

From Guns to Roses
Explaining Rebel Use of Nonviolent Action

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ABSTRACT

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As rebel organizations are associated with violence and war, the term “rebel use of nonviolent action” seems paradoxical at first glance. Yet, some rebel organizations — after pursuing their aims through militant means unsuccessfully — *do* start to use mass-based nonviolent action, mobilizing and organizing the population to participate in large-scale mass protests, demonstrations, or boycotts. Sometimes, as evidenced by the cases of Timor-Leste’s Maubere Council for National Resistance or the Nepalese Maoists, this strategic shift can bring them considerably closer to their ultimate goal. This study addresses the following question: Why do some rebel organizations strategically use nonviolent mass popular action in a civil war?

The aims of this dissertation are two-fold: First, I explore, conceptualize and define “rebel use of nonviolent action”. Second, I build a theory to explain to explain whether or not rebel groups will seize on an opportunity for using strategic nonviolent action that builds on the rebel group’s internal organizational processes. Precisely because mass-based nonviolent action is unexpected and very difficult to organize, there can be significant strategic benefits for rebel organizations who successfully launch a nonviolent campaign. First, they demonstrate the breadth and depth of their popular support by mobilizing the people to actively and *en masse* put themselves at risk as protesters. Second, the use of nonviolent action displays a high degree of movement resilience and control, as nonviolent events that are most effective in urban areas must be coordinated with a rebel leadership likely located in the periphery. Third, the rebel group can signal norms adherence, as nonviolent action is generally associated with democratic values. Fourth,

nonviolent action can garner significant international attention, as masses of civilians peacefully protesting against a civil war backdrop create a powerful image.

The proposed theoretical framework takes an organizational approach to understanding rebel group behavior, which accounts for the role of civilians as potential group actors. The appropriateness of this framework is established through an in-depth theory-building case study of Timor-Leste's violent/nonviolent independence struggle. Based on insights gleaned from this case and a conceptual exploration of nonviolent action as a rebel strategy, my theory is anchored on the insight that a rebel operational shift towards the use of nonviolent action constitutes a particularly disruptive instance of strategic innovation. The theory unfolds in two parts: First, I argue that consolidated political authority in a rebel organization is necessary for disruptive innovation in the form of nonviolent action. Second, I explore the operational requirements for actually carrying out nonviolent action, and argue that embedded organizational structures linking rural rebel strongholds with urban popular centers are necessary to allow for both popular mobilization for nonviolent action and control of individual events and the organization as a whole. The common organizational "theme" uniting these two complex features is an operational focus on functional task differentiation.

The Timorese theory-building case study analyzes findings from in-person interviews, first-person accounts and historiography of the conflict to trace and explore the relevant mechanisms leading from a violent (guerrilla) to a largely nonviolent conflict strategy. This case study also establishes that the decision to adopt nonviolent action as a strategy and the actual planning of nonviolent events can be directly linked to a rebel organization's leadership. To test the plausibility of the theory and explore the scope, I present two additional medium-length case studies of the Nepali Maoists and the Salvadoran Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional.

In addition to providing the first comprehensive conceptualization of nonviolent action as a rebel strategy, this dissertation makes two key analytical and conceptual con-

tributions: First, I provide a framework for studying rebel groups as organizations with internal frameworks and processes that come together in a dominant structure that can explain operational and strategic choices, options, and trajectories. A comprehensive understanding of a rebel group's dominant structure requires careful over-time analysis. Second, the example of nonviolent action as a conflict strategy shows the necessity of studying the population — and its ties to the rebel organizations — as active resistance participants that must be included in a comprehensive organizational analysis of a rebel group.

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Für meine Mutter

1. Rebel Use of Nonviolent Action: Framing the Issue

“Nonviolence is not inaction. It is not discussion. It is not for the timid or weak. Nonviolence is hard work ... In some cases, nonviolence requires more militancy than violence.”

– Cesar Chavez

1.1 The puzzle

As rebel organizations are associated with violence and war, the term “rebel use of nonviolent action” seems oxymoronic. Yet, some rebel organizations mobilize and organize the population to participate in large-scale mass protests, demonstrations, or boycotts, and sometimes this strategy brings the militant group considerably closer to their goal. To even begin to understand the potential shock and awe effect rebels can have by using nonviolent action, only consider what the action entails: In a repressive, violent, and chaotic environment, a militant organization veers from its charted path of organized violence and motivates a large number of people to publicly advocate the rebel cause at great personal risk.

Timor-Leste’s Fretilin (later National Council for Maubere Resistance or CNRM) epitomizes the unexpected but highly effective nature of rebels using nonviolent action. After 15 years of internecine civil war, CNRM shifted its strategy from guerrilla warfare in the mountainous periphery of Timor-Leste to a popular nonviolent campaign. Using a clandestine information network that connected occupied urban areas such as Dili and Baucau to the militant rebel leadership in the mountains, CNRM was able to coordinate violent and nonviolent activism to great success, later even expanding nonviolent action into

university towns in Indonesia where Timorese students were studying. Ten years later, under increasing international pressure, Indonesia conceded to Timorese independence.

The first nonviolent event was triggered by Suharto's "opening" of the island to foreign visitors, which suddenly provided a means of reaching the international community. The first (and only) foreign head of state to visit the island was Pope John Paul II; a visit by the head of the Catholic Church was intended to confer legitimacy on the annexation (Stephan 2006). Through links established in the 1970s and early 1980s for the provision of information and supplies from the population to the rebels and people hiding in the mountains and jungle (Clandestine Front), a few hundred young Timorese were mobilized to protest the Pope's Mass in a church in Tacitolo, near the capital of Dili (Bexley and Tchailoro 2013). After the Pope had conferred the final blessing, the youths ran up to the front, shouting the slogans of the National Council of Maubere Resistance (CNRM, formerly Fretilin), and unfurling their banners. The Pope was quickly ushered from the stage and the protesters fled, although a few were captured, tortured, and killed. Over the next decade, the Clandestine Front, under the auspices of the rebel leadership, would organize hundreds of protest events both within Timor-Leste as well as university towns and urban centers around Indonesia.

On all counts, the circumstances at the time did not favor large-scale popular activism. The civil war – accompanied by one of the worst genocides of the 20th Century – was still in full swing; about one third of the population had already perished.¹ In early 1989, Bishop Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo described the situation in an open letter to UN Secretary General Javier de Perez Cuellar: "We are dying as a people and as a nation" (Lyon

¹Estimate from former governor of occupied Timor, Mário Carrascalão, during our interview on November 27, 2014, in Dili. According to both his own testimony and that of many others, including José Ramos-Horta, Carrascalão acted as a double agent smuggling information out of Timor (more on this later). Official estimates from Indonesian, Portuguese and Catholic Church sources range from 40,000 to 200,000. Using a variety of data sources ranging from the Indonesian Army over international organizations to the Catholic Church and multiple-systems estimation, Silva and Ball (2006) estimate a minimum of conflict-related deaths of 102,800.

2006, 139).²

The conditions for organizing nonviolent action in Timor-Leste were unfavorable at best. A former soldier in CNRM's military wing - Forças Armadas da Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste or Falintil - as well as nonviolent organizer Constâncio Pinto characterizes the Situation on the ground in war-torn Timor-Leste before the first public demonstration, highlighting just how difficult and improbable it was to mobilize the Timorese population for nonviolent action: "We were concerned that it would be difficult to hold a demonstration because people were not yet brave enough to speak out publicly against the occupation and the repression. None of us, since the time of the invasion, had ever participated in any sort of demonstration ..." (Pinto and Jardine 1997, 107). How was the Timorese resistance organization able to build a nonviolent popular protest movement out of the ashes of an internecine civil war almost unparalleled in its brutality against civilians in the 20th Century? Why were rebel leaders willing to abandon established and tried violent methods, and why was the population willing to put themselves at risk? The developmental trajectory of Fretilin or CNRM is particularly puzzling when we consider how many rebel groups become more extremist in their means as civil wars progress without resolution. From this set of questions and observations, I derive the following research question that guides this dissertation: *Why do some rebel organizations strategically use nonviolent mass popular action in a civil war?*³

Although the rebel use of nonviolent action appears to be most common in leftist militant organizations active towards the end of the 20th Century such as the Fretilin, the West Sahrawi Polisario, or the Nepali Maoists, the organizations who have used this strategy are highly diverse, and some are not recent at all. The case of the Pashtuns living in the North-West Frontier Province of colonial India throughout most of the 19th and

²Together with José Ramos-Horta, Belo received the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize for his leadership role in organizing and publicizing nonviolent activism in occupied Timor-Leste.

³I refer to this phenomenon as *rebel use of nonviolent action* throughout most of the dissertation as opposed to "rebel use of strategic mass-based nonviolent action," which is more precise but even more unwieldy.

the first half of the 20th Century exemplify this last point. Organized in a loose military confederacy, the Pashtuns engaged in periodic guerrilla warfare against the British colonial power for more than eighty years. The British sent more than a hundred punitive military expedition into the region that was strategically invaluable, as the Khyber Pass represented the overland gateway to India (Johansen 1997, 57).

The Pashtun resistance seemed as far removed from nonviolent action as possible; this was by no means a likely strategic trajectory for the movement. The Pashtuns resisted so fiercely that the British were never able to consolidate stable control over the region, and they were infamous for their exceptional martial skills, which pervaded deep layers of the Pashtun society; through their code of honor, the *Pashtunwali*, disputes over property, women, or personal injury often resulted in blood feud (Ahmed 1976), and nearly all Pashtun men carried firearms. In 1842, an army expedition numbering 4,500 British soldiers was completely exterminated except for one survivor, who was sent back to Britain to tell the tale (Johansen 1997). Their martial skills and effectiveness against the British led to very negative stereotypes about the violent Pashtun nature. In 1896, William Crooke wrote: “The true Pathan [Pashtun] is perhaps the most barbaric of all the races with which we are brought into contact,” further describing them as cruel, bloodthirsty, and vindictive (Crooke (1896, 167-168) quoted in Johansen (1997, 56)).

Abdul Ghaffar Khan, devout Muslim and son of a chieftain, founded the *Khudai Khidmatgars* (‘Servants of God’) in the 1920s, which based themselves on the Pashtun code of honor and Muslim beliefs. It was an indigenous army intent on fighting no matter the cost to soldiers’ physical persons; however, all “fighting” would be nonviolent. Like a violent army, the *Khudai Khidmatgar* would be drilled, disciplined, and pledged to fight, not with guns, but with their lives (Johansen 1997, 58). As in the preceding 80 years of guerrilla-based resistance, the ultimate goal was home rule of Pashtunistan, and many former fighters became Servants of God, so that the organization numbered in the 100,000s in the 1930s, and engaged in hundreds of mass-based actions against the British (Pyarelal

1950, 37).

Because of their previously loose organization and their anti-colonial (rather than intra-state) character, the Pashtun example diverges from the established conception of rebel use of nonviolent action. However, it still exemplifies the ability of movement insiders to radically alter contentious course even after 80 years of violent struggle, mobilizing large numbers of people into risky action, while all the same maintaining the goals of the previously exclusively violent push. It also shows how nonviolent action has a strong strategic and contentious character, even though it is commonly thought of as a morally superior campaign (compared to violent action) aiming to persuade and change hearts and minds. In fact, the unique power of nonviolent action, especially in a civil war context, comes from having a moral connotation as well as a strategic, contentious bent, demonstrating that the two characteristics are by no means exclusive. Accordingly, Ghaffar Khan explicitly told his people: “I am going to give you such a weapon that the police and the army will not be able to stand against it” (quoted in Johansen (1997, 58)).

More “modern” examples also show how the rebel use of nonviolent action can be both a *conscious and strategic* but also *controversial and difficult* decision. For example, the Basque ETA, which originally had organized itself around six activist branches (publications, study groups, Basque language groups, mass actions, propaganda, and military actions) and had originally focused on propaganda and sabotage quickly decided upon increased repression that violence was the only way forward and that there was no space for other methods of resistance (Aiertza and Zabalo 2010, 13). The ETA is often associated with a relatively tranquil conflict transformation, and there are even several instances of demonstrations for the Basque cause. For example, the 1969 Burgos trial, a show trial to judge and execute 16 ETA members accused of killing superintendent Melitón Manzanas, spurred large demonstrations and protest both at home and abroad, not only protesting the planned executions but also the suppression of Basques. However, these protests were held within the context of the anti-Franco movement in Spain, and not organized by ETA

(though ETA soldiers did show up to some of these trials) (Aiertza and Zabalo 2010, 14). Rather, mass organization for nonviolent action was only adopted by the ETA as a goal in 1972 at the movement's fifth assembly. The case of ETA usefully demonstrates how complex the adoption of nonviolent action can be, and in fact ETA split over the decision to incorporate nonviolent action.

The list of “modern” rebel organizations who used (or currently use) nonviolent action ranges from the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa, the Basque Country and Freedom (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna or ETA) in Spain, the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) in El Salvador, to the Communist Party of Nepal - Maoist (CPN-M/UPF), geographically spanning four continents. Some organizations, such as the Polisario operating in territory claimed by Morocco, fought for independence. Others, for example the People's Liberation Army of Manipur (PLA) in India, fight for less maximalist goals such as increased self-determination. In some instances, the organizations were uncontested in their leadership of the movement, such as Fretilin and later CNRM in Timor-Leste; other rebel organizations, such as the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), distinguished themselves from formidable rival rebel organizations through their use of nonviolent action in an attempt at in-bidding. Finally, while nonviolent action is often associated with commitments to the ethical superiority of nonviolence and therefore would appear to be diametrically opposed to attacking civilians, some organizations have used both nonviolent mass-based action and terrorism targeting civilians, such as the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) in Turkey.

While some rebel organizations built their shift from violence to nonviolence on a prior history of nonviolent action in their country – as was the case with the South African ANC – this is no necessary condition. Timor-Leste had never experienced any nonviolent direct action prior to Indonesian invasion.⁴ Conversely, organizations with significant

⁴Interview by the author with former nonviolent activist and Fretilin member Nuno Rodrigues Tchailoro on November 25, 2014, in Dili. In contrast to Timor-Leste's unprecedented use of nonviolent action, the ANC had used nonviolent action exclusively prior to using violent action. The ANC made the

nonviolent activist history never returned to this strategy once organized violence was underway. For example, Burma experienced a slew of student groups organizing large-scale protest marches and demonstrations before organizing an insurgent movement, the All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF) in the early 1990s. The activist movement lasted for approximately one decade, during which no concessions were made by the government. Subsequently, the organization lost much of its fighting capacity as many of its members joined ethnic insurgent groups instead, none of which went on to wage nonviolent campaigns. Given the diverse attributes of these violent groups, what structural or organizational features do they have in common that led to their use of nonviolent action?

1.2 The effects of nonviolent action in a civil war

What payoffs can rebel groups derive from the use of nonviolent action? Rebel organizations rarely achieve their stated outcome goals.⁵ Using a dataset comprising 310 militant organizations active sometime between the years 1980 and 2012, Acosta (2014) finds that 18.7% of rebel groups achieved at least part of their stated outcome goals; this number drops to 12.2% if we only count full goal achievement (149). In achieving their stated outcome goals, rebel organizations using nonviolent action have been very effective. Both Timor-Leste's CNRM and Nepal's Maoists attained their maximalist goals, so that Timor-Leste became independent from Indonesia and the Nepalese monarchy was overturned. Pursuing yet a different kind of goal, the ANC in South Africa brought about the end of centuries of effective and later legal apartheid. Given how difficult it is for rebel orga-

decision to move towards violent struggle hesitantly, with several leaders questioning whether the limits of nonviolent action had really already been reached (Maharaj 2008, 10). This contrast exemplifies the diversity of conflict histories behind the rebel use of nonviolent action.

⁵Acosta (2014) defines "outcome goal" in the following manner: "Outcome goals represent an organization's *raison d'être*. They signify the purpose of an organization's genesis and persistence. Outcome goals exhibit the revolutionary or reactionary demands that militant organizations place on the status quo, which a particular adversary secures or promotes" (142-143).

nizations to win a civil war outright, it is a remarkable feat that 20% of the rebel groups who have used nonviolent action as a protracted strategy (as identified in Chapter 2) have attained their goals.⁶ While the goal of this dissertation is not to conclusively explore the efficacy of nonviolent action as a rebel strategy, the promising nature of the strategy is still worth remarking upon.

Rebel groups using nonviolent action have also achieved significant diplomatic successes. For example, West Sahara is recognized by more than 70 countries, plus South Ossetia (Stephan and Mundy 2006). Going back a few decades, Ghaffar Khan's Khudai Khidmatgar eventually brought about British reforms and eventually British withdrawal, although they never attained an independent homeland of their own (Johansen 1997). Thucydides once stated that "right, as the world goes, is only in question between equals in power, while the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must." That military organizations could actually do better in a war by reverting to explicitly non-military strategies puts the adage that might makes right - widely accepted by political realists - on its head.

Rebel groups not only pursue oftentimes lofty goals shared by many in the movement, but they are also political organizations purporting to represent and govern a population, often in competition with rival groups who want the same. Without surviving, the organization cannot hope to attain its stated outcome goal. As argued by Acosta, "militant organizations pursue two common and distinct aims: to survive and to achieve the goals that define their *raison d'être*" (135). Therefore, while rebels work towards the overall goal shared by the movement at large, "they simultaneously pursue organizational objectives that benefit the groups themselves" (Krause 2013, 259). Rebel organizations therefore often simultaneously pursue two goals: the public good of national liberation or regime change as well as the private good of organizational power, primacy, and survival.

⁶The 20% estimate comes from cross-referencing Acosta's dataset with my list of rebel organizations that used nonviolent action. Given the small n, this statistic is purely descriptive.

This insight dovetails with the maxim of organizational scholars of the “predominance of organizational survival over the transformation of external reality” (Max Weber quoted in Della Porta (1995, 84)). Rebel organizations constantly aim to mobilize support from the population and to outbid other armed groups in the movement; the intermediate goal is to scrounge up significant popular and financial support. Some groups will also look towards a post-conflict social and political order, where they want to be given a seat at the table (Krause 2013). In other words, the internal organizational struggle for power is real.

The use of nonviolent action by a rebel organization is both an indication of strong popular support and can further augment and cement the organization’s standing within the movement. This complex, mutually reinforcing relationship is one reason why process-tracing in a small-n research design is ideally suited for this study, as it allows for a better grasp of how these forces interact and fit together. The rebel use of nonviolent action not only expresses the close population-rebel link, it also also strengthens this relationship and alters its quality. Through using nonviolent action, the rebel leadership can hope to solidify its position in the movement, which also makes them likely post-conflict political power players. In fact, looking through the complete list of rebel groups who have used nonviolent action (see table 2.2 in Chapter 2), not a single rebel organization that has utilized nonviolent action has become politically irrelevant, and several of them have become major political players (think of the FMLN, the PKK, or the JKLF). An important caveat is that we are more likely to know about the groups that retained relevance, and might overlook those that drifted into oblivion.

Fatah is a case in point for this phenomenon, too. During the First Intifada, Fatah, one of the four factions of the Palestinian Liberation Organization – the most powerful faction at the time – was instrumental in supporting and directing the various forms of nonviolent action used against Israel between 1987 and 1991 (Stephan 2006). During the Second Intifada, most Fatah leaders turned away from violence completely (in favor of

institutionalized politics); as a result of their savvy strategic maneuvering of the strategies of violence and nonviolence, Fatah is now “better recognized and [has] enjoyed greater support from people across the globe than many current states” (Krause 2013, 276).

The potential pay-offs of nonviolent campaigns in civil wars can be important drivers of the strategic choice to employ it. The rebel use of nonviolent action can also make compromise with the central government more likely than if the rebel group confined itself to purely violent means. Politically, it can be easier for a government to negotiate with or make concessions to a group with a public commitment to internationally held norms and democratic governance rather than a known “terrorist,” as many governments categorically do not negotiate with terrorists. In contrast, the use of nonviolence can make a group a more palatable political partner, more likely to be ready to be integrated into the political process. In this way, apart from its direct effect on reducing organized violence and therefore reducing the loss of lives, nonviolent action can also indirectly affect the quality of a post-conflict peace and solidify the rebel leadership’s political position. The Nepali Maoists are symptomatic of this: After the US State Department listed the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) as a terrorist organization in 2001, the group became Nepal’s dominant political party following a widespread nonviolent campaign in 2006. The increased popular mobilization can lead to broader support, or be a symptom of broader support.

The rebel use of nonviolent direct action can also have a positive impact on post-conflict sustainable peace and democratization. How civil wars are fought can have significant effects on post-war politics. This argument is frequently made about the use of violence. For example, Krause (2013) argues “non-state violence does not simply affect the course of a military occupation, it also determines which non-state groups survive or perish, ... and, in some cases, which non-state group becomes the ruling regime of a new state” (261). Not only do civil wars affect who is in power after the war, but wartime rebel-population links can significantly affect the nature of the political power structure.

A rebel group practiced at mobilizing the population for nonviolent action will likely have significant experience in popular organizing, enjoy broad support, and is more likely to adhere to human rights and democratic principles. Democracy also crucially relies on the participation of the population; according to Walzer (2002), “only popular mobilization will pave the way for the establishment of a free government” (220). Wartime nonviolent action will develop key skills of democratic participation before democratization is even attempted. Nonviolent direct action is both an expression of the relationship between rebels and population and it also serves to strengthen this tie, which can facilitate the post-war democratization process.

In her dissertation, Huang (2012) argues that rebel governance, which she defines as “a political strategy of rebellion in which rebels forge and manage relations with civilians” significantly affects state-society relations, which in turn characterizes a political regime (8). Huang further posits that wherever rebels heavily rely on civilians for survival (rather than foreign sponsors or extracting natural resources), the population will be politically mobilized. In this way, during the war, the population becomes aware of the possible meaning of political rights, alternatives to the status-quo, and develops expectations of a radical break from the autocratic pre-war status quo, which creates at least some pressure on the post-war elites to cater to the needs of the citizens. Active civilian participation in rebel-sanctioned or even rebel-organized protest events is likely to multiply the effect of these mechanisms.

1.3 Rebel use of nonviolent action and the study of conflict

Rebel use of nonviolent action can partly reduce or completely replace the use of violence in civil wars. While some rebels use violent and nonviolent action concurrently, others, such as the Western Sahrawi Polisario, completely shift from the former to the latter. In

either case, the use of nonviolent action implies a de-emphasis of violence, implying fewer deaths and less human suffering. Rebel groups who substitute some or all of their violent action with nonviolent activism should be of great interest to scholars and practitioners, as the study of conflict is fundamentally concerned with the causes of war and peace and how violence starts and ends. Yet, partly because of the seeming paradox of the term “rebel use of nonviolent action,” this phenomenon has received almost no scholarly attention. This is all the more astonishing as this represents a possible pathway away from civil war violence that might make both negotiation more amicable and post-war reconstruction and democratization smoother.

One of the reasons the phenomenon has been largely overlooked is its relative rarity. The Non-State Actor Dataset, an extension of the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset (ACD), identifies 443 rebel organizations (Gleditsch et al. 2002; Themner and Wallensteen 2014). Of these, I identified 15 rebel organizations who used large-scale nonviolent action. Yet, given the lethality and scale of some of these conflicts, as well as the effect of nonviolent action, the importance of the phenomenon is clearly evident.

One reason why the rebel use of nonviolent action has evaded significant attention and in-depth analysis is that it runs counter to some key assumptions about violence in terms of what intrastate conflict is, why it occurs, and why it ends. Scholars of conflict analyze how violence is used as a bargaining chip, how it can bring about negotiations, and sometimes, how likely it is that violence will recur once the warring parties have reached a negotiated settlement.⁷ Yet, traditionally, a conflict is identified exclusively based on the use of violence. If the identification of “civil war” is done through battle deaths, all commonly used datasets on civil wars and conflict actors only consider what goes on as long as deaths exceed some threshold. Conflicts are considered terminated if one side wins, if there is a negotiated settlement, or if the number of battle deaths drops beneath a certain threshold (see for example Gleditsch et al. (2002)). Most quantitative datasets on

⁷See Blattman and Miguel (2010) for a review of the study of civil wars.

conflict would not recognize nonviolent action as a conflict strategy; nonviolent action is usually accompanied by a decrease in violent action and lowered battle deaths, so that the conflict would not appear in a dataset during the active use of nonviolent strategies even without formal conflict resolution. This exclusive focus on violent contentious action in conflicts at the exclusion of a myriad of alternative contentious strategies is artificial and misleading, and masks important similarities and parallels between violent and nonviolent action.

Nonviolent action, just like violent action, is outside of the institutional realm of politics, often illegal, and has a strong coercive element (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011). I follow a recent scholarly trend that recognizes nonviolence as a powerful tool to effect lasting political change, and is just as or even more difficult to organize and carry out than organized violent action (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011). In their seminal 2011 book, Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) argue that nonviolence have a significantly higher success rate than violent campaigns. Their central argument is that nonviolent campaigns allow for broader public participation because of the lower physical and moral barriers to this kind of activism, that this in turn makes nonviolent movements more resilient and better able to innovate, and can cause loyalty shifts towards the movement. However, while Chenoweth and Stephan significantly contribute to a broadened and more realistic assumption of contentious action, they make one crucially restrictive assumption: They assume that a campaign uses *either* violent *or* nonviolent direct action. Just as is done by many “traditional” conflict scholars, this practice falsely constrains organization’s activities and may thereby overlook much of what a resistance group does and how.⁸

In contrast, practitioners have long held more inclusive views on forms of contentious action and struggle. In the African National Congress, one of the best-known exam-

⁸There is also a significant, unaddressed selection bias underlying the findings of Chenoweth and Stephan (2011): If, for example, cases that have higher underlying grievances are more likely to use violent rather than nonviolent strategies, then the level of grievances rather than the strategy type explains the likelihood of a campaign’s success.

ples of a rebel organization moving from violent to nonviolent action, the organization maintained the view throughout their resistance struggle that a continuum of contentious strategies facilitated shifts in strategy and tactics, as they were necessitated by changing conditions, and therefore made the organization more adaptable. Walter Sisulu, former Secretary-General of the ANC, summarized the breadth of contentious action strategies in the following way: “There exist at all times a multiplicity of forms of struggle that a movement exploits as part of its arsenal of weapons. ...Even if a given form of struggle emerges as a dominant one, this does not mean that other forms do not co-exist” (Sisulu 2001, 84). As this shows, some rebel organizations consider nonviolent action a realistic and viable strategic option; therefore, scholars should study violent and nonviolent action within the same analytical framework.

Not only has nonviolent action as a conflict strategy been largely ignored, it actually runs counter to our current understanding of conflict escalation and de-escalation and how conflicts begin and end.⁹ Rational explanations of war and violence view conflict onset as a type of bargaining failure and violence therefore logically following nonviolence. According to Blattman and Miguel (2010), commitment-problem based explanations for intrastate violence “one of the most dominant explanations for civil war” whereby commitment problems “prevent socially desirable agreements between fighting sides” (7). These commitment problems also operate at the end of a conflict, as rebels will shy away from accepting a settlement if the opportunity for post-treaty exploitation persists (Walter 2009).

That a violent group would unilaterally abrogate violence simply does not fit into this framework where an escalatory logic dictates that violence temporally and logically follow nonviolence. However, the escalatory understanding of violence onset at least implicitly acknowledges that violence is not the only potential type of contentious action.

⁹See, for example, Fearon and Laitin (2003); Collier and Hoeffler (2004); de Rouen and Sobek (2004), Toft (2010).

The insight that nonviolent action can follow violent action and the two can be used by the same group also puts into question the association of violent action with greater conflict intensity. For example, Gurr's Minorities at Risk dataset (Minorities at Risk Project 2009) recognized three different forms of protest based on *increasing levels of scope and intensity*: Nonviolent protest ranges from verbal opposition through political organizational activity to small and large demonstrations, strikes, and rallies. Riot ranges from scattered acts of sabotage to serious and widespread rioting and armed attempts to seize power locally. Finally, rebellion ranges from political banditry to protracted civil war in which rebel military units have base areas.

The analytical focus of this dissertation considers rebel groups as complex organizations with many actors and internal processes. This makes analysis much more complicated: After all, "the assumption that movements are unitary actors is attractive because it simplifies the complex empirical world into identifiable decision-makers whose practices can be elegantly modeled" (Pearlman 2010, 179).¹⁰ Though treating movements as actors has the advantage of parsimony, analytical leverage is lost, and we might miss a big part of the causal story. As Pearlman (2010) cautions, many of the causes and processes of civil violence (and nonviolence) that we attribute to strategic decision-making by a rational unitary actor can often be traced to originate with dynamics internal to the movement.

With a process as complex as the adoption of nonviolent action by rebel organizations, I follow what Pearlman (2010) terms a "composite-actor approach," which brings resistance movements' multifaceted internal dynamics to the forefront of analysis. Pearlman identifies clusters of actors based on their objectives and motivations, and differentiates between elites, aspirants, and masses. Poignantly, she calls on conflict scholars to "rethink the nature of the agents who we regard as driving violence" (198). In this way, Pearlman

¹⁰To provide a contrasting example, Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) focus on *movements* rather than *organizations* as their unit of analysis. Coggins (2011) is another example of a movement-focused approach, whereas Cunningham (2011) and Cunningham, Salehyan and Gleditsch (2013) follow organization-focused approaches.

goes one step further than Krause (2013), who argues that we should differentiate between movements and the organizations representing them; the latter pursue objectives benefitting both the movement as a whole and the organization specifically. However, there are also potentially divergent interests within the organization; a rebel group is a political organ like any other where individuals vie for power and influence; this needs careful consideration.

By breaking movements into organizations and organizations into their composites, we can keep an open mind to “unexpected” conflict trajectories and causal processes that might evade our notice otherwise. For example, Wood (2003) explores how indiscriminate state violence may provoke moral outrage that legitimizes a turn to rebel violence, for example in El Salvador in the late 1970s, which then shifted the balance of power within the opposition to those favoring violence. Alternatively, indiscriminate violence may lead civilians to perceive that their security can be better ensured if they join the insurgency, even if they are not concerned with achieving the overall goals of the movement (Kalyvas and Kocher 2007). Both of these fine-grained explanations dig much deeper than one could by considering organizations as unitary, rational actors.

By looking at how organizational factors determine the use of nonviolent action by rebel organizations, I build on a growing literature that challenges a purely rationalist explanation for contentious action. This literature challenges the frequently cited assumption about organizations’ choice of strategy, including the initial choice of violent or nonviolent approaches, which assumes that groups pick strategies based on the costs of those strategies and their anticipated success, and are then assumed to remain on their chosen trajectory (Cunningham, Salehyan and Gleditsch 2013). Instead, I consider conflict trajectories as multi-layered processes that continuously change and adjust to shifting circumstances: according to Cunningham, Gleditsch and Salehyan (2009), “just as with conflict onset, during each stage in a civil war actors deliberately choose between violence and alternative strategies” (574). There is no reason why the strategic, deliberate

choice of nonviolent action should not be part of this rationalist framework.

Kalyvas and Balcells (2010) also argue that there has been too much focus on the determinants of civil war onset rather than on how civil wars are fought. They argue that conventional warfare and symmetric nonconventional warfare are used more frequently than guerrilla warfare in post-Cold War civil wars, so that our analyses of conflict dynamics are warped. An example of how the study of conflict and violence has changed in recent years is the literature on violent restraint. Scholars of restraint challenge blanket predictions of escalatory violence in situations of competition between rebel groups (Clauset et al. (2010), Findley (2011), Jaeger et al. (2012), Nemeth (2014), Kaplan (2014), Stanton (2016)). These approaches explore situations in which rebel organizations exercise restraint in the use of violence over escalation within outbidding dynamics. However, while restraint is a quintessentially passive move, rebel use of nonviolent action requires a deep, active commitment to *use nonviolent action* rather than just sometimes *not using violent action*.

There exists some qualitative and policy-related work on related or similar phenomena.¹¹ Using the term “conflict de-escalation,” Dudouet (2013) discusses how some violent movements transition into nonviolent movements. Conflict de-escalation, among others, describes processes whereby “non-state insurgent groups ... evolve from armed strategies to nonviolent methods of contentious collective action” (402). Dudouet also offers the term “conflict transformation” to describe this phenomenon. The latter term is too broad: There are many ways in which the nature of a conflict may be transformed, and the term may even describe radicalization and splintering processes. On the other hand, “conflict de-escalation” misrepresents the phenomenon and conveys false assumptions about the intensity of the conflict. Simply because an armed organization moves towards the partial or full use of non-violent rather than violent action does not mean that the

¹¹See Pearlman and Cunningham (2011), Dudouet (2013) and a collection of qualitative narratives (Dudouet 2015) are partial exceptions.

conflict is less intense or desperately fought. Other discussions of rebel use of nonviolent action broaden the term to a point where it has little analytical meaning; for example, in his otherwise insightful analysis of the Nepali Maoists' violent and nonviolent strategic responses to brutal government repression, Bhattacharya (2013) takes "nonviolent action" to mean mass-based popular protest, negotiations, and the establishment of rural development programs, unwittingly demonstrating the dire need for conceptual specificity in this field of study.

In exploring and explaining how rebel organizations use nonviolent action, I lean on pioneering work that not only disaggregates what happens in civil wars, but also differentiates the component parts of conflict actors. In this way, my approach in this dissertation is similar to how Weinstein (2007, 18) described his own: "This approach recognizes that patterns of violence and abuse vary in important and measurable ways across conflicts, over time and across space within conflicts, and across belligerent groups." Most of the literature on civil wars conceptualizes "contentious action" very narrowly, purely based on the destruction of lives or possibly property. Expanding our conception of conflict to incorporate the rebel use of nonviolent action can further sharpen our understanding of civil wars and the use of contentious strategic action to win them. In this dissertation, I aim to do just this by positing that violent action is not the only type of contentious strategy that is used in practice in civil war, and that we need to pay attention to nonviolent action as a rebel strategy as well. In this, I follow the literature on contentious politics (see for example Tilly and Tarrow (2012)), which conceives of contentious action as a much broader action spectrum. My conceptualization of nonviolent action as a rebel strategy is influenced by both this literature and recent work on rebel strategies in civil wars.

1.4 Analytical approach, argument and contribution

The rebel use of nonviolent action thus not only appears paradoxical, but also runs counter to some very basic assumptions about conflict trajectories. First, the voluntary and unconditional move away from violence contradicts the basic tenets of escalatory conflicts. Second, the use of nonviolent action appears surprisingly unconnected to the prevailing military balance of power in a civil war, or conflict type, for that matter. This second point will become particularly clear in the comparison between the Timorese CNRM and the Nepali CPN-M. How can we explain a phenomenon that seems to fall this far outside of existing conceptions of conflict? The overall aim of this dissertation is two-fold: First, I define, conceptualize and explore the strategic value of *rebel use of nonviolent action*. Second, I build a theory to explain whether or not rebel groups will seize on an opportunity for using strategic nonviolent action. There are some obvious factors that facilitate the rebel use of nonviolent action: A close relationship with the population, a political ideology favoring democracy and mass action, the presence of urban centers as “staging areas”, a concurrent popular movement, or a receptive international audience, to name just a few. Furthermore, nonviolent action, as will be explained in more detail in Chapter 3, can benefit many rebel organizations — and yet, few actually use it. However, just because some or all of these facilitating or triggering factors are given does not mean that the rebel group, a complex, multi-layered organization replete with contrasting aims and interests and individual leaders and factions vying for power and influence, will be either willing or able to seize on the opportunity to utilize nonviolent action.

The proposed framework takes an organizational approach to understanding rebel group behavior, which accounts for the role of civilians as potential group actors. The appropriateness of this framework is established through an in-depth theory-building case study of Timor-Leste’s Fretilin/CNRM. Based on insights gleaned from this case and a conceptual exploration of nonviolent action as a rebel strategy, my theory is anchored

on the insight that a rebel operational shift towards the use of nonviolent action constitutes a particularly disruptive instance of strategic innovation. The theory unfolds in two parts: First, I argue that consolidated political authority in a rebel organization is necessary for disruptive innovation in the form of nonviolent action. Second, I explore the operational requirements for actually *carrying out* nonviolent action, and argue that embedded organizational structures linking rural rebel strongholds with urban popular centers are necessary to allow for both popular mobilization for nonviolent action and control of individual events and the organization as a whole. The common organizational “theme” uniting these two complex features is an operational focus on functional task differentiation.

One interesting theme that emerges throughout the dissertation is the intrinsic analytical overlap between the questions of *why* rebel organizations use nonviolent action and *how* they do so. If we consider rebel groups as potentially complex organizations that evolve and adjust over time, then a group’s dominant structure and modus operandi come to color and delimit the strategies and trajectories open to the organization; in other words, *how* an organization does some things comes to influence *how* it acts. This explains why sometimes throughout the dissertation a group’s way of doing something and its reason for doing so might appear as one and the same.

In addition to providing the first comprehensive discussion of nonviolent action as a rebel organization, this dissertation makes two key analytical and conceptual contributions: First, I provide a framework for studying rebel groups as organizations with internal frameworks and processes that come together in a *dominant structure* that can explain operational and strategic choices, options, and trajectories. A comprehensive understanding of a rebel group’s dominant structure requires careful over-time analysis. Second, the example of nonviolent action as a conflict strategy shows the necessity of studying the population — and its ties to the rebel organizations — as active resistance participants that must be included in a comprehensive organizational analysis of a rebel group.

1.5 Dissertation roadmap

The remainder of this dissertation will proceed as follows: Chapter 2 explores the concept of *rebel use of nonviolent action*, starting with nonviolent direct action in general and then situating its shape and role in a conflict context. Building this conceptualization and definition, I operationalize terms and concepts and present a full universe of cases. Chapter 2 also lays out the qualitative research design in-depth, which is based on the very specific purposes of generating and refining hypotheses on the necessary conditions for the rebel use of nonviolent action, identifying causal mechanisms, and defining scope conditions.

Before being able to explore why and under what conditions some rebel groups resort to nonviolent action, I first explain why they would want to do so. What are the strategic benefits and the risks for rebel organizations using nonviolent action? What are the costs and challenges associated with nonviolent action that are unique to a conflict context? Chapter 3 explores nonviolent action as a contentious strategy in a civil war, paying special attention to the strategic, organizational and operational advantages and disadvantages. In Chapter 4, I explore how Timor-Leste's Fretilin/CNRM came to use nonviolent action. It serves as a pathway theory-building case study. Chapter 5 presents my *organizational-process theory* to explain the rebel use of nonviolent action. Chapter 6 presents the case of the Nepali Maoists as a most-different case study that presents a plausibility probe for the theory. Chapter 7 presents the case of the Salvadoran FMLN as a case where nonviolent action was attempted, but failed, as the necessary organizational conditions were not present. I also introduce two case examples to disprove the remaining alternative hypotheses.

Chapter 8 concludes the dissertation. What can we say about the scope conditions under which my theory can explain why rebels use nonviolent action? To what extent might the theory be generalizable to the full universe of cases? I propose several avenues

of future research on this topic, and outline important policy implications for my theory, reiterating how important it is to study the organizational processes and developmental trajectories of militant non-state groups.

2. Definition, Operationalization and Research Design

“Fighting is the central military act. . . . Engagements mean fighting. The object of fighting is the destruction or defeat of the enemy.”

– Carl von Clausewitz

2.1 Definitions and operationalization

How do we define and study *rebel use of nonviolent action* and who uses it? Operationalization is both particularly important and complicated for this study; there is very little scholarly work to build on, so that terms have to be defined from scratch. The seemingly contradictory nature of the phenomenon makes wording and identification tricky. Posing an additional conceptual challenge, rebels’ use of nonviolent action relies on the mobilization and participation of actors who are not militants themselves (nonviolent activists from the civilian population), it is tricky to determine at what point we can attribute a nonviolent campaign to a rebel group.¹ Yet, precisely because of the complex organizational processes necessary for rebels to utilize nonviolent action and the level of specificity necessary for attribution, we must have a clear understanding of what constitutes a rebel group and what nonviolent action is in order to determine what it means for a rebel group to use nonviolent action and why they might do so.

¹*Rebel group* and *rebel organization* are used interchangeably throughout the dissertation.

Rebel organizations - what are they and what do they do?

What are rebel organizations, and how are they markedly different from other organizations with violent purposes, such as state militaries or terrorist organizations?² Is there something about a group actively organizing violence that fundamentally differentiates them from non-violent organizations such as activist groups or even businesses?

I define rebel organizations both by what they do and by how they are structured. Rebel organizations mount an organized, violent challenge to existing political institutions in a geographically clearly bounded territory. I focus on organizations that are not only in conflict with state institutions, but wish to replace partially or fully the state's governance capacity either at the central government apparatus or substate territory. This means that the rebel group is focused gaining increased or complete control over territory, either by controlling the center or through increased self-determination or secession.³

This distinction matters because the organizational requirements for organizations that aim for political governance of a territory are very different than those of organizations with less maximalist aims. In fact, some rebel groups already fulfill government-like functions during the civil war, which underlines that they are political actors. As summed up by Mampilly (2011), "the performance of governmental functions by violent nonstate actors from across the ideological spectrum has occurred throughout history and is a far more common occurrence than generally recognized" (2). While they operate outside of the realm of institutionalized politics (see for example McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2003)), rebel organizations are political at their core, even though they are illegal or extra-institutional. Rebels' challenge of the government, which according to Max Weber holds

²Note that some rebel organizations also use terrorist strategies, so that these are not wholly distinct actor categories.

³This excludes groups that have minimalist aims, such as increased cultural or economic rights that are not connected to increased self-determination or more political clout at the center. This definition does include organizations that lay claim to territory currently occupied by more than one state; one example are the Kurds who consider their homeland to include territory that spans southeastern Turkey, northern Syria, northern Iraq, as well as northwestern Iran.

a monopoly over the legitimate use of force in a state, necessarily places them outside the legal realm of the state (Gates 2002).

That rebel groups are political actors who wish to govern territory is an important deviation from some conceptualizations of rebel organizations. For example, Weinstein (2007) also considers rebel organizations that fight in “wars in which belligerents use violence but have no interest in achieving territorial control of any sort (notably terrorist groups)” (17). Because of the narrowness of my definition, some groups are excluded; for example, organized crime organizations that do not directly challenge state institutions for governance purposes, or some international terrorist organizations such as most branches of al-Qaeda if they do not wish to replace one current government structure with another. On the other hand, the militant group “Islamic State” (IS) would be counted, because it does aim to govern in a geographically bounded territory. On the other hand, I do not differentiate rebel groups based on how they organize violence. A rebel group is the belligerent, organized opposition in a civil war, irrespective of whether they fight guerrilla or conventional wars, though groups using nonviolent action use guerrilla tactics more often than not.⁴

At their core, rebel organizations are organizations like any other. Problematically, many studies investigating why some countries experience civil wars but not others, when they experience violence, and why some civil wars last so much longer than others “have taken organization as a given” (Weinstein 2007), treating the rebel organization and its internal structure as a “black box,” and therefore as a rational unitary actors with uniform preferences and incentives. This is a critique that was already leveled against the rational-actor approach of studying international relations decades ago. For example, Allison (1969) famously reprehended established political scholars and analysts for

⁴Though this is oversimplified, “insurgency” and “guerrilla warfare” are considered as synonymous. Guerrilla warfare is considered a type of *military technology* where fighting groups use light weapons and operate primarily from rural, peripheral bases (Fearon and Laitin 2003, 75). Guerrilla warfare and what it means for rebel relations with the civilian population will be discussed in more depth in the next chapter.

“understand[ing] happenings as the more or less purposive acts of unified national governments” based on a rational weighing of perceived strategic benefits and drawbacks (690). Instead, Allison proposed that government “acts” and “choices” were instead to be considered “outputs of large organizations functioning according to certain regular patterns of behavior” (690). Accordingly, it is crucial to analyze the organizational logic and processes within rebel groups in order to understand why they act how they do and how this contributes to conflict trajectories and outcomes. Organizational processes are particularly important for understanding how rebels use nonviolent action, as the coordination of violent and nonviolent action requires high organizational capacity and innovation potential.

For Weinstein (2007), *organization* refers to the internal characteristics of a movement: Its membership, policies, structures, and culture. These characteristics of an organization are mirrored by Staniland (2014). To the latter, organizations are collective actors with formal membership boundaries, where the members know what goals and principles the organization stands for and members can be identified by at least some other members. Organizations also have official, specialized goals, and they have routinized internal processes of decision-making control and the allocation of resources (Staniland 2014; Knight 1992; Elster 2007). This holds for rebel organizations like for any other formal, but non-violent, organization.

The definition put forth here clearly differentiates groups from movements, though the two are often lumped together in the conflict literature, where the non-state actors are seen as a unitary actor. Social movements are defined as “informal interaction networks between a plurality of individuals, groups, and/or organizations” with “a shared set of beliefs and a sense of belonging” that are “engaged in political and/or cultural conflicts, meant to promote or oppose social change” (Della Porta and Diani 1999, 14-15). Therefore, it is possible for a social movement to contain more than one organization; the former is defined by beliefs and a sense of belonging, whereas the latter is defined

based on its internal structure. For example, the Kashmiri nationalist movement is an example for a social movement, whereas the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front is one of the organizations representing this movement.

The difference between movements and organizations not only matters for the identification of organizational processes, but it is also crucial to get a complete sense of our main actors' goals and motivations. As eloquently argued by Krause (2013), "insurgencies are not unitary actors, but are instead marked by armed groups that pursue strategic objectives that benefit their larger social movements . . . while they simultaneously pursue organizational objectives that benefit the groups themselves" (259). A complete analysis of conflict actors and their choices requires us to consider both organizational goals and movement goals, as well as the inherent trade-offs inherent in weighing these against one another. Only by differentiating between movements and rebel organizations can we fully understand and appreciate the motivations and mechanisms behind specific actions or strategic choices.

To summarize, I conceive of a rebel group as *a collective organization made up of individual members, with a self-designated formal name, clear political goals, and formal structures of command and control. It uses organized violence in order to govern territory and operates outside the realm of institutionalized politics. Finally, it may or may not be the only organization purporting to represent a particular political movement.*

Defining and operationalizing nonviolent action

What is "nonviolent direct action" both as a type of action in its own right and as a rebel strategy? One reason why nonviolent resistance is so difficult to define is that scholars use different terms to denote the same or at least a similar concept, such as "nonviolent resistance", "popular resistance", or "nonviolent struggle." I use the terms "nonviolent action" and "nonviolent resistance." As Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) point out, the term *resistance* implies that the campaign is launched against the establishment and is

therefore outside of the standard institutional political framework; it also implies that the movement is generally confrontational. In this way, nonviolent direct action is outside the realm of institutionalized politics. According to Cunningham, Salehyan and Gleditsch (2013), nonviolent tactics entail some form of non-routine and non-institutionalized political behavior directed toward some policy change, and these actions do not involve violence. Nonviolent action, then, is a form of contentious action that operates outside the framework of legal, institutionalized politics.

Some of these characterizations appear eerily similar to violent action. In fact, even if the term appears contradictory, violent and nonviolent action have many similarities and parallels. As such, some definitions of nonviolent action are applicable to violent action as well. For example, Chenoweth and Stephan (2011, 12) define nonviolent action as “a type of political activity that deliberately or necessarily circumvents normal political channels and employs noninstitutional (and often illegal) forms of action against an opponent.” This definition underscores the similarities between violence and nonviolence as forms of organized, contentious action, as does Dudouet (2013, 402), who sees violent and non-violent action as “alternative methods of popular mobilization for collective, organized, non-institutional, contentious and coercive action.”

Yet, we must be careful in seeing nonviolent action and violent action as simply two sides of the same coin. For instance, some conceptions of nonviolent direct action are “negative” in that they are characterized by all of the factors defining violent action, but distinguishing itself through an absence of behavioral violence (see, for example, Bond et al. (1997)). On the surface, then, the key difference between armed and unarmed activism simply lies in the use of direct (behavioral) violence, defined as the intentional infliction of physical damage to persons or property. However, this makes violent action appear somehow more “intense” and “difficult”, going one step further than nonviolent action. Since I have already established that nonviolent action can temporally follow violent action within the same organization and alluded to the significant mobilization and

organization efforts as well as personal risks involved in using nonviolent action in a civil war, this conception of nonviolent action as the “negative” of violent action is highly misleading.

Viewing violent and nonviolent action as different only in the absence of violence in the latter also masks key differences in how the strategies operate and achieve their aims. Not only must our conception of the rebel use of nonviolent action acknowledge the significant organizational requirements and challenges inherent in the strategy, it must also account for the unique way in which it exerts pressure on opponents. Inching closer to this goal, Sharp (1999) defines nonviolent resistance as “a technique of socio-political action for applying power in a conflict without the use of violence” (567). But what kind of power is applied, by whom, and how?

Nonviolent action derives a large part of its power from widespread popular participation, which is both disruptive and demonstrates the government’s utter loss of legitimacy (see for example Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) or Nepstad (2015); to be discussed in more detail in the next chapter); a few thugs holding up pro-rebel signs on the side of the road do not qualify here. The centrality of people for the power and influence of nonviolent action is apparent in the terminology: “popular” is often inserted into the term describing the action – “popular nonviolence” or “mass-based direct action” are prominent examples – thereby directly associating nonviolent action with people power. According to Stephan (2006), nonviolent struggle is “popular” because it involves widespread civilian participation; it is “nonviolent” in that it uses nonviolent methods such as protests, demonstrations, boycotts, strikes, civil disobedience, and noncooperation Stephan (2006). Tarrow (2011) further explains the popular or collective nature of nonviolent action. Nonviolent action as used here is crucially also a collective, purposive form of political action, as opposed to individual forms or acts of political dissent (such as a sprayer of pro-anarchist graffiti). It is the fact that a large mass of people was mobilized to participate in a public event all at the same time without reverting into a riotous mob that gives nonviolent action a lot

of its power. Tarrow (2011, 7) sums this up in the following way:

The irreducible act that lies at the base of all social movements, protests, rebellions, riots, strike waves, and revolutions is contentious collective action. ... Collective action becomes contentious when it is used by people who lack regular access to representative institutions, who act in the name of new or unacceptable claims, and who behave in ways that fundamentally challenge others or authorities.

There are several ways for a committed mass of people to actively exert pressure on a government. Sharp (1990) offers a typology of nonviolent weapons or action types that is based on how the action is supposed to effect its overall goal:

1. *Protest and persuasion*: Includes demonstrations, pickets, vigils, petitions, synchronized moments of silence or noise. These are mainly symbolic acts that are designed to communicate citizens' grievances, outrage, and readiness to mobilize. Also aids further mobilization through visibility.
2. *Noncooperation*: Refusal to participate in an activity or practice, which can be social, political, economic, religious, military, or cultural. This can include an unwillingness to fly a flag, go to work, or participate in elections that are deemed illegitimate. Gandhi's famous hunger strikes are an example.
3. *Intervention*: Intervention can either be psychological or physical, such as sit-ins or the blocking of military tanks.

What types of action are considered "nonviolent action"? In a widely cited study, Sharp (1973) identifies 198 different forms of nonviolent action.⁵ This is far too broad;

⁵Nonviolent protest includes parades, vigils, picketing, posters, teach-ins, and protest meetings. These are mainly symbolic forms of opposition or of attempted persuasion that move beyond rhetoric but stop short of non-cooperation or nonviolent intervention. Non-cooperation with the opponent comprises the largest category of methods and involves discontinuing, withholding, or defying certain existing social, economic, or political relationships. Sharp sub-divides the methods of non-cooperation into three groups: methods of social non-cooperation (social boycotts), economic cooperation (economic boycotts and strikes), and political non-cooperation (political boycotts) Nonviolent intervention, the third class of nonviolent weapons, are used to intervene directly in a situation in order to disrupt it or change it in some funda-

especially in a conflict context, not all forms of nonviolent action will make enough of a splash for the rebel organization to derive noticeable benefits. Within the context of civil war, the range of visible nonviolent action is a lot more narrow, as everyday routines and the economy are disrupted and chaos already reigns supreme (the disruption of daily economic life is generally one of the main mechanisms through which nonviolent action is hypothesized to achieve success). In the context of civil war, only certain types of nonviolent action will garner significant attention and effects. These are “harder” or more active forms of nonviolent resistance - protest marches are the most obvious and visible example, though strikes may also be possible if the economy is still functioning in a war-torn country. While boycotts are possible in the context of elections, some countries in civil wars do not hold elections, and many of those elections that do take place are not free or fair.

I follow Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) in their focus on the participation of individuals in collective action, i.e. the active and observable engagement of civilians in an organized, mass-based event with a clear political message. This means I only include individuals who make their participation clearly observable. Some forms of nonviolent action may fall through the cracks: Even widespread instances of passive non-cooperation may be a lot harder to observe than a mass protest with a few hundred participants. On the other hand, this is also a “harder” requirement for identifying nonviolent action in a civil war, since protest marches with visible participation engender more danger to personal safety. Therefore, this approach biases towards undercounting rather than overcounting instances of nonviolent action in a context of organized violence.

Therefore, in operationalizing nonviolent action, I purposely deviate from Chenoweth and Stephan (2011)’s approach. They classify nonviolent campaigns as existing in a given year if events garner at least 1,000 participants in a given year, and a year as having a

mental way. Fasts, sit-ins, nonviolent obstruction, the establishment of new social patterns, stay-in strikes, alternative economic institutions, seeking imprisonment, and establishing a parallel government are examples of this most advanced, and often the most risky, form of nonviolent struggle (Sharp 1973).

violent campaign if it reaches at least 1,000 battle deaths. Both of these numbers are misleading in trying to identify transitions from violent to nonviolent strategies or their concurrent use: First, strategic change is more likely if the previous method has proven unsuccessful, so that it is unlikely that 1,000 battle deaths should have been reached in recent memory. I use the more frequently used number of 25 battle deaths. Second, 1,000 protest participants is a very high number in the kind of heavily repressive environment of a civil war. I set the bar at an estimated 1000, thereby excluding small, spontaneous gatherings or protest events, though it may be that an organization starts with smaller events. I crucially require these to have campaign character. The relatively rare nature of the rebel use of nonviolent action and the qualitative approach of this dissertation allows me to clearly trace these requirements in each case.

To be recognized as a strategy in a civil war, nonviolent action must take on a campaign character. One-time use is very difficult to link to a rebel organization, and is more likely to have been accidental, or spur of the moment, and can therefore not constitute an overall strategic approach. Rather, there must be a number of events of similar character, identical goals, and comparable planning patterns. According to Ackerman et al. (1994, 10f.), a campaign consists of a series of observable, continual tactics in pursuit of a constant, clearly stated political objective. A campaign can last anywhere from days to years but crucially includes more than one event. Campaigns also have discernible leaderships, which distinguish them from random riots, or random mass acts. In the case of rebel use of nonviolent action, not only should there be discernible leadership, but observable coordination mechanisms between violent and nonviolent leaderships, so that the two are a part of the same organizational structure, at least broadly speaking, i.e. we can clearly identify the chain of command. Therefore, here we also require that there be a *series of observable, continual tactics in pursuit of a constant, clearly stated political objective*. What exactly these tactics are and who carries them out will be discussed in the next section.

Thus, nonviolent direct action requires popular and potentially mass participation,

that it be outside established politico-institutional channels, that it be political, and that it has a disruptive, contentious but also nonviolent character. What does this mean in a civil war context? In order to be identified as of nonviolent direct action in a civil war, the requirements summarized in the table below must be fulfilled.

Table 2.1: Operationalizing nonviolent action

1. Mass popular participation (a thousand participants or more in at least one of the events). “Popular” implies that civilians march on behalf of the organization, not just rebels, though often, rebels participate as well.
2. Types of action that have a disruptive effect: Boycotts, strikes, protests, demonstrations.
3. Campaign character

Rebel use of nonviolent action

What does it mean for a rebel group to *use* nonviolent action? A complete definition of rebel use of nonviolent action must incorporate its strategic, purposive, and unilateral nature, and clearly link to the rebel leadership. Nonviolent action can have a strong ethical connotation; an activist group may choose nonviolent action because of a principled commitment not to use violence against people. By contrast, if rebels use nonviolent action, they have already demonstrated both the capability and willingness to use violent strategies. There is something decisively different, then, about the rebel use of nonviolent action than if it is used by nonviolent activist without ties to violence.

One obvious reason why it is easier to identify rebel groups’ use of violent than nonviolent action is that it is carried out by militants themselves, or rather, carried out by individuals commonly associated with a rebel organization, who sometimes even wear uniforms. While the secretive element of guerrilla warfare poses an obstacle to attribu-

tion, the link to the rebel organization is still direct and immediate. Nonviolent action subverts this expectation. Nonviolent action is largely carried out by civilians who have never carried weapons. Therefore, as is true for some forms of terrorism, nonviolent action can be carried out by agents without obvious ties to the movement. In fact, the mass mobilization of civilians as agents is a key characteristic of the rebel use of nonviolent action. While it is possible that rebels participate in marches, we cannot conclude from the identity of the individual actors that the action is carried out at the behest of and on behalf of the rebel organization. The analysis of *rebel use of nonviolent action* therefore requires us to expand our conception of conflict actors, and to specify an attribution strategy.

The most obvious way to link a nonviolent event to a rebel organization is if protesters carry insignias or chant in unison paroles that show their support for the rebel group. Yet, this alone only indicates that the rebel organization has civilian supporters, not that the rebel organization has consciously made the strategic decision to use nonviolent action. Conversely, a rebel organization can declare its support for nonviolent action even if it was not involved in the planning, and is simply trying to take credit for something it did not contribute to. Rather, the rebel use of nonviolent action represents a two-way street: The rebel organization has to be involved in the planning of events, and the nonviolent protesters have to be cognizant that their nonviolent activities imply support for the rebel organization. How can we confidently say that a rebel organization *uses* nonviolent action if we cannot directly conclude from observing a protest march that it is clearly linked to a rebel organization?

In addition to a clearly visible link to the nonviolent events (in the form of slogans, flags, demands, etc.), it is necessary for the rebel leadership to be involved in planning the event in at least one of the following ways:

- The leadership planned the nonviolent events from mobilization of participants to organizing the actual event;

- The leadership was notified of a planned nonviolent event and given input/veto power over proceedings;
- The leadership significantly altered its violent strategies as a clear consequence of its publicly voiced support for nonviolent events.

Thus, even though rebels usually rely at least in part on civilians for actually carrying out nonviolent events, we can clearly identify actions taken by the rebel leadership towards actualizing a nonviolent strategy.⁶ In other words, we can identify rebel complicity in the organization of nonviolent events, either in the form of hands-on planning or approval/veto of plans. Because we are only concerned with nonviolent *campaigns*, the rebel-activist link should be institutionalized in some way; there must be a formal organizational link. The easiest way to identify such a link is through identical aims, slogans, or flags, although there are other forms of formal coordination as well (such as military support or protection or evidence of clear coordinating communication). An example that would not pass this test is the Free Papua Movement. While there is an intermittently active nonviolent movement on the island, thus far, the rebel group(s) have not adjusted their own strategies and have avoided collusion. In fact, according to MacLeod (2007), the coordination attempts by the nonviolent leadership had such poor results that the nonviolent effort would cease whenever violence broke out anew, out of fear for retribution.

- The violent and nonviolent leadership arms must fit into one organizational hierarchical structure.
- The aims and demands of the violent and nonviolent activists are identical.

It is crucial that the use of nonviolent action is purposive, that is, it is a strategic choice intended to get the group closer to its main goal. This means that the move towards nonviolent action is unilateral, meaning that it cannot be directly prompted by government

⁶This likely means that we will undercount rather than over-estimate the number of relevant cases, since rebel leaderships may be involved in the planning of events without leaving any evidence thereof.

demands or conditions (i.e. the move towards nonviolence is not a direct condition for negotiations); there are, of course, many instances of nonviolent action as a consequence of negotiations. If the cessation of violence is a part of a negotiated settlement, we cannot differentiate between a strategic, deliberate choice on the part of the rebel leadership and government coercion.⁷ The ANC's move to nonviolence exemplifies how important it was for the group to be seen as using nonviolent action on their own accord. While the ANC did use widespread nonviolent strategies in tandem with violent ones, in 1985, South African President Pieter Willem Botha announced in Parliament that he was willing to release Nelson Mandela from prison, but only if Mandela "unconditionally rejected violence as a political instrument" (Maharaj 2008, 17). Mandela rejected any conditions for negotiation: He was categorical that "the renunciation of violence . . . should not be a pre-condition to, but a result of, negotiation."

2.2 The universe of cases

How frequent is the use of nonviolent action by rebel organizations, and what observations can we make about these organizations? The above definitions and operationalizations allow us to identify the relevant universe of cases. I use Cunningham, Salehyan and Gleditsch (2013)'s Non-State Actor Dataset (NSA) as a base to identify all rebel organizations active from 1945 to 2011. NSA data extends the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset (ACD) (Gleditsch et al. 2002; Themner and Wallensteen 2014). In order for a conflict to be coded as an internal armed conflict in ACD, it must meet five general criteria: The conflict must (1) involve the government of the state, (2) take place primarily within the state, (3) involve organized opposition forces, (4) be fought over either control of the government or territory and (5) generate 25 battle deaths in a calendar year. NSA identifies 443 rebel organizations.

⁷Importantly, this does not preclude the use of nonviolent action following some ceasefires; ceasefires are not always tied to conditional demands but rather allow for the care and protection of civilians.

Table 2.2: Operationalizing rebel use of nonviolent action

1. At least one must hold:
 - The rebel leadership **planned** the nonviolent campaign from mobilization to execution
 - The rebel leadership was notified and **given input/veto power** over planned events
 - The rebel leadership **altered their violent strategies** as a consequence of their support for nonviolent events.
2. The violent and nonviolent leadership arms must fit into **one organizational hierarchical structure**
3. The violent and nonviolent activists have **identical aims and demands**.
4. The protesters **express support** for the violent group.
5. The move to nonviolence must be a **unilateral**
6. The use of nonviolent action has to take on a **campaign character**.

From this list, I identified cases of rebel use of nonviolent action. Several avenues were pursued to compile a viable list of cases. I relied on qualitative narratives of related phenomena. Dudouet (2009, 2013, 2015) explores the broader concept of *conflict transformation* and thus provides a useful starting point. While not all of her cases are instances of rebel organizations utilizing nonviolent action, some of them do fit into this typology. The Berghof Foundation, a non-governmental organization that supports efforts to prevent political and social violence and to achieve sustainable peace through conflict transformation, has published a policy-focused series on conflict transformation (see below), which includes cases fitting my phenomenon. I also benefitted from qualitative work by Parkinson (2013), Pearlman and Cunningham (2011) and Stephan (2006).

Second, I used the Minorities at Risk Organizational Behavior (MAROB) dataset covering the Middle East and North Africa from 1980 to 2004 (Wilkenfeld, Asal and Pate

2008).⁸ This dataset chronicles political organizations in the region and codes for both the degree of insurgent activity and the degree of organizations' nonviolent activity. In this way, I was able to identify multiple additional organizations. Finally, I conducted targeted searches on LexisNexis to identify additional cases and then conducted case-specific research.

Both the stringent inclusion requirements and the nature of the phenomenon mean that the universe of cases presented here likely does not capture all relevant cases. For example, the Gorkha National Liberation Front, which pursued both violent and nonviolent strategies but does not meet the NSA criteria, is not included in this list, though it fits all the other criteria. Two more problems contribute to undercounting. First, we can only identify instances of nonviolent direct action in civil wars if they are captured by the international media. That is, only if the organization successfully mobilized *and* was lucky (or possibly strong) enough to capture international attention, would we be able to identify nonviolent action. This is complicated further because governments often impose military rule during civil wars, severely restricting media access. Further, even if the media does cover the event, database searches may not pick up on them. One significant problem in identifying organizations in this way is that there are many culture-specific terms that describe activities we subsume under "rebel use of nonviolent action"; an example is the Hindi "bandh", meaning protest.⁹

In sum, the universe of cases is a set of positive cases, starting with all UCDP civil conflicts, that therefore conceivably *could* use nonviolent action. The cases listed here are all positive on the dependent variable, i.e. the rebel use of nonviolent action.

⁸In contrast, the NAVCO dataset compiled by Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) (as well as the updated version by Chenoweth and Lewis (2013)) was not useful for this undertaking: First, the unit of analysis of "movement" rather than "organization" was too broad. Second, because this dataset identifies movements as exclusively violent or nonviolent, it only captures two instances of rebel use of nonviolent action (ANC and Polisario).

⁹An extension of MAROB covering the former USSR and eastern Europe is due to be released soon, which might allow us to capture a few more cases.

Table 2.3: The universe of cases

1. African National Congress (ANC), South Africa
2. Basque Country and Freedom (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna, ETA), Spain
3. Communist Party of Nepal - Maoist (CPN-M/UPF), Nepal
4. Islamic Resistance Movement (Harakat Al-Muqawama Al-Islamia, Hamas), Israel
5. Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), India
6. Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI), Iran
7. Kurdish Workers' Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê, PKK), Turkey
8. National Council for Maubere Resistance (Conselho Nacional da Resistência Maubere, CNRM), Indonesia
9. Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Israel¹⁰
10. Palestinian National Liberation Movement (Fatah), Israel
11. Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (Yekêtiy Niştîmaniy Kurdistan, PUK), Iraq
12. People's Liberation Army of Manipur (PLA), India
13. Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguiet el Hamara and Rio de Oro (POLISARIO), Morocco
14. Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA), Northern Ireland
15. Sandinista National Liberation Front (SNLF), Nicaragua
16. Zapatista National Liberation Army (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, EZLN), Mexico

2.3 Research design

In this dissertation, I address why some rebel organizations use nonviolent action, whereas others do not. Therefore, the outcome of interest or dependent variable is whether or not rebel organizations strategically use nonviolent mass-based action. The successful use of

nonviolent action in a civil war is a complex, multi-causal process that in part depends on fortuitous circumstances (activist population, ability to garner the attention of the international press, urban areas to serve as a “stage” for protest events, a favorable international and possibly national climate) and trigger events associated with them.¹¹ This study was designed to demonstrate how these background conditions alone are insufficient; rather, structural and organizational features determining capacity and innovation potential are necessary for rebel groups to use nonviolent action. In the proposed theoretical framework, there are two necessary conditions within the rebel organizational structure for the successful use of nonviolent action: Centralized communication networks (“hubs and spokes”) and separate political and military decision-making structures.

I am interested in *why* and *how* rebels use nonviolent action rather than with *how much* certain variables affect the outcome of interest. As put by Goertz and Mahoney (2012), qualitative scholars “tend to be far less concerned with average effects and to focus centrally on the causes that produce outcomes in specific cases” (42). In identifying and testing necessary conditions, I employ a qualitative research design. The qualitative research design allows for a high level of conceptual validity, meaning that I can be assured that what I identify as rebel use of nonviolent action is in fact just that. This is especially important in analyzing an under-examined phenomenon, where concept- and theory-building are paramount. Cases were structured and selected in order to both identify and begin to test these necessary conditions while “controlling for” fortuitous circumstances and trigger moments as best as possible. The qualitative analysis is roughly divided into three parts: One theory-building pathway case, one longer and one shorter in-depth longitudinal case study, and one case study that seems to contradict my theory.

There is a considerable focus on theory construction throughout this research project. This is crucial, as no one has treated this topic in a systematic manner. I employ two

¹¹“Successful” when used here and in most places throughout the dissertation, unless stated otherwise, refers to the successful mobilization and coordination of nonviolent events by the rebel organization and not to the organization’s attainment of its ultimate goals.

qualitative research designs simultaneously: I use Goertz and Mahoney (2012)'s *ideal or pathway case approach* to identify causal mechanisms and necessary conditions. By using Goertz and Mahoney (2012)'s conception of *causal mechanism*, "we can understand causal mechanisms to mean the intervening processes through which causes exert their effects." Goertz and Mahoney (2012, 100) In other words, I focus on the processes that link the independent and dependent variables, and to identify the conditions under which this link happens. To do this, I use *process-tracing* (George and Bennett 2005), which "involves an intensive analysis of the development of a sequence of events over time, is particularly well-suited to the task of uncovering intervening causal mechanisms and exploring reciprocal causation and endogeneity effects" (Levy 2008, 8).

Second, I use the comparative method to probe the generalizability and scope of my organizational theory and to test the operation of causal mechanisms. Roughly, I am modeling my research for this part on Petersen (2001), who summarizes his research approach as follows: "The sequence of mechanisms ... provides a base line for comparison. Cases are ... sought that control certain factors and vary others. In a rough sense, the comparisons proceed from most similar to most different design" (27). In the comparative section, I pay significantly more attention to cases where the variable in question (the rebel use of nonviolent action) occurs; this is in part due to the theory-building nature of this research, and in part due to the rarity of the event. Though there are of course quantitative research methods that account for rare events (see for example King and Zeng (2001)), in qualitative research, the positive cases of interest are generally rare occurrences (Mahoney 2006). I explore two additional cases where rebels used nonviolent action, but where the scope conditions were very different: The Kashmiri Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front and the Nepali Maoists. Finally, I explore a case that seems to contradict my theory (rebels did use nonviolent action but did not exhibit the necessary organizational conditions) in the form of the El-Salvadoran FMLN.

Pathway Case Study: Theory Construction and Causal

Mechanisms

The purpose of the pathway case study is two-fold: First, it deductively contributes to theory refinement, and second, it serves to probe causal mechanisms through process-tracing. Referred to by Gerring (2007) as an *extreme-case method*, I have selected a case with an extreme value on the dependent variable of interest (the rebel use of nonviolent action).¹² Timor-Leste is a particularly strong instance of rebels using nonviolent action because the concurrent use of violent tactics ceased almost entirely, and I was able to trace the organization of the nonviolent campaign directly back to the violent leadership so that attribution errors could be minimized. As such, Timor-Leste was not chosen for reasons of representativeness, but rather because it is such an ideal case of rebels using nonviolence: Any theory on the shift to nonviolence in civil war *must* be able to explain Timor-Leste's transition. Further, in a case where the variables take on the most extreme variables, causality should be clearest (Levy 2008), which is particularly helpful when refining theory and hypotheses.

Timor-Leste not only is an ideal instance of the dependent variable, it also conformed to the initial iteration of my theory, in which I posited that quasi-democratic institutions are necessary for the use of nonviolent action. Fretilin/CNRM exhibited particularly strong quasi-democratic institutions even though there was no history of self government in the former colony. While I refined the causal mechanisms and processes significantly, the structural features that allow for widespread popular mobilization in a civil war are similar to these quasi-democratic institutions, and the hypotheses were revised significantly. However, because the structural features still hold, Timor-Leste fortuitously also possesses extreme values on the independent variables.

¹²Note that Gerring later referred to this type of case as an *outcome* case as well (Gerring and Cojocaru 2016). The possible "outcomes" include extreme, rare, or polar; there are multiple terminologies for this type of case study.

Fretilin/CNRM and Timor-Leste also exhibit features that make it particularly advantageous for process-tracing. The potential confounding variables in Timor-Leste are such that we can observe the causal mechanisms with minimal interference. According to Gerring (2007) and Weller and Barnes (2014), a good hypothesis-generating case is one where not only the apparent impact of the independent on the dependent variable conforms to theoretical expectations and is strong in magnitude, but background conditions are also held constant or exert a “conservative” bias. In other words, the potential confounding variables are such that they exert minimum effects on the dependent variable, which allows for the observation of the hypothesized causal mechanisms in a setting as close to an experiment as possible. According to Gerring and McDermott (2007), to determine the ability of a qualitative case study to serve a role in causal inference, we should consider the degree to which the chosen case exhibits experimental qualities. The more potential confounders can interfere in the operation of causal mechanisms, the less we can say about how the independent variable really affects the dependent variable. In those terms, CNRM’s nonviolent transformation is relatively “clean” and allows for causal inference via process-tracing.

What are these potential confounding variables?

1. *No history of nonviolent action*: Prior to 1989, Timor-Leste had no history of nonviolent direct action whatsoever. Therefore, I can conclude that any networks and channels used to organize nonviolent action during the civil war were directly linked to the resistance movement and were not created by repurposing pre-existing means of grass-roots organizing unconnected to the violent resistance efforts.
2. *No competition with rival rebel groups*: Fretilin (later CNRM) was the dominant rebel organization throughout the Timorese civil war. As such, the use of nonviolent action was not linked to the desire to gain an edge over a stronger rival or to the inability to compete militarily with a rival.

3. *Minimal free-riding opportunities:* Although there would later be cooperation and collaboration between the pro-democracy movement in Indonesia at large, this movement was in its infancy in 1989 (first nonviolent event in Timor-Leste), so that the Timorese resistance movement was left to its own organizational devices.
4. *Minimal external ties and communication:* During the civil war, Timor-Leste was almost completely cut off from the outside world, so that imitation of other movements and outside inputs were minimal. This allows us to isolate the impact of the rebel organization on the organization of nonviolence.¹³

As an essentially unexplored phenomenon, it was particularly important to understand *how* rebels use nonviolent action. While I was able to gauge from secondary sources that there were protest marches over a decade in the tail end of the Timorese war of independence, these sources could not tell me how exactly these events were connected to the violent leadership, as this angle has never been explored. To what extent were these marches coordinated with the violent leadership? How were individual marches planned? Did leaders on either the violent or nonviolent side have ideas about the strategic implications of nonviolent action on their cause? By teasing out the mechanics of nonviolent action in a civil war, I gained a clear sense of what kinds of narratives and indicators to look for in my comparative case studies. In all interviews, I would spend the first part of the interview focused on how different events were planned, who knew about it, etc., before moving on to questions of *why*, as we cannot draw causal inferences without first understanding *how* a process works.

In order to understand the process that led from a violent to a largely nonviolent resistance organization in Timor-Leste, I used interviews for the most important purpose

¹³By contrast, the West Sahrawi Polisario communicated with Fretilin prior to organizing their first nonviolent event, and they remodeled their resistance after the Timorese example. The Polisario is therefore not one of the main case studies. (Information from Polisario leader and then-ambassador of the West Sahrawi Republic to Timor-Leste Mohammad Badi Slama, interview in Dili with the author, December 14, 2014.)

attributed to them as a research tool by Mosley, namely as a “distinct means of understanding contemporary political actions and outcomes”; interviews can “serve to identify causal mechanisms that are not evident in other forms of data” (5). Interviews are particularly useful for this purpose as they allow for a deep set of responses, and, with certain question design strategies, also allow for open-ended responses and follow-up questions into unexpected or even contradictory answers. As argued by Mosley (2013), while the purpose of in-depth interviews is rarely generalization, within a single case, it can generate “more points of inferential leverage” (6). This makes interviewing a particularly appropriate tool for conducting a pathway case study.

Specifically, I conducted in-person, one-on-one interviews with former violent and nonviolent activists and leaders, all the way up to former military governor Mário Carrascalão and former head of the CNRM Diplomatic Front (and Nobel Peace Prize winner) José Ramos-Horta, as well as about thirty former activists, both violent and nonviolent. It was particularly useful to talk both to Carrascalão and Ramos-Horta, as they were — on paper — on opposite sides of the conflict, which allowed for me to have a high degree of validity. As both of them had held high offices within their respective organizations, they could give me particularly valuable insight into what was going on inside the organizations. Interviews took place over two visits totaling about six weeks. While some interviews only lasted half an hour, many interviews would go on for hours, and in some cases I was able to meet with interviewees twice to ask follow-up questions. The length of interviews was very helpful, as it allowed me to gauge details of the internal mechanisms and how individuals were connected to the movement as a whole, and in particular, what motivated them personally to play the role they did.

All of the interviews were semi-structured, so that I could ask follow-up questions that might not have been in my script if the interview took an unexpected direction. It was important to me both that these interviews be conducted in-person as well as one on one. On the one hand, this is because of the highly sensitive nature of the subject

matter, as Timor-Leste experienced one of the worst genocides in the Twentieth Century, which has left deep psychological and physical scars in the small country. Second, old Fretilin party members and resistance activists still regularly get together and talk about the “old days”. This brings the risk of a coordinated narrative with a political propaganda undertone intended to portray the resistance struggle in a particularly flattering light. I was more likely to detect such canned responses by interviewing activists individually by observing tone, diction, body language, and precise wording (metadata). In almost all of my interviews with former nonviolent activists, I was struck by the sense of nostalgia; the deep, continued connectedness

To identify interviewees, I relied on a non-random sampling strategy. If the goal is to develop causal explanation or develop theory, interviewees should “be chosen because of the insights they provide regarding the causal circumstances that generate particular outcomes” (Mosley 2013, 19). I used a “purposive” or “quota” sampling strategy, whereby interviewees are chosen based on certain characteristics allowing for particular insight. In this way, the interview data is more likely to take the form of “causal process observations”, which Brady and Collier (2004) define as “an insight or piece of data that provides information about context, process or mechanism, and that contributes distinctive leverage in causal inference” (277-278). In this way, I rely on non-random participant samples in order to generate credible causal process observations.

By asking interviewees to refer me to other activists who may have valuable information, I also obtained important “metadata”. As argued by Lynch (2013), a snowballing sampling strategy can also yield important metadata: How widely was a specific piece of information or a particular person known? How were different players connected? Did there appear to be political bias in who different interviewees referred me to? In this way, the snowballing process itself provided me with valuable information about the social network I was trying to access. Because the type of organizational structure as well as the connection between organization and population makes up an important part of my

theoretical approach, this was particularly useful and gave me an important sense of the social and organizational network structure.

In terms of analytical period and scope, the Timorese case study briefly explores colonial and precolonial socio-political structures and provides an in-depth overview over Fretilin/CNRM's pre-war organizational development. As a theory-building case study, it is problematic to assume that all of the relevant organizational factors for the use of non-violent action are determined during the conflict itself. This follows the key assumption that many tracks for organizational development and popular relationships are laid prior to the conflict.

As with any other type of organizations, in rebel groups, "the different starting points of organizations create distinct pathways of likely change that reflect the initial strengths and weaknesses of groups" (Staniland 2014, 34). These organizational origins create patterns of path dependency that create certain institutional trajectories; actors will adjust their strategies and choices to fit these constraints (Thelen 1999; Weber 1946).

The organizational origins of rebel groups may even be more important than those of other organization types. Civil wars are highly disruptive in several ways. They bring with them significant transformation to the political demographics both in terms of who lives where as conflicts can create refugees, but also in terms of who rules where. It is also likely that existing infrastructure in terms of both communication and transportation will be disruptive. This can make it particularly difficult to fully build new organizational structures, especially over short periods of time; during wartime, "while political meanings are not locked in place, they also cannot be easily transformed" in a war. This means that an exploration of the organizational and social dynamics relevant to wartime nonviolent action must consider pre-war dynamics as well.

Comparative case selection: Testing causal mechanisms and exploring scope

The selection strategy for a case to compare to Timor-Leste's CNRM followed the logic of a most-different case study approach. The case is selected to confirm or disconfirm (or possibly refine) the causal hypotheses derived through the pathway case, and therefore serves a diagnostic function. Second, this comparative case study method "promises to shed light on a larger population of cases" and therefore should allow for inferences with regards to scope (Gerring and Cojocar 2016, 3). This should not be confused with generalization, which is not the purpose of this dissertation or its research design. To sum up, the comparative case study serves two key purposes:

1. To further test the hypothesized causal mechanisms for further cases
2. To explore the explanatory scope of the theory

To test hypotheses about necessary conditions, I selected the comparative case on the dependent variable (Levy 2008). In doing so, I follow the *most different systems* design as proposed by Przeworski and Teune (1982), in which I identify and study cases that have similar values on the dependent variable but have different values on as many relevant confounding variables as possible, except for the main independent variables.¹⁴ Eckstein (1975) also emphasizes the usefulness of crucial cases argues that most-least-likely research designs are particularly suited for qualitative hypothesis testing if they are based on a most/least likely case design.

CPN-M: A most different case

The main theory-testing case study has been chosen because it differs from the Timorese case in terms of significant confounding variables, especially with regards to the alter-

¹⁴This research design corresponds to Mill (1872)'s method of agreement

native hypotheses developed in Chapter 5. The Nepalese Maoists fought for control of the central government rather than independence, they possessed a highly capable military apparatus, they fought in a very different type of territory that was also significantly larger than Timor-Leste, and they controlled significant parts of the countryside.

The FMLN: A “negative” case

How can we falsify necessary conditions? Levy argues that “the only observations that can falsify the hypotheses in question are those in which a particular outcome of the dependent variable occurs despite the absence of hypothesized necessary condition” (Levy 2008, 9). This further confirms the appropriateness of a research design with little to no variance on the dependent variable.

The case best fitting this bill is the Salvadoran Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN). In the late 1980s, the FMLN repeatedly organized nonviolent events with several hundred participants. All the same, until 1984, the organization did not have a well-organized political front, and the group’s hierarchy clearly prioritized the military. Further, communication between town and country was tenuous at best. As such, my theory would not expect the use of nonviolent action, since neither of the two necessary conditions were entrenched in the organization. However, delving more deeply into the actual nonviolent campaign as well as the organizational development of the FMLN between 1984 and 1986, a more nuanced picture emerges: First of all, between 1984 and 1986, the FMLN did try to reform itself precisely by focusing more on political mobilization and strengthen its clandestine communication network between population and rebels. In this way, while these features were by no means consolidated, they likely did exert some influence.

The FMLN also serves as a cautionary note in identifying rebel use of nonviolent action. While a few hundred protest participants in Timor-Leste was a notable, unexpected feat, in El Salvador, a protest event with a few hundred people was a disappointment, if

not failure. The background conditions in El Salvador would indicate that large-scale popular mobilization should have been comparatively easy. In many ways, the FMLN would seem like an ideal case for the use of nonviolent action, if we consider surface facts: It was Latin America's most prolific non-state militant force; during its heyday, there was one FMLN fighter per 500 El Salvadorans. By contrast, in Colombia, this number was 1 fighter per 3000 Colombians (Alvarez 2009, 7). This means that the FMLN's reach into the population was broad and deep, which should have favored popular mobilization. Further, the organization's commitment to violence was not absolute, as the end of the civil war and its aftermath demonstrate. Even though the organization was not defeated militarily, it decided to negotiate and disarm and later became the country's most popular opposition party. (Alvarez 2009, 10) Therefore, the very limited nonviolent action cannot be considered a fully successful instance of the rebel use of nonviolent action. According to Alvarez (2009, 20), the planned popular direct action movement did not materialize, to the great disappointment of the organization.

The FMLN also serves to test the alternative hypothesis that broad popular support is sufficient for rebel use of nonviolent action.

Two mini cases to test alternative hypotheses: The Free Aceh Movement and the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front

Finally, Chapter 7 also presents two very short cases to disprove two alternative hypotheses.

The Free Aceh Movement (GAM) is used to demonstrate that a significant opportunity for mass-based nonviolent action alone is not sufficient for a rebel group to use nonviolent action. Even though the Indonesian pro-democracy movement and country-wide nonviolent demonstrations coincided with a pro-secessionist Acehnese population, GAM did not manage to organize a nonviolent action campaign supporting its specific platform. In this way, I rely Mahoney and Goertz (2004)'s possibility principle in selecting a negative

case:

The Possibility Principle holds that only cases where the outcome of interest is possible should be included in the set of negative cases; cases where the outcome is impossible should be relegated to a set of uninformative and hence irrelevant observations. (653)

GAM is a particularly useful case for disproving the opportunity argument because it confronted the same government opponent (Indonesia) and had the same opportunity to mobilize a motivated population and reach an international audience as Timor-Leste.

The example of the JKLF is presented to show how a populist socialist ideology is not necessary for either the adoption of a nonviolent strategy nor for the existence of the underlying necessary organizational structures.

Table 2.4: Case selection overview

| Organization | Opponent Gov. | Dependent Variable | Case Type | Purpose |
|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|------------------|--|
| CNRM | Indonesia | Yes | Pathway | Hypothesis generating, tracing causal mechanisms |
| CPN-M | Nepal | Yes | Most Different | Testing, exploring scope |
| FMLN | El Salvador | Incomplete | Most Likely | Falsification |
| JKLF | India | Yes | Most Different | Testing alternative hypothesis |
| GAM | Indonesia | No | Most Similar | Testing alternative hypothesis |

3. Rebel Use of Nonviolent Action: A Strategy

“Non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man.”

– Mahatma Gandhi

3.1 The strategic nature of nonviolent action

In order to assess why and how some rebel organizations use nonviolent action, we must first establish what they can tactically and strategically gain from such a move. What is the strategic value of nonviolent action, and what are the potential risks and drawbacks?

One reason why violent and nonviolent action have been studied separately for such a long time, with the latter not considered a viable civil war strategy in its own right, is the close association of nonviolence with pacifism, which precludes thinking about nonviolent action in strategic bargaining terms. Nonviolent action has long been associated with or even equated to pacifism, mostly due to Mohandas Gandhi, one of the most famous nonviolent leaders. Nonviolent activism in the image of Gandhi is one where the activist aims to reach her goals through conversion, persuading the opponent to accept her views through altering his deeply held beliefs and convictions. In order for nonviolent action to be successful in a Gandhian approach, there is a moral and spiritual aspect to *satyagraha* where the enemy has to discover a deeper “truth force” that is personally transformative.

Yet, while nonviolent activists may privately hold pacifist beliefs, it is important not to equate a strategy with the potential underlying motivation of actors. In his seminal

book, Sharp (1973) dispels the Gandhian notion that a principled commitment to nonviolence is necessary to achieve success, and argues that nonviolent action is a pragmatic approach that can be applied by a wide array of actors. Nepstad (2015) defines pragmatic nonviolence as "a strategic choice to employ nonviolence because they believe it is more effective than violence" (4). In contrast to principled nonviolence, pragmatic nonviolence does not aim to convert or persuade the opponent, merely to get them to do something, or stop doing something, no matter the motivation for this behavioral change.¹

Accordingly, Bond (1994, 61) argues that nonviolent direct action is "revealed more in the dynamics and consequences of behavior than in the motivating beliefs in principled nonviolence that drives some of it." From a practical point of view, only by acknowledging that nonviolent action does not necessarily go hand in hand with pacifist beliefs can we analyze its use by rebel groups, who have already demonstrated that they are not committed to pacifism. Focusing on dynamics, behavior and effects rather than motivations also helps us not to compare nonviolent and violent action in terms of ethics, thereby avoiding bias when considering the validity of different organization's causes. In the same vein of avoiding implicit bias, Stephan (2006) argues that we can think of nonviolent action as a method for prosecuting conflict rather than a lifestyle or world view, thereby not making nonviolent action sound implicitly "better" than violent action.

Thinking about violent and nonviolent action as alternative means of prosecuting conflict points to the inherent comparability of violent and nonviolent action, which can be done along several dimensions. Explicitly acknowledging that violent and nonviolent action are both forms of mass-based strategic political action, McAdam and Tarrow (2000) identify three potential dimensions along which political actors make decisions: Legal versus illegal, institutionalized versus non-institutionalized, and violent versus nonviolent. With both, there is an underlying assumption that the use of institutionalized polit-

¹Nepstad (2015) presents an in-depth comparison of the goals and strategies of principled and pragmatic nonviolence in chapter 1 of her book. See p. 5 for a helpful summary.

ical channels to settle disputes or disagreements is either explicitly or implicitly closed to the population the active group purports to represent. In their non-institutional nature, violent and nonviolent action are two sides of the same coin, and they both bypass the political "rules of the game".

Along these lines, Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) describe nonviolent direct action as "a type of political activity that deliberately or necessarily circumvents normal political channels and employs non-institutional (and often illegal) forms of action against an opponent" (12). In that they are not a part of the everyday political process, both violent and nonviolent action also involve risks to participants. Schock (2003, 705) argues that violent and nonviolent action remain outside the bounds of institutionalized politics either by choice or necessity:

Although institutional methods of political action often accompany nonviolent struggles, nonviolent action occurs outside the bounds of institutional political channels. Contrary to regular and institutionalized political activity, there is always an element of risk involved for those implementing nonviolent action since it presents a direct challenge to authorities.

Acting outside of what is accepted or expected is part of how violent and nonviolent strategies attain their goals. Therefore, both approaches belong to the greater universe of contentious or disruptive politics, in that they both violate or bypass routine conflict resolution procedures of a political system or social custom (Bond et al. 1997; Tilly 2003). In this way, both nonviolent and violent action subvert other actors' expectations, which are heavily influenced by institutions and established practice. Moving outside of this framework is both surprising (catching the opponent on the wrong foot) and extreme, thereby signaling the depth of motivating underlying grievances. After all, with both types of contentious action, the aim is to protest some grievance, rectify a perceived wrong, and work towards a political aim.

Not only do nonviolent and violent action share their non-institutional nature, they also both operate via coercion. In his introduction to Sharp (1973)'s seminal work on

nonviolent action, Thomas Schelling characterized the key similarity between violent and nonviolent action: “The difference is not like the difference between prayer and dynamite. Political violence, like political nonviolence, usually has as its purpose making someone do something or not do something or stop doing something” Schelling (1973). Therefore, at their core, both violent and nonviolent strategies in civil wars are coercive in nature, trying to change the behavior of the opponent against their a priori interests one way or another.

Violent action in civil wars

A detailed explanation of how violence in civil wars works is far beyond the scope of this dissertation. As Kalyvas (2006, 7) put it, “wars, and their violence, display enormous variation — both across and within countries and time,” and this violence “appears bewilderingly complex and polysemic” (7). Still, political theorists have attempted to boil down the role of violence. In this way, Howes (2009) in his conceptualization of how violence works neatly sums up how violent actors coerce: “By adapting and modifying Clausewitz’s theory of war [...] physical violence is the use of destruction of another’s body in order to subdue or destroy their will” (5).

Through physical destruction, violent action directly targets the adversary’s capacity to resist. This can happen either through directly targeting military capabilities and forces, or through destroying or damaging infrastructure, threatening populations, disrupting the flow of goods, disrupting commerce and the economy, and halt essential administrative responsibilities. In this way, the other side is weakened militarily, but it is also hindered in carrying out other essential functions, such as social service provision or economic production. This both physically weakens the government and demonstrates the government’s inability to govern effectively, thereby questioning its legitimacy. Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) sum up the effect of violent resistance: “Violent campaigns physically coerce their adversaries, which may significantly disrupt the status quo.” (42)

There are important differences between how most state and non-state actors use violence to advance their goals. At the risk of oversimplifying, we can characterize strategic violence in a civil war into strong-actor and weak-actor strategies, according to a typology developed by Arreguin-Toft (2001), leaving aside for now terrorism. In a civil war, militarily strong actors are most likely to utilize direct attack strategies, which refers to the use of the military to capture or eliminate the adversary's forces, thereby gaining control of their values and resources. A war is won by destroying the opponent's capacity to resist using armed forces. In essence, then, one military directly targets the opponent's military, trying to diminish or eliminate one another. In contrast, strong actors target large swaths of civilians in order to destroy the adversary's will to fight.

An alternative typology is developed by Kalyvas and Balcells (2010), who disaggregate civil wars based on the technology of rebellion, that is, the joint military technologies of states and rebels engaged in armed conflict. The combination of military technologies on both sides determines the type of war that emerges. Conventional warfare emerges when rebels are able to militarily confront states, using heavy weaponry such as armor or field artillery. Military confrontation is likely to be direct, often across well-defined front lines; fighting often takes on the form of set-piece battles (Balcells 2010). Offensive and defensive strategies and tactics are clearly distinguishable (Lockyear 2008, 62). Civil wars that fit into this category include the American Civil War or the Spanish Civil War. However, there are also much more recent examples: During the Angolan Civil War, the battle of Cuito Cuanavale in 1987, fought by the pro-Soviet Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and South African-backed National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) rebels, entailed clashes between heavily armored columns and has been called the largest conventional land battle in Africa since World War II (Chester 1996). The Croatian and Bosnian wars are another example. This kind of war is won in a direct clash of forces on an identifiable battlefield, where the militarily stronger side usually wins; territory can be gained and held through occupation. In this

kind of war, power really does imply victory, as has been stated since Thucydides, and the war progresses in how described by Von Clausewitz (2008, 226): “Fighting is the central military act. ... Engagements mean fighting. The object of fighting is the destruction or defeat of the enemy.”

There are also conflicts where government and rebels are matched where both sides have very low technological capabilities. These tend to take place in the context of extremely weak or collapsed states. An example is the civil war in Congo-Brazzaville from 1993 to 1997. However, so-called symmetric nonconventional conflicts provide unlikely ground for nonviolent action: There is no organized state against which to protest and to show off as illegitimate. These wars also rarely involve battles over hearts and minds of the people.

In a civil war, non-state forces in a civil war are usually the “underdog” (there are exceptions, such as the LTTE, the militant group known as Islamic State or at times the Nepalese Maoists), and therefore they often rely on indirect strategies such as guerrilla warfare. What, then, is irregular or guerrilla warfare, and how does it work? According to Fearon and Laitin (2003, 75), “irregular or guerrilla warfare is a technology of rebellion whereby the rebels privilege small, lightly armed bands operating in rural areas.” It is an expression of the relative asymmetry between states and rebels; while rebels have the capacity to challenge and harass the state, they lack the capacity to head-on confront force with direct force. Rather, rebels tend to “hover just below the military horizon”, hiding, relying on harassment and the element of surprise (Simons 1999). Mao’s ideal was that rebels aim at launching a major conventional attack after the state’s strength has been sapped. However, guerilla wars often turn into wars of attrition where rebels aim to slowly grind down the governments’ superior resources and resolve.

To understand guerrilla warfare, we have to consider the society in which it takes place, as the population plays a key role. Arreguin-Toft (2001, 103) takes this into account as he conceives of guerrilla warfare as “the organization of a portion of society for the

purpose of imposing costs on an adversary using armed forces trained to avoid direct confrontation. These costs include the loss of soldiers, supplies, infrastructure, peace of mind, and most important, time.” Yet, while this kind of strategy does primarily target opposing armed forces and their support structures, its ultimate aim is to destroy not the capacity (which it is unlikely to be able to do conclusively) but rather the will of the attacker in a war of attrition (Arreguin-Toft 2001, 103) (note that conventional wars can also be wars of attrition).

How can this be done? Mao (1961, 46) describes guerilla warfare in the following way:

In guerrilla warfare, select the tactic of seeming to come from the east and attacking from the west; avoid the solid, attack the hollow; attack; withdraw; deliver a lightning blow, seek a lightning decision. When guerrillas engage a stronger enemy, they withdraw when he advances; harass him when he stops; strike him when he is weary; pursue him when he withdraws. In guerrilla strategy, the enemy’s rear, flanks, and other vulnerable spots are his vital points, and there he must be harassed, attacked, dispersed, exhausted, and annihilated.”

Rebels often have a home-court advantage that facilitates this kind of approach: According to Mao (1961, 42), guerrilla fighters (supported by the local population) enjoy the advantage of knowing the conditions of the terrain, climate, and society much better than the oppressor or invader, which will slow the progress of the latter and can be turned to advantage by the former.

In civil wars, a guerrilla strategy is dependent upon being almost invisible to the enemy, so that the enemy will never be certain where you are going to attack from. The line between civilians and combatants blur only inasmuch as anyone might be a rebel at night, hide rebels, inform rebels on enemy movements. Civilians provide information, cover, sustenance, resources, logistic support, and sometimes are trained as soldiers.

Although guerrilla warfare is most commonly associated with Mao Tse-Tung or the Viet Cong, it is in fact a centuries-old practice; in the 18th and 19th centuries, we can find numerous analyses of the approach (see Laqueur (1976) for a review of the history of

guerrilla warfare). For Mao, civilians constituted the *sine-qua-non* of successful rebellion. It was during the liberation struggles during the second half of the Cold War that “people’s war” became mainstreamed; in 1975, all but two ongoing civil wars were waged through guerrilla warfare (Kalyvas and Balcells 2010, 415).

3.2 Nonviolent action in civil wars

Like rebels, nonviolent activists also want the government to do something (or stop doing something) they would not otherwise do on their own. Nonviolent action is coercive in that it threatens to or actually does impose negative social, economic, political or physical sanctions for non-compliance (Bond et al. 1997). A protest march might be followed by more widespread social unrest and disruption, for example, if the group’s demands are not met. Disruption, which raises the political, economic, and military cost for the adversary (DeNardo 1985). As costs multiply, the target regime may accommodate some of the activists’ demands, or even force them to give up power completely. If the government clamps down on protesters with violence or repression, this will make the government look bad to both domestic and international audiences. A protest march might be followed by more wide-spread social unrest and disruption, for example, if the group’s demands are not met; and if the government clamps down on protesters with violence or repression, this will make the government look bad to both domestic and international audiences. The most obvious difference between how violent and nonviolent actors coerce is in the kind of weapons they use, and who uses them. Sharp and Jenkins (1990) characterized nonviolent action as a political technique that is similar to armed combat in that it requires sound strategy, numerous “weapons” as well as courageous, well-disciplined (but nonviolent) soldiers. In nonviolence, both the weapons and the soldiers come directly from the population, and disappear into it again when a given event is over. In contrast, rebels usually have specialized training, clearly fit into a hierarchical

command-and-control organization, often wear uniforms, and devote all day, every day to their activism.

Therefore, nonviolent action actively involves the population at large, putting them front and center as the main agents. Nonviolent action publicly displays the opposition of a mass of people against the government. At the most basic level, this demonstrates that the population has withdrawn its consent from the government, the very basis of any citizen-government relationship. The importance of this type of consent is exemplified by the Preamble to the US constitution: “To secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it.” At the most basic level, nonviolent action attempts to sever power from authorities by demonstrating that rulers can no longer rely on the support of the population, and might even have their outright opposition. This is in line with Henry David Thoreau’s call upon people to publicly oppose the Mexican-American War: “Let your life be a counter-friction to stop the machine. What I have come to see, at any rate, that I do not lend myself to the wrong which I condemn” (Thoreau 2008)².

In the words of Sharp (1990), nonviolent action operates through the unique power sources that citizens possess:

When people refuse their cooperation, withhold help, and persist in their disobedience and defiance, they are denying their opponent the basic human assistance and cooperation that any government or hierarchical system requires ... Workers may halt work, which may paralyze the economy ... If people and institutions do this in sufficient numbers and for long enough, that government or hierarchical system will no longer have power. ... Its power has dissolved. (9)

While nonviolent action can try to cripple the government’s effectiveness by halting the economy, clogging the streets, and making it difficult to demonstrate quiet and order, it also gains effectiveness through a ripple effect as the widespread public popular

²Originally published in 1849

discontent activates other players to put pressure on the government: the media, the educational sector, businesses, factories, production and economic elites, religious leaders, nongovernmental organizations, the military, and others. On the domestic level, Sharp and Paulson (2005) refers to this as targeting the government's main pillars of support. While the movement can try to coerce the government into submission by preventing these pillars from functioning, thereby significantly decreasing the government's effectiveness, command of resources and reputation, nonviolent protest also aims to persuade these pillars to shift support over to the protesters.

Nonviolent activists also play to an international audience. Masses of people taking to the streets makes for a powerful image that will sell papers and spread through social media like wildfire if cards are played right; only consider the Arab Spring. While violent strategies can have some effects on gaining an international audience, Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) argue that this effect is likely to be much smaller for violent than nonviolent campaigns. Seeing large numbers of resistance participants engaging in nonviolent activism will be taken as a sign of the movement's legitimacy and viability and actively demonstrate their commitment and adherence to international democratic norms. This can motivate foreign governments and nongovernmental and international organizations (as well as other players) to powerfully lobby on behalf of the movement. This is such a powerful tool that there are even consulting firms specializing in the international marketing of norms-conforming resistance movements.³

Governmental overreactions against civilian activists will further turn international support away from the regime. Chenoweth and Stephan (2011, 53) confidently conclude that "the international community is more likely to contribute diplomatic support to nonviolent campaigns than to violent ones." It is important here to differentiate between international attention (which can be done effectively through the use of violent action) and support, which is more likely to follow nonviolent action. In this way, rather than apply-

³Carne Ross's Independent Diplomat is an example.

ing pressure on the opponent's military capacity (by attacking military bases, troops, or sources of supply), seizing and maintaining control of territory, nonviolent action aims to generate domestic and international pressure on the government to agree to a resolution. Paradoxically, both in targeting an international audience and provocation, nonviolent action and terrorism can operate in a civil war through some of the same mechanisms (see Fortna (2015) for a discussion of the strategy of terrorism in civil wars).

3.3 What can rebels gain from using nonviolent action?

The very fact that few would associate nonviolent action with rebel groups points to its key strategic pay-off: It is unexpected by both the enemy government and the international audience, and thus unanticipated by any counterinsurgency doctrine and disrupting an ongoing narrative. After all, the expectation of violence in a civil war is absolute, as explained by Howes (2009, 2):

If we are willing to use enough of [violence], so the thinking goes, violence is reliable. Violence compels and destroys without requiring consent. Physically manipulating and attacking others frees us from dependence upon their opinions, reactions, responses, and desires. If others respond to violence with violence, one's material and moral capacities may be exhausted. **However, even in that case, violence prevails. When violence confronts violence, violence produces the winner.** Setting aside legal, social, and ethical qualms allows us to make the world we desire. It seems as though the material quality of violence ensures that violence always works for those who are willing to use a sufficient degree of it. (Emphasis added for clarity.)

Howes' characterization of violence dovetails with the conflict literature's assumption that violence is the natural outcome of an inescapable conflict escalation spiral, where the use of violence implies a high degree of conflict intensity and dire underlying grievances. This does not mean that violence is preferred by all actors; in general, violence is not morally desirable and considered a measure of last resort by most. Violence, so the argu-

ment goes, might be indispensable even to those who would not otherwise choose to use it, if their grievances are dire enough. As Howes (2009) puts it, “one of the most tragic, strange, and undeniable [paradoxes], so it would seem, is the necessity of using violence when one does not want to in order to stop those who insist upon it” (3). If the commonly held assumption is that violence persists until victory or painstakingly negotiated settlement, the unilateral abrogation of violence by a main conflict actor – or at least the partial substitution through nonviolent action – will both shock and awe.

The example of the First Palestinian Intifada exemplifies how mass-based (almost) nonviolent action can catch an opposing army unawares, making them pause, unsure how to act or even virtually unable to. In the Israeli case, an opposing army that had been engaged in counterinsurgency was flummoxed by the new challenge of demonstrating people. Stephan (2006, 120) convincingly argues that the Israeli army had no training in riot control, and had no *modus operandi* or established practice protocol on hand to face protesters in the street, so that they were rendered as good as useless. Schiff and Ya’ari (1989) describe this so-called “third front” and the reaction:

By their rebellion, the Palestinians opened a third front of mass, unarmed civilian violence – a new kind of warfare for which Israel had no effective response. Since the standard tools of military might are not designed to handle defiance of this sort, the IDF was wholly unprepared for the uprising in terms of its deployment, its combat doctrine, and even its store of the most basic equipment. The result was that overnight Israel was exposed in all its weakness, which was perhaps the real import of the surprise. (31)

What was the weakness exposed by the third front? The intifada showed in stark colors just how little headway the Israeli occupiers had made in winning Palestinian hearts and minds; it showed off the depth of despair within the population for all to see. Further, any “traditional” high-tech, heavy military response would have appeared blunt, brutal and overreactive next to the publicly suffering, unarmed population.

There are two key tactical advantages that can be gained through nonviolent action. First, it can render established counterinsurgency and military practices and processes

ineffective at least in the short term, duping the government's likely superior military machine. In addition to duping the opponent's superior counterinsurgency machinery, the use of nonviolent action can also draw attention away from the violent element of the resistance, buying time for a scrambling or failing militant organization to recuperate and regroup.

The most important benefits for rebels using nonviolent action are strategic. There are four key advantages to the rebel use of nonviolence: It demonstrates and deepens popular support, exemplifies movement resilience and support, signals the organization's adherence to democratic and other key international norms, and it attracts and solidifies international attention.

Table 3.1: Rebel benefits of nonviolent action

1. Demonstration and mobilization of popular support
2. Exemplification of movement resilience and control
3. Costly signal of norms adherence
4. Increase and solidification of international support

Demonstrating and deepening popular support

Since civilian activists are the heart of nonviolent action, at its core this strategy can show off the breadth and depth of the rebel's popular support base. The sheer number of people in the streets shows how wide this support network really is; the population's willingness to put themselves at real physical risk of retribution by the armed forces shows the depth of their commitment.

Comparing violent and nonviolent action side by side, Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) argue that nonviolent resistance enjoys a participation advantage over violent resistance.

Nonviolent direct action requires much less physical prowess, strength, or training. As Gandhi famously said, “in nonviolence the masses have a weapon which enables a child, a woman, or even a decrepit old man to resist the mightiest government successfully.” In practical terms, it is therefore possible for many more people to participate in nonviolent than violent action.

Participation is also important for violent resistance campaigns, where the population plays an important role in sustenance, support, recruits, information, and administrative or political tasks.⁴ However, when comparing exclusively violent or nonviolent campaigns, Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) argue it is easier to recruit people to nonviolent campaigns:

The physical risks and costs of participation in a violent resistance campaign may be prohibitively high for many potential members. Actively joining a violent campaign may require physical skills such as agility and endurance, willingness to train, ability to handle and use weapons, and often isolation from society at large ... [T]he typical guerilla regimen may appeal only to a small portion of any given population. (34-35)

Not only does nonviolent action have much lower physical barriers to participation, but the psychological and ethical barriers are lower as well. As DeNardo (1985) puts it, “violent methods raise troublesome questions about whether the ends justify the means, and generally force people who use them to take substantial risks” (58). People might have moral or ethical concerns with using violence against other human beings no matter the movement goals, and might be neither willing to carry out violence themselves nor to condone violence through direct association or support. DeNardo also points out that nonviolent activism is less risky than violent activism on several different levels. We often hear the logic that carrying a gun increases the risk of being killed by a gun, and while this is a debated point in US public policy, carrying a gun as a rebel is much more likely

⁴The quantity and quality of popular support is hypothesized to significantly contribute to the success of all types of resistance campaigns (DeNardo 1985; Lichbach 1994; Weinstein 2007; Wickham-Crowley 1992).

to make you a target by opposing government forces. However, the risks are not only to life and limb; as put by Chenoweth and Stephan (2011), “participants in nonviolent campaigns can often return to their jobs, daily lives, and families with lower risk than a participant in a violent campaign” (38). Consequently, Chenoweth and Stephan find that the average nonviolent movement has about 150,000 more participants than the average violent movement, although they fail to unpack the potential underlying selection effect (33).

How, then, does the role and effect of popular participation change for nonviolent action if it is used by a rebel organization, associated with rebel goals, and used against the backdrop of a civil war? First of all, nonviolent campaigns allow for mass participation from a broad swath of society, which “can erode or remove a regime’s main sources of power” as outlined in the previous section (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011, 30). This adds the direct pressure of the population to the government, magnifying the pressure of the resistance campaign .

However, Schock (2003) argues that there are instances where nonviolent action has been effective in brutally repressive contexts and ineffective in democracies. One mechanism that contributes to increased success in repressive environments is that repressive regimes may respond to nonviolent action with violent crackdowns, which may backfire, leading to loyalty shifts towards the nonviolent campaign and against the regime Martin (2007, 3). By Martin’s logic, it is easier to justify draconian measures in response to armed insurgency. However, whether there is an armed insurgency or not, the image of civilians in the street being brutally mowed down by the regime will allow a violent organization to benefit from this kind of sympathy boost, too.

Nonviolent action provides armed groups with many of the same benefits as it does purely nonviolent movements: It demonstrates the breadth of popular support to the government and can trigger further popular mobilization and loyalty shifts. It is important to be aware of the different categories of civilians, as identified by Fortna (2015): There

are civilians already supporting the rebel group, civilians supporting the government, and fence-sitters who are neither members of the directly aggrieved group nor active supporters of the state policies. The use of nonviolent action largely targets the first and third categories: Silent rebel supporters are encouraged to show their support as part of a protesting, protective mass, and fence-sitters are to be won over by demonstrating the degree of support already enjoyed by the movement.

However, the use of nonviolent action by rebel groups can also demonstrate the breadth and depth of popular commitment in a way that is not possible in purely nonviolent movements: in nonviolent backdrops, it is easier to mobilize the population precisely because of the lower moral barriers to participation and the decreased risks to life, limb, and livelihood. However, this is not the case in the context of a civil war: The government has already demonstrated its willingness to resort to violence during its civil war; by associating with the rebel organization openly, protesters identify themselves as an extension of the enemy, making reprisals more likely. Further, mobilization is more difficult because infrastructure is likely to be destroyed. Therefore, if nonviolent protest *does* occur in a civil war on behalf of the rebel group, it necessarily indicates a deep popular commitment to the rebel cause. Further, violent actors often abuse or exploit the population; if the population is willing to stand up publicly for the rebel group, this is a signal that they have a positive, supportive relationship with the population.

Exemplifying Movement Resilience and Control

The use of nonviolent action can demonstrate the continued resilience of a movement and its cause, as well as the degree of control exerted by the leadership and the breadth and depth of their organizational network – how many people can it reach, and where? Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) find that violent campaigns are most likely to succeed if they have mass support. The use of nonviolent action makes this popular support visible, which can otherwise be difficult to gauge, especially since the traditional roles played by

civilians are relatively invisible.

While it is a great testament to popular support, nonviolent events are very difficult to organize in a civil war. Freedom of information, the press and freedom of assembly are likely heavily restricted and known activists will likely already be under surveillance or already in jail. Further, communication infrastructure (phones, internet, mail or even just roads) will likely be watched and/or destroyed. While Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) claim that part of nonviolent action's participation advantage over violent action comes from being easier to organize, this advantage almost completely evaporates in a civil war.

However, it is precisely because of these increased difficulties in information and mobilization that nonviolent action can be such a powerful tool in the context of a civil war if done right: Because popular mobilization is so difficult and communication is so difficult, a rebel organization can demonstrate just how capable it is and how broad its support base. This means that the traditional strategic advantages from nonviolent action are multiplied in the context of insurgency, and it acts as a particularly costly signal for popular support.

In practice, nonviolent action is used most often (though not exclusively!) when the violent resistance is stagnant, or even failing. At that moment, it is crucial for the resistance to demonstrate continued activity and relevance, thereby proving resilience. In this way, nonviolent action as a rebel strategy can serve an important role in demonstrating the continued relevance of a campaign, especially if the armed resistance has ground to a lasting halt and most of the rebels are in hiding and no longer possess the capacity for publicity stunts.

Costly Signal of Norms Adherence

Nonviolent action can be a critical way for a rebel organization to reframe their cause and their publicly perceived identity, portraying themselves as a capable political entity adhering to critical international norms. Rebel use of nonviolent action is a costly (and

difficult to organize) but potentially very effective way to signal adherence to internationally held norms. This can lead resistance movements to be seen as desperately fighting for a legitimate cause, rather than as radical extremists wreaking havoc. In turn, this can have positive effects for both the organization and its cause. How does this work?

The perceived close link between nonviolent action and pacifism runs deep; one only need consider different religious doctrines to find evidence. For example, in Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism, the concept of *ahimsa* refers to the denunciation of the will to harm others, or non-injury. In Christianity, the Sermon of the Mount (Matthew 5:38-41, 43-44) is translated in the King James Bible to read:

But I say to you, do not resist one who is evil. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if anyone would sue you and take your coat ... Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

Although this has been frequently interpreted to advocate passivity and non-engagement, the theologian Walter Wink argues that this text, using the correct translation of the Greek *antisthenai*, actually reads “do not strike back at evil in kind ... Do not retaliate against violence with violence” (Wink 1996). Nonviolent action and its value is at the very heart of different religious traditions.

This is not to say that holy and just war are not also important religious doctrines, but rather that society’s tendency to associate nonviolent action with moral high ground is deeply rooted. This means that the use of nonviolent action, if used convincingly, can serve as a costly signal for rebels’ willingness to adhere to commonly held norms. In comparing violent and nonviolent movements, Howes (2009) argues that groups that deliberately adopt nonviolent tactics are commonly understood to be doing so for moral, principled reasons. This is different from associating nonviolent action entirely with pacifism; rather, the association between nonviolent action and holding the moral high ground can be exploited strategically. Precisely because nonviolent action is unexpected in a violent context, it strengthens rebel organizations’ normative claims by demonstrat-

ing their broad, quasi-democratic appeal if nonviolent activists publicly advocate for the rebel cause.

Not only does the inherent association between nonviolent action and pacifism evoke norms conformity, but the mobilization of broad swatches of the population also echo democratic principles and popular consent for the rebel leadership to lead by the resistance movement. There are other examples for rebel organizations signaling norms adherence. ? argues that violent secessionist groups have an interest in adhering to the laws of war in order to appear both capable (of restraining members from committing certain types of violence) and legitimate. Accordingly, Stanton (2016) finds that rebel organizations that signal international norms compliance by refraining from targeting civilians fare better in civil wars because they will garner more international support. Similarly, rebel organizations that demonstrate large popular support also significantly increase their perceived legitimacy in representing and governing the population, as well as their willingness and capacity to do so.

The use of nonviolence not only sends a positive signal about a rebel group's current norms adherence, but also about their capacity to govern. In this vein, Nepstad (2015), building on a logic famously advocated and exemplified by Gandhi, argues that nonviolence may in fact be more conducive to a stable post-war society. She states that “[one] reason for choosing nonviolent methods is that they are compatible with the goal of creating a nonviolent civil society” (13), a concept which is known as “prefigurative politics”. By using civil forms of resistance, movement activists and participants can gain experience in strategic political action and interaction and nonviolent means of expressing a political point of view. If the goal is to run an independent state, “the methods advance the goal, even before the end goal is fully attained” (Nepstad 2015, 13).

This might also have very pragmatic pay-offs. By demonstrating the depth of popular support, capacity to shift strategy without chaos and factionalization, and norms adherence pointing to a stable post-conflict government, rebel groups who use nonviolent

action might also become good investments for both governments and foreign business elites. In a Serbian educational guide on nonviolence in practice, this point about presenting a good investment is made explicit, though talking about economic elites in particular: “Their main interest is profit, so they are quite pragmatic and often view support for a non-violent movement or a government as an investment. [Nonviolent activists’] challenge is to convince this community that supporting your vision . . . is a wiser investment than supporting your opponent” (Popovic et al. 2007). Foreign governments are much more likely to support rebel organizations who appear stable, reliable, and norms-conforming.

Garnering an International Audience

The previous paragraph indicates how nonviolent action can have significant benefits for a rebel organization’s international standing and reputation. International attention and support is not bestowed on movements randomly; many organizations purposefully campaign to attract this kind of publicity. In his book, Bob (2005) writes about how rebellions market themselves internationally, competing for the attention of media outlets, donors, and sympathetic governments. He outlines the mechanism whereby international support can be crucial to resistance groups’ goal attainment:

At stake is more than a global popularity contest. For many challengers, outside aid is literally a matter of life and death. NGOs can raise awareness about little-known conflicts, mobilize resources for beleaguered movements, and pressure repressive governments. External involvement can deter state violence and force policy change. It can bestow legitimacy on challengers who might otherwise have meager recognition. And it can strengthen challengers, not only materially, through infusions of money, equipment, and knowledge, but also psychologically, by demonstrating that a movement is not alone, that the world cares, and that an arduous conflict may not be fruitless. (4)

The role and influence of international supporters can make a crucial difference. For example, for many self-determination movements, international support can mean the difference between independence and failure. Contrary to conventional wisdom, Cog-

gins (2011) shows that independence is often attained without the consent of the central government if there is significant international support. In fact, only half of all new states since 1945 had the consent of their national government prior to secession (Coggins 2011). Had the United Nations Security Council not intervened to ensure Timor-Leste's plebiscite and defend its autonomy, it is unlikely that the Indonesian government would have upheld its independence. In order to gain the approval of the international community of states, though, it is crucial to be considered a legitimate player, with legitimate grievances. As argued in the previous section, one of the main effects of nonviolent action is the signaling of norms adherence and consolidated control over the movement, and through this, increased legitimacy. This is an important factor both to bolster domestic popular and international support.

Rebel organizations are keenly aware of the importance of international audiences can be seen in how many of them have diplomatic fronts, organizational arms entirely devoted to coordinating a foreign strategy, and foreign offices and diaspora organizations championing their cause around the world. Yet, violent action might not be the best way to attract international attention. Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) maintain that nonviolent campaigns are more likely to attract international attention than violent campaigns; they "believe that the international community is more likely to contribute diplomatic support to nonviolent campaigns than to violent ones" (53). The main logic underlying their argument is that large numbers of popular supporters are a sign of a movement's legitimacy and viability. Accordingly, their (problematic) data analysis finds that a nonviolent campaign is 70% more likely to receive diplomatic support in the form of sanctions targeting central governments than a violent campaign.

Therefore, rather than directly targeting the government, weakening its will through attrition or directly hurting its military capabilities, rebels aim at reaching an audience greater than just the opposing government by using nonviolent action. Paradoxically, this is similar to how some rebel organizations use terrorism as a strategy. According

to Merari (1993), terrorism lacks the direct material goals often associated with guerrilla warfare, such as obtaining resources, controlling specific territory, and governing. While terrorist rebel groups have as their ultimate aim to coerce the government into making concessions, the immediate aim of terrorism is to influence a wider audience. There are a host of possible audiences: The government, the population that the rebel group is trying to get on their side, other states' governments, or the international community at large (the media, NGOs, international organizations, etc.).

Just like terrorists, nonviolent activists aim to widely advertise their cause, creating awareness, thereby trying to put their grievances on political agendas ("propaganda by the deed"). The two uses of terrorism that most adequately parallel nonviolent action if used in a civil war are "advertising the cause" or "propaganda by the deed", whereby terrorism publicizes grievances and thereby puts the cause on the political agenda (Crenshaw 2011). A mass protest makes for good press, and has the added advantage of being unexpected in the civil war context, thereby eerily recalling the "shock and awe" effect of large-scale terrorist attacks. By using nonviolent action, rebel groups can hope to mobilize international players to pressure the central government through publicly support, aid, or even boots on the ground.

Similar to terrorism, nonviolent action can also benefit from government overreaction, which can also make significant international waves. Accordingly, Kydd and Walter (2006) identify *provocation* as a terrorist mechanism: Through provoking the government into retaliating against the population in order to clamp down on terrorism, both the population and the international community should increasingly consider the government as evil and untrustworthy. Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) characterize how nonviolent action works in very similar terms: "The international repercussions of a violent crackdown against civilians who have made their commitment to nonviolent action known may be more severe than against those that could be credibly labeled as terrorists" (53). This can be particularly valuable to rebel organizations, which are characterized by violence

per definition, but the effective use of nonviolence can paint them in a righteous light in contrast to a brutal, untrustworthy government.

Finally, their public demonstration of norms adherence and mobilization and coordination capacity, rebel organizations also demonstrate that they are a trustworthy investment for the future. The international community of states is inherently conservative, fearing for stability of the system. According to Coggins (2011), “the Great Powers ought to prefer coordinated recognition to maintain their social standing and security; to maintain international stability; and to reproduce the state-centric international order” (48). By demonstrating popular appeal and capacity, especially in contrast to an untrustworthy government, resistance organizations can demonstrate that they are worthy, legitimate future states.

3.4 Rebel risks of using nonviolent action

If the rebel use of nonviolent action has in the past proven very effective and can bring significant strategic benefits, why is it such a rare event? Rebel use of nonviolent action is not only very difficult to organize and implement, it also comes with significant risks and drawbacks, especially if not done right. I argue that there are three significant risks that come with rebel use of nonviolent action: First, mass-based nonviolent action can jeopardize military effectiveness either by making planning more difficult or diluting the message. Second, if leaders within the organization have attained their power position because of their violent “expertise”, they might be resistant to a shift away from this approach for fear of empowering rival actors within the organization. Third, the rebel organization might lose control over control of the narrative and message of the movement as well as their purported representative function for the movement as a whole as nonviolent action can empower rival organizations.

Conversely, nonviolent action may hold little strategic promise for some rebel groups.

This is likely to be the case for organizations relying on extensive civilian targeting, groups heavily relying on local resource extraction, or groups with strong foreign sponsors pressing for a military victory. Organizations differentiating themselves from rival organizations via their skilled use of violence would also likely see little strategic benefits from using nonviolent action.

Table 3.2: Rebel risks and drawbacks of nonviolent action

1. Jeopardize military effectiveness
2. Empower rival leaders
3. Loss of control over agents and movement

Jeopardize military effectiveness

Just as the unexpected element of rebels using nonviolent action can bring significant benefits, a departure from the status quo can jeopardize the organization's main focus: Violent action. This can happen in two different ways. The public, centralized, large-scale nature of nonviolent action can make it more difficult to meticulously plan and execute insurgent strategies. According to Mao (1961), "in guerrilla warfare, select the tactic of seeming to come from the east and attacking from the west; avoid the solid, attack the hollow; attack; withdraw; deliver a lightning blow, seek a lightning decision" (46). In other words, effective military planning requires secrecy, and depends on the element of surprise. Internal debates within the Basque Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) when the question of a nonviolent shift was up for debate exemplify the dilemma of military effectiveness versus continued political relevance of the organization.

At the time of ETA's official formation in 1958, the clandestine organization had decided that violence was the only possible response to the Spanish occupation, and that

there was no space for other forms of resistance. In their first assembly in 1962, the organization leadership proclaimed: “Violence is necessary. A contagious violence, destructive, which would help our struggle, the good struggle, the struggle that the Israelis, Congolese and Algerians have taught us” (Garmendia (1980) quoted by Aiartza and Zabalo (2010, 13)). By 1972, the year of their fifth formal assembly, violence had achieved far less than anyone had hoped, and some within the organization advocated reverting to an at least partly mass-based strategy. The plan was to reorganize the organization according to Truong Chinh’s handbook on resistance models, “The Resistance to Win”, where the Vietnamese strategist proposed the ideal structure of a resistance organization into four fronts: Military, cultural, political, and worker. Activating the masses was an important part of this reorganization as they played the crucial roles in three out of four fronts. Yet, within the organization, there was significant opposition to this plan: The main argument was that while working with the masses was necessary for the political-cultural and workers’ fronts, the military front needed secrecy and security of a kind where any kind of mass involvement was simply non-feasible. Tactical and strategic decisions could not take into account politico-cultural preferences and requirements, or the violent effort would lose its edge. Some members of the leadership argued that the organization had to be just military, and that the workers’, political, and cultural movements should organize themselves completely separately. Eventually, the ETA split into two in part because of this largely unresolved dispute (Aiartza and Zabalo 2010). Internal disputes between military and political factions within the organization will be discussed in more detail as part of the Timor-Leste and Nepalese case studies.

Second, organizations that have hitherto pursued their objective through violence might fear that a public turn to nonviolence, even if only partial, might make them appear weak in the eyes of the opponent and thus weakening their chance of prevailing. As outlined in the previous section, violent action plays the leading role in a civil war, where it is thought that (military) power always prevails. Voluntarily de-emphasizing the use of

violence might therefore be seen as a signal of military weakness, inciting the opponent to increase the aggressiveness of attacks to take advantage of this momentary weakness. Whether or not this is how nonviolent shifts are in fact perceived by opponents, it is reasonable that some militant rebel leaders might think so.

Empowering rival leaders

A second significant risk is that the use of nonviolent action can significantly affect the balance of power within the organization and within the movement as a whole. Machiavelli stated that “the reformer has enemies in all those who profit by the old order, and only lukewarm defenders in all those who would profit by the new order” (Machiavelli 1984, 331). This succinctly captures why organizations are inherently conservative: The institutional order comes with entrenched power structures and interests, whereas organizational changes bring the specter of uncertainty and the possibility of power shifts. If individual leaders have built their careers and prestige on the strategic use of violence, which often requires considerable expertise, they may be weary of shifting the emphasis away from violent action, because they might lose their position of power and influence within the organization. Horowitz (2006) argues that innovation is likely to give individual leaders a tactical or strategic edge over competitor. This means that nonviolent action would be considered much riskier in organizations with leaders who have staked significant reputation on the use of specific strategies. Further, this would affect organizations more who have relatively unpredictable internal hierarchical power structure, so that the effect of de-emphasizing violent action could have unforeseen consequences and destabilize the organization.

This effect will be particularly strong in militaries, where the organizational *raison d'être* is inextricably tied to military effectiveness, so that a move away from violent action not only implies a loss of personal power but also a perceived loss of organizational clout over the movement. Geddes (1999, 126) sums up the consensus in research on mil-

itary regimes that “most professional soldiers place a higher value on the survival and efficacy of the military itself than on anything else.”⁵ Tying this insight back to strategic innovation, Horowitz (2006) argues that the military leadership is wary of significant strategic shifts because it might have adverse effects for the position of the military as a whole.

In the case of using nonviolent action, though, the violent leadership not only risks losing power in relation to other arms of their own organization, but they also risk empowering actors outside their organization. Since nonviolent action requires a different class of actors (protesters in central locations) that are not easily accessible to the rebel leadership, so-called nonviolent entrepreneurs act as connectors between the urban population and the rebels in the periphery. Often, these are student or union leaders who did not previously play significant roles in the resistance. These actors will have significant clout within the movement, and may with time contest the rebel organization’s claim of legitimate representation of the movement.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the benefits from nonviolent action for rebel groups are significant even when weighed against the risks. This makes it even more puzzling why rebel use of nonviolent action is such a rare event. In the next chapter, I explore just why the use of mass-based nonviolent action is so difficult for rebel groups – and what might explain why some groups are able to use it after all – by presenting an in-depth case study of the Timorese independence movement.

⁵See Janowitz (1964, 1977); Finer and Stanley (2002); Bienen (1980); Decalo (1976); Kennedy (1975)

4. Louder than Bombs: Timor-Leste's Violent Nonviolent Independence

“The development of a phenomenon in movement, whatever its external appearance, depends mainly on its internal characteristics.”

– Amílcar Cabral¹

The Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (Fretilin, later National Council for Maubere Resistance or CNRM) embarked on a widespread, purposive nonviolent campaign after fourteen years of brutal civil war and occupation while simultaneously fighting in the hills — and won independence.² The conflict trajectory of Timor-Leste's independence struggle demonstrates how organizational structures and institutionalized processes determine and constrain a rebel organization's ability to use nonviolent action as a conflict strategy. The intricate web of ties linking the population in occupied urban areas with party elite and guerrillas in the periphery not only survived the shock of Indonesian invasion, but developed new organizational tentacles extending its reach during the conflict. The strong political leadership that had developed prior to war likewise continued to hold sway over the military hardliners in Fretilin and CNRM after the invasion, which would allow the rebel group to think outside of the strictly military box. Both of these wartime characteristics grew out of a highly diversified pre-war organization that had its roots in a long history of indigenous socio-political networks that had been barely altered during colonization, making the relevant organizational features robust enough

¹From “A Weapon of Theory,” address delivered to the first Tricontinental Conference of the Peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America held in Havana in January, 1966

²The organization's name was changed several times in its history: Timorese Social Democratic Association or ASDT, Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor or Fretilin, and National Council for Maubere Resistance or CNRM all refer to roughly the same organization.

to be repurposed during the war. When John-Paul II's visit to previously sequestered Timor brought foreign journalists to the island, these organizational conditions allowed the organized resistance to turn the conflict "nonviolent".

This case is particularly well suited as a pathway case for theory development: First, Timor-Leste's centuries-long isolation without any meaningful experience in political organization makes process-tracing particularly effective, as we can trace most relevant governance structures back to Fretilin and minimize attribution errors. Even more poignant, Fretilin's political and administrative structures were all formed and honed over a period of only 1.5 years after the Carnation Revolution in Lisbon suddenly brought on the prospect of decolonization; this provides us with a particularly clear picture of Fretilin's ideological, political, and strategic incentives and structures. Timor's isolation both during colonization and after invasion also minimizes interference by potential confounding variables.

Prior to conducting fieldwork and in-depth research on Timor-Leste, the theoretical exploration of "rebel use of nonviolent action," its strategic value, and its organizational requirements led to a set of preliminary assumptions and ideas. First, I assumed that the rebel organization must have an outstanding apparatus for popular mobilization and enjoy significant popular support. Second, it seemed likely that democratic decision-making structures within the organization would facilitate both innovation capacity and mobilization. These assumptions, underlying the otherwise largely inductive case study, narrowed the analytical focus of this chapter on moments of internal organizational change and external shock throughout the resistance organization's history to gauge the innovation and mobilization tools that would be available to later organize nonviolent action. External shocks are particularly useful for exploring key organizational features and their operation; for example, Thelen (1999) argues that "in moments of crisis, the elements that previously held a system together come into full relief" (399).

I examine the distinct organizational development stages undergone by Fretilin/CNRM

with a special focus on who was making the key decisions on strategic innovation and who was opposed to them.³ In addition, I pay particular attention to how the organization adjusted to three key external “shocks”: Full-scale Indonesian invasion on December 7, 1975, the destruction of the rebel mountain regime symbolized by the death of then Fretilin leader Nicolau Lobato on December 31, 1978 at Mount Matebian, and the limited opening of Timor to foreign visitors, symbolized by the visit of Pope John Paul II on October 12, 1989. Organizational features and links to the population that survived these shocks can be considered particularly resilient, and the way the organization was able to “come back” from these challenging moments in its history provide key insights into strategic innovation potential. However, before exploring these three key moments, I first examine Timor’s socio-political history in precolonial and colonial times, as this determines the popular mobilization potential and thus constrains Fretilin’s strategic choices.

In order to trace the presence and operation of the hypothesized causal mechanisms and to streamline and structure the analysis, a set of general questions underlie both the pathway case and the following two shorter case studies. Following the method of structured and focused comparison developed by George and Bennett (2005), formulating a set of general questions is “necessary to ensure the acquisition of comparable data in comparative studies” (69). However, given the pathway nature of this case, these questions will be revisited and concretized at the end of the chapter to shape the shorter theory-testing case studies.

1. What historically entrenched social patterns and institutions had the potential to ex-ante influence the shape and direction of prewar and wartime political organiz-

³Due to a significant scarcity of sources for the period, there are considerable historiographical inconsistencies on the period between 1981 and 1985. No foreigners were able to enter the island during this period and the two Timorese scholars on the resistance to whose accounts this dissertation generally defers in questions of inconsistency, Nuño Rodrigues Tchailoro and Antero Benedito da Silva, have not written about this period, so that Xanana Gusmão’s likely at least partially biased first-person account remains the only source. The account provided on this period in this chapter represents my best effort at resolving these inconsistencies and minimizing bias, but as a result the account provided on the period is more vague than others.

ing?

2. How did the prewar organization mobilize the population, and how did translate into the wartime relationship between rebels and population? How inclusive (in terms of geography and social classes) was mobilization?
3. How were decisions made within the organizational leadership? Who had de-facto or formal veto power?
4. What circumstances or event triggered the first instance of nonviolent action, and how was the rebel group involved?
5. Which organizational mechanisms were utilized or repurposed in planning individual events, and how did nonviolent action fit into the organization's strategy?

4.1 Timor-Leste's colonial and pre-colonial socio-political roots

Pre-colonization Timor was organized into small kingdoms ruled by *liurai* (a hereditary position) and a few autonomous domains.⁴ A kingdom could contain several chiefdoms (*sucos*), and chiefdoms would consist of villages (*povacaos*, comparable to clans and ruled by elected chief elders) and hamlets or households (*enuas*). Some chiefdoms were independent of any kingdom, so that we cannot think of them as unified or centrifugal in the sense of European kingdoms. In spite of linguistic diversity across the island, this basic social structure was found throughout the island (see figure). (Traube 1986)

Power was measured in how much tribute a ruler commanded and his strategic position in the kinship exchange system (Taylor 1999, 7). Rulers (both local and regional)

⁴The term *liurai* underwent a transformation over the centuries. While it traditionally was a title for kings, the Portuguese used it to denote chieftains, as well as other Timorese men of political influence generally, which corresponds to the term's current use.

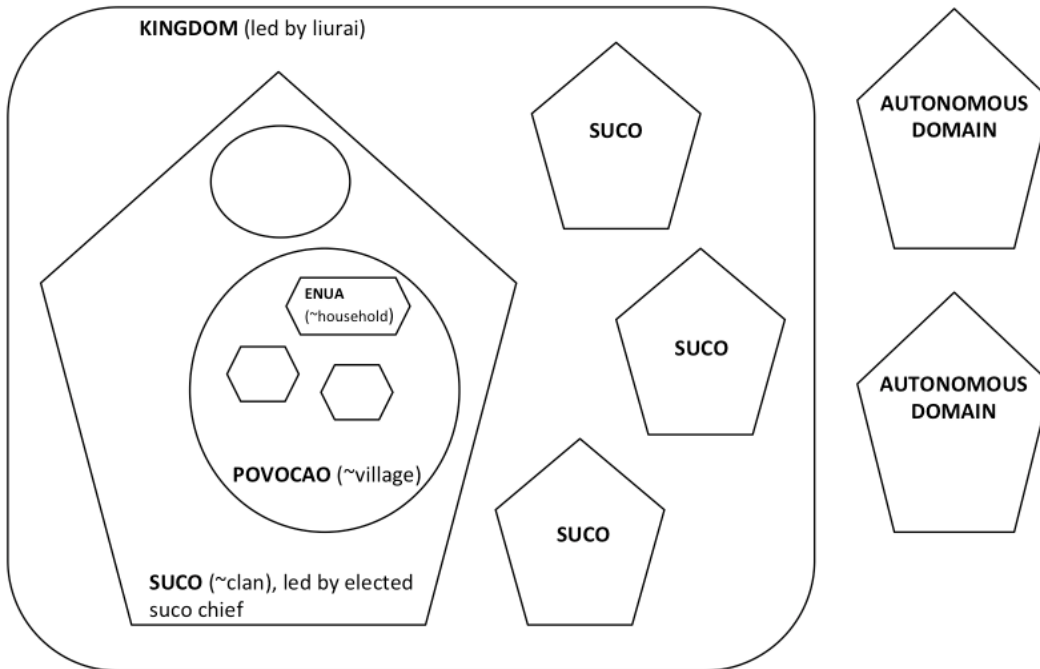


Figure 4.1: Timor-Leste's precolonial social structure

granted land use to tenants in exchange for labor and a cut of agricultural products. Between villages and princedom, men and women were exchanged in marriage in exchange for a price in goods; this exchange practice was used to form key kinship alliances, which were brokered by tribal elders who could elevate their own status based on the value they could receive in such exchanges.

According to Taylor (1999), political power and status in Timor-Leste was intimately tied to the means of production (land) and reproduction (the creation of new family units), so that an intricate web of family and trade ties (which could be one and the same) crisscrossed the whole island. This centuries-old practice might explain why ethnicity and race never emerged as a prominent political dividing line, even though there was significant linguistic diversity on the island (see Figure 5.2). Most Timorese were of Austronesian origin, with some influx of different Indonesian and Malay groups. While there exist many languages and dialects in Timor-Leste, there are often few speakers of one distinct language, so that ethnicity was never a strong marker (see map of main languages). Likely catalyzed by marital exchange and alliances across the island, Tetum, a grammati-

cally and phonetically simple hybrid language most firmly based on a relatively pervasive tribal language, gained traction about 1000 years ago and facilitated communication between different kingdoms, princedoms, and clans, though peasants would rarely speak it.

In most ways, Timor-Leste is an unlikely candidate for the degree of international attention it garnered towards the end of the 20th Century. Even its name implies its geographically isolated location – “Timor-Leste” literally means “East of East”, and it is small, approximately half the size of Switzerland. Timor-Leste is the eastern part of a tropical island located at the southern end of Maritime Southeast Asia, one of the Lesser Sunda islands north of Australia and surrounded by Indonesian islands. The local origin myth holds that the island of Timor used to be a crocodile; accordingly, its shape is oblong and curved with a rugged mountainous backbone, interspersed with fertile valleys formerly covered in lush jungle. Its vegetation and topology only allow for limited land use, though the sea surrounding the island is rich in oil and gas deposits and its woods rife with sandalwood. Most Timorese are of Austronesian origin with some influx of different Indonesian and Malay groups; through centuries-long trade relations, there is also a small Chinese minority in Dili.

Portugal’s colonization of Timor-Leste was hands-off and left indigenous ties and structures largely intact. When the first Portuguese ship reached the beaches of Timor in 1511, they found a complex political structure of kingdoms and chiefdoms, intertwined through a convoluted network of marriage and kinship alliances which they barely attempted to penetrate until the last century of their rule. As late as 1860, the Governor of Dili, Affonso de Castro, described Portuguese colonialism in Timor as merely a thin veneer: “Our empire on this island is nothing but a fiction” (quoted in Fox (2000, 18)). Especially as Portugal allowed for next to no politicization among the Timorese population, traditional socio-political structures retained relevance not only throughout colonization, but also provided an important political reference point as Fretilin prepared for

self-governance when decolonization loomed in 1974 and 1975 as well as during Indonesian occupation.

When Portuguese explorers reached Timor in 1511, this was likely the first direct contact of the island with the western world. They cited the abundance of sandalwood and the important trade in beeswax, honey, slaves and silver that Timor had already been trading internationally with China and India via the Java and Sulawesi islands (Yoder Meitzner 2011). Sandalwood was the chief economic attraction of the island, though: In Chinese documents published in the Ming dynasty about the Chinese trade with Timor, the island is described as one in which “the mountains are covered with sandal trees, and the country produces nothing else” (Groeneveldt (1960, 116) quoted in Taylor (1999, 1)). It is hard to overstate the economic value the Portuguese saw in Timor; when Gerelamo de Verrazano drew world maps in 1529, Timor was included, whereas Java (where there was a Portuguese trading post) was not, despite its vastly bigger size and much more strategically important position (Taylor 1999).

The sandalwood trade did not require significant Portuguese presence in Timor proper, especially as Timor did not serve as a strategic connection to other colonial holdings, as did for example Goa or Macao. The Portuguese could forego building significant infrastructure, by tapping into the existing trade network on the island, which had after all already traded sandalwood and had mechanisms and instruments in place that did not necessitate roads. This was particularly fortuitous given the distance between Lisbon and Timor-Leste of 14,438 kilometers. After arriving in Timor-Leste in an official capacity in 1515, the Portuguese maintained a base in a Dominican fortress on the Solor Island, north of Timor (Taylor 1999, 3-5), and made annual trips to the main island to collect sandalwood (Taylor 1999, 3-5). With the Dutch threat of the profitable Portuguese sandalwood repository, the Portuguese invaded the island forcefully in 1642 under the pretense of protecting the newly Christianized kings and chieftains of the coastal regions (Molnar 2009, 28). After military clashes with the Dutch, a status quo of Portuguese control of

East Timor and Dutch control of West Timor emerged.

Until the mid-19th Century, the Portuguese were represented by the governor in Oecussi (an enclave technically in Dutch Timor). The Portuguese presence was felt most in the form of the Catholic Church; the Dominican friar António Taveira had arrived on the island in 1556 and commenced a semi-systematic missionizing effort, initially restricted to the north and south coastal chiefdoms during a period when there was no colonial Portuguese administration, trading posts, or military garrisons on the island. The church represented the only contact many Timorese had with the Portuguese. Because of the specific type of animist beliefs in Timor, many Timorese accepted Catholicism without renouncing their traditional beliefs, instead weaving the two together, practicing their own form of syncretism. As the Portuguese tightened their rule starting in 1834, the Portuguese government's association with the Catholic Church in Timor was weakened concurrently as anti-clerical sentiments grew in Lisbon. In consequence, there was a sense of solidarity between the Timorese and the Catholic Church in opposition to Portugal and Catholicism began to be seen as quintessentially Timorese (Davidson 1994, 36).

Lisbon favored an indirect administration style. Until the mid-19th Century, Portugal administered Timor through a system that relied on the pre-existing indigenous system of *liurai* and *suku* (local chieftains), rather than replacing them with Portuguese local administrators, thereby inserting themselves comparatively unobtrusively into pre-existing structures. Molnar (2009) describes the comparatively benign relationship between Timorese rulers and Portuguese colonizers: "According to local interpretations, resistance to the Portuguese failed, as a consequence of the Portuguese possessing greater spiritual potency, since these foreigners did not only have a larger army, but also had their own powerful sacred men with *luli* (spiritual potency) in the form of Catholic priests." (16) During colonization, the legitimacy of local rulers was enhanced as it was seen that the Portuguese flag and a ruling "staff" given to *liurai* by Portuguese emissaries (mimicking traditional Timorese sacred objects), learning the language of the colonial dominant

power, receiving additional education, and enhancing spiritual power through affiliation with the Catholic Church, actually strengthened the local authority of the *liurai* in the eyes of many of their subjects (Molnar 2009, 16).

In addition to using local leaders to govern and administer, Portugal also exploited rivalries between *liurai* to “buy” themselves a Timorese militia, offering select Timorese elites Portuguese military titles (*Colonel Regulo*), conferring increased local authority on these local leaders and privileging them in comparison with rival *liurai* (Davidson 1994, 60).⁵ These militias supported Portugal both against rebellious Timorese and against *Topasses*, mixed-origin elites with significant informal power, who engaged in illicit trade with the Chinese and Dutch (Davidson 1994). Because of their strategic location, this strategy empowered mostly coastal kingdoms, which were also easier to control and were important partners in the sandalwood trade. Growing increasingly concerned about unsanctioned Timorese trade with the Netherlands and Chinese in the 17th Century, the colonizers embarked on a purposive divide-and-rule strategy, with the goal of undermining the larger kingdoms and strengthening princedoms and chiefdoms and thereby increasing the number of political units and decreasing *liurais*’ political power. The defeat of the Wehale kingdom in the middle of the century was the culmination of this strategy. From this point on, “once established, the co-existence of external control with indigenous structural reproduction continued throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries”, although there was periodic resistance and Portuguese military presence finally became stronger in the 19th Century (Taylor 1999, 9).

The loss of the Brazilian crown colony in 1822 (and concurrent losses in Africa) freed significant Portuguese attention and manpower up for Timor, and in fact more than sixty armed Portuguese expeditions are recorded between 1847 and 1913 (Molnar 2009, 31). Lisbon set up a system of thirteen regional *conselhos* (corresponding to today’s districts) that would oversee *sucos* to administer the colony more directly. However, even after

⁵These indigenous militias were known as *moradores* and *arraias*

Lisbon tightened control in the 18th and 19th Century, their presence had little effect on the entrenched indigenous power structures. Accounts from travelers and researchers who visited Timor towards the end of the 19th Century overwhelmingly confirm this. The English traveller Wallace spent several months in Timor-Leste during his travels through the Malay archipelagos at the end of the 1850s, and made the following observation after witnessing one such attack: “Timor will for many years to come remain in its present state of chronic insurrection and mis-government” (Wallace 1964, 153). H.O. Forbes, a naturalist, travelled through Timor in 1882, and made the following observations about the true balance of power in “Portuguese” Timor: “[The country] is apportioned out under certain chiefs called Rajahs or Leoreis (*liurais*), each of whom is independent in its own kingdom” (Forbes 1883, 404). Forbes further asserted that even though the Portuguese had nominally abolished kingdoms, it seemed clear that some *liurais* still enjoyed much elevated positions compared to others, closely mimicking the relationship between king or prince and *liurai*.

In fact, the way Forbes describes the Timorese governance structure during his travels is identical to how historians describe the pre-colonial structure:

At present there are forty-seven of these [*liurais*]; but many of them possess a far greater amount of influence than, and exercise a sort of vassalage over, the others. These *kingdoms* are divided into districts, each of which is called a *Suku*, over which a *Dato* rules [(clan chieftain)] rules, who receives his orders from the Leorei by a special officer appointed for that purpose. The *Dato* has under him two other officials, a *Cabo* and a *Tenente*, who assist him in the regulation of the *Suku*. (404f.)

Forbes never encountered any Portuguese outside of “Dilly” on his travels. In 1882, the Portuguese governor of Timor acknowledged the unabated operation of indigenous and family ties in the following way, also pointing to the continued relevance of traditional exchange and alliance systems linking different clans and princedoms:

Marital exchange is our Governor’s major enemy because it produces ... an infinity of kin relations which comprise leagues of reaction against the orders

of the Governors and the dominion of our laws. There has not yet been a single rebellion against the Portuguese flag which is not based in the alliances which result from marital exchange. (Forman (1978) quoted in Taylor (1999, 11)).

Externally, Portugal was able to solidify its control of Timor-Leste when they signed a border agreement with the Dutch in 1915, dividing the island roughly into halves, only retaining Oecussi in West Timor. After Ant3nio Salazar's military coup in 1926 and the emergence of a fascist government in Portugal, Timor was included in the general Portuguese centralization effort, which included an effort to assimilate the Timorese population to the Portuguese and treat them (more) like citizens than colonial subjects; this was the first and only exposure of Timor to conscious nationalization efforts. Timorese were divided into two political groups: *Indigenes* and *assimilados*. Assimilados were given Portuguese citizenship and the right to vote in elections for the Portuguese National Assembly and the local legislative council, which met twice a year and included the local administration, the church, Portuguese plantation owners, and the army. To achieve *assimilado* status, a Timorese had to speak Portuguese, be economically profitable enough to comfortably support his family (and, presumably, be of use to Portugal economically), and show a positive attitude towards Portugal. The Salazar government also solidified and formalized the role of the Catholic Church, which had previously unofficially run most schools and hospitals. After 1941, education was officially put in the hands of the Catholic Church, following an agreement between Portugal and the Vatican, with the administration providing the following justification: "Portuguese Catholic missions are considered to be of imperial usefulness; they have eminently civilizing influence" Hill (2001, 22). However, the hardships of World War II and depression as experienced by (neutral) Portugal prevented the centralization campaign from taking root in Timor, and the colony fell into neglect apart from one limited program of road construction (Taylor 1999).

The Pacific War brought the first experience of large-scale invasion to Timor and can

explain in part the swift guerrilla mobilization in response to Indonesian invasion in 1975. When the Dutch and Australian allies perceived a Japanese invasion of Timor as inevitable and imminent following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, they landed 400 commandos on the island against the express wishes of the Portuguese governor.⁶ This action, in turn, piqued Japanese attention and Japan became convinced that the Allied forces planned to use Timor as a forward military base; they sent 20,000 troops to take the island. What followed was recorded in history books as a gallant two-year guerrilla war carried out by 400 Allied troops, inflicting 1500 casualties on the Japanese (Taylor 1999, 13). Records show that the Timorese population provided crucial support to the Allied troops. As one Australian Commander observed:

We relied on the natives to act more or less as a buffer between us and the Japanese; they more or less protected us by letting us know when the Japanese were moving about and where the Japanese were going ... part of my job was to collect food to send away to our headquarters that lived in an area where there was no population. I would go around with the local chief and we'd collect the food. On occasions when the food was scarce the *chefe* would order the households to give us food which they had ready to eat that night — they would have to go without because the *chefe* said we had to be strong to fight their enemy, the Japanese. (Morris (1977, 14) quoted in Taylor (1999, 14)).

After the Allied forces left, the Japanese exerted a heavy toll on the Timorese population to punish them for their support of the Allied troops. Forced labor was a common practice; villages were burned; families were executed. According to Dunn (1983, 26), the 1947 census shows that the population of Timor fell from 472,221 in 1930 to 433,412 in 1947, which indicates that about 13% of the population perished during the Pacific War.

Following World War II, Portugal was isolated internationally because of her support of Franco, the weak post-war economic climate that impeded trade and its conservative stance on decolonization, which clashed with the quickening anti-colonial movement. Portugal returned to Timor as if nothing had happened, and re-exerted control with re-

⁶Portugal pursued a policy of neutrality in the Second World War.

newed vigor to make up for losses they were experiencing elsewhere. The island economic infrastructure was rebuilt using forced labor with a particular focus on roads and ports. Yet, the Portuguese still did not penetrate the local power structure, which “continued to reproduce itself intact during the post-war period,” and attempts at colonial transformation remained fruitless during these final decades of Portuguese colonialism.

Catholic schools taught a curriculum exclusively focused on Portuguese language, history, and culture at the expense of Timorese subjects. Helen Hill, who had conducted interviews with former Timorese students in 1974 for her Master’s thesis, observes: “Even in the remotest villages children were required to commit to memory the rivers, railways and cities of Portugal. Timorese culture and traditions were not mentioned in the classroom and neighbouring [sic] Asian countries rarely mentioned” Hill (2001, 41)⁷

Secondary education was only available in the urban centers of Dili, Maubisse, Lospalos, and Baucau; before 1970, only two students per year attended university, mostly in Lisbon (Taylor 1999, 17). Timorese educated in this manner were then integrated into leadership positions within the colonial administration, serving as a bridge between colonizer and colonized. This is in stark contrast to how the Dutch had left West Timor: While their presence was also hands-off, they never trained Timorese to fill administrative or military roles, and rather “imported” Javanese to fill these posts (Nilsson 1964). This saw the slow development of a small Timorese urban elites of *assimilados* and *mestizos*. In the decade or so before decolonization, the Timorese elite became increasingly diversified; according to the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in East Timor, in late colonial Portuguese Timor, being privileged or part of the elite could stem from the following circumstances: A *liurai* background, mixed-race (*mestizo*) background, a family with landholdings, or secondary education in church or state schools. The urban elites were often connected to rural elites through kinship and family ties and knew each other

⁷Hill later embarked on an academic career and is now considered one of the foremost experts on modern Timorese history. Her 1974 interviews provide unique insights into Timorese decolonization politics, as most other reports are based on second-hand knowledge or politically colored.

from their education (CAVR 2006).

In the decade leading up to the Carnation Revolution in Lisbon - which would trigger decolonization almost immediately - no one considered the prospect of decolonization at all likely. A Portuguese official told the journalist Ken Nilsson that “Portugal would no more give up Timor than America would give up Hawaii”. From this and many more interviews, in a detailed report for the Strait Times Nilsson characterized Portugal as “apparently intent upon preserving its half of Timor as a sleepy dependency fragrant with sandalwood” (Nilsson 1964).⁸

In part because decolonization seemed so out of question, there was almost no politicization or political organizing among Timorese against Portuguese rule, which in turn made the prospect of resistance-driven decolonization very unlikely. The historian Willard Hanna visited Portuguese Timor in the 1960s, where he was puzzled by the lack of any organized struggle against Portuguese rule, especially when compared to Portuguese holdings in Africa, to which there was no Timorese connection. He describes the political situation he found on the island:

In the course of my brief stay in Timor I was never able to get any information with regard to emerging leaders or movements of a distinctly nationalistic or revolutionary type. Various persons assured me categorically that there were none and that there was no significant overt or covert opposition to Portuguese rule. I found such statements difficult to credit but I never found anyone, not even an Indonesian, who would admit to knowing anything specific to indicate present or impending unrest. (Hanna 1966, 114)

Before the Portuguese Armed Forces Movement (AFM) overthrew the Caetano regime in favor of democracy in Lisbon in April 1974, the only form of party politics permitted to

⁸All of this does not mean that there were never any instances of resistance against the Portuguese, though they were all minor. At a speech in front of the UN in 1976, José Ramos-Horta points out the following instances: “The war of Cova Lima in 1719, Cova Cotubaba in 1868-1869 and Manufahi in 1912 are chapters in the history of our people in their constant struggle for the right to self determination” *UN Documents on the Situation in East Timor after the Indonesian Invasion* (1997). The 1912 rebellion was both the most recent and the most widespread – from Oecusse over Baucau to Quelicai – covering most of central Timor under the leadership of *liurai* Dom Boaventura. In particular, the rebellion of 1912 in Manufahi (now Same) was referenced by Fretilin in 1974 when they were trying to build a following for their pro-independence party, using it as a historical precedent to build a sense of nationalist history.

assimilados was to join the Caetnist *Acção Nacional Popular* (ANP).⁹ In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the closest thing to a Timorese “party” was a clandestine group of students and administrators meeting in Dili to discuss decolonization and circulate their ideas in minor Catholic newspapers such as *A Provincia de Timor* and *Seara*. In order to avoid suspicion by the PIDE (International and State Defense Police, essentially Estado Novo Portugal’s secret police), the group met in the park outside the Governor’s office in broad daylight (Hill 2001, 59). The group was founded by a handful of Timorese newly returned from attending university in Lisbon, where they were influenced by the socialist pro-democracy movement as well as African liberation movements. Leonel Sales de Andrade, who attended university in Portugal in 1968/1969 and was involved with setting up the Dili student group in 1970, describes his experience:

The first among us who went to Lisbon immediately came into contact with revolutionary theories and developed joint actions with patriots from other colonies and with anti-fascist Portuguese patriots. From that moment on we were no longer isolated. We could understand the just struggle of the peoples for national independence for we had assimilated the thinking of the great revolutionary leaders. (Sales de Andrade (1977, 27) quoted in Hill (2001, 59)).

Andrade further explained that it was only in the mid to late sixties that anyone in Timor learned of colonial independence movements in Africa or anti-fascist streams in Portugal - such was the isolation of Timor. Apart from the ANP and the student group, some Timorese landowners and other rural elites were represented in the Portuguese Legislative Assembly in Timor, where they had some input.

The continued relevance of traditional political practices is also exemplified in local reactions to the news of the coup in Portugal; there, little disturbance was felt, and there were simply instances of renewed allegiance to the *liurai* (most *liurais* continued exerting power even though their positions had officially been abolished by the Portuguese).

⁹Prof. Marcello Caetano had taken over the post of Prime Minister from Salazar in 1968 upon the latter’s ill health. Caetano had promised upon his appointment to continue Salazar’s opposition to decolonization (Hill 2001, 32).

The US anthropologist Shepard Forman was conducting ethnographic fieldwork in the Makassae-speaking area of Vemasse during the time of the coup in Portugal. At a hearing in front of the US Congress concerning US involvement in the Indonesian invasion, he gave the following description of the local events that followed the news of the Lisbon coup:

On July 15, 1974, just three months after the Portuguese revolution and before any organized political activity in East Timor had reached beyond the coastal towns, 475 out of a total of 500 household heads in the villages involved trekked from their mountain homes down to the administrative post at Quelicai to record with signatures when possible or the mark of X their deliberate and reasoned choice on a petition which this time simply declared the autonomy of the suku [suco] of Letemumo [which had lost suco status under Portuguese rule]. In a matter of only five days, 95% of the relevant population had been mobilized to freely express their political will" (quoted in Hill (2001, 63))

In conclusion, even though Portuguese presence in Timor-Leste spanned 459 years, it is remarkable how little imprint it had left on traditional governance structures. Serious attempts at consolidation and assimilation lasted only a few decades and were disrupted by the Pacific War. During World War II, the Allied Powers utilized indigenous networks for communication and resources, thereby reinforcing their salience and use for guerrilla warfare. Taylor (1999, 15) sums up: When the Portuguese left, "all the basic elements ensuring the reproduction of indigenous society were still firmly in place – kinship systems, a self-sustaining subsistence economy and a culture based on notions of reciprocity and exchange." Liurai and suco chiefs, especially those with royal status (which had been "abolished" by Portugal) retained their positions of local power, both within the kinship system and the colonial administration. Thus, on the eve of decolonization, the island was criss-crossed indigenous inter-community ties in the form of marriage and kinship alliances; there were no clear ethnic divisions among Timorese ripe for outside political exploitation and activation. Apart from last-ditch efforts at road construction in the decades before decolonization, infrastructure in the form of roads, phone lines, or mail

routes never reached far into the island, so that “modern” modes of communication had not come to de-emphasize the importance of traditional modes of communication, which are much better suited for adaptation to guerrilla warfare conditions. The unabated relevance of kinship networks and the almost complete lack of politicization provided a unique base for decolonization and resistance to occupation, namely one almost completely devoid of westernized political ideals and models.

4.2 Fretilin’s prewar rural-urban political network

Decolonization and party formation

When decolonization suddenly loomed large following the Lisbon coup, Timor’s tiny elite, largely ignorant of the simmering pro-democracy movement in Portugal, was not ready. Both in the communication between the Portuguese mainland and the Portuguese colonial administrators and between administrators and the colonial population, uncertainty reigned supreme, as no one quite knew what this would mean for Timor’s political status. While the government in Lisbon promised the formation of parties in the colonies and reforming the colonial administration, ANP-supporting governor Alves Aldeia made no move to implement such changes and did not even publicly acknowledge the coup. Party formation began in earnest in May of 1974, when two missives from mainland Portugal finally arrived on the island, promising a referendum on decolonization and independence within a year, though remaining vague about particulars with Governor Aldeia still nominally in charge in Timor. Throughout the summer and fall of 1974, newly hatched parties proposed their plans for partial or full independence or incorporation into neighboring Indonesia and initiated policy programs and political mobilization of the population. This period represents the first instance of unguided and relatively free political activity in Timor, and is as such essential to understanding the political networks upon which wartime mobilization and communication would build.

The two most prominent parties were roughly based on land-owning Timorese elites who had participated in the Legislative Assembly on the one hand and the clandestine urban student-administrator group on the other. Members of the former group formed the Timorese Democratic Union (UDT), which planned on “proceeding in the shadow of the Portuguese flag” and at least in the medium future remaining a province of Portugal, but with equal rights (UDT 1974). Its founders represent the kind of support the party attracted: Mario Carrascalão was of half Portuguese origin (therefore enjoying a high social status) and a coffee-plantation owner and a Lisbon-educated forestry engineer, whereas Lopez da Cruz and Domingos d’Oliveira were customs officials. The party attracted the entrenched Timorese administrative elite and leading plantation owners, and enjoyed support from a range of *liurais*, particularly in the coastal regions. The *liurais* used their kinship networks to attract lower-ranking supporters for the UDT in their areas (Taylor 1999, 26).

The second party, founded on May 20, 1974, was the Timorese Social Democratic Association (ASDT, soon renamed Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente or Fretilin)¹⁰, founded by young urban elites, and “combined the interests of urbanized with rural-based elites” (Taylor 1999, 27). ASDT immediately grew out of the Committee for the Defense of Labor, an impromptu group spearheaded by José Ramos-Horta, who wanted to capitalize on the coup to attain higher wages for laborers in Dili. This impromptu group also organized the first public demonstration in Timorese history (Evans 1975*b*). Ramos-Horta explains:

Immediately after the coup the first thing we did was to organize a strike of the laborers who were getting only \$10 per month. The strike was called because some of the workers were asking for an increase of salary and were sacked. They came to see me and we organized a meeting. The company complained to the government and called me a reactionary against the coup. (Quoted in Hill (2001, 68))

¹⁰“Fretilin” and all of its subsidiary and successor organizations are written without capitalization, as is common in Timorese writers’ accounts

The founders of Fretilin had many commonalities: All of them were young (the average age of the founding committee was 27, the oldest committee member was 37), straight out of secondary school or university, and all of the founders lived and worked for the Portuguese administration in Dili. The organization also had ties to the Catholic Church, as several founding members had been trained in the Jesuit seminary of Dare near Dili.¹¹ A third, tiny pro-Indonesian party - Associação Popular Democrática Timorense or APODETI – was also formed during this time. Though these parties would later experience significant clashes, at the outset, they were close-knit. The Secretary General of UDT at the time, Domingos Oliveria, told the Commission for Truth and Reconciliation that he had a close friendship with Fretilin’s vice-president, Nicolau Lobato, and how he often discussed politics with his cousin José Osorio Soares, the secretary general of APODETI (CAVR 2006, 165).

Fretilin’s pre-war organizational development

The finalization of Fretilin’s formal political program coincided with the arrival of the new MFA governor, Lemos Pires, on the island in November 1974. As such, the development of Fretilin’s ideology can be seen as relatively independent from Portuguese guidance or pressures and thus indicative of the party’s deeply held beliefs. Until August 1975, Fretilin operated as a political party (or “front”) that was preparing for decolonization, first without and then with Portuguese guidance. Following an attempted UDT coup and

¹¹It should be noted that this did not indicate that they were particularly religious; it was simply for a long time the only form of secondary education available in Timor. The bishop of Dili noted: “Until the founding of the liceu the seminaries were responsible for whatever advanced schooling there was. They had educated not only for the Church but for the government as well. Of the seminarians, no more than about 10% actually took holy orders; the other generally took jobs in the administration” (Hanna 1966). However, Catholic teachings did make it into Fretilin’s ideology, in particular with regards to social policy. One of the founding members of Fretilin (and its first president), Xavier do Amaral, was inspired by the populist nature of Catholic social teachings (though rejected an official role for the Church in government), and frequently told visitors about Fretilin: “We work as Jesus did, amongst the people” (Hill 2001, 71). This close association with the Catholic church and the very limited education opportunities available in Timor-Leste meant that there existed strong ties between the founders of UDT and Fretilin, as many of them had studied together and some were even related (Evans 1975*b*).

short period of violence in August 1975 that resulted in the departure of the Portuguese governor, Fretilin acted as the de-facto government of Timor-Leste while preparing for imminent Indonesian invasion. The political ideology developed by a group of young, inexperienced, ideological and passionate young Timorese in Dili in the summer and fall of 1974 thus represents the only period of political development in Timor without significant outside pressures. It was during these seven or so months that Fretilin laid the foundation for its popular support base and its political mobilization mechanisms, solidifying a party link between the rural and urban populations. By the time Indonesia invaded, Fretilin's communication network was robust and resilient, based on a political ideology, reinforced by practical political incentives, and battle-tested by a small-scale conflict.

At the time of its foundation in May 1974, ASDT was committed to "socialism and democracy" and "the rejection of colonialism" (Ramos-Horta 1984). These ideological leanings were likely derived from the very limited exposure of some party leaders to parallel anti-colonial movements. For example, Mari Atakiri had met some members of the MPLA on a work excursion to Angola (Hill 2001, 72). Similarly, José Ramos-Horta, who was exiled to Mozambique by the Portuguese for his involvement with the clandestine student group in the early 1970s, was exposed to the political ideology of FRELIMO and claims that this is where he received his political education (Hill 2001, 73). The influence of anti-colonial liberation philosophy was streamlined by the return of a group of seven Timorese students who had studied in Lisbon returned to Dili and joined the ranks of ASDT.

The party's structure, ideology, and program were clarified when it held its September 1974 conference in Dili, where the party's name change from ASDT to Fretilin was also finalized. While ASDT had previously supported the idea of gradual independence, increased awareness of events in Lisbon, where international pressure for quick decolonization made Portugal a less dependable entity, as well as information about independence movements in Mozambique and Angola gleaned from the Timorese students returning

from Lisbon now pushed the party towards preparing Timor-Leste for independence as soon as possible.¹² One of its founding members described this difference between Fretilin and ASDT in the following way: “ASDT was formed to defend the idea of the right to independence; Fretilin was formed to fight for independence” (Taylor 1999, 33).

Fretilin styled itself as a “front” rather than a party, claiming to represent the interests of all Timorese, even to be the “sole legitimate representative” of the Timorese people (CAVR 2006, 168).¹³ This is an important distinction, as it likely influenced how Fretilin organized its internal structure. As argued in the September 1974 program:

It is called a *Front* because it calls for the unity of all Timorese patriots ... At the moment East Timor is a colony and as a colony the immediate and only objective is the struggle for national Independence and Liberation of the People ... It is *Revolutionary* because it seeks to modify, transform and revolutionize the old structures which were inherited from 500 years of colonialism ... *Independence* is the only way towards *Progress* and real *Development* of the People of East Timor. (Quoted in Evans (1975*b*, 75))

Because they saw decolonization and managing the transition towards independence as the most immediate challenge, Fretilin’s self-identification as a front rather than a party had political, ideological, and practical reasons. On the practical side, decolonization and independence suddenly loomed large, and partisanship could wait until this transition was weathered. The sense of urgency came both from political developments in Portugal and the intensifying threat of Indonesia: Indonesia’s support for pro-integration APODETI outlined their interest in annexation of East Timor from the earliest period of decolonization. The fact that West Timor was Indonesian made the Indonesian shadow loom over the island at all times. Remembering this period in Timorese history, Fretilin founding member Geraldo da Cruz testified to the growing awareness among Fretilin’s cadre of In-

¹²Opinions are divided on whether or not these students radicalized Fretilin or actually calmed some of its more fringe ideological elements by providing a more pragmatic interpretation of unfolding events in Portugal, but the *Casa dos Timores* students (as they were called, by the building they had inhabited in Lisbon) clearly played a role in ideologically sharpening the organization.

¹³Throughout, I refer to Fretilin as a party, as indicated by its organizational structure, despite their self-identification as a front.

donesia's neo-colonial ambitions and the belief that a broad national front (especially one with military support) was best suited to counter a potential invasion (CAVR 2006, 168). Fretilin in no way resembled the traditional definition of a front, which Grenier (1991, 51) defines as "a coalition of various organizations, united for a specific goal and in which each retains its own identity." It is more likely that the term "front" was adopted because it conformed to the terminology used by many revolutionary groups at the time.

Its stylization as a "front" rather than a "party" was grounded in the ideological convictions of Fretilin's founders. While not resembling either a typical western *or* liberation-era party in terms of ideology or policy priorities, the "blank slate" of political organizing they confronted in Timor-Leste of 1974 actually provides an ideal setting for experimentation with party organizing. Fretilin's influences and its execution of their ideas were unencumbered from outside pressure for six months before the arrival of the MFA governor, which allows us to trace party structure, ideology, and popular ties with minimal interference. Fretilin's leaders were exposed to only a small number of political theorists through limited contact abroad with parallel decolonization movements and Timorese students returned from Lisbon; it was through these channels that they were familiar with some writings by Amílcar Cabral and Paulo Freire. Due to the Fretilin founders' limited political inexperience and narrow exposure to political thought, Cabral and Freire's ideas served as a sort of blueprint for the party's aims and its organizational focus. Fretilin's philosophical influencers thus serve as a necessary starting point to understanding the structure and resilience of Fretilin's organizational network.

Fretilin's early philosophy is best summed up by the following quote from Cabral from the same year as the party's foundation:

A people who free themselves from foreign domination will be free culturally only if, without complexes and without underestimating the importance of positive accretions from oppressor and other cultures, they return to the upward paths of their own culture, which is nourished by the living reality of its environment, and which negates both harmful influences and any kind of subjection to foreign culture. (Cabral 1974)

Cabral's emphasis on the necessity of an indigenous, bottom-up sense of nation heavily influenced Fretilin's founders, though there were also pragmatic incentives for nation building in Timor. There were no pre-existing channels for political organizing or political mobilization, which were critical preconditions for a functioning postcolonial political process. By contrast, western parties in the 1970s were able to build on centuries of political history and nationalism. In Portugal's (former) colonies, this was not the case, and in remote, tiny, remote Timor, least of all.

In accordance with Cabral and Freire, Fretilin's ideology conceived of nationalization, popular education, and decolonization as intricately intertwined, and this insight guided all of their early activities. Cabral and Freire strongly emphasized that popular education rather than simple political mobilization on behalf of a party was more thorough and more sustainable in accordance with Paulo Freire's concept of *conscientização*.¹⁴ Fretilin's young, inexperienced cadre wanted not only to politically mobilize the population on their behalf, they wanted people to achieve an in-depth understanding of both their own Timorese culture and heritage and the undesirability of colonialism (Benedito da Silva 2012, 77). Likewise, as urban elites with few roots to their own heritage, they needed to learn from the population at large so that a sense of being "Timorese" could be developed together. As summarized by Cabral (1966):

National liberation and social revolution are not exportable commodities; they are, and increasingly so every day, the outcome of local and national elaboration, more or less influenced by external factors (be they favorable or unfavorable) but essentially determined and formed by the historical reality of each people, and carried to success by the overcoming or correct solution of the internal contradictions between the various categories characterising [sic] this reality.

Amílcar Cabral, the founder of PAIGC (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde) in Guinea Bissau (also a Portuguese colony) outlines the crucial role of nationalism-building in independence movements: "The liberation struggle is, above all, a

¹⁴Roughly translates as *critical consciousness*

struggle both for the preservation and survival of the cultural values of the people and for the harmonization and development of these values within a national framework” (Cabral 1974, 48).

Thus, personal and cultural decolonization had to come before political and legal decolonization. Alarico Fernandes, a founding member of Fretilin and former Minister of Information and Internal Security in post-war Timor-Leste, explains how Fretilin understood the role of popular education: “Popular education means getting people to understand the revolutionary theories in order to struggle for liberation” (quoted in Benedito da Silva (2012, 78). The policy program derived from this philosophical framework was subsumed under *trabalho de base*, which sums up Fretilin’s immediate pivot towards the countryside in the summer of 1974, as this was where about 90% of the population still lived. From this starting point, Fretilin developed what Benedito da Silva (2012) terms a *Pedagogy of the Maubere Revolution*, with the basic premise that urban elite and rural peasants needed to be engaged in dialogue and mutual teaching.¹⁵

As a basis for cultural decolonization and nationalization, Fretilin founders reclaimed a new term to denote Timorese citizens, spreading the term “Maubere” to be synonymous with “Timorese”. In the Mambai language, the word was used to denote illiterate, ignorant, impoverished hill people under Portuguese rule (Hill 2001). However, the term was not only chosen because it denoted a Timorese identity with no connection to Portugal, but also because it harked back to indigenous political practices. As explained by Ramos-Horta:

The poorest peasants are known in Timor as “Maubere”, but before the Portuguese conquest the Maubere people were proud people, who farmed collectively and shared their crops. They elected their chiefs and the chief would call an assembly of villagers to make decisions. He would carry them out. It was a system of socialism and democracy. We speak of “Mauberism” and that

¹⁵Antero Benedito da Silva is a Timorese political scientist, President of the National University of Timor-Leste, and was himself a student activist leader during the resistance. For his efforts as leader of the East Timor Students’ Solidarity Council, he was awarded the 1999 Students’ Peace Prize.

is why we call our party social democratic – not in the European sense, but in the tradition of Mauberism. (Quoted in Freney (1975))

While some Fretilin members felt that this sounded too similar to Marxism and Fretilin has frequently been associated with Marxism-Leninism, nothing more than a tame version of socialism was ever officially advocated, though some individual leaders might have preferred that. Yet, when testifying to CAVR, Ramos-Horta also acknowledged that there was a strong political motivation in choosing *Maubere* as part of Fretilin’s central message. He explains:

When we began ASDT, in a meeting of ASDT/Fretilin I explained that all political parties needed an image. That if we wanted to convince the electorate we could not do this with complicated philosophy . . . So I said it would be good if we could identify Fretilin with *maubere* like a slogan, a symbol of Fretilin’s identity. It is clear that 90% of Timorese are barefoot, no papers, but they all called themselves *maubere*. (Quoted in CAVR (2006, 169))

The first step, then, was to work from the grassroots up and understand what it actually meant to be a *Maubere*, and to simultaneously politically engage and mobilize the rural population. Nationalism, culture and politics were interwoven with the literacy and education programs. All of Fretilin’s main teaching tools were about Timorese culture and nationalism, starting with the idea that “Timor is our land” (Hill 2001, 129). Because a basic level of literacy was necessary for administrative purposes and the vast majority of the rural population was illiterate, Fretilin placed particular emphasis on basic education.

Their idealistic outlook, strong reliance on the writings of Cabral, Freire, or Fanon, collective young age and lack of experience, and atypical (even for a liberation political party) emphasis on culture and education, made many observers not take Fretilin seriously, especially during these times of strong anti-colonial sentiments. For example, a UN document on the Timor-Leste situation composed in 1977 describes pre-war Fretilin as “a self-important party of Dili intellectuals that was formed only after General Spínola’s coup in Lisbon on 25 April 1974 and busily acquired a FRELIMO-type image [Mozambique

Liberation Front] through a vague collectivist ideology, a flag and an anthem” (*UN Documents on the Situation in East Timor after the Indonesian Invasion 1997*, 73).

Fretilin’s prewar popular mobilization strategy

On January 25, 1975, Fretilin’s President Francisco Xavier do Amaral delivered a speech in which he explained the centrality of the popular base:

The Revolutionary Front of East Timor appeared. It was a popular explosion. It was the beginning of the revolution of Maubere. It was necessary to take a more radical line so that it would be possible to destroy all the colonialist structures and introduce a new form of life [that would be] truly democratic. Of the people, with the people and for the people for a better East Timor ... It was the start of the great revolutionary march (quoted by Nicol (2002, 168)).

Given the ideology outlined in the previous section, the centrality of popular mobilization is not surprising. However, apart from the ideological bent, ASDT/Fretilin had strong political and strategic incentives that reinforced its populist leanings. One of the founders of ASDT, Francisco Xavier do Amaral, described Fretilin’s popular support strategy in the following way:

The ASDT party had this method. We could see that the first party to form was UDT, and I saw their tactics. UDT campaigned focussing [sic] on the Administrators, and went down to the Sub-district Administrators and the traditional kings (*liurai*). They did not go directly to the people. So I thought, we need the people, I don’t need the *liurai*, they are with the Portuguese. I need the people. So they would go from the top down, and I would start at the bottom. I would start at the grassroots and go up. We would sometimes meet in the middle. (Quoted in CAVR (2006, 166)).

Thus, even in its earliest iteration in the spring of 1974, ASDT/Fretilin realized that popular support was crucial.

Given the almost complete lack of political experience and political education both among the population and Fretilin’s leaders themselves, the speed at which Fretilin rallied the population in the first months of the party’s existence is remarkable. There were

no formal elections in the first year of the party's existence that could actually back up Fretilin's claim that they really did represent the majority of the population (CAVR 2006). However, after it was founded in May of 1974 and reorganized in September of the same year, two Portuguese administrators sought to formulate an interim advisory parliament for the period of transition (this was never actualized and therefore receives no more attention): Voting was held in a few provinces, and even though they were not contested on party lines, 90% of those elected were Fretilin members (Nichertlein 1977, 491). This demonstrates the swift countrywide sweep of Fretilin's mobilization strategy even before Portugal incentivized popular mobilization through the parties. How was this achieved?

Since they hoped to "nationalize" the Timorese and claimed to represent *all* Timorese, Fretilin needed to reach out to the rural population. Because of their prioritization of "nationalization" or "Timorization" à la Cabral, the mobilization of the population was a crucial first step to decolonization and as such became the party's first priority. Beginning in the summer of 1974, Fretilin cadre members would travel to the countryside on weekends (when they did not have to work) to initiate cultural and economic programs and recruit the rural population for party membership. In 1974, these trips were restricted to areas that could be reached from Dili on foot, on mule, or on motorbike, as Fretilin only acquired a four-wheel drive car in December 1974 through a donation, which allowed them to widen their reach considerably (Hill 2001, 120).

On these weekend visits, Fretilin leaders would convene meetings at public places, such as Sunday market, where they would give speeches (often using translators) and invite discussion.¹⁶ They would appoint a local secretary (usually with at least limited writing skills) and issue new members with membership cards, requiring them to turn in UDT or APODETI membership cards if they already had one (Hill 2001, 122).¹⁷

¹⁶By March 1975, Fretilin was in possession of three vehicles, which significantly affected their geographic reach and their ability to respond to demands and crisis in remote locations. (Hill 2001, 122)

¹⁷According to first-hand observations made by Grant Evans, Fretilin's rural organization remained inferior to its urban network, as "most of its ... representatives in the villages were appointed on the spot following Fretilin political meetings, and so usually have a very limited understanding of the political ques-

Early rural outreach projects were executed in towns where a Fretilin leader had family ties. For example, Nicolau Lobato left his job in the administration in August 1974 (three months after the party's foundation, while it was still ASDT) to establish cooperatives at Bazar-tete, 30 km from Dili (a considerable distance in Timor), where he was from (Hill 2001). Cooperatives were a key point in their political program, but few of them would actually be implemented before the war.¹⁸

Lobato described his work in the following way:

The people are still suspicious of the idea [of a co-operative]. They have been drawn in to similar collective projects before by either the Portuguese or the Japanese only to find themselves dispossessed. We have started off with a small number so that we can work out the problems that arise easily, and when it has shown itself to be successful then others will follow quickly. It demands a great deal of trust amongst the members and that all decisions taken by the co-operative be taken democratically. (Evans 1975a, 9)

Similarly, in the summer of 1974, Vicent Sahe¹⁹ travelled back to his home village, where he set up groups to informally discuss the new political situation, agricultural cooperatives, groups to keep alive the local culture through singing and dancing, a women's group, and a youth group (Hill 2001, 76). Francisco Borja da Costa and Abilio Araujo wrote down traditional songs and poems and distributed them widely, using them as a part of

tions surrounding independence" (Evans 1975b, 75). This is a likely reason for why functional regional subcommittees were rare.

¹⁸Fretilin's goal of economic reorientation had the two-fold aims of lowering Timor's dependence on Portuguese exports (i.e. farming for self-sufficiency) and strengthening local cooperation and solidarity, thereby empowering rural peasants at the grassroots level. In Fretilin's program for "Economic Reconstruction", the "creation of co-operatives" is listed as the second point, and "elimination of the excessive dependency on foreign countries" comes third (Fretilin (1974) quoted in Hill (2001, 96f.)). The list also included items such as the expropriation of large farms and their redistribution to the co-operatives, which cost Fretilin dearly in elite support. In its program, Fretilin also stated that "local industry, including native handicrafts and weaving, will be encouraged." However, even though the program appeared relatively detailed, no one in the young, inexperienced Fretilin leadership had any idea of how to implement it, which was described by the party as follows: "We are a country of peasants and farmers, but our people are hungry" - knowledge of farming and agriculture had been long lost under Portuguese influence) (Fretilin (1974) quoted in Hill (2001, 97)). The need for local reconnaissance to implement policies necessary for any semblance of nominal economic independence was a further incentive to turn to the countryside immediately.

¹⁹Like many politically engaged Timorese in the 70s, Vicent abandoned his Portuguese family name - Dos Reis - and took up the family's pre-colonial last name.

their literacy program.²⁰ As Fretilin leaders visited villages, they would hold weekly gatherings to learn more about the local culture and spread the ideology of *Mauberism*. Many people's first contact with ASDT was through evenings of traditional song and dance, which did not require literacy to participate (Hill 2001, 87). However, these gatherings were also used for the purpose of political mobilization. In his autobiographical account of his role in the resistance, Pinto, who was living with his family in Remexio at the time, describes these weekly "parties" organized by Fretilin at the local level:

I ... went to Fretilin parties, which we called *convivios*. These were not only times for people to get to know one another and build trust and confidence within the party, but also opportunities for Fretilin to propagate its political ideology and to recruit new members. Even though I was very young, I knew the names of some of the Fretilin leaders such as Nicolau and Rogerio Lobato, José Ramos Horta, Hamis Hatta, Alarico Fernandes, Rosa Bonaparte, Mari Alkatiri, and Guido Valadares. (Pinto and Jardine 1997, 39)

In this way, Fretilin's cultural and political activities were intimately intertwined, reinforcing one another. It is impossible to understand the strong relationship Fretilin forged with the population without understanding its cultural work.

These early rural outreach programs usually followed patterns of personal and familial ties. Programs initiated in the summer of 1974 also had a distinct experimental character; due to the lack of political or leadership experience, the party needed to gauge what policy and mobilization approaches were even feasible, and what and who the population would support.

In individual villages, popular support for one party or another often followed family allegiances and geographic factors. For example, Pinto explains in his autobiography how his family became part of ASDT/Fretilin:

My father and mother immediately joined the ASDT ... in May 1974. They joined the ASDT because the party defended independence for East Timor

²⁰The most widely known song in Timor-Leste was written by da Costa and Araujo during this time, *foho Ramelau* about Timor's highest mountain. It became the hymn of the resistance, akin in popularity in Timor to the Marseillaise in France.

and because Xavier do Amaral, one of the founders of ASDT, is related to our family. Xavier do Amaral was married to one of my father's aunts. My father and Xavier spent their childhood together in Aileu. (Pinto and Jardine 1997, 35)

Mario Carrascalão also emphasizes how family allegiance and geographic and practical factors determined party allegiance in 1974 and early 1975. He describes: "People in Maubisse, because they were close to the Portuguese soldiers, all of Maubisse was UDT. Virtually all of Maubisse was UDT. But if you looked at Uatolari, everyone was Fretilin, and in Uato Carbau everyone was Apodeti" (CAVR 2006, 166). UDT was particularly strong in coastal regions where *liurai* had profited from their trade association with the Portuguese, whereas the rural Timorese heartland was dominated by Fretilin.

Three features about Fretilin's prewar mobilization strategy jump out: First, from the beginning, there was a concerted effort bolstered by both ideological and political considerations to forge strong ties between Fretilin's young, educated, urban elite and the impoverished, uneducated, rural population, which ensured significant diversity in membership and support within the party. Second, the description of Fretilin's early leaders sounds eerily similar to the description of "nonviolent entrepreneurs" during the discussion of nonviolent strategic action in Chapter 2, though in this case, the strategic use of nonviolent action was still 15 years in the future. Third, mobilization efforts were influenced by indigenous socio-political ties: Fretilin leaders first returned to their ancestral villages to implement policies, and people often voted for Fretilin over UDT because their friends and family were voting for Fretilin.

Fretilin's pre-war organizational structure

Fretilin leaders formally set up the front's organizational structure at the September 1974 meeting. Although there were some adjustments made when Fretilin became Timor-Leste's de-facto government after the August 1975, the basic framework remained in place

until invasion in December 1975 (see diagram 4.2 for an organizational chart of Fretilin in the fall of 1975).²¹

The Central Committee was Fretilin's main governing body and contained the founders of ASDT and the *Casa dos Timores* student leaders.²² The full Central Commission can be considered the chief legislative body of pre-war Fretilin. Its executive leadership consisted of 15 members who met several times a week and are akin to Fretilin's executive branch. The 15 members included a President, Vice-President, Secretary General, and Vice Secretary General, as well as representatives from the popular organizations, Falintil, and some regional commissions (Benedito da Silva 2012).²³ There were also 13 issue-specific departments (for economics, education, etc.), and later a number of administrative commissions that were either a part of the Central Committee or were subordinate to the Central Committee, though it is unclear how formally these were organized.

Fretilin established a Regional Committee in each of the twelve districts of Timor-Leste as established by Portugal. Each Committee consisted of a Secretary, two or more Vice-Secretaries, a representative each of the Timorese Women's Organization (OPM), the Popular Organization of Workers of Timor (OPTT), the Popular Organization of Youth of Timor (OPJT), an activist delegate (usually a student representative from the Timorese

²¹Research and historiography on pre-war politics in Timor-Leste are limited at best; the three most reliable sources I was able to find are Benedito da Silva (2012), which relies in part on personal recollections of the early days of the war; Hill (2001), relying on interviews conducted at the time and interpreted through an academic lens; and CAVR (2006), relying on post-war interviews, in part about this early period. While there is agreement on the basic story arch and organizational picture painted in these three sources, terminology (especially when translated) and sequence of events is sometimes out of sync. These instances are indicated in the text. With regards to nomenclature, I have tried to stay as true as possible to the organizational structure and adopted the terms for organizational elements that facilitate comprehension.

²²The Central Committee consisted of 50 members prior to invasion and 68 members after invasion (Hill 2002, 131). While some have attempted to identify factions within the organization, Benedito da Silva (2012), who knew many leaders personally, argues that fully fledged ideological dividing lines cannot be identified before 1978 even though there were many different ideological preferences within a self-declared broad front of nationalist forces.

²³Note that in some sources, the term "Central Commission" only denotes the executive leadership, whereas the legislative branch is translated as "General Assembly". After significant research, I have concluded that while the translations do not match, the different sources describe the same organizational structure. Since an all-encompassing understanding of the Central Commission is more common, I have followed this interpretation.

Students' Association, UNETIM, that was not formally associated with Fretilin), and a militia commander and a soldier from Falintil after Falintil was founded in August 1975. While the representatives were selected by their respective organizations, the committee leadership was democratically elected following political education headed by a Central Committee member who lead discussions on Fretilin's political goals and structures as well as liberation philosophy and the literacy campaign. In addition, there were also sub-committees planned at the sub-district level, though not many had been established by the time Indonesia invaded.

The new MFA governor brought with him clarity that full decolonization was in Portugal's best interest. A group of Portuguese Majors was to assist him in administering Timor's decolonization. From the beginning, this group of Portuguese administrators made clear their goal of a smooth and expeditious decolonization process. Policy analyst (and later professor) Stephen Hoadley conducted interviews with the Portuguese MFA administrators in December 1974, and sums up their main interests as follows: "As time passed and the leadership of the Armed Forces Movement in Lisbon passed from General Spínola to General de Costa Gomes, and decolonization was speeded up in Africa, the Portuguese became inclined to support any Timorese political party that has substantial public support, with the end in view of handing power as smoothly and expeditiously as possible" (Hoadley 1975, 12). Portugal set up an Advisory Council with representatives from Fretilin, UDT, and APODETI, as a first step towards a transitional government; it failed due to irreconcilable political differences between Fretilin and UDT on one and APODETI on the other (Hill 2001). Pires then set up a broader Decolonization Commission consisting of committees that focused on the step-by-step decolonization of individual policy and governance areas, such as education, the administration, the economy, public health and social welfare. As such, this plan was considerably less political. Due to its own internal structure and its successful popular mobilization in the countryside for the previous six months, Fretilin was best prepared to participate in these sub-committees

immediately; they set up their own parallel committees to look at the same areas as the MFA's committees so that they could determine a unified party line towards each issue and appointed representatives to all of the Decolonization Commissions committees (Hill 2001, 114). In parallel, Fretilin continued to pursue their own policy initiatives, such as the literacy campaign that they had already embarked on. In conclusion, the decolonization process reinforced Fretilin's popular mobilization approach and strengthened its rural representation.

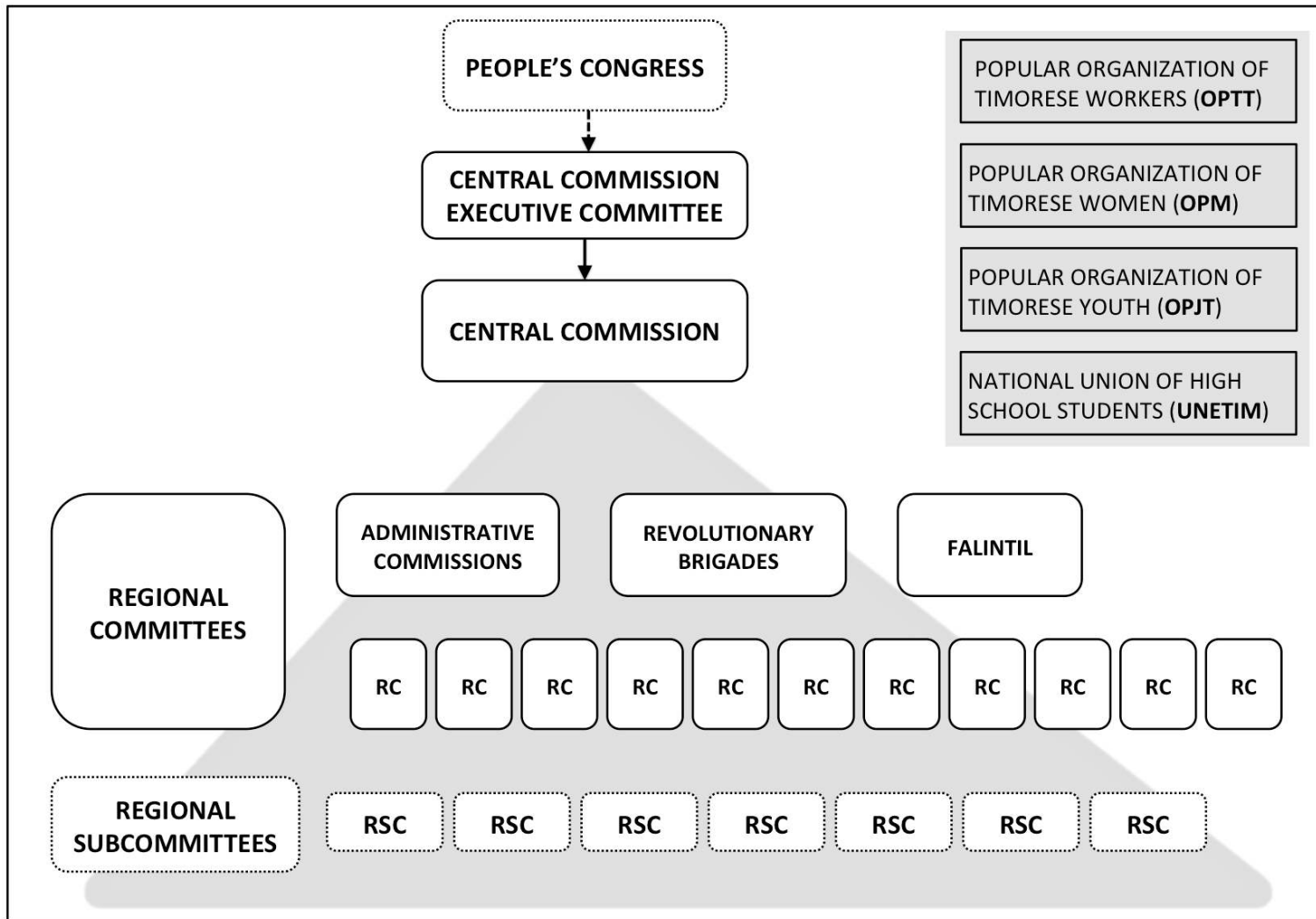


Figure 4.2: Fretilin's prewar structure

From coup to violence to de facto government

During the first part of 1975, UDT and Fretilin formed a coalition in preparation for a transitional government. After this coalition broke down in the summer of 1975, the UDT leadership attempted a coup to seize power from Portuguese authorities on August 11, 1975 and Fretilin called for an armed popular uprising four days later (Benedito da Silva 2012, 100). How did it come to this?

According to James Dunn, who had served as Australian consul to Portuguese Timor from 1962 to 1965 and provided testimony to the US Congress in 1977, this took place as follows:²⁴ A functioning UDT-Fretilin collaboration was an important prerequisite to a peaceful transition, as, between them, UDT and Fretilin enjoyed the support of 95% of the population. By summer 1975, UDT had also come out in favor of independence rather than continued association with Portugal, and the two parties formed a united front for independence, planning to govern the territory together throughout decolonization and in its aftermath, realizing that the extreme degree of uncertainty caused by the coup in Portugal and hurried decolonization plans could not allow for domestic political unrest as well. An alliance between UDT and Fretilin capable of spearheading a post-colonial transition process was not in Indonesia's interest at all.

According to Dunn (1977), both the coup and subsequent short conflict were provoked by Indonesia, already planning the incorporation of East Timor. In fact, Dunn states unequivocally: "I find it impossible to avoid the conclusion that it was Indonesia's efforts to subvert the decolonization process that led to the civil war of August 1975" (28). According to UDT co-founder Domingos de Oliveira, Suharto's Indonesia sought to sow dissent between UDT and Fretilin in several ways: After the breakdown of the Fretilin-UDT coalition in the summer of 1975 due to irreconcilable ideological differences, UDT

²⁴Dunn also served on a 1974 fact-finding mission organized by the Australian government to gauge the political consequences of the Portuguese coup in Timor; Australia was keenly interested in political development, as they had deals for the use of offshore oil and gas in place with Portugal. Dunn also was part of a humanitarian delegation from November to December 1975.

representatives traveled to Indonesia to assess the position of Indonesia and “to destroy all Indonesian pretexts for invading Timor” (CAVR 2006, 183). The leaders were told that if UDT removed the spectre of communism (in the form of Fretilin) from Timor, Indonesia would have no reason to intervene. Via their West Timor radio station, the Indonesian government beamed propaganda at Timor that characterized Fretilin as “Maoist” and “Communist”, impressing on UDT leaders that the international community would not accept a communist government in Timor-Leste at the height of the Cold War (Dunn 1977, 28). According to Niner (2001, 18), following the coup, Indonesian troops in Apodeti and UDT garb crossed the border from West Timor, provoking Fretilin into violent action in an escalatory spiral.

Fretilin called for a popular armed uprising against UDT on 15 August 1975 (4 days after the coup) and established its first military base (Centro de Insurreiçao do Comando Territorial Independente de Timor) as well as its own army (Forças Armadas da Libertação Nacional, commonly known as Falintil) during the following days (Benedito da Silva (2012, 100f) citing De Almeida (1997, 7)). Organizationally, Falintil was firmly subordinate to the Central Committee in the party’s hierarchy in accordance with the principle of *a política comanda fuzil* (politics commands the gun) CAVR (2006, 421), which was enshrined in Fretilin’s party program.

UDT and Fretilin were plunged into a five-week civil war that resulted in 1,500-3,000 casualties according to International Red Cross estimates (CAVR 2006, 186). Weapons were readily available from Portuguese army repositories. Fretilin came away as the winner in large parts because of its support by 3,000 Timorese who had served in the Portuguese Army (Dunn 1977, 28).²⁵

This was in direct contradiction to the political neutrality - *apartidarismo* - expected of them as soldiers in the Portuguese army, in order to prevent the creation of a militar-

²⁵The key points of contention were Fretilin’s claim to represent all Timorese as a front, and UDT’s categorical opposition to Fretilin’s socialist, commune-based economic policies.

ily viable internal challenger to Portuguese rule. It is a testament to how insignificant Portugal's presence was at this point that soldiers' political partisanship did not even cause a stir. The Portuguese authorities fled to the nearby island of Ataúro while violence broke out between UDT and Fretilin that lasted approximately five weeks. When Fretilin emerged victorious, Fretilin's leaders repeatedly called on the Portuguese to return to complete the formal decolonization process, but were ignored in their demands just as Indonesia intensified illicit armed incursions into East Timor from West Timor; Fretilin became the de-facto government of Timor-Leste, governing in heightening anticipation of imminent Indonesian invasion (Jolliffe 1978; Benedito da Silva 2012)

Between September 1975 and November 1975, Fretilin was in de-facto control of Timor's administration while still appealing to the Portuguese to return from Ataúro and formally conclude the decolonization process.²⁶ While the previous year serves as a helpful guide to trace Fretilin's ideological ideals, especially with regards to the rural population, this period allows us to see the operation of these ideals in action in a moment of political crisis. The three-month period provides a window into how a future rebel group governs without a full-on war. Even though we do not have formal Fretilin documents on this period, non-governmental organizations were present in Timor during this time, so that we can corroborate representations of this time period from Fretilin members. During this period, Fretilin redoubled efforts to complete the organizational structure from September 1974 and added new elements to it.

As the Portuguese had effectively left the island and most UDT and APODETI forces and leaders fled across the border to West Timor, Fretilin found itself in the position of de-facto government of Timor. Fretilin barely had any funds, lacked administrative experience, and still dealt with the aftermath of the armed confrontation with UDT, including a large number of political prisoners. Fretilin made several strong public gestures to en-

²⁶As a matter of fact, 80% of the 3000 or so Portuguese formerly administering the colony took the opportunity to return to Lisbon during the five-week conflict, indicating that the intent for returning was low (CAVR 2006, 193).

courage a Portuguese return: They issued public statements, calling on Portugal to return for negotiations; they kept the Portuguese flag flying in front of the governor's office (which they left empty) and other administrative buildings; and they put armed guards in front of the Portuguese-owned bank, the Banco Nacional Ultramarino (CAVR 2006, 189).

Why was the Portuguese return so important? Indonesia had started fielding open armed incursions into Timor-Leste from the West Timorese border. The presence of Portugal administering an orderly decolonization process might have held off Indonesia, and it would certainly have strengthened Timor's claim for independence vis-à-vis the international community. To this end, Fretilin even attempted to involve Indonesia in a public negotiation process; on September 16, following an Indonesian incursion as far as Atsabe (almost half-way between Dili and the border between East and West Timor), Fretilin called for a conference attended by representatives of Portugal, Australia, Indonesia, and Timor-Leste to "clear rumours and misunderstandings" (CAVR 2006, 190). Fretilin also took pains to allow international organizations such as the ICRC access to its political prisons, further signaling its intention to be seen as a legitimate government. Fretilin's pleas for Portugal's return alone strongly indicate that Indonesian invasion at this point was a foregone conclusion.

Yet, Indonesian movements within Timor-Leste intensified between September and November, though the Indonesian government blamed any attacks on UDT and APODETI, which somewhat limited the ability of Indonesia to maneuver. On October 15, the Indonesian National Armed Forces (ABRI) 2nd Infantry Brigade launched an attack on the town of Balibó, killing five foreign journalists in the process. It is speculated that they were killed because they had witnessed the true scale of Indonesian incursions into Timor-Leste and were able to link the attack directly to ABRI, as this attack was carried out exclusively by Indonesian soldiers rather than Timorese partisans. Indonesia soon controlled Balibó and neighboring Maliana, where ABRI also used warships to bomb Fretilin's positions in Maliana, located only a 1.5 hour drive on bad roads away from Dili. It was

during these early incursions that it became clear that the might of the Indonesian military in the form of naval artillery enjoyed much greater advantages in coastal regions, while they struggled against Falintil in the jungle and mountain regions. Albino do Carmo, a Falintil commander, describes Indonesian attempts at taking the border town of Lebos:

It was about the middle of October. There were many people, they fired with mortars. They had machine guns, two of them. We saw many people from afar. There was information [they] were from Menpur. Over 100 [people]. We couldn't see behind [them]. They couldn't ... advance because we shot at them. We also had machine guns and mortars. I had about 20 men at the time. (CAVR 2006, 196)

Albino do Carmo's characterization of Falintil's potency in the fall of 1975 makes Falintil seem more effective than it really was. Falintil's military effectiveness was hampered by insufficient arms and a lack of coordination mechanisms with Fretilin's leadership, as military officers had only joined the ranks of Fretilin a month and a half before and no one in Fretilin's cadre had any military experience. Falintil leaders had few insights into Fretilin's political organization due to Portugal's policy of *apartidarismo* for Timorese colonial army members had left professional Timorese soldiers even out of the limited political activities permitted to Timorese under colonialism. In this way, we can see how both Portugal's policy of *apartidarismo* and Fretilin's policy of *a política comanda fuzil* had significant effects on Falintil's ability to perform on the battlefield, as Fretilin's leadership made strategic decisions that affected military tactics without taking into consideration the realities of the Timorese territory or the balance of forces between the Indonesian military and Falintil.

Weldemichael (2008), who provides an in-depth historical analysis of grand strategy in the Timorese civil war, concludes from in-depth interviews how Falintil's exclusive use of positional warfare — as instructed by the Central Committee - in the early confrontations in these eastern border towns caused them to be torn asunder quickly. When Atabae fell in late November, Falintil's organized, positional approach gave way to small-scale, scattered engagements that actually managed to briefly drive back the Indonesian

forces (Weldemichael 2008, 221). It was only then that Fretilin's directives regarding tactics began to change, though they continued to be based on a highly centralized command system. The strong effect of *apartidarismo* on Fretilin's professional soldiers can also be observed in the contrast between Falintil's *modus operandi* and that of the armed civilians who were defending towns and could be activated at short notice. Due to their lack of professionalized training, they operated in a manner more closely resembling guerrilla warfare from the beginning, eschewing direct confrontation due to a lack of weaponry and skill. An example is the Special Forces unit headed by Paulino Gama — known by the resistance name Mauk Muruk²⁷ - inaugurated at the same time as Falintil (August 1975), which was only answerable to Secretary General and later Prime Minister Nicolau Lobato (Weldemichael 2008, 220). The Special Forces unit was originally intended as a glorified group of bodyguards, but had grown to several dozen members carrying out stealth missions by the time of full invasion.²⁸ In contrast to the professional military members, Mauk Muruk had read widely on African liberation movements and deeply admired the Viet Minh commander Vo Nguyen Giap, and implemented the tactic of lightning attacks from scattered directions (Weldemichael 2008, 223).

Whatever steps towards administration Fretilin took in the fall of 1975 were taken in the expectation of an impending full-scale invasion, so that we can assume that all important administrative decisions were taken with this specter in mind. By early September, Fretilin controlled all of Timor-Leste with the exception of Batugade (already occupied by ABRI on the border with Indonesia). Two Australian parliamentarians, who had been invited Fretilin to visit and report on the Timorese situation, made the following observations: "Our visit around the country confirmed Fretilin's claim that the situation is under

²⁷Most former Falintil, Clandestine Front and Renetil activists are still known by their resistance code name, which they now wear as something of a badge of honor.

²⁸For example, one of the unit's earliest tasks was to accompany and protect the group of five foreign journalists tasked with chronicling the early days of resistance. When the journalists were executed by ABRI when Balibo fell on October 16, 1975, the special forces unit managed to secure the tape of their execution.

control. In the regions we visited ourselves, we received information from aid workers and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) that they shared the same view” (CAVR 2006, 193).

The expectation of full-scale civil war shifted some of Fretilin’s organizational priorities. For example, prior to August 1975, education had been carried out by Fretilin at the primary school level in most rural areas, and by the Catholic Church and the Portuguese administration in urban areas. Many Catholic nuns and teachers who had run the schools departed during the August 1975 conflict, leading Xavier do Amaral to comment: “It is deeply regrettable that ‘the shepherds’ leave just at a time when the “lamb” need their guidance” (CAVR 2006, 194). Timorese teachers (either in rural, Fretilin-run schools or urban, colonial schools) were redeployed, as their skills were either needed as Falintil soldiers or as administrators (Hill 2002, 194). On the other hand, hospitals were kept open and medical supplies were rationed, as these would also play a pivotal role during an armed conflict. Thus, Fretilin began preparing rural towns and villages for invasion. The first step was to move supplies and ammunition into remote locations in the countryside. Through October and November, on the civilian support side, Revolutionary Brigades were moving from town to town, hurriedly teaching war-relevant skills to civilians. On the military side, Falintil began establishing and training ad-hoc local militias (Milícia Popular de Libertação Nacional or Miplin). (CAVR 2006, 198)

Fretilin was also dealing with an acute economic crisis in the urban areas not surviving on subsistence farming, which was still the main economic model in most rural areas. As an emergency measure, Fretilin redistributed food stores in larger towns (Pinto and Jardine 1997, 37). The departure of Portugal had left Fretilin with no means to import food. Among a number of specialized commissions that Fretilin established to administer the island, one of the most important ones was the Economic Management and Supervisory Commission established on October 11, chaired by Dr. José Gonçalves, the only trained economist on the island. The Commission coordinated with regional committees as well

as international NGOs to distribute emergency food aid. In carrying out these functions, Gonçalves repurposed the infrastructure of the colonial governmental business and logistics enterprise SAPT (Sociedade Agrícola Pátria e Trabalho). Once BNU also closed, there was no way to have access to cash, so that the island returned to in-good trading for a few weeks.

As there was no time to rebuild administrative infrastructure, Fretilin would often repurpose Portuguese institutions on the island. For example, Pinto remembers how “Fretilin took over the office of the head of the sub-district of Remexio and began to organize the town” (Pinto and Jardine 1997, 38). Instead, consultative bodies were kept as established a year earlier, but they did also take over the administrative offices and buildings at all levels vacated by the Portuguese.

At the center, Fretilin expanded the membership of the Central Committee to include more regional representatives (facilitating greater geographic representation) and to give Falintil a formal seat at the table. The *mise-en-place* of Regional Committees, formally established in September 1974, was accelerated and the committees officially put in charge of regional administration, as opposed to the dialogue-based regional outreach pursued previously. Regional committees directly collaborated with some of the key commissions set up, most importantly the Economic Management and Supervisory Commission (CAVR 2006, 193). In Same, elections for the Regional Committee were held as late as November 17, 1975, and in Suai on November 9.

An impromptu declaration of independence

On 28 November 1975 at 5.55 pm, Rosa Muki Bonaparte, Secretary of the Organization of Timorese Women, lowered the Portuguese flag and raised the new flag of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, hastily sewn that very afternoon. Following a 21-gun salute to commemorate those who had already fallen in the previous months, Xavier do Amaral proclaimed the independence of the RDTL:

Expressing the highest aspirations of the people of East Timor and to safeguard the most legitimate interests of national sovereignty, the central Committee of Fretilin decrees by proclamation, unilaterally, the independence of East Timor, from 00.00 hours today, declaring the state of the Democratic Republic of East Timor, anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist. (Quoted in Hill (2001, 201, 202))

The ceremony was only attended by about 2,000 people, as it had been moved up at the last moment and most Falintil troops were away as well. Originally, the declaration had been planned for December 1, the anniversary of the agreement signed between Portugal and Spain in 1762 that ended Spanish occupation of Portugal. However, the risk of Indonesian full-scale invasion pre-empting the declaration was deemed too great. In 2004, Mari Alkatiri recalled Nicolau Lobato's on November 28: "The Indonesian army have already entered Atabae ... They have occupied Atabae! If we wait until 1 December we might not have time to declare independence in Dili. So we'd better proclaim independence today" (CAVR 2006, 199).²⁹

There were several reasons to declare independence before invasion. One reason was Portugal's continued refusal to return to Dili from Ataúro and continue the formal decolonization process. As argued in front of CAVR by RDTL's first President, Xavier do Amaral:

From Fretilin's point of view, its policy of continuing to recognize Portuguese sovereignty in the absence of any sign from Portugal that it was willing to exercise that authority was a dangerous course to follow. Despite being the de facto ruler, Fretilin had no international legitimacy as a ruling power. Fretilin was not an elected government and its fear was that the political vacuum would give Indonesia a pretext to launch a full-scale invasion of Timor-Leste. (Quoted in CAVR (2006, 197))

Even more worrying, Portugal had held talks with Indonesia in Rome. While Indonesia agreed not to interfere in Timorese affairs, Portugal affirmed that it would not return to

²⁹The decision to declare independence on November 28 was not unanimous. Xanana Gusmão (at this point occupying a low rank politically) and Jose Ramos-Horta both were not in favor of a pre-invasion declaration, the latter because the United Nations was unlikely to support it, and the former because it would cement a politically immature movement where the radical left was growing too strong (Selders 2008, 38).

Timor as long as there was violence. Thus, holding off declaring independence to entice Portugal's return to Timor now seemed futile.

Preparation went into a frenzy following the declaration of independence both locally and internationally. Minister of Defense Rogério Lobato issued the following statement once the ICRC was pulled back to the island of Ataíjro as the international community had now realized Indonesia's immediate intentions and their unwillingness to recognize the organization's neutrality:

Based on information from Fretilin intelligence sources, we suspect a full-scale attack on Timor-Leste, especially to the capital city Dili, will take place ... We urge the world to stop this criminal aggression, as it will be the cause of an endless bloodbath. The people of Timor-Leste will resist. (CAVR 2006, 203)

One day later (December 4, 1975), an international delegation left Dili to lobby for international support and procure arms (comprised of the Minister of Economic and Political Affairs Mari Alkatiri, Minister of Foreign Relations and Information, José Ramos-Horta, and Rogério Lobato).³⁰

The last remaining foreign journalist on the island, Roger East — who would be executed by Indonesian soldiers mere days later — observed the local preparations for invasion in Dili:

With the deterioration of the security situation, people started quietly to leave for the hills. Tonight Dili is quiet and almost empty, abandoned by its people. A curfew was applied on the fourth day and armed soldiers guarded the beach and the streets. (Quoted in Hill (2001, 179))

Militarily, Fretilin controlled 2,500 East Timorese soldiers who had been trained in the Portuguese army, and 7,000 trained civilian volunteers, and were equipped with Mauser rifles and ammunition from Portuguese NATO stocks. Anticipating that they would be

³⁰25 countries promised recognition if Timor-Leste declared independence, among them China, the USSR, Zambia, Mozambique, Tanzania, Guinea-Bissau, Angola, Cape Verde, São Tome and Príncipe, North Korea, North and South Vietnam, Cambodia, Romania, the Netherlands, East Germany, Sweden, Algeria, Cuba, Norway and Brazil. Many rescinded recognition again later (CAVR 2006, 198).

unable to parry a full-fledged Indonesian attack on Dili, based on their experience from smaller ABRI incursions in the fall, Falintil never fortified Dili for a serious defense. They ensured that there were enough troops to ascertain at least some escape routes out of Dili, but Falintil built its first true stance in the foothills behind Dili (Weldemichael 2008, 224). Thus, on the day of the attack, only a few dozen Falintil fighters remained in Dili to defend the capital, and a mere 21 Falintil soldiers were detailed to protect Comoro Airbase. Likewise, Falintil had moved its limited pieces of artillery into the hills behind Dili near Balibar where Fretilin's command center was located (Jolliffe 1978). As Dunn put it, the fight "in the streets of Dili was little more than a delaying tactic" on the part of Falintil (Dunn 1983, 258).

The December 7 invasion was a major military offensive involving both sea and air support. The full-scale attack was three-pronged: By that time, Indonesian troops had full control of the border towns of Balibó and Atsabe, where 3,200 Indonesian troops (both marine and army infantry battalions with a submarine and two air force transport planes) were already stationed and could assist. Indonesia's military technology was state of the art, as it enjoyed military aid from the US both in the form of hardware (aircraft, ships and landing craft) and training of its elite troops. The US had been informed about the impending attack and had acquiesced, which becomes clear from the following telegram exchange between Gerald Ford and Suharto:

[Suharto:] We want your understanding if we deem it necessary to take rapid or drastic action.

[Ford:] We will understand and will not press you on the issue. We understand the problem you have and the intentions you have. (CAVR 2006, 205)

By December 17, Dili and the northern coast were secured to the point that Indonesia could install a provisional government mostly made up of members of Apodeti and UDT, the Provisional Government of East Timor (Pemerintah Sementara Timor Timur or PSTT).

4.3 Fretilin's civil war

By December 7, a large proportion of Dili's 28,000 residents had already fled into the mountains south towards Aileu with the Fretilin leadership – overall, up to 300,000 civilians would be displaced by ABRI (CAVR 2006, 215). Many of the civilians who stayed behind in Dili were indiscriminately killed, and remaining members of the Fretilin leadership were executed. The flight of tens of thousands of people – and the organizational challenges this would pose – is best understood through eye witness accounts. As one survivor recalled in an interview with Dunn:

At 2:00 p.m. [on December 7, 1975,] 59 men, both Chinese and Timorese, were brought onto the wharf ... These men were shot one by one, again with the crowd ... being ordered to count. The victims ordered to stand on the edge of the pier facing the sea, so that when they were shot their bodies fell into the water. Indonesian soldiers stood by and fired at the bodies in the water in the event that there was any further sign of life.³¹ (Dunn 1980, 33-35)

While certain provisions had been made for an evacuation of Dili, on the day of, it was relatively chaotic. Falintil Special Forces commander Mauk Muruk recounts:

In the face of these Indonesian atrocities and shocked by the sheer scale of invasion, the surviving population and the Falintil units made a strategic withdrawal to the mountains in order to regroup and reorganize a more effective resistance. (Gama 1995, 98)

The retreating Falintil fighters tried to hold on to the villages of Taibessi and Lahane at the base of Dili's southern foothills and the hills south of Fatuhada to provide a secure escape route for as long as possible. (CAVR 2006, 207) As Fretilin and a large part of the Timorese population retreated further south, they conducted several mass executions of UDT prisoners still kept from August (CAVR 2006, 214). Fretilin retreated from Aileu to Maubisse on December 31, and from there further south towards the coast. Civilians who had remained in Dili were detained and tortured by ABRI forces.

³¹Because of centuries of trade between Timor and China, Dili had a small Chinese minority population.

Gusmão recalls in his autobiography how he observed the flow refugees from the Fretilin command center in Balibar above Dili:

An interminable line of people streamed upwards. I saw no fear in their exhaustion, I saw resignation in their eyes, and anguish that must have been torturing their souls, but they knew to smile, as if somehow it would relieve their suffering. (Gusmão 2000, 226)

Constancio Pinto and his family were fleeing from Remexio, near Dili, when ABRI reached the town on December 25. He describes his family's experience:

When we left Remexio, we didn't know where we were going. We didn't even know the names of the villages where we went. ... There were no guerrillas with us because they stayed near Remexio trying to prevent the Indonesians from advancing beyond the town. ... It was a big change for us to be in such a small village with people we didn't know, but everyone there was really helpful. When we arrived [in Bereliurai, 25 miles south of Remexio], they gave us food to eat and mats to sleep on and then offered us a modest house made of bamboo with a roof of thatched grass in a knua on the outskirts of the village. (Pinto and Jardine 1997, 42ff.)

Thus, the rural population played a crucial role in aiding the resistance, gradually organized by Fretilin under a formal rebel governance system.

Fretilin controlled the island through so-called *Basos de Apoio* (support bases) where the population was supportive of Fretilin, and continued efforts of securing the support of civilians in more ambivalent areas (Weldemichael 2008). The set-up of the *basos* at this point appears to have resembled that of Fretilin's regional and subregional committees where local cadres more or less spontaneously organized their hamlets, villages or districts according to Fretilin's regional administrative structures as designed in 1974 (the only available blueprint for local governance) (CAVR 2006, 420). According to Eduardo de Jesus Barreto, a Fretilin cadre member from Ermera, the situation in the unoccupied zones was as follows:

Up until early 1976 there was no strong formal structure at the base, but Fretilin militants in bases managed to organize people although not formally

... People individually or in groups also performed farming activities like growing corn, tubers, and other edible plants.” (Quoted in CAVR (2006, 420))

Coordination in these first six months was difficult, and Falintil command was decentralized, as Lobato let the subordinate Falintil leaders “choose their own direction” but without an ability for them to coordinate (Gusmão 2000, 40). Communication between different units had not been streamlined, so that information could often not be trusted, as it might have been spread for political or propaganda purposes. For example, Gusmão recalls how when he was stationed in Manatuto with fewer than a dozen arms, he heard about a capture of weapons in Baucau, but when he undertook the perilous trip to Baucau to claim some of the bounty, he was told that it had only been a rumor to boost morale (Gusmão 2000, 41f.). In addition, the political inexperience made holding course in unconnected districts difficult. Gusmão observes in his autobiography about the period following December 1975 that “the situation of the war demanded a strong grip of command ... [that] the majority of us, the members of the CCF, were unpoliticized ... [and] were too inexperienced” to act fully independently (Gusmão 2000, 39-43).

Filomeno Paixão de Jesus, a company commander³² in Liquiçá immediately following invasion, testified to the initial lack of military coordination:

So in one zona ... there was one zona commander. The zona commander had one to three companies under his command. In Liquiçá, for example, there were three companies with one zona commander. But each only took the initiative in their own sub-districts [zona] ... Some sub-districts had plenty of weapons, while others didn't have any weapons at all. (Quoted in (CAVR 2006, 422))

By mid-1976, Fretilin (outnumbered 15:1) was scattered throughout the eastern interior of the island with poor coordination mechanisms connecting different *zonas*. Within six months or so, the resistance-controlled areas were whittled down to the three districts of Baucau, Viqueque and Lospalos in the east of the island, with pockets throughout the

³²In terms of hierarchy, one level below the zona commander

island's interior. The Indonesian army controlled the major towns, the north coastal road from west to east and the central corridor running from north to south, but had not yet made significant progress into the interior of the island (CAVR 2006, 420). This was in part because while ABRI had prepared for the invasion of Dili, its commanders had underestimated the terrain of Timor, once described by a World War II Allied briefing as "one lunatic contorted tangle of mountains. There is no main system of ranges, for the mountains run in all directions and fold upon one another in crazy fashion" (quoted in Jolliffe (1978, 46)). An illustrative example for what this meant in practice is how it took the Indonesian army a full two weeks to even advance 20 km south of Dili to Remexio; once there, they could not stay there because the town was deep inside a valley with only two narrow roads in and out (Pinto and Jardine 1997, 44). This led to a lull in fighting in late spring of 1976 so ABRI could regroup, mistakenly interpreted by some of Fretilin's leadership as a retreat signaling that the two sides were more closely matched than they were in reality (Weldemichael 2008, 244).

The Soibada Conference

The Fretilin leadership took this opportunity to call on the Central Committee (technically the RDTL's Cabinet) to meet in Soibada (Manatuto) between May 15 and June 2. They mapped out a new strategy to repel the invading Indonesian forces that was modeled on the observed experiences of guerrillas in Mozambique, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, and Vietnam (Weldemichael 2008, 244). The session outlined "three Maubere Revolution guidance principles": People's war, protracted war, and self-reliance. The chosen strategy was deeply steeped in ideology; Weldemichael analyzes that "on top of the fact that excessive ideological zeal arrested [the Fretilin leaders'] capacity to objectively appraise the situation, the resistance leaders' fascination with and their wholesale borrowing from other successful experiences blinded them to how far Indonesia was prepared to go to annihilate them" (244).

Who was responsible for choosing and implementing the new “Maubere Revolution guidance principles”? According to Gusmão’s testimony, RDTL’s formal departments were no longer functional; all decision-making had reverted back to Fretilin’s Central Committee (CAVR 2006, 421). In accordance with a *política comanda fuzil*, military commanders were also not present at the key meetings of Soibada with the exception of the Chief of Staff and two deputy defense ministers who were also members of the Fretilin Central Committee (CAVR 2006, 421)³³ This arrangement during a meeting where *key military innovation questions* were decided shows clearly that the military was not only formally subordinate to the political leadership, but also in practice; in fact, the almost complete lack of military input at this point is striking.

In Soibada, the relationship between the refugee population in the mountains, Fretilin, and the Timorese resistance was formalized. As explained earlier, in the early years of the party’s history, many Fretilin leaders held the view that a social revolution needed to accompany armed resistance to eradicate *exploração do homem pelo homem* (“exploitation of man by man”) so that post-war Timor would be completely without oppression. As part of this, individuals with remaining wealth (plantations, monetary, etc.) were to relinquish their holdings to benefit all, in line with Cabral’s dictum of “class suicide” (Weldemichael 2008, 246). The quasi-abolition of private property was one major ideological shift to come out of Soibada.

At Soibada, the remaining unoccupied territory was divided into sectors, which were in turn divided into further, smaller units: Region (*região*), zone (*zona*), village (*suco*) and sub-village (*aldeia*), terminology borrowed from the Portuguese administration that Fretilin had physically taken over after August 1975. Militarily, there was now a commander appointed each at the sector, region, and zone level (*commandos da sector, commandos da região, commando da zona*). In addition, each settlement (*base de apoio*) had a

³³Falintil leaders were instead camped right around the meeting grounds to guarantee security and were thus kept up to date with decisions taken.

self-defense force (*Força Auto Defesa*), comprised of local civilians with (very) basic military training.³⁴ However, a *política comanda fuzil* was mirrored in the regional command structure: The six sectors of the *zonas libertadas* were at once political administrative unit and military zone, and each sector was led by a political commissar (*comissário política*), a member of Fretilin's Central Committee who had supreme command over both political and military matters. Each commissar was assisted by a number of assistant commissars (*assistente commissariado*) each responsible for a particular area: Health, agriculture, education, women's issues (carried out by a representative of OPTM) and political propaganda. At each regional level, the Falintil leader was subordinated to his equivalent political leader. This went down all the way to the *suco* level; writing about his time as a refugee in Bereliurai, Pinto recalls that there was both a Fretilin secretary and a Falintil commander (Pinto and Jardine 1997, 46).

In essence, this would severely curtail Falintil's ability to adjust tactics as necessitated by the changing conditions on the field, and did not provide for an independent coordination mechanism for Falintil across sector lines and thus made no attempt at fixing the probably biggest tactical problem faced by the resistance: The positional warfare strategy necessitated by the *bases de apoio*. This new structure was also not adopted by Falintil without resistance. For example, José da Silva, who was Falintil's Deputy Chief of Staff (second highest position) and commander of the North Central Sector, refused to implement the restructuring in his sector according to the directives of the Sector Commissar, and was not only removed from his post but also executed. In fact, over half of the incumbent sector commanders protested the proposed changes, and several were executed and replaced with more pliable men (Weldemichael 2008, 252).

Already before Soibada, people were organized around programs of agriculture, health, education, culture and women's liberation in the *bases de apoio* in order to support the

³⁴Pinto (1997) recalls that during his training, which he started at age thirteen, he was never allowed to shoot an actual gun because ammunition was so scarce.

armed resistance both logistically and politically. Gusmão describes the role of the population: “We had just begun the war and the people were with us [in the interior] ... *bases de apoio* were implemented as a mechanism to organize people so they could continue to fight in the war [by providing] logistical and political support, which we could describe as revolution” (Gusmão 2000, 9). Weldemichael (2008) concludes from primary accounts that this heavy reliance on the population was based on second-hand insights from other resistance movements that nonconventional war could only succeed by relying on civilian populations, and that they could only rely on the civilian population if the population was physically present (in stark contrast to later mobilization approaches).

Yet, caring for a refugee population numbering in the hundred thousands would significantly curtail Falintil’s ability to engage ABRI as necessary. Therefore, several Falintil commanders were strongly opposed to the *bases*. Given their significant disadvantages in terms of both manpower and firepower, Falintil fighters needed to be highly mobile to take full advantage of their superior knowledge of Timor’s interior terrain, which they could not do if they needed to protect civilian settlements in the liberated zones. Instead, the presence of civilians forced them into a strategy of protection rather than offense that did not favor the kind of covert operations carried out by small troops that would have made the most of Falintil’s few comparative advantages.

Disagreement with the *bases* was not contained to Falintil. President Xavier do Amaral, who was from a plantation-owning family, was not only ideologically opposed to the Soibada Conference’s ideological innovations, but also voiced strong reservations about the civilian support system in the mountains. In an interview with Weldemichael (2008, 250), do Amaral recalls suggesting that civilians gradually return to their previous lives, where they might actually be an additional source of support to the resistance from behind enemy lines. Lobato called him “an imperialist lackey” attempting to “undermine the unity of Fretilin Central Committee”; do Amaral was imprisoned and then exiled in the following year (Weldemichael 2008, 251).

Through the establishment of the *bases*, governance structures set up by Fretilin remained active, and the RDTL continued in the periphery, governing up to 300,000 people (CAVR 2006, 241) with an attention to detail that does not call to mind a rebel organization engaged in an active civil war. In Bereliurai, which Pinto describes as “very pro-Fretilin”, Fretilin ran communal gardens (*hortas comunais*); the food was given to people who were unable to grow food such as newly arrived refugees and to the guerrillas (Pinto and Jardine 1997, 46). In Bereliurai, there was an administrative building (*sede*), that was used to teach people to read and write and learn about Timorese culture, political engagement, history, and Catholicism. However, instruction also included more pragmatic concerns: How to support guerrilla fighters on the front, how to build shelters to protect himself or herself from bombing or shooting, as well as use of weapons. (Pinto and Jardine 1997, 47) As before the invasion, there were weekly meetings (*convívios*) to discuss politics and the state of the war. Fretilin also organized medical care, mostly using whatever the refugees had brought from the towns and natural remedies (Constancio Pinto’s father worked as a nurse).

The armed resistance falls

After Indonesia redoubled their efforts in early 1977 and made significant territorial gains against which Falintil seemed almost completely powerless, Fretilin’s leadership convened another important conference in Laline (Viqueque district). It was only now that Fretilin’s leadership recognized the need for improved coordination mechanisms for Falintil commanders; militarily, the resistance was reorganized to have sector-level military commands that allowed for coordination between different areas. In addition, a so-called “Shock Brigade” (under the command of Mauk Muruk) was created that was not bound by sector delineations but rather assisted where there was need. Politically, Fretilin created a new *Conselho Superior da Luta* or Supreme Resistance Council that included the President, VP, Deputy Minister of Defense and Minister of Information and National Se-

curity, which led to greater centralization and a higher degree of military inclusion in decision-making. However, ideologically, it was during this conference that Fretilin officially adopted a Marxist-Leninist ideology, at least on paper, thus making the resistance more extremist in its political leanings. Fretilin formally upheld its declaration of independence and demanded its universal recognition.

Within the first six months of 1977, Fretilin still controlled some interior areas in the south of the island. However, Indonesia was employing two parallel strategies: “Encirclement and annihilation” and “killing the fish by draining the sea,” both instituted under the leadership of General Muhammad Yusuf, fresh from his command of the successful South Sulawesi counterinsurgency. Frederic Durand produced a cartographic reproduction of *enrirclement and annihilation* between 1977 and 1979 that shows the strategy’s success: Falintil and Fretilin, hampered by the population trailing in their wake, were encircled by ABRI and pushed back into three self-contained enclaves, cut off from the rest of the resistance, one concentrated in Maliana, one surrounding a handful of villages at the geographic center of Timor, and one at Mount Mantebean (Durand 2006, 73). At the same time, ABRI concentrated on cutting off the *bases de apoio* in the three target areas off from supplies (weapons, food, and water). By early 1979, most Falintil fighters were pinned down in inaccessible caves dotted throughout the mountain ranges above the bases, and they were cut off from receiving supplies from other bases. Mauk Murruk recounts: “It was rare for crops to reach maturity because they were systematically destroyed by Indonesian bombardments and sabotage attacks. Springs and wells were poisoned on a number of occasions, which greatly affected the availability of clean water and caused the death of many people” (Gama 1995). In other instances, gasoline was used to burn the off forest and arable land (literal scorched earth), often burning civilians alive in the process (CAVR 2006, 225). A key to both strategic approaches was the heavy use of Napalm, repurposed from US operations in Vietnam, against both civilian areas and Falintil holdouts (Gama 1995, 100).

Yet, it was only in December 1978 that Fretilin leaders started to allow some civilians to surrender and return to the now-occupied areas.³⁵ Over the next weeks, the *bases de apoio* emptied as civilians were interned by ABRI into so-called resettlement camps. Operationally, internment was deemed necessary to defeat the guerrillas by separating them from the people and purging Fretilin ideological influences by indoctrinating them with Indonesia propaganda (Weldemichael 2008, 260). Prohibited in the early period of the internment camps from cultivating their own food or foraging in the bush and provided with insufficient supplies, malnutrition, consequent diseases, and outright famine was a frequent occurrence and no relief was provided from the rough conditions of the last months in the mountains.

It is hard to overstate the hopelessness of Fretilin's situation by the end of the decade. By 1979, Encirclement and Annihilation had resulted in the near complete destruction of the East Timorese resistance, leaving 79% of the Supreme Command (Fretilin Central Committee and Falintil leadership) dead. Support bases had been not only defeated but rather reduced to smatterings of soldiers and civilians through the bush and mountains. According to all different narratives, the near-annihilation of the Timorese resistance by early 1979 was cemented with the death of Fretilin President Nicolau Lobato on 31 December 1978 (see for example Gama (1995, 101)). Only three members of the Central Committee, Fernando Txay, Mahugo and Xanana Gusmao, had survived and were still at large; they were based on the eastern tip of the island, where Fretilin had a very tenuous hold (Niner 2004, 56). Further, whatever was left of the resistance had lost any ability to communicate with the outside world as Alarico Fernandes, when surrendering to the Indonesian forces, gave up Radio Maubere (Weldemichael 2008, 261).

³⁵CAVR (2006) provides some accounts of Fretilin leaders not allowing civilians to return to Dili even if they wanted to, believing popular support in the mountains to be vital for the continuation of the resistance.

Gusmao's rise to power and third reorganization

In March 1979, the remaining Fretilin leadership and other highly ranked party or military officials held a meeting on the eastern tip — Ponta Leste - of the island. Ponta Leste, which was not yet controlled by ABRI, was where the surviving cadre members, who had managed to break out of the siege, had fled to in the knowledge that they would not be shown mercy by the Indonesian troops, should they surrender. The Legumau mountain range east of Baguia was both difficult to access and of no strategic importance, thus providing a relatively safe haven for the remnants of Fretilin and Falintil. In Ponta Leste, the surviving leaders reorganized the resistance's structure and chose Xanana Gusmão as the new leader, as the former sector commissar was the highest-ranking surviving Fretilin Central Committee member.³⁶ The continuing effect of a *política comanda fuzil* even in the resistance's state of near-complete annihilation clearly shows here: There were surviving military leaders such as Mauk Muruk who held significantly higher positions within the military leadership than Gusmão in the political hierarchy, but the latter was chosen nonetheless (and with little apparent opposition).

The decision on Gusmão as leader was provisional, as it as of yet lacked popular approval. Further, it was unclear whether enough resistance members had actually survived to even continue fighting. It was thus decided to embark on a reconnaissance mission to learn who of the resistance apparatus had actually survived, re-establish contacts with the population, assess their willingness to continue to support the resistance, and gain a better sense of the Indonesian military disposition Gusmão (2000, 57-59). It is significant how important the population's approval was deemed at this moment; Fretilin's populist identity seems to have had deep roots.

³⁶The full list of surviving Fretilin/Falintil cadres was so short that it could be counted on two hands: On the political side, it consisted of Xanana Gusmão, Ma'Huno, Mau Hodu, Bere Malay Laka, and Taxy. On the military side, it was Mauk Muruk, Kilik Wae Gae, Olo Gari, Nelo, and Freddy. Note that few of these names have even appeared in the narrative up to now — this signals their relative low ranks. (Gama 1995, 101).

To get a fuller sense of the state of the resistance, both Falintil and Fretilin members shed their uniforms and hid their weapons so as to slip through Indonesian controls undetected, signaling a first tentative move towards guerrilla warfare.³⁷ In his CAVR testimony, Gusmão recalls:

We went straight [from Matebian] to Ponta Leste. When we got there, we started building a strategy and each of us learned what guerrilla [warfare] was about. Because I already had contacts with the underground [from] when [we were in the] bases de apoio, I went straight to Mehara on 7 December [1979] ... We searched [for resistance members]. From Dili they [clandestine members] told us that there's a small number of [Falintil] troops but they couldn't contact them, many had surrendered. I sent two groups to Centro [central region] [but] they said they didn't find any troops and didn't meet any civilians there. (CAVR 2006, 242)

There are several noteworthy points in this short testimony. For one, even without filling in the term “clandestine members” given the source of Gusmão’s information, there was clearly a civilian underground that had its origins in the bases de apoio, many of whom now likely lived in Indonesian occupied zones, feeding information to Fretilin. In fact, civilians who had not fled Dili had been providing information to family members in the mountains from the beginning of the occupation Bexley and Tchailoro (2013, 407). Second, with the loss of the bases de apoio and most of the more ideological leadership, military innovation (guerrilla warfare) was fast and pragmatic, indicating that innovation in the Timorese resistance at least was much swifter with fewer veto players. Third, most of the surviving leadership appears relatively untrained, as they needed to first learn about the tenets of guerrilla warfare before carrying them out in practice.

The recon campaign was led by Ologari Asuwain, Gusmão, and Mauk Muruk, who focused on the three broad areas of Dili-Same-Suai-Batugade-Dili, Dili-Same-Viqueque-Baucau, and Viqueque-Lospalos respectively. During almost 1.5 years of travels through

³⁷It was customary for both Falintil and Fretilin leaders to wear uniforms as to distinguish themselves clearly from the civilian population. However, this had had little to no effect on the Indonesian treatment of civilians.

the bush, Gusmão and his remaining associates located a few additional pockets of Falintil fighters. Francisco Guterres “Lú-Olo,” who in 1980 was hiding somewhere in the central mountains with a small fighting unit, describes how “when we heard that our older brother Xanana Gusmão had come we felt our hearts at ease” (CAVR 2006, 243).

Significantly, the non-uniformed guerrillas often managed to slip through Indonesian fortifications and establish links to clandestine groups within occupied territories now that ABRI felt secure in victory and positional warfare had been abandoned (CAVR 2006, 243). A delegation of guerrillas even covertly entered Dili to announce their survival to the population by participating in the symbolic attack of the Maubara radio station (Weldemichael 2008, 292). Not only did this recon mission allow the remaining leaders to plan ahead, the surviving fighters likewise gained valuable information about the continued popular support for the resistance. Further, there now existed personal and direct-if tenuous - links between Fretilin and the population in the occupied territories, which, together with the personal links between family members, would slowly be formalized over the next decade. It is important that Gusmão’s March 1981 reorganization was undertaken with the awareness that a reliable information network existed. On the other hand, one big blow of the reconnaissance campaign was the realization that there were no other surviving Central Committee members, which likely also informed the strategic decisions taken in 1981.

Gusmão called a national meeting in Lacluta, Viqueque District, to reorganize the resistance according to the information gathered in the previous year and a half. After studying guerrilla warfare in 1979 in Ponta Leste, the remaining leaders determined that, given the dismal state of the resistance, full-blown guerrilla warfare – as waged in Vietnam or Cuba, apparently the main two sources of inspiration – would not work in Timor. Rather, then, in 1981, the remaining cadres under the unanimously appointed leader Xanana Gusmão reorganized the resistance according to an avowedly pragmatic approach that prioritized attaining independence, putting the internal revolution on the

back burner. In practice, this led to the following organization of military activities: Small troops of Falintil fighters were thinly spread out across the country (at this point, only a few hundred trained troops). Locally, these small, mobile units would be supported by cells of the Clandestine Front. At the district level, the Clandestine Front was represented by “Resistance Centers” (*cernak*) and at the village level through smaller cells at the village level (*nurep*) (CAVR 2006). Thus, the Clandestine Front, though not yet centralized or streamlined, now took on important information and communication tasks.

According to Gusmão, the goal in 1981 was to do “what we could do with small guerilla [groups], to plan political activities, military activities, and how the two related to each other” (CAVR 2006, 244). This leads to two conclusions: First, the military focus did not disappear, but rather took on a more pragmatic bent, made possible by the deaths of most military hardliners who had been trained in conventional warfare in the Portuguese colonial army. Second, the prospect of nonmilitary “political activities” on behalf of the resistance was broached as early as 1981, if Gusmão’s recollections are credible, though they are not explicitly mass-based at this point.

Politically, the overall new approach was to construct an umbrella *forum* theoretically able to accommodate all nationalists. While many *ex-post* accounts claim that the creation of the CRRN actually represented the first instance of a pro-unity approach, this is not true. Rather, the CRRN was an organization to “unite all nationalists” and did thus not allow for UDT or APODETI members to join, according to Kammen’s translation of the CRRN resolutions from Lacluta (Kammen 2009, 79). That CRRN was not (yet) an umbrella organization can be seen in its structure: The leadership was still exclusively Fretilin, Falintil retained its direct link to Fretilin (or, at least, it was not officially severed), Fretilin continued as an official arm of the organizational structure, and open anti-UDT rhetoric continued. Also, Fretilin still advocated Marxism-Leninism (Kammen 2009, 79). CRRN’s leadership was synonymous with Fretilin’s Central Commission, so that the term “Fretilin” is still used to denote the resistance organization. In his letter to Fretilin’s Del-

egation of External Services from October 13, 1982 (as a matter of fact also the first time a missive was sent directly from Timor to the External Delegation after blockade had made this impossible (Weldemichael 2008, 379)), Gusmão reported of the reorganization only that “here the nation was reorganized, the liberation forces restructured, and a new leadership appointed” (Gusmão 2000, 72).

Structurally, CRRN was headed by a President Xanana Gusmao, who presided over a Central Committee with both members within Timor and (largely symbolically at this point) members from abroad such as José Ramos-Horta. Xanana Gusmão was also the National Political Commissar of Fretilin and Commander-in-Chief of Falintil, which was still officially the armed wing of Fretilin, further showing that CRRN and Fretilin at this point are essentially synonymous. Importantly, the appointment of a political leader as “Commander in Chief” of Falintil indicates the continued commitment to and functioning of *a política comanda fuzil*.

Ceasefire and first communication links

The resistance organization’s eventual real pro-unity character started to be injected into CRRN in large parts due to pressure by Catholic clergy on Gusmão. Father Martinho da Costa Lopes testified that in the first meeting with Xanana Gusmao in 1982, he made clear that the only hope for the resistance lay in a united UDT-Fretilin front and a much more definitive organizational distancing from Maoism and Leninism; in fact, Lopes made CRRN’s formal departure from Fretilin’s leftist orientation and the embrace of UDT members a condition for both covert and overt collaboration between the Catholic Church in Timor and Gusmão (CAVR 2006, 246).³⁸ This was not an empty threat, as the Church, widely trusted and supported even by Indonesia, could play an important role in facilitating communication and lending legitimacy to the movement. After his meeting with Father Martinho in 1982, Xanana resigned from his post as National Political Commissar

³⁸Lopes da Costa was forcefully exiled in 1982 for aiding the resistance and replaced by Ximenes Belo.

of Fretilin as a signal that the unity organization needed to come first. In 1983, CRRN officially adopted “national unity” as its new principle, Fretilin agreed to a ceasefire with Indonesia, which they had previously staunchly opposed.

The ceasefire was also necessary for diplomatic purposes: CRRN documented the signing ceremony of the ceasefire agreement between Xanana Gusmao and Colonel Purwanto, Indonesia’s sub-regional military commander in East Timor, shaking hands under Fretilin and Indonesian flags. In the freedom accorded by the ceasefire, Gusmao sent this photo to the External Delegation abroad. While the photo legitimized Fretilin internationally, showing that the resistance was still alive and kicking, the agreement backfired for Indonesia, as it implicitly acknowledged that the war was still in full swing and not pacified, as had been ABRI’s official position. (Weldemichael 2008, 344) In fact, by this point, it was policy for ABRI to refer to Falintil guerrillas as *gerombolan pengacau keamanan*, literally translated “band of security disturbers” (Kammen 2009, 73). In fact, in January 1983, Purwanto had told journalists that “the band of [security] disturbers in East Timor, who are the remnants of Fretilin forces, have no more than one hundred weapons and five hundred members” (Kammen 2009, 73).

Why did Indonesia agree to the ceasefire? Kammen (2009) identifies two main reasons: March 1983 represents a period of political turnover, so that the outgoing guard (including Yusuf, Indonesia’s outgoing sector commander in Timor) felt that they had nothing to lose and everything to gain by trying a new approach. Second, Indonesia hoped that it would be able to schedule diplomatic visits during the period of the ceasefire, most importantly by Australia, with whom they needed to negotiate a treaty on the use of Timor’s offshore natural resources (Timor and Australia share a maritime border).

The ceasefire was in part possible due to the efforts of Timorese military governor, UDT founder Mario Carrascalão. In 1982, the Indonesian leadership deemed the new province sufficiently under control to appoint a Timorese governor, following “elections” that overwhelmingly favored Indonesia’s shadow government. Very carefully, Carras-

calão started supporting the resistance from within. Once he had Suharto's full trust, he would push policies beneficial to Timor and the resistance. Before this, he played a key role in facilitating communication between Falintil and the Clandestine Front and provided information about the Indonesian intentions.

From the beginning of his tenure as government, Carrascalão kept his Fridays open to receive Timorese civilians to have walk-in meetings with him. Sometimes, up to one hundred people would wait outside the governor's residence to see him. Because most Timorese did not yet speak Bahasa, Carrascalão would hold these meetings in Tetum; because the ABRI officers guarding the residence did not speak Tetum, Carrascalão could receive important information about Falintil through farmers who had traveled to Dili and could pass on information to them in turn. In their indirect communication prior to the ceasefire agreement, Gusmao communicated to Carrascalão that he needed three months to reorganize his forces, and asked Carrascalão to try and convince ABRI to agree to a ceasefire. Carrascalão recollects the message as follows: "From Xanana I heard, 'that's what I need: I need three months to reconstruct my army, my guerrilla army. You have been benefitting from the Indonesians, now you have to help us. I take care of the war, and you take care of the population.'"³⁹ The ceasefire, then, served specific strategic purposes and was meticulously planned.

Before the end of the ceasefire, there was an official meeting between Carrascalão and Xanana Gusmão organized by Carrascalão at Gusmao's urging, on May 28, 1983, which was recorded on an Indonesian transcript of the meeting was recovered in 2009, in the office of a provincial Indonesian police commander. The 1983 meeting shows how early signs of unity between Fretilin and UDT started to emerge, and give significant credence to both Carrascalão's and Gusmão's recollections.⁴⁰ While there are obviously no outright

³⁹Interview with Mario Carrascalão, Dili, November 28, 2014

⁴⁰The post-war relationship between Gusmão and Carrascalão also speaks to the considerable trust and understanding that must have connected the men. Carrascalão publicly (and effusively) endorsed Gusmao for Prime Minister in 2002, and Gusmao invited Carrascalão and his Social Democratic Party into an alliance in 2006 Kammen (2009, 80). In post-war Timor, it was customary to reward resistance heroes with

statements of mutual support given the official nature of the meeting and the presence of Indonesian observers, the conciliatory language is remarkable. Carrascalão states at the very beginning of his opening speech (the recording indicates blocks of speeches rather than a back-and-forth dialogue) that “unity needs to be created because if the East Timorese people are divided they will ‘devour’ one another” Kammen (2009, 81). In the following speech, phrased almost as a response, Gusmão asks: “If there is UDT and there is Fretilin, if there is a possibility of a Coalition, then why can’t there be an understanding between us?” Kammen (2009, 87)

Kammen hypothesizes that behind the purposefully vague language, the two men were actually coordinating their collaboration that would stay in place throughout Carrascalão’s governorship in the 1980s. Gusmão says of Carrascalão and his role in the resistance: “He is someone who is of value to our homeland and people. If we reach a common vision, that is, a desire to resolve this situation in a good way, then this can be used as a bridge to cross into new territory. ... that was not our attitude towards previous Governors” (Kammen 2009). Finally, Carrascalão openly states his position as interlocutor: “If I am given the task of intermediary I always want to give perfect expression to what one party has to say to the other party” Kammen (2009, 94). Carrascalão finally concludes that “as for the support that you just mentioned, I admit that there is [such support],” which considers a signal of assent to Gusmão’s call for “national unity,” i.e. Governor Carrascalão doing what he can to support the resistance.⁴¹ At some point towards the end, Carrascalão actually overtly describes the process of delivering secret letters back and forth between himself and Gusmão: “I can arrange so that secrecy is kept. For example: when José Conceição came to Dili to deliver your letter to me, no one knew. The first anyone knew of it was the next day when I gave him my letter for you.” (Kammen

ministerial posts (which is how Timor, with a population of less than one million at the time, ended up with a cabinet with 57 ministers).

⁴¹According to Kammen, this could also refer to international support; the wording is purposefully vague to hide the true meaning Kammen (2009, 98).

2009, 100) The most important message was this from Gusmão to Carrascalão: “You are responsible for the people in the occupied towns and villages, and I am in charge of the people in the jungle” (quoted in Pinto and Jardine (1997, 93)).

Apart from the apparent coordination efforts and slow movement towards a unity organization, the meeting transcript also indicates how Gusmao was moving away from Marxism-Leninism: “If during this war Fretilin has directed certain individuals toward a particular ideology, that does not mean that all followers of Fretilin are Marxists . . . Fretilin must mobilize people who think that East Timor can become an Independent Country” Kammen (2009, 87). He goes on later to say that “it would not be realistic — or as Senhor [Carrascalão] said, it would be to behave like sheep — were I to force myself, to impose my ideology on everyone else” (Kammen 2009, 92). This shows the extraordinary position of influence Gusmao had attained by this point, and the clear shift towards a more pragmatic set of goals for the resistance.

Gusmão’s unilateral termination of the ceasefire in August of 1983 similarly demonstrates his position of power over the military leaders in the resistance organization. The leaders most opposed to ending the ceasefire were Mauk Muruk (commander of the Red Brigades, a highly mobile elite unit that operated throughout the territory) and Kilik Wae Gae, Falintil’s Chief of Staff (CAVR 2006, 246). Mauk Muruk told Weldemichael that he and several other high-ranking Falintil leaders opposed the termination at this point for strategic reasons (not explained further), but there was really no way for them to stop Gusmão. Mauk Muruk still blames Gusmão for the Kraras Massacre, perpetrated by ABRI against a village of Timorese civilians likely as retaliation for Fretilin’s unilateral termination of the agreement (Weldemichael 2008, 345).⁴²

In 1984, Gusmão further demonstrated his hold on power when he changed Fretilin’s ideological program. After they had already opposed the unilateral abrogation of the

⁴²General Benny Moerdani, ABRI Commander, had explicitly only gave Purwanto and Carrascalão three months to make the ceasefire work (so, until early July), indicating that Gusmão may simply have taken advantage of the publicity to be gained from being the first to resume attacks (Kammen 2009, 76).

ceasefire, Kilik Wae Gae, Mauk Muruk and his deputy Ologari Asuwain were vocally opposed to the formal 1984 reorganization, which was supported by most of the Central Committee. Apart from the change in party ideology, Falintil was formally severed from Fretilin and put it under the command of the CRRN, thereby making Falintil into an apolitical entity. This would have further removed Falintil leaders from key political decisions taken at the top of the organization. Taur Matan Ruak, at the time on the Falintil General Staff and a staunch supporter of Gusmão's, characterized the dissent between the three Falintil leaders and Gusmão: "Nothing [that Gusmão did] was ever right, what did they want?" (CAVR 2006, 455). Despite the internal opposition, Gusmão easily restructured Falintil and demoted all three of the oppositional Falintil commanders. He explains the 1984 Falintil personnel reorganization: "I carried out a reorganization. ... Because of this they called me a traitor, that I was no longer a Marxist. They held on to the ideology, making it into a problem. But the [real] problem was the military reshuffle" (CAVR 2006, 454). It appears generally accepted that Mauk Muruk's surrender to Indonesia was out of fear for meeting his own death as part of the resistance (see for example Weldemichael (2008)). With the death or surrender of Kilik Wae Gae, Mauk Muruk, and Ologari Asuwain, the three most powerful Falintil leaders — who had all been with the resistance from the beginning — were gone, leaving Xanana Gusmao with significantly enhanced powers.

One year later in 1985, Fretilin and UDT representatives in Portugal (where UDT was represented by João Carrascalão, Mario Carrascalão's brother) jointly announced "National Convergence" (collaboration), support for the guerilla-led resistance, and their intention to work together both in Timor and in the diplomatic field to bring about their mutual goals and interests. Fretilin and UDT (1986) This solidified CRRN's unity character.

4.4 The Clandestine Front and nonviolent action

Meanwhile, a formidable if delicate underground communication network had formed and become more formalized inside of the occupied territories, particularly the towns and cities. The Clandestine Front, Timor's underground information and supplies network, became an important player in the resistance especially once the civilian population left the *bases* for Indonesian-occupied areas. Constancio Pinto, who would go on to become the leader of the Clandestine Front once firmly incorporated in the resistance organization, describes the functions of the Clandestine Front from roughly the mid-1980s on:

[The Clandestine Front's] members worked to send messages about East Timor to family members and friends in Portugal and Australia and tried to support the resistance in the jungle. They would send the guerrillas food and supplies. The assistance sometimes included ammunition or money, but information was the most important resource for the guerrillas. We provided information on all sorts of matters, most typically on Indonesian military activities in the towns and throughout the territory, human rights violations, and developments on the diplomatic front regarding East Timor. We would get the information from shortwave radio and from people within the Catholic Church. Psychologically, the information that we provided was very important for the guerrillas. It let them know that they were not alone, that the world had not forgotten about East Timor. (Pinto and Jardine 1997, 98)

How did a fully-fledged information network emerge in occupied Timor-Leste, and how did it survive and evolve? How did it work? And finally, how did the Clandestine Front finally begin to organize nonviolent protest events, and how was it able to coordinate its activities with the rebel leadership?

In the first few years, those civilians who had not taken refuge in the mountains with Fretilin and Falintil still provided support and communicated with family members fighting in the mountain (CAVR 2006). While these clandestine activities were undertaken in a largely spontaneous manner following personal and family ties to the population fighting or residing under the mountain regime, there were quickly also more streamlined local clandestine groups. For example, in eastern Mehara, people formally coordinated their

clandestine activities as early as 1976 (Bexley and Tchailoro 2013, 407). Nuño Rodriguez Tchailoro, who returned with his family from the mountains to Dili during this period explains how these initial connections between rebels in the periphery and the towns and cities were made:

It really started from families. Before Indonesia destroyed the whole liberated zones, in the jungle, during three years, families would be together [in the *bases de apoio*]. So, after the destruction of liberated zones, because of the people's political education, the political system already [was] there, and people, on their own initiative, started to make a link [to rebel-held territories] by their own self. The families that surrendered, or were captured by the Indonesian military, they f[ou]nd ways to meet with their family members who were still in the mountains [fighting].⁴³

In other words, family ties across Indonesian lines existed throughout the brutal early years of the civil war, and once the *bases* were eradicated, connections to the jungle were strengthened as civilians with keen knowledge of the rebel situation in the mountain returned to occupied towns, knowledge which facilitated the continued exchange of information across enemy lines. During the 1979 to 1981 reconnaissance mission, the resistance leadership was able to substantiate the extent of the clandestine networks spanning Timor and incorporate this new-found knowledge into their strategic calculations moving forward.

In urban areas (Dili and Baucau), the formalization of the clandestine network fulfilled the dual role of information and supply source of information and a way to channel the increasingly riotous attitudes of young Timorese. Living under Indonesian martial rule, young Timorese had no access to secondary education or university and little perspective in life, causing aggression and restlessness; many bands of youth carried out small, uncoordinated raids and acts of vandalism Bexley and Tchailoro (2013). For example, Elisario Ferreira, the founder of one such gang, recalls: "In its beginnings, FITUN was just a gang with the objective of bashing and getting rid of new transmigrant arrivals from

⁴³Interview with Nuño Rodriguez Tchailoro, Dili, November 27, 2014. Tchailoro was a student activist in Indonesia and finally became the first and only Timorese historian of resistance history.

Indonesia" (quoted in Bexley and Tchailoro (2013, 408)). These gangs, acting on their own initiative, provoked the Indonesian army without Falintil having the ability to coordinate and made the resistance look disorganized and tattered; the leadership in the mountains grew concerned but quickly realized the gangs' untapped potential in terms of manpower. Via the Clandestine Front, the resistance leadership encouraged the formation their own youth organizations that subsumed the gangs in the cities, which led to groups such as Sagrada Familia and OPJLATIL, specifically tasked with carrying out logistical and tactical commands from Falintil (Bexley and Tchailoro 2013). Thus, the population in the cities was safer from reprisals against unsanctioned gang violence and the resistance had a new small army of messengers, called *estafetas*.

The 1983 ceasefire played an important, dual role in the development of a resilient underground information network. Kammen (2009) also notes that the resistance was keenly aware that it needed to broaden its civilian points of contact, and that this was one of the reasons Fretilin agreed the ceasefire. Pinto, at this time a student in occupied Dili, describes how the ceasefire allowed to move more freely and make personal contact with the mountain resistance: "Many people traveled from Dili, Baucau, and other towns and villages went to meet with the guerrillas" (Pinto and Jardine 1997, 93). This led both to improved coordination between towns and cities, and the further strengthening of people's personal ties to the Falintil fighters in the mountains. Second, the two brutal ABRI massacres of hundreds of civilians in Kraras and Viqueque as a consequence for Falintil's abrogation of the ceasefire had a motivating effect on many civilians to play a more active part in the resistance, as they realized the extent of ABRI's untrustworthiness and brutality. For Pinto, for example, it was the massacres that made him actively seek to join a clandestine cell in Dili. Understanding how it was possible for an individual to become a link in the Clandestine network allows for a deeper understanding of the underground network's internal organization and working.

In Pinto's school, the Catholic Externato in Dili, he was already cognizant that sev-

eral of the other students were involved in the underground, but he was not yet a trusted enough friend to be initiated; gaining the trust of already-initiated members was key, as ABRI often attempted to plant spies in the Clandestine Front. Once again, then, the successful operation of Timor's resistance network depended on personal ties rather than sophisticated technology. For his part, Pinto noticed that several of the students he suspected of being involved in the Clandestine Front were also members of the Catholic Scouts, an organization that was public and could be joined by anyone and was thus open to him. Pinto soon became a leader of the Balide Church troop in Dili, and it was only after months of holding the position that two underground members, José Manuel Fernandes and Donaciano Gomes, invited him to a meeting of their underground cell. Most local Clandestine cells had links to "legal" organizations or networks; while Pinto's was linked to the Scouts, others were connected to indigenous spiritual houses (*Umas Lulik*) or martial arts groups (such as Colimau 2000) Weldemichael (2008, 390).

Through the Clandestine cell network, Pinto became indirectly connected to Falintil. At one of the Dili meetings of the Scouts Clandestine cell, he was introduced to Toko, who had been a Falintil fighter in the jungle, but had been captured and now worked from Dili through another Clandestine Front cell. At first, Pinto's Scout cell channeled supplies for Falintil through Toko's connections, but after a few months, they had proven trustworthy enough to put in more direct contact with Falintil through Commander Alex Daitula. Daitula, in turn, was in a position to connect the cell to Mau Hudo, who had become Fretilin Chairman after Gusmão's resignation from the post in 1984 and Taur Matan Ruak, Falintil General Staff member (Pinto and Jardine 1997, 98).

Toko warned Pinto about the quintessentially frail nature of the Clandestine Front's structure: "The underground movement is something that is very delicate. You have to be determined and responsible for your own actions" (Pinto and Jardine 1997, 95). Self-sufficiency of both individual members and individual cells was indeed key to the survival of the clandestine front, and coordination was very difficult. It was paramount that if one

clandestine member were discovered by ABRI, they would not be able to give up information about many other members, so that each cell would maintain their own direct line to a Falintil commander without direct knowledge of other cells. According to Pinto, different population groups (students, civil servants, merchants, “churchpeople”, women’s groups, or, as in Pinto’s case, scouts) worked discreetly and separately, making coordination across cells virtually impossible, as cells were largely only connected via their Falintil contacts (Pinto and Jardine 1997, 93).

In a bid to improve the coordination of Clandestine Front activities, Pinto and several members of their original cell founded a new cell, 007, in 1985, and then individually went on to establish further cells, whose members in turn also systematically founded new cells. 007 had seven members, and each member founded a secondary cell with six more people, many of whom went on to found new cells in turn. In this manner, slow but direct communication and coordination between cells became possible: One person in the cell would know about one other cell, and that cell had its own person-to-person contacts to yet different cells (Pinto and Jardine 1997, 97). If captured, a Clandestine Front member would still only be able to give up a small handful of people and a maximum of two cells. In addition, with the approval of Alex Daitula, Pinto and the Scouts carefully began linking up existing cells through personal contacts across Timor, weaving them into a network resembling a tangled spider’s web.⁴⁴

About two years after its foundation, 007 had established a firm link to Xanana Gusmao, and with his approval, formed a new leadership organ called *Orgão Oito* in 1987 (Pinto and Jardine 1997, 97-98). *Orgão Oito* included leaders from all of the 007 offspring cells as well as several leaders of similar cellular structures across the country identified through careful reconnaissance over the span of several years. Through secret shortwave

⁴⁴As Pinto had not been a Falintil fighter, he had relative freedom of movement and could leave Dili with approval from ABRI. As he was a teacher and involved with the Church, approval was relatively easy for him to obtain, though he was not able to travel with larger quantities of food than needed by one family and could not smuggle weapons in this way.

radios and Timorese double agents working within the Indonesian ranks, cells could gain information about what was going on in the outside world (information was tightly controlled and even being caught with a radio was punishable by torture) and sometimes even about ABRI's internal workings and plans. A cell would channel the relevant information intended for the guerrillas to their Falintil contact, who would then in turn send it on to the appropriate final recipient (and the other way around). *Orgão Oito* maintained an extensive network of messengers (*estafetas*) that relayed messages between different cells or between cells and the armed resistance. Many former gang members were employed as *estafetas* (Bexley and Tchailoro 2013). Often, the *estafetas* actually crossing ABRI lines were women. According to Tchailoro, who is currently conducting research on the role of women in the Timorese resistance, explains: "The Indonesian military, with their concept of a very patriarchal society, they th[ought] that ... women are really weak. ... When the Indonesians controlled the whole island, they didn't allow any men to cross the lines, so that was the main role of women. They could go and pass freely to other places, and the Indonesians didn't discover that they were doing clandestine activities. They didn't discover that inside women's weakness there is also a strength."⁴⁵

In addition to messages, *estafetas* would also provide Falintil with supplies and, rarely, ammunition. Before 1984, leaving Dili required a travel document (*surat jalan*), so that supplies could only be moved under the guise of sending food to family in another town, which made the movement of supplies exceedingly slow. After 1984, Indonesia allowed free movement out of Dili into other occupied zones, although there were still military checkpoints throughout the country. If caught, Indonesian soldiers could often be bribed with small sums of money or a pack of cigarettes (Pinto and Jardine 1997, 100). A common practice was to use several *estafetas* to transport goods: The first messenger would drop off the message or goods at a designated location, and the bundle would be picked up by a second *estafeta* either the rest of the way or to an additional relay point. This ensured

⁴⁵Interview with Nuño Rodriguez Tchailoro, Dili, November 27, 2014

that ABRI could only glean minimal information from one captured messenger.

The 1987 reorganization

In the December 1987 anniversary of the Indonesian invasion twelve years prior, Xanana Gusmao announced in a speech that was internationally disseminated via the External Delegation the formation of a true “national unity” organization and a decisive shift in both strategy and ideology. At this point, the unity character of the resistance was established fact, and communication within Timor through the Clandestine Front and outside Timor with the External Delegation allowed significant intra-resistance coordination. Gusmão announced that he had undertaken a “significant change of position” that “affirm[ed] that we are becoming, finally, more realistic!” He critically assessed the resistance’s experience with Marxism-Leninism, dismissing it as “political infantilism that tried to defy the world, obsessed with our non-existent capacities.” In particular, he renounced “doctrines that promote suppression of democratic freedoms in East Timor” and that incited “senseless radicalism [that] paid no attention to our concrete conditions and limitations” (Gusmão 2000, 129-136).

In the self-same speech, Gusmão outline the new objectives of the resistance: Decreasing Indonesian capacity, increasing Timorese resilience, and, most importantly, achieving the international recognition of the Timorese right to self-determination. In order to achieve this, he withdrew from Fretilin to become a non-partisan leader of all pro-independence Timorese within the framework of the newly created National Council of Maubere Resistance (CNRM), with Falintil as a neutral military apparatus of the resistance movement. The umbrella organization was purposefully structured so as to maximize coordination mechanisms between the armed resistance, the Clandestine Front within Timor and within Indonesia, and the renamed Diplomatic Front abroad in full recognition that the resistance could probably not overcome Indonesia militarily.

Fretilin was now but one party within the CNRM. While the erstwhile author of

Fretilin's party program Abilio de Araújo — still in exile in Lisbon — strongly opposed these changes, there was little he could do, and while a few others joined him in dissent, opposition to Gusmão's most sweeping structural and political changes to date was largely limited to exiled Fretilin members (Weldemichael 2008, 385). Since Ramos-Horta had never accepted Fretilin's Marxist-Leninist turn in the first place, he now became the de-facto leader of the External Delegation, which was officially incorporated into the organizational structure of CNRM as the Diplomatic Front (Weldemichael 2008, 386). Gusmao expressed his confidence in Ramos-Horta both vocally and in practice, giving him complete freedom to direct the Diplomatic Front's actions, structures, and strategies, answerable only to Gusmao himself. He explained in a letter how this was part of his greater objective of centralizing and streamlining the resistance now that it was no longer bound to a party:

The regulation of institutional functioning should be the most basic, not losing oneself in the confusion of capitals, articles and paragraphs with no end, that only reflect a "necessity" to satisfy all of the components of structure, as if it were the primary objective ... It is in this sentiment that we advocate a simple, but functional 'structure of war,' in which the sentiment of duty will prevail more than a description of rules of a "democratic" game. (Quoted in (Weldemichael 2008, 385)

Gusmão had now surrounded himself with trusted long-time political friends and allies and firmly integrated erstwhile moderate rivals (UDT) into his organizational framework. Potential challengers to the left had either died in the first years of the resistance, killed in action later, or pushed to surrender to Indonesia. His position within the organization was so comfortable that he was able to give younger civilian leaders within the Clandestine Front or old allies such as Ramos-Horta considerable freedom to act relatively autonomously, reserving only veto right for their actions. This is in stark contrast to Fretilin in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when Falintil was given little to no strategic or even tactical leeway to adjust their strategies to changing circumstances on the ground.

The strategic shift towards nonviolent action

In November 1988, Suharto visited Timor for the first time and determined that the country would be opened to foreign visitors in a limited fashion on the strong urging of Mario Carrascalão. It was then that he announced the visit from Pope John Paul II, planned for October 1989, clearly hoping that the visit of the Pope would confer legitimacy onto Indonesia's annexation, if not lead to outright recognition of Indonesia's claims by the Vatican. Pinto, then part of Orgão Oito's leadership, recalls his cell's reactions to the announced visit: "Although we were worried that the Pope's visit might constitute a form of recognition of Indonesia's annexation of East Timor, we immediately began thinking of how we might take advantage of the Pope's visit. We saw the Pope's visit as one of the most important opportunities in the history of our struggle to influence international public opinion" (Pinto and Jardine 1997, 107). This is the first moment I could identify when the idea of nonviolent strategy was explicitly considered as a possibility; clearly, the announcement of the Pope's visit quickly triggered considerations about how it might be exploited strategically. As phrased by Tchailoro: "In Tacitolo, when the Pope visited East Timor for the first time, ... they tried to use that momentum, to show that there is still a big resistance against Indonesian occupation."⁴⁶

Via *estafeta*, Orgão Oito began conferring with Falintil leader David Alex; both sides agreed that a demonstration would be the most effective way to embarrass Indonesia internationally, as dozens of reporters from all over the world would attend the Pope's mass in Tacitolo, a walled open-air forum in Dili with only two entrances that could be easily patrolled by ABRI. A demonstration seemed like a good, practical approach. While "none of us [Timorese], since the time of the invasion, had ever participated in any sort of demonstration, ... we knew about the potential effectiveness of demonstrations through what we learned from international shortwave radio and even Indonesian public

⁴⁶Interview with Nuno Rodrigues Tchailoro, Dili, November 27, 2014

television about struggles in places such as South Korea, Israeli-occupied Palestine, and Europe” (Pinto and Jardine 1997, 108). Once more, political mobilization and organizing in Timor-Leste took on a quasi-experimental character.

This first demonstration was not, as is often assumed, a spontaneous expression of discontent, nor was it an initiative solely planned by Orgão Oito (also recall that Orgão Oito, as the Clandestine Front’s leadership at the time, was formally a part of CNRM). Rather, CNRM’s leadership approved of the plan in its very early stages. Through David Alex, who was in the company of Xanana Gusmão, Orgão Oito was able to communicate with Xanana Gusmão about the planned demonstration; according to Donaciano Gomes, Pinto’s close friend and also in the leadership of O.O., Gusmão “through a clandestine message ... approve[d] our plan to carry out a demonstration after the high mass was celebrated by the Pope at Taci-Tolu [sic] on 12 October” (Gomes 1995, 107). This meant that planning commenced almost immediately upon hearing of the Pope’s planned visit, as communication via *estafetas* was slow and cumbersome. Importantly, we can see here that the impetus for innovation came from the one of CNRM’s organizational arms (the Clandestine Front) rather than directly from Gusmão, which provides valuable insights into the nature of innovation within the Timorese Resistance under Gusmão. It appears that Gusmão’s position within the organization was established enough that strategic adjustments could be proposed by younger leaders, as long as he was apprised of plans.

The plan for the Papal visit demonstration was for Constancio Pinto to be in charge of communication with other cells, while José Manuel, Donaciano, Francisco Lelan, and a few others would lead the protest.⁴⁷ Of their discussions of the meticulous planning required for the day of this first demonstration, Pinto recalls that both Orgão Oito and their correspondents in the mountains were “concerned ... that it would be difficult to hold a demonstration because people were not yet brave enough to speak out publicly

⁴⁷Presumably because Pinto was at this point embedded in so many different cells and had so many contacts, he was both too valuable to potentially lose and also had too much information that could be given up under torture.

against the occupation and the repression” (Pinto and Jardine 1997, 107). While they were able to mobilize members of the Clandestine Front cells independently, they could not reach everyone who would be at the demonstration, and whether people were willing to put themselves at risk was a big question mark in the planning process.

The details of the event were left entirely in the hands of Orgão Oito, as communication via David Alex became impossible about three months prior to the Pope’s visit. ABRI tightened security measures and engaged Falintil in the periphery as “the military tried to push the guerrillas far away from the villages and towns to keep them busy in the jungle,” likely to subdue the resistance as much as possible prior to the Pope’s visit and avoid Falintil presence in Dili on the day of (Pinto and Jardine 1997, 108). Thus, on the days leading up to the mass, Dili was congested with soldiers (and the whole area of Tacitolo was blocked off), military vehicles, and even tanks. This shows the sheer level of unpreparedness on the part of ABRI for nonviolent protest, against which tanks would have little effect.

The plan for the mass was to have the 400 Catholic Scouts, who had been formally invited to attend the mass, smuggle banners into Tacitolo, which they managed to do this despite being searched for weapons. Banners at this first nonviolent event were adorned with a wide variety of slogans ranging from “Welcome John Paul II” over “Long Live East Timor” and “Free East Timor” to “Indonesia Get Out,” whereas the message in subsequent demonstrations was more finely tuned and focused on demands for a UN-administered referendum. The Scouts stood at the front of the room close to the Pope; they waited until he had given his final blessing, and then a significant portion of them ripped off their uniforms, unfurled their banners, and began shouting pro-independence slogans. Chaos ensued; according to Pinto, who was among the Scout leaders but was not participating in the protest as per agreement, describes how some people in the church chimed in with the Scouts: “People in the choir who were singing *Cristus V[i]ncit* continued to sing, but some of them simultaneously shouted out slogans. Other people in the crowd

started shouting out slogans as well ... The Indonesian military immediately grabbed the Pope and took him away. ... The intelligence agents couldn't tell which people had been demonstrating. How could you stop hundreds of people running in the same direction?" (Pinto and Jardine 1997, 110)

The demonstration had been a mixed success. The demonstration did not lead to immediate, widespread popular participation in the demonstration. *Orgão Oito* planners had "thought that when we [they] took this action, everybody would participate in the demonstration. But when it happened, only a few hundred people, just a small group in the center of the crowd, largely individuals from the Catholic scouts and from various underground organizations, took part. The people in the periphery, for the most part, were afraid and ran away" (Pinto and Jardine 1997, 111). Yet, Pinto describes that the first demonstration led to a surge in civilians wanting to join the Clandestine Front, and "the demonstration greatly excited the people in East Timor" (111). Following the demonstration, while there were reprisals, arrests, and torture following the demonstration, only a handful of instigators was caught, as many of the leaders had sought refuge in Bishop Carlos Ximenes' residence, though eventually both Donaciano Gomes and José Manuel were arrested. Furthermore, the first demonstration also indicated the international effect of nonviolent action, as almost all of the international media coverage of the Pope's visit prominently featured the demonstrators, and many published photos of ABRI troops beating civilians with metal chairs (Robinson 2011, 81).

Xanana Gusmão was impressed with the effects of the demonstration and formally endorsed plans for further direct, nonviolent action aimed at an international audience (Robinson 2011, 82). With Falintil and the CNRM leadership on board, David Alex reached out to Pinto and O.O.'s leadership for an in-person meeting outside of Baucau, which was risky and thus had never happened before. That the first demonstration was considered promising enough to warrant in-person contact is another clear indication for the resistance leadership's enthusiasm about nonviolent action as a strategy with great potential.

The meeting between Orgão Oito representatives and David Alex was focused on planning on a second, improved demonstration on the occasion of a planned visit to Timor by John Monjo, US Ambassador to Indonesia, which was to take place at the Hotel Turismo in Dili. They also “discussed the tactics and strategy of the underground, the mechanisms of the organization, and how to maintain and improve our communications with Falintil and abroad” (Pinto and Jardine 1997, 114).

Back in Dili, based on notes received through David Alex, Orgão Oito reached out to groups not yet formally within their network to invite them to participate in the Turismo demonstration. While the number of demonstrators eventually present at the Turismo was similar to the group at Tacitolo, the demonstrators’ organizational make-up was more diverse, and their demands were now precisely in line with those of CNRM as evidenced by the list of demands presented to Monjo by the demonstrators. The demonstrators demanded for the US to support negotiations with Indonesia, the withdrawal of the Indonesian military from the island, and the holding of a referendum on Timorese independence in accordance with UN decolonization guidelines Pinto and Jardine (1997, 116). This shows the nature of the relationship between the Clandestine Front nonviolent activist leaders and CNRM’s leadership; the former immediately implemented changes to their approach as desired by the overall resistance leadership.

After the Turismo demonstration, demonstration events in Timor quickly multiplied. Through a contact at the governor’s office (with Carrascalão no longer in office), the Clandestine Front was apprised of planned visitors from abroad well ahead of time (foreign visits had to be scheduled well in advance so that ABRI could prepare). In my interviews, several nonviolent organizers described the process of planning such an event in an identical fashion: The most common method of informing the leadership or alerting different clandestine cells of planned demonstration events was either through the dissemination of photocopied messages that detailed the plan for the day or through tapes. While many Clandestine Front cells had access to photocopiers through members who

worked undercover in the administration, these would often be under close observation by the Indonesian intelligence. Therefore, it was more common for plans to be recorded on tapes, which would then be duplicated and passed on by cells that were in possession of contraband tape recorders. While there were some instances where the message about intended demonstrations did not reach the resistance leadership in time for approval, this was the norm; it was a clear expectation that demonstrations remain nonviolent, and that demands not deviate from CNRM's. Overall, this planning process, due to the slowness of the *estafeta*-based communication system, never took less than three months.⁴⁸

By the time of the first nonviolent protest in 1989, the Timorese resistance had readied itself organizationally and structurally for the effective use of its strategy on three different fronts: Through the buildup of the Clandestine Front within Timor, through the placement of Timorese students in Indonesia, and through an international network of its own diplomats and sympathetic international community members. The Diplomatic Front had become skilled at instrumentalizing the foreign press. In 1990, the Diplomatic Front, the Clandestine Front, and Falintil collaborated in smuggling a foreign journalist, Robert Domm, into the jungle to meet directly with Xanana Gusmão; the interview would cause international uproar. This interview really proves the effective functioning of CNRM's carefully constructed coordination mechanisms, as it took several hundred resistance members to get Domm from Dili to Gusmão's base in the mountains (Koloff 2015).

Expansion of nonviolent arm in Indonesia through Renetil

In the mid-1980s, Mario Carrascalão convinced Suharto to grant Timorese students the right to secondary education in Indonesia. He argued that this would keep young Timorese away from riotous activities, prevent their recruitment by the resistance, and would cultivate an Indonesian-indoctrinated future Timorese elite. In 1986, Jakarta initiated a

⁴⁸interview with Alex Tilman, November 25, 2014; interview with Ozorio, Dili, December 15, 2014; interview with Carlito, December 19, 2014; interview with José Pereira, Dili, July 22, 2015.

program of competitive scholarships for Timorese students. The Timorese students in Bali and Java quickly realized the disparities in development and freedoms between Timor and Indonesia, and this realization coincided with their study of political philosophy and theories of nationalism. Further, the arrival of the Timorese students in Indonesia almost perfectly coincided with the emergence of an Indonesian student-led pro-democracy movement, which was building a network of student organizations across the country and linking up to NGOs. The Timorese students and the Indonesian students began exchanging ideas and slowly linking up their aims and purpose (Robinson 2011, 80).

In an interview by Weldemichael, one of the former students, Saky, draws a parallel between the Timorese resistance and the growth of Indonesian nationalism through education in the Netherlands: “Young Indonesians who studied in Indonesia and in Holland started challenging Dutch colonialism and so we put our heads together to see what we can benefit from our studying in Indonesia so that we can advance our cause for independence and we found a lot” (quoted in Weldemichael (2008, 417)). Similarly, in his reflections from 1995, Donaciano Gomes draws a direct line between the Timorese resistance and the Indonesian anti-colonial struggle fifty years earlier: “The Indonesian military and the people of Indonesia should both remember their own arduous struggle against Dutch colonialism in the late 1940s. They should remember that we ... have the same rights as they do” (Gomes 1995, 108). Rather than furthering Timorese integration, the scholarship program provided both new information and new allies to the Timorese resistance.

In 1988, about two years after the initiation of the scholarship program, ten Timorese students founded the *Resistência Nacional dos Estudantes de Timor Leste* (National Resistance of East Timorese Students or Renetil). Renetil was established by students; as put by one of its founding members, Fernando de Araújo (“Lasama”), the idea of a student organization came from the students themselves rather than from the older generation of leaders: “We considered Xanana Gusmão our leader, but Renetil was our idea. He later gave his approval” (as told by de Araújo to Robinson (2011, 81)). The organiza-

tion pledged allegiance to Xanana Gusmao, even before being formally incorporated into CNRM's structure in 1990. Allegiance to Gusmão Gusmão was absolute; as explained by former Renetil activist Lucas da Costa Lopes in a conversation with Stephan: "We were called Xananists because we swore an oath of loyalty to Gusmão and the CNRM and followed [his] orders without disobeying" (quoted in Stephan (2005, 71)).

While the overarching aims of Renetil were identical to CNRM's, they set themselves intermediary goals that could help CNRM's mission overall:

1. Insulate Timorese students in Indonesia and prevent them from being absorbed into the Indonesian integrationist scheme;
2. Expose (to Indonesia and the international community) the crimes perpetrated by ABRI and the Indonesian government;
3. Prepare a corps of educated East Timorese for peacetime national reconstruction.

The third point in particular was seen as very important. After observing the stark disparities in development between Timor and Indonesia, the students realized that Timor was not in fact ready for self-government, as both the requisite infrastructure and requisite governing skills were lacking. Timorese students were encouraged to choose subjects with practical value, such as economics, engineering, agriculture, or law.⁴⁹

Renetil was able to grow relatively quickly and safely thanks to Carrascalão's foresight in establishing an official East Timorese Student Organization (Ikatan Mahasiswa dan Plajar Timor Timur or IMPETTU) that was approved by Suharto himself. The underlying rationale was to foster forging a Timorese identity within the Indonesian framework and to control their activities. Edmundo Viegas, who was the leader of IMPETTU Yogyakarta and is now a dean at the Timorese National University, explained that the Indonesian rationale for IMPETTU was to grow a Timorese identity within Indonesia among students who were cut off from their homeland; it was supposed to help Timorese students realize

⁴⁹Interview with Edmundo Viegas, Dili, December 12, 2014

that “Timorese” and “Indonesian” were not incompatible identities. According to Viegas, IMPETTU was instrumental in establishing connections between Timorese students studying in different universities (most students were either in Denpasar (Bali), Jakarta, or Yogyakarta).⁵⁰

After the foundation of Renetil, IMPETTU continued to play key roles. As an IMPETTU chapter leader, Viegas would organize travel for Timorese students to other cities under the guise of athletic or religious events; these events were a pretense for Renetil coordination meetings or even allowed students to legally travel to protest locations.⁵¹ IMPETTU would continue to offer the pro-independence students a convenient camouflage for the activities of Renetil; all of IMPETTU’s leaders were also Renetil members. The legal mantle of IMPETTU allowed for official contact between the Timorese pro-independence students and Indonesian pro-democracy student groups, which built the base for the later alliance between the two movements. When Indonesia started to crack down on IMPETTU, a legally sanctioned Indonesian organization, Renetil members used the open forum of courtrooms to eloquently plead for the Timorese case using perfectly crafted legal arguments.(Weldemichael 2008, 423)

The foundation of Renetil immediately extended CNRM’s tentacles into Indonesia as newly minted students could legally move between Bali, Jakarta, and Dili. In his first letter to Renetil in December 1988, Gusmão advised Renetil’s founders to remain autonomously affiliated with CNRM rather than attaching themselves to Fretilin, and to accept all Timorese students into their ranks regardless of their political background. Communication between the leadership of Renetil (Lasama became Secretary) and CNRM was done through letters delivered by *estafetas* once they reached Timor. (Weldemichael 2008, 418) Just as the adoption of nonviolent action in mainland Timor originated from Orgão Oito rather than CNRM’s highest echelons, the foundation of a student organization and network in

⁵⁰Interview with Edmundo Viegas, Dili, December 12, 2014

⁵¹Interview with Edmundo Viegas, Dili, December 12, 2014

Indonesia proceeded from the bottom up. Thus, the founding story of Renetil provides strong indication for the strength of Gusmão's position in CNRM; as long as the new organization fit CNRM's aims and goals, he appeared not to have felt threatened by strategic change and growth of the organization.

Just as nonviolent demonstrations organized by the Clandestine Front aimed to reach a wider global audience to witness its struggle and increase pressure on Indonesia, Renetil's focus was on publicizing Timor's plight internationally. This was considerably easier to do in Indonesia than in Timor, as there was a considerable presence of international press outlets, foreign representatives, and sympathetic organizations. Thus, the types of activist events organized by Renetil in Indonesia was broader than those organized in Timor, and entirely focused on internationalization and the exchange of information: Demonstrations, sit-ins, groups of students symbolically seeking asylum in carefully selected foreign embassies, and publicized legal defenses in courtrooms following arrests. In addition, Renetil played a key role in gathering information and sharing it with the rest of the resistance. Geoffrey Robinson, who was working for Amnesty International in Jakarta at the time and had many Timorese contacts himself, describes Renetil's crucial role in providing information: "From his small student room in Denpasar, Bali, ... Lasama sent carefully drafted messages about recent human rights and political developments inside East Timor to a wide range of international contacts, including Amnesty International and the ICRC. And when new information arrived from abroad, he would send it by Renetil courier back to East Timor for further distribution within the resistance."⁵² (Robinson 2011, 81)

With internationally aimed activism events by both Renetil and the Clandestine Front, the internationalization of the resistance strategy became inevitable and is mirrored in the content of Gusmão's missives to Renetil, the Diplomatic Front, and the Clandestine

⁵²With students visiting their families in East Timor, it was relatively easy for Renetil to move information in and out of Timor.

Front. Virgilio Guterres, then a student in Indonesia, describes the tapes they received from prison during this period: Gusmão now defined war as “the art of living side-by-side with the enemy,” implying that Gusmão no longer believed that the Timorese resistance struggle would be won on the battle field. The Timorese students in Indonesia, now well-versed in philosophy, economics, history, and political science, then “tried to apply Gusmao’s messages to our own context” (Guterres quoted by Stephan (2005, 75)). In this vein, Sarmiento Alves, another Renetil member, expands: “We began to study Bahasa Indonesia along with the Indonesian constitution and state ideology, known as the Pancasila. We emphasized learning Bahasa in the same way the the Indonesians learned Dutch in the Netherlands as part of their anti-colonial struggle.” (Both quoted by Stephan (2005, 75-76)) Many Renetil members were now actively joining Indonesian pro-democracy groups and actively forging personal connections with Indonesian students.

In 1989, Renetil debuted a new type of nonviolent event when they coordinated large groups of students to simultaneously seek asylum at three embassies with close ties to Indonesia and significant international clout — Austria, the Vatican, and Japan — providing them with detailed accounts of Indonesian human rights abuses in Timor. Although they were ejected from the embassies at the behest of the Indonesian government, the stunt caught the attention of Indonesian pro-democracy organizations. Weldemichael (2008) has unearthed a note from 1991, in which a Renetil leader passes on information received directly from CNRM through a brainstorming session he attended during a visit home, during which CNRM, Renetil, and Clandestine Front leaders coordinated events for the upcoming visit of the Portuguese parliamentary delegation to Timor in 1991. The note emphasizes the crucial importance of secrecy regarding the plans for the Portuguese Parliamentary Delegation visit, and urges Renetil to mobilize its members and network of strategically placed friends to maximize coverage of events surrounding the Portuguese visit. This shows how a Renetil-originated idea for new resistance activism was taken up by the leadership and made more effective by coordination between all arms. By this

time, Renetil had curated personal and institutionalized connections with human rights advocates in Indonesia, journalists, and officials at foreign embassies, to whom they were funneling information about unfolding events and the human rights situation on the half island. The embassy publicity stunts helped training the international spotlight on Timor-Leste, so that coverage of the subsequent Santa Cruz Massacre (see below) internationally was maximized, as the cause was now already widely known.

After the successful coordination of activism between different organizational arms of CNRM on the occasion of the Portuguese visit, this same focusing strategy was replicated whenever there was an event (such as a foreign visit to Timor or an international event that fit into the resistance's narrative), and the methods of courting international attention became more sophisticated. On the occasion of the UN Human Rights Summit in Vienna in June 1993, Renetil organized another wave of asylum seeking event, this time at the Swedish and Finish embassies in Jakarta. In step with the mass asylum applications, Renetil released a letter to their advocacy contacts in Indonesia. The letter and asylum events drew wide and sustained attention in Europe, especially as Renetil had coordinated with Amnesty International in Jakarta to release an official press release within 24 hours. The amnesty event at the Swedish and Finnish embassies was planned in direct collaboration with Xanana Gusmão, who had been using his status as a political prisoner in Jakarta to communicate with the world more directly, thereby now fully committing to the international strategy (Robinson 2011, 89). Gusmão communicated from prison through a young Australian activist, Kirsty Sword, who had gained unparalleled access due to her gender and white skin; with international attention trained on Gusmão and the Timorese resistance, Indonesia could not simply let the independence leader "disappear". On the event of the 1993 asylum activism, Gusmão made a personal appeal from prison that was released at the same time as personal background profiles on the asylum seekers, previously planted with international news outlets, and both designed to personalize the Timorese struggle and increase international sympathy by allowing people to put faces

and names with the Timorese cause (Robinson 2011, 90).

Like the Clandestine Front, Renetil was given considerable autonomy in planning and carrying out its events and even sometimes initiated innovative new forms of activism. Carlito, a former Renetil activist, explained that strategic guidelines were provided directly by Xanana Gusmão, but the execution was left up to the student groups.⁵³ Yet, as with the Clandestine Front, every single planned event was communicated to CNRM in advance and approved, usually sent through a student who was visiting home (each student was able to visit home once a year), in a process that could take months.⁵⁴ If organizers failed to do so, they were often severely reprimanded by Gusmão (Weldemichael 2008, 418). When the Clandestine Front organized a demonstration at the occasion of a visit of Timor by the Australian Ambassador to Indonesia, Renetil planned a parallel demonstration in Jakarta, but their letter did not reach Gusmão in time. Gusmão furiously wrote to the Renetil leadership: “If the resistance’s chain of command cannot be strictly respected in its current state, then the command may as well be transferred to Renetil HQ.” (Letter quoted in Weldemichael (2008, 419)).

This indicates that it was crucial to maintaining a functioning, resilient organization under Xanana Gusmão’s leadership that Gusmão was able to trust that he was receiving all of the relevant information. Thus, for the maintenance of order and unity, it was not enough for there to be a tightly spun network to mobilize different arms of the resistance, but that information could travel back towards the top of the organization. The demonstration of control over this sprawling movement was key to Gusmão according to an anecdote by Colonel Monana, a senior Falintil commander who was taken prisoner in the late 1980s and spent most of the 1990s in prison in Jakarta and was a close associate of Gusmão’s. When a homemade bomb detonated at one of the student-led protest marches in Jakarta (clearly in the face of directives to stay nonviolent at all costs at such events),

⁵³Interview with Carlito (resistance name) in Dili, December 10, 2014

⁵⁴Interview with Carlito in Dili, December 10, 2014 (similar process confirmed in several other interviews)

Gusmão immediately released a statement claiming responsibility for the act of violence, thus maintaining the external semblance of complete control even if it made him appear less principled.⁵⁵ While there was never an official doctrine on the use of nonviolence, there was a clear directive to keep violent resistance and popular resistance separated.

A summary of CNRM's basic organizational structure is provided in Figure 4.3.

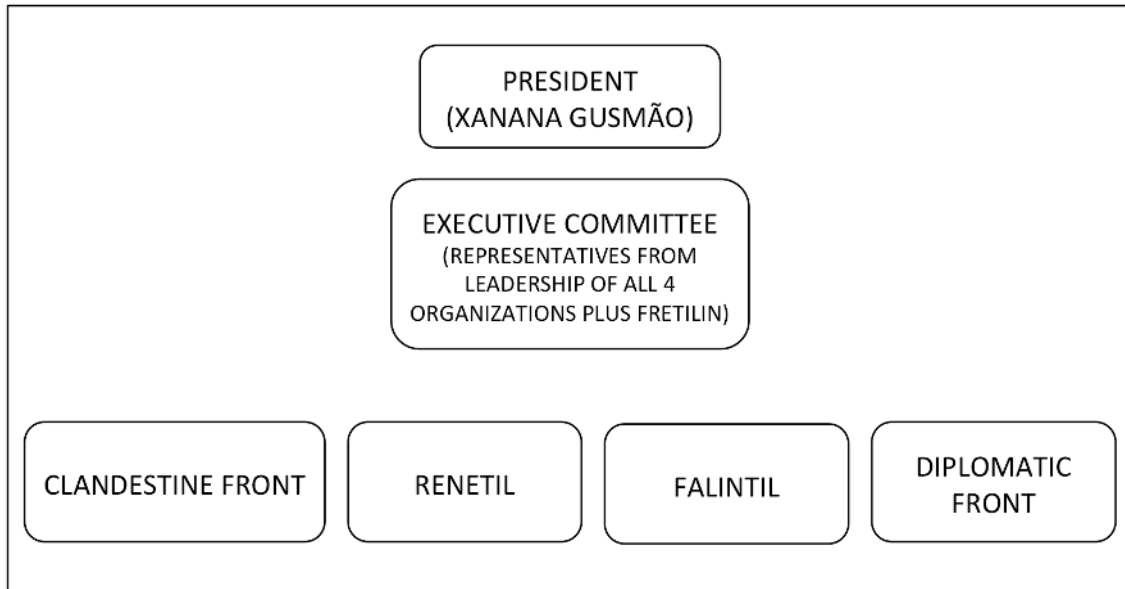


Figure 4.3: CNRM's Structure in 1990

Santa Cruz and the subsequent nonviolent march to victory

In October 1991, a planned visit of a Portuguese parliamentary delegation, which had brought significant hope that Portugal might pressure Indonesia to allow for a formal decolonization process and referendum, was cancelled on Indonesia's urging. A large-scale protest march had already been planned through the Clandestine Front Central Committee, and turned into a medium-scale protest march denouncing the cancellation of the visit (there were already foreign journalists in Dili who had planned on reporting on the delegation visit); during this protest, ABRI forces killed a young protestor named

⁵⁵Interview with Colonel Monana (Monana is a resistance moniker) in Dili, December 6, 2014

Sebastião Gomes (Pinto and Jardine 1997). On 12 November, the Clandestine Front organized a peaceful march from Motael Church in Dili (where a memorial service had been held for Gomes) to the site of his grave in Santa Cruz cemetery, about 15 minutes on foot; many mourners from the service joined in the march, swelling it to about 200 participants (Robinson 2011, 66). Marchers chanted pro-referendum slogans and waved Fretilin flags.⁵⁶ When most of the marchers were inside the cemetery walls, trucks carrying Indonesian soldiers armed with US-supplied MI-16s suddenly appeared. The soldiers got out of the truck and started indiscriminately firing on the trapped crowd, even pursuing those who fled. Estimates hold that around 300 Timorese civilians were killed at Santa Cruz. While this is not the most deadly Timorese massacre, it is the only one that was witnessed and documented by foreign journalists; Amy Goodman, Allan Nairn, and Max Stahl survived the massacre and Stahl managed to bury and later retrieve film footage.

Cristalis (2002, 49) sums up the effect of Santa Cruz:

It was not the first or worst massacre in East Timor, nor would it be the last, but [this] time the Indonesians could not totally deny what had happened, the world could not close its eyes, and the politicians could not avert their gaze from a simple truth: Indonesian soldiers had opened fire, without any warning, on a group of unarmed youngsters in school uniforms.

Many echo the pivotal role of Santa Cruz in the Timorese resistance. According to Robinson, observing unfolding events at the time from Indonesia, “without question the critical turning point in East Timor’s path to independence was the massacre at the Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili, on November 12, 1991, in which as many as 270 young people were killed by Indonesian troops” Robinson (2011, 66). When asked Octavianus Mote, the coordinator of the West Papuan independence movement abroad, about the most important factor that allowed the Timorese independence campaign to succeed, he answered “Portugal and Santa Cruz, but mostly Santa Cruz. That was the most important factor.”⁵⁷

⁵⁶Even after the establishment of CNRM, the Fretilin flag was used to signal allegiance to the resistance, not Fretilin in particular — the flag is now Timor’s national flag

⁵⁷Interview with Octavianus Mote in Bern, Switzerland, 11 November 2014

Similarly, Mohamed Badi Slama, at the time West Sahara's ambassador to Timor-Leste, said it was difficult to overstate the importance of Santa Cruz.⁵⁸ While this indicates that the pure chance of a massacre being filmed changed the trajectory of the independence movement, this is misleading. Santa Cruz was a focusing event, but its effect is in large part due to the three years of organized nonviolent action and the establishment of strong relationships with foreign media outlets and organizations.

The brutality of the Santa Cruz massacre also represents a key test of the resistance's commitment to nonviolent action and their ability to rein in riotous anti-Indonesian sentiments. In an interview from 2000, Pinto explains how it was most difficult after Santa Cruz to maintain the peaceful character of the resistance movement: "The underground movement was unarmed. We could have obtained weapons — we had some people in the Indonesian armed forces, we had access to Falintil, and we could buy weapons from Indonesia. But we thought it would be a mistake. For example, after the Santa Cruz massacre people were very angry about the massacre and wanted to revolt in response, but we thought it would be a big mistake. If we did that they would just go from house to house and wipe out everyone. We knew how the enemy behaved towards the population ..." (quoted in Tanter, Selden and Shalom (2001, 36)).

When images of the Santa Cruz massacre were sent around the world, Indonesia was forced to publicly address the charges and even take some actions. Indonesia justified the harsh response (though claiming that only 19 "rioters" had been killed) in the following way, taken from the official statement by the regional military commander of the time, Major General Mantiri:

We don't regret anything. What happened was quite proper ... They were opposing us, demonstrating, even yelling things against the government. To me that is identical with rebellion, so that is why we took firm action ... [T]heir theme was opposing the government. Long Live Fretilin. Long Live Xanana, waving Fretilin flags. If they try that now, I will not tolerate it. I will order

⁵⁸Interview with Mohamed Badi Slama in Dili, December 13, 2014

strong action ...I don't think there's anything strange in that. (Quoted in Robinson (2011, 67))

However, testimonies such as this actually demonstrate the effect of Santa Cruz: because of the irrefutable evidence of brutality against unarmed civilians, recorded and disseminated by foreign journalists, several governments actually suspended development assistance to Indonesia contingent upon action against the perpetrators of Santa Cruz. Public hearings were held, and two senior Indonesian army officers were relieved of their posts in Timor (Robinson 2011, 83).

Though the main focus of this chapter is the initial adoption of nonviolent action as a strategy, I will briefly outline the trajectory of the last few years of resistance. Santa Cruz was a watershed moment for the resistance and there was a clear shift in focus and strategy that prioritized nonviolent activism and diplomatic efforts. According to Pinto, after the collapse of the armed struggle in 1979, the underground movement steadily gained importance in relation to Falintil between 1981 and 1999, but 1991 marked the moment where the coordination between the Clandestine Front, Renetil, and the Diplomatic Front became the focus of the resistance (Gusmão's imprisonment in Indonesia also contributed to this balance shift). He explains: "From 1991 to 1999, the activities of the underground and the diplomatic front were complementary. The underground continued its peaceful activities and at the same time the diplomatic front made great advances, helping to build support for the struggle worldwide" (quoted in Tanter, Selden and Shalom (2001, 36)). Importantly, though no military match for Indonesia, Falintil remained fighting in the mountains as per CNRM's official policy, as "their presence in the mountains forced the international community to recognize that the resistance would not be extinguished for many years and that the situation could only be resolved by negotiation, which meant coming to terms with Falintil" (Pinto quoted by Tanter, Selden and Shalom (2001, 36)).

CNRM re-emphasized non-partisan unity identity. Both within Timor and in exile, CNRM publicly reached out to Apodeti and UDT members who were not yet officially

a part of the organization to demonstrate the unity character of the movement. Santa Cruz also had a catalyzing effect on the unity front within the Timorese resistance. Even Mauk Muruk, who had once surrendered to the Indonesians because he could not agree to Gusmão's pro-unity approach, wrote from exile in favor of a nationalist, pro-unity approach: "We members of the East Timorese resistance are not murderers as some people have tried to depict us, but simply nationalist soldiers dedicated to the defence [sic] of our country in the face of Indonesian invasion, occupation, and genocide. We are dedicated to upholding the fundamental principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights." (Gama 1995, 99).

The aftermath of Santa Cruz increasingly saw the resistance cloaking its resistance in the language of human rights and using legal channels as often as possible. As summed up by Robinson: "By casting its demands in the language of human rights, the East Timorese resistance and its allies succeeded in reaching a far broader international audience than it had done when the movement was seen as being engaged primarily in armed struggle" (82). Strategically placed protest marches multiplied both in Indonesia and Timor-Leste; Nuno Rodrigues Tchailoro, who now heads the Memorial Museum in Dili, has accounted for over 500 individual nonviolent protest events in his preliminary archival research project.⁵⁹ In parallel, a network of solidarity organizations such as the American East Timorese Action Network sprung up internationally and began organizing protests globally.

The Diplomatic Front, together with Renetil, embarked on a strategy of "Indonesianization." Beginning with the student groups formed in the late 1980s, there was now an increasing number of Indonesian pro-democracy advocacy organizations. NGOs such as Lemgaga Bantuan Hukum (Legal Aid Institute), Lembaga Studi dan Advokasi Masyarakat (Institute for Policy Research and Advocacy), or Fortilos (Forum Solidaritas Untuk Rakyat Timor Timur, Solidarity Forum for the People of East Timor) took up the Timorese cause

⁵⁹Interview with Nuno Rodrigues Tchailoro, Dili, November 26, 2014

and linked it up with their own overarching goal of a democratic Indonesia. It is hard to overstate the effect of Santa Cruz on Indonesian solidarity; as put by Clandestine Front member Domingos Sarmiento Alves, after the massacre, “we came to the understanding that the East Timorese and Indonesians had the same enemy, which was the TNI (Indonesian military) ... and the Suharto dictatorship. We needed to bring Indonesians into our struggle because it was their struggle, too” (quoted by Stephan (2005, 75)).

Because the UN had never acknowledged Indonesian sovereignty and Portugal had never formally conferred power onto either Indonesia’s or Timor-Leste’s provisional governments, Timor remained on the agenda of the UN Special Committee on Decolonization, which continued to hold regular hearings that provided a forum for critics of Indonesia’s Timorese policies, as did the UN Commission on Human Rights, whose resolutions and human rights investigations put significant diplomatic pressure on Indonesia. While Timor was removed from the General Assembly’s agenda, the secretary-general kept his promise to work towards a solution and organized a succession of tripartite meetings with Indonesia and Portugal that served to keep the Timorese question in the spotlight (several of these meetings were timed with nonviolent events).

Finally, the Catholic Church played a crucial role, providing a moral center to the resistance (both Monsignor Martinho Costa da Lopes and Bishop Belo, heads of the Catholic Church in Timor, played important roles as interlocutors and in providing safe haven). The Catholic Church’s importance to the Timorese is exemplified in the 90% of Timorese that chose Catholicism when forced to choose one of the state’s five recognized religions in the 1980s (Robinson 2011, 86). One thing that made the Church particularly trustworthy was that it was administered directly by the Vatican rather than by the Indonesian Church, giving it a significant measure of autonomy and thus legitimacy. The sense of solidarity was strengthened by the decade-long sequestration of the island which also affected the Church and had brought clergy and population very close together. Bishop Belo wrote in an open letter to UN Secretary General Perez de Cuellar:

The people of East Timor must be allowed to express their views on their future through a plebiscite. Hitherto the people have not been consulted. Others speak in the name of the people. Indonesia says that the people of East Timor have already chosen integration, but the people of East Timor themselves have never said this. Portugal wants time to solve the problem. And we continue to die as a people and as a nation. (quoted in Robinson (2011, 86)

The work of Belo and Ramos-Horta was rewarded with the awarding of the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize, also starkly showing the success of the international strategy.

After the 1998 democratic uprising in the wake of the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis led to the resignation of Suharto, there was tremendous international pressure on newly elected Indonesian President Habibie to deal with the East Timor issue. Habibie first offered an autonomy deal, but this provoked a student demonstration 30,000 strong on the occasion of a visit by EU ambassadors to Dili on 28 June (Stephan 2005). The ousting of Suharto was seen as a Timorese victory; Habibie and the democratic movement in Indonesia had been seen as allies, and the threshold for participating in a demonstration against the new regime would have been much lower, as it was not associated with the atrocities of the civil war. On 5 May 1999, Indonesia, Portugal and the UN signed a tripartite agreement to hold a UN-supervised “popular consultation” on East Timor’s final status. ABRI launched a final intimidation campaign in the run-up to the referendum, killing 3000-5000 independence supporters according to local Church estimates; in response, Gusmão called on the population to “behave with discipline and civility” (Stephan 2005, 93). Timor-Leste became the 191st member of the United Nations on September 27, 2002.

Evaluation and conclusion

Returning to the five questions posed at the beginning of the chapter, what overall insights can we gain from Fretilin/CNRM’s use of nonviolent action? I provide brief summary answers to each of the five questions posed at the beginning of the chapter.

What historically entrenched social patterns and institutions had the potential to ex-
ante influence the shape and direction of prewar and wartime political organizing?

In Timor-Leste, personal and family ties criss-crossed across the island. When Fretilin's founders conducted their first rural outreach programs, they would often return first to villages where they had personal ties. Early party alliances also followed personal ties.

How did the prewar organization mobilize the population, and how did translate into
the wartime relationship between rebels and population? How inclusive (in terms of ge-
ography and social classes) was mobilization?

Before the war, Fretilin's ideology as well as political incentives made the organization prioritize rural mobilization even though the founders were all part of the young, intellectual elite of Dili. This led to a geographically broad popular support pattern prior to the war. Because of the very hands-off governance approach under the Portuguese, Fretilin was able to gain governance experience prior to the conflict, which further deepened their popular support. Thus, when Indonesia invaded, both ideology and experience led to the decision to establish *bases de apoio* in the mountains and administer governance. While this had negative consequences in terms of military effectiveness and strategic trajectory, it meant that when the population returned to Dili, most people had some personal connection to the Falintil fighters who were still in the mountain, which must have facilitated communication and coordination.

How were decisions made within the organizational leadership? Who had de-facto or
formal veto power?

Before the war, decision-making in Fretilin was very democratic. In the first years of the war, only political leaders were included in strategic decision-making, whereas Falintil commanders were largely left out (as at the Soibada Conference). After Fretilin's near-annihilation, another political leader came to power in the person of Xanana Gusmão, whose power and influence in the organization grew over the next decade. When Orgão Oito proposed a nonviolent demonstration in 1989, Gusmão was consulted in the planning

process, a pattern that was maintained throughout the nonviolent campaign lasting over the next ten years.

What circumstances or event triggered the first instance of nonviolent action, and how was the rebel group involved?

The first foreign visitor to Timor-Leste – Pope John Paul II – occasioned the first non-violent demonstration in 1989. In order to coordinate the planned event, Orgão Oito and Gusmão coordinated and communicated via Clandestine Front supply and information networks that connected Dili with the mobile command in the mountains.

Which organizational mechanisms were utilized or repurposed in planning individual events, and how did nonviolent action fit into the organization's strategy?

As nonviolent events expanded to Indonesia via Renetil, the organizational focus shifted towards appealing to the international community. While the violent struggle continued nominally in Timor-Leste proper, it was not the focus of the struggle.

From these insights as well as connections made throughout the chapter, I inductively build a *organizational process theory* proposing three necessary organizational features necessary for rebel use of nonviolent action,

5. Rebel Use of Nonviolent Action: An Organizational Process Theory

“There exist at all times a multiplicity of forms of struggle that a movement exploits as part of its arsenal of weapons. Any form of struggle, including the armed struggle, can only emerge to dominance over time and as a result of consistent effort.”

– Walter Sisulu¹

Mario Carrascalão said to me about the Santa Cruz demonstration and massacre: “Without Santa Cruz, I believe this would be a forgotten war.”² Likewise, José Ramos-Horta was adamant that effective rebel diplomacy would not have been possible without Santa Cruz, as it allowed for an international focus and momentum not otherwise possible.³ The film footage of heavily armed Indonesian soldiers jumping out of tanks to mercilessly chase and gun down hundreds of nonviolent civilian protesters in a cemetery reverberated through the world. The thousands-strong demonstration at Santa Cruz and its bloody ending not only demonstrates the potentially explosive effect of nonviolent action in a civil war (bought dearly and tragically, in this case), but also epitomizes the puzzle of CNRM’s ability to use nonviolent action. A near-extinct rebel group was able to overcome the significant organizational challenges of mobilizing civilians to participate in large nonviolent events. The leadership was able to do this across long distances to have demonstrations in Indonesian-occupied Dili in the face of a highly repressive occupation regime, and they won independence in 2002 against all military odds. This was

¹Walter Sisulu was a South African anti-apartheid activist and former Secretary General of the African National Congress (ANC) (Sisulu 2001, 84)

²Interview with Mario Carrascalão in Dili, November 28, 2014

³Interview with José Ramos-Horta in Dili, July 15, 2015

accomplished even though Timorese activists had at best 1.5 years of pre-war political organizing experience. In the following, I analyze the organizational processes apparent in the CNRM's move towards nonviolent action to inductively build a theory of rebel use of nonviolent action.

In tracing CNRM's shift towards nonviolent action, three key (rebel) organizational obstacles or hurdles become apparent. First, the opportunity and feasibility of mass nonviolent action must be recognized and realized; second, the urban population must be mobilized; and third, this must be done while maintaining control over both movement and organization. All of this was particularly challenging because it required coordination across considerable geographic distance between a rebel leadership hiding in the remote, impassable Timorese mountains and an urban population living under Indonesian occupation.

The initial impetus for using nonviolent action came from Orgão Oito, a Clandestine Front cell in Dili. Through Clandestine Front *estafetas*, commonly used to exchange strategically important information and send supplies to Falintil, Orgão Oito made contact with Xanana Gusmão in Falintil's mobile command in the deep jungle. Donaciano Gomes explains how they "wanted to try to meet the Commander-in-Chief of the resistance, Xanana Gusmão, in order to plan a demonstration. But the Indonesian military campaigns against the resistance were so widespread that it proved impossible to meet him in person ... [so that finally] through a clandestine message, ...he approve[d] our plan to carry out a demonstration after the high mass was celebrated by the Pope at Tacitolu on 12 October [sic]" (Gomes 1995, 107). By repurposing Clandestine Front cells and information networks, the urban population could slowly be mobilized to participate in nonviolent events. Yet, Gusmão firmly retained control over the movement, as every single planned nonviolent event was approved by him, and his leadership position was in no way weakened by empowering new organizational arms and leaders to organize and coordinate nonviolent action. As Renetil activist Lucas da Costa Lopes highlighted, in

organizing large-scale nonviolent events in Indonesia, “we were [...] Xananists because we swore an oath of loyalty to Xanana and the CNRM and followed [his] orders without disobeying” (quoted in Stephan (2005, 71)). The Timorese resistance’s shift towards utilizing nonviolence heavily relied on socially embedded organizational networks that could be repurposed for organizing urban demonstrations without threatening the established organizational hierarchy.

In a nutshell, my theory on rebel use of nonviolent action consists of three interrelated parts. First, I explore the internal decision-making structures and dynamics that determine whether a rebel organization will recognize the need and opportunity for innovation and whether it has the organizational capacity to carry it out. The key organizational feature for rebel organizations to recognize the need and opportunity for nonviolent action (or other forms of significant innovation) is a strong, centralized political leadership. Similarly, strong civilian oversight is often seen as conducive to military innovation. Political leaders in a rebel organization are likely to have greater flexibility in their strategic thinking (and can think outside of the strictly military “box”), and their power position is less likely tied to the continued use of a particular violent strategy. “Centralized political authority” an “overall, *dominant* structure” (to borrow a term from the business literature), which is “the structure that best describes the whole organization” (Fredrickson 1986, 281). To identify centralized political authority in a rebel organization, it is not enough to look at the group structure on paper, but it is necessary to trace organizational processes over time to determine which person or faction holds significant sway.

Second, I explore the practical requirements for a rebel organization in a civil war context to carry out mass-based nonviolent action. The key difficulty is for a peripherally based leadership to mobilize a geographically distant urban population into active civil war participation, all while retaining control over both the organization and movement. This requires the collaboration and coordination of many different actors in different locations. To pull this off, the rebel group needs to rely on so-called “non-violent

entrepreneurs” to organize nonviolent action in urban centers and coordinate with the violent leadership, which represents a loss of control for the rebel leaders as well as potential rivals.

As a strategy that derives its power from mass participation, nonviolent action requires low financial investment but significant organizational changes and personal risks.⁴ What drives a war-weary, decimated population to actively support the armed resistance at significant personal risk? I argue that the mobilization of civilian masses for activist conflict participation requires strong institutionalized networks linking the rebel leadership with the urban population.⁵ Because nonviolent action is a new contentious strategy, these pre-existing communication links must be explored carefully, as their form and function will be different when an organization pursues a violent strategy. The credible organizational structures linking rebel leaders in the periphery to the population in urban areas constitute the second necessary condition.

The third part of the theory focuses on how these two necessary conditions are interrelated and mutually reinforce each other. A rebel organization with a consolidated political authority is likely going to be willing and capable to “project” their reach into urban areas. Rebel leaders can only risk empowering new actors if they are certain of their own power position in the organization, thereby ensuring organizational unity. In turn, strong, credible communication networks will give the far-away organizational leadership confidence in their control over the movement and further strengthen the organization by demonstrating the depth of its popular support and its adherence to democratic norms. The two organizational features also share an important trait in common: Both are intrinsically connected to functional task differentiation in an organization. Functional task differentiation is used as an analytical lens. Taken together, these necessary processes and underlying mechanisms can be summarized in the following diagram:

⁴See Horowitz (2010) for an in-depth discussion of financial and organizational barriers to innovation.

⁵This argument builds on the literature on the processes and relationships that sustain rebellion over time (Petersen 2001; Parkinson 2013; Staniland 2014)

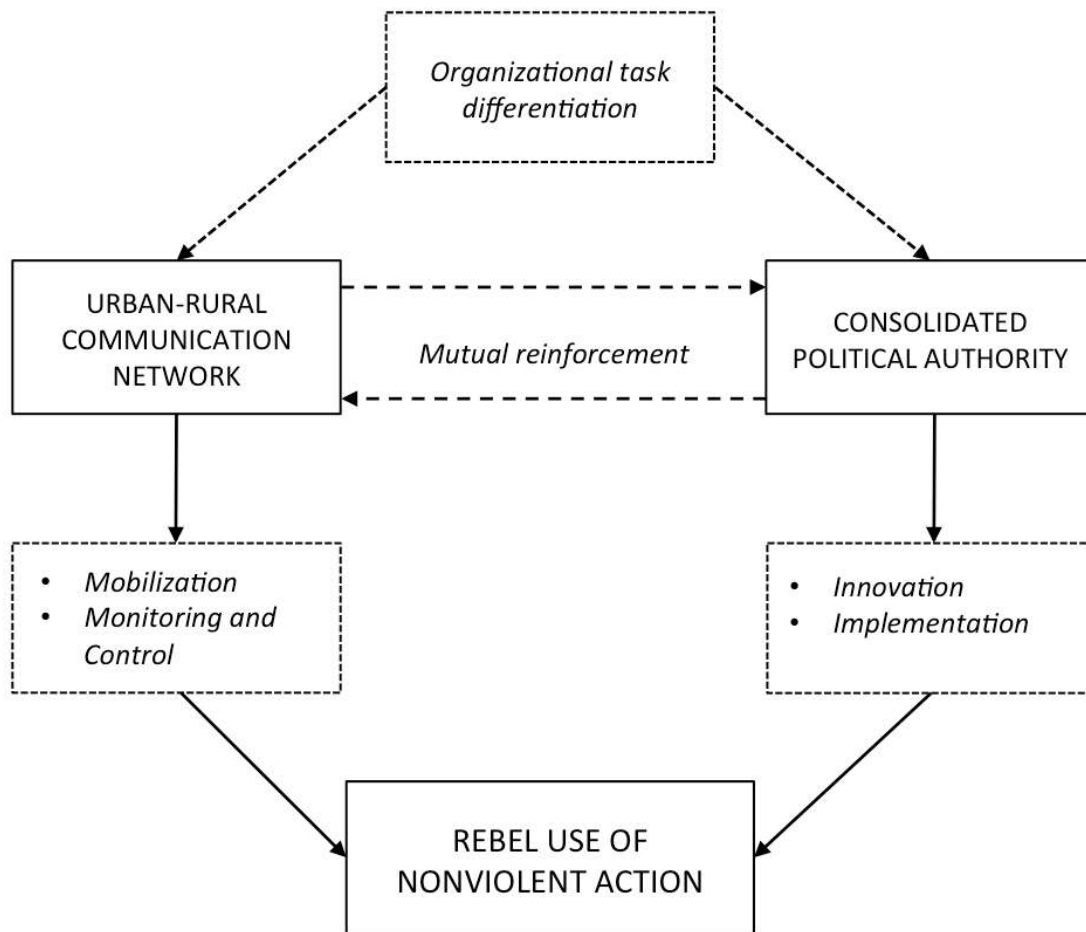


Figure 5.1: Summary of the organizational process theory

Organizational processes and complexity

The Timorese case starkly highlights how organizational structures and processes drive the rebels' shift towards nonviolent action. While many other features also played a role, the structural features of Fretilin/CNRM set in motion processes, delimited strategic options determined outcomes, thus directly affecting the organization's ability to use nonviolent action.⁶ Structure is not only the rigid underlying blueprint of an organization, but rather consists of a complex pattern of relationships, authority, and communication

⁶This conception of *process* is borrowed from the business literature: "In the broadest sense, [processes] can be defined as collections of tasks and activities that together – and only together – transform inputs into outputs" (Garvin 1998)

(Thompson 2003). An organization engaged in clandestine, dangerous work that requires the cooperation and coordination of many different actors cannot change how it operates at will; rather, decision-making and operational processes are developed and fine-tuned over years, if not decades. In illicit groups or organizations, it is both particularly important and particularly tricky to explore internal relationships and patterns of authority, as they are less likely formalized and less easily observed in action.

A focus on organizational processes is very similar to conceptions of institutions. In state-centric conceptions of politics, “institutional structures have an impact as they facilitate or limit the actions of groups and individuals — which means that institutions are never offered as a complete explanation of policy outcomes” (Ikenberry 1994, 2). Yet, if, as put by Ikenberry (1994, 3) “polities have structures that mediate political struggle and that limit the realm of the possible,” who or what represents the “polity” and “institutional structures” in rebel organizations?

In a rebel group, it is difficult to differentiate combatants and civilians. It is impossible to differentiate if we consider civilians as conflict actors in their own right, which is necessary if considering nonviolent action as a rebel strategy. By recognizing nonviolent direct action as a rebel strategy in a civil war, I also directly acknowledge that “civilians” can directly participate in contentious — albeit nonviolent — action, and thus should be considered conflict actors in their own right. The population therefore needs to be considered part of the formal and informal internal structure and processes of the rebel organization. I build on a budding literature that recognizes and analyzes the social processes and relationships that underlie rebellion (Parkinson 2013; Petersen 2001; Staniland 2014), which increasingly recognizes the diverse, active role of civilians in shaping conflict dynamics (see also Mampilly (2011) and Wood (2003)). Thus, if civilians can be considered conflict actors, the formal and informal relationships tying them to or into the organization must be analyzed closely in order to understand the “structures that mediate political struggle” in a civil war (Parkinson 2013, 419). This approach heeds Parkinson’s call to be highly

cognizant of “the nuanced relationship between social structure, militant organizations, and sustained rebellion” while analyzing conflict processes and outcomes (ibid).

Given the many actors and groups that can be a part of a rebel group’s organizational structure, it is clear that the use of nonviolent action does not follow a neatly linear process. It is simply not possible to succinctly identify one structural variable that points straight to a decision or outcome in any given organization that includes thousands of actors and multiple actor categories simultaneously working through an organization’s structures, thereby also continuously changing them. This interactive process builds on social and political norms and institutions that most of the time exist in some shape or form prior to the onset of the civil war. As Staniland (2014, 22-23) puts it: “While political meanings are not locked in place, they also cannot be easily transformed.” This is especially important in the context of a civil war, where a high degree of external uncertainty hampers (though in no way prevents) the construction of organizational ties and social structures. My aim is to understand the structures and processes that incentivize and constrain behavior of all of the relevant actors in a rebel organization and draw meaningful conclusions about guiding organizational characteristics. Therefore, it is necessary to study organizational processes and transformations over time rather than from a momentary “snapshot” in the organization’s existence. Hence, to assess whether the necessary organizational conditions for the use of nonviolent action are present in a rebel organization, we must analyze the evolution of the rebel organization, including its potential “civilian” component, over time, which has significant implications for how such a theory can be tested in the future.

All three parts of the theory indicate that a rebel organization that successfully initiates and utilizes nonviolent action possesses a high degree of organizational complexity. In discussing organizational structure, Hall (1982) suggests three sources of complexity: horizontal (number of distinct functions and tasks carried out by the organization) and vertical differentiation (number of hierarchical levels) as well as spatial dispersion. As be-

comes clear from the theory summary above, the use of nonviolent action requires that the rebel group possess a high degree of complexity in all three of these categories without sacrificing the strength and reach of its leadership, as a high level of complexity naturally makes it difficult to coordinate and control decision activities (Lawrence and Lorsch 1967). It is thus impossible to explain the rebel use of nonviolent action without taking into account the complexity of both the requisite process and the requisite underlying organization.

5.1 The necessity of centralized political authority in rebel organizations

In order to use nonviolent action as a contentious strategy, the leadership of a rebel group must recognize that there is a valuable opportunity for mass-based action, and it must shift the organization as a whole in this new direction. I argue that this is most likely in a rebel group with a *centralized political authority* as a dominant organizational structure. One key assumption underlying this argument is that a *nonviolent shift* in a rebel organization can be analyzed akin to military innovation in a state apparatus.⁷ “Political authority” in a rebel organization is considered as vaguely equivalent to civilian oversight over militaries, with the same two key underlying mechanisms determining significant innovation: First, a pure military view on the organization’s strategy and task focus does not allow for the kind of “thinking outside the box” that is required to significantly change the organization’s overall approach. Second, if the leadership bases its own prestige and thus hold on power on the use of (particular) military strategy, innovation will not be implemented, as it will pose a direct threat on the leadership’s hold on power. Using insights from the Timor-Leste case study and insights from the organizational structure of firms, I propose

⁷The terms *military*, *state military* and *national military* are utilized interchangeably throughout to refer to the formal violent arms of states.

a conceptualization of political authority as a dominant organizational structure in a rebel organization in the sense of Fredrickson (1986), namely as the structural feature that best describes the organization as a whole when considering its structures at various levels, processes, and decisions/outcomes.

Rebel use of nonviolent action as military innovation

Before it is possible to fully construct the organizational process theory, it is necessary to demonstrate that theories of military innovation can be applied to the study of rebel use of nonviolent action. With the notable exceptions of Horowitz (2010) and Staniland (2014), there exist few approaches to studying innovation in rebel organizations. Staniland's explanation of strategic evolution and change in rebel organizations is too broad to account for a specific type of significant innovation such as nonviolent action, and Horowitz's theory of disruptive innovation in terrorist groups is too narrow in its focus on innovation as purely focused on violent strategies. While both of these approaches contribute to my theory as building blocks, it is theories of military innovation with a focus on civic-military relations that provide the crucial explanatory mechanisms underlying a rebel leadership's capacity for nonviolent innovation. To apply nuanced theories of innovation in one type of organization and apply it to another, I first demonstrate that nonviolent action can indeed be considered an instance of military innovation, and then briefly outline to what extent we can directly compare rebel organizations with national militaries.

Military innovation and nonviolent action

The Timorese case demonstrates that the use of nonviolent action necessitates "innovation" in three distinct ways: First, the rebel group must change its operational task focus and *modus operandi*. As observable in CNRM, the focus shifted from military attacks by small, mobile guerrilla units to large-scale urban protests. This also entailed

a repurposing of organizational structures previously utilized for violent action to now serve a different purpose, which is the second key organizational change. In the case of CNRM, during the violent period, the Clandestine Front had received information and supplies from the occupied areas and relegated them through *estafetas* to Falintil in the mountains. The same Clandestine Front messenger network was also used to organize nonviolent events, but the *estafetas* now moved key information and messages between nonviolent entrepreneurs and violent leaders as a direct coordination mechanism. Third, CNRM shifted its conception of how it could win the war. As it was impossible to win against Indonesia by engaging ABRI directly with military means, nonviolent events were clearly targeting an international audience. This conceptual shift was also observable in the significant bolstering of the diplomatic front both in Indonesia and internationally. Pinto stresses how, after 1991, “the underground continued its peaceful activities and at the same time the diplomatic front made great advances, helping to build support for the struggle worldwide” (quoted in Tanter, Selden and Shalom (2001, 36)). In other words, there was a conceptual shift in how means related to ends.

This characterization indicates that we can consider mass-based nonviolent action as used by a rebel organization as an instance of innovation. According to conceptions of military innovation, a change in operational practice is crucial to identifying innovation. According to Grissom (2006), while “authors in the field [of military studies] have proposed a tangle of orthogonal, even contradictory, definitions” of military innovation, the one common denominator in all of these definitions is that innovation changes the manner in which military formations operate in the field (906).⁸ A focus on operations in the field is also problematic for analytical extrapolation to rebel organizations in general. Innovation in rebel organizations as in militaries will involve a change in how they operate in the “field”. Rebel organizations often do not operate in a clearly delineated field, but

⁸Here as in Grissom (2006, 906), “field formation” refers to units that directly conduct military operations.

employ a range of strategies that may take place in a variety of locales. According to Mao Tse-Tung, “in guerrilla warfare, select the tactic of seeming to come from the east and attacking from the west; avoid the solid, attack the hollow; attack; withdraw; deliver a lightning blow, seek a lightning decision” (Mao 1961, 46). Guerrilla warfare therefore distinguishes itself from other strategies precisely by completely evading the demarcation of a “field,” and rebel use of nonviolent action stretches this conceptualization even further, as nonviolent action often takes place in urban areas not touched by war as much as rural areas. Therefore, not only does *nonviolent action* in a civil war call for a broader conceptualization of contentious action and actors, but it also requires an open mind with regards to conflict theater or locale.

Another red thread identified by Grissom is more problematic, namely that *effectiveness* is a crucial part of innovation. However, building effectiveness into the definition is problematic, since we would then only consider instances of clearly measurable *successful* innovation. Similar to Grissom, Horowitz (2006, 37) stresses the importance of impact and effectiveness, but takes into account intent and not only result: Accordingly, “major military innovations are major changes in the conduct of warfare relevant to leading military organizations designed to increase the efficiency with which capabilities are converted to power.” If a move was designed to increase efficiency, it should be considered an innovation, whether successful or not. This means that in order to consider nonviolent action as an innovation, it needs to be demonstrated that it was a purposive move on the part of the organization. Further, Grissom’s focus assumes that innovation in a militant organization can only take place within the universe of violent strategies, which may close off our analytical attention from the full range of strategies available to rebel organizations, including nonviolent action or terrorism.

Organizational approaches to the study of militaries highlight structural and procedural shifts as crucial elements of military innovation, thus accounting for the second big shift necessary when rebel organizations use nonviolent action. For example, Evange-

lista (1988, 12) includes “major restructuring of military organizations” as an important part of military innovation. Horowitz observes that the character of warfare is shifted by innovation not only because of how attacks are carried out, but also by the way organizations plan these attacks (2010). Rosen (1988, 143) likewise elaborates on the structural structural process changes within the organization as a part of innovation. He offers the following:

A “major innovation”, as I use the term here, is a change that forces one of the primary combat arms of a service to change its concepts of operation and its relation to other combat arms, and to abandon or downgrade traditional missions. Such innovations involve a new way of war, with new ideas of how the components of the organization relate to each other and to the enemy, and new operational procedures conforming to those ideas. They involve changes in the critical military tasks, the tasks around which war plans revolve.

Rosen’s analysis elaborates on the structural changes within the organization that are necessary. A shift in an organization’s core competencies causes a shift in how different functional arms of the organization relate to one another (in terms of who works together and how), and in how plans are formed and decisions are made. Rosen also points to hierarchical changes necessitated by major innovation: As traditional missions are downgraded, the organizational arm specializing in said mission will likely lose importance within the organization and shift its functions. I will elaborate on the point of hierarchical changes and innovation in section 5.2.

“A new way of war” describes the rebel use of nonviolent action perfectly. Nonviolent innovation requires a radical departure from established conceptions of how wars are won, both in terms of means (violent versus nonviolent action) and target (military or civilian targets versus a larger international audience). According to Avant (1993, 410f.), doctrinal shifts “encompasses the broader set of issues about how one wages war, including ideas about how to best fight the enemy and assumptions about what part of the enemy is most important.”⁹ While insurgency strategies target key military targets and

⁹See Alger (1985) for a thorough discussion of definitions of doctrine.

makes it impossible for the enemy to directly hold territory through efforts of coercion and attrition, nonviolent direct action directly involves the international public as a key actor, aiming to increase outside pressure on the enemy. This indicates a shift in the conception of how means relate to end, which Avant (1993) describes as new ideas about how to best fight the enemy, which in turn also allow for an actor that is both political and violent. Accordingly, Zisk (1993, 4) maintains that military innovation involves shifts in how actors conceptualize war, which is crucial in studying the rebel use of nonviolent action, which requires a shift in how we define and identify contentious strategies.

From this brief exploration of military innovation, I conclude that rebel use of nonviolent action *can* be considered a particular instance of *significant* military innovation. Figure 5.2 succinctly sums up the three key aspects of innovation that must be explained.

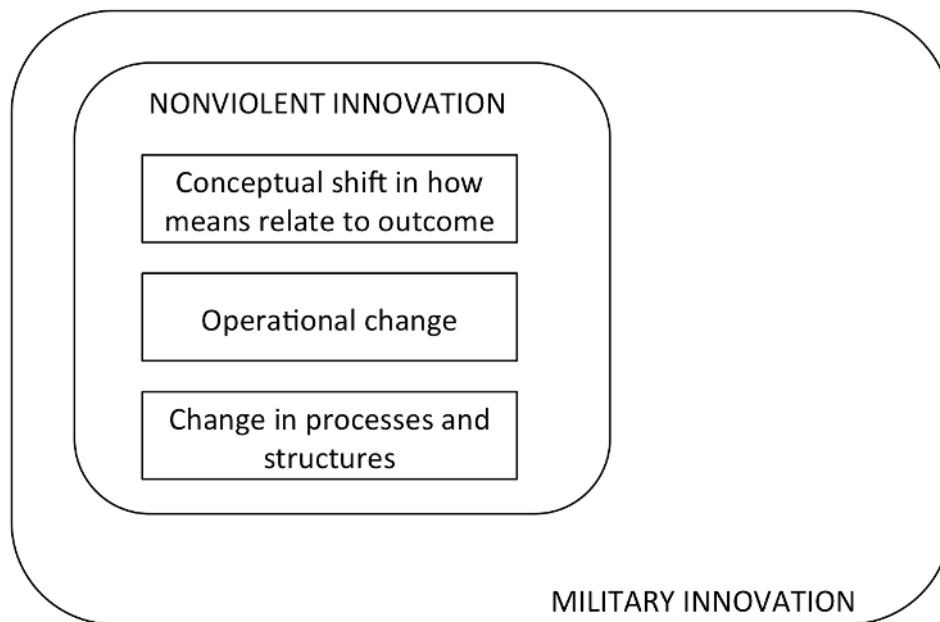


Figure 5.2: Rebel nonviolent action as an instance of military innovation

Are rebel groups and militaries comparable organizations?

While militaries and rebel groups are inherently comparable in their violent task focus, the comparison is more strained when we consider them as organizational structures.

While militaries are but one organizational arm of a larger state structure, rebel groups are not part of a larger organizations; rather, the term denotes *all* equivalent structures, which may differ vastly in scope, form and function from one group to another. I briefly outline how theories that explain military actions may apply to rebel groups, but that it important to note that this requires a shift in the level of analysis.

Both rebel groups and militaries use violence to bring about a certain outcome, in line with Horowitz (2006, 35), who conceives of military power as “the way that states generate organized violence for use either on the battlefield or as part of coercive strategies.” In both cases, violence is generated through the combination of the hardware necessary for fighting (technology such as rifles, artillery, and bombers) and the organizational processes (“software”) used to plan the use of and actually employ the hardware. At a minimum, like state militaries, rebel groups rely on the use of organized violence at least in part to attain their goals; their public image, and in some cases their identity, is closely associated with the strategic use of violence.

However, while militaries wield legitimate violence on behalf of a government, the organizational form and function of rebel groups is less clearcut. While some rebel organizations have purely violent origins, others evolve into rebel organizations from groups with an entirely different form, function and focus, such as political parties or religious associations.¹⁰ For example Fretilin originated as an informal discussion group of anti-colonial philosophy and strategies, then morphed into a fully fledged political party. Even as a rebel organization, its party origins were reflected in its organizational structures, which in part even persisted when Fretilin morphed into CNRM.

Some rebel groups develop extensive bureaucratic and governance systems. Wickham-Crowley (1989) likens rebel governance systems to state systems by stating that rebel systems can become “subject to the [same] social-contractual obligations of all governments” in a sort of “implicit social contract” (477-478). CNRM had several features that make it

¹⁰See Staniland (2014) for an in-depth discussion of different origin trajectories of rebel organizations.

resemble a state system. In the late 1980s, CNRM had a central decision-making organ resembling an executive with ten members, an Armed Front, a Diplomatic Front, and the Clandestine Front. Before it was morphed into an (at least nominal) umbrella organization, Fretilin's Central Commission even took on a quasi-legislative function; in the early years of the war, Fretilin oversaw institutions related to health, agriculture, and education in the *bases de apoio*.¹¹

In analyzing militaries and rebel groups as organizations, it is important to differentiate the relevant level of analysis. Militaries are but one functional arm of a larger state apparatus, whereas rebel groups can be purely violent groups but may also comprise both military and political wings, where the latter can take on state-like functions. In using civilian control of militaries as a lens for explaining innovation in rebel organizations, it is key to be aware of this organizational distinction.

From civilian control of militaries to political authority in rebel organizations

Rebel use of nonviolent action is an instance of significant innovation that involves a change in operational focus, a structural shift in how different parts of the organization relate to one another, and a shift in how the group conceives of war. *How does the impetus for such a significant departure from the organizational status quo emerge, and what determines that the organization will be able to implement it?* The Timor-Leste case provides answers to both of these questions. The initial impetus for nonviolent action emerged in Orgão Oito, an umbrella group connecting various Dili-based clandestine cells — usually tied to legitimate social, religious, or athletic groups — to the rebel leadership in the periphery. Xanana Gusmão, a political leader, approved the proposal for the first nonviolent

¹¹The Sri Lankan LTTE also oversaw several ministries, including those for finance, justice, protection (police), economic development, health, and education, each headed by a secretary or porupalar (Neeran (1996) paraphrased by Mampilly (2011)). Rwenzururu rebels in Uganda in the early 1960s organized a complex governmental bureaucracy composed of eleven ministries headed by a cabinet (Mampilly 2011, 1).

protest in October 1989. By this time, Gusmão's leadership position was consolidated to a point where there was no opposition to such a move within Falintil, and pre-existing Clandestine Front messenger networks were repurposed to coordinate events; when necessary, Falintil moved closer to urban areas to guarantee the safety of protesters, or engaged ABRI in skirmishes to draw them away from Dili during times when demonstrations were planned.

There are two key factors that link strong, consolidated political authority in a rebel organization with the use of nonviolent action:

1. Rebel command structures that prioritize military authority and military concerns are structurally less likely to undergo significant innovation because such a new approach is too far outside of the organization's *modus operandi*;
2. If personal power and prestige in a rebel organization is tied to a (particular) violent operational focus, individual leaders will have an incentive to obstruct significant innovation, in particular towards nonviolent action.

I explain the underlying mechanisms by building on "civilian control" approaches to explaining innovation in militaries. In what follows, I first explain why and how civilian control is key to significant military innovation both in terms of the initial impetus for innovation and its actual execution.

Civilian control, political authority and the impetus for innovation

The impetus for significant strategic innovation such as nonviolent action is unlikely to be given if the military or military faction has significant control over strategic decision-making. The aphorism "where you sit is where you stand" aptly captures how militaries and civilian governments bring different attitudes, interests, and capabilities to the decision-making table, and how military leaders are not likely to think outside of the "military box". In other words, an organization purely focused on military concerns is

unlikely to recognize the need or opportunity for a non-military approach when viewing problems strictly through its violence-trained lens.¹²

Nonviolent action also brings with it a significant increase in the complexity of organizational actors and processes as nonviolent leaders in cities organize nonviolent events on the ground. According to Etheredge (1985, 143), organizational learning often involves a shift from simple generalizations to “complex, integrated understandings grounded in realistic attention to detail.” It is not only unlikely that military actors — deeply mired in the execution of violence for political ends — would recognize the potential of a non-violent strategy, but it is also unlikely that they would recognize organizational changes either in terms of process or structure. For example, in Timor-Leste, the use of nonviolent action led to the repurposing of Clandestine Front *estafetas* in the short term, but a restructuring of CNRM as a whole in the medium term with the creation of the Clandestine Front Executive Committee in 1990 and the reorientation of the Diplomatic Front to focus on Indonesian pro-democracy organizations. If strategic decision-making is controlled by the military faction deeply grounded in the extant violent *modus operandi*, it is unlikely that the opportunity for nonviolent action would lead to the necessary strategic innovation.

How does this argument derive from theories on civilian control of the military? Strong political leadership in a rebel organization is (imperfectly) comparable to civilian control over militaries in government apparatuses. Maintaining control over its military arm is a crucial and difficult task in any government. The realist paradigm of international relations holds that physical security is the paramount concern of any state. Accordingly, neorealists maintain the dictum that “each state must always be concerned to ensure its own survival” (Mearsheimer 1990, 44). Machiavelli even equated effective state leadership exclusively with warfare for state security:

¹²Note that there is a close relationship between this approach to innovation and organizational learning, as both require the use of new knowledge to redefine the content of organizational interests (Nye 1987)

A prince must have no other objective, no other thought, nor take up any profession but that of war, its methods and its discipline, for that is the only art expected of a ruler. And it is of such great value that it not only keeps hereditary princes in power, but often raises men of lowly condition to that rank. (The Prince, Chapter XIV)

Because security is of such importance, the actor tasked with its maintenance may assume disproportionate power within the government, crowding out other socially desirable and necessary government duties. Thus, in the words of Huntington (1957, 2), the central tension in civil-military relations is “to develop a system of civil-military relations which will maximize military security at the least sacrifice of other social values ... [and this] involves a complex balancing of power and attitudes among civilian and military groups.”

The “civil-military approach” to explaining military innovation was first coined by Posen (1984), who posits that major innovation is only likely if civilian statesmen intervene in military service doctrinal development.¹³ This requires a civilian government with a certain degree of independence from the military in its decision-making and some power over the armed leadership to impose their decisions. There are several different approaches to explaining mechanisms underlying *why* and *how* civilian oversight makes the impetus for innovation more likely.

One key explanatory approach credits the bureaucratic rigidity of militaries’ decision-making and execution for their inability to initiate innovation. Comparing different interwar doctrinal developments in Britain, France and Germany, Posen himself argues that because military bureaucracies operate on a routine basis, if there is no outside input, their procedures will result in rigid, sub-optimal strategies. Military organizations build up organizational expertise in a specific field over time, so that an organization will be predisposed to consider the range of possible strategies within these confines. Because militaries are so specialized, they will likely not consider strategic options outside of the current set of operational and strategic approaches. On the other hand, the much broader range of

¹³See also Beard (1976), Zisk (1993)

activities in a civilian government makes significant innovation much more likely. According to Posen, only balance-of-power crises will invoke the top civilian leadership's attention and trigger an updating of strategies. Therefore, militaries would usually favor offensive approaches, whereas the civilian leadership should be more attuned to the demands of the international system, and intervene if the military does not appear to be able to respond to such crises.

This explanation oversimplifies how military and government actors define their interests. Avant (1993) points out that it is unrealistic that two different bureaucracies within the same state apparatus will function according to such vastly disparate logics. Further, the political leadership will not only have balance-of-power concerns vis-a-vis other states, but also must consider domestic political and economic costs precisely because their only concern is *not just* security. Thus, according to Horowitz (2006), while the government may be more flexible in considering alternative strategies and approaches, their decision-making will be driven by the political and economic costs and benefits of adopting the innovation. A failed attempt at innovation will make a government look weak - failed both in terms of the military publicly balking at the idea or the innovation actually lessening military effectiveness.

It is not only important that a civilian authority oversee strategic decision-making, but the nature of the relationship between the civilian and military organs also matters. Strategic decision-making that affects the military cannot be done wholly without military input. This imbalance of input and interests was clearly observable during the years of Fretilin's wartime mountain regime. Because the Soibada conference excluded Falintil commanders from the discussions about strategy, Fretilin continued to prioritize positional warfare and the protection of stationary civilian settlements, which made both coordination within Falintil impossible and doomed the first phase of the conflict. This risk of complete civilian dominance is also mirrored in civilian-military analyses of innovation. For example, Huntington (1957) terms this *subjective civilian control*, which

exists when one elite group or faction of civilians has amassed so much power that they dominate both other civilian groups and the military; this can happen if power is maximized within particular governmental institutions, particular social classes, or particular constitutional forms.¹⁴

A continuous dialogue and coordination of civilian and military arms is also important for the practical implementation of a particular innovation. While it makes intuitive sense for civilian leaders to propose significant innovation due to their non-military perspective, power considerations within the military determine whether innovation proposals will actually be implemented. In states as in rebel groups, high-ranking military officers control a sizable bureaucracy, and there are many ways to block or retard innovation that has been directed top-down by civilian leadership. Rosen (1988) argues that in several prominent cases of military innovation, the role of the civilian leadership was overstated. Rather, the initiative for reform must enjoy significant support from within the military and cannot emerge wholly outside of the military realm; further, successful major innovation must bring with it a significant effort to change the intellectual way the military organization conceives of its main tasks (Rosen 1988, 137).

Hypothesis: The primacy of political control

How do these insights translate into a testable hypothesis? From the above, I conclude that if strategic decision-making is dominated by the military, it is unlikely that innovation will be either initiated or executed. In a state military, the power dynamic in question is between the military and the civilian government. In a rebel organization, this translates to the political versus military wing and who ultimately controls strategic decisions. This leads to the following hypothesis (note that all hypotheses that follow assume that there

¹⁴One frequent argument is that democracies will have a higher degree of stable civilian control over the military. In democracies, political outcomes are achieved via persuasion and compromise, whereas totalitarian or absolutist countries will be dominated force, coercion, or the threat thereof; since the military controls the most powerful instruments of violence, they will be more powerful under totalitarian or absolutist forms of government. See Kohn (1997) for an overview over this strain of literature.

is an opportunity for using nonviolent action unless noted otherwise):

Hypothesis 1a: A politically controlled strategic decision-making process in a rebel organization is necessary for nonviolent innovation.

In practice, a “politically controlled strategic decision-making process” can mean several things, and several structural and procedural features contribute to it. First, one key indicator is the formal organizational structure, specifically the relative positions within the organizational hierarchy of military and political wings; political authority is more likely to persist in an organization if it clearly delineated military and political decision-making structures where the latter is not subjugated to the former. These can differ significantly: For example, in Fretilin, the key political organ was superior to Falintil, the military wing. Furthermore, no Falintil field commanders were a part of the Central Committee of the party, and even in the different *zonas*, political commissars outranked Falintil commanders responsible for the same territory. The LTTE is a good counterexample, as the military leadership oversaw both the strategic planning and political planning units of the organization – which would allow for political decision-making only as long as it did not run counter to military interests and goals (Chalk 1999).

However, this purely structural approach to determining military versus political control in rebel organizations has limits; only consider CNRM. In CNRM, both Falintil’s Executive Council of the Struggle/Armed Resistance and the Clandestine Front Executive Committee made up the key deliberative body of CNRM together, but were both subject to the leadership of Xanana Gusmão. In this case, it is impossible to determine whether political or military voices rang louder in decision-making, and it is key to better understand Xanana Gusmão’s leadership style and background. In this case, Xanana’s ascent to power was from the starting point of a political functionary; in fact, he was chosen to lead Fretilin in 1980 precisely because he was the highest ranked political cadre survivor, and assumed the position of power over Falintil commanders that outranked him, such

as Mauk Muruk. It may also matter how the organization identifies itself: Is its identity predominantly that of a political party or that of a military organization?

Confirming or disconfirming this hypothesis thus requires that all of these factors be considered, which is only possible by longitudinally tracing the development of the rebel organization, its organizational and hierarchical structure, its processes, and the resulting strategic outcomes.

Internal power dynamics and nonviolent innovation

Organizational power considerations can also greatly affect the adoption and implementation of nonviolent innovation. This mechanism does not emerge as clearly in the Timorese case as it does in the case of Nepal (Chapter 6), but even in Fretilin/CNRM, we can see the opposition of military leaders to moderating strategic shifts. When Falintil commanders and ideological hardliners Kilik Wae Gae, Mauk Muruk and Ologari Asuwain opposed the ideological and strategic reorientation of Fretilin in 1984, they quickly disappeared from the organization through death or surrender. Afterwards, Gusmão was able to announce CRRM's adoption of a policy of National Convergence, officially collaborating with UDT, an erstwhile military opponent. By the time of the first nonviolent event in 1989, Xanana Gusmão's position of power within the organization was uncontested, and throughout the 1990s, he was synonymous with the resistance both within Timor and internationally. There are two notable conclusions that can be drawn here: First, if the military faction had had more power in the organization, their mere opposition or at least the threat of a split from the main organization could have prevented the step towards political moderation that would naturally dilute the position of Falintil relative to the rest of the organization. Second, Xanana Gusmão's position within the organization was not diminished but rather strengthened, his powerful status solidified.

How do power sources and organizational leadership determine an organization's ability to adopt and implement significant innovation, in particular, nonviolent action?

Gusmão's authority in the organization was not tied to the use of a particular strategy. If a rebel organization is dominated by its military faction, it is likely that internal hierarchy and resulting power dynamics are closely tied to the maintenance of a particular strategic approach. I will briefly show how this conclusion is supported by conceptions of military and civilian leadership.

With regards to individual military leaders' interest in the maintenance of an established strategic approach, Machiavelli once more provides a perfect starting point by summing up the central problem with innovation, as significant change of an old order will threaten those who benefited from said old order:

It must be considered that there is nothing more difficult to carry out nor more doubtful of success nor more dangerous to handle than to initiate a new order of things; for the reformer has enemies in all those who profit by the old order, and only lukewarm defenders in all those who would profit by the new order; this lukewarmness arising partly from the incredulity of mankind who does not truly believe in anything new until they actually have experience of it. (Machiavelli 1984, 331)

What does this mean? Consider the conception of military rule as entailing "governance by men who specialize in armed force and maintaining order rather than in political affairs" (Geddes, Frantz and Wright 2014, 148). A ruler who specializes in the use of violence and has amassed power and prestige within the organization doing so will be much more secure in her position if military strategy, possibly even a particular type of military strategy, remains vital in attaining key organizational goals. Such a ruler has a personal stake in the military strategy staying its course, and nonviolent innovation represents a clear threat to the ruler's position.

Similarly, within a rebel group, being an expert at carrying out a particular operational tactic or approach can give you an air of indispensability, but also tie power within the organization to that particular strategy. In writing about terrorist groups, Horowitz argues that if a particular strategic approach (or "idea") fails, this can lead to a significant loss in prestige and reputation for individual leaders. And, as "just like businesses and military

organization, terrorist groups develop expertise at particular tasks” (Horowitz 2010, 39), which they have in turn staked some of their reputation on, they may be unwilling to relinquish the operational primacy of this approach for fear of losing power within the movement. According to Horowitz (2010), this is particularly likely if a group’s broad strategy and the means of implementing that strategy separate.¹⁵ If a group’s broad strategy is tied to particular means, this will increase the prestige of those leaders within the organization who possess expertise at carrying out said task. If broad strategy is defined predominantly by the military leadership, this scenario is much more likely to arise.

How is this conflation of rebel leaders’ personal prestige and strategic approach best prevented? Huntington (1957) argues that a system of objective civilian control over a professional military can render the military “politically sterile and neutral” (Huntington 1957, 84). A professionalized military will have predefined avenues for promotion, a clear task focus, and a solid military hierarchy. While it is clearly not possible to “professionalize” guerrilla fighters in a rebel organization, a unifying political ideology and a clearly established differentiation of tasks among different organizational arms can also help to keep military prowess and organizational power dynamics separate. If militants and political cadre are deeply committed to the same set of goals and are in agreement about the division of labor making the attainment of these goals most likely, they will be much less likely to abuse a civil-military tug-of-war to win an ideological struggle. This is only possible if the internal hierarchy is clearly delineated and if the primacy of political authority is well-consolidated.

If there are too many veto players in the civilian government that can influence the military realm, this can also cause confusion and problems. In this manner, Avant (1993) points out that the structure of the civilian leadership may inhibit outright attempts at intervention (and, therefore, major innovation), even if the dire need for innovation is

¹⁵See Wilson (1989) for a more technical explanation of the risks of conflating a military’s critical task with the mechanisms required to achieve said task.

abundantly evident. Divided civilian institutions will both increase the likelihood of policy disagreements *and* encourage distrust among different branches of government over the control of bureaucracy; anticipating that another veto player will intervene and prevent a disruptive form of innovation, leaders might be deterred from proposing it publicly in the first place. What becomes very clear is that it is not enough to simply assess the organizational structure and civil-military power balance; we also need to consider the nature of their interaction and the processes that have led to a particular power configuration. This is reminiscent of the precarious balance of power in Fretilin, where there was a high degree of uncertainty about the power balance between Nicolau Lobato and Xavier do Amaral, and where the insecure political leadership did not even allow military commanders to participate in strategy discussions, resulting in the continuation of a highly ineffective strategy of positional warfare.

Hypothesis: Consolidated authority

Therefore, political authority within the rebel organization must be firmly established and clearly defined; this “institutionalization” process takes time. If integrity is high and authority structures clearly defined throughout the organization, there is both space for more voices to contribute to strategic decision-making, and it is possible for leaders to adopt innovation without risking their future authority (Avant 1993, 413). For example, within CNRM, Orgão Oito leaders were able to suggest a new nonviolent strategies that they would implement themselves, and the CNRM leadership under Xanana Gusmão was able to seize on this opportunity without risking personal position or organizational unity and cohesion. The example of Orgão Oito and Gusmão’s relationship also suggests that centralization of leadership is important; even if organizational changes are suggested in far-flung parts of the organization, it is crucial that the central leadership still be consulted and given ultimate decision-making power (the issue of centralization will be picked up again in the next section).

This results in the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1b: A centralized, consolidated authority structure with a widely accepted leadership is necessary condition for a rebel group to use nonviolent action.

As with Hypothesis 1a, one approach to confirming or falsifying this hypothesis is to consider the organizational structure. Is there a clear organizational leadership? However, here, too, time and process matter. Are there frequent leadership challenges or challenges either to take over the central leadership or to split from the organization? If there were splits, how was the organization able to recover? It is also important to assess over time whether or not centrally made decisions are faithfully executed by different arms of the organization, and whether they are apprised of important development.

Considering both Hypotheses 1a and 1b together, *political authority* emerges as a common theme, or dominant organizational structure. This will continue to weave through the theory like a red thread.

5.2 Nonviolent action, mobilization and control

I argue that the rebel use of nonviolent action necessitates the repurposing of pre-existing institutional links between urban rebel command areas and the urban population. This builds on the observation that nonviolent direct action crucially requires the coordination of two types of strategies that are fundamentally different in terms of approach, actors, and locale. While rebel strongholds are often in peripheral areas, nonviolent action, to have effect, is likely to take place in urban areas that are controlled by the central government or occupying power.

In Timor-Leste, Xanana Gusmão and Falintil were moving their command center around in the mountain region while nonviolent events were carried out in Dili and later in various Indonesian university towns. This means that the resistance leadership needs to somehow “project” its influence across geographic distances to mobilize the population

and control proceedings, usually done through local subsidiaries, here termed “nonviolent entrepreneurs” (though in the Timorese case, after a few years of nonviolent action, Xanana himself came to hide in Dili). In Timor-Leste, this new class of nonviolent entrepreneurs consisted of the urban intellectual elite (teachers, Church officials, government employees) and Timorese student leaders in different Indonesian university towns.

However, nonviolent entrepreneurs are not the only new actors: By participating in nonviolent action, civilians become conflict actors in their own right. As such, the formal and informal ties and relationships between civilians and the resistance organization make up a key part of the overall rebel organizational structure. Civilians play a wide array of roles and perform a variety of services in conflicts. They can join the guerrilla force or militia, form a part of the logistics and support apparatus, participate in illegal activities that can finance a sustained rebellion such as smuggling or bank robbery, act as messengers, intelligence operatives, diplomats, hold political “office”, or form a cog in the bureaucracy that governs territory. The dynamics between rebels and population that underlie the provision of different “services” vary significantly: For example, while supplies, transportation, or sometimes even recruits can be coerced relatively easily, it is much more difficult to coerce the provision of high-quality intelligence (Wood 2003).¹⁶ In the words of McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2003, 34), mobilization is about “how people who at a given point in time are not making contentious claims start doing so.” To mobilize and coordinate the urban population to become contentious nonviolent actors requires specific underlying organizational structures; sympathy with rebels and their cause alone is not enough.

How can a rebel group with peripheral strongholds mobilize and coordinate the urban population to participate in nonviolent action? Delegating the coordination of contentious action to new actors requires a high degree of control and trust on the part of the organizational leadership: Nonviolent events must stay “on message” and reinforce

¹⁶See also Parkinson (2013) or Mampilly (2011) for in-depth discussions of civilian functions in conflict.

rebel aims and demands. Conversely, the rebel organization must mobilize the urban population to actively put themselves at direct risk; this only works if there is strong urban support for the rebel organization and a high degree of trust that the violent division will support rather than “spoil” nonviolent action. Because these urban-peripheral organizational links fill such a crucial role and because the information relayed needs to be reliable, they cannot be built quickly when the opportunity for nonviolent action arises. Therefore, the rebel organization needs to be connected to urban areas via reliable structural links prior to the onset of nonviolent action; these links will be repurposed to serve bridging and coordinating functions between rebel leaders, nonviolent leaders, and the would-be activist population.

To make this argument, I first develop the unique problem of wartime nonviolent mobilization. I then explain how spatially dispersed organizational structures are crucial to overcoming this problem, and build a corresponding hypothesis.

Mobilizing urban masses for active civil war participation

Mobilizing the population for wartime nonviolent action is a logistical nightmare. To grasp the scope of this issue, only consider how difficult it is to mobilize masses for any kind of nonviolent direct action. In nonviolent direct action, citizens’ power stems from their numbers, which means that a movement must mobilize a critical mass in order to be effective (DeNardo 1985). According to Kuran (1991, 14), “the crucial insight of the rational-choice school is that an individual opposed to the incumbent regime is unlikely to participate in efforts to remove it, since the personal risk of joining a revolutionary movement could outweigh the personal benefit that would accrue were the movement a success.” This means that it is not ex-ante rational to participate in public protest as the risks are considerable and the potential personal pay-off uncertain. Further, a revolution constitutes a “collective good”: Once a revolution is successful, citizens can benefit from the outcome whether they have directly contributed or not. This makes it difficult to

mobilize participants for mass-based activism under most circumstances.

However, there is also safety in numbers. The risk to the individual is much lower and success much more likely if a large mass of people show up to protest; therefore, individuals are much more likely to engage in protest – of any kind – when they expect a large number of people to also participate.¹⁷ Once a large-scale protest is under way, it will be much easier to motivate people to join, or to organize subsequent marches, since participants already know the depth of public support and others' willingness to participate (Chenoweth and Stephan (2011)). According to critical-mass theories of collective action, protesters base their perception of protest opportunities and costs on existing, observable patterns of opposition activity (Kurzman 1996, 154). This is nicely demonstrated in the contrast between the very first Dili demonstration in 1989 and the Santa Cruz demonstration a few years later. At the first demonstration, only a handful of people besides the Scouts – who had been directly involved in the planning – joined in the protest; in contrast, at Santa Cruz in 1991, thousands of women, men and children waving flags and banners and shouting slogans participated (Pinto and Jardine 1997, 190).

Demonstration effects can overcome some of nonviolent mobilization's inherent problems. Yet, this still makes it very difficult to organize the very first protest event of a movement. Even under conditions of freedom of speech and expression, without repression, mobilization for nonviolent direct action is very difficult: A nonviolent action event requires the coordination of and communication between a large number of people. The conflict context adds obvious additional levels of difficulty; while some people may be able to directly observe a protest march or demonstration, there will not be open, unbiased domestic or local media coverage prior to the event or afterwards. Protests may also take place outside of the homeland, so information about upcoming, planned events will have to be spread through private back channels. Before the planned demonstration for

¹⁷See Goldstone (1994); Granovetter (1978); Kuran (1991); Kurzman (1996, 2009); Oliver, Marwell and Teixeira (1985); Oberschall (1994); Olson (1965); Rasler (1996); Schelling (1978); Tullock (1971) for more on the underlying mechanisms that determine individual participation in protest.

the Pope's visit in 1989, Pinto remembers how "we were concerned ... that it would be difficult to hold a demonstration because people were not yet brave enough to speak out publicly against the occupation and the repression" (Pinto and Jardine 1997, 107).

Governmental repression exacerbates the information problem: Organizing collective action in a civil war context is akin to organizing protests in an authoritarian context, where there is imperfect information about citizens' true preferences and the size of the potential opposition coalition (Kuran 1991; Kricheli, Livne and Magaloni 2011). Out of fear, citizens are likely to publicly comply with the regime's demands, in a process of *preference falsification*: In public acts and statements, an individual is likely to support the oppressive government, even if she may privately hold strong anti-regime sentiments (Kuran 1991).¹⁸ Further, in this kind of repressive environment, a ruthless government has little reason to provide the conditions for people to gather information about the true degree of government opposition in the population — in other words, the government has "an incentive to discourage independent polling and discredit surveys that reveal unflattering information" (Kuran 1991, 21). In a civil war, it is likely that many public methods of communication (flyers, assemblies) are no longer available; technology is likely only available to a limited degree and to a limited audience, and may not be considered trustworthy.

While the civil war may indicate shared grievances, the mere fact of organized violence reveals little about the population's willingness to take to the streets. According to Chenoweth and Stephan (2011), many forms of violent activism — including ones that might be used in a civil war — reveal very little about troop strength and level of support. For example, a terrorist attack may only involve a handful of activist participants, while support staff behind the scenes remain concealed.¹⁹ Further, nonviolent mobilization taps

¹⁸In a civil war where the vast majority of the population has been personally negatively affected by the government (killed family members, loss of independence, loss of rights, economic deprivation, etc.), publicly supporting the government while privately holding strong opposing sentiments may constitute "a sacrifice of personal integrity" Kuran (1991, 18), which would lower the psychological barrier for protest.

¹⁹Bueno de Mesquita (2010) disagrees with this analysis. He argues that the more violence rebels create,

into a hitherto "dormant" segment of society for a new type of activity; in urban areas, where rebels' military strength tends to be weak, information about support will be much more difficult to procure.²⁰ Also, while the civil war may indicate shared grievances, the mere fact of organized violence reveals little about the population's willingness to take to the streets. The rebel group's organizational links to urban areas must bridge this inherent information problem.

Nonviolent *direct* action puts participants publicly in the line of enemy fire, likely in the very heart of enemy-controlled territory (cities, towns) that have symbolic value to both sides. This makes nonviolent action risky and erodes the mobilization advantages that nonviolent action can have over violent action. Chenoweth and Stephan (2011, 34) argue that "the physical risks and costs of participation in a violent resistance campaign may be prohibitively high for many potential members" whereas both personal risks and costs are lower for nonviolent action. After years of conflict, the population will be keenly aware of the government's willingness to violently repress opposition. Two factors will mitigate this problem: First, if the population is highly supportive of the rebel group, they will be more likely to participate in nonviolent action. Second, nonviolent action is more likely if there exists a high level of trust between the population and the rebels, as the military arm of the organization can support — or at least not spoil — nonviolent action. Therefore, the organizational links between urban and rural areas must be flexible and reliable enough to allow for detailed coordination of plans and strategies. West Papua provides a good example for the importance of coordination. According to MacLeod (2015), the West Papuan nonviolent protest campaigns in coastal towns and cities would stop as soon as violence flared up again in the periphery for fear of retribution. This last point

the more anti-regime sentiment citizens believe there to be in society, theoretically making them more willing to join the rebellion. In other words, people will already be aware that their anti-government or anti-occupation sentiments are widely shared in the population, which could increase their likelihood of participating.

²⁰See Barkey and Van Rossem (1997); Centola and Macy (2007); Gould (1993, 1995, 1996); McAdam (1986); Petersen (2001) for other theoretical accounts on high-risk popular mobilization.

is clearly exemplified in both the Nepal (where coordination was strong) and El Salvador (where coordination was nearly non-existent) in Chapters 6 and 7.

If there exist reliable rural-urban links between population and rebels, it is likely that the popular support for the rebel organization is relatively high, as reliable coordination and mobilization links are often deeply embedded in quotidian and social relationships (Parkinson 2013). Further, these links, if socially embedded, can provide information to the rebel group about the depth of urban popular support; also, these links need to provide information and reassurance to the population about the rebels' willingness to materially support and secure, as far as possible, nonviolent action. However, the relationship between urban-rural links and rebel support is to some extent mutually reinforcing, further necessitating careful process tracing to observe how they operate.

Delegating control to nonviolent entrepreneurs

The use of nonviolent action includes the “activation” of thousands of new actors into operations. This brings with it two key risks for the leadership and organization as a whole: First, protesters can deviate from the stated rebel demands, thereby diluting the message and making the movement appear disorganized. The danger of appearing undisciplined is demonstrated in a message from Gusmão to the Clandestine Front as they were planning a demonstration for the expected visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture: “It’s a good idea to have a demonstration, ...but be careful and **be disciplined**” (Pinto and Jardine (1997, 189), emphasis added).

The second danger is that nonviolent action can spin out of control or engender extremist splinter groups, making the leadership appear out of touch and out of control. A second example from the Timorese resistance illustrates how important it was to Gusmão that the resistance appear unified. In September 1997, a militant wing of the Timorese Socialist Association, “Brigada Negra”, attempted to make a small TNT bomb in Indonesia to smuggle to Falintil inside East Timor. In the same month, one of the bombs went off ac-

cidentally in the activists' Central Java apartment, which led the Indonesian police to find 11 bombs and bomb supplies, as well as a computer disk with organization names. Even though the Brigada Negra was not formally connected to CNRM, Xanana Gusmão was quoted in the Jakarta Post on November 19, 1997: "The bombs were made to strengthen our resistance towards the [Indonesian] armed forces and I will take full responsibility for their activities" (quoted in Stephan (2005, 85)).

I argue that if *nonviolent entrepreneurs* can be empowered and coordinated via strong pre-existing organizational networks connecting city and periphery, the rebel group can mitigate the dangers of disjointed action, radicalization, and facilitate popular mobilization with minimal risk to established leadership patterns. However, this delegation of power also brings inherent risks: the newly empowered party officials, student leaders, union leaders, or academics (to name just a few options) may prove difficult to control, and may have or develop interests or ambitions of their own. This creates a principal-agent problem: Miller and Moe (1986) argue in their book that the danger of delegating significant authority over portions of crucial policy to new actors and organizations empowers new agents that may develop interests of their own that are contrarian to the old leadership's. This succinctly sums up the rebel leadership's central dilemma. How can the rebel leadership organize nonviolent events on the ground without losing control of the movement?

By adding an additional layer of leadership, there is a risk that the movement loses in efficiency and cohesion. The more complex the network of command and accountability in an organization, the slower the organization will move. According to Burt (2005, 3), "matrix structures have people reporting to multiple superiors, which weakens the authority of each reporting relationship. Efficiencies gained by removing layers of bureaucracy shift control from vertical chains of authority to horizontal peer pressure." Indeed, in Timor-Leste, the first handful of nonviolent events were planned up to a year in advance, just as soon as a foreign delegation visit or press tour suitable for nonviolent

action displays was announced, as these required the coordination of so many different key players through a cumbersome *estafeta* network.

Apart from the risk of losing power and influence in the present, leaders may also have an eye on a potential post-conflict order: Those who dominate the movement during the conflict are likely to have a seat at the table in negotiations and after a conflict. Therefore, the rebel leadership runs the risk of losing its grip on the movement both at present and down the road. The delegation problem is similar to that of the civil-military balance outlined in the previous section, and in fact a civil-military balance serves as a mechanism here as well: If there is a political authority that sits above the military side, the military does not oversee political decisions, and there is a clear hierarchy with outlined promotion pathways, empowering a new actor with a different area of expertise would be much less threatening to the rebel leadership. This is a first indication for how tightly linked the different necessary conditions for nonviolent innovation really are.

The organizational complexity of urban-rural ties

Both the problems inherent in wartime nonviolent mobilization and the risks of power delegation to nonviolent entrepreneurs can be mitigated if the wartime organizational structure encompasses reliable rural-urban communication networks that can be repurposed for organizing and coordinating nonviolent action. These organizational structures must enable the coordination and communication between the rebel leadership and nonviolent entrepreneurs. Informally, the urban population must support and put trust into the rebel leadership in the periphery and identify with the cause. In urban areas, there must be formal and informal mobilization pathways for organizing concrete nonviolent events. This results in the following actors and links:

Therefore, the rebel use of nonviolent action necessitates two sets of organizational ties: First, robust institutional ties connect rebel leaders and nonviolent entrepreneurs. Second, the civilian population must be formally or informally embedded in the resis-

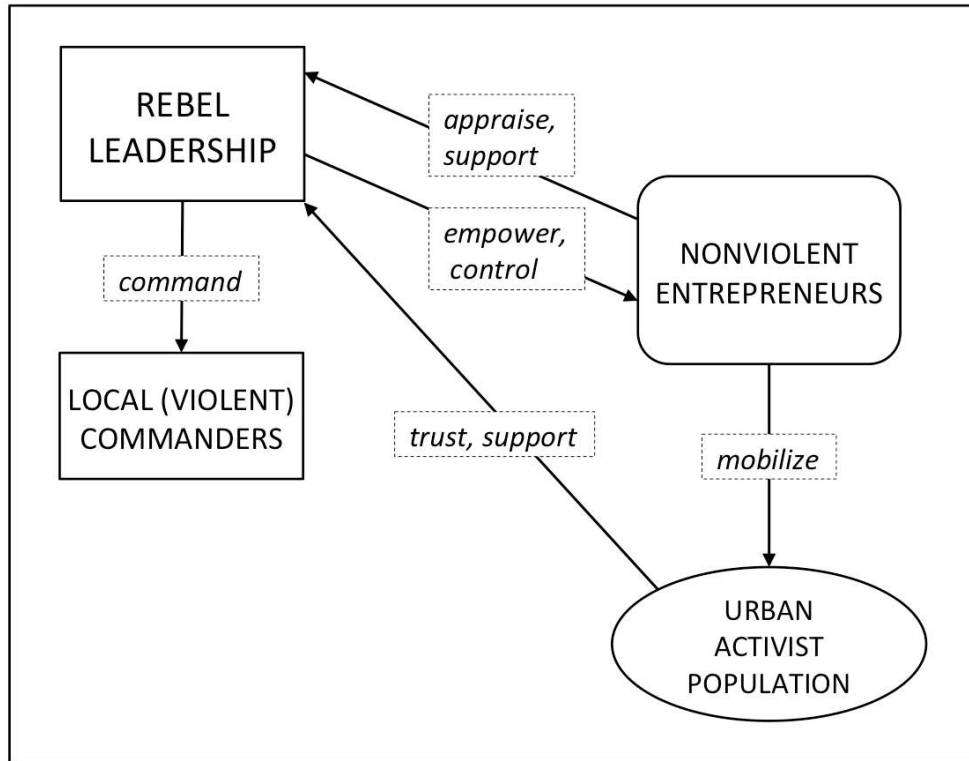


Figure 5.3: Conflict actors and their relationships

tance. However, these types of links are closely connected, as nonviolent action considers civilians as conflict actors. Staniland (2010) argues that in robust rebel organizations, “trust, political consensus, information flows, and norms among members are essential in an environment in which secrecy is needed and risk is endemic” (35). If urban civilians become active conflict actors, they must be tied into the same robust organizational environment. I will outline what each of these organizational links looks like, but their intrinsic connectedness is important.

Hypotheses: Urban-rural organizational ties

Geographic dispersion

The organizational links repurposed by a rebel group for the coordination of nonviolent action, usually via nonviolent entrepreneurs, must link urban and rural areas, as established above. They must also be reliable conduits of information, which means that they

are “institutionalized”. In Timor-Leste, the Clandestine Front network that was later used for nonviolent coordination had its roots in personal links between Dili residents and their families who had fled to the mountains with Fretilin (Bexley and Tchailoro 2013). These individual, personal links were amalgamated during the surviving Fretilin cadres’ reconnaissance mission in 1980 and 1981, and from then on slowly instrumentalized for the transmission of information and supplies. By the time Orgão Oito and Gusmão organized the first nonviolent event, the underground transmission network was a well-oiled machine consisting of thousands of individual links.

Accordingly, Staniland (2014) argues that effective strategic coordination between the central rebel leadership and local commanders is most likely done through well-developed bureaucracies for socialization and discipline. This describes the function of the Clandestine Front by 1989 well. These types of links will allow for the reliable transmission of information, and also afford the central leadership sufficient control to empower new urban actors and trust them with the execution of events. Indeed, all nonviolent organizers I interviewed (a dozen) told me that the central leadership was apprised of planned events every single time.

This leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2a: An institutionalized organizational structure linking urban and rural areas is necessary for rebel use of nonviolent action.

There are many possible ways for a rebel organization to structurally link urban and rural organs. In the Timorese case, the clandestine support network was key; the Nepalese case will demonstrate another pathway via military capacity and territorial control.

Hypothesis: Popular mobilization through socially embedded resistance ties

Mass-based nonviolent action requires the mobilization and participation of civilians as conflict actors. This is only possible if civilians are either formally or informally connected to the resistance organization. In Timor-Leste, social and formal organizational

ties were often blurred. Many urban youths became involved in the resistance as *estafetas* because of their personal ties to Falintil members in the periphery; their knowledge of the terrain came from their experience living in the *bases de apoio*. Constancio Pinto and his colleagues in 007 and later Orgão Oito all became linked to the Clandestine Front through social groups, in their case the Scouts (though Church or martial arts groups were also a common conduit).²¹ When organizing nonviolent events, resistance members would recruit within their own social ties.

Thus, the exploration of the requisite ties linking potential urban activists into rebel organizations requires what Parkinson (2013) terms “situat[ing] militants in their organizational and social context” (418). The important organizational juncture for nonviolent mobilization is in the overlap between formal organizational links and locally extending social ties. In her analysis of Palestinian militant organizations’ startling remobilization in the late 1980s, Parkinson argues that “patterns of overlap between formal militant hierarchies and quotidian social networks — that is, every day kinship, marriage, friendship, and community-based relationships” determined the availability and nature of rebels’ later mobilization pathways. Thus, the “formal” ties linking urban and rural rebel leaders directly connect to the social ties tying urban civilians to the resistance organization; when considering nonviolent action as a contentious strategy, one type of link cannot be understood without considering the other.

Hypothesis 2b: Wartime nonviolent popular mobilization requires substantial overlap between formal organizational ties and their social networks.

²¹Interestingly, the overlap of social ties and political-organizational ties was fostered by Fretilin from the very beginning. Their 1974 campaign of “nationalization” through educational and cultural engagement in villages and towns across Timor-Leste did not differentiate between social and political spheres.

5.3 Complex rebel organizations and functional differentiation

How do the two organizational features of political authority and geographic dispersion fit together? If both of these features are firmly institutionalized in a rebel organization, they will be correlated and mutually reinforcing. Yet, it is rare for an organization to display both of these features together, as their coexistence requires a high degree of organizational capacity *and* complexity. The capacity for task differentiation is an important part of this underlying complexity. Organizations that emphasize task differentiation throughout their organizational history are the most likely to have both consolidated political authority and socially embedded structures linking urban and rural actors. Further, not only is task differentiation directly associated with both necessary organizational features, it is also a useful analytical lens for tracing the hypothesized organizational features in a given rebel group. The lens of observing functional differentiation over time can therefore serve as an analytical lens to identify the structures and processes that come together to form a rebel organization's *dominant structure* with the concomitant action outcomes.

The complex relationship between political authority and urban-rural organization links

How do the two conditions reinforce one another? If political authority is well-consolidated, a leader will likely feel more comfortable “projecting” authority into geographically distant areas by empowering intermediary actors. Conversely, the use of nonviolent organization further strengthens the non-military leadership of a group by de-emphasizing the military arm's *raison d'être*. Both a consolidated political leadership and broad and deep popular ties are also more likely in organizations that embody and practice democratic norms, and in organizations who support the population through governance apparatuses

(further propping up the political side of the organization).

Yet, it is difficult to build and maintain an organizational structure that has a dominant structure of consolidated political authority *and* an organizational structural reach into central urban areas. In firms as in rebel groups, the coordination and control of decision activities is best achieved through a high level of centralization, which “refers to the degree to which the right to make decisions and evaluate activities is concentrated” (Fredrickson 1986, 282). In a rebel group where political authority is so uncontested that a nonviolent shift is possible as outlined in Section 5.2, authority is likely to be concentrated, which directly compares to Fredrickson’s concept of centralization. At the same time, actually mobilizing for nonviolent action requires empowering nonviolent entrepreneurs in far-flung locations, which can dilute the authority of the central rebel leader if the coordination and communication mechanisms are not strong enough. High levels of organizational spatial dispersion and an increase in the number of key actors will also make it more difficult for a central leadership to oversee both the operation of tasks and the actions of subordinates (Lawrence and Lorsch 1967). Compared to firms, this dilemma should be heightened in rebel groups, which operate covertly and illegally, making oversight and the ready availability of information necessary for controlling a complex organization even trickier.

The development of the coordination of these two organizational features of centralized leadership and spatial dispersion thus requires time and practice. In what follows, I argue that a rebel organization that has put emphasis on task differentiation and developed the necessary mechanisms throughout its organizational history is likely to maintain urban-rural organizational links and centralized political authority side by side.

Why and how task differentiation in rebel groups matters

Before CNRM engaged in the vastly different tasks of violent and nonviolent contentious action, Fretilin’s history reveals a deep adherence to task differentiation throughout. At

the time of the group's foundation in 1974, their ideological adherence to Cabral as well as political incentives on the ground made Fretilin's leaders focus on the twin activities of political mobilization and carrying out socialist policies on the ground. While they registered members using voting cards, they implemented agricultural cooperatives, organized cultural events, and improved the rural schooling system. After UDT's coup and the development of Falintil, they militarily confronted the growing threat of Indonesia and administered a quasi-state bureaucracy. In the *bases de apoio*, Fretilin continued to prioritize local governance even at the detriment of military imperatives.

The shift towards nonviolent action built on these early instances of task differentiation. The Clandestine Front built on people's social and ideological connections to Fretilin, which made the underground structures particularly durable and widespread. The prioritization of political action likewise prevented military dominance in Fretilin and CNRM's leadership, sometimes at the cost of strategic effectiveness. While this indicates a close connection between organizational task differentiation and the two key organizational features required for nonviolent action in a civil war, what is the underlying logic? I first briefly explore the concept of task differentiation and then theoretically link it to the key organizational features of political authority and urban-rural organizational links.

The concept of task differentiation in rebel organizations

Task differentiation can happen both horizontally and vertically in an organization, where horizontal differentiation refers to the number of distinct tasks and vertical differentiation refers to the different organs in the organizational hierarchy distinctly responsible for these tasks. Therefore, functional task differentiation not only implies that an organization "does" several things at once, but also that there exist distinct organs for carrying out the different tasks. Bennis (1966, 250) offers the following conceptualization of organizational bureaucracy that highlights the organizational complexity that can come with functional task differentiation:

Most students of organizations would say that the anatomy of bureaucracy consists of the following “organs”: a division of labor based on functional specialization, a well-defined hierarchy of authority, a system of procedures and rules for dealing with all contingencies relating to work activities, impersonality of interpersonal relations, and promotion and selection based on technical competence.

In a rebel organization, this means that the group purposefully pursues tasks functionally unrelated to violence even while waging war. The operation of these tasks should be observable in distinct organizational processes, and be reflected in the group’s formal structure. Naturally, the development of fully functional task differentiation in rebel groups takes time. Task differentiation in pre-war Fretilin was informal; throughout the conflict, it became formalized, until CNRM had four fully functional and meticulously coordinated functional arms in the Clandestine Front, Renetil, Falintil, and the Diplomatic Front, all represented in a central Executive Committee chaired by Xanana Gusmão. How does the development of task differentiation relate to the organizational structures necessary for rebel use of nonviolent action?

Task differentiation and political authority

A focus on and development of functional task differentiation throughout a rebel group’s history makes it more likely that political authority can be maintained throughout the war. Early task differentiation in a rebel organization’s pre-war form allows for a slow calibration of a balance of power with a chance to develop a distinct political culture and identity within the group without an overtly dominant military arm. During a civil war, the military arm of an organization will take on the most pressing task of any organ within the rebel group. This means that the practice of task differentiation must be deeply embedded in the organizational fabric at the time of the civil war, which means that pre-war organizations matter.

Just as Fretilin was a political party before it was a rebel group, all “insurgent groups are built by mobilizing prewar politicized social networks,” so that “pre-existing networks

provide the underpinnings for new insurgent groups” (Staniland 2014, 9, 17). However, the organizational histories and forms of these prewar launching organizations can differ widely. They can be political parties, crime syndicates, religious fringe groups, social organizations, terrorist groups, etc. All of these organizations vary widely not only in terms of their functions, but also in their degree of task differentiation. Therefore, the rebel organizational origins of effective task differentiation are likely to be found prior to the conflict. In a group that practiced several forms of activity, including political or explicitly nonviolent ones, a nonviolent identity can take hold, which should strengthen the political leadership vis-à-vis the military organ during the war.

Task differentiation and urban-rural links

There are two key pathways through which task differentiation affects the breadth of popular mobilization possible during a civil war. First, an organization that carries out multiple tasks will intrinsically reach into a more diverse segment of the population than an organization catering towards only one interest and interest group. Second, this leads to a multiplicity of potential mobilization pathways, which makes it more likely that geographic expansion during the chaos of civil war will be possible.

A wide pre-war mobilization base will practically make wartime mobilization easier. According to McAdam (1986), prior activist histories, even if involvement in the past was much more marginal in the form of low-cost, low-risk activism, will make it much more likely that the “budding activist” will later be drawn into higher-risk forms of participation. In this way, “safe” forays into activism may have longer-range consequences, [...] for they place the new recruit “at risk” of being drawn into more costly forms of participation through the cyclical process of integration and resocialisation [sic]” (69). Through her prior participation, the activist will make new friends and contacts in the movement, which will tie her more closely to the movement and increase her stake in the outcome. Previous engagement will also increase ideological commitment. Therefore, people with

an activist history of any type will be “structurally available” for high-risk mobilization (McAdam 1986).

Reaching many segments before the war allows for the participation of different segments of society both in terms of social classes, age groups, and other cleavages. A trade union only reaches union members, likely from an urban class. Conversely, a socialist party is likely to have members who are also associated with unions, but they also sponsor youth groups and women’s groups. By reaching different social segments, the organization opens up the possibility of mobilizing more people through the strength of ‘weak ties’ (Granovetter 1978). According to Parkinson (2013), the overlap between organizational structures and militants’ quotidian relationships significantly facilitates the mobilization of new actors after a civil war is already under way, since mobilization tasks can be carried out among family members, co-workers, friends, and so on.

An organization that reaches a wide range of people and groups before the war allows organizational ties and social ties to reach deeply into the population. In this way, the peacetime establishment of networks with different functions can provide a canvas onto which communication channels and institutions can later be mapped, allowing for the maintenance of geographically and socially diverse communication channels. In Timor-Leste, Fretilin’s wide-ranging pre-war activities provided the organization with a wide-ranging mobilization base that reached into many segments of the society. In the *bases de apoio*, the Clandestine Front’s early communication networks were built from people’s personal relationships to people who had remained in Dili. This provided Fretilin and later CNRM with a vast potential mobilization base with a wide geographic distribution.

Social ties can also make formal organizational ties stronger, which is important if these ties need to bridge long distances. According to Gould (1995, 22), “an unintended consequence of formal organizations [...] is the creation of social ties that encourage the recognition of commonalities on a scale considerably broader than would be expected on the basis of social networks alone.” In the case of Pinto, it was the overlap of his social

ties with organizational ties that linked him to the organization: Through the Scouts, a shared interest, young educated Timorese would come into contact with Clandestine Front members, who would then link them into Fretilin/CNRM's organizational structure, thus erasing the division between organizational and social structures. Once they were members of the Clandestine Front, Pinto and his friends would form their own cells and recruit further people, which now connected people in adjacent social circles in a formal way and also would have strengthened their adherence to the resistance cause.²²

In comparison, an narrow organization with a narrow focus and no functional differentiation is likely to target only a small sliver of society for potential mobilization. After all, "relations are more likely between people who share socially significant attributes such as income, education, age, gender, and so on (also familiar in the old saying "birds of a feather flock together")" (Burt 2005, 12). Such an organization would not be able to mobilize great masses, since it lacks both direct ties to different population segments and weak ties to the broad population.

Not only does functional differentiation increase the scope and depth of a rebel group's mobilization base, but if an organization performs multiple tasks throughout its history, this will also provide a wider range of structure and link types inherent to the organization. Since a nonviolent shift requires the repurposing of preexisting structures, these structures need to be relatively flexible, which is simply more likely if the group is already practiced at carrying out multiple tasks and functions.

Hypothesis: Task differentiation

To sum up, task differentiation makes it likely that the group has organizational urban-rural links that can be appropriated for nonviolent mass mobilization, and it makes it more likely that there exists a distinct political voice among the rebel leadership that has developed vis-à-vis the military. Further, functional task differentiation that allows for

²²See also Burt (2005) and Fuji (2009) for the bridging functions of social/quotidian ties to the organizational structures of militant organizations.

the full function of both of these organizational features together requires the practice of task differentiation throughout the organization's history.

This leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Rebel use of nonviolent action is correlated with functional task differentiation throughout the organization's history.

It should be noted that the relationship between task differentiation and rebel political authority and urban-rural organizational links is not a linear one; rather, these features reinforce one another, so that causation runs in both directions. Task differentiation also provides a useful analytical lens to focus the exploration of further case studies. As both necessary organizational features are closely related to task differentiation, an exploration of functional task differentiation will likely yield insights into the processes and structures underlying rebel use of nonviolent action.

5.4 Alternative explanations

What are the key alternative explanations for rebel use of nonviolent action? Chapters 2 and 3 yield two key alternative arguments, one related to the strategic interaction between rebel organization and government (or rebel organization with rival organizations and government), one building on popular support, and one purely arguing based on opportunity. I briefly outline each explanatory approach and formulate alternative hypotheses.

Nonviolent action as a purely strategic move

The *organizational process theory* presented in this chapter is built on the assumption that mass-based nonviolent action can be highly beneficial to almost any rebel group; however, even if a rebel group has the opportunity to do so, most rebel groups do not have

the organizational structure and processes to either recognize the need for nonviolent innovation or have the ability to implement it.

The main counterargument to this key assumption is that nonviolent action does not in fact strategically benefit most organizations; rather, the motivation to use it is much stronger for rebel organizations who are militarily weak relative to the central government. The key benefits for rebels who use nonviolent action (explored in Chapter 3) are the demonstration of popular support, exemplifying movement resilience and control, signalling norms adherence, and solidification of international support. While a militarily strong rebel group could also benefit from these, the cost of appearing weak by resorting to nonviolent action would outweigh these benefits and actually weaken their bargaining position.

A rebel group losing the military struggle, on the other hand, can only gain from demonstrating its capacity and support by using nonviolent action, and might have few other options in attracting international attention. This should hold especially if the rebel organization is also in competition with militarily stronger rebel organizations; utilizing nonviolent action could then be used as a way to stand out by “in-bidding”. It should be noted that this is more of a probabilistic than necessary condition.

This leads to the following alternative hypothesis:

Alternative Hypothesis 1: Nonviolent action is a strategy exclusively used by militarily weak rebel groups confronting strong central governments and/or militarily stronger rival rebel groups.

Nonviolent action and popular support

The second alternative explanation holds that the organizational process theory overcomplicates the structural requirements for rebel use of nonviolent action. Rather, the key to rebels using nonviolent action is in the support of the key actor for nonviolent events, namely, civilians. Thus, a rebel organization with an opportunity for using nonviolent

action that enjoys significant popular support should be able to use nonviolent strategies.

What determines the level of popular support? One could argue that a rebel organization engaged in popular governance functions should have broad popular support. Second, if the rebels' aims are widely supported in the population, this could also determine the ability of rebels to use nonviolent action. The following hypothesis results from this logic:

Alternative Hypothesis 2: High levels of popular support are a sufficient condition for rebel use of nonviolent action.

Nonviolent action and opportunity

Finally, rebel use of nonviolent action is only a promising strategy if it is visible to an international audience. In Timor-Leste, the first instance of nonviolent action took place at the occasion of the very first international visit to Dili in 1989. While an international audience is key to the success of nonviolent action, one might argue that the rare opportunity to use nonviolent action is sufficient to determine the use of nonviolent action. This leads to the following hypothesis:

Alternative Hypothesis 3: The opportunity for nonviolent action via access to an international audience is sufficient to explain rebel use of nonviolent action.

Nonviolent action and ideology

The two in-depth positive case studies of successful rebel use of nonviolent action (Timor-Leste's CNRM and Nepal's CPN-M) share a populist ideology deeply influenced by Mao. This could lead to the conclusion that a socialist populist ideology is key to nonviolent action, either because it might predispose an organization for a mass-based strategy or because it makes the underlying organizational structures particularly likely to emerge. This leads to the following hypothesis:

Alternative Hypothesis 4: A populist ideology is necessary for rebel use of non-violent action.

In addition to probing the main explanatory hypotheses using the case of the Nepali Maoists, I provide evidence against alternative hypotheses. The Nepalese case demonstrates that nonviolent action is not a strategy exclusively for militarily weak rebel groups. In addition to demonstrating how the absence of the key organizational features necessary for nonviolent action made an attempt at urban mass action unsuccessful for the Salvadoran FMLN, the case also indicates that popular support alone does not determine a rebel group's ability to use nonviolent action. In the concluding chapter, I present two examples of rebel groups that provide some evidence against the other two alternative hypotheses: The Acehese GAM had a unique opportunity for nonviolent action (and a population supporting GAM's aims) but was not able to use nonviolent action. Finally, the JKLF in Jammu and Kashmir did not have a populist ideology but still used nonviolent action.

Table 5.1: Summary of hypotheses

1. Political authority hypotheses:

- 1a: A politically controlled strategic decision-making process in a rebel organization is necessary for nonviolent innovation.
- 1b: A centralized, consolidated authority structure with a widely accepted leadership is necessary condition for a rebel group to use nonviolent action.

2. Hypotheses about rural-urban organizational links:

- 2a: An institutionalized organizational structure linking urban and rural areas is necessary for rebel use of nonviolent action.
- 2b: Wartime nonviolent popular mobilization requires substantial overlap between formal organizational ties and their social networks.

3. Functional differentiation hypothesis:

- 3: Rebel use of nonviolent action is correlated with functional task differentiation throughout the organization's history.

4. Alternative hypotheses:

- A1: Nonviolent action is a strategy exclusively used by militarily weak rebel groups confronting strong central governments and/or militarily stronger rival rebel groups.
- A2: High levels of popular support are a sufficient condition for rebel use of nonviolent action.
- A3: The opportunity for nonviolent action via access to an international audience is sufficient to explain rebel use of nonviolent action.
- A4: A populist ideology is necessary for rebel use of nonviolent action.

6. Probing Plausibility: Nepal's Capable Maoists Turn Nonviolent

“The fundamental principles of this path are: To grasp firmly the fact that the people’s war is the war of the masses ... and not to permit at any cost to arise a situation where the gun would control the party.”

– Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)¹

By 2005, after nine years of insurgency, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (CPN-M) controlled over 80% of Nepalese territory. As planned in 1996 by a small group of Maoist Kathmandu intellectuals, they had followed Mao Tse-Tung’s blueprint: They had moved from guerrilla warfare carried out by a few dozen fighters to replacing state governance institutions with their own in their base areas, and finally moved on to positional warfare, having attained at least military power parity with the Royal Army of Nepal (Thapa 2015, 190). Despite their military prowess, the Maoists indicated a shift in focus towards nonviolent action in October 2005 and they finally collaborated with Nepal’s more moderate parties in organizing a massive nineteen-day strike in April 2006 that included a demonstration in Kathmandu with several hundred thousand participants.² Maoist spokesperson Ananta announced on January 15, 2006 that the Maoists would now exclusively focus on preparing an urban mass insurrection as a key step in establishing a republic in Nepal (ICG 2006*b*, 9).

Even more striking, the Maoist wager on nonviolent action paid off: The state of Nepal became a Federal Democratic Republic on 28 May 2008 after 240 years of almost uninterrupted monarchy following a ten-year insurgency by the CPN-M and a two-year interim

¹*Strategy and Tactics of Armed Struggle in Nepal*

²Throughout the chapter, I use “Maoists” and CPN-M interchangeably to denote the same organization.

period of negotiations and elections; Prachanda (Pushpa Kamal Dahal), the Maoist Chairman and Supreme Commander, became Prime Minister. Experts attribute the Maoists' shift towards nonviolent action with the success of their campaign and their subsequent hold on power in Nepal; according to Bhattacharya (2013), for example, "the rebels' choice of alternating between violent and nonviolent action ended the conflict in the Maoists' favor" (575).

Was the Timorese turn towards nonviolent action unique, or can the dominant organizational structures that allowed for the CNRM to strategically use mass-based nonviolent action explain analogous conflict trajectories in other rebel organizations? The easiest way to answer this question is to examine a case that is as different as possible from Timor-Leste in terms of scale, scope, background conditions and strategic interaction with the central government. While CNRM's nonviolent turn was puzzling because it demonstrated the ability of a nearly-defeated, peripheral rebel group to mobilize civilian activists across Timor and eventually Indonesia, using an invisible control-and-communication network, the Nepali case is puzzling for a very different reason: Here, a militarily highly capable rebel organization that might also have achieved its goals militarily transformed and retooled its powerful military apparatus to focus on organizing an urban nonviolent mass uprising. Not only is it rare for rebel groups to achieve most of their ultimate aims, but there are few rebel organizations to achieve military parity with a state army. The very different relative power balance in Nepal compared to Timor-Leste is a strong argument against the alternative hypothesis presented in the previous chapter that the rebel use of nonviolent action is a weapon of the weak useful only to militarily weak groups vis-à-vis the government, as this approach cannot explain both of these cases.

Not only do Timor-Leste's CNRM and Nepal's CPN-M differ vastly in terms of their conflict trajectory, their underlying political histories, aims, opponents, cultures, ethnicities, etc. were as different as could be. In contrast to Timor-Leste, Nepal is a multi-ethnic,

multi-lingual, multi-religious, landlocked country with a long history as a nation-state – it was politically unified in the mid-eighteenth Century by the Shah dynasty – and with no significant history of colonization. Nepal’s history with Britain was confined to a war in the early 19th Century when it lost a good amount of territory to British India after the ambitious Nepali king Prithivi Narayan expanded his kingdom’s boundaries until he created a conflict with the British East India Company (Thapa 2015, 190). Ideologically, while Fretilin at times identified as Marxist-Leninist (though in practice can really only be called socialist), this identity was shed in the mid-1980s, whereas CPN-M explicitly originated from a series of splinters in Nepal’s Communist parties that made the Maoists’ views extremist by almost any standard. Finally, both due to timing (seventeen years lie between the start of the Timorese and Nepalese nonviolent campaigns) and infrastructure, means of communication and propaganda dissemination were somewhat more advanced in Nepal.

The way the two organizations used nonviolent action was also somewhat different. While CNRM used nonviolent action over ten years, slowly increasing the scope of events, CPN-M organized a much larger and much shorter nonviolent campaign with significant shock value. To do so, it collaborated with other, erstwhile rival parties (the Nepalese Seven-Party Alliance or SPA). While Falintil also remained active as the nonviolent events unfolded, CPN-M’s militant wing actively supported the nonviolent events by engaging the Nepalese Royal Army (NRA) in the periphery and constructing elaborate blockades around Kathmandu to prevent NRA crackdowns on protesters.

Despite these vastly different trajectories and scope conditions, the Maoists’ nonviolent shift was determined by the same two key organizational structural features that played a determinative role in Timor-Leste even though their outward appearance might have looked different: Prachanda, a political leader, was firmly in control of a centralized organizational structure. The shift towards nonviolence occurred once Prachanda had cemented his position as Chairman of the CPN-M (and extremist military commanders had

been jailed), allowing for the identification of consolidated political authority as a dominant structure prior to the onset of nonviolent action. While Fretilin/CNRM achieved organizational geographic dispersion via a clandestine network, CPN-M was able to formally extend its population links step by step through military control with the exception of Kathmandu, where a mobilization structure was established via organizational affiliates (though on the eve of the nonviolent campaign, CPN-M was also able to operate within Kathmandu, providing an important control mechanism). Organizational spread and control was so broad that CPN-M was even able to securely collaborate with rival parties without compromising their own position within the movement. Just as in Timor-Leste, spatial extension of communication and control and consolidated political authority reinforced one another, but the Nepali case shows an alternative pathway towards this difficult-to-establish organizational structure. At the same time, just as Fretilin/CNRM, CPN-M maintained a strong political identity both before and throughout the war.

To effectively probe the plausibility of the proposed theory, the following key questions underlie the analysis of the CPN-M's nonviolent strategic shift:

1. How much control did the political leader of the rebel organization have over grand-strategy decisions?
2. How centralized and streamlined was the decision-making apparatus?
3. How far did the organization's communication and mobilization network reach when the use of nonviolent strategic action was initiated? How did this affect when, why and how nonviolent action was used?
4. Did the organization pursue different functions throughout its history? How were these incorporated into the organizational structure?

This chapter will proceed as follows: I will first present a (short) overview of Nepal's political history and then outline the conflict trajectory and nonviolent campaign with

a special focus on the transition from the former to the latter. I will then explore intra-organizational dynamics: How were strategic decisions, particularly with regards to significant shifts, made? What other factors played a role? I then examine CPN-M's decision-making dynamics, especially as they related to strategic innovation, and the spread of territorial control and mobilization structures, and draw conclusions about the organization's reach on the eve of the nonviolent campaign. Throughout, I keep in mind functional differentiation as an analytical focusing tool. I will conclude by briefly discussing whether or not the case study confirms or disconfirms the proposed hypotheses, and what this tells us about the scope of the theory.

6.1 The Maoist insurgency and its nonviolent finale

Political background

The histories of democracy and popular movements in Nepal is short. From 1959 to 1960, King Mahendra briefly introduced multi-party democracy but quickly abandoned the experiment using his emergency powers. In 1985, the powerless Congress Party launched a nonviolent protest campaign (satyagraha) against the prevalent panchayat system (Bassett 2009, 18). Until the 1990s, the authoritarian rule of the royal class was blamed for the country's socio-economic ills and democracy hailed as a panacea (Thapa 2015, 190). In 1990, a multi-party pro-democracy movement largely driven by education institutions, students, and teachers launched a nonviolent people's movement (*Jan Andolan*) against the monarchy. King Birendra acceded to some of their demands and gave the country a democratic constitution and a political system of multi-party constitutional monarchy. This new "democratic" system resulted in three parliamentary and two local elections between 1991 and 2002, but failed to achieve stability, so that democracy was seen as mostly profiting dominant Brahmin and Chhetri upper castes (Thapa 2015, 191).

The new political system, led by a quick succession of Prime Ministers in conjunction

with the king, saw little progress in either development or equality and many parts of Nepal were still barely developed by 1996. For example, from the 1970s on, roads only connected the tropical lowlands, with limited additional offshoots into the northern hill country and south into India appearing in the 1990s; most of the country could still only be reached via trails even in 2005. Similarly, by 2005, Nepal's phone lines were only beginning to expand from the center, and even then only into district capitals, though there was at least a limited spread of radios (Marks and Palmer 2005, 93). Rampant structural inequality and bad governance were the norm in the early 1990s, a time that saw explosion of identity movements among marginalized groups (class, ethnic, caste, religious, regional, and gender). Against this backdrop, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) was formally established in 1995, perfectly placed to capitalize on the growing popular disenchantment with the prevailing power structure and launch a violent insurgency against the parliamentary democracy and its ally, the king (Thapa 2015, 191).

Nepal's civil war

CPN-M, led by Puspa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda) and Dr. Baburam Bhattarai (the organization's chief ideologue) formally announced the beginning of their violent insurgency on February 13, 1996, after the Nepali government rejected their ultimatum of 40 demands they had handed to the government a few days earlier. The list contained demands related to nationalism, full democracy, the livelihood of the Nepalese rural population, and the abrogation of unequal treaties with foreign countries. Although a Maoist-style "people's democracy" was the most ideologically charged demand, the key (and most consistent throughout the war) demand concerned the election of a new constituent assembly and the drafting of a new constitution, guaranteeing more equal political representation (Dahal 2005; Basnett 2009).

CPN-M's ideology was influenced by the ideological teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Mao; the plans for practical implementation of these fathers of communism was in-

spired by the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, Peru's Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) and the Naxalites in India (Marks and Palmer 2005, 102). Their envisioned strategy was also based on these role models, according to their published theoretical premises underlying their insurgency: "This plan of ours would be based on the lessons of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism regarding revolutionary violence . . . that will unfold as protracted people's war based on the strategy of encircling the city from the countryside according to the specificities of people's war developed by Mao as the universal and invincible Marxist theory of war" (CPN-M 1996*b*). This grand strategy of a *Protracted People's War* had the following rough components: To control the countryside fully and then encircle and move on urban areas; to rely on guerrilla warfare and then move to positional warfare; and to pass through the three distinct stages of strategic defense, strategic stalemate, and strategic offense (Bhattacharya 2013; CPN-M 1996*b*). It should be noted that while the CPN-M announced each of these stages formally and they did correspond to strategically distinct phases (guerrilla warfare and building of bases, positional warfare and propaganda/mobilization through fraternal organizations, large-scale military actions coordinated with nonviolent movement), the interpretation of what Mao himself might have meant when coining the three stages was very loose and heavily adjusted to changing strategic circumstances.

The Maoists' overall goal during the stage of strategic defense was the weakening of enemy power, establishing power vacuums via sabotage and targeting and collect enemy weapons. They would then establish rural bases, govern, and expand military power according to the following motto: "Let us march ahead on the path of struggle towards establishing the people's rule by wrecking the reactionary ruling system of the state" (CPN-M quoted in Ogura (2008, 14)). Accordingly, the Maoist insurgency started in the the central, rural and mountainous Rukum and Rolpa districts with attacks on three police posts, carried out by small groups of fighters with locally available weapons: Knives, sticks, sickles, homemade explosives and old-fashioned guns. While the Maoists started out with only

a few dozen fully trained fighters, they were able to carry out over 6000 more or less coordinated small-scale actions during the first fifteen days of struggle (Huang 2012; Ogura 2008). After six months, CPN-M formed its first squad of fighters carrying out guerrilla warfare, mostly committing raids against local feudals, police, rival political workers, government spies, moneylenders, rapists, wife-beaters, smugglers, and corrupt officials. In 1999, the Maoists first divided their activities into three parallel forms of struggle that were employed strategically in different places across the country: In the “Guerilla Zone”, they directly engaged Nepal’s security forces (first the Armed Police Force or APF and later the Royal Nepalese Army or RNA); in the “Propaganda Zone” they mobilized the urban population through political education and issues-focused activism via associated subsidiary student and professional organizations; and in the “Main Zone” they established base areas and carried out local governance functions (Dahal 2005, 2).

The Nepalese government relied on its armed police force for counterinsurgency measures and failed to understand the quickly growing scope of the insurgency, in large parts due to its highly centralized governance style that left entire districts largely unguarded (Dahal 2005; Thapa 2015). In fact, the government actively withdrew its police and administrative officers (as well as service delivery agencies and institutions) from rural areas that were not deemed strategically important, thus allowing the Maoists considerable room to expand and grow their base areas (Dahal 2005, 2). The government relied on severely repressive counterinsurgency measures against the Maoists that included significant civilian casualties (which CPN-M avoided wherever possible). This lumbering ineptitude in containing the Maoists finally led to “intensified security mobilization” in 1998, which included Armed Police Ordinance 2057 which increased the powers of the APF, and expanded the executive power for the king (Bhattacharya 2013, 576).

A ceasefire from late 2000 to early 2001 marked the beginning of the Maoists’ period of “strategic stalemate”. The ceasefire followed the assassination of King Birendra, who had been relatively moderate, if weak, compared to his successor, hardliner younger brother

Gyanendra, who many suspected of ordering the assassination himself. As the state continued its repressive measures through the APF, CPN-M unilaterally called off the ceasefire and engaged in further targeted attacks. The Nepalese government — at this point still ruled jointly by king and prime minister with a weak parliament — declared CPN-M a terrorist organization in the same year (it also appeared on the US State Department’s Terrorist Watchlist). That year, 3,000 people were killed, most of them by the state (Bhattacharya 2013, 576). Gyanendra reinforced the overwhelmed police force with 54,000 troops from the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) and passed anti-terrorism legislation that further increased the power of the palace relative to the civilian government (Marks and Palmer 2005, 105). Gyanendra’s relationship with parliament was shaky at best from the start; through failed negotiations and ceasefires in 2002 and 2003, he unseated the Prime Minister twice (Bhattacharya 2013, 576).

By February 2001, the Maoists had acquired modern weapons such as mortars, rocket launchers, machine guns, self-loading rifles, and a variety of small, light weapons; its military wing had grown to three divisions, nine brigades, 29 battalions in addition to people’s militias (Dahal 2005, 2). At varying degrees of penetration, they now controlled the majority of Nepal’s rural territory. Through a combination of Maoist governance, publicity campaigns and increasingly large-scale civilian targeting by the Nepalese government and human rights abuses that received both national and international public condemnation, civilian support for the Maoists increased steadily, and the narrative that Gyanendra was to be blamed for failed negotiations became widely accepted (Bhattacharya 2013, 576).

The Maoists initiated the third stage of their struggle on August 31, 2004, as they believed there to now be a “strategic equilibrium” where neither side could militarily fully eliminate the other; the focus now was to “stand on the spine [of the enemy] to strike the head”; the military focus was to be on peripheral military bases and to cut off supply routes to Kathmandu, serving the simultaneous purposes of enabling strikes on the Kathmandu area, demonstrate government incapacity, and increase Maoist mobi-

lization in urban areas (ICG 2006a, 8). The most immediate aim of the strategy was to disrupt the preparations for municipal elections called by the government and encourage a widespread boycott (Chalmers 2012, 75).

In February 2, 2005, King Gyanendra lost patience, sacked the prime minister, dismissed parliament, and declared a full state of emergency, assuming all executive power in an attempt to defeat the insurgency. In his official statement, he stated that “it would not be right for the monarchy to just watch the country slide into chaos;” he blamed partisan infighting for the failed counterinsurgency, claiming that “even when the bloodshed, violence and devastation has pushed the country to the brink of destruction, those engaged in politics continued to shut their eyes to the people’s welfare” counterinsurgency campaign on the parties (Bell 2005). It was this fatal strategic mistake on the part of the king that gave the immediate impetus for the nonviolent campaign.

The nonviolent campaign

While the narrative around nonviolent action in Nepal’s civil war tends to focus solely on the April 2006 nineteen-day strike that culminated in a protest march in Kathmandu attended by several hundred thousand people, nonviolent action was nothing entirely new for either the Maoists or the Seven-Party Alliance (SPA - Nepal’s seven main parties that had been ousted from government and parliament by King Gyanendra).³ As part of their “popular insurgency” campaign initiated in 2001, CPN-M organized countless small-scale demonstrations and strikes through its subsidiary organizations coordinated under their United Front (see below). However, most of these early events were aimed at mobilization and propaganda and were not coordinated with strategic military action. For their part, the SPA had launched a “second people’s movement” in May 2005 (after the *Jan Andolan*

³The Seven-Party Alliance consisted of the Nepali Congress, the Nepali Congress (Democratic), the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), the Nepal Workers and Peasants Party, the Nepal Goodwill Party (Anandi Devi) and the United Left Front.

of 2001), but did not manage to gather popular force until the early months of 2006 when they had joined forces with the vastly better organized CPN-M (Thapa 2015, 195).

On September 3, 2005, CPN-M announced a three-month unilateral ceasefire, and once more publicly reiterated their demands, now bolstered by the king's coup: the formation of an interim regime and elections for a constituent assembly to solve the crisis facing the country (Dahal 2005, 5). The King decried the ceasefire as strategic maneuvering and was not wrong, as CPN-M used the time period to plan its campaign on two fronts: Reorganization of their own party and general approach, and forging an agreement with the SPA, which had been unthinkable prior to Gyanendra's emergency rule. In its two-week expanded Central Committee meeting, the Maoists reorganized their command structure, reinforced their military organization around Kathmandu, and decided on collaboration with SPA and the prioritization of true multi-party democracy through a new constitution over Maoist ideology. After the CPN-M meeting, Prachanda announced: "The party would utilize the truce with mass mobilization and struggle" to campaign for a democratic republic (Dahal 2005, 6).

Meeting in New Delhi in November 2005, the SPA and the Maoists signed the "12-Point Understanding" and committed to boycotting the municipal elections scheduled for January 2006. In their agreement, the Maoists formally indicated their willingness to participate in multi-party government, whereas the SPA conceded to Maoist demands to bring an end to monarchy, create a republic, and hold a constituent assembly election to draft a new constitution (Huang 2012, 158). The SPA and Maoists both explicitly stated their intent to foment a nonviolent democratic movement (Thapa 2015, 195). Theirs was not an easy alliance: Coordination at the start was difficult, so that untimely attacks by the Maoists in the Kathmandu valley and across the country (after ending the ceasefire on January 2) provided justification for a government crackdown, stifling the first proposed mass rally on January 20, 2006, which led to the arrest of dozens of political leaders and activists on January 19 (ICG 2006a, 1). The Maoists shifted to a strategy of very small

military engagements and sabotage in Kathmandu to demonstrate the lack of government capacity combined with mobilization efforts through the United Front associated organizations (ICG 2006*a*, 9).

SPA and the Maoists also disagreed on the best type of nonviolent campaign, namely a general strike or a series of large-scale demonstrations. Initially, it was deemed impossible to combine the two, as a strike would make the coordination of demonstrations difficult due to lack of transportation and the potential shutdown of means of communication. In the end, they decided on a four-day strike starting on April 6, which would be accompanied by smaller, decentralized demonstrations and a larger demonstration in Kathmandu if possible. In the run-up to April, both SPA and the Maoists reaffirmed their commitment to the November 2005 deal, but could not agree to issue a joint appeal to the population to join their general strike, so that separate mobilizing appeals were sent out by each ally (ICG 2006*b*, 2). On April 10, four days after the start of the strike, Nepali Congress President G. P. Koirala and Maoist spokesman Krishna Bahadur Mahara had a very public dispute on BBC's Nepali radio over who controlled the nonviolent movement (ICG 2006*a*, 3).

Despite the disagreements over strategic approach and movement control that complicated planning, it is unimaginable for the nonviolent movement to have been successful (or possible) without the Maoists (more details later). Prachanda himself in a radio address detailed the CPN-M's efforts in organizing the nonviolent movement, likely incensing SPA's leadership (ICG 2006*b*, 4). CPN-M positioned troops in Kathmandu, should the government react with severe repression; they controlled all highways leading to Kathmandu by force and engaged the RNA in remote areas to draw them away from the city; and the ferried in busloads of protesters from rural regions to participate in the April 19 demonstration. The four-day strike continued for nineteen days and participants came from all segments of society, including professional associations, civil society groups, civil service, business community, and even government (Ogura 2008). On April 24, the CPN-M

also held a bold solo demonstration in Pathari Bazar (Morang) after the SPA had displayed an inclination to compromise; Gyanendra capitulated on the same day, acceding to all of the SPA-Maoist alliance's demands (ICG 2006*b*, i).

6.2 Political authority and decision-making in CPN-M

There are several reasons why we might expect CPN-M to become more extremist in their means over time – and possibly show signs of further splintering – rather than move towards nonviolent action. The organization started out as an extremist splinter from another party, and existing research often associates splintering with increasing extremism.⁴ In contrast with Fretilin/CNRM, the Nepali Maoists also lacked even a short history of political governance or conventional political organizing but favored a violent strategy from the beginning.

Apart from the startling resort to nonviolent action in 2005/2006, there are other notable features to the Nepali Maoists' organizational trajectory over time. Despite its factionalized origins, CPN-M showed a high degree of organizational cohesion under Prachanda's leadership even during wartime without further splintering, coming close only once. While their funding ideology placed them at the far-left fringe of Nepalese politics, the Maoists softened rather than hardened in their aims, adapting to political and structural incentives and pragmatic considerations about widening their mobilization base. While they originally called for a "dictatorship of the proletariat" (using the slogan *naulo janbad* or "new people's democracy"), they later emphasized the need to complete Nepal's "bourgeois democratic revolution" and a true multiparty democracy that allowed for real popular representation, as stated by Prachanda in an official press statement on May 10, 2005 (ICG 2005, 2). On the one hand, CPN-M remained steadfast and was ultimately successful in demanding the abdication of the monarch, the election of a new con-

⁴See Bueno de Mesquita (2008) or Cunningham (2013)

stituent assembly, and the drafting of a new constitution. On the other hand, they were flexible in terms of their main economic policy demands and adopted issues championed by the middle class, such as high private school fees, in order to broaden their popular appeal (ICG 2005, 4). They also proved adaptable in their military approach, moving from guerrilla-inspired small-scale hit-and-run action to full-scale guerrilla mobilization and finally positional warfare.

Many of these features, in particular the ability to shift an explicitly violent organization towards mass-based nonviolent action, is due to the leadership skills and style of Prachanda. Shahi (2010) argues that “Prachanda’s abilities to maneuver through oppositions and constraints led the CPN (Maoist) to power through instigating the insurgency, but without achieving military victory over the state” (5). Benefitting from an explicitly political - rather than military - organizational identity with a highly centralized internal structure, Prachanda was able to deepen and extend his hold on the Maoists as their military successes multiplied. When the Maoists were at their military peak, he was able to maintain his stature even while collaborating with the SPA, an erstwhile arch rival. His ability to keep extremist internal rivals and ambitious external rivals in check, coupled with a bit of luck where arrests and government mistakes were concerned, gave Prachanda the authority to move CPN-M onto a nonviolent path in late 2005 and early 2006. I will first briefly outline the organizational history and structure of CPN-M and then trace how leadership determined the Maoists’ ability to shift towards nonviolent action.

The tumultuous creation of CPN-M

CPN-M was the result of several splintering events of communist Nepali parties since 1949, when the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) was founded in Kolkata, India. Twelve separate party splits and mergers stood between 1949 and the official creation of CPN-Maoist (Shahi 2010). A major disagreement over strategy (peaceful within the political process or violent) caused a split in 1974 and led to CPN (Fourth Convention), which aimed

to end the monarchy through force; this and most other splits directly leading to CPN-M moved the party further towards the extreme left and a concomitant belief in violence as the only way out. In 1983, Mohan Bikram Singh split from CPN (Fourth Convention) to found CPN (Masal). Only two years later, Mohan Vaidya (Comrade Kiran), an ideological hardliner who wanted to accelerate the armed uprising, clashed with Singh and started CPN (Mashal).⁵ Prachanda replaced Kiran as Chairman of CPN-Mashal in 1986, while Bhattarai had become Chairman of CPN-Masal; both groups advocate the use of “People’s War” (Shahi 2010, 10-11).^{footnote}After the war, Kiran would retain his strictly Maoist ideology, continuing to advocate for a fully-fledged People’s Republic without multi-party elections (Shahi 2010, 10). Chandra Prasad Gajurel, a cadre member of CPN (Mashal) and Central Committee member of CPN-M during the war, explained that neither group could ever agree on concrete plans for carrying out armed insurgency, and lacked the requisite knowledge to do so. Prachanda became Chairman of CPN (Unity Center) after a merger in 1990, and then Chairman of CPN-M without serious challenges to his leadership role (Ogura 2008, 9).

In 1984, CPN-Mashal became a founding member of the Revolutionary International Movement (RIM), which afforded them exchange about strategies and theories with other revolutionary leaders and movements. It was then that CPN-Mashal and its leaders were formatively influenced by other ongoing armed insurgencies with shared ideological underpinnings. According to Gajurel, who then led CPN-Mashal, the organization received direct guidance from Peru’s Sendero Luminoso and the Indian Naxalites:

After our participation in the first convention of the Revolutionary International Movement in 1984, we received plenty of documents on beginning a People’s War from the Peruvian Communist Party, the Shining Path, as they too participated in this convention. We also had contacts with armed groups in India, such as the Indian Naxalite group and the Maoist Communist Center. By analyzing those documents and the examples available in India, we also thought that although the ‘mass line’ was missing in Peru, the military

⁵*Masal* means “flame” in Nepali; *Mashal* differentiated itself by simply adding an “h” to sound different, but the word has no separate meaning (Shahi 2010, 9).

plan and basic principles of the People's War adopted by the Shining Path nevertheless could be applicable in Nepal. (Ogura 2008, 9)

CPN-Mashal leaders also took more concrete steps to prepare for armed conflict during this period. For example, to familiarize himself with the realities and difficulties of guerilla warfare, Prachanda trained with ex-Gorkha soldiers in India and learned how to make bombs from exiled Nepali revolutionary Ram Baja Prasad Singh (Roy 2008, 186).

In January 1990, seven outlawed communist party factions formed the United Left Front with the aim of launching a popular movement against the Panchayat political system. They cooperated with the Nepali Congress (Nepal's oldest and largest outlawed party) to launch the *Jan Andolan*, which lasted 50 days and ended with King Birendra a multi-party political system. In opposition to this collaboration, CPN-Masal, CPN-Mashal, and several other far-left communist parties merged into CPN-Unity Centre with an ideology advocating for People's War and Maoism as their ideology, with Prachanda as General Secretary (Shahi 2010, 11). After 1990, the political wing - United National People's Front (UNPF) - managed to enter the House of Representatives led by Bhattarai, but even though they had the third-most votes, they held only nine of 205 seats in parliament and quickly became disillusioned (Ogura 2008, 10).

After the Nepali Congress Party (in power) used police force to suppress UNPF gatherings, CPN-Unity Center split into two over the question of whether or not the time was ripe for an armed uprising, the larger splinter group formed CPN-Maoist in 1995, likewise under the leadership of Prachanda (Thapa 2015, 194). From the point of its break-off, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) was committed to an armed strategy. While their 40-point list of demands submitted to the Nepalese government was framed as an ultimatum (indicating that violent action was only one option forward), the party was preparing for war, engaging in extensive recruitment and propaganda campaigns in the Maoists' mid-western stronghold districts of Rukum and Rolpa, focusing on the disaffected groups in the region (Von Einsiedel 2012, 10). However, while CPN-M saw violence as the only way

forward, the violent struggle was seen as crucially organized and restrained. As put by Prachanda, “it should be strictly expressed in both our policy and practice that red terror does not mean anarchy” (quoted in Bhattacharya (2013, 583)). Further, to Prachanda, it was clear that to initiate a people’s war did not mean that the CPN-M was a militant organization; it was seen as integral “to establish the leadership of the party over the army and not to permit at any cost to arise a situation where the gun would control the party” (CPN-M 1995). Thus, the primacy of the political authority was emphasized even before the war started in this party advocating violence as their means of struggle.

CPN-M’s organizational structure

In CPN-M, Prachanda’s leadership skills and the organization’s self-identification as a party throughout the war are inextricably linked. Throughout, he had the authority to take all immediate executive decisions, though the rest of the party leadership (Politburo, Standing Committee, and occasionally Central Committee during plenum meetings) could endorse, revise or, very occasionally, reject his decisions (ICG 2005, 7). Throughout the conflict, organizational control of both party and military remained firmly in the hands of the Politburo’s Standing Committee, which was to say Prachanda. Serious challenges to his position in 2004/2005 were dealt with swiftly. At the same time, the Maoists’ internal decision-making structure resembled more that of a party with a strong leader than that of a militant organization throughout. The International Crisis Group, following multiple in-depth reports about CPN-M’s organizational development over the years and relying on dozens of interviews with CPN-M leaders and members, concluded in 2005 - when the Maoists were at their military peak - that “the Maoists are at heart a political party. They have developed military capacity but it is subordinated to political control” (ICG 2005, i).⁶ This is remarkable: After all, CPN-M had no real history as a functioning political party.

⁶The organizational structure of CPN-M during the insurgency days is at times murky and there are some inconsistencies across accounts. The most credible account comes from the Nepali branch of the International Crisis Group, which bases its analyses on primary sources and extensive interviews.

Even though CPN-M was founded and influenced most profoundly by two high-caste Brahmins from Kathmandu, strongly adhered to a populist *political* ideology Marks and Palmer (2005, 102). The maintenance of this strong and enduring political identity in parallel to an astounding military apparatus can in no small part be attributed to Prachanda's second in command and close friend, Dr. Baburam Bhattarai. The relationship between Prachanda and Bhattarai, chief ideologue and academic, was such that Bhattarai moderated Prachanda's views but never threatened Prachanda's authority.

Under the ideological stewardship of Bhattarai, CPN-M developed a carefully calibrated political authority structure that could fit seamlessly with the prioritization of violent action as the key strategy. On the one hand, Bhattarai believed firmly that violent struggle was imperative given Nepal's situation and his own interpretation of Maoism, as he wrote in the theoretical foundations of CPN-M's predecessor party in 1991: "It is evident that in such a revolution the role of the Communist Party and the people's war would be primary and that of the mass and class organizations and the people's movement be secondary" (quoted in ICG (2005, 7)). At the same time, according to Maoist teachings, the use of violence as a prioritized strategy was fit into three "magic weapons", decreasing in strategic importance: party (most important), army (second important), united front (third important). Yet, even though this statement clearly prioritizes violent over nonviolent action, the popular focus is very apparent. Violence as a means to a political end was thus enshrined in the CPN-M's foundations; in this way, functional differentiation was part of CPN-M's very identity.

The primacy of political authority and the plan to govern territory was clearly evident in the "three magical weapons" organizational structure. The Party, led by the Chairman of the Politburo (Prachanda), consisted of a nine-member Standing Committee (nine members) and below it the full-member Politburo (twenty-seven members). The Politburo was also the military "General Staff", which made the two most influential military commanders (Ram Bahadur Thapa (Badal) and Mohan Vaidya (Kiran)) also influential figures in

the Standing Committee of the Politburo (Marks and Palmer 2005, 102). It appears that the majority of the Standing Committee were political leaders and not field commanders. CPN-M's main "legislative" body was the Central Committee (55-100 members), which convened in plenary sessions approximately once or twice a year; however, the majority of key decisions were taken in the Politburo, and Prachanda himself initiated most significant strategic decisions and shifts. The Central Committee only debated and approved significant strategic, structural and ideological shifts. Importantly, both Timor-Leste and Nepal, then, had strong central leaders, not only strong political authority structures, which allowed both of them to circumvent internal opposition to innovation.

The political control over military affairs was also replicated at the regional level once CPN-M controlled and governed a piece of territory. In June 2002, the Central Committee approved the creation of additional key power positions in the form of three regional commands led by regional political commissars that had significant leeway in terms of action: The Special Central Command, Western Command, Eastern Command, where they were in charge of forming and administering regional party committees. These political regions were merged with military regional divisions overseen by a military commander after the creation of the People's Liberation Army (see below). According to the Maoists, a Political Commissar had authority over regional military commander (according to a translation of a 2004 Maoist publication in ICG (2005, 9)). On paper, there were also several departments in charge of policy, schools, human rights, health, etc., though not all of them were actually functioning. The International Department, led by Bhattarai during the key years 2004-2006, was in charge of international outreach (and later negotiations with the SPA in India) and was the most fleshed out of them.

The Maoist armed wing at first consisted of a few dozen fighters with three levels of authority below Prachanda, the Supreme Commander: "Fighting units" (*ladaku dal*), "security units" (*suraksha dal*), and "volunteer units" (*svayamsevak dal*). CPN-M either captured weapons through raids or bought them abroad through money from criminal ac-

tivities (bank heists, kidnapping, etc.). In 1998, the Central Committee approved the construction of base areas, where CPN-M both administered governance and recruited troops through a mixture of propaganda and at times coercion.⁷ It was only when King Gyanendra tightened executive control that CPN-M overhauled its military structure completely, creating the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of Nepal. The PLA's organization was modeled on that of a state military, matching their shift from guerrilla to positional warfare strategies: There were three regional divisions, three brigades per division, battalions, companies, platoons, squads, and militias (poorly armed, non-uniformed fighters without guerrilla training). For urban areas, there were specialized, lightly armed task forces. It was the PLA's attacks on army barracks at Ghorahi that caused Gyanendra to bring the Royal Nepalese Army out of the barracks.

The United Front was the Maoists' official third "magic weapon", fulfilling multiple parallel functions that increased in number over the years, all representing nonmilitary action. Officially, it was established in accordance with the Maoist dictum to "unite with all forces that can be united with in order to fight a common struggle against the enemy and win in revolution and construction" (Li 1995, 451). The United Front served both as an umbrella for a broad coalition of associated organizations ("people's class organizations") assisting in the revolutionary struggle, but officially also administered and oversaw the governance institutions established in regions controlled by the Maoists. The People's Government, officially under the purview of the United Front but in practice directly controlled by the party, included units devolved to the lowest administrative unit of the country (more on this below), with each level overseen its own consultative committee (Basnett 2009, 23). Out of the key associated organizations, only one (All Nepal National Free Students Union or ANNFSU-M) was grandfathered in; many others (unions for different groups of workers, women, ethnic groups, etc.) were established directly by Maoists. In 2001, the work of the United Front was streamlined with the creation of

⁷See Eck (2014) for a detailed review of CPN-M's use of coercion.

the United People's Revolutionary Council, which coordinated the activities of associated organizations. This was necessary as the second strategic stage (Strategic Stalemate) fore-saw increased propaganda and mobilization activities to prepare for urban insurrection under the label "Prachanda path," which would be largely carried out by the 21 associated groups (Dahal 2005, 2). It was through the United Front that CPN-M organized its first strike in 2000, when ANNFSU-M shut down 30,000 schools all over Nepal in November 2000 (ICG 2005, 11).

Political authority and strategic evolution: Towards nonviolent action

CPN-M underwent two key moments of innovation that moved the organization towards nonviolent action: The Central Committee meetings of November 2001 and October 2005, respectively. In November 2001, the party decided to put more efforts into popular mobilization and propaganda outside of their base areas in preparation for an urban, popular insurrection down the line; and in October 2005, they moved to institute urban insurrection in conjunction with the SPA with a concurrent significant shift in military strategy. How did these strategic shifts happen? Who made the key decisions? And how were they implemented?

November 24, 2001 marks the organizational shift from "Strategic Defense" to "Strategic Stalemate," which on the military side included a military shift from guerrilla warfare to positional warfare. In order to accomplish this, CPN-M formed the People's Liberation Army (PLA), organized akin to a state military given its new military-strategic approach (Ogura 2008, 18). More importantly given the focus of this analysis, CPN-M also embarked on the so-called "Prachanda Path," devised by and named for Prachanda. The "Prachanda Path" seems connected to a growing realization that the classic Maoist expectation that a slow build-up of capacity and support in rural areas would lead in itself to a decisive revolution in more urban areas of the country did not materialize. The strategic approach was

unsuited to highly centralized, mountainous Nepal, where Kathmandu was controlled by King Gyanendra and rural areas essentially cut off from the capital. This led to a marrying of Maoist and Leninist tactics: the “people’s war” in the villages would be complemented by a push for “people’s rebellion” in towns and cities. Practically speaking, this meant increasing urban mobilization via non-military means and intensifying the military struggle in the periphery. Importantly, while mobilization sometimes did include small-scale non-violent events such as protests or strikes, these were not intended as large-scale popular mass action but were rather instances of propaganda that helped to make mass action possible at a later date.

Within the organizational hierarchy, the 2005 decision to move towards nonviolent action would likely have failed without personnel shakeups in 2004. CPN-M came closest to a split in 2004 during the August plenum where the start of the strategic offensive was announced. Disagreements focused on three key questions: The balance between political and military strategies, the personality cult over (and influence of) Prachanda, and whether struggle against the Nepali monarchy should take precedence over opposing Indian expansionism and achieving a full Maoist revolution. Prachanda was for a struggle against Nepali monarchy but against a compromising alliance with the SPA, preferring negotiating with the King (Vanaik 2008). Baburam Bhattarai, on the other hand, argued for a conditional alliance with mainstream parties against the monarchy, and was suspended briefly in early 2005 for his “traitorous” position (Chalmers 2012, 75). On the other extreme was Comrade Kiran, who was opposed to Prachanda’s compromise stance with regard to negotiations (he deemed it “weak”) but he was arrested in the same year (Thapa 2015, 197). In fact, during the first ceasefire and round of peace negotiations in 2001, the military faction headed by Kiran walked out of negotiations, effectively ending the ceasefire (Basu and Riaz 2010). Kiran’s absence in particular seems like a large reason why Prachanda was able to unite CPN-M behind him in joining into an alliance with SPA and effectively abandon the armed struggle. Likewise, Bhattarai’s suspension

showed that the party as a whole supported Prachanda even in a move against Bhattarai, demonstrating that Bhattarai could not pose a threat to Prachanda's position within the organization.

King Gyanendra's February 2, 2005 coup provided the impetus for nonviolent action. Yet, the immediate reaction on the part of the Maoists was a display of their full military capability. Prachanda demonstrated the Maoists' military strength, realizing that the coup had foreclosed the possibility of dialogue with the monarch for the foreseeable future. He ordered large-scale attacks on a well-fortified army base in Khara (Rukum district), which were not entirely successful. As a consequence, he reshuffled local commanders in the summer of 2005, which allowed for a successful attack on a heavily fortified army engineering base in Pili (far-western Kalikot district) (Chalmers 2012, 75). These attacks likely served not only to demonstrate the Maoist's strength to Gyranendra but also the SPA, making clear that CPN-M could spoil an agreement not to their liking in an instant through military action.

Internally, the King's coup shifted the strategic incentives in favor of Bhattarai's preferred moderate approach: Collaboration with Nepal's mainstream parties in the Seven-Party Alliance. Bhattarai was released shortly after the King's fatal move, and the Maoist Central Committee held a meeting in Chunbang (a village in Rolpa) where they first conceived of the new party concept of inter-party collaboration (Shahi 2010, 30). Bhattarai himself frames this outcome in a positive light, glossing over the preceding rift: "After the king's coup, our internal dispute over issues of priority was automatically resolved because it had become clear that he was the main enemy. Actually, the king's move against the state brought us together" (quoted in Ogura (2008, 21)).

The coup provided both internal and external justification for a rapprochement with SPA. Prachanda could now move towards a more moderate approach, especially as he had already demonstrated his internal power by sanctioning Bhattarai. His ability to accede to changes in strategy even when proposed by others in the organization made Prachanda's

rebel leadership style remarkable. Along these lines, Lawoti (2010, 13) argues that apart from his charisma and leadership abilities, Prachanda was strategic in balancing different factions and leaders by not veering to far into either ideological direction before the King's coup, and he would often incorporate issues raised by others into the official party line, though only sometimes follow up with action. This is remarkably similar to Xanana's willingness and flexibility to allow for innovation originating in different parts of his organization and incorporate them into his organizational structure without loosening his own hold on the organizational leadership. It also mirrors innovation in Xanana's CNRM in 1989, which were also preceded by organizational reshuffling and also originated from elsewhere in the organization.

The second instance of major innovation — which directly concerned nonviolent action — occurred in October 2005 as both Prachanda and CPN-M as a whole officially declared their willingness to ally themselves with the SPA and together plan and organize a nonviolent uprising. In an interview with Vanaik (2008, 65), Prachanda provided his reasoning behind this significant shift. First of all, by abandoning the path of armed struggle in favor of peaceful mass mobilization, the Maoists had hoped to achieve a new form of legitimacy both domestically and internationally that would afford them greater protection in the long run. Second, given the international balance of forces, while the Maoists might have been able to capture power militarily, they might not have been able to hold on to it very long, as they would have needed international support for their government. This latter reasoning is very similar to the statement of a highly placed Maoist in an International Crisis Group interview in 2005: “They [Maoist leaders] don't just want to seize power, they want to retain it and use it to transform Nepal. They know that smashing the state by force of arms will be difficult and ultimately unsustainable. They're well aware of how the world would react to a violent overthrow of Kathmandu and how difficult that would make it for them to remain in power” (27). Vanaik himself offers a third reason behind the shift, namely that the strategic shift was likely influenced by the awareness

that to try and achieve a climactic military victory against a force of 15,000 to 20,000 RNA troops stationed to defend Kathmandu would have been very bloody with a highly uncertain in outcome and would thus have represented a significant gamble (2008, 66).

At the plenum in Rolpa of October 2005 that preceded the talks with the SPA in New Delhi during a ceasefire, CPN-M committed to its new pragmatic approach by admitting the inadequacy of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Mao, and publicly “argued the party’s need to enter into the spirit of the 21st Century to face the contemporary challenges of globalization” (Dahal 2005, 2). This lofty statement was accompanied by practical shifts that provide background on their intent: CPN-M announced that they would allow other parties to participate in politics in areas they controlled, announced their official intent to join multiparty politics following the war, and even sought the UN’s help in supervising the post-war process of disarmament and constituent assembly elections (Dahal 2005, 5). The same plenum also elevated (and thus solidified) Prachanda’s position of power within the organization as he demoted all military commanders by one hierarchical level and divided the three regional divisions into seven (thus giving each commander a smaller sphere of influence). He also replaced the Central Committee with a Seventh Convention Organizing Committee, likely to signal the organization’s willingness to turn away from militant action in the medium term and weaken the Communist organizational terminology (ICG 2006*b*, 9). Prachanda’s ability to shake up the internal formal hierarchy in his favor shows just how significant (and consolidated) his authority within the party was. The dominance of Prachanda as a political leader within the organization both in theory and practice over time demonstrates how political authority was a dominant structural feature in CPN-M.

6.3 Maoist communication, mobilization and control

While Prachanda's authority over the internal structure has now been demonstrated, how did CPN-M's control and influence extend geographically? While the Timorese communication structure that linked urban and rural resistance activists was largely covert and invisible – and necessitated minutious process-tracing to gain a full picture of its operation – CPN-M's geographic reach was directly related to its military control of territory and is thus directly observable. The CPN-M's communication and control network was expanded through four key channels:

- Military control and governance
- Regional autonomy arrangements for ethnic minorities
- Propaganda/mobilization campaigns and events
- Strategic collaboration with erstwhile rivals

CPN-M was highly strategic in employing different mobilization mechanisms for different groups of people. Popular mobilization was considered paramount to achieving a “People's Revolution” even before the war. In 1995, CPN-M stated that “it is impossible for armed struggle in Nepal to make a quick leap into an insurrection and defeat the enemy; however, it is possible by systematic development of [the masses]” (CPN-M 1995). According to Shahi (2010), the Maoist leadership was keenly aware of the different social and demographic groups in Nepal and how mobilization would proceed very differently for the rural poor, ethnic minorities, and the city population (22).

While the Maoists only resorted to large-scale mass-based nonviolent action in 2006, it is important to note that small-scale nonviolent action served as an urban mobilization tool after the adoption of the Prachanda Path. Once their control and supreme positioning among opposition organizations was thoroughly established, collaboration with the SPA that filled some of the CPN-M's urban gaps.

Popular links through military control and governance

As in the case of Timor, the CPN-M's focus on popular mobilization was driven by an interplay of ideological, practical and political incentives that made their popular focus a reliable and durable constant in their campaign. While the Nepalese government and with them the APF and later the RNA had external backers in India and the United States (military, financial, political support), CPN-M had neither foreign government sponsorship nor access to natural resources. Thus, they had to generate funds through their popular support base supplemented by criminal activities such as extortion, bank robbery, kidnapping-for-ransom, etc. (Marks and Palmer 2005, 103).

While I have already highlighted their startling buildup in military capacity, the Maoists' expansion of their popular base in only ten years is also remarkable. The Maoist geographic expansion and organization from 1996 to 2006 doggedly followed Mao-Tse Tung's military strategy to encircle the cities after taking over the villages, describing it with the slogan of "tactically pitting ten against one [and] strategically one against ten" (Dahal 2005, 2). Accordingly, even though the party's founders were highly educated Brahmins from Kathmandu Valley, their early mobilization efforts were focused on marginalized classes in the Mid-Western Region hill districts, from where their predecessor organization had also sent several representatives to parliament in the early 1990s (Marks and Palmer 2005, 103). Areas captured and controlled by CPN-M were declared "base areas" and incorporated into a clandestine infrastructure or alternative society orchestrated through quasi-governmental institutions run by the CPN-M (Basnett 2009).

In accordance with their mass-based ideology, CPN-M's intent to wage conflict was communicated directly to the population of the midwestern mountain districts they intended to focus on first via a leaflet disseminated on February 13, 1996, which was addressed "Dear Masses of the People." The leaflet ended with the message: "Finally, we appeal to the workers, peasants, women, students, teachers, intellectuals and the masses

of the people of all categories and trades to march along the process of people's war for establishing a people's New Democratic state and to extend to it all forms of support and help. It is right to rebel!", ending their message with "revolutionary greetings" (CPN-M 1996*a*). In parallel, they organized meetings throughout Nepal - including in Kathmandu - to publicize their intent to start an armed insurrection, campaign for support, and publicize grievances (Ogura 2008, 12).

As planned, the plan to first control the rural areas and then proceed to the cities is reflected in the actual progression of the Maoist insurgency: In 1996, CPN-M built their first bases in rural midwestern and western districts of Nepal. Between 1996 and 2000, their bases expanded into rural southern districts, slowly building a ring around Kathmandu. From 2002 to 2003, they began occupying semi-urban areas. Finally, in 2005, there were increasing small-scale violent events reported from Kathmandu, and 2006 saw major protests in Kathmandu itself (Bhattacharya 2013, 578).

After gaining control of an area militarily, the Maoists would proceed to replace state institutions with their own, which Nepal's highly centralized state and lack of rural development made easier; in many places, the local administration consisted of only one or two people. Under the official purview of the United Front, Maoists would establish their own parallel governments and associated institutions, thereby exacerbating the disconnect between rural areas and urban centers (Huang 2012, 166). By 2001, the Maoists had created a "people's government" in 21 out of 75 districts, exercising complete control in at least seven of them (Sharma 2004). By 2005, they had spread to all but two of seventy-five districts, though it's unclear how deeply the governance institutions penetrated in the newer areas (Vanaik 2008, 62). By the same year, they had established three main regions (plus Kathmandu and "abroad", i.e. India) with three sub-regions each that were run by people's district committees that were coordinated by the Central Committee and answered to Prachanda. Further down, they also established representative people's committees at the ward and village level (Vanaik 2008, 62). In areas where the Maoist control

ran deeply, they provided services such as hospitals, schools, and even court system, even imposing income and “in-kind” taxes on local residents (Huang 2012; Ogura 2008; Sharma 2004). In accordance with their ideological views, CPN-M implemented community farming projects, constructed roads and even planned a hydro-power plant in Western Nepal. UN-affiliated organizations were often not allowed to work in areas without permission from CPN-M, which dealt with such players directly (Bhattacharya 2013, 582).

Gaining support through regional autonomy

Another important CPN-M pathway to rural popular support ran through the devolution of power to ethnic minority groups. Previously, ethnic minority groups had been incorporated into CPN-M through a dozen or so specialized fronts under the aegis of the United Front (Sharma 2004, 41). In early 2004, CPN-M formed Autonomous People’s [provincial] Governments, thus formally devolving power to ethnic minority groups which they termed “Embedded Autonomy”. The CPN-M publicized this through an official statement:

On January 9, Magarat Autonomous Region [the region inhabited by the Kham Magar] People’s Government was declared amidst a huge mass meeting of over 75 thousand people in the historic Thawang village in Rolpa district. The Autonomous People’s Government was formed under the leadership of Com. Santosh Budha Magar [from the Kham Magar tribe], in which members from various other nationalities and classes and masses are represented. As may be recollected, this is the main base area of the revolution and is inhabited by the most oppressed Kham Magar nationality. (CPN-M 2004)

At the same time, CPN-M was circumspect and selective in choosing which groups were awarded autonomy status, and who was to administer these territories (Basnett 2009, 24).

Propaganda and mobilization

Active political engagement was an important part of the Maoists’ way of governing *and* mobilization. In their emphasis on civilian engagement, CPN-M strongly resembled Fretilin. Eck argues that active civilian mobilization was a key part of the Maoists’

success and startling growth in support in only ten years: “By addressing the villagers, discussing their problems, and requesting their assistance, the Maoists encouraged the villagers to be active political agents, a radical departure from villagers’ previous experiences of marginalization” (Eck 2010, 44). In this way, CPN-M was able to build both trust and awareness among the population. For example, in their ethnographic study of the Dolakha district under Maoist rule, Sneiderman and Turin (2004) found that “while many villagers had never heard of Mao Zedong or the results of Maoism in China, when they were asked what the [Nepali] Maoists stood for they immediately answered ‘reclaiming our land’ or ‘bringing the exploiters to justice’” (93).

Depending on the location, CPN-M used a combination of mass meetings, print media, radio talks, door-to-door visits, service provision, or cultural programs to engage civilians (Eck 2010). Propaganda and mobilization were well planned and strategized: They ran their own FM radio stations and publications, held “orientation” sessions at schools and public arenas to disseminate their ideology and mission (Huang 2012, 164). It should be noted that there were instances of explicit or implicit coercion, though considerably less than on the side of the Nepali government.

Practically, the Prachanda Path called for more urban insurrection while simultaneously continuing the build-up in rural areas and working to surround the towns through specifically targeted mobilization and propaganda campaigns carried out via fraternal organizations who mobilized their own networks. The necessity for increased attention to mobilization in urban areas had been demonstrated starkly a few months before the initiation of the Prachanda Path. In 2001, the stark difference between Maoist mobilization in rural versus urban areas is exemplified by an attempt three months earlier to hold an anti-monarchist demonstration in Kathmandu: Coordination mechanisms failed, and the government easily blocked the small group of protesters that had shown up. (ICG 2005, 23-24) It is hard not to see at least a tenuous connection between this failed demonstration attempt and the adoption of the Prachanda Path three months later.

Events would be aimed at demonstrating government inability and recruiting new members. For example, events organized through ANNFSU-M targeted inefficiencies in the school system such as fee-paying private schools by mobilizing teachers and students to participate in strikes (ICG 2005, 23-24). Such events were coordinated through the newly minted United Revolutionary People's Council (URPC) (Dahal 2005, 2). However, one key issue with the 2001 innovation was that there was not yet a concurrent adjustment to violent strategies, so that sometimes there would be violent and nonviolent actions in the same place (a mass meeting and a bomb, for instance), which prevented large popular turnout (ICG 2005, 24). The Prachanda Path was initiated at the same time as Prachanda's position was changed from "Secretary General" to "Chairman". The large-scale coordination of military and nonviolent actions would not take hold until 2006. The Prachanda Path can be clearly read as a way for Prachanda to cement his position in the party towards the outside and tie his persona to the identity of within the party. It also clearly signified the centralized political authority structure of the group.

The importance of building up organizational capacity in urban areas as such was not new. CPN (Unity Center) had already acknowledged its importance in 1991: "In the specificities of our country and the current world situation, the significance of urban mass movements has definitively increased" (Political Line of CPN (Unity Center) quoted in (ICG 2005, 23)). In their usual quasi-academic manner of writing, a 1995 CPN-M document adopted at a meeting of the Central Committee expanded on this point:

Give priority to the rural work, but do not leave out the urban work; give priority to illegal struggle, but do not leave out the legal struggle, too; give priority to specific strategic areas, but do not leave out work related to the mass movement, too ... give priority to guerrilla actions, but do not leave out political exposure and propaganda, too ... give priority to build army organization, but do not leave out building front organizations. (quoted in (Shahi 2010, 21))

Accordingly, there was no apparent pushback on the development of an urban front within the organization, although there was some opposition within CPN-M over the

close association between the new approach and the person of Prachanda; this opposition did not prevail, further cementing Prachanda's control over the organization. (ICG 2005, 23)

Part of the Prachanda Path was the increased reliance on associated organizations under the control of the United Front, coordinated via the United Revolutionary People's Council, supplemented by a terror campaign that proved counterproductive (Marks and Palmer 2005; Ogura 2008). Writing about the relative importance of organizations under the United Front umbrella, Marks and Palmer concluded in 2005 that "most active in the united front campaign [sic] are student and ethnic liberation groups. The latter have not proved particularly vibrant, but the former function openly and appear to execute instructions issued by the CPN-M leadership" (115). However, during ceasefires, CPN-M would also openly recruit in urban areas directly. For example, during the 2003 ceasefire, Prachanda appeared at press conferences in the capital that were well-attended by journalists and onlookers, straining to get a view of the underground leaders, who were surrounded by a sort of notorious air of glamor (ICG 2005, 25). Importantly, the initiation of the Prachanda path can not in and of itself be considered an instance of nonviolent innovation, as military activities were not adjusted to allow for large-scale nonviolent events; rather, nonviolent events during the Prachanda Path period should be considered a means of increasing the popular base. Bhattarai describes the mobilization gains made during the 2001 negotiations: "During the first truce, we gained more and lost less. We were able to go among the masses and propagate our political demands in a variety of ways. Internally, the more open environment allowed us to hold some important meetings and training sessions. Although the negotiations were unsuccessful, we did not regret this at all" (Bhattarai quoted in Ogura (2008, 17)).

Mobilizing through erstwhile rivals

For their final push towards mass-based nonviolent action, the Maoists collaborated with the Seven-Party Alliance, as they alone would not have been able to mobilize the requisite number of people. While the collaborative nature of nonviolent action might speak against nonviolent action as a *rebel* strategy in this instance, the Maoist innovation process and their crucial role in organizing and controlling the actual nonviolent events speak against such an interpretation. The SPA alone would not be able to build sufficient momentum to effect King Gyanendra's abdication; Thapa (2015) argues that "during the 2005 royal takeover there was a silent consent of the population to King Gyanendra's rule as people were frustrated with the corrupt practices of party politics" (198). In other words, the SPA was not particularly popular with the population after their years of collaboration and collusion with the monarchy. In an analysis relying on a bevy of in-person interviews, the International Crisis Group concludes that the SPA was keenly aware that they did not command enough popular support to ensure that a critical mass of people would show up to protest, as a failed attempt at a mass demonstration in the summer of 2005 had brought into sharp relief (ICG 2006*b*, 10). Thapa concludes from the same event that "when the SPA announced its nonviolent movement against King Gyanendra to restore democracy in Nepal, very few people supported it, posing a serious challenge to the parties' political future" (2015, 198). The practical complications of a nonviolent urban movement without the Maoists once again showed on January 20 (before plans on the precise form of an SPA-Maoist collaboration were finalized) when a SPA mass rally in Kathmandu on 20 January 2006 failed because of simultaneous Maoist military action essentially justifying the king's crackdown on Kathmandu; the SPA was simply not strong enough to do a nonviolent movement without Maoists (ICG 2006*a*, 2).

Thus, the Maoists did not join a nonviolent movement bound for success in either case, but the movement could only succeed if they participated. Their own commitment

to a nonviolent approach going forward is exemplified in their actions during the end of February/ early March, was they argued over concrete plans with the SPA. The Maoists had planned a large-scale strike on March 14, 2006, and had already set in motion the military blockades to support the event. The concretization of their plans with the SPA caused them to call off the endeavor and allies publicly recommitted themselves to their alliance. (ICG 2006*a*, 3).

The Maoists were instrumental to organizing a successful nonviolent campaign and prepared for it in several key ways, outlined by Prachanda in a press statement on April 3, in which he also made clear the CPN-M's prioritization of the nonviolent movement: Through the Special Central Command, they were at the ready to intervene in case of a mass insurrection and subsequent potential state retaliation against civilians. At the same time, to send a costly signal of their commitment to a nonviolent path, they declared a unilateral ceasefire in the Kathmandu Valley and reiterated commitment to support human rights through both Nepali and international media channels. They also held mass meetings (i.e. demonstrations) in the run-up to the general strike that were not coordinated with SPA, though these were not publicly announced and did thus not run counter to the terms of their alliance (ICG 2006*a*, 3). For several months in the run-up to April 2006, Maoist representatives were sent to travel across the country to ensure turnout and local organization capacity, instructing local activists on slogans and crowd control (ICG 2006*a*). This ensured that protesters would reinforce Maoist rather than SPA demands. As mentioned earlier, CPN-M also bussed in thousands of protesters from rural areas into Kathmandu.

While preparations for the nonviolent strike and demonstrations were running in high gear and CPN-M completely ceased military activities in the immediate environs of Kathmandu, they increased their efforts in peripheral areas in order to draw the RNA out of the urban centers and essentially blockaded Kathmandu for the passage of army vehicles through their control of highways and rail lines. Their placement of troops in Kathmandu

just in case there was large-scale unrest likely also had the effect of demonstrating their power to SPA, should they defect from their agreement (which SPA actually attempted). By this time, the CPN-M's military capacity was at parity with that of many state militaries. By the time the Maoists entered into an alliance with SPA, they had just conducted their largest-ever military offensive in Beni, expanded their military forces to include two divisions, seven brigades, and 19 battalions (Huang 2012, 160). An offensive in Beni in 2004 exemplifies the military power of CPN-M: There, they had used mortars in a classic night-time assault on a fixed defensive position with detailed preparations that even included the commandeering of stretchers and medical supplies and setting up field medical posts; civilians had been warned ahead of the attack. Probably most impressive, they were even able to move the attack forward by two days at the last minute (ICG 2005, 26).

Conclusions

The Nepalese case study confirms both *political authority hypotheses*. Prachanda was the uncontested leader of the CPN-M from the moment he took on the leadership of CPN-Mashal. This was particularly pronounced on the eve of the nonviolent campaign, when Comrade Kiran was in jail, which removed the most extremist military leader from the strategic deliberations about a SPA alliance and the decision to shift the operational focus to nonviolent action.

Throughout, the Maoists identified as a political organization, and considered organized violence as one political strategy. Yet, violence was not used as the main tool for popular mobilization, but CPN-M maintained separate organizational structures and means for both political education and mobilization. The influence of Bhattarai, widely acknowledged as the second most important personality in CPN-M, further speaks to the primacy of the political within the organization.

CPN-M also confirms the hypotheses about *urban-rural organizational links*, though

they present very differently from Timor-Leste. The construction of an urban-rural mobilization network in Nepal followed an almost completely opposite trajectory to Timor, where Fretilin enjoyed broad pre-war support and was able to maintain their bases even as they quickly lost territory after Indonesia's invasion. In contrast, the Maoists acquired support across territories as they increased their territorial gains. In drawing conclusions about the successful expansion of CPN-M's territory and its successful rural mobilization campaign, Bhattacharya (2013, 578) concludes that "the gradual process adopted by the Maoists to take control of key rural areas of Nepal is directly linked with the levels of civilian support for the Maoists and the [eventual] choice of nonviolent action."

While they were able to rely on SPA for some of the mobilization of the urban population, CPN-M only partook in organizing a nonviolent campaign once they were assured of broad levels of support even in urban areas, following the King's coup. They had focused on political mobilization either directly or through affiliate organizations in Kathmandu for five years prior to April 2006. In order to control the nonviolent events, they sent representatives to urban areas for months prior to the strike and demonstration in order to make sure that protesters would mirror the CPN-M's demands and to instruct local emissaries in crowd control. To make sure that the situation would not get out of hand, CPN-M also blockaded the RNA's access to Kathmandu as much as possible and distracted them in the periphery, as well as posting CPN-M soldiers in Kathmandu to intervene.

CPN-M also had significant levels of *functional differentiation* in its organization. The organization's direct predecessors had experience participating in parliament at the same time as Prachanda and his associates received instruction about guerrilla warfare. During the war, military conquest was directly combined with political governance, and both of these tasks were directly reflected in the organizational structure. Just as in Timor-Leste, it was only when organizational mobilization links into the cities were solidified that the widespread use of strategic nonviolent action became possible for the Nepali Maoists. However, the highly organized top-down structure of CPN-M combined with its

approach of immediately instituting political control after gaining military control (thus firmly incorporating territorial control mechanisms into the hierarchical party organization) would have afforded the Maoists unparalleled mobilization and communication capacity in areas under their rule. Therefore, even though the conflict trajectories are vastly disparate, the Nepali Maoists exemplify the same two key dominant structures – political authority combined with urban-rural structural links – that allowed for the use of nonviolent action.

7. Increasing Confidence: A Negative case and Refuting Alternative Hypotheses

“Our final offensive two weeks from now will be backed by all Salvadorans.”

— FMLN Spokesperson, 1981¹

“[T]he masses are not insurrectionary.”

— FMLN guerrilla fighter, 1983²

The aim of this chapter is to increase confidence in the necessity of the hypothesized conditions and to refute alternative explanations. To do so, I proceed in two steps: First, I present the case of the Salvadoran FMLN, which attempted but did not succeed at effecting urban mass mobilization. It is a particularly good case to show that the organizational process conditions are necessary for rebel use of nonviolent action, as the broad support enjoyed by the FMLN, its populist orientation, and its composite organizations’ history of actually using nonviolent mass action should have made it a likely candidate for successful mass mobilization. The FMLN case also provides evidence against the alternative hypotheses that popular support is a sufficient condition for rebel use of nonviolent action.

Second, I explore the alternative hypotheses. To do so, I present two short case examples — the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front — that address the alternative hypotheses related to opportunity and ideology.

¹Quoted in Wickham-Crowley (1989, 511-512)

²Quoted in Wickham-Crowley (1989, 511-512)

7.1 The Salvadoran FMLN: A failed attempt at urban popular mobilization

The Salvadoran Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional or FMLN) exemplifies how in the absence of the hypothesized necessary conditions the strategic use of nonviolent mass action is not possible even if it is attempted. There were two times when there was a hope that mass popular action would reinforce FMLN's military action (in 1981 and 1989), but this did not materialize in San Salvador, though small-scale nonviolent action *was* used as a rural mobilization tool (Wood 2003).

The FMLN's strongholds were in the north and east of El Salvador, but their urban presence in San Salvador was barely developed by the "final offensive" in 1989. Their urban weakness is widely acknowledged. Rhetorically, Wickham-Crowley (1989, 517) asks: "How could they win a revolution with virtually no urban component to the insurrection?" Likewise, there was not a dominant political authority structure. In narratives of the conflict, the group's internal organization is complex, inefficient, and lacks coordination mechanisms. There was a clear prioritization of military action in the group's statements, but no clear chain of command and no centralized command, as FMLN was a composite of five organizations that had been merged but retained relatively autonomous structures. There was never a clear political leader. On the other hand, the Front *did* pursue multiple functions, and had a complex rural governance and bureaucracy apparatus.

The FMLN fits Mahoney's "possibility principle" for selecting negative cases that "only cases where the outcome of interest is possible should be included in the set of negative cases" (2004, 653). Given the organization's broad popular support and attempts at governance *and* their attempt at actually mobilizing urban masses, nonviolent action seemed like a feasible and perhaps even likely strategy. For example, FMLN enjoyed wide popular support, measured in terms of fighting strength (in this sense, it was Latin America's

strongest guerrilla movement). During the Front's strongest periods, there was one FMLN guerrilla for every 500 people; by comparison, this figure reached perhaps one guerrilla per 3,000 people in the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) (Alvarez 2009, 6). Where the Salvadoran guerrillas numbered between 10,000 and 12,000 by 1983, the neighboring Sandinistas in Nicaragua numbered half of this during their final offensive (Wickham-Crowley 1989, 512). Not only did the FMLN boast swollen ranks during the war, political popular mobilization had started well before the conflict and even at times took on the shape of nonviolent mass action in urban areas prior to the conflict, as nonviolent social groups mobilized extensively in urban areas to persuade state actors to address their grievances (Wood 2008, 542). Given the insights gleaned from Fretilin's prewar political mobilization, this should have been a significant advantage for nonviolent action.

Their popular support can also be measured in other ways: FMLN still enjoyed considerable social backing by the time they agreed to lay down arms; after the war, they became the opposition's leading political force, overcoming political parties with much greater experience in electoral politics. In 2000, the FMLN became most powerful party within the Legislative Assembly, and won the presidency in March 2009 (Alvarez 2009, 6). As popular support is absolutely essential for successful nonviolent action, FMLN would at the surface seem like a good candidate for nonviolent action. Similarly, FMLN was cognizant of the importance of international legitimacy — the key pathway for leveraging nonviolent action — and in fact enjoyed considerable international support, as exemplified by the Franco-Mexican declaration of August 1981 that recognized the alliance between the FMLN and the Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR) as a representative political force and thereby legitimized it (Alvarez 2009, 18).

The key argument against the possibility for nonviolent action in El Salvador is the high degree of violent state repression. After all, this is a war that killed between 50,000 and 75,000 people, depending on estimate (Finn (2009, 60), Seligson and McElhinny (1996)). Yet, the conflict is in no way unique in this feature; in fact, the civilian toll in the Timorese

conflict was much higher. While repression certainly plays a role in making nonviolent action more difficult, it is not the decisive factor (and can actually make the strategy more successful overall).

As I will show below, the two structural features absolutely necessary for successful nonviolent action were lacking in FMLN. Similar to the structure of the Nepalese case, I will first briefly outline the relevant political background and the trajectory of the civil war. I will then discuss decision-making within the organization and discuss the spatial dispersion of mobilization structures and discuss functional differentiation throughout.

Political background

By the 1970s, the vast majority of Salvadorans were excluded from “all but the most meager life opportunities” (Wood 2003, 11). Much this was due to El Salvador’s economic history. The expansion of coffee production in the late nineteenth century had displaced the country’s indigenous communities, and the expropriation of small-scale landholders resulted in the control of most of the most arable land in the hands of two small elite groups, namely plantation owners and coffee processors. Meanwhile, indigenous people were forced into landlessness and barely survived on bonded seasonal labor. An indigenous uprising as early as 1932 was brutally crushed by government forces and left 17,000 dead, with rural residents afterwards silenced and without any political recourse. Brutal security forces controlled the daily lives of most people, exclusively protecting landed interests and economic production, and for most of the 20th Century, the Salvadoran government was controlled by shifting alliances between the military and the landed oligarchy. (Wood 2003, 20-24)

In the 1960s and early 1970s, demands for land reform and increased political inclusion grew increasingly louder again, especially at universities in San Salvador, which led to a mushrooming of community-based organizations (radical leftist student organizations, urban trade unions, and faith-based groups). The Salvadoran state responded with

brutal repression designed to eliminate all forms and faces of subversive, leftist behavior (Alvarez 2009; Finn 2009). During this time, we can observe a repeated dynamic of mass-based nonviolent activism and subsequent government repression: During a student demonstration on 30 July 1975, dozens died, and during a demonstration in the Plaza Libertad on February 27, 1977, the military shot into the crowd of protesters indiscriminately (Alvarez 2009, 10). By 1980, more than 1500 people were killed monthly as a result of political violence (Finn 2009, 63). It was this escalating cycle of protest and repression that gave rise to insurgency (Wood 2008).

Civil war and strategy

The first two guerrilla groups created were Popular Liberation Forces Farabundo Marti (Fuerzas Populares de Liberación Farabundo Martí or FPL), founded on April 1, 1970, and the People's Revolutionary Army (Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo or ERP), officially founded on March 2, 1972 (Alvarez 2009, 11). FPL is a good example of how guerrilla groups grew out of the popular activism of the 1960s and 1970s; FPL's founding members were university students and union workers, many of them former members of the Salvadoran Communist Party (PCS) who were frustrated with the PCS's timid opposition (Alvarez 2009, 11). Other guerrilla groups soon followed: The National Resistance (Resistencia Nacional, RN), Revolutionary Party of the Central American Workers (Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores Centroamericanos, PRTC), and an extremist splinter of the PCS.

In mid-1979, the guerrilla forces initiated a dialogue with the aim of establishing a common coordinating platform with a common leadership with mediation by Cuban government (Alvarez 2009, 16). On October 15 of the same year, a military coup in San Salvador by a civic-military junta established a government with nominal representation from center parties. Bolstered by this move, the PCS, RN and FPL established a new coordinating structure, the Political-Military Coordination on December 17, 1979 (Alvarez

2009, 16). The organizations also created a coordinating committee (Revolutionary Coordinating Committee of the Masses or CRM) for the multi-sectoral organizations of the social movement in San Salvador. The guerrilla groups had infiltrated these organizations for the past ten years or so, recruiting their members for violent action by participating in meetings and trying to get their own leaders elected into leadership positions (Alvarez 2009, 16). In the same year, the guerrilla groups created in the Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR) in April, which grouped together opposition political parties and dissidents that went by the name of “Social Christian Popular Movement”, several universities, and the social movements that were partly incorporated into the guerrilla structure (Alvarez 2009, 16). Note how there are three parallel coordination structures only in the first year of the guerrilla alliance, which speaks to the highly complex, sprawling organizational structure.

The FMLN was formally established on October 19, 1980 when the ERP joined the other guerrilla organizations (Alvarez 2009, 16). In January 1981, the newly consolidated FMLN launched a joint military attack – called the “final offensive” – intended to overthrow the regime, which failed. What went wrong? The plan for January 10 had been to launch a national-scale offensive with the aim of quickly defeating the armed forces and taking power before Ronald Reagan took power in the US, as this was expected to bring additional support to the government. At this point, the Front had 2,500 fully armed and trained guerrillas, plus an undisclosed number of local militias (Alvarez 2009, 17). The hope was that in urban areas, local militias would protect the population as they rose up in support of the guerrillas, as in the 1970s. The offensive was launched from safe campsites in the rural area, and two thirds of the country witnessed a series of severe clashes, with civilians experiencing brutal repression. According to Alvarez, “the lack of arms and training as well as the lack of coordination among the different organizations, stopped the FMLN from reaching its strategic goal. Also, the mass popular insurgency that the guerrilla groups had expected did not take place” (Alvarez 2009, 16).

One week later, FMLN staged a tactical retreat. Following the defeat of their “final offensive”, the FMLN swiftly moved out of San Salvador and other cities and gradually acquired control of rural areas in eastern, central and northern parts of the country, and the conflict turned into a grand-scale civil war. Significantly, most of the social movement activists who were collaborating with the guerrilla groups moved away from cities, too, leaving FMLN with no notable urban infrastructure (Alvarez 2009, 17).

Between 1981 and 1983, the FMLN focused on large-scale attacks on military and economic infrastructure targets and gained territory. The military responded by attacking FMLN-controlled areas without discrimination, death squads executing civilians suspected of supporting them. From mid-1982 to late 1983, FMLN peaked in military terms as it had 10,000-12,000 fully trained armed militias at their disposal and was able to build two military units the size of a brigade (1,500 men) (Byrne 1996, 84). The Front was able to take several smaller cities and towns and multiple military strongholds during this period (Alvarez 2009, 19). However, the Salvadoran military grew stronger as well. They received US funding, training, and arms supplies.³ The government forces’ indiscriminate use of violence against civilians decreased after US-voiced concerns and after the Christian Democratic Party won the presidency in 1984 and was able to exert some moderating influence (Finn 2009, 64). After 1984, the FMLN focused increasingly on organizing small, mobile units and covertly infiltrating rural and urban areas in northern half of country (Finn 2009, 64).

The FMLN’s 1989 offensive targeting San Salvador, codenamed “Out With the Fascists; Febe Elizabeth is Alive,” was a turning point in the conflict; it provided a signal to both parties that neither was positioned to win militarily anytime soon Alvarez (2009, 6). Perceptions of the “mutually hurting stalemate” led the government and the FMLN to ap-

³The FMLN was funded through war taxes and illegal activity as well as foreign sponsors. Through Cuban and Nicaraguan mediation, they had gained access to arms, ammunition, training and logistics support from countries such as Vietnam, Czechoslovakia or the German Democratic Republic, as well as solidarity committees in US, Mexico and Europe (Alvarez 2009, 17).

proach the United Nations separately for assistance in December (Söderberg Kovacs 2007, 66). Álvaro de Soto, Special Representative to the Secretary General, led the negotiations, which began in Geneva in April 1990. Negotiations of a series of accords took place over a two-year period and ended in a final peace agreement on December 31, 1991. The government agreed to reduce and reconstruct the military, disband the security forces and establish a new civilian police force that included FMLN members. Judiciary and electoral systems would undergo significant reforms, and the latter would include a broader spectrum of political parties (de Soto and del Castillo 1995, 192). The rebels committed to disarm, accept the terms of the existing constitution and enter the political system as a legal party (Finn 2009, 66). The January 1992 Chapultepec Agreements ended the conflict.

Attempt at nonviolent action

“Popular insurrection” was a key part of the plan for FMLN’s 1989 *Febe Elizabeth* offensive (Grenier 1991, 63). Sources are contradictory on the precise meaning of “popular insurrection”; FMLN documents and statements allow for both violent and purely nonviolent interpretations of the term. For example, in one front document, the goal of “unleash[ing] the violence of the masses” was stated (though not in connection with the 1989 offensive), whereas other documents stated that “we need to organize the masses to struggle for clinics, schools, drinking water, credits, land, but oppose decisively the installation of mayors and civil defense” (FMLN documents quoted in Byrne (1996, 133-134)). An interpretation of “popular insurrection” as large-scale protests and demonstrations can be made clearest from the following quote from a Front meeting in late 1988: In order to gain international support and a favorable bargaining position, “it is indispensable ... to strengthen the struggle of the popular movement and the Democratic Popular Front and thus contribute to a change in the correlation of forces that favors the revolution” (quoted in Byrne (1996, 136)).

Given previous use of nonviolent action by the FMLN (at a small scale) and concur-

rent nonviolent events, it is reasonable to infer that “popular insurrection” was likely to have a nonviolent component. For example, in 1984, a series of strikes began that were organized by FMLN-associated organizations against the freezing of salaries and the loss of purchasing power, and lasted until 1986 (Alvarez 2009, 21). Likewise, Byrne (1996, 149) identifies a series of small-scale FMLN-associated protests and demonstrations in San Salvador. The United States experienced large-scale protests with over 2000 participants following the assassination of Jesuit priests by the government in the immediate run-up to the offensive (Harris 1989).⁴ That nonviolent mass action would have been possible if organized properly became clear in the following year: In 1990, San Salvador saw the largest demonstration in the past decade when 80,000 marched for a peaceful settlement of the war (Brockett 2005, 315). The lack of clarity with regards to the precise meaning of “popular insurgency” is likely indicative of why it failed: There was a lack of a clear, coordinated message to the urban population and not sufficient mobilization in the run-up to *Febe Elizabeth*.⁵

The main aim of FMLN to strengthen their bargaining position through *Febe Elizabeth* is well documented. According to Goodwin (2001, 177-178), the purpose of the 1989 offensive was not to defeat the official armed forces once and for all, but to “provoke a qualitative change in the correlation of forces that would help to restart the stale-mated negotiation process for a political solution to the war”. Militarily, the offensive demonstrated the FMLN’s strength and it also made clear that the government was not in control of its stronghold of San Salvador. The minimum goal was to wage an offensive in San Salvador for 72 hours, which was achieved; the FMLN brought 2,000 guerrilla fighters into San Salvador and took over complete neighborhoods, and actually lasted for three weeks (Byrne 1996, 152). As summed up by the Los Angeles Times: “The intensity and duration

⁴The US protests led to the withholding 50 percent of US military aid to El Salvador (\$42.5 million) (Grenier 1991, 64).

⁵Even if the intent for popular insurrection was purely violent, it was still to be mass-based and urban, which means that some of the hypotheses would still apply.

of the offensive ...has mocked all official predictions and sent Cristiani's elected right-wing government reeling" (quoted in Byrne (1996, 152)).

While they did succeed in demonstrating that neither side could militarily win the war, *Febe Elizabeth* was also tactical failure as it did not produce a decisive popular uprising (Byrne 1996, 153). As summed up by Goodwin: "The decisive action by the FMLN secured important support from the population of the northern and eastern districts of the capital, although the popular insurrection that some had erroneously envisioned did not take place" (Goodwin 2001, 178). Alvarez' summary of events is even clearer about the failure of popular action:

The offensive was launched from a safe camp side in the rural area, and two thirds of the country witnessed a series of severe clashes. However, the lack of arms and training, as well as the lack of coordination among the different organizations, stopped the FMLN from reaching its strategic goal. Also, the mass popular insurgency that the guerrilla groups had expected did not take place. (Alvarez 2009, 18)

Alvarez' account is explicit about *why* popular insurrection failed by arguing that there was a lack of coordination among different organizations. The second relevant element in his account is that the offensive was launched from the rural areas, which further compounded local coordination efforts. According to Alvarez, there was some small-scale popular demonstrations of support, for example by a few hundred workers living in the labor belt of San Salvador (Alvarez 2009, 21). However, this was nowhere near the mass showing of support that FMLN had repeatedly noted as indispensable; in fact, winning popular support had been its stated priority in the period from 1984 to 1989 (Byrne 1996, 145). This came out clearly in their statement that their strategy in the run-up to 1989 was for "the reactivation of the urban masses to lay the basis for the insurrection" (Byrne 1996, 136). Yet, the FMLN had severely overestimated its popular support. As put by Alvarez (2009, 21), "the population's lack of response in that they failed to support the insurgents en masse demonstrated the fact that they were not in a state of insurgency and

that the people's support for the Front was not as great as some guerrilla commanders had expected."

FMLN's plans for urban mass popular action were not accompanied by either clear directives nor an adjustment of military strategy (CPN-M provides an example for effective military coordination with nonviolent action). To provoke the army, FMLN launched military attacks in heavily populated areas (Ayutuxtepeque, Ciudad Delgado, Ilopango, Mejicanos, Soyapango and Zacamil) to get supposedly moderate government to "show its true face" (Grenier 1991, 63). Grenier elaborates:

The argument can be made that if the rebels launched the offensive in the most crowded neighborhood of San Salvador in November 1989, it was not in spite of but because they expected a violent and indiscriminate response from the military. Furthermore, the use (and misuse) of heavy artillery by the rebels against military targets located in densely populated areas have caused numerous casualties amongst innocent civilians. It has been repeatedly criticized across the board, even by FMLN sympathizers concerned with the political cost of such operations. However, it has not led to any significant change in the FMLN's behavior. All these indicators raise doubts about the intellectual evolution of the FMLN's leadership and rank-and-file, whose radicalism is certainly unparalleled in Latin America, including Cuba and Nicaragua during their insurrectional periods. (Grenier 1991, 57)

Thus, FMLN's military strategic planning appeared not to have been coordinated with the political objectives they wanted to achieve; their operational planning on the ground in San Salvador was poor at best; and their general strategic trajectory was unlikely to be conducive to political mobilization. In what follows, I will show how FMLN lacked both a consolidated political authority and urban-rural coordination structures, which can explain all of these reasons for why *Febe Elizabeth* failed in terms of popular mobilization and participation.

Organizational processes and leadership

What in the FMLN's organizational structure and decision-making processes can explain their failure to successfully mobilize the urban population for nonviolent action? FMLN

possessed neither a streamlined decision-making and delegation structure, nor a centralized, uncontested political authority. In fact, it is impossible to pinpoint a clear power center.

Organizational structure

The main issue in the FMLN's decision-making process was its true *Front* character, which "usually means a coalition of various organizations, united for a specific goal and in which each retains its own identity" (Grenier 1991, 51). The five main Salvadoran revolutionary organizations merged to form the FMLN in October 1980 with the dual goal of procuring the government's defeat and realizing their socialist project (Alvarez 2009, 7). This led to a highly complex command structure that was only partially integrated and coordinated between the different composite groups, despite a joint leadership structure (Wood 2008). How were actions within FMLN coordinated, and how did the Front make and implement decisions about strategy?

Even though there was a joint leadership to FMLN, the five composite organizations maintained their separate identities within the organization. However, in addition to this, each of the five organizations also had political or central committees (Alvarez 2009, 6). Each of the organizations also had their own military wings, so that the "rebel group" FMLN was represented by all of the following on the battlefield.⁶ As succinctly summed up by Alvarez (2009, 16): "Each organization within the FMLN kept its own military, logistic and chain of command structures." Not only were the five composite organizations disjointed structurally, but FMLN organizations were separated by profound ideological and strategic differences: Mistrust between the different organizations persisted, in particular between the ERP and its former RN comrades (the ERP had been created through a split within RN). All groups were wary of the Communist Party, which in turn did not

⁶These were: Popular Armed Forces of Liberation (FAPL/FPL), Armed Forces of National Resistance (FARN/RN), Popular Armed Forces of Liberation (FARPL/PRTC) and the Armed Forces of Liberation (FAL/PCS) (Grenier 1991, 52).

take the other organizations seriously from an ideological standpoint (Alvarez 2009, 17). The organizations disagreed on major strategic questions: While the RN wanted to create an alliance with the moderate parties in the government, the FPL maintained a radical opposition position against any agreement with the military (Alvarez 2009, 17).

As briefly alluded earlier, even in its early history as a front, the FMLN maintained a plethora of parallel coordination structures. These separate wings were first coordinated by the Unified Revolutionary “Political-Military” Direction (DRU-PM) prior to the formal foundation of the FMLN, though “it is difficult to know what groups — the military or the political-military — this Direction coordinated”, which appears to have existed prior to the FMLN and then probably was moved over to the Front and made into the General Command (Grenier 1991, 52).⁷ Later, the highest executive body was either the General Command of the FMLN, or the FMLN’s Joint Chiefs of Staff (Estado Mayor General Conjunto), though unclear what exactly the division of labor and hierarchy between the two was (Grenier 1991, 52). This uncertainty is very telling: It is not possible to clearly pinpoint the seat of authority within FMLN for much of its active history, which also makes it very difficult to identify dominant structures. The nature of the FMLN’s alliance with the FDR was also unclear; officially, “the FDR is not the FMLN’s political wing, nor is the latter the FDR’s military wing” (Grenier 1991, 53). The two organizations often publicly disagreed (for example, over the FMLN’s decision to break off talks with the Salvadoran government in the fall of 1989), which indicates that coordination between the two was minimal.

Leadership and identity

It is difficult to pinpoint either a clear leader or a clear organizational “identity” as either a military or political organization. Who was FMLN’s leader? The short answer is that

⁷Under the umbrella of the General Command, there were also several commissions with representatives from each FMLN organization: Finance, solidarity, and propaganda, as well as the political-diplomatic commission (Alvarez 2009).

this is unclear. FMLN proclaimed itself the “vanguard” of the Salvadoran people, but it was not clear who actually led this vanguard. In pinpointing FMLN’s key leadership, Grenier states: “It seems, for example, that almost every rebel who can given an interview, and they are several, is a *comandante*” (Grenier 1991, 53). During the last military offensive, the FMLN General Command’s communiqués (though not the 1989 peace proposals) were all signed by the same five commanders: Eduardo Sanchez (nom de guerre Fermán Cienfuegos), Francisco Jovel (Roberto Roca), Jorge Shafik Handal, Salvador Sánchez Cerén (Leonel Gonzalez) and Joaquín Villalobos (René Cruz). In 1991, Rubén Zamora, a center-left Salvadoran leader involved in the peace negotiations, stated: “Whether they are “more equal” than other *comandantes* — like Claudio Armijo, Leo Cabral, Nidia Diaz, Facundo Guardado, Ana Maria Guadalupe Martinez, among many others — is still an open question” (quoted in Grenier (1991, 53)). It is telling that even during the 1991 peace processes, there remained considerable uncertainty about who was representing FMLN as a whole. Grenier draws the following conclusion about FMLN’s organizational and command structure during the peace process: “The elusiveness of its organizational structure, in spite of tremendous ideological homogeneity, suggests that the issue of power is not yet settled amongst the different groups, levels, zones, and leaders” (Grenier 1991, 53).

Not only the lack of a clearly identifiable leadership makes it difficult to pinpoint the Front as either clearly “military” or “political,” but it is also difficult to trace the group’s self identification as either political or military, as the prioritization of one or the other shifted over time. The DRU-PM dealt with decisions about both military and political matters, with no clear domination over time (Grenier 1991, 52). Until 1984, the group did not have a political front and hierarchy clearly favored the military; according to Alvarez, between 1981 and the end of 1983 “the military development of the guerrilla organizations superseded political action in the revolutionaries’ strategy during this period, although the latter never completely disappeared” (Alvarez 2009, 19). One reason for this were the disagreements between the composite organizations with regards to negotiations, which

were particularly intense between 1981 and 1983 (Alvarez 2009, 20).

By 1984, it had become clear that the FMLN would not win the conflict outright with military means. As analyzed by Byrne (1996, 158), “drawing the lessons from the earlier period, particularly 1982-1983, that it had focused too much on building military strength and seeking a military victory, and not enough on political contestation with the government, the FMLN saw the key to victory in the period 1984-1989 lying in the reactivation of the masses.” In public statements, *comandantes* also were adamant about the primacy of the military struggle. When asked about political means to end the conflict and laying down arms, commandante Villalobos replied very clearly: “Lay down the arms? We don’t have any conditions because we are not about to lay down arms, ever” Grenier (1991, 62). He continued: “El Salvador needs a revolutionary change to establish a democratic and pluralistic society; that change needs to be guaranteed by military power” (Villalobos Spring 1989, 122). This leaves the question of whether FMLN saw itself as a military organization advancing political freedom or as a political organization using military means.

Urban and rural mobilization

FMLN lacked a clear organizational structure linking it to urban areas, which made urban political mobilization difficult to impossible. The three key differences between FMLN and Fretilin/CNRM and CPN-M were as follows: There was no sustained effort to incorporate urban areas into the organizational structure; there was no standardized, clear way to control and coordinate with associated popular organizations that could have filled some urban mobilization gaps; and the organization engaged in civilian targeting. There are also strong similarities. As with Fretilin and CPN-M, the population was a key part of FMLN’s strategy; accordingly, the overall strategy guiding FMLN’s insurgency was “Prolonged Popular War,” borrowed from Mao (Moroni Bracamonte and Spencer 1995, 13-15). In his writings about his organization, Villalobos (Spring 1989, 107) emphasized the importance of the population in the Front’s conception of conflict: “The FMLN is

not a terrorist organization. Its military practices seek to win the support of society, not to intentionally and premeditatedly cause civilian casualties.” Yet, popular support (and political mobilization) was largely limited to rural areas.

The key problem with the popular uprising planned as part of *Febe Elizabeth* was its theater in San Salvador, where the war had almost no presence, but which required significant resources; as with the “final offensive”, FMLN staged the effort from rural areas, bringing in all of the supplies and personnel from the periphery (Goodwin 2001, 178). The lack of urban political resources is puzzling, since all of the FMLN founding organizations had historical ties with urban popular organizations in the 1970s. This urban organizational base was used strategically for mobilization purposes before the war by appropriating their infrastructure; for example, they would try to get their own militants elected into leadership position within popular organizations or create coordinating committees (Alvarez 2009, 15). These early efforts led to a rapid growth in insurgent ranks from 1979 and 1981, as intense and indiscriminate state violence left many formerly nonviolent activists disillusioned with conventional political forms (Wood 2003). Urban support for the guerrillas was greatest in these two years (Wickham-Crowley 1989, 517). After the failed “final offensive” of 1981, the popular movements in the cities were essentially dismantled, and radicalized activists fled into the northeastern parts of El Salvador alongside FMLN (Alvarez 2009, 20). This organizational fissure between urban and rural political action was never bridged.

Once FMLN had left the cities for rural areas, their ranks swelled with rural guerrillas. The majority of insurgent combatants were from poor, rural backgrounds (McClintock 1998, 266-267). During these early years of the war, the rebels expanded their forces from a few hundred combatants in 1981 to several thousand by 1984 (McClintock 1998, 266-267). Recruitment happened through various different channels; it included forced recruitment as well as the administration of governance apparatuses but also included targeted recruitment of interest groups, such as organizing workers around calls for labor

reform (Finn 2009, 77).

The organization's failure to recruit and mobilize in cities coincided (and can in part be explained by) the Front's prioritization of military over political action. Up until the end of 1983, the warring style developed by the FMLN had "solely emphasized the creation of a great military contingent by militarizing all the insurgency's human resources. Revolutionaries had sought a strictly military defeat of the government, leaving aside the need to carry out political work with the population of the cities, where at the end of the day the war would ultimately be settled" (Alvarez 2009, 20). Thus, the complete severance of urban political ties after the "final offensive" was not considered bothersome, as rural areas provided a much better military base and mobilization pool. In fact, the Front's military capacity really was formidable; by the late 80s, they were able to wage war in 10 of 14 departments in the country, and prevented local authorities from being established in almost half the municipalities; but there was a lack of both meaningful political and military action in urban areas (Alvarez 2009, 20).

After 1984, there were deliberate attempts at rectifying both the lack of urban mobilization structures and the military focus. Between 1984 and 1989, the FMLN pursued a deliberate strategy of renewing its political efforts at "reactivation of the masses" (Byrne 1996, 158). From 1984 on, FMLN dispersed forces throughout the Salvadoran territory, dividing them into small units with sufficient communication and mobilization capacities to rapidly concentrate them when necessary, which allowed them to launch actions of a certain magnitude Alvarez (2009, 20). It was also during this period that FMLN attempted to construct a clandestine communication network (Alvarez 2009, 20). With regard to *Febe Elizabeth*, documents stated that "in order to move with firm steps to the cities and be capable of acting within them we must be strong in our rearguard ... popular organizing will be the detonator that will incorporate the masses into the strike and the insurrection" (FMLN quoted in Byrne (1996, 134)).

Yet, there was no organizational path to incorporate the urban masses after most urban

activists had left San Salvador with the FMLN to move to the Front's rural strongholds and participate in the guerrilla struggle; none of these "original" associated social organizations was still active by 1991 (Grenier 1991, 52). During the following decade, the FMLN's composite groups did have informal associations with several non-military organizations such as the National Union of Salvadoran Workers (UNTS) or the Committee of Mothers and Relatives of Political Prisoners, Disappeared, and Assassinated (COMADRES); however, these groups were neither based in San Salvador, nor was there a central coordinating mechanism for the Front as a whole (Grenier 1991, 52). Finally, there was the formal association with the FDR, which mainly consisted of two political parties.⁸ While the FDR was linked to FMLN through a "Politico-Diplomatic Commission," it remained officially and in practice an autonomous organization and there were serious, repeated disagreements between FMLN and FDR over both strategy and goals, which would have made significant coordination impossible (Grenier 1991, 52).

The last key hindrance to effective popular mobilization was the FMLN's use of terrorism, civilian targeting, and their failure to adjust their military strategy to allow for a popular uprising. The FMLN saw civilian targeting and terrorism as key to popular mobilization; according to Grenier's analysis, "acts of sabotage and killing of opponents, even civilians, [were] viewed as necessary in the process of raising the masses' consciousness" (Grenier 1991, 56). For example, the June 19, 1985 operation code-named "Yankee Aggressor, Another Vietnam Awaits You in El Salvador" killed 4 US marines, 2 US businessmen, 1 Chilean, and 5 Salvadorans, in San Salvador. Villalobos himself said about the reasoning behind this attack:

We not only hit the principal enemy [presumably the US capitalists], but they did it in the fundamental zone, where the classes and the social contradictions are expressed more acutely and shamefully for the popular movement ... Those acts moralize the people and demoralize the enemy. (Grenier 1991, 56)

⁸The Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario led by Guillermo Ungo and the Popular Social Christian Movement led by Rubén Zamora.

Their use of violence against civilians likely hurt the Front's ability to mobilize the urban population. According to a 1987 survey, the Salvadoran population was frightened by violence and preferred dialogue and negotiations to the continuation of violence by a large margin (Grenier 1991, 56).⁹ It is unclear why FMLN got this so wrong; their lack of infrastructure and presence in urban areas certainly hurt effective planning and assessment of the situation on the ground.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the FMLN had neither a consolidated, centralized political authority structure nor organizational links connecting their rural strongholds with the population of San Salvador. What the FMLN *did* have were extensive governance structures in rural areas under their control, where they created legal structures that were formally disconnected from the guerrilla organizations, with clandestine communication channels to the guerrillas (Alvarez 2009, 20). Through their governance structures and rural communication channels, the FMLN sought to secure logistical supply channels and prevent support to the regime; this strengthened the FMLN's political capacity and support among the rural population (Byrne 1996, 132-133). Their rural administrative capacity went as far as organizing land redistribution schemes and charging and collecting taxes in their *zonas controlladas* (Moroni Bracamonte and Spencer 1995, 46). Thus, while the front *did* have an organizational focus on task differentiation (though not from the beginning, as it formally started *as* a guerrilla organization), none of the other main hypotheses are confirmed in this case. This shows that widespread popular support and even the maintenance of political governance structures are insufficient for the use of nonviolent action if the organizational structures do not extend into urban areas, which goes against Alternative

⁹Note that the pattern of civilian targeting on the part of the FMLN compared to the Salvadoran government was still one of "relative restraint"; about 85% of violence against civilians was perpetrated against state actors. At the same time, the FMLN also used indiscriminate weapons against civilians, such as land mines (Alvarez 2009, 18).

Hypothesis 2.

7.2 The Free Aceh Movement and the insufficiency of opportunity

Opportunity played a big role in Timor-Leste's and Nepal's shift towards nonviolence. In Timor-Leste, the sudden, partial opening of the island to international visitors and the announcement of the Pope's visit in particular made nonviolent action a promising strategy; the Indonesian pro-democracy movement in combination with the Asian financial crisis further propelled both popular mobilization in Indonesia and international attention. Likewise, King Gyanendra's coup in Nepal swiftly shifted both international and domestic sympathies towards the Maoists, again making the success of a nonviolent movement much more promising than before. It is possible that the *organizational process theory* overstates the role of structure and organization, and that opportunity for using nonviolent action is so rare that most rebel groups would seize on it, one way or another, and organize a nonviolent action campaign.

To see how opportunity alone does not *explain* the use of nonviolent action, we need only consider violent Indonesian resistance movements active at the same time as CNRM in Timor-Leste. In all of Indonesia, Suharto's fall was a "critical juncture" suddenly opening the door wide to the mobilization of different movements (Bertrand 2004). Secessionist movements in Timor-Leste, Papua, and Aceh exploded (Aspinall 2009). Not only was there an opening in Aceh for mass-based nonviolent action as the world was watching Indonesia, but a mass-based, nonviolent pro-independence movement actually emerged in Aceh in 1998 and 1999. Even so, GAM's involvement was minimal, and the organization did not make attempts to control or infiltrate the organization of nonviolent events in any significant way.

After the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997, the Indonesian pro-democracy movement

grew exponentially and led to popular activism all over Indonesia. The first student protest in Aceh was organized by Student Solidarity for the People (*Solidaritas Mahasiswa untuk Rakyat*) on March 19, 1998. While these early demonstrations were part of the Indonesian-wide pro-democracy movement, by the end of the year, thousands peacefully occupied Banda Aceh's radio station in November and demanded an independence referendum. (Aspinall 2009, 125-127) Following Suharto's resignation on May 21, 1998, "within six months Banda Aceh was transformed from a political backwater into a center of frenetic activism" (Aspinall 2009, 126). In 1999, hundreds of thousands filled the grounds of Masjid Raya in Banda Aceh, calling for a referendum (King 1999). This means that a pro-secession platform enjoyed broad popular support in Aceh, and that people were willing to take to the streets.

While both the student activists of Banda Aceh and GAM favored independence, there were key differences between the two sides. The leaders of the 1998/1999 popular movement in Banda Aceh were decidedly urban and middle class — many of them were university students — and they were closely linked to the Indonesia-wide activist network that also collaborated with Timor-Leste's student activists (Aspinall 2009, 123). The student activists were not connected to GAM in any meaningful way. According to Aspinall, "most of the key actors had little contact with GAM, and their outlook differed from that of members of the older movement" (2009, 123). While GAM's demands were based on discourses of national survival and unique cultural heritage, Banda Aceh's student activists emphasized human rights and an inclusionary national identity; they were open to negotiations with the central government (Aspinall 2009; Schulze 2004). Following the nonviolent movement, Aceh's autonomy status was broadened in 2001, which was insufficient for GAM.

GAM's involvement with the planning and execution of the Banda Aceh nonviolent movement was minimal at best. In 1999, the organization released a statement in support of the protesters' main demand of a referendum, and some GAM guerrillas did attend the

Masjid Raya protest (identifiable by their GAM banners) (King 1999). GAM also claimed to have aided in transporting some people to the protest from the countryside (ibid). However, this is a far cry from the rebel group consciously organizing and using nonviolent action to further their aims, and GAM banners in the protests were few and far between. Apart from a vaguely shared goal, the 1998/1999 protests were functionally unconnected to GAM.

A cursory exploration of GAM's organizational structure and processes as well as its geographic spread reveals that none of the organizational necessary conditions outlined in Chapter 5 were present. In terms of political authority, GAM did have a clearly defined, widely accepted leader in Teungku Hasan di Tiro, who was the *wali negara*, a position modeled after that of a Sultan. Below the top leadership in exile, there was an Aceh-based midlevel leadership, troops, members, and a support base in Aceh (Schulze 2004, 10). However, GAM's strategic decision-making did not follow political imperatives. Neither Hasan di Tiro's background nor the organizational structure or actual practice indicate that political concerns trumped military concerns; Schulze (2004) concludes her organizational analysis of GAM by stating: "In practice [decisions] are dictated by the realities of the conflict and thus military imperatives" (11).

The central control of regional and subregional entities was also not strong. At the subregional level in particular, GAM's military command structure was highly factionalized and troops were very undisciplined (Schulze 2004, 10). These are not ideal conditions for empowering new political actors in far-flung locales, as would have been necessary for actively organizing nonviolent action. Not only was GAM's regional and subregional organization weak in general, the organization lacked organizational or even social ties to Banda Aceh, which would have been key for GAM to meaningfully influence, coordinate, or control the nonviolent movement. Few of the organizers of the 1998/1999 protests had any contact with GAM; most organizers and protesters had been isolated from GAM's almost entirely rural conflict (Aspinall 2009, 125-126). Aspinall concludes: "Among the

student protestors of 1998-1999, a few had relatives who had been involved in GAM; more were only vaguely aware of the movement and the methods that had been used to suppress it” (126).

None of this is to say that GAM was not able to profit from the popular movement. After the movement had popularized the secessionist agenda, GAM was able to increase its active membership fivefold, and expand their stronghold areas into much of Aceh, at one time controlling as much as 70 percent of the province and even establish shadow civil service structures in some areas (Schulze 2004, viii). Interestingly, although it was unable to take advantage of the opportunity provided by the 1998 popular movement, the organization did appear to recognize its weaknesses in terms of organization, strategy and message, and put increasing effort into popular mobilization, internationalization and signaling their adherence to human rights, and finally did enter into negotiations with the Indonesian government in 2002/2003 (Schulze 2004, 9). The organization also attempted to streamline the command structure and centralize its decision-making, which could be read as an attempt to implement an organizational structure more conducive to popular political mobilization and its control (Schulze 2004, 12).

Overall, the case of GAM demonstrates that opportunity alone cannot explain the use of nonviolent action, as it is hard to imagine a better opportunity for rebel use of nonviolent action than in Aceh in 1998 and 1999.

7.3 The limited role of ideology: the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front

One striking common denominator in Timor-Leste and Nepal’s independence struggles is that both grounded their populist approach to struggle in communist ideology with a particular reliance on Mao. To what extent do ideological roots drive rebel use of nonviolent action or determine the organizational features necessary mobilization and coordination?

A look at the list of identified cases reveals that while communist and/or socialist ideology is a common theme, it does not appear to be necessary for an organization to shift towards nonviolent action. One example for a rebel group that shifted from violent to nonviolent action is the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF).

The JKLF was originally founded as a pro-*Azadi* (independence) group in Birmingham, England, in 1964 to advocate for an independent country comprising Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh, Pakistan-held Kashmir, Gilgit and Baltistan (Anant 2009, 761). It promoted an ideology of secular nationalism, officially advocating for a multi-religious Kashmiri state but did not promote a particular political philosophy (Bhatnagar 2009; Tremblay 1996). Their clearest political agenda item was to demand a plebiscite in Jammu and Kashmir regarding the political status of the region (SATP 2014). After decades as a diaspora group, the organization established itself in Srinagar (the capital of Jammu and Kashmir) in 1987 (Bhatnagar 2009, 8).

In 1989, when the Kashmiri conflict began in earnest, the JKLF was the most prominent pro-*Azidi* rebel group, largely relying on guerrilla warfare (Anant 2009, 761). After five years of organized violence across Kashmir Valley, the group was losing ground to both the Indian Army and the Pakistan-supported Hizbul Mujahideen (HM), among other groups; though Pakistan had initially funded many of JKLF's activities, they shifted their funding exclusively towards the HM in 1992 (SATP 2014). When the President of JKLF, Yasin Malik, was released from prison in 1994, he publicly declared his intention to embrace mass-based nonviolent struggle as a political strategy inspired by Gandhi (SATP 2014).¹⁰ Amanullah Khan, JKLF's influential founder, lobbied for the removal of Malik from JKLF's presidency, and the organization split in two, one group violent, the other nonviolent in its strategic approach. In 1995, Malik's JKLF began calling for hunger strikes, organizing protests and demonstrations, and election boycotts, with widespread

¹⁰(Schofield 2003, 268) attributes this shift in part to the changed strategic situation as effected by the shift in Pakistani funding priorities.

success (Anant 2009, 762). Malik publicly affirmed the JKLF's values as peace, democracy, pluralism, harmony, and brotherhood following his group's shift to nonviolent action (Anant 2009, 763). Later, JKLF also joined the pro-freedom political alliance, the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC).

A cursory exploration of JKLF indicates that the two key organizational features of political authority and urban organizational structures were present. The latter factor is not as relevant in the case of JKLF; Kashmir Valley, where the insurgency took place, has several cities with suburban areas and is densely populated. After putting down organizational roots in Srinagar in 1987, JKLF continued to have support in that area, and even organized *bandhs* (strikes) in 1989 (Puri 1993, 65). In the same year, their anti-election/pro-boycott mobilization all across the valley was a great success (Tremblay 1996, 492). In 1989, JKLF had enjoyed more significant support in the Kashmir Valley region than any other pro-secession groups (Tremblay 2009, 934).

JKLF also had a clearly political identity throughout its history. It claimed to sponsor a political, and not a religious or militant movement since inception, although some individual leaders were also suspected of instances of terrorist activity (Tremblay 1996, 489). Its leaders were elected by relatively democratic means, and on 18 June 1990, Amanullah Khan officially announced the establishment of a 24-member "provisional government" that would represent Kashmiris living under Indian rule; the "provisional government" (though short-lived) even included a few non-JKLF members (IRB 1994). JKLF's internal structure also formally prioritized its political organ over its armed faction (SATP 2014). The internal hierarchy was such that there was a President, but early on decisions were taken by a core leadership of four, originally known by the acronym HAJY (Hamid, Ashfaq, Javed, and Yasin), with Amanullah Khan, pulling significant strings; however, among the four members of the core leadership, Yasin was the only one who survived the first five years of the conflict, and significant parts of the organization followed his call to nonviolent activism (Bhatnagar 2009, 8).

This short exploration of JKLF demonstrates that a particular ideology cannot be the driving factor behind rebel use of nonviolent action, or the strategic shift under Yasin Malik would not have been possible.

Conclusion

To sum up, the brief exploration of the FMLN increases our confidence in the hypothesized mechanisms. Although the FMLN hoped that the urban masses would rise up to support them in their 1989 offensive, this did not happen. I was unable to identify either a centralized political authority structure or an organizational structure linking rural and urban areas. As the FMLN enjoyed high degrees of popular support and even connected to the population through extensive governance structures, this case goes against Alternative Hypothesis 2.

The case of GAM shows that opportunity for nonviolent action alone does not determine rebel use of nonviolent action, and is therefore not a enough for nonviolent action in and of itself; this goes against Alternative Hypothesis 3. The JKLF's lack of a populist political ideology shows that this is not a necessary condition for the phenomenon in question, which opposes Alternative Hypothesis 4. Meanwhile, the in-depth case study of the Nepali Maoists already showed that nonviolent action is not a strategy exclusive to militarily weak rebel groups, which strongly goes against Alternative Hypothesis 1.

In conclusion, this chapter provides key additional evidence for the proposed theory and its operational mechanisms.

8. Conclusion and Outlook

“[The Nazis] were experts in violence, and had been trained to deal with opponents who used that method. But other forms of resistance baffled them . . . It was a relief to them when resistance became violent, and when non-violent forms were mixed with guerrilla action, thus making it easier to combine drastic suppressive action against both at the same time.”

— Liddell Hart¹

Over the last seven chapters, I have shown that the structure, organization and internal processes of rebel groups have a significant impact on their ability to use nonviolent action. What are the main conceptual and theoretical contributions of this dissertation, and what are the policy implications? What are promising directions for future research? I will briefly address each of these questions and conclude with a brief summary of what we do and do not know about rebel use of nonviolent action.

Theoretical contribution and implications

This dissertation identified, defined, and explored the concept of nonviolent action as a promising rebel strategy. Using conceptions of strategic nonviolent action in general as a starting point, I explained how the strategy has unique risks, benefits and complications if used in a civil war by violent actors. Using the example of Timor-Leste, I then showed how nonviolent action is, in fact, sometimes used as a deliberate rebel strategy, and how this requires significant shifts in terms of internal organization, geographic scope, and reconceptualization of how means relate to ends in civil war. Building on both the conceptual chapters and the Timorese case study, I proposed a theory for why some rebel

¹*History of the Second World War* (Hart 1970)

groups are able to strategically shift towards using nonviolent action based on necessary organizational structures and processes.

Nonviolent action as a rebel strategy

My conceptualization of nonviolent action as a rebel strategy expanded and built on the insight that nonviolent action is a form of contentious, coercive political action that can be highly effective. As framed by Tarrow (2011, 7), violent and nonviolent strategic action have many features in common; after all, “the irreducible act that lies at the base of all social movements, protests, rebellions, strike waves, and revolutions is contentious collective action.” However, the strategic value of nonviolent action depends on both its context and on who uses it, which makes rebel use of nonviolent action a beast of a very peculiar nature. In a civil war, participation in nonviolent action is particularly risky, and popular mobilization particularly difficult; the opponent has already proven their willingness to use violent repression, and many means of communication and information dissemination are unavailable. The contrast between a mass of nonviolent protesters and government forces armed to the teeth will also be particularly striking, *if* the protesters can reach an international audience.

If a rebel group can overcome these key mobilization and information problems and organize mass nonviolent events, this will be a strong testament to their level of popular support and organizational capacity and reach. Precisely because the idea of a violent group using nonviolent action seems paradoxical, a rebel group’s ability to successfully use the strategy can have a big impact. For example, the Nepali Maoists were able to move their international image from one of “terrorists” (as evidenced by their appearance on the US Department of State’s Designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations) to defenders of democratic values in 2006 during the April nonviolent movement to finally legitimate political leaders in 2008. Their use of nonviolent action thus allowed them to reach an international audience and sent a powerful signal about their adherence to international

norms.

I also demonstrated how nonviolent action can purposefully be used as a conflict strategy by rebel organizations. Relying on interviews with violent and nonviolent activists in Timor-Leste as well as several written first-hand accounts, I showed how nonviolent events in Dili and Indonesian university cities were carefully coordinated with Xanana Gusmão and CNRM's leadership, and can therefore be directly linked to the rebel organization's core internal decision-making apparatus. The case also shows how extensive underground networks, repurposing of pre-existing organizational communication structures, and a shift in target focus from the Indonesian government to the international community was necessary for the rebel group to *use* nonviolent action. The existing (very small) body of work on nonviolent action in conflicts does not address the question whether or not (or how) rebel groups themselves can be directly linked to the use of nonviolent action; the Timorese chapter thus provides an important missing puzzle piece.

The identification of nonviolent action as a rebel strategy implies that nonviolent action can temporally follow violent action, which means that conflicts can move away from violence (at least on one side) without a negotiated settlement or an outright victory by either side, as is frequently claimed or assumed in the conflict literature. As already outlined in the introductory chapter in greater detail, the conceptualization of nonviolent action as a deliberate rebel strategy directly disagrees with an escalatory understanding of conflicts and violence as prevalent in rationalist explanations for war, where a conflict between two or more actors will only stop if a credible settlement has been reached or one side has won a decisive victory. The fact that two rebel groups of disparate military capacity vis-à-vis their main opponent unilaterally "exited" means that we need to consider a wider range of potential conflict trajectories.

Explaining rebel use of nonviolent action

The examples of Timor-Leste's CNRM and the Nepali Maoists demonstrate how nonviolent action can have significant payoffs for rebel groups. Yet, it is a very rare conflict strategy. In part, this is because the opportunity to use nonviolent action in civil wars is rare, as nonviolent action requires access to an international audience to be effective, and international audiences are often shut out from conflict regions by the central government as press and international organization access is often barred. Opportunity for nonviolent action via national and international attention played a large role both in Timor-Leste and Nepal: In Timor-Leste, the Papal visit that engendered the first nonviolent protest of the conflict was also the first foreign visitor to Timor-Leste in fifteen years. In Nepal, King Gyanendra's coup shifted both domestic and international sympathies towards the Maoists, which made nonviolent action a feasible and promising strategy. However, even given ideal conditions, many rebel groups do not choose to or manage to successfully use nonviolent action (the Salvadoran FMLN was presented as an example). What, then, explains the rarity of successful rebel use of nonviolent action?

I argued that there are three key necessary conditions related to the internal organization of the resistance that determine a rebel group's ability to use mass-based nonviolent action. First, a rebel group with a centralized, political authority structure is much more likely to recognize the opportunity for nonviolent innovation. In an organization where the military faction does not dominate decision-making, it is also unlikely that individual leaders' power and personal prestige is tied to the use of a particular violent strategy. Second, only a rebel organization with organizational structures that extend into urban centers can mobilize the relevant population segment for nonviolent action *and* coordinate and control nonviolent entrepreneurs. Third, both of these organizational requirements are closely connected to functional differentiation, which also becomes a useful analytical lens.

This study contributes to a budding literature on organizational processes in civil wars. Both the theory and accompanying case study demonstrated how important organizational structures and processes are to explaining significant strategic shifts in conflicts. This means that the developmental history of a rebel organization is determinative in the group's future strategic trajectory, as tracks for future development are laid early and civil wars do not facilitate significant organizational development; therefore, rebel groups do not “start” when the first shot is fired. Rebel groups are political organizations, and “politics have structures that mediate political struggle and that limit the realm of the possible” (Ikenberry 1994, 3). Organizational structures not only determine the broad development trajectory of a rebel group, but they also determine the range of strategic choices open to rebel leaders. Therefore, organizational structures and processes are crucial even to understand such a stark strategic decision as violent versus nonviolent action, organizational structures and processes.

If we consider mass-based nonviolent action as a rebel strategy, this also requires a shift in how we conceive of conflict actors. In order to successfully use nonviolent action, rebel groups largely rely on civilians. To mobilize masses of people, not only does the rebel cause need to enjoy widespread support, but formal and informal structures and links need to connect urban civilians to the rebel group. This means that we not only need to consider the rebel group as a potentially complex organization, but we also need to consider civilians as potentially important conflict actors.

Policy implications

Both the concept and theory addressed in this dissertation yield relevant policy insights. Nonviolent action is a contentious, wartime strategy that is often associated with significant decreases in violence. Knowing more about how violence — and therefore casualties — can be reduced is intrinsically important and useful. In more practical terms, my study

of rebel use of nonviolent action can provide important insights for both conflict resolution processes and postwar democratization support. A rebel organization capable of mobilizing large swaths of the population *and* significantly shift its operational focus reveals itself as both highly capable and broadly supported, which should make it a reliable negotiating partner adhering to important international norms.

This kind of rebel group could also be an important facilitator of post-war democratization for two reasons. First, nonviolent action requires a population that is practiced at political participation, which can make peacetime democratic processes smoother. Second, this kind of rebel organization has already proven itself capable of maintaining complex organizational processes, which could allow it to adjust to post-war political administration more quickly. To sum up, a rebel group that uses or used mass-based nonviolent action is likely to become a viable, legitimate political organization that will respect democratic norms and the rule of law.

Third, the organizational process theory suggests that the history of a rebel organization and the development of its organizational structure over time can yield valuable insights into the future potential for strategic shifts and trajectories. In many ways, rebel use of nonviolent action can be considered as a development diametrically opposed to radicalization and splintering. Often, foreign governments or organizations are faced with a choice of supporting one group in a conflict over another. By looking both at the organization's full range of contentious actions *and* at its full organizational history, this choice can become better informed and have better results.

Which way forward?

There are three clear avenues for further research on this subject. First, an exploration of further cases could shed light on the generalizability of the structural process theory either through quantitative or qualitative research. Further exploration of the phenomenon

may well uncover more cases, and refine the theory presented here or an alternative explanation not apparent from the cases considered here.

A second, related question is that of effect: What is the effect of rebel use of nonviolent action, at either a small or large scale? Are the strategic payoffs of this strategy uniform across cases? Are there conditions under which the use of nonviolent action is more beneficial to rebel groups? Exploring the effectiveness of nonviolent versus violent action if both are considered as rebel strategies could overcome some of the significant selection problems underlying the analysis in Chenoweth and Stephan (2011), which does not address why some groups use violent and some groups use nonviolent strategies. Purely focusing on organizations that have already embarked on a violent path could control for significant confounding variables.

Third, to what extent can the organizational process theory explain significant innovation in rebel groups that is not connected to nonviolent action? With a few notable exceptions (Horowitz (2010) and Staniland (2014)), there are no systematic accounts of strategic innovation in rebel organizations. My theory and my cases both show how structural process factors can have a significant impact both on a group's ability to recognize the opportunity for innovation and for actually carrying it out, and there is no prohibitive reason why the same logic should not apply to a wider set of innovation trajectories beyond mass-based nonviolent action.

Rebel use of nonviolent action: What do we know?

What do we know about rebel use of nonviolent action, and what do we not know? In this dissertation, I was able to show that nonviolent action is sometimes used as a rebel strategy, and has even had significant effects on conflict outcomes both in the Timorese and Nepalese case, and contributed to a successful political trajectory for the JKLF in Kashmir. We also know how specific organizational features and structures affected the use

of nonviolent action in at least two cases. An exploration of these mechanisms revealed that *why* rebel groups use nonviolent action and *how* they do it are intricately related. One interesting theme that emerges throughout the dissertation is the intrinsic analytical overlap between the questions of *why* rebel organizations use nonviolent action and *how* they do so. If we consider rebel groups as potentially complex organizations that evolve and adjust over time, then a group's dominant structure and modus operandi come to color and delimit the strategies and trajectories open to the organization; in other words, *how* an organization does some things comes to influence *why* it acts or considers acting in the first place.

While the research design of this theory-building dissertation does not allow for generalization, the inclusion of the Nepali case does provide insights into the potential scope of the theory, as the same basic conditions affected the use of nonviolent action, even though the strategic interaction, intervening variables, and context were vastly different. Finally, I can also conclude that four key alternative explanations cannot explain why some rebel groups use nonviolent action whereas others do not.

In conclusion, this dissertation provides a plausible theory for why and how a rebel group can unilaterally integrate nonviolent action into its resistance campaign.

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