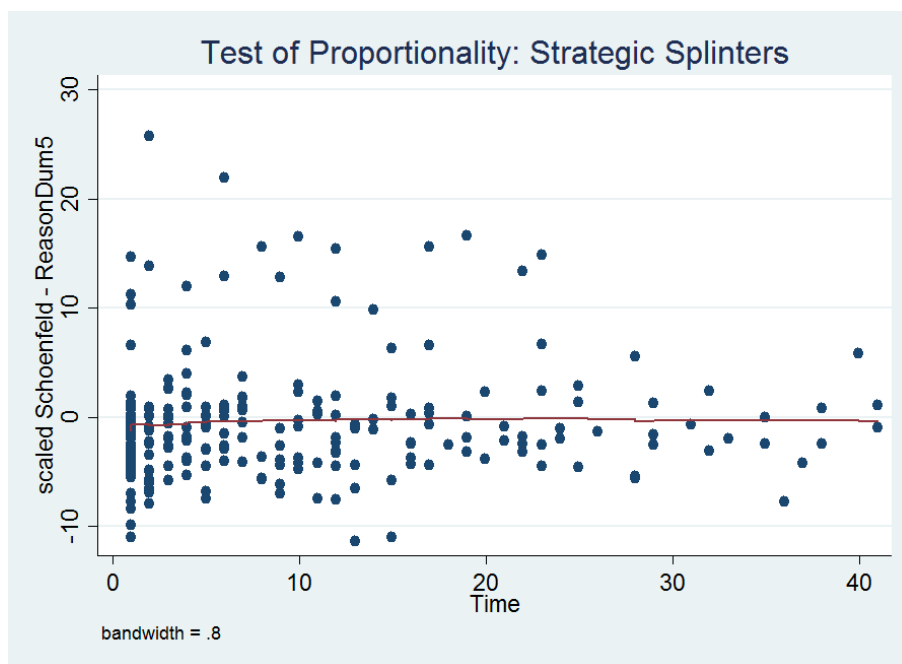


Figure 8.4. Test of proportionality: strategic splinters.



Finally, the tables below replicate each of the models for group radicalization using ordinary least squares regression instead of negative binomial, and the results are similarly clustered by group. The same patterns emerge when the estimation technique is changed: notably, multidimensional and personal splinters are consistency weaker and less radical whereas strategic splits exhibit increased per-attack lethality. This is evidence of the robustness of the findings as they appear regardless of modeling choices.

Table 8.3. OLS Regression: Yearly Attacks

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Ideological Splinter	-0.254 (0.394)	-0.178 (0.298)	-0.363 (0.356)	-0.263 (0.270)
Nonfactional Splinter	-1.113*** (0.330)	-1.126*** (0.287)	-1.108*** (0.255)	-1.127*** (0.287)
Personal Splinter	-1.937*** (0.345)	-1.624*** (0.231)	-1.712*** (0.282)	-1.420*** (0.200)
Strategic Splinter	-0.351 (0.336)	-0.254 (0.172)	-0.334 (0.225)	-0.221 (0.168)
Group Age		0.0303*** (0.011)		0.0328*** (0.011)
Nationalist-Separatist		0.303* (0.165)		0.336** (0.159)
Communist-Socialist		0.478** (0.198)		0.540*** (0.188)
Religious		0.389** (0.181)		0.427** (0.170)
Anarchist		1.051*** (0.349)		1.054*** (0.385)
Leftist		0.118 (0.305)		0.118 (0.307)
Transnational		1.321*** (0.119)		1.270*** (0.117)
Polity Score			0.0483*** (0.015)	0.0486*** (0.016)
Polity 2 Squared			0.00411 (0.004)	0.00343 (0.003)
Regime Durability			0.00318 (0.011)	0.00771 (0.009)
GDP Per Capita (log)			-0.604** (0.271)	-0.214 (0.253)
Population (log)			0.415*** (0.144)	0.413*** (0.152)
Low-Level Competitors			0.00796 (0.013)	0.00796 (0.012)
High-Level Competitors			0.0919*** (0.020)	0.0760*** (0.017)
Observations	2019	2019	1991	1991

Standard errors in parentheses (clustered by group).

Country and year fixed effects included but omitted from the results.

* $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

Table 8.4. OLS Regression: Yearly Fatalities

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Ideological Splinter	-0.194 (0.805)	-0.0738 (0.372)	-0.386 (0.574)	-0.222 (0.341)
Nonfactional Splinter	-1.393*** (0.281)	-1.183*** (0.390)	-1.567*** (0.356)	-1.415*** (0.428)
Personal Splinter	-2.077*** (0.573)	-1.880*** (0.491)	-1.791*** (0.529)	-1.639*** (0.523)
Strategic Splinter	0.0212 (0.535)	-0.000830 (0.235)	-0.0449 (0.317)	0.0442 (0.228)
Group Age		0.0198 (0.016)		0.0264* (0.016)
Nationalist-Separatist		0.0485 (0.253)		0.101 (0.242)
Communist-Socialist		-0.0334 (0.268)		0.00391 (0.254)
Religious		0.321 (0.243)		0.323 (0.231)
Anarchist		1.145** (0.459)		1.255*** (0.460)
Leftist		-0.888* (0.533)		-0.944* (0.550)
Transnational		1.496*** (0.137)		1.423*** (0.137)
Polity Score			0.0265 (0.017)	0.0334** (0.017)
Polity 2 Squared			0.00678 (0.004)	0.00733* (0.004)
Regime Durability			-0.0100 (0.011)	-0.00424 (0.008)
GDP Per Capita (log)			-0.564* (0.324)	-0.239 (0.307)
Population (log)			0.519*** (0.178)	0.494*** (0.167)
Low-Level Competitors			-0.0341** (0.017)	-0.0424** (0.018)
High-Level Competitors			0.190*** (0.026)	0.166*** (0.023)
Observations	2019	2019	1991	1991

Standard errors in parentheses (clustered by group).

Country and year fixed effects included but omitted from the results.

* $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

Table 8.5. OLS Regression: Attack Lethality

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Ideological Splinter	-0.408 (2.176)	0.00438 (1.462)	-0.286 (1.453)	0.0645 (1.336)
Nonfactional Splinter	-1.520** (0.680)	-1.369 (1.023)	-1.459 (1.040)	-1.482 (1.176)
Personal Splinter	-2.886 (2.061)	-2.721 (2.886)	-2.229 (2.959)	-2.382 (3.075)
Strategic Splinter	1.494 (1.064)	1.491 (0.909)	1.501** (0.736)	1.464* (0.911)
Group Age		-0.0158 (0.040)		-0.0379 (0.052)
Nationalist-Separatist		-1.387 (1.301)		-1.229 (1.199)
Communist-Socialist		0.239 (1.176)		0.333 (1.122)
Religious		0.342 (0.824)		0.180 (0.857)
Anarchist		0.00844 (1.694)		0.566 (1.493)
Leftist		-2.400** (1.003)		-2.290** (1.083)
Transnational		2.001 (1.493)		1.776 (1.362)
Polity Score			-0.243 (0.172)	-0.247 (0.173)
Polity 2 Squared			0.0344* (0.020)	0.0337* (0.020)
Regime Durability			-0.0203 (0.047)	-0.0144 (0.049)
GDP Per Capita (log)			-6.473 (5.359)	-6.352 (5.295)
Population (log)			1.005 (0.923)	0.806 (0.866)
Low-Level Competitors			-0.108 (0.073)	-0.109 (0.070)
High-Level Competitors			0.140 (0.271)	0.110 (0.291)
Observations	2019	2019	1991	1991

Standard errors in parentheses (clustered by group).

Country and year fixed effects included but omitted from the results.

* $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$