

Bargaining With Militant Non-State Actors: Is This a Group We Can Work With?

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Puzzle: Variation in Willingness to Compromise

“Independence can be the subject of negotiations. If the Philippine government can show us something that can address the problem of our people, then we do not close our doors.”

—Salamat Hashim, leader of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front

What explains variation in the willingness of militant non-state actors to accept less than their stated preferred institutional outcome during bargaining with the government?

- What are the structural conditions that make militant non-state actors most likely to be willing to accept less than their stated institutional outcome?
- Why is it that some militant non-state actors are unwilling to accept less than their stated institutional outcomes even when they are operating in structural conditions ripe for compromise?

The Goals of Militant Non-State Actors

In order to theoretically distinguish the *strategies* organizations use to pursue their preferred outcomes from the *outcomes* themselves it is necessary to unpack the goals of militant non-state actors. I partition the goals of militant non-state actors into two analytically distinct pieces.

1. The **policy objectives** of the organization. These are the social and policy changes the organization is fighting for within a given country.
2. The **institutional objectives** of the organization. This entails the outcome through which the policy goals are to become implemented.



The Structural Conditions Conducive to Compromise

What are the **structural conditions** most conducive to compromise?

- First set of theories argues that whether negotiated settlements occur are a **function of the economic, military, or political conditions that exist on the ground.**
- Second set of theories focuses on the conditions that encourage combatants to make concessions to their enemy including **whether identities are malleable, stakes are easy to divide, or mediators are present.**

When comparing organizations with identical political objectives and tactics within the same country there is no variation in these structural conditions.

Organization-Specific Factors: Beliefs About Alternative Institutional Outcomes

I argue that militant non-state actors that believe their policy objectives **cannot be credibly implemented and sustained through an alternative institutional outcome will not be willing to compromise.**

- The institutional outcome that is implemented determines the long-term durability of a group’s policy objectives.

Beliefs about the alternative institutional outcome are shaped by **prior experience combating and negotiating with the government** or outside mediators.

Research Design Ideas

Research design must be able to isolate the organization-specific factors from the structure in which organizations operate.

- Can hold constant the strategic setting by comparing militant non-state actors **with identical policy objectives and institutional objectives operating within the same country at the same time.**

However, when looking within countries **difficult to discern at any given time t whether the conditions are “ripe for a compromise” unless we observe a compromise.**

- The macro-conditions under which a conflict is ripe for compromise can be derived directly from the existing literature.
- Being able to measure these theoretical concepts and building a model that could identify conditions that are ripe for compromise is important for separating the strategic setting from organization-specific factors driving variation in my dependent variable.

Must also find a way to **measure beliefs about alternative institutional outcomes.**

- Case studies and field work could be one way to get at this.
- Text analysis on a corpus of internal documents discussing the government and possibility of compromise could be a way of exploring variation in beliefs within an organization over time.
- Could use exogenous shocks to an organization to explore how beliefs change over time.