

# 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.