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The Geography of Insurgent Organization and its Consequences for Civil Wars: Evidence from Liberia and Sierra Leone

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PATRICK JOHNSTON

This article investigates the determinants of armed group organization and the downstream effects of organization on civil wars. It demonstrates that the interaction between geographical and technological factors influences the types of hierarchical organizations that armed groups develop. It then argues that variations in the types of hierarchies developed by armed groups have important consequences for principal-agent relations, which in turn affect groups' overall level of military effectiveness. Using evidence from field research conducted in Liberia and Sierra Leone, the model's plausibility is examined in comparative case studies of four armed groups that fought in those countries from 1989–2003.

In America's Global War on Terrorism, scholars, journalists, and politicians identify failed states as a security threat. Failed states' incapacity to control territory and people create pockets of anarchy that transnational terrorist and criminal networks exploit to undermine major powers' policies abroad. The failure to build durable political hierarchies in Africa has attracted considerable attention both in the media and from scholars. Robert D. Kaplan's "coming anarchy" thesis argued provocatively that a Malthusian dystopia of

demographic and ecological crisis was triggering political anarchy and primordial violence in countries such as Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Somalia.[1] William Reno argues that new opportunities in the global economy and liberal norms provide incentives for enterprising weak state rulers to dispense with the political and administrative challenges of building bureaucratic states and instead to assert control through informal transnational networks.[2] Jeffrey Herbst suggests that the artificial nature of the creation of African states during decolonization, sovereignty norms that prevent boundary shifts, and low population density perpetuate state weakness.[3]

Despite the dire implications of these analyses, I propose that there are strategies available to indigenous state builders in contemporary failed states. Contrary to recent literature that views civil war as an embodiment of *state collapse*,[4] this article builds on an earlier tradition that locates large-scale violence as a potential contributing factor to *state formation*.[5] It attempts to explain why, in the context of civil wars and large-scale violence, some insurgent groups develop state-like hierarchies while others do not. I investigate ways in which certain factors promote state-like organization in insurgencies. Understanding the origins of these groups' organizational structures generates propositions about the possibility of indigenous solutions to state failure and the creation and sustenance of order.

Groups' internal organizational structures exhibit considerable variation. While some groups' internal structures resemble state-like hierarchies, others ironically resemble those of the failed states against which they fight. In the literature on civil war, armed group organization has generally been thought of dichotomously as vertical or horizontal, that is, hierarchical or networked.[6]

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[1] Robert D. Kaplan, *The Coming Anarchy: Shattering the Dreams of the Post-Cold War* (New York: Vintage, 2001).

[2] William Reno, *Corruption and State Politics in Sierra Leone* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner,1998).

[3] Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[4] Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States*; Herbst, *States and Power in Africa*; Robert I. Rotberg, ed. *State Failure and Weakness in a Time of Terror* (Cambridge, MA: World Peace Foundation, 2003); and Zartman, I. William, *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1995).

[5] See, for example, Charles Tilly, "War-Making and State-Making as Organized Crime," in *Bringing the State Back In*, eds., Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (New York: Cambridge University Press), 169-91; Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States, A.D. 990–1992* (New York: Blackwell); Brian Downing, *The Military Revolution and Political Change: Origins of Democracy and Autocracy in Early Modern Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); and Thomas Ertman, *Birth of the Leviathan: Building States and Regimes in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997). For a similar contribution on modern state-building, see Diane E. Davis and Anthony W. Peireira, ed., *Irregular Armed Forces and Their Role in Politics and State Formation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[6] See especially Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999). She argues that globalization processes generate "horizontally-organized" armed groups whose behavior "blurs the distinction between war, organized crime, and large-scale

I argue that this dichotomy misrepresents actual circumstances on the ground because all armed groups arrange themselves hierarchically—all insurgent groups have, at the least, formal leaders, commanders, subcommanders, and foot soldiers.[7] However, there are important differences among types of hierarchies. I argue that exploring different ideal types of organizational hierarchies better captures variations in armed group structures.[8] These variations impact the leadership's level of effectiveness at controlling, disciplining, and motivating subordinates and determine whether the organization behaves like a unitary actor.[9]

More fruitful than asking whether or not groups have hierarchy, then, is to distinguish a "typology" of hierarchical forms and to investigate the downstream consequences of variations in hierarchical forms. To do so, I borrow from theories of hierarchy in the business literature. I argue that the interaction of geographical and technological factors is an important determinant of how insurgents develop particular types of hierarchical organizations. Variations in types of hierarchies have important consequences for principal-agent relations, which in turn affect their overall level of military effectiveness.

Liberia and Sierra Leone are archetypes of states whose antecedent conditions—collapsed state apparatuses, lootable natural resources, and access to transnational criminal economic networks—would lead analysts to predict that state-like rebel organizations would fail to emerge.[10] Yet several

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violations of human rights." Kaldor, *New and Old Wars*, 2. In practice, the scholarly distinction between hierarchical and networked rebel organizations has not provided many insights into how organizational structures affect outcomes because of scholars' frequent under-specification of these concepts' attributes and mistreatment of the concepts' indicators. Scholars have often referred to rebel organizations with visible leadership as "hierarchies" and organizations with less-visible leadership as "networked" or "decentralized." The uncritical conceptual treatment of rebel organization has done little more than to describe observed outcomes post-hoc rather than to build theory deductively about the effects of variations in organizational relationships between rebel leadership and subordinates. Similar problems have plagued analysis of terrorist organizations. Grahame Thompson laments that the loose usage of the term "network" to describe terrorist organization has rendered "network" merely a word, rather than a concept. See Thompson, *Between Hierarchies and Markets* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 2.

[7] Even rebel organizations to which analysts commonly refer as "networks" contain these aspects of hierarchy. In my ideal-typical concepts, M-form hierarchical organization more closely approximates networked organization than U-form organizations do, but these features of intentionally organized, top-down organizational leadership distinguish it from networks, in which control is organized horizontally among members of more-or-less equal status. Hierarchies do sometimes emerge *within* networks, but network theorists argue that these authority relationships tend to emerge from interactions within the network and result in clusters of authoritative people according to the importance of their function within the network. See Thompson, *Between Hierarchies and Markets*, 59–61.

[8] I make no claim that this same logic applies to terrorist organizations, whose transnational ties tend to be more extensive than those of insurgent organizations and whose sporadic attacks do not require as immediate central coordination as do most insurgent operations. Terrorist organizations are more likely to, but will not necessarily, take on networked organizational forms.

[9] See also Sun-Ki Chai, "An Organizational Economics Approach to Anti-Government Violence," *Comparative Politics* 26, no. 1 (October 1993): 99–110.

[10] Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "On Economic Causes of Civil War," *Oxford Economic Papers* 50, no. 4 (1998): 563–73; and Collier and Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil Wars," *Oxford Economic Papers* 56, no. 4 (2004): 563–95.
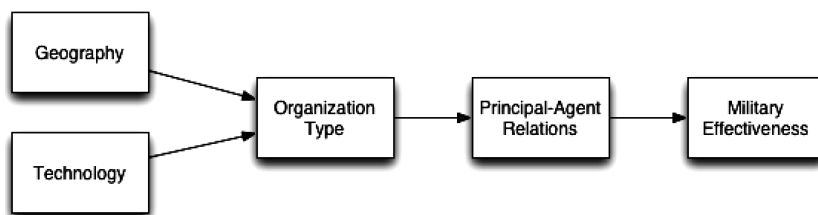
FIGURE 1 Causal Chain.

such groups did emerge. In Liberia, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) administered local communities, and its commanders controlled and disciplined subordinates relatively effectively. In Sierra Leone, Kamajor militias formed to protect local communities. As in LURD, Kamajor elites successfully reined in followers to pursue organizational objectives.[11]

Consistent with standard predictions, however, armed groups in both Liberia and Sierra Leone emerged whose internal organization resembled that of the failed states they sought to defeat. For example, commanders of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and of the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone (RUF) struggled to control lower-level fighters who pursued parochial objectives that hindered the groups' coordination and military effectiveness. It is important to note that the more state-like groups exhibited greater military effectiveness than their adversaries. Both LURD and the Kamajors outperformed the NPFL and the RUF despite the latter groups enjoying significant material advantages in wealth and weapons. This suggests that armed groups' organizational structures may be of equal or greater importance than their material capabilities in shaping the outcomes of civil wars.

To understand the organization and military effectiveness of armed groups, several issues need to be addressed. First, I explain why armed groups develop different types of hierarchies. Existing theories either ignore group organizational structures or fail to explain their variations.[12] I argue that exogenous geographic and technological factors shape the development of particular organization types. These variables shape actors' preferences and strategies—particularly those of subordinates in military hierarchies—because variation affects the relative cost of defection from leadership's objectives.

In this vein, the second task is to demonstrate the usefulness of a principal-agent framework in the study of rebel groups. Despite the fertile preconditions for such analysis, such as a lack of third-party monitoring

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[11] Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission, "Witness to the Truth: Report of the Sierra Leone Truth & Reconciliation Commission," vol. 2, chap. 2, 76–83. The Report of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission shows that Kamajor militias lacked oversight toward the end of the war.

[12] A notable exception is Chai, "An Organizational Economics Approach to Anti-Government Violence." Chai presents an application of the new economics of organization to nonstate armed actors.

and high rewards for agent defection, almost no applications of the principal-agent framework exist in the civil war literature.[13] Scholars have paid little attention to the divergent incentives that hierarchies create for leaders and followers (that is, principals and agents) in rebel groups.[14] The literature instead takes two other approaches. First, some of the literature borrows from neoclassical economics to view all participants—regardless of their organizational position—as utility-maximizing individuals with similar incentives.[15] Second, many assume that groups behave as unitary actors. These studies aggregate preferences to the group level.[16] Both approaches deemphasize the role played by variation in organization in shaping the incentives, preferences, and strategies of particular actors within groups. I argue that because payoffs from various outcomes vary greatly depending on actors' positions within the rebel organization, leaders and followers often have divergent interests. Thus, there are good reasons to expect them to behave in varying ways.

Methodologically, I attempt neither to get in the heads of rebel leaders and followers to assess their intentions systematically,[17] nor to derive exact utility functions. Instead, I seek to posit relationships between varying organizational features and particular motivations and then to assess the fit between these motivations and observed empirical outcomes.[18] Rebel leaders

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[13] For an exception, see Jeremy M. Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[14] The literature on terrorism and anti-government violence has generated some hypotheses on how organization and organizational processes affect terrorist behavior. Martha Crenshaw has used an organizational logic similar to that developed in this article to demonstrate how leaders of terrorist organizations, whose personal ambitions are tied to the success of the organization, attempt to promote organizational effectiveness through supplying incentives for subordinates to pursue organizational rather than personal goals. See Martha Crenshaw, "Theories of Terrorism: Instrumental and Organizational Approaches," in *Inside Terrorist Organizations*, ed. David C. Rapoport (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); and Chai, "An Organizational Economics Approach to Anti-Government Violence."

[15] The neoclassical approach struggles to explain variation in group structures, why hierarchies form in the first place, and how they are maintained. For an example, see Collier and Hoeffler, "On Economic Causes of Civil War."

[16] For example, see Barry R. Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," *Survival* 35, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 27–47; Jack Snyder and Robert Jervis, "Civil War and the Security Dilemma," in *Civil Wars, Insecurity, and Intervention*, eds., Barbara F. Walter and Jack Snyder (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Barbara F. Walter, "The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement," *International Organization* 51, no. 3 (Summer 1997): 335-64; and Barbara F. Walter, *Committing to Peace: The Successful Settlement of Civil Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002). For nonunitary actor approaches to ethnic conflict that focus on elites, see V. P. Gagnon, "Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict: The Case of Serbia," *International Security* 19, no. 3 (Winter 1994/1995): 130–66; and Jack Snyder, *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000). For a focus on opportunism from below, see John Mueller, "The Banality of 'Ethnic War,'" *International Security* 25, no. 1 (Summer 2000): 42–70.

[17] I do, however, include insurgents' testimony to demonstrate the plausibility to my inferences.

[18] This methodological approach resembles Chai, "An Organizational Economics Approach to Anti-Government Violence," 101.

who can get followers to pursue organizational rather than personal goals enjoy a competitive advantage in civil wars.[19]

THE EFFECT OF TERRITORY AND TECHNOLOGY ON INSURGENT ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

As wielders of coercion with finite resources, insurgents confront many of the same challenges as states. Jeffrey Herbst's study of state formation has shown these challenges to be particularly problematic in Africa.[20] He argues that exercising control over large expanses of sparsely populated territory is exceedingly difficult and costly for rulers who have relatively little capital or few coercive instruments. Given these constraints, Herbst claims that rulers of geographically small, densely populated states are better equipped to broadcast state power than those in large, sparsely populated states.

Territorial control creates similar challenges for insurgent organizations. Leaders of geographically concentrated insurgencies are better able to broadcast power directly over subordinates than leaders of geographically deconcentrated groups. These elites are better able to monitor and punish subordinates. These oversight mechanisms help to induce subordinates to execute the commands of elites by reducing the opportunities for and raising the costs of defection. As groups expand territorially, information asymmetries become greater and leaders have less ability to directly oversee day-to-day operations. I argue that without a sufficient increase in what I refer to as "managerial resources,"[21] leaders must delegate de facto authority to subcommanders whose position in the organizational hierarchy generates incentives for them to shirk leadership's goals and instead to pursue their own personal interests.

These incentives arise for two reasons: information asymmetries inherent in delegation and asymmetrical payoffs in war outcomes. First, information asymmetries reduce the costs of defection from organizational goals. When a group's leaders cannot observe a subordinate's behavior, the subordinate has

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[19] The civil war literature pays surprisingly little attention to military effectiveness. No corresponding literature systematically explains whether particular types of groups fight more effectively than others in similar contexts.

[20] Herbst, *States and Power in Africa*.

[21] "Managerial resources" refers to technology that increases cooperation between principals and agents. I emphasize monitoring technology that enables principals to detect when agents are shirking their orders. Another resource, of course, could be an organizational culture or charismatic leadership that fosters cooperation. See Gary J. Miller, *Managerial Dilemmas: The Political Economy of Hierarchy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Although I acknowledge that endogenous norms and culture can be potent tools for alignment of principal and agent interests, I pay less attention to these factors to examine other exogenous variables that contribute to the formation of effective hierarchies in hard cases where norms or organizational culture do not align principal and agent interests.

more leverage to pursue his own goals, which often differ from those of the leaders. Second, leaders stand a good chance to win the ultimate payoff— becoming the president of the country in which they fight. For mid- and low-level fighters, the payoff from a military victory is significantly lower, which decreases their incentive to fight efficiently for military victory and creates an incentive for them to pursue personal aggrandizement when possible. This is not to say that followers do not want their group to win the war; rather, it is to say that they have individual incentives to pursue personal objectives that hinder collective military efficiency. Thus, when an insurgency's leadership devolves power to subordinates and cannot observe their actions, as is often the case across territorial expanses, the leadership is likely to face an increase in agency problems that undermine its military effectiveness.

I borrow from theories of hierarchy in business firms and from the new institutional economics to generate hypotheses about the effects of hierarchy to test in the context of civil war. Alfred D. Chandler first elaborated the distinction between firm hierarchies according to what he termed "U-form" (unitary) and "M-form" (multidivisional).[22] These organizational forms are differentiated by three attributes: governance costs, information flows, and opportunism types. U-form firms require integration and coordination by the center for the whole range of products produced by the firm. To extend this concept to insurgent organization, I suggest that in U-form armed groups, the leadership directly administers the production and deployment of violence. In contrast, M-form firms consist of relatively autonomous subunits.[23] Applied to insurgent organization, M-form leadership delegates authority and grants autonomy to regional subcommanders, who in turn administer violence under the auspices of the organization. The modern unitary state is a close analogue to U-form hierarchy. Its subunits require integration and coordination from the top. From this, one can infer that for armed groups, U-form hierarchy is the most effective form of governance in small, concentrated territories that lack good infrastructure and telecommunications technology and perhaps in larger territories where elite commanders are capable of coordination and integration. Despite the advantages of the U-form for curbing opportunism and reducing information asymmetries, the U-form is expensive to administer and increasingly inefficient as organizations become larger or more specialized because leadership lacks extensive monitoring capability and technical knowledge about a wide range of specific issues.

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[22] For more on the U- and M-forms, see Alfred D. Chandler, *Strategy and Structure: Chapters in the History of the American Industrial Enterprise* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1969); see also Oliver E. Williamson, *Markets and Hierarchies: Analysis and Antitrust Implications* (New York: Free Press, 1975).

[23] See Alexander Cooley, *Logics of Hierarchy: Problems of Organization in Empires, States and Military Occupations* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005). Cooley's book introduces this logic as a predictor of institutional outcomes and governance patterns in a number of different contexts, including empires, states, and military occupations.

To understand the relative merit of U- and M-form organization for in-surgent groups, we must examine their comparative attributes. The first at-tribute is *governance costs*. In most cases, governance costs will be higher in U-forms than in M-forms. As a U-form organization grows, its leadership must contend with larger information flows and must coordinate decisions accord-ingly. Inefficiency and coordination problems emerge as leadership attempts to process this information and make decisions based on it.[24] In contrast, M-form governance costs are relatively low. Submanagers obviate the need of central leadership to cope with growing levels of information. These sub-managers, who typically operate at the regional level, make decisions based on local conditions and information.

The second attribute of organizational form is *informational flows*. In the U-form, information is processed and transmitted by functional divisions both vertically (to lower levels) and horizontally (among leadership). In the M-form, interactions among regional divisions are relatively rare. The leader-ship delegates responsibility to regional managers, who then operate semiau-tonomously. This limits organizational cohesion and produces informational deficits among submanagers about the larger workings of the organization.

Opportunism is the third organizational attribute. Although hierarchy tends to be linked to control, different types of hierarchies exhibit differ-ences in control mechanisms. In U-forms, divisions that are part of the orga-nizational chain tend to compete amongst themselves for larger budgets and greater autonomy, thereby engendering inefficient "tribal warfare."[25] Repre-sentatives of functional divisions often seek out ways to empower their own division, even at the expense of the overall profit of the firm.[26] However, as the number of functional subdivisions in U-form organizations declines, tribal warfare and other forms of opportunism dramatically diminish. In most armed groups, the number of functional divisions is relatively low because the main asset being produced, violence, is specific.[27] This reduces oppor-tunism within U-form armed groups. Opportunism tends to be more prob-lematic in M-form organizations. Agents who enjoy greater autonomy from leadership are easily able to pursue private objectives, often diverting the or-ganization's resources from their intended uses for their own. These agents are likely to try to reshape their local arm of the organization such that they enjoy greater control, autonomy, and resources. In M-form insurgencies, lo-cal commanders may defy the military goals of the central leadership and instead form semiautonomous factions. As the number of factions within a

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[24] Oliver E. Williamson, *The Economic Institutions of Capitalism* (New York: The Free Press, 1985).

[25] Cooley, *The Logics of Hierarchy*, 48–49.

[26] Williamson, *Markets and Hierarchies*.

[27] To be sure, most armed groups also perform economic, security, and even some administrative functions. I focus on violence as the main asset produced by armed groups because the capacity to produce violence is a requisite for armed groups to perform these functions.

group increases, the central leadership struggles to incorporate diverse factional preferences to form a coherent military strategy.

How does this framework explain the politics of insurgent organization and military effectiveness? On the one hand, U-form organization—with its high governance costs, low information asymmetries, and low agency problems—generates harmonizing political institutions. On the other, M-form organization—characterized by low governance costs, high informational asymmetries, and agency problems—generates patrimonial institutions.[28] In short, despite the advantages and disadvantages of each, insurgent elites who seek maximum control over subordinates should prefer U-form governance because they will be able to oversee directly military operations and thus reduce agency problems made more likely by the M-form. Because insurgent organizations' goals are less specialized and complex than those of modern corporations, elites have the knowledge necessary to manage day-to-day operations. Generating the managerial resources to govern the U-form as groups expand territorially and grow in numbers is the most significant obstacle to maintaining U-form structures.

Generating managerial resources challenges many nascent insurgencies, which are relatively impoverished and lack sophisticated technology. These relative organizational disadvantages may preclude effective monitoring as groups expand, preventing them from punishing insubordination.[29] As organizations grow territorially and numerically, M-form organization becomes difficult to avoid unless commanders can overcome monitoring and disciplinary deficiencies.[30] As such, I argue that the formation of M-form insurgencies is less about choice and more about geography and technology.[31] Commanders who lack the material and technical capability necessary for U-form governance can inexpensively adopt an M-form structure, albeit at the cost of agency problems and their attendant consequences.[32]

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[28] Cooley, *Logics of Hierarchy*, 56–63.

[29] On monitoring and punishment in principal-agent relationships, see Matthew D. McCubbins, Roger G. Noll, and Barry R. Weingast, "Administrative Procedures as Instruments of Political Control," *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 3, no. 2 (Fall 1987): 243–77.

[30] M-form organization could be governed effectively if leadership enjoys sufficient monitoring and disciplinary capability. However, as the cases below illustrate, these assets are scarce.

[31] One could argue that neither geographic expansion nor managerial technology is exogenous, that is, groups can and do make choices about how much territory to control (and when to expand or contract) and what investments to make in equipment. Yet I contend that these variables are exogenous given that rebel groups must expand to seize national political power and that the quantity and especially the quality of available technology at given periods in time is exogenous. For example, the cellular technology was much more advanced in the early twenty-first century during the LURD and Kamajor insurgencies than at the onset of the NPFL and RUF rebellions in the early 1990s. Thus, the choices groups could make concerning technology investments were heavily constrained by exogenous factors.

[32] Although beyond the scope of this paper, the argument implies that such compromises have broader applicability to the study of the making, disintegration, and remaking of political authority and control across time and space. Charles Tilly, for example, highlights the exigencies of devolution in early modern European state-building projects, in which diffusions of coercive capability and capital

From the theoretical framework outlined above, I generate the following propositions:

Proposition 1. Devolution to M-form organization occurs as armed groups expand territorially. In other words, ceteris paribus, delegation occurs as groups occupy more territory.

Corollary 1. Insurgent leaders who can accumulate managerial resources, such as information and communications technology, which enhance their ability to oversee subordinates, will be better able to maintain U-form governance structures than those who cannot accumulate such resources.

Corollary 2. The insurgent leadership's ability to monitor subordinates is insufficient for U-form governance. Leadership must be capable of credibly threatening subordinates with punishment to deter agent defection.

Proposition 2. M-form organization is more prone to information asymmetries than U-form organization, which provides incentives for agents to defect. Defection consequently undermines military effectiveness.[33]

HIERARCHY AND MILITARY EFFECTIVENESS

The limited political science literature on military effectiveness serves more as a point of departure than a conclusive resolution to debates on the explanatory power of various political, military, and social factors.[34] One limitation has been researchers' inclination to conflate effectiveness with material inputs.[35] As the case studies below demonstrate, the two M-form insurgencies enjoyed far more monetary wealth—one of the commonly-used material indices—than their U-form competitors. Yet the U-form groups performed more effectively and efficiently militarily, suggesting that material capabilities alone do not determine military effectiveness and that alternative

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often necessitated indirect, M-form type governance. See Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States AD 990–1992*, 24.

[33] There are of course ways to mitigate principal-agent problems. First, elites could pay subordinates more than the subordinates could acquire by looting. If elites would discover that subordinates were cheating on this arrangement, then the elites could discontinue salary payment to the subordinates. Second, regional commanders could be rotated. Yet rotation incurs costs. Rotated commanders have less local knowledge than permanent ones, which hinders the quality of decision making. Another way of mitigating agency problems is to foster a type of Weberian "elective affinity" between the principal's interests and agents' ideas about those interests. Elective affinity fosters high levels of compliance and morale through the routinization of norms and institutionalized procedures. It can even bring agents' preferences into alignment with the principal's. As this article demonstrates, however, organizing such routines is a central challenge to organizational leadership. See H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, ed. From *Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 62–63.

[34] Risa A. Brooks, "The Impact of Culture, Society, Institutions, and International Forces on Military Effectiveness," in *Creating Military Power: The Sources of Military Effectiveness*, eds., Risa A. Brooks and Elizabeth Stanley-Mitchell (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 7.

[35] One example is John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 55–82.

explanations should be explored.[36] Military effectiveness, then, involves the relative ability of military units to use resources efficiently to achieve their war aims.

Military effectiveness cannot be measured solely by relying on indicators such as victory in war or number of battles won. A crucial indicator of effectiveness involves groups' ability to translate resources, human and material, into military power. To capture groups' relative ability at translating resources into military power, indicators such as insurgent group size, armaments, and wealth must be considered relative to the groups' level of success at achieving their war aims. By themselves, crude indicators, such as outright victory or number of battles won, do not allow us to make inferences about groups' relative success at using the resources at their disposal to create military power. Thus, these crude indicators, although important in their own right, tell us nothing about the sources of military effectiveness.

I measure military effectiveness, then, as insurgent groups' relative ability to translate resources into military power. Effective groups use their resources to pursue their war aims efficiently. These groups are capable of achieving more, or at least as much, with fewer resources than are less effective groups. Although this variable is difficult to quantify because of limited systematic data on rebel groups' resource endowments, it can be captured effectively using a qualitative small-*n* cross-case comparative research design, in which researchers can make nuanced comparisons of groups within particular wars and over time based on their substantive knowledge of the cases. In Liberia and Sierra Leone, for example, LURD and the Kamajors overcame relative material deficiencies and a relatively small number of fighters to achieve their war aims quickly and efficiently. In comparison, the NPFL and the RUF, each bloated with material resources and large numbers of fighters, struggled in protracted civil wars to achieve their war aims. Although at varying times both the NPFL and LURD fought their way to outskirts of Monrovia, LURD proved more effective at translating its resources into military power.

My explanation of military effectiveness emphasizes the downstream effects of organizational structure. U-form organizations are more effective than M-forms because of their capacity to manage agency problems, which reduce military efficiency and hinder coordination. Moreover, U-form groups enjoy a centralized, unified military strategy, whereas M-form groups must attempt to overcome internal actors' varying preferences and strategies. U-form organization thus allows smaller armed groups to get the most out of their personnel. M-form insurgent organizations should

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[36] Stephen Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 21. Biddle, using five different indices, likewise finds that material factors can at best explain less than two-thirds of observed outcomes.

only be expected to be equally or more effective if they can muster sufficient resources to manage their personnel and effectively deploy the resources to mitigate agency problems. From this argument, I deduce a third proposition.

Proposition 3. All else equal, U-form armed groups will be more effective militarily than M-form groups.

ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS

Two alternative explanations of armed group military effectiveness should be considered. The first alternative hypothesis (HA1) involves ethnicity: insurgent groups that are ethnically homogeneous will be more effective. James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, for example, argue that individuals cooperate more often in ethnically homogenous groups because internal policing and expectations of repeated interactions with coethnics raises the costs of defection.[37] Ethnically-diverse groups should attract opportunists who rationally defect for private gain with less fear of punishment, especially when leaders of ethnic groups cannot or will not punish defectors who cheat on other groups.[38] Coordination and cohesion among coethnics should increase ethnically homogenous groups' military effectiveness. Inspection of the cases, however, casts doubt on this hypothesis: combatants from a mélange of ethnic groups comprised each of the four armed groups, except the Kamajors, which was more ethnically homogeneous.[39] That the two most effective groups featured dramatically different ethnic configurations suggests another causal factor explains why these groups performed similarly effectively.

A second alternative explanation involves insurgent groups' access to material resources. One might predict that groups with greater access to material resources will be more effective (HA2). Alternatively, one might expect groups with access to natural resources to attract opportunistic recruits whose short-term material interests lead to defection and military ineffectiveness (HA3).[40] The cases support neither of these hypotheses: contra HA2, the NPFL and the RUF—the groups most engaged in natural resource smuggling— easily generated the most material wealth, yet proved the least effective of the

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[37] See James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Explaining Interethnic Cooperation," *American Political Science Review* 90, no. 4 (December 1996): 715–35; and Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).

[38] Fearon and Laitin, "Explaing Interethnic Cooperation," 1996.

[39] Fearon and Laitin also find that ethnic fractionalization is not a significant explanatory variable for the onset of civil war. See Fearon and Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 1 (February 2003): 75–90.

[40] Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion*; see also Macartan Humphreys and Jeremy M. Weinstein, "Handling and Manhandling Civilians in Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 100, no. 3 (August 2006): 429–47.

four groups. Contra HA3, one of the most effective groups, LURD, enjoyed aid from Guinea.[41] Yet this aid did not attract particularly opportunistic recruits or hinder the group's military effectiveness.

METHODOLOGY

This article responds to Nicholas Sambanis' challenge to use case study research to refine and expand formal and quantitative models of conflict. Sambanis argues that although these models are useful for building theory, many suffer from measurement error, unit heterogeneity, model misspecification, and lack of clarity about causal mechanisms.[42] I seek to maximize analytical leverage within case study research by generating more observations within the two countries encompassed by this essay.[43] Using the four aforementioned armed groups as the units of analysis, I disaggregate Liberia and Sierra Leone into these smaller units and address observed variation among them. I also explicitly investigate the Kamajor case diachronically to highlight change over time as particular independent variables change and others remain constant.[44] Moreover, within-country, group-level analysis allows us to examine, in a structured, focused comparison, potential causal factors such as ethnic fragmentation, natural resource exploitation, international ties, and diaspora communities.[45] The within-country analysis is propitious for comparing potential causal mechanisms and controlling particular variables.

By illustrating that armed groups developed different types of organizational hierarchies and exhibited dramatically different behavior and effectiveness in a context in which material incentives for defection were very high, I advance new theoretical propositions about how variations in organizational types shape incentive structures and have important downstream effects for behavior and effectiveness. Yet any theory that involves organization is incomplete without an ordering of preferences. I assume that commanders of rebel organizations are boundedly rational actors whose main preference is to occupy the capital city and gain recognition as the

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[41] International Crisis Group, "Liberia: Unravelling," Africa Briefing No. 10 (July 2002), 4-5.

[42] Nicholas Sambanis, "Using Case Studies to Expand Economic Models of Civil War," *Perspectives on Politics* 2, no. 2 (June 2004): 259–79.

[43] See Richard Snyder, "Scaling Down: The Subnational Comparative Method," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 36, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 93-110; and Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 23-30, 217-18.

[44] On diachronic within-case analysis, see King, Keohane, and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry*, 219–23; Dietrich Rueschemeyer, "Can One or a Few Cases Yield Theoretical Gains?" in *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, eds., James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (New York: Cambridge University Press 2003), 305–36.

[45] Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press).

sovereign regime. This preference is ranked first because such political sta-
tus would allow commanders the most economic leverage in controlling
and allocating resources, making laws, taxing populations, and attracting in-
ternational partners.[46] I establish two observable criteria to infer that these
assumptions bear some correspondence to the insurgents' real preferences.
First, group commanders must verbally express their desire to be recognized
as sovereign presidents.[47] I find this condition to be true in all four cases,
even that of the Kamajor leader Sam Hinga Norman, whose militias have
largely been considered to be civil-defense forces.[48] The second observable
criterion is expansion toward the capital city. Although an imperfect indica-
tor of preferences to occupy the capital, it reinforces the first criterion and
squares the circle of rhetoric and action. Such expansion occurred in all four
cases.

This article tries to build theory on territorial expansion, organizational
forms, and the effects of these forms in internal conflicts. It does not suf-
ficiently or exhaustively test the theory against enough cases to yield (sta-
tistically) significant results. The comparative method used here serves as a
theory-building technique to generate hypotheses to be tested in a larger se-
lection of cases. Complete quantitative data on the processes examined here
do not exist; for data I turn to the ethnographic record of nongovernmental
organizations, journalists, scholars, and to my own fieldwork in Liberia and
Sierra Leone. During the summers of 2004 and 2005 I interviewed more than
forty people who participated in or had intimate knowledge of the wars,
including subcommanders, low-level combatants, NGO personnel, United Na-
tions peacekeeping personnel, and local academics and intellectuals. In an
attempt to limit bias, I have purposefully sought information that would
disconfirm my hypotheses. For example, I report the possibility that Sierra
Leone's Kamajor militias had preferences different from those of the other
three groups. As an analytical device, however, I assume fixed preferences
and then investigate the fit between the theoretical assumptions and the em-
pirical data.

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[46] William Reno, "Order and Commerce in Turbulent Areas: 19th Century Lessons, 21st Century
Practice," *Third World Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (2004): 607–25.

[47] This should reveal insurgent leaders' real preferences, to the extent that these leaders actually
have incentives to claim that they hold no aggressive ambitions to seize national power, but rather only
to defend their communities from government atrocities.

[48] Although the Kamajors were born as a civil defense force, the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconcilia-
tion Report shows that Kamajor leadership was indeed heavily involved in plans to invade the capital city
in August 1997 to remove the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council military junta after it ousted President
Ahmad Tejan Kabbah's regime in a coup. Although the plan was ostensibly to reinstate the exiled civil-
ian government, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report reveals that many, including Kabbah
himself, believed that Hinga Norman and his Kamajor militia sought to control Freetown for themselves.
See Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission, "Witness to the Truth," vol. 3A, chap. 3, 248–74.

ARMED GROUPS: TERRITORY, ORGANIZATION, AND EFFECTIVENESS

Liberia

NATIONAL PATRIOTIC FRONT OF LIBERIA

In late 1989, a small band of insurgents claiming allegiance to Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia invaded Nimba County, Liberia from neighboring Cote d'Ivoire. What began as a small insurgency of several hundred fighters grew quickly into a large one of tens of thousands that would control most of Liberia's territory. Despite being trained by Muammar Gaddafi's forces in Libya and making use of revolutionary rhetoric for mobilization, Taylor formed his NPFL from a collection of exiles with little in common apart from a strong aversion to the incumbent president, Samuel Doe. Their aversion sprang from Doe's exclusionary patron-client relations that favored some ethnic groups over others, as well as from the government's unwillingness and inability to provide basic public goods across the country's periphery. Within six months of its initial attack, the NPFL expanded rapidly, controlling most of Liberia outside of Monrovia. It also spilled across borders, expanding its rear base into southeastern Sierra Leone and parts of Guinea. This vast territory, known locally as "Greater Liberia," or "Taylorland," required a decentralized administrative apparatus. Taylor established the NPFL's headquarters in Gbarnga, a city in central Liberia. The location of NPFL headquarters was strategic because it minimized the possible geographic distance NPFL fighters could be from Taylor's operational locus at any given point in the group's conquered territory, thereby enabling him to impose some—albeit limited—oversight of NPFL regional operations. Taylor's failure to oversee regional and local commanders effectively despite his "capital's" favorable locale underscores the extreme infrastructural and technological deficiencies in Liberia, as well as the incentives that these deficiencies and the country's abundant natural resources provide to subordinates to behave opportunistically under M-form administration.

As Taylor's group expanded numerically and territorially, it became increasingly fractionalized as it failed to adapt to the increases in size and scale. In the six months it took the NPFL to occupy Greater Liberia, expansion forced Taylor to devolve power to mid-level commanders. According to Liberians who lived in NPFL-held territory, Liberia's decrepit infrastructure and communications technology enabled these mid-level commanders to operate relatively autonomously from those in the Gbarnga capital, though fear of Taylor pervaded.[49]

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[49] Author interviews with Liberian refugees who lived in NPFL-controlled territory before fleeing, 23, 25, 27 June, Accra, Ghana.

Such problems posed a dilemma for Taylor. He could compensate mid-level agents and hope that the compensation would help to retain their loyalty despite the low level of monitoring he could undertake. However, this option would create incentives for subordinates to take the compensation and still shirk Taylor's objectives since he could not make a credible threat to punish their unobservable behavior. Alternatively, he could opt not to pay mid-level subordinates and hope that their semidependence on him for supplies would mitigate defections. The high costs and high risks of the former led Taylor to choose the latter. He subsequently authorized missions such as "Operation Pay Yourself," in which he granted subordinates formal permission to engage in the looting and plunder in which many were already engaged. Rather than serving to unify the NPFL or to bind it under a common ideology, such missions engendered further opportunities for agents to accumulate resources independently with which they could further distance themselves from dependency on Taylor and instead pursue private objectives at odds with those of military efficiency.

The exigencies of M-form governance became more apparent as further expansion occurred. Taylor sought to conduct offensives on multiple fronts, at once expanding toward the country's capital, Monrovia, as well as occupying key resource areas in the hinterland, whose rainforest terrain rendered effective administration and direct oversight still more difficult. Taylor delegated power to Prince Johnson, a mid-level commander, to lead one of the fronts. Johnson's forces increasingly grew independent from Taylor's, expanding toward Monrovia as most of Taylor's troops remained in distant Nimba and Lofa counties. As this occurred, Johnson mobilized the troops in his jurisdiction to join an independent insurgency named the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL). Johnson expected that by splitting from the NPFL and capturing Monrovia, he could become the next president of Liberia.

Taylor's remaining NPFL forces had little recourse to stop the disintegration. The split in the NPFL engendered a scenario in which Taylor was forced to spread his faction even thinner by sending troops toward Monrovia in an attempt to prevent Johnson's INPFL from capturing the capital. In turn, this struggle for further territorial expansion necessitated still more delegation to regional and town commanders to fight on multiple fronts. Greater factionalism ensued, as inexperienced and unprofessional subcommanders enjoyed new opportunities for personal aggrandizement. Although funds from illegal logging poured in to Taylor, the necessities of rapid expansion on multiple fronts hindered attempts at oversight.[50] Taylor's practice of nonpayment to

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[50] Patrick Johnston, "Timber Booms, State Busts: The Political Economy of Liberian Timber," *Review of African Political Economy* 101 (2004): 441–56. Taylor also signed lucrative contracts with foreign firms to extract and export iron-ore. On this, see William Reno, "War, Markets, and the Reconfiguration of West Africa's Weak States," *Comparative Politics* 29, no. 4 (July 1997): 493–510.

subordinates provided them with incentives to misrepresent information and hide personal economic agendas tied to looting and clandestine trade.[51] Indeed, at this juncture local units of the NPFL engaged more in looting and plunder than in disciplined combat.[52] One scholar estimates that between 1990 and 1994, the value of Liberian warlord trade per annum hovered around $200 million.[53]

Taylor understood the threats that factionalism posed to his vision of controlling the entirety of Liberia and becoming its president. Elmer Johnson, a subordinate commander with intentions similar to Prince Johnson's, was less successful at splitting from the NPFL. Taylor discovered that Elmer Johnson had begun subjecting his troops to rigorous training in an effort to impart discipline. Taylor feared that Elmer Johnson was training his soldiers to defect from NPFL in order to attempt to control Monrovia before his own faction of the NPFL could do so. Taylor's response to this challenge suggests that he recognized the deficiencies in his M-form organization: rather than finding ways to accommodate Elmer Johnson by guaranteeing him increased profit shares or disciplining him with controlled coercion, Taylor is alleged to have ordered the commander's death.[54] To the extent that Elmer Johnson represented one of the NPFL's few well-trained commanders—he had been trained in the American military—Taylor's inability to co-opt him undermined the group's overall effectiveness. These organizational challenges limited Taylor's options for punishing Elmer Johnson, so much so that Taylor had little alternative to making a suboptimal choice that weakened the NPFL's capabilities.[55]

In 1994, as the NPFL sought to hold territory, Taylor's subordinates began to defect en masse. Samuel Dokie and Tom Woewiyu formed a splinter faction called the NPFL-Central Revolutionary Council (NPFL-CRC). The CRC sought to curry favor with the Nigerian-led peacekeeping force that had been deployed. Around the same time, another faction, the Lofa Defense Forces (LDF) split from the NPFL. The LDF illustrates the desperation of Taylor's M-form delegation. Confronted by an upstart armed group in northeastern Liberia, ULIMO-K, Taylor himself agreed to back the LDF as an independent NPFL splinter faction to protect the NPFL's rear base. This delegation would significantly

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[51] Precise information about the extent to which this occurred does not exist. I thus rely on the ethnographic record, conversations with other fieldworkers (academics and NGO personnel), and my own conversations with Liberians. It should also be noted that if Taylor had chosen to share the spoils of illicit resource trade with subordinates, the lack of direct oversight and opportunities for private gain would still have existed and likely hindered the NPFL's military effectiveness. Thus, Taylor's practice of nonpayment is not necessarily an irrational choice.

[52] William Reno, "Foreign Firms and the Financing of Charles Taylor's NPFL," *Liberian Studies Journal* 18, no. 2 (1993): 175–88.

[53] Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States*, 99.

[54] Mark Huband, *The Liberian Civil War* (London: Frank Cass, 1998), 84-85, 111-12.

[55] For a detailed account of Taylor's dealings with Johnson, see Stephen Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy: The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimension of an African Civil War* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 80–81.

reduce Taylor's control over operations in Lofa County, but it represented the only feasible compromise for Taylor to protect key territory in the hinterland.

Such instances of opportunistic fractionalization are more representative of the progressive worsening of agency problems within the NPFL's command structure than the real emergence of new insurgent movements. Organization theory posits that agents seek to maximize autonomy from the principal. Organizations with distantly placed agents which lack the resources to monitor agents' behavior are prone to agency problems and agents' attempts to reshape their arm of the organization to better suit their interests. Such was the case in the NPFL. Although basic telecommunications equipment and services improved around 2000, the factions' destruction of basic physical infrastructure during the previous decade offset any important effects it might otherwise have had because rough terrain and infrastructural decay allowed subordinates "exit options" to escape punishment.[56] As such, rampant insubordination forced Taylor to dismantle important arms of the organization such as Elmer Johnson's brigade. More able agents such as Prince Johnson successfully reshaped their wing of the organization to pursue personal goals. Even town commanders who remained among the NPFL ranks behaved similarly to those who broke away, systematically underreporting the value of looted booty to Taylor in order to generate rents and to sell it at higher prices on the black market.[57]

The key findings in this case are that organizational dilemmas within the NPFL—especially monitoring and the central leadership's inability to punish—rendered its hierarchy uncoordinated for efficient territorial expansion. During multiple interviews I conducted in Liberia, respondents remarked on the NPFL's extreme fragmentation, describing its organization as akin to numerous mini independent groups rather than a singular unified group.[58] The geographic extensity of the group's territorial occupation coupled with its lack of effective oversight and disciplinary mechanisms generated information asymmetries between Taylor and his subordinates. As agents gained increased territorial autonomy, they established semi-independent fiefdoms and preyed on local communities for personal aggrandizement rather than engaging in intense combat.

Although throughout the war the NPFL remained the largest faction with the most access to material resources, Taylor failed to bind together his organization into a unitary hierarchy that could pursue a common goal. As we will see in the case of LURD, a smaller territorial base can help to mitigate agency problems because in this context a U-form organization can be

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[56] As corollary 2 proposed, leadership must be capable of credibly threatening subordinates with punishment to deter agent defection.

[57] Author interview with Liberian refugees, Accra, Ghana, 23 June 2004.

[58] Author interviews with Liberian lawyers and academics, Monrovia, Liberia, 25 July 2004, 27 July 2004.

administered at relatively low cost. The case will also show, in contrast to the NPFL case, how increased managerial resources can help maintain U-form structures as expansion occurs. Together, these factors provided LURD with distinct advantages over the NPFL.

LIBERIANS UNITED FOR RECONCILIATION AND DEMOCRACY

In contrast to the NPFL, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) armed group established a basic administrative apparatus in its controlled territory, limited its exploitation of available natural resources despite connections to outsiders, and largely refrained from targeting noncombatants.[59] Instead, LURD's leadership constructed a hierarchy that resembled the U-form ideal-type conceptualized above. Its ability for most of the war to avert fragmentation and agent defection might be surprising given the presence of factors other analysts link to fragmentation, such as intragroup ethnic heterogeneity and lootable resources.[60]

In this section, I explain differences in organization and effectiveness between LURD and the NPFL. I assess how LURD's elites controlled and disciplined subordinate fighters as the group expanded outward from northwestern Lofa County, Liberia. The analysis demonstrates that to the extent elites could control subordinates, the organization could centralize revenue procurement efforts and pose credible threats of punishment, thereby generating better relative effectiveness than the NPFL despite enjoying fewer material resources.

The LURD insurgency formed in 1999 as a multiethnic coalition of anti-Charles Taylor forces. Although the group drew many of its members from former ULIMO fighters (a faction that had split from the NPFL in 1993), it refused membership to former warlords from factions that disbanded after the first civil war ended in 1997, but welcomed recruits from any of Liberia's sixteen ethnic groups.[61] As a result, LURD forces were quite diverse; several Liberian ethnic groups, most notably Krahn and Mandingo, as well as some Sierra Leone Kamajor fighters, banded together to challenge the government. Mandingos comprised the main military leadership, with Sekou Conneh the official leader. Within two years, what began as a relatively small, unknown insurgency came to threaten the incumbent Taylor regime despite bypassing opportunities to increase its base of material resources by looting commodities.

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[59] International Crisis Group, "Liberia: Unravelling," *Africa Briefing* No. 10. (July 2002), 9.

[60] The common values of these possible independent variables render them acceptable negative cases. On selecting negative cases, see James Mahoney and Gary Goertz, "The Possibility Principle: Choosing Negative Cases in Qualitative Research," *American Political Science Review* 98, no. 4 (November 2004): 653–69.

[61] James Brabazon, "Liberia: Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy," The Royal Institute of International Affairs, Africa Programme, Armed Non-State Actors Program Briefing Paper No. 1 (2003), 2.

LURD faced a number of challenges. Its relative success as a multiethnic insurgent group belies theories of ethnic conflict that predict that diversity should lead to opportunism and defection.[62] Field researchers who spent time in and around LURD territory have noted that neither ideology nor political vision seemed to drive the rebel organization. James Brabazon sums up: "LURD are not in any sense characterized by political or ideological polemic or grandiose intentions. Sekou Conneh's political position, and that of LURD in general, is limited and succinct: Charles Taylor must be removed from power."[63] Interviews with LURD personnel in 2003—several months before the war would end and three years after it had begun—revealed that its command still lacked political vision for the country were it to oust Taylor.[64]

Despite these challenges, LURD proved quite effective in combat. LURD leader Sekou Conneh successfully controlled subordinates, a feat that Taylor never managed to accomplish. LURD began its war against the state in July 2000, when it invaded Lofa County from Guinea, the state which proved to be LURD's strongest supporter. One significant tie between the rebels and the Guinean state was the position of LURD leader Sekou Conneh's wife, Aisha, as spiritual advisor to Guinea's president, Lansana Conte. Upon learning of Guinea's ties to LURD, Charles Taylor, whose NPFL at one time controlled parts of western Guinea, launched an attack on Guinea in September 2000. Taylor's troops pushed into the wealthiest and most populous areas of western Guinea. Conte, who already supported LURD, now mobilized and gave sanctuary and aid to the rebels to help push Taylor's forces out of the country.[65] Conte's fear of another invasion left him beholden to LURD to serve as a buffer between Taylor's forces and the Guinea border. Moreover, fearing another collapsed state in the West Africa region, the United States and Britain reportedly increased aid to Guinea's army, which trickled down to the LURD forces who defended the border.[66]

After January 2003, LURD reclaimed strategic areas near Tubmanburg and Foya, Liberia, which the government had controlled after receiving a large shipment of Bosnian arms.[67] Upon reclaiming this territory, LURD launched offensives to the south, using hit-and-run tactics and successfully moving government forces out of key areas such as Cheesemanburg, Liberia and Po River. Correctly fearing that LURD would flush out his weak defenses in the

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[62] Fearon and Laitin, "Explaining Interethnic Cooperation."

[63] Brabazon, "Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy," 3; see also, William Reno, "The LURDs of the New Church," in *African Guerrillas: Raging Against the Machine*, eds., Morten Bøas and Kevin C. Dunn (Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner, 2007), 69–79.

[64] International Crisis Group, "Tackling Liberia: The Eye of the Regional Storm," Africa Report No. 62 (April 2003), 3–4.

[65] Contra hypothesis HA3, this inflow of aid did not create opportunism among the LURD ranks or undermine its effectiveness.

[66] International Crisis Group, "Liberia: Unravelling," 4–5.

[67] Ibid.

hinterland, Taylor moved these forces from their posts to Monrovia, where they fortified the capital. This allowed LURD to move unabated to the outskirts of the capital, where the war reached a stalemate. LURD became more fragmented as it expanded toward the capital city in late 2002 and early 2003, with avarice increasing among subcommanders who sought greater independent power in anticipation of divvying up the spoils of a power-sharing agreement.[68] However, without any real government military opposition outside of Monrovia, LURD managed to retain control of areas surrounding the capital city, while government forces controlled the city itself. To alleviate the humanitarian crisis, the United States sent a small intervention mission to get Charles Taylor to go into exile in Nigeria. The international community brokered a power-sharing agreement among insurgent groups and Taylor's remaining supporters.

Why did agents generally comply with the LURD elite's directives? For one thing, LURD's strategy of expansion markedly differed from NPFL's. LURD remained concentrated in its headquarters in Lofa County for some time after launching its initial offensive. Offensives tended to be conducted as quick strikes and retreats instead of ones that required long-term occupation. For its purposes, LURD's strategy was more tenable than an occupation strategy because of its relatively small number of fighters (approximately 3,000). LURD commanders could quickly mobilize the bulk of these fighters to launch offensives, which kept government forces off-balance while allowing LURD commanders direct oversight of military operations. Agents could not easily hide or misrepresent information from commanders because of the elites' immediate presence. Subordinates whose status in the organization might have otherwise led them to prefer defection had to weigh the potential costs of reprisal when making strategic choices. More often than not, LURD mid- and low-level personnel followed organizational directives.

To say that the LURD elite successfully monitored and disciplined subordinates is not to suggest a ubiquitousness of LURD monitoring and punishment capability. The organization did have limited regional operations to control strategic territory. Yet for most of its insurgency, LURD controlled no more than 30 percent of Liberia, a significantly smaller amount than the nearly 90 percent controlled by the NPFL less than six months after it launched its first offensive in 1989.[69] Timing also aided LURD elites to a greater degree than it did NPFL. This is because from the onset LURD elites enjoyed affordable and reliable communications and surveillance technology, while the NPFL, which began its war in 1989, did not. LURD elites had control and oversight of expansion as it occurred, maintaining regular contact with subordinates via radios

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[68] International Crisis Group, "Tackling Liberia: The Eye of the Regional Storm," 3–6.

[69] Brabazon, "Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy," 6–7; and Stephen Ellis, "Liberia's Warlord Insurgency," in *African Guerrillas*, ed. Christopher Clapham (New York: James Currey, 1998), 159.

and cellular telephones.[70] Such managed expansion, coupled with its smaller scale than the NPFL's and the RUF's, both allowed LURD elites to oversee and punish insubordinates more efficiently than could the NPFL or Sierra Leone's RUF. The credible threat of punishment for insubordination reduced the likelihood of large-scale defection such as that which occurred within the NPFL and the RUF.[71]

As a result of these differences, LURD's subordinates, unlike the NPFL's, fought relatively cohesively according to the strategies chosen by their leaders. The consequent organizational coherence enhanced LURD's military efficiency and effectiveness. LURD's unitary military organization helped it win successive battles, which brought it closer to Monrovia. Equally indicative of LURD's integrated U-form military organization was its ability to manage internal political struggles between its U-form military wing and its political wing. The LURD military grew worried that the political wing would negotiate a settlement that would leave Charles Taylor in power as president in exchange for shared power. Rather than causing mass defection, LURD military elites managed this uncertainty by maintaining effective control over subordinates, thereby retaining the military's strength vis-à-vis the political wing and strengthening its ability to shape negotiations both with the political wing and the international community because it held the most coercive capability and represented a meaningful threat to defect from any peace agreement signed by the political wing.[72]

Apart from giving insight into the theoretical propositions, the LURD case teaches us at least two key lessons: 1) gradual expansion or hit-and-run tactics promote greater organizational cohesion and elite oversight than can rapid expansion and long-term occupation; 2) timing, technology, and proximity matter. In terms of monitoring subordinates, LURD commanders had an advantage over their NPFL counterparts because of the tools with which they were equipped from the outset and because of the relative ease with which they could discipline nearby agents.

Sierra Leone

REVOLUTIONARY UNITED FRONT

This section examines the organization of the Revolutionary United Front. I highlight similarities between it and Liberia's NPFL, particularly in terms

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[70] Brabazon, "Liberian United for Reconciliation and Democracy," 9.

[71] On punishment and the governance of hierarchy, see Steven L. Solnick, "The Breakdown of Hierarchies in the Soviet Union and China: A Neoinstitutional Perspective," *World Politics* 48, no. 2 (January 1996): 209–38.

[72] On factions with varying preferences and peace settlements, see Andrew Kydd and Barbara F. Walter, "Sabotaging the Peace: The Politics of Extremist Violence," *International Organization* 56, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 263–96.

of territorial expansion, delegation, and financing. These characteristics—especially the rapid territorial expansion upon which each group embarked—rendered higher-ups unable to prevent subordinates from pursuing personal objectives at the expense of the collective group's military goals. These factors hindered the effectiveness of both insurgent organizations despite their high relative wealth, access to weapons, and large numbers of fighters. This weakness manifested itself in the protracted nature of the conflicts in which NPFL and RUF fought: the NPFL still had not claimed victory after more than seven years of fighting (late 1989–97) in its first war and then failed to defeat LURD during the second war; the RUF failed to defeat government forces after eleven years of fighting, although it came close on several occasions.

The RUF shared many similarities with the NPFL. The two groups intimately shared some political and military connections, particularly in the early 1990s. NPFL leader Charles Taylor played a key role in the early development of the RUF. He sought a regional partner who could supply access to Sierra Leonean diamonds, which he used to fund his own rebellion across the border in Liberia.[73] The RUF's origins also sprang in part from connections to Libya, where Gaddafi sponsored the training of some of its personnel. However, as in the NPFL, the RUF's revolutionary fervor quickly dissipated, especially after the emergence of Foday Sankoh, one of Taylor's confidantes, as the group's leader. Second, the RUF expanded rapidly after beginning the war in 1991. Within three months of its initial invasion, the RUF controlled up to one-fifth of the country, mostly in southern and eastern Sierra Leone.[74] Unlike LURD, the asset-specific nature of the diamond regions in southern and eastern Sierra Leone required the RUF to occupy much of the territory it controlled.[75] RUF needed to control the diamond regions to broker trades of the stones for weapons, mostly from Charles Taylor's foreign connections.[76] Thus, it was not enough to drive government forces from these regions and then retreat, as had been a common tactic of the LURD insurgency. Rather, Sankoh faced the challenge of occupying all of the country's diamond regions in the south, east, and northeast[77] and controlling agents' clandestine mining operations while at the same time expanding west toward Freetown, the capital city.

This proved difficult for a rebel leadership endowed with neither good communications technology nor well-trained, professional soldiers.[78] Such

[73] Stephen Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy*; and Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission, "Witness to the Truth," vol. 2, chap. 3.

[74] Paul Richards, *Fighting for the Rainforest: War, Youth, and Resources in Sierra Leone* (New York: James Currey, 1996), 5.

[75] On asset-specificity and governance, see Williamson, *Markets and Hierarchies*; and Williamson, *The Economic Institutions of Capitalism*.

[76] Douglas Farah, *Blood from Stones: The Secret Financial Network of Terror* (New York: Broadway, 2004).

[77] See the map in Richards, *Fighting for the Rainforest*, 39.

[78] The RUF recruited volunteer child soldiers and also kidnapped children to become fighters. For more on child soldiers, see Richards, *Fighting for the Rainforest*, 28–29; William P. Murphy, "Ingratitude and

logistical barriers made it difficult for RUF elites to oversee local and regional occupations, maintain battlefield success, and prevent subordinate commanders and fighters from siphoning off diamond wealth for personal profit. In the mid-1990s, International Alert (IA), a London-based nongovernmental organization, positioned itself between the RUF and the state government as a mediator. IA distributed radio sets to RUF commanders, supposedly to aid negotiations between the rebels and the government.[79] The new technology, however, did little to unify the organization or to change its behavior. Although RUF surveillance of its agents improved, subordinates remained able to mine clandestinely. This outcome can be explained by two factors. First, RUF elites' ability to punish insubordination declined as territorial expansion spread thinner the group's disciplinary capabilities and decrepit physical infrastructure limited central leadership's reach into significant swaths of the hinterland. Second, RUF agents could easily switch sides and mine with rogue soldiers from the Sierra Leone Army who shirked their own military responsibilities to mine for personal profit.[80] These "sobels" (soldier-rebels) provided protection for RUF agents.[81] Together, the RUF leadership's waning capacity to punish defection and sobel protection of RUF subordinates limited agents' fear of reprisals from leadership.

Despite severe agency problems, the RUF profited enormously from the illicit diamond trade. The United Nations estimates that in the 1990s RUF diamond smuggling netted between $25 million and $125 million per annum.[82] De Beers, a leader in the diamond industry allegedly involved in the sale of conflict diamonds, estimates the figure to be $70 million.[83] As lucrative as diamond mining and smuggling were in the short-term, long-term occupation of the diamond regions and active expansion throughout the rest of the country weakened the RUF's overall military effectiveness. Effective mining required occupation of the country's dispersed diamond areas and coordinated labor-intensive efforts. Territorial control necessitated that RUF elites delegate political control to town-based subcommanders. Such delegation allowed mid- and low-level agents free rein to pursue their own objectives, which often included summary executions, rape, forced labor, pillaging of

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Patrimonial Punishment: Civilian Limb Amputations in the Sierra Leone Civil War," unpublished typescript, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL, 2004.

[79] Not all parties believe IA's distribution of radios and close contact with the RUF was for altruistic purposes. Some suspected that IA profited from RUF smuggling and arms transfers. They believe that distribution of radio sets was to help coordinate arms transfers from Liberia. *See alone Times*, 22 October 2001.

[80] Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States*, 124–25; and David Keen, *Conflict and Collusion in Sierra Leone* (New York: James Currey, 2005).

[81] Collaboration between elements of the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) and the RUF also put civilians in a difficult spot because they no longer knew which side they could trust to provide security. For more on the dilemmas posed by sporadic SLA-RUF collaboration, see David Keen's description of the "sell-game." Keen, *Conflict and Collusion in Sierra Leone*, chap. 7.

[82] United Nations, "Panel of Experts Report Pursuant to Resolution 1306," (December 2000), 17.

[83] Ibid.

civilians' possessions, burning civilians' houses, and depriving civilians of food.[84]

Although some argue that Foday Sankoh authorized such exploits, a simple counterfactual scenario generates another logical explanation. Imagine that Sankoh presided over a U-form organization that was endowed with abundant managerial resources. Such an organization could doubtless engage in such predatory activities, but its structure would suggest that the costs of civilian abuse and looting would be sufficiently high to reduce such behavior. This is because commanders endowed with managerial resources would prefer action that would be of more direct benefit to achieving the organization's goal of military victory, from which their personal benefits would be greatest. The RUF clearly lacked U-form organization and a sufficient level of managerial resources to prevent or punish such behavior. Although Sankoh authorized subordinates to loot, it seems more plausible that this was an effect of his organization's weak institutionalization, indirect oversight, and territorial exigencies than a cause. Thus, less emphasis should be placed on his rhetoric for looting and more should be placed on the strategic environment in which he operated and the incentives and constraints created by this context.[85]

Rapid territorial expansion required additional recruitment. The addition of thousands of new soldiers—many of whom were youths—increased the RUF's ability to expand and occupy territory but diminished its core commanders' capacity to monitor, discipline, and control local commanders and foot soldiers.[86] These changes engendered an M-form hierarchy, characterized by misrepresentation of information and opportunism by mid- and low-level RUF agents. Governance of diamond regions proved especially problematic. Subordinates of Foday Sankoh, such as Sam "Mosquito" Bockarie, Dennis "Superman" Mingo, Issa Sesay, Ibrahim Bah, Prince Khan, and others, struggled for control over the diamond trade within the areas their arms of the RUF occupied. A United Nations investigation reports that such intra-organizational competition led to freelancing among regional wings of the RUF and cheating on organizationally-led diamond smuggling. Bockarie accused Mingo, for example, of selling diamonds on his own and laundering the profits.[87] If such shirking had not occurred, RUF commander Sankoh would have been able to better coordinate his forces, monopolize revenues, control free-riding, and

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[84] Ibid., 80.

[85] On counterfactual thought experiments, see Phillip E. Tetlock, Phillip E. and Aaron Belkin, eds., *Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics: Logical, Methodological, and Psychological Perspectives* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991); and James D. Fearon, "Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science," *World Politics* 43, no. 2 (January 1991): 169–95.

[86] *Agence France Press* Interview with anonymous RUF regional commander. Agence France Press, 16 December 1999.

[87] United Nations, "Panel of Experts Report Pursuant to Resolution 1306," 16–17.

distribute selective incentives to fighters for the merit of their achievement in battle.

There are few reasons apart from principal-agent problems that the RUF would have been such a weak military organization. Even despite the presence of government-sponsored South African mercenaries employed by the private firm Executive Outcomes (EO) to train and equip Kamajor militias to counter the RUF,[88] the RUF enjoyed two major advantages yet could not win an outright military victory. The first advantage was that the collapse of the Sierra Leone state engendered anarchy. This weakening of the central state should have made rebel victory more likely. The small number of mercenaries employed by the government should have had more difficulty than they did at pushing the RUF and its abundant manpower out of key territories. Second, the RUF had significant external support, mainly from Charles Taylor's NPFL. Taylor helped finance and arm the movement throughout the 1990s. Despite these advantages, the RUF repeatedly failed to maintain effective occupation and control of the capital city, Freetown, far away from its main occupied territory in the south and east.

Evidence from this section has reinforced the correlation between rapid and extensive territorial expansion and agency problems. RUF occupation of asset-specific regions required intensive occupation. At the same time, the group expanded outward toward the capital city. The RUF elite lacked the resources to organize U-form structures throughout its territory. M-form governance and its attendant agency problems ensued. Importantly, the case study reveals that improved monitoring mechanisms are insufficient (but are still necessary) to prevent agency problems. Agency problems persisted after International Alert gave field radios to RUF commanders. Comparison of the RUF and the LURD cases suggests that principals must have both the capability to monitor agent behavior *and* to punish insubordination in order to control shirking. LURD's governance structure enabled it to do both; the RUF's structure enabled it at best to monitor agent behavior but not to punish insubordination. Ongoing agency problems limited RUF military effectiveness despite the fact that it enjoyed a number of distinct material advantages. This indicates that territory and organization play key roles in shaping the behavior of agents and organizations' military effectiveness.

KAMAJORS

The final case study is of the Kamajor militias. Local elders (elites) conscripted bands of ethnic Mende youths to protect local villages in southern and eastern Sierra Leone from RUF incursion. Unlike the other groups surveyed in this essay, the Kamajors appear to have been bound by a coherent ideology that

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[88] See Al J. Venter, *War Dog* (Havertown, PA: Casemate Publishing, 2006).

involved beliefs about magical forces associated with their relationship with rainforest ecology and hunting.[89] In lieu of an effective state military or police force, Kamajor forces served for a time as the main security apparatus in the country. Mariane Ferme and Danny Hofffman have shown that Kamajor fighters displayed a fierce loyalty to local hierarchies that directed their use of violence mainly toward enemy combatants, and that their behavior largely respected human rights norms.[90]

The Kamajors drew most of their fighters from rural villages or refugee/internally displaced camps. Chief Sam Hinga Norman, who would later become the national Deputy Minister of Defense, assumed formal control of the Kamajor militias, which according to one report had access to more than 17,000 fighters.[91] Although the Kamajor militias formed in 1994, they never posed a formidable threat to the RUF until May 1995, at which time Sierra Leonean President Valentine Strasser hired the South African private security firm Executive Outcomes (EO) to equip and train Kamajor forces and to support some offensives.[92] Bereft of a loyal military, Sierra Leone's president had to rely upon the mixture of EO expertise and technology and Kamajor irregulars to mitigate the RUF threat.

Highlighting the importance of managerial resources, the expertise and military technology of the EO professionals and the relative concentration of Kamajor-held territory allowed them to administer directly their controlled territory, such as the city of Kenema, a regional diamond center, in a hierarchy that resembled the U-form ideal-type. Advanced communications technology and the extensive use of helicopters ensured that EO contractors could monitor and punish Kamajor local commanders as Kamajor-held territory expanded to reclaim southern coastal rutile and bauxite mines.[93]

Indeed, the difference in efficacy between command by trained military experts with abundant monitoring and military technology and that of relatively untrained local commanders with little oversight or punishment capacity can be seen if the Kamajor military endeavor is examined diachronically in two distinct cases: the Executive Outcomes (EO) phase, and the post-EO phase. The EO phase ended in 1997 when the Sierra Leone government failed

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[89] Author interview with a Kamajor subcommander, Panguma, Sierra Leone, 10 July 2004; Patrick Muana, "The Kamajoi Militia: Civil War, Internal Displacement, and the Politics of Counter-Insurgency," *Africa Development* 22, no. 3 and 4 (1997): 87–88; also, *The Independent* (London), 26 June 1997, 14.

[90] Mariane C. Ferme and Danny Hoffman, "Hunter Militias and the International Human Rights Discourse in Sierra Leone and Beyond," *Africa Today* 50, no. 4 (Summer 2004): 73–74, 83-84. The Kamajors did not exercise perfect restraint from human rights violations, but they committed some ten times fewer than did the RUF. See volume 4 of the Report of the SLTRC for statistics on Kamajor human rights violations.

[91] *The Independent* (London), 26 June 1997, 14

[92] On Executive Outcomes, see Herbert Howe, "Private Security Forces and African Stability: The Case of Executive Outcomes," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 36, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 307-31. Deborah Avant, *The Market for Force: The Consequences of Privatizing Security* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Venter, *War Dogs.*

[93] Howe, "Private Security Forces and African Stability," 314.

to generate sufficient revenue to renew its contract with EO. By this time, the Kamajors had successfully launched a number of offensives and reclaimed RUF-held territory. EO's sudden departure left the Kamajors with expansive territory to administer in the southern and eastern parts of the country and little technology or expertise with which to do so.

In contrast to the EO phase, Kamajor leadership during the post-EO phase saw a transformation to M-form governance in which Chief Hinga Norman failed to rein in local commanders in Kenema, Pujehun, and Moyamba districts.[94] Although it appears that few Kamajors engaged in rogue mining, post-EO Kamajor militias are reported to have committed more atrocities than they did during the EO phase. Although no armed group in Sierra Leone's civil war was completely innocent of human rights violations, numerous reports indicate the scale of Kamajor atrocities was much less than that of the RUF.[95] Systematic data collected by the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission, for example, show that the Kamajors committed only about six percent of the human rights violations reported in the war, or about one-tenth of the number committed by the RUF.[96] However, ethnographic accounts confirm that as the Kamajors expanded beyond the regions in which they were recruited, their adherence to established hierarchies waned.[97] Although the Kamajor forces did not force an end to the war, they played a key role in pushing the RUF out of key territories in southern and eastern Sierra Leone. The dramatic variation in their governance of hierarchy and military effectiveness is instructive for evaluating the importance of technology for monitoring and punishment because the intervention and departure of EO allows the case to resemble a natural experiment in which the technology variable can be isolated. EO's abundance of these resources enabled it to govern local and regional commanders directly as the Kamajors expanded outward into RUF territory. When EO left the country in 1997, Chief Hinga Norman lacked these managerial resources, yet he could not feasibly contract the Kamajors' territorial base without ceding power to the RUF, which eventually occurred anyway due to RUF incursions. Hinga Norman's attempt to control this territorial expanse required him to devolve power to local and regional commanders. An increase in Kamajor agency problems ensued; local militias engaged in minor looting and in some cases even cooperated with the

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[94] International Crisis Group, "Sierra Leone: Time for a New Military and Political Strategy," *Africa Report* No. 28, (April 2001), 9.

[95] International Crisis Group, "Sierra Leone: Managing Uncertainty," *Africa Report* No. 28 (April 2001), 11; Human Rights Watch, "Report on Child Soldiers," (1999). Accessed online at (http://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/guinea/guine997-08.htm); Human Rights Watch, "Sierra Leone: Getting Away with Murder, Mutilation, and Rape," vol. 11, no. 3a, (July 1999); Human Rights Watch, "Sowing Terror: Atrocities Against Civilians in Sierra Leone," vol. 10, no. 3a, (July 1998).

[96] Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission, "Witness to the Truth," vol. 2, chap. 2, 38.

[97] Ferme and Hoffman, "Hunter Militias and the International Human Rights Discourse in Sierra Leone and Beyond," 73, 80.

rebels they were conscripted to defeat. Thus, we see again the importance of technology as a necessary condition for mitigating agency problems and coordinating military strategy.

LESSONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This article has argued that varying geographic and technological factors contribute to the development of different insurgent organizations. In turn, differences in organizational structures create varying incentives for subordinates, whose actions influence the military effectiveness of nonstate armed groups. My framework began with the assumption that group leaders seek to fight effectively with the ultimate goal of occupying the capital city and becoming recognized as a sovereign government. Yet the groups examined here pursued that goal in remarkably different ways and with markedly different results. From a range of possible explanations, I identified variation in armed groups' organizational structures as the salient variable that determines organizations' level of military effectiveness and elaborated a theory to account for variation in groups' military effectiveness.

The comparative case studies provide strong support for the hypotheses generated by the theory. I first proposed that delegation and M-form governance occurs as armed groups occupy more territory. Dramatic differences between the NPFL and RUF, on the one hand, and the LURD on the other hand, illustrate this difference. The NPFL and RUF expanded rapidly from their resource bases in the hinterland toward the capital cities that they sought to control. Such expansion required elites to delegate control over specific territory and responsibilities to subordinates in what quickly became M-form governance. In contrast, LURD, for most of its campaign, refrained from rapid territorial expansion. It favored hit-and-run guerrilla tactics that did not require broad territorial control. Leaders could consequently manage the organization with less delegation to subordinates.

I also argued that territory, by itself, does not determine the extent to which insurgent elites can govern their groups as U- or M-form organizations. Oversight instruments, such as information and communications technology, can enhance elites' ability to oversee subordinates. If elites can use these instruments to detect defection and to make credible threats to punish it, then they will remain able to govern U-form type hierarchies as organizations expand. The EO-phase Kamajor case is particularly illustrative. EO provided helicopter support and radios to assist in oversight of day-to-day operations. During this phase, elites displayed an impressive ability to control subordinates as they pushed the RUF out of key territories. Yet after EO departed, with all other conditions remaining nearly constant, Kamajor leadership struggled to control subordinates, who ransacked and looted as they entered new territory.

I next hypothesized that U-form organizations are more effective militarily than M-form organizations. This is because M-form organizations are more prone to information asymmetries between leaders and subordinates than U-form organizations. Such asymmetries provide opportunities for subordinates to defect for personal aggrandizement, which in turn undermines collective militarily effectiveness.

Each of the cases provides support for these claims. Groups that expanded rapidly and devolved to M-form organization, such as the NPFL and the RUF, became better known for their predatory economic behavior and wanton violence against civilians than for their political ideals or military effectiveness. The inability of elites to control subordinates and to coordinate military activities efficiently hindered their ability to win decisive victories despite significant material advantages. On the other hand, materially disadvantaged groups with stronger central oversight such as the LURD tended to fight more effectively and efficiently. LURD leadership found that abandoning attempts at broad territorial control and resource exploitation in favor of a U-form organization could be advantageous militarily. LURD's quick, coordinated attacks tended to be better at achieving its leadership's objectives than the predatory, uncoordinated actions of the M-form groups.

However, there is no reason to believe that M-form insurgent groups could not be effective if their elites enjoyed adequate monitoring and punishment mechanisms.[98] The problem is that in impoverished, war-torn countries with decrepit physical infrastructure, it is extremely difficult to generate monitoring and punishment capabilities that can keep pace with extensive territorial expansion. Thus, groups that expand across relatively small tracts of territory are likely to generate relative advantages in leadership control and thereby to fight more effectively than expansionist groups. Comparative research that investigates armed groups in better-off countries is needed to assess the generalizability of these claims.

The theory generates some broader policy implications. It could help to predict when peace negotiations to end civil wars will be successful. Negotiations involving M-form organizations should be likely to fail because the nature of M-form hierarchy makes it very difficult for top-level commanders to effect compliance from mid- and low-level subordinates. If

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[98] A unifying ideology that aligns principal and agent incentives could also coordinate effective M-form armed groups, as has been the case historically in some communist insurgencies. Numerous historical examples of effective M-form organization in conventional militaries also exist, such as Germany's emphasis on *Auftragstaktik* and Britain's emphasis on mission command. However, these cases differ from those examined in this article in key ways. For example, German and British subordinates to whom responsibility was delegated were better trained and indoctrinated to pursue organizational goals than are many contemporary insurgent subordinates. This would lead us to expect that delegation by leadership of armies in advanced countries would lead to outcomes more consistent with organizational goals than would delegation by insurgent leaders, many of whose subordinates receive little or no formal training and education.

these subordinates feel that they are not adequately compensated in peace settlements—which almost invariably is the case because of divergent principal and agent payoffs—they can act as spoilers and defect from the agreement by inciting violence.[99] On the other hand, U-form organizations should be more likely to adhere to peace agreements, at least to the extent that top-level commanders find the agreement satisfying and do not fear defection by their opponents.[100] In the cases examined here, this implication seems tenable: multiple peace agreements involving the NPFL and RUF failed, while agreements involving LURD and the Kamajors succeeded after the first round.

Thus, it appears that U-form insurgencies are both more formidable on the battlefield and more reliable at the negotiating table. Although nonstate armed groups are generally deemed normatively illegitimate in the eyes of the international community, we ironically see some groups developing U-form hierarchies that meet the criteria for Weberian statehood. In fact, to the extent that these groups succeed in controlling violence and establishing basic administrative apparatuses, they often are more "state-like" than the failing sovereigns against which they fight. Understanding the circumstances under which such groups form represents an important step toward understanding Africa's current *problematique*, the disintegration of political authority and order, as well as to exploring the possibility of indigenous solutions to state collapse.

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[99] Stephen John Stedman, "Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes," *International Security* 22, no. 2 (Fall 1997): 5–53; and Andrew Kydd and Barbara F. Walter, "Sabotaging the Peace: The Politics of Extremist Violence."

[100] For a prisoner's dilemma-based explanation of peace settlements, see Barbara Walter, "The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement"; and Walter, *Committing to Peace*.