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Commitment Problems or Bidding Wars? Rebel Fragmentation as Peace-Building

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Abstract

After highly-fragmented civil wars, order is often secured through the selective co-optation of rebel field commanders and atomized insurgents. I present a formal model of civil war settlement as a coalition formation game between various regime and rebel factions. This approach emphasizes the ability of installed civilian rulers to lure warlords into the state based on promises of future wealth, then use divide-and-rule tactics to pit different warlord factions against one another. Quantitative and qualitative data from Tajikistan, including an original dataset of warlord incorporation and regime purges during wartime reconstruction, are used to evaluate the model.

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“Now we shall live better. We want to live better, the way we did under Communists in the Soviet Union.”

– IBDULLO BOIMATOV

February 1996, Dushanbe

1 Introduction

In the freezing Tajik winter of 1996, a coordinated mutiny of field commanders surrounded Tajikistan’s capital city of Dushanbe. The revolt was led by Ibodullo Boimatov, who had once claimed the country’s only aluminum smelter, and Makhmud Khudayberdiev, who ruled the southern agricultural hub of Kurgan-Tubbe as an independent city-state. Both warlords claimed to speak for powerful constituencies. Both warlords had helped to install Tajikistan’s civilian president, Emomalii Rakhmonov. Both warlords feared that as Rakhmonov’s “peace process” unfolded they would lose influence in the ruling coalition. President Rakhmonov, acknowledging that their fears had merit, offered generous compensation to the blackmailers. Boimatov was appointed to the position of special trade envoy for cotton and aluminum, the country’s two largest export items. Khudayberdiev became the First Deputy of the Presidential Guard. Just over one year later, Khudayberdiev raised the stakes with another uprising. Bolstered by foreign support from Uzbekistan and promises of support from shadowy financiers, he declared the establishment of the “Autonomous Defense Council of Central and Southern Tajikistan in Kurgan-Tubbe and Hissor.” Few allies rallied to his cause this time. Boimatov, in particular, let Khudayberdiev flail in the wind. An improvised counter-coalition of rehabilitated rebel field commanders, many of whom had been branded as “criminal insurgents” and “Islamic terrorists” only weeks earlier, drove Khudayberdiev from the country in humiliation.

Extreme military fragmentation characterized the closing phases of the Tajik civil war. The head of state was forced to strike private bargains with individual warlords. The details of these bargains are largely lost to history. In the aggregate, however, these bargains calcified into a stable and durable political order. Khudayberdiev’s public defeat turned out to be the last militarily significant incident of the Tajik civil war. High mountains, an ungovernable border with Afghanistan, deep poverty, a thriving unmonitored drug economy, meddlesome neighbors, and an ideologically sophisticated Wahabbi subculture remain permanent facts of political life in Tajikistan. Yet in spite of these overwhelming structural disadvantages – and without robust third-party monitoring and enforcement for illicit backroom deals – Tajikistan today finds itself at

peace.

Though most civil wars end with military victory by the incumbent regime, this rarely implies inflicting comprehensive battlefield defeat on the rebel army. A common outcome is selective co-optation of insurgent field commanders. Though the phenomenon of side-switching is ubiquitous and well-chronicled in civil wars around the globe, processes of defection, desertion, and incorporation are rarely analyzed. If incumbent and insurgent military commanders are potentially interchangeable candidates for post-war government spoils, then from the point of view of these commanders civil war settlement might reasonably be conceptualized as a *coalition formation* game. Formalizing this intuition requires placing commitment and coordination problems between factional warlords at the center of strategic analysis. “The state” can be treated as a semi-permeable membrane for violence entrepreneurs, who weigh their life opportunities as social bandits against their life opportunities as agents of an internationally recognized sovereign. The utility of such an approach would be measured by its ability to generate predictions about when militias are likely to yoke themselves to the governing coalition and when they are likely to resist consolidation.

This paper presents an original model of civil war settlement under conditions of state failure. An n -player coalition formation game is analyzed. I suggest that a war can end either through costly military victory or through coalition building by warlords. Analysis of the model reveals a number of analytically distinct equilibria. I identify parameters that support the incorporation of all warlords into a single coalition that is self-enforcing without the need for a benign external guarantor. I also identify parameters that predict stalled negotiations or persistent state failure. The model is then used to frame an analytic narrative of the settlement of Tajikistan’s civil war. Statistical analysis of an original dataset of regime purges against incorporated field commanders reveals that warlords from the victorious faction of the war were as likely to be purged from the ruling coalition in a given year as warlords from the defeated faction. Strong and weak warlords were equally vulnerable to divide and rule tactics, consistent with model assumptions. Intra-coalitional commitment problems were as difficult to resolve as the larger commitment problem across the war’s master cleavage.

This paper proceeds in four parts. The first section briefly reviews the literature on civil war settlements. The second section presents the model, discusses key comparative statics, and presents a number of testable hypotheses that stem from the model. The third section discusses the model in the context of the Tajik civil war. The final section concludes.

2 Literature Review: Commitment Problems and Civil War

A number of independent scholars have confirmed that since 1945 most civil wars end with military victory rather than negotiated settlement (Licklider (1995), Walter (1997), Fearon (2004)) and that victory tends to go to the incumbents (Toft (2006)). More recent research suggests that many “negotiated settlements” or “military stalemates” are, upon closer inspection, face-saving arrangements that codify de-facto incumbent success (Fearon and Laitin (2007), McCormick and Harrison (2007)). The question of why it is so much more difficult to reach a negotiated settlement to extract players from costly civil wars than interstate conflicts has received a great deal of attention. Borrowing tools from the study of international relations and microeconomics, the most prominent approach to this question has been to model a civil war as a two-player game between an incumbent state and a rebel insurgency. This narrows the focus to particularly difficult aspects of the bargaining that occurs between two armed actors competing to rule a sovereign state.

At powerful insight that emerges from this modeling enterprise is that the negotiations necessary to end a civil war diplomatically differ fundamentally from the negotiations that end interstate conflicts. After two states fight a war, their armies remain intact and retreat behind internationally reified boundaries. Ending a civil war often requires the losing side to formally lay down its arms. It is very difficult for the winners, then, credibly commit to honor the terms of the ceasefire once they hold all the guns.¹ This commitment problem complicates the diplomatic resolution of the civil wars through many mechanisms, rendering rebel disarmament or stable post-war power sharing extremely difficult. Policy recommendations are typically directed toward benevolent foreign interveners, suggesting that an international gendarmerie could help locals solve intractable security dilemmas and enforce compacts struck between civil war combatants (Walter (2002), Michael Doyle (2006), Fortna (2008)).

By design, two-player approaches have limited applicability to the complex situations that emerge in failed states with many armed groups. Evidence supports the common intuition that civil wars with many potential “spoilers” or “veto players” are relatively difficult to end (Stedmen (1997), Cunningham (2006)). Governments prefer to face a large number of weak rebel groups rather than single unified well-organized insurgency, of course, and devote a great deal of effort to fragmenting armed rivals: Infiltrating and co-opting radical movements, murdering or imprisoning prominent leaders, recruiting “proxy armies” from the same

¹ Fearon and Laitin summarize the core of this asymmetric commitment problem: “Rebel groups aim at regime change because they could not trust the government to implement the policies they desire even if the government formally agreed to do so. After the rebel group disbands, or after the central government regains strength, or because of monitoring problems arising from the nature of the policy aims (for example, redistribution), the central government would renege on policy concessions it made to end a war. Thus rebel groups must often fight for ‘all or nothing.’” (Fearon-Laitin 2007, p.2). For a reviews of theoretical and formal literature on commitment problems in civil war, see Walter (2009), Blattman and Miguel (2010).

population as the insurgents, mapping the rival power centers in rebel armies, and the like.² Rebel groups facing a competent leviathan, in turn, must invest in ideological indoctrination and intra-factional security to prevent precisely this sort of infiltration and dismemberment. These divide-and-rule strategies are familiar because they are the spine and guts of modern counterinsurgency practice.

In this context, it is noteworthy that many governments create institutions to facilitate side-switching by insurgents as irregular wars grind to a slow finish. Examples abound. The Russian government enlisted many rehabilitated Chechen rebels in the last decade, and they are unusually effective as the sordid tasks of counterinsurgency.³ Since the 1980s, the government in the Philippines has incorporated entire rebel battalions of rebel forces into “CAFGU” units around Mindinao.⁴ The 2006 “Anbar Awakening” in Iraq would have been impossible set of policy shifts designed to allow former insurgents to reinvent themselves and find employment in the Iraqi Security Forces.⁵ The United States strategy for post-Taliban Afghanistan involved incorporating prominent warlords, many of whom have found their way into the army, police, private security companies, or into opaque para-statal relationships with the Karzai government.⁶ Incorporating enemy combatants is a double-win for the incumbent regime, since it simultaneously reduces the ranks of the enemy, provides an “exit option” for demoralized rebels who do not want to keep fighting, and brings soldiers with knowledge of the terrain and tactics to their side. It also mitigates the commitment problem sketched above, since in this case the individual rebel warlord does not necessarily disarm, and can implicitly threaten to return to the insurgency.

Despite the fact that counterinsurgency professionals across the globe obviously believe rebel incorporation is a strategy that produces results, side-switching has not been incorporated into standard models of civil war settlement. A preliminary effort to remedy this is presented in the following section.

3 Civil War Settlement as a Coalition Formation Game

Three empirical regularities serve as the model’s point of departure. First, civil wars since 1945 have rarely been between two professional armies with coherent and unified lines of command-and-control. Analogies to two-player firm or interstate bargaining problems are therefore strained. Second, in spite of this fact, most of these wars ended with military victory rather than negotiated settlement. Many negotiated settlements

² See Kalyvas (2006), Davenport (2007), and Kalyvas and Balcells (2011).

³ See Balta (2007), Lyall (2009).

⁴ See Felter (2005).

⁵ See Anderson (November 19, 2007), Ucko (2009).

⁶ See Rashid (2008) ch. 10, Giustozzi (2009), Jalali (2006), Tarzi (2005).

simply recognize the military balance, since the winners already enjoy de-facto legal immunity within the borders of the state. Third, side-switching in civil wars – especially highly fractious civil wars – is far more common than is generally acknowledged.

The stylized model that follows contributes to a literature that treats state-building as a constantly renewable process of contracting and bargaining between violence entrepreneurs.⁷ Warlords are locked in competition. Their rivalry can easily turn violent. They have the option of working together, though cooperation is risky. If they can assemble a coalition with sufficient military power to seize the capital city and achieve international recognition, they will have the option of installing a civilian regime and gaining access to foreign aid, international markets, and low-interest capital investment. The civilian regime – personified by the figurehead president – becomes their hostage. If the gains associated with seizing the capital city and extorting the rents of sovereignty are greater than the expected utility of outright war, all warlords may rationally abjure violence.

In the commitment problem framework, the central problem of civil war settlement is convincing rebels to disarm. Since warlords’ bargaining power extends from their capacity as violence entrepreneurs, I assume no one actually disarms. Some warlords simply reinvent and redefine themselves as the state. One might observe certain kinds of cosmetic disarmament – warlords may don suits, shave their beards, and reinvent themselves as party officials or vote brokers – but they maintain control of men and weapons. Order is contracted through a process of incorporation and buy-out, with payments taking the form of graft: state offices, black-market monopolies, or rigged privatization schemes. “The state” is little more than a cosmetic legitimizing device for predatory gangsters.

All warlords – “insurgent” and “incumbent” alike – must contend with the possibility that they will be marginalized in a future coalition. Opposition and pro-regime warlords are functionally interchangeable as coalition members: They are equally capable of extorting the regime for spoils, and equally vulnerable to intrigue. After installing a president, warlords may face a collective action problem if they attempt to remove the president from power. Warlords realize that they are vulnerable to divide-and-rule tactics, which makes coalition politics vital. An equilibrium framework is useful to analyze how changes in the international environment should affect the size and composite identity of the warlord coalition.

⁷ See Barkey (1994).

3.1 The Model

Assume that a strategic contest takes place in an internationally recognized sovereign state. This state contains lootable resources and government positions worth v . The conflict is over the right to appropriate these spoils through selective enforcement of property rights. The actors in this contest are *warlords* – violence entrepreneurs that have organized private armies. Assume the state contains $n > 1$ warlords indexed by i , all locked in a struggle for power.⁸ Each warlord i has the option of attempting to capture the statehouse, exclude all rival warlords from power, and expropriate all the state wealth v for himself.

Civil war is costly and unpredictable from the perspective of a warlord. A charismatic leader’s ability to sustain a militia and press the military advantage amidst state collapse depends on a host of military, social, and psychological variables that cannot be predicted. A simple way to capture the essentially random character of this violent contest is to treat warlords as symmetric in military capabilities: Every warlord i has a roughly equal chance of seizing the statehouse by force. Assume that fighting imposes costs c on each warlord, since sustaining a militia cannibalizes productive assets. In a war of all against all, then, each warlord i expects a “war economy” payoff of $\frac{v}{n} - c$.⁹

As an alternative to going alone, warlords can attempt to work together. Warlords can form a group with sufficient domestic armed power to provide order in the capital and minimally secure the borders. The coalition will then temporarily abjure violence and back the ascension of a civilian government, headed by a figurehead president F . In the first stage of the game, each warlord simultaneously chooses to either “Fight” or “Install.” The “stability threshold” s represents the number of warlords necessary before foreign governments recognize a state and deliver aid, $1 < s \leq n$. If fewer than s warlords opt to collude together then the government that is installed will be incapable of controlling the countryside. Warlords revert to fighting. The loss of domestic and international legitimacy associated with a failed attempt to govern the country should be costly, represented by a sucker’s payoff of $\frac{v}{n} - c - w$ for warlords who backed a failed consolidation project. If s or more warlords work together, by contrast, then a government emerges that contains sufficient domestic power to acquire foreign aid, claim the country’s seat at the United Nations, and enforce domestic contracts to facilitate foreign investment. The influx of foreign aid, extort-able civilians, and illicit rent-seeking opportunities increase the lootable wealth in the state to $v^* > v$. Assume v^* will be doled out by the figurehead president as ministry positions and government graft, making arrangements

⁸ I assume that it is impossible to peacefully negotiate a power-sharing and disarmament agreement between the various groups because of well-analyzed commitment problems in the postwar period. See Walter (1997) Fearon (1998, 2004); Fearon and Laitin (2007).

⁹ Fighting thus destroys state wealth, but the illicit business opportunities in a “war economy” are assumed to be sufficiently lucrative for warlords to retain soldiers. The costs of fighting c are never so high as to deter a warlord from fighting ($\frac{v}{n} - c > 0$).

opaque to foreign observers. This coalition represents the “shadow state.”¹⁰

Warlords who chose to fight at the beginning rather than support the president will be cut out of these spoils. What happens to these excluded warlords varies substantially by local context. Excluded warlords may be able to keep their armies intact by fleeing to the mountains or across international borders to keep the fight alive. They may be able to reinvent themselves as bandits or narcotics traffickers. They may be quickly killed along with their families. The equilibria identified below are sustainable regardless of the payoff for excluded warlords, so I assume the most difficult case for consolidation: Even if s or more warlords install a president, let the “reservation payoff” for remaining outside the regime-installing coalition be identical to their “war economy” payoff, $\frac{v}{n} - c$. For these warlords, the game ends and payoffs are realized.

Though v^* is nominally controlled by the figurehead president, the warlords still hold all the cards. By now they have merged their memberships with the army and police forces. The threat of a coup hangs over all distributional politics that follow, since warlords are perfectly positioned to replace one civilian president with another. Warlord payoffs in the event of a hypothetical palace coup thus represent the upper-bound of what a warlord can expect from installing a president.¹¹ Warlords install a president with the expectation of being bought off. The price that warlords will demand is determined by two factors: their expected gains from replacing the president, and their assessment of the president’s political skill.

Let k represent the number of warlords that opted to create the ruling coalition. For these warlords, a new subgame begins. Let us simplify their strategic choices as coalition members to a simple binary choice: They may either “Extort the President” or “Accept the President.” Extortion implies public challenges to the president’s authority and demanding rents exactly proportional to what would be received in a coup. These payoffs are straightforward to deduce. After a coup, each of the k warlords would mobilize their resources and attempt to dominate the newly enriched state. Assuming optimistically that the resulting scramble could be resolved without fighting, the hypothetical “palace coup” payoff would be $\frac{v^*}{k}$. Alternatively, acceptance implies accepting a subordinate role in a state hierarchy, admitting that the civilian president has the right to carve himself some share of the state rents $R > 0$ before dividing the remaining spoils. “Accepting” a president is the equivalent of demanding $\frac{v^* - R}{k}$.

Recall that the “stability threshold” s is determined by foreign governments and capital markets. This fixed parameter is a benchmark for how many warlords are necessary to install a president in the first period.

¹⁰ I borrow this phrase from Reno (1998).

¹¹ Note that a strategic president ought to be able to choose a distribution of v^* that guarantees warlords exactly what they would receive in a coup, allowing the off-the-path threat of a coup to replace actual violent breakdown. This basic insight is already incorporated into the utility functions of warlords in this paper. For an extensive analysis of the n -player distributional politics subgame with a president and k warlords, see Driscoll (2009), Chapter 3.

It also represents the minimum number of warlords necessary to *keep* a president in power in the second period. If fewer than s warlords play “Accept” in the second period, assume that the president is revealed as a completely disposable figurehead with no domestic constituency. All k warlords receive their “Extort” payoff of $(\frac{v^*}{k})$. If s or more warlords play “Accept,” then these colluding warlords receive $\frac{v^*-R}{k}$ and the president stays in power. This means that so long as $k > s$, playing “Extort” is risky. Each warlord i must contend with the possibility that s other warlords will play “Accept.” In this case, the warlord might find himself attempting to “Extort” the president all alone, like Khudayberdiev in his second uprising. Since the president has no army of his own, his ability to punish warlords who choose to “Extort” him depends on his skill as a politician. He might be effective at gradually manipulating side-payments to coalition members and convincing them to punish transgressors. He might be feckless, incompetent, or simply unpopular with his coalition. For simplicity, assume that the figurehead president F can be one of two types: either “Capable” (F_C with probability p) or “Weak” (F_W with probability $1 - p$). A “Capable” type can use bribes and threats to convince warlords to turn on one another and punish extortionists. A “Weak” type cannot. F_W will always capitulate a warlord’s extortionist threats and transfer the warlord $\frac{v^*}{k}$. F_C , by contrast, can convince warlords to punish one another for transgressions. A warlord i who plays “Extort” while s or more warlords play “Accept” suffers a punishment $-x$. Payoffs are realized for each warlord and the game ends.

To summarize:

- Each of n warlords chooses simultaneously whether to battle for total dominance of a state (“Fight”), or to support the candidacy of a civilian president (“Install”). The total lootable resources contained in the country are defined as v . If the total number of warlords supporting a president is less than a commonly known stability threshold s , the outcome is war. In war, each warlord who played “Fight” receives payoffs of $\frac{v}{n} - c$, and each who played “Install” receives $\frac{v}{n} - c - w$.
- Define the number of warlords who play “Install” as k . If $k \geq s$, a president is installed. Warlords who played “Fight,” receive $\frac{v}{n} - c$. The game ends for these warlords.
- Nature chooses the president’s type. The president will be “Capable” with probability p and “Weak” with probability $1 - p$. The state wealth v increases to v^* .
- The remaining k warlords either allow the president to distribute v^* according to his own prerogative (“Accept”) or extort him with the threat of a palace coup (“Extort”). If fewer than s warlords choose “Accept” then all k warlords receive $\frac{v^*}{k}$. The game ends for all players.

- If s or more warlords “Accept” the president’s transfer, then the president is permitted to appropriate R for himself ($0 < R \leq v^*$) and split the remains among the warlords. In this case, all warlords who played “Accept” receive $\frac{v^*-R}{k}$. With the president in power, payoffs for warlord i who plays “Extort” depend on the president’s type: If the president is Weak, i receives $\frac{v^*}{k}$; if the president is Capable, i suffers a penalty $-x$. The game ends for all players.

The strategy space for warlords is defined as follows: Each warlord i can either Fight, Join the Coalition and Extort, or Join the Coalition and Accept. Payoffs are determined based on joint strategies, so define P_F (the percentage of warlords playing “Fight”), P_{IE} (the percentage of warlords playing “Install, Extort”) and P_{IA} (the percentage of warlords playing “Install, Accept”). These choices are exhaustive, so $P_F + P_{IE} + P_{IA} = 1$, and $n(P_{IA} + P_{IE}) = k$. Payoffs for the various strategies can be defined by the following functions:

$$[1] P_F = \frac{v}{n} - c.$$

$$[2] P_{IA} = \frac{v}{n} - c - w \text{ if } k < s; \frac{v^*-R}{k} \text{ if } n(P_{IA}) \geq s; \frac{v^*}{k} \text{ if } n(P_{IA}) < s.$$

$$[3] P_{IE} = \frac{v}{n} - c - w \text{ if } k < s; \frac{v^*}{k} \text{ if } F_W \text{ or if } n(P_{IA}) < s; -x \text{ if } F_C \text{ and } n(P_{IA}) \geq s.$$

The appropriate solution concept for this game is a Subgame Perfect Nash Equilibrium, where no player is able to promise or threaten actions that he would not take if presented with the option. Analysis is restricted to symmetric equilibria where no warlord plays a weakly dominated strategy on or off the equilibrium path.

PROPOSITION ONE: This game has a subgame perfect Nash equilibrium in which all warlords choose to fight to eliminate each other. Call this the *state failure* equilibrium.

This is the situation that characterized Tajikistan in the immediate aftermath of statehood, and one that should be familiar to students of Lebanese, Congolese, Somali, or Afghan history. Each warlord fights hoping to seize the statehouse. (*See Proof 1 in Appendix*). This is an inefficient equilibrium for two reasons. First, war is costly. Fighting destroys productive assets, leaving v smaller for whatever warlord succeeds in the military contest. Second, fighting in the first stage foregoes the wealth associated with international recognition. The model’s assumption that $v < v^*$ is based on the intuition that any figurehead president

can attract more foreign aid and investment capital by demonstrating that his coalition has the capability to restore basic order in the capital and secure the state borders. Nevertheless, if all warlords are planning to wage war and attempt to install themselves in the statehouse, an individual warlord i can only make himself worse by not taking part in the scramble. As in Rousseau’s stag hunt, hypothetical gains from cooperation cannot easily overcome structural incentives for defection when trust is low and stakes are high.

PROPOSITION TWO: For some parameter values, the game contains an additional equilibrium that results in the installation of a figurehead president F . If all warlords install a president, call this a *full incorporation* equilibrium. If only some warlords install a president while others fight, call this a *partial incorporation* equilibrium.

In these equilibria, warlords have been co-opted into a symbiotic relationship with civilian authority. The warlords provide the muscle necessary to achieve minimum order and foreign investment. This arrangement holds because warlords expect to extort a share of this new wealth from the president proportional to their military strength. (*See Proof 2 in Appendix*).

In a *full incorporation* equilibrium, all of the warlords are bought off with jobs in the regime or autonomous rural fiefdoms. The figurehead president manages a patronage network that allows warlords to reinvent themselves as state agents in the army, ministry of interior, tax police, or local government. Equilibria exist where all of the warlords are induced to join and “bought off” in the second stage.¹² While the threat of a palace coup hangs over the distribution of spoils, this threat can take the place of actual fighting, just as expensive electoral campaigns take the place of open partisan warfare in institutionalized democracies.¹³

Intermediate *partial incorporation* equilibrium solutions are also possible. These solutions are analytically interesting for students of civil war termination. Under various parameter combinations, some $k \geq s$ warlords install a president hoping to loot the state from behind the scenes. For k warlords, expected returns to joining the coalition are greater than what is possible fighting in the first stage. For the remaining $n - k$ warlords, this is not true. The logic of this interior equilibria is based on two factors. First, analogous to coalition politics in institutionalized settings, warlords expect the president to form the cheapest possible winning coalition. The president only needs some of them to stay in power (s of them, to be precise), and he may be crafty and competent. There are diminishing returns to membership for every warlord that joins past the

¹² One scenario for this sort of outcome is the ascension of a celebrity figurehead president with a reputation for fair dealing (low R) and is capable of appealing directly to elite international donors (high v^*). Nelson Mandela and Eduard Shevardnadze provide historical antecedents for peacemakers in this mold.

¹³ See Fearon (2006).

minimum necessary for international recognition. Second, since warlords always have the option of falling back on their “war economy” payoff in this stylized representation, only positive inducements can bring a recalcitrant warlord into the state. These two aspects of warlords’ utility functions combine to form a relatively familiar commitment problem: The president cannot credibly commit to offer all warlords more than they can receive in war. These equilibria would be observed as persistent low-intensity conflict between a coalition of criminal gangsters that control the capital city and rural gangsters that reject the regime’s authority. “Insurgent” warlords may want to trust the puppet president, but calculate that there is simply more to be gained at the fringes of state control. Stalled peace processes in weak states might be productively analyzed in this equilibrium framework.

Taken sequentially, these three classes of equilibria provide an informal account of how failed states rehabilitate themselves after extended periods of violent domestic anarchy. All warlords recognize that a *state failure* equilibrium is inefficient and to be avoided if possible. Some warlords initially collude to provide order, gain access to international wealth, and gain monopoly rents from the state apparatus that falls under their control. A local “puppet president” is selected as a placeholder for opaque coalition politics. Complicated bargaining follows and back-room deals are struck. As foreign aid and investment increases and the president acquires a reputation for fair dealing, parameter shifts gradually facilitate a switch from a *partial incorporation* equilibrium toward a *full incorporation* equilibrium. Peace and order are supported, in this account, by warlords’ ability to extort presidents directly and the international community indirectly. Warlords transmogrify into violence sub-contractors for the regime, fully realizing that this may ultimately leave them vulnerable to divide-and-rule tactics by the president and his cronies. Incrementally stripping bargaining power away from the men with guns is assumed to be a local process, with the threat of a coup looming over the distribution of postwar spoils.

PROPOSITION THREE: Conditional on having achieved a *partial incorporation* equilibrium, the likelihood of a *full incorporation* equilibrium should increase with v^* and c and decrease with p and R .

For all of these parameters, the logic of the model’s predictions is straightforward and intuitive. A higher ratio of v^* to v means more wealth for the warlords to steal. High costs of war c imply low “war economy” payoffs. The risks associated with installing a president are defined by the joint probability of installing a competent (p) and greedy (R) president. Figure 1a-1c are graphical representations of how supportable equilibria vary with model parameters. (See *Proof 3 in Appendix*).

[Insert "Figure 1a-1c" About Here]

These comparative statics make relatively clear predictions about the costs and benefits of warlord incorporation into the state. Figure 1b, which displays the payoffs in a *partial incorporation* equilibrium, demonstrates that the payoffs to warlords who remain outside the state are identical to those inside the state. Since warlords are symmetric in power by assumption and indifferent between strategies in equilibrium, the model suggests that it is very difficult for foreign analysts to predict which warlords will accept the figurehead president and which will continue to oppose the state's consolidation project. Because the president can tailor rewards and threats to field commanders individually, the model implies that in a *partial incorporation* equilibrium no measurable characteristics of a warlord should predict loyalty or defection. Homogenous warlords may, in equilibrium, rationally choose heterogenous strategies.

A theoretical approach that treats military actors within a failed state as essentially interchangeable – ignoring the various messy particulars of ethnic politics, individual warlord ideology, and the local/temporal particulars of the domestic balance of power – is sure to be a messy fit with reality. Whether it is a worse fit than rival two-player models is unclear. The comparative statics presented above suggest a relatively blunt set of financial, diplomatic, and military tools that the international community can use to shape the parameters of war termination. These tools, and their inherent limitations, are clearly familiar to contemporary practitioners of counterinsurgency.¹⁴ By assumption, foreign governments are not able to monitor the particulars of individual side-payments that bring warlords into the state, nor punish a regime that later reneges on promises. Still, foreign governments' efforts to shape individual warlord incentives, and thus alter joint strategies, can be guided by the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: As foreign aid and investment increase, more warlords should opt for incorporation into the president's coalition.

Hypothesis 2: As the costs of war and banditry increase, more warlords should opt for incorporation into the president's coalition.

Even the more ephemeral parameters relating to "presidential reputation for competence and avarice" (p and R) or "optimal coalition size" (k) can be framed in the following manner:

Hypothesis 3: An installed president must establish a reputation for honesty and grant warlords

¹⁴ See Filkins and Gall (2010).

lucrative jobs as members of the ruling coalition to convince warlords to join the president's coalition.

Hypothesis 4: The more warlords join the president's coalition, the less dependent the president is on any single warlord's support. The larger the coalition, therefore, the lower the payments for each warlord.

Rigorously testing these hypotheses is a task left for future research. It is important to emphasize that the comparative statics in *Proposition Three* are not unqualified: Strategies are determined jointly, and the model explicitly admits the possibility of a violent *state failure* equilibrium regardless of model parameters. This has troubling policy implications for outsiders attempting to shape incentives in a failed state. To the extent that social order after civil war emerges out of collusion by predatory violence entrepreneurs, however, conflict resolution professionals can benefit from revisiting familiar anecdotes of postwar settlement through the theoretical lens this model provides. The fit between the model and the empirical record will be considered in light of an analytic narrative of Tajikistan, the theory-generating case, and a statistical analysis of warlord tenure in the Tajik state.

4 Tajikistan: Dividing The Rents Of Sovereignty

In the spring of 1992, after months of escalating tensions and street confrontations between urban mobs, Tajikistan exploded into civil war. The master cleavage of the civil war was between the traditional support base of the old Communist regime and a coalition of new political actors loosely organized under the banner of Islam. Both sides attempted to exclude the other from the state. Local strongmen quickly mobilized large numbers of young men by activating collective farm (*kolkhoz*) and extended family (*avlod*) obligation networks, cannibalizing Soviet military garrisons for weapons. These “field commanders” quickly became the primary actors in the civil war.¹⁵ Two loose coalitions formed, with factional alliance splintering down roughly regional lines. Khojand, Hissor, and Kulyob backed the old guard, the highlands of Gharm and Gorno-Badakshan supported the opposition, and the cotton-rich agricultural lowlands of Khatlon split.

The Popular Front of Tajikistan (PFT) – a coalition of militias dominated by field commanders from the southern agricultural region of Kulyob and Hissor – won a convincing military victory. The militias of the Popular Front seized the capital city of Dushanbe in December of 1992, and established control over

¹⁵ See Roy (2000) 14, 92-100, Rubin (1998) 147-52 and Akiner (2001) 26-7, 65. On the outbreak of war more generally, see Dudoignon (1998), Rubin (1998), Roy (2000), Lynch (2000), Whitlock (2005), Collins (2006).

critical southern towns by ruthlessly liquidating the civilian population bases of their enemies. Emomalii Rakhmonov, a relatively unknown Kulyobi farm director, was installed as the head of state. Although his ascent represented a relatively clean break from the traditional Khojandi party clan networks that had linked Moscow to Dushanbe – “a shift from ‘those who held the factories and party personnel committes’ to ‘those who held the guns’” – his regime received international recognition almost immediately.¹⁶ Opposition forces regrouped in Northern Afghanistan and launched an insurgency based in the mountainous eastern region of Badakhshon. Politically reborn as the “United Tajik Opposition” (UTO), these field commanders continued to resist Rakhmonov’s consolidation project for the next five years.

Consistent with the model’s assumption, Rakhmonov’s first priority was securing international recognition. He set out to cement ties between his regime and elites in both Moscow and Tashkent. He immediately committed Tajikistan to the CIS Collective Security Treaty and chose Alexander Shishlyannikov – an ethnic Russian with institutional ties to the Uzbek military – as his first Minister of Defense. In June 1993, at the behest of Tashkent, the Supreme Court of Tajikistan formally banned opposition parties and brought criminal charges against their leaders. Uzbekistan’s demonstration that it could export its uncompromising stance Islamic radicalism led some observers to suggest that Tajikistan was evolving as an Uzbek protectorate.¹⁷ Boris Yeltsin’s statement that the Tajik-Afghan border is “in effect, Russia’s” was reified and formalized with the 1993 Russian-Tajik Agreement on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance. Still, uncertainty over the amount of foreign support that Rakhmonov’s coalition could expect from abroad, and whether the aid would flow directly from Russia or be filtered through Uzbekistan, meant that the minimum threshold of domestic warlords necessary to achieve stability (s) was unclear in the early 1990s.

This uncertainty did not last long. As natural frictions between Uzbekistan and Russia began to emerge, Rakhmonov seized the opportunity to ally his small nation strongly with Russia and purge factions from the Communist old-guard that were historical clients of Uzbekistan – the Khojandis and Hissoris in particular. After Rakhmonov defeated his Khojandi opponent Abdumalid Abdullajanov in a flagrantly rigged election, Moscow signaled its support for the narrowing of the governing coalition by immediately sending 15 billion rubles to the Dushanbe regime, enabling the Rahmonov government to pay government salaries for the first time since independence.¹⁸ The marginalization of their traditional allies outraged the government of Uzbekistan, but the fact that their outrage did not lead to Rakhmonov’s ouster was a powerful signal to local warlords. His coalition had withstood a critical challenge, and v^* had been delivered. In the following three

¹⁶ Rubin (1998), 129.

¹⁷ Olcott (1997), 123-138.

¹⁸ Afterwards, the Russian government hailed Tajikistan’s presidential election as proof of Tajikistan’s “progress towards democracy.” Atkin (1997) 303.

years virtually all Hissori and Uzbek warlords were dismissed. It was not difficult for Rakhmonov to convince the dominant Kulyobi faction that field commanders from Hissor were a threat to their interests – either a potential fifth column for Uzbek influence in the consolidating state, or as likely allies for a power-grab by the embittered Khojandis (who still enjoyed close ties with both Moscow and Tashkent). Uzbekistan responded by giving safe haven and military support to warlords who would challenge Rakhmonov’s coalition. In the language of the model, one could say that this friction between Russia and Uzbekistan modulated the stability threshold s and lowered the cost of war c for recalcitrant warlords.

Once Rakhmonov could boast powerful patrons in Moscow, affiliation with the regime was seen as vital to accessing post-Soviet transit networks (v^*). This opened numerous opportunities for entrepreneurial field commanders. Though the precise details of the deals that brought individual warlords to the negotiating table remain opaque, field commanders were extremely savvy in demanding banking rights for cotton futures, narcotics transportation arrangements, and semi-official writs of bazaar protection.¹⁹ Privatization of state assets and the rise of the Afghan heroin trade reinforced the ruling coalition’s position. It gradually became obvious that many warlords had quietly resigned themselves to the idea of Rakhmonov’s hierarchy, and that property rights for all variety of local stakeholders would need to be renegotiated if there was a coup or regime change. Alternatives to Rakhmonov became increasingly unthinkable. Between 1996 and 1997, previously uncommitted warlords repositioned their loyalties. A cascade of collusion and collaboration ensued.²⁰ A general peace agreement was signed in Moscow in 1997, giving *de jure* recognition to a variety of *de facto* ceasefires and informal understandings that Rakhmonov’s administration had been negotiating for years. Most UTO field commanders were incorporated into state bureaucracies without even a token effort to disarm their militias.

The comparative statics identified in *Proposition Three* can predict the timing of the Peace Process reasonably well. The amount of international wealth and investment (v^*) in the state increased dramatically after 1995. By this point all the warlords understood the huge financial gains that accrued to individuals positioned to take advantage of the dislocations caused by partial privatization, manipulation of the cotton mono-cropping price structure, and the burgeoning Afghan heroin trade.²¹ Foreign assistance to the Tajik

¹⁹ The most coveted positions were in subsections of the Ministry of the Interior and the Border Guards, since these could be immediately converted into tax farming and smuggling rents. See Akhmedov (1998); Rubin (1998); Pirseyedi (2000); ICG (2004); Nourzhanov (2005), Torjesen and MacFarlane (2009).

²⁰ From the summer of 1996 forward, there were special shuttle diplomacy meetings between representatives of the Rakhmonov government and individual UTO warlords, as dozens of opposition field commanders attempted to strike separate deals with government negotiators or Russian military forces, allowing them to deliver votes and keep order in exchange for some share of the emerging state spoils. These individual bargains were replaced with large working groups in the immediate run-up to the comprehensive peace process, with meetings conducted in Khojand and Kulob. Interview conducted with Mahmud Abdollo-Jailev, 6/18/07.

²¹ See Nourzhanov (2005), p. 124, Akiner (2001), p. 72-4, Van Atta (2008).

government grew as a percentage of the state budget almost every year until 2004, when it accounted for a staggering 37% of the state budget.²² The costs of war (*c*) increased during this time, as well. Intense Russian pressure on recalcitrant Tajik warlords was a strategic response to the Taliban’s consolidation of power in Afghanistan. Russia convinced non-Pashtun Afghan warlords, especially Shah Massoud, to stop sheltering United Tajik Opposition warlords, forcing them from their sheltered cross-border camps to the lower river valleys of Tajikistan, vulnerable to artillery fire.²³ With peaceful incorporation more attractive and war more costly – more carrots and more sticks – the cascade of incorporation into the Tajik state progressed as the model would predict.

Consistent with the model, warlords were “bought out” at a price that approximates what they could secure for themselves by private banditry.²⁴ Deals were struck to allow warlords to keep their drug routes in the mountainous periphery of the state, assume vague policing functions in rural fiefdoms, or to keep their men under arms while managing lucrative state ministries.²⁵ More significantly, the peace process represented a one-time opportunity for warlords to legalize the holdings they had acquired over the course of the civil war. Many field commanders used their amnesty to transition to the emerging class of “businessmen,” having re-appropriated Soviet state property (apartments, land, factories, bazaars, and even shopping centers) at gunpoint during the war. Positions in the regime could be immediately converted into graft and patronage. Hoji Akbar Turajonzoda, a religious figure who rotated between the military and political wing of the UTO, used his post of Vice Prime Minister to acquire “a cotton-processing plant in Vakhdat (Khatlon), the main shopping center in Vakhdat (the “Univermag”), and two flats in downtown Dushanbe,” as well as monopoly contracts importing wheat from Kazakhstan.²⁶

Though two distinct United Nations missions (UNMOT and UNTOP) implemented a variety of confidence-building tasks through the 1990s, it is difficult to identify concrete mechanisms that connect their modal activities to peace or stability. It is widely acknowledged that key security guarantees of the peace accord were either not implemented or flagrantly reneged upon.²⁷ Despite the *de jure* betrayal of the “losers” by

²² Data available in World Bank Development Indicators, cited in Barnett (March 16, 2008), footnote 32.

²³ For a more thorough discussion of the passive and permissive role of the Russian military in the Tajik civil war, see Akiner (2001); Gretskey (1995); Orr (1998); Rubin (1994, 1998); Zviagelskaya (1998).

²⁴ Recall that in the *partial incorporation* equilibrium warlords are bought out at their “war economy” payoff. The president tailors the rewards and punishments to each warlord individually, so unobserved heterogeneity in the warlord population should be already be priced into the unobserved regime payment that brings warlords into the coalition.

²⁵ It is difficult to make inferences about an individual’s income flow from his formal place in the Tajik state hierarchy. Pedestrian offices in obscure bureaucratic agencies often had operational jurisdiction over lucrative consumer bottlenecks; while lofty titles could conceal purely ceremonial functions. Many warlords created their own authority. Burihon Djobirov seated himself as the President of the Tajik Institute of Physical Culture and Sports and the President of the National Olympic Committee – both institutional positions that allowed him to keep former combatants, weightlifters and wrestlers on his personal payroll to manage a racketeering and protection business on the side.

²⁶ See Torjesen and MacFarlane (2007), 320.

²⁷ For insider accounts of the politics of the peace process implementation, see Nakaya (2009) and Heathershaw (2008).

the “winners,” it is no great mystery why war did not resume. The central mechanism that kept the Tajik civil war settled, as everyone knows, was bribery: Uniforms, salaries, amnesty, and respected government positions lured warlords into the internationally recognized state. In the words of a long-time United Nations observer: “The UTO forces that you would need on your side [to disrupt the Peace Process] . . . were much happier with their state roles than the would have been returning to the mountains.”²⁸

Many former combatants entertain conspiracy theories that the settlement of their war was the result of clandestine Russian manipulation behind-the-scenes. As is often the case when “power” is the independent variable and mechanisms are left opaque, these are difficult theories to falsify. This paper’s model allows scholars to remain agnostic about Russian policy intentions, and focus on what their policies actually incentivized: The formation of a coalition that could guarantee a minimum threshold of stability and order. Many share Shirin Akiner’s blunt appraisal that “had the Russians wished, they could have decisively altered the course of the war at any time.”²⁹ Reasonable people disagree on the question of how to interpret their carefully calculated inaction during the 1991-1994 period. One former lieutenant field commander, asked to explain the neutrality of Russia’s 201st Motorized Rifle Division during the war, opined: “They wanted us to kill each other, so that we would all see which of us was the strongest ally. Then they step in and smile and talk about peace.”³⁰ Sergei, a Russian military commander who was part of the CIS Border Defense unit, articulated an alternative theory:

“After Afghanistan nobody in Moscow had time for another complicated war. [The Tajiks] are so friendly and passive, so I think most people were surprised at how quickly things fell apart here. And once everyone had guns, how could you tell who was who? We got a briefing from a KGB officer in Bishkek before we came down here – he told us that we shouldn’t even bother trying to figure this place, with its inbred family politics . . . It was really a no-win for Russia – if we left, things would have gotten very bad, and we would have just had to come back . . . The Tajik government – if you know them, you know they are peasants and thieves. But what could [Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny] Primakov do? He said ‘Let them have their broken little state, with their cotton and their stupid hats.’ After all, war makes its winners . . . We care only for the border.”³¹

4.1 Multivariate Statistical Analysis: Warlord Biographies & Regime Purges

The post-incorporation experiences of various field commanders diverged dramatically. A few are still officially affiliated with the regime to this day. Many more were purged, jailed, or killed. The model, which treats field commanders as symmetric and indistinguishable, makes no attempt to explain this variation in

²⁸ Interview with Waldemar Rokoszewski, 8/15/05.

²⁹ Akiner (2001), 46.

³⁰ Interview conducted in Dushanbe, 8/9/07.

³¹ Interview conducted in Kalikhum, 4/16/07.

side payoffs or tenure in the ruling coalition.³² Indeed, if it were possible to compare post-incorporation political fortunes, the model’s prediction would be that conditional on joining the state, all warlords should be on equal footing when it comes to keeping their position and avoiding a coup. This seems a poor fit with the narrative data presented thusfar. Ethnic minority warlords were easily marginalized, and strong warlords seem to have done better than weak warlords. Statistical rigor is the antidote to anecdote, however. A dataset of Tajik warlord biographies allows for a transparent evaluation of the model’s most controversial starting assumption.

Using Russian- and Tajik- language newspaper archives and embassy reports, a team of Tajik researchers employed by the Small Arms Survey compiled a list of the most prominent “field commanders” (Torjensen (2005)). Their report identifies 70 field commanders and provides brief biographical data for prominent warlords. With the aid of two research teams based in Bishkek and Dushanbe, I revisited the Small Arms Survey’s secondary source materials with the aim of identifying additional characteristics of each field commander’s private army. Additional interviews with a number of former combatants, area specialists and journalists resolved a number of inconsistencies in the application of coding categories in the SAS data. An additional 27 field commanders were identified, for a total of 97 observations.³³ The unit of analysis is the individual field commander. The period of observation is 1992-2006.

The dependent variable used in this analysis is the number of *years* that a warlord was permitted to take part in the bonanza of postwar state corruption before he was dismissed or disappeared. The independent variables in the dataset are either were individual characteristics of warlords or characteristics of their army. A binary *UTO* variable was created to capture the master cleavage of the civil war, coded “1” if a warlord joined the state as part of the 1997 UTO amnesty agreement. Since militias were fought with similar weapons technology and deployed light infantry tactics, an estimate of *Troop Strength*, the total number of soldiers under a warlord’s command at the time of integration, was triangulated through a variety of sources. As an additional indicator of relative warlord power, a binary variable was constructed to identify commanders that had careers in the Soviet army, the MVD (police), or KGB (security service). The *Soviet Security* variable was intended to serve as a proxy for leadership and tactical training beyond the standard single tour of conscripted service.

Between 1992 and 1997, 58 of these 97 Tajik warlords accepted positions in the new bureaucracy, subordinating their armies to Emomalii Rakhmonov’s political hierarchy.³⁴ 34 of these warlords represented the

³² If warlords could predict ex-ante which characteristics maximized their odds of successful coalition survival, it is assumed that they would have adapted these characteristics.

³³ For a discussion of coding rules and criteria, see Driscoll (2009), Chapter 5 and Appendix 3.

³⁴ Shuttle diplomacy and secret negotiations between representatives of Rakhmonov’s regime and individual field comman-

core of the Popular Front coalition that seized the capital city in December 1992. The next major wave of warlord integration came with the 1997 Peace Accords, which guaranteed 30% of the positions in the “Power Ministries” (State Security, Defense, and Interior) to members of the United Tajik Opposition. An additional 24 field commanders integrated into the state apparatus piecemeal.

Deep regional cleavages, exacerbated by the violence of the war, are often used to explain political outcomes in Tajikistan. As the Soviet Republic with the highest percentage of its citizens living in rural poverty, Tajikistan’s clan structure was relatively static and geographically fixed. Table 1 demonstrates that a warlord’s home region was a good predictor of which side they fought on in the civil war. The bulk of Popular Front fighters were from either Kulyob/Khatlon or the region surrounding Hissor for the Popular Front; the opposition was based in the Pamiri mountain range or the Gharm highlands. The final column of Table 1 also demonstrates that warlords from different regions had different average periods of tenure in the state before being purged. Of the 58 warlords that joined the state through the 1992-1997 period, by December 2006 only 16 remained. As Figure 2 indicates, warlords were pushed out of their jobs at a rate of about 3 per year. For most warlords, the offer that was used to lure them into co-optive relationships with the state were void within a decade.

[Insert Figure 2 and Table 1 About Here]

Despite the relatively small sample size and well-known inference problems associated with omitted variable bias, survival analysis can be used to check if these regional patterns are spurious. Multivariate Weibull analysis displays transparently which individuals were more or less likely to “survive” successive rounds of coalition formation.³⁵ Table 2 reveals a few trends of note.

[Insert “Table 2” About Here]

First, it is clear that ethnic minority warlords face different constraints than warlords from the national group in when navigating the contours of coalition politics. As discussed in the narrative, Hissori warlords

ders had been taking place through the spring and summer of 1996. Rather than code warlords entry into the dataset by these informal arrangements, the 1997 Peace Process is used as the date of formal incorporation for all UTO warlords. When a warlord did not join the state it usually meant that he was killed in the course of civil war violence, though a small-number of non-joiners fled to Afghanistan, disappeared into the criminal underworld, or simply refused to disarm or compromise. Even after 1997, many warlords continued to control territory in which neither the government nor United Nations observers could enter without the permission and escort of these warlords. The most prominent of these locations were Darband (controlled by Mullo Abdullo), Tavildara (home of the Minister of Emergency Situations Mirzo Ziroyev), and even the Leninsky District, about 20 kilometers from downtown Dushanbe (controlled by Rakhmon “Hitler” Sanginov).

³⁵ The reported coefficients are expressed as the multiple by which a field commander’s expected time in the state will change when the factor is present.

were easy targets for persecution and purges once geopolitical friction between Russia and Uzbekistan raised the stability threshold for Tajik state consolidation. They exit the ruling coalition about three times as fast as the average warlord. Pamiri warlords, with the option of retreating into semi-retired employment in the impenetrable mountains of Badakshon, emerged as preferred coalition partners. They last about 50% longer than average. Though it is unlikely that these trends could have been predicted ex-ante with either existing models of civil war settlement or expert area knowledge, these trends are exceptions to the model's theoretical priors of interchangeability.

Second, commanders who had careers in the Soviet security services were unusually successful survivors, lasting about twice as long as average. As of 2006, five of these eleven warlords still held official state positions and only two had been killed – putting their survival rate far above average. The informal professional networks of former-Soviet security officials gave these men advantages identifying lucrative, yet unthreatening, niches in the Tajik shadow state.

Third, these data reveal that most warlords were – statistically speaking – equally likely to be purged in a given year. This is consistent with the theory that they were indistinguishable coalition members from the president's perspective. Winners of the civil war were no more likely to survive successive rounds of coalition reshuffling than losers. Whether one considers the civil war as being fundamentally a matter of ideology (“UTO Islamists vs. PFT Rump Communists”) or regional politics (“Kulyob, Hissor, and Khojand vs. Gharm and Badakshon”), the master cleavage of the war provided no predictive power in terms of which warlords were most likely to endure as coalition members. The president turned on warlords from his home region at a rate that is virtually indistinguishable from the average.³⁶

Fourth and finally, warlord military power, measured by number of troops at the time of incorporation, had no statistically significant impact on warlord tenure in the state. This is a humanizing reminder that while analysts unconsciously conflate warlords and their private armies, ultimately these data record the characteristics of 97 human beings. Many “left the state” due to what amount to random acts of violence. “Baba” Sangak Safarov, the most powerful and popular field commander in the Popular Front, lost his life unexpectedly in a shootout with Fayzullah Saidov's bodyguards.³⁷ Civil war is costly and unpredictable, especially for the warlords themselves.

Taken cumulatively, these results paint a straightforward explanation for how an oligopoly of violence emerged in Tajikistan. Warlords willing to pledge Rakhmonov personal loyalty and commit their troops

³⁶ I am grateful to Klaus Rasmussen for noting that this is an important reminder that the “Kulyobization” of the state represents a victory for civilian apparatchiks at the expense of war criminals.

³⁷ See (Roy (2000), 49), Nourzhanov (2005), 118).

to supporting the Tajik government were integrated into the state. There could be no long-term political guarantees, since the warlords themselves were the enforcing agents for contracts struck inside the borders of the state. Field commanders observed Rakhmonov as he carefully and methodically applied divide and rule logic to this coalition, occasionally inducing warlords to turn on each other in exchange for a larger share of state spoils. This risk was weighed against alternatives, which changed substantially over the 15 year consolidation period. In general, warlords were offered the same kind of deal regardless of their characteristics: They were given amnesty, permitted to make large sums of money for a few years, and were then squeezed out of the governing coalition. The relative winners in the shell game were the Pamiris of Gorno-Badakshan and ex-KGB types. The relative losers were the Hissoris who could not shed their association with Uzbekistan. Although these seem like overdetermined outcomes ex-post, is doubtful whether anyone – especially the warlords themselves – could have predicted these trends ex-ante.

5 Conclusion

In the closing phases of the Tajik civil war, rebel fragmentation was a critical component of peace-building. The war itself consisted of a decentralized set of battles among militias and remnants of state authority. Amidst the chaos, several militias, calling themselves the Popular Front, colluded together and invited in a civilian leader. A set of bargains were struck whereby the warlords provided protection to this civilian government in return for a promise of control over security ministries, allowing them to loot the state from within. As it became clearer that warlords outside of this initial coalition – who had organized and re-named themselves the United Tajik Opposition – could not shoot their way into power, the civilian regime moved quietly to selectively incorporate militia leaders into the state apparatus. This gave the president and his apparatchik cronies a counterweight to the Popular Front warlords that originally backed his rise to power. The competition that followed between old warlords and the fragmented remnants of the rebel opposition was a complex, brutal, and highly contingent process.

This paper’s theoretical contribution is a stylized mathematical model to illuminate the contours of the bargaining that took place during this chaotic period. This model generates transparent ex-ante expectations of how different kinds of changes in the the foreign and domestic bargaining environment should shape the state consolidation. The model is meant to be generalizable to other cases of state failure and recovery. The paper’s empirical contribution is the presentation of a comprehensive dataset on warlord integration into the Tajik state. The most surprising pattern in the data is that the winners and losers in the state consolidation

process were not necessarily the winners or losers of the civil war. This is a pattern that is consistent with the model presented here, but inconsistent with the central predictions of other prominent models of civil war resolution.

An approach that views “the state” from the bottom-up, as an emergent equilibrium of joint warlord strategies, illuminates different aspects of war termination than top-down approaches that adopt the point of view of the intervener. The gulf between these approaches is analogous to the difference between treating a failed state as a patient on an operating table and treating a failed state as an ecosystem. This approach has a number of observable implications that differ from the observable implications of traditional two-player bargaining models. Instead of treating the armed strength of a rebel challenger as an exogenous model parameter, this approach seeks to explain variation in the relative size and strength of the incumbent and insurgent coalitions. The central strategic choice in the game is whether a warlord will choose to contribute his armed forces to the emerging warlord coalition (the state) or remain outside this coalition (as a rebel). The model parameters suggest that foreign governments can use their financial, diplomatic, and military tools to shape civil war settlements, and much richer palette of policy options and outcomes than simply promising to punish incumbents if they renege on promises to insurgents.

Empirical findings in this paper are preliminary, and should be interpreted as an invitation to more research on the global variation in the kinds of post-war coalitions that form and endure. This is a research agenda that has been neglected, despite it’s obvious importance to the ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. Although variation in regime incorporation strategies could be quite easily studied using public sources and archival data, this author is aware of no systematic effort to code characteristics of rebel integration into state armed forces across space and time. This is a striking omission from the conflict resolution research agenda. The model presented in this paper might anchor future endeavors in a common theoretical frame.

6 Appendix

6.0.1 PROOF FOR PROPOSITION 1:

The complete strategy profile that supports a “state failure” equilibrium is as follows: Every warlord i chooses “Fight” in the first stage of the game. No president is installed, so there is no need to consider distributive strategies off-the-path. To see why the equilibrium holds, one has only to consider a defection by a single warlord in the first stage. If every warlord i knows that all others will “Fight,” then opting to “Install” for a payoff of $\frac{v}{n} - c - w$ is strictly dominated by opting to “Fight” for a payoff of $\frac{v}{n} - c$.

6.0.2 PROOF FOR PROPOSITION 2:

We will solve through backwards induction, first examining strategies in the final subgame.

Lemma 1 – If the president is a “Weak” type ($p = 0$), the only Nash Subgame Perfect Equilibrium involving symmetric strategies is one in which every warlord i plays “Install, Extort.”

The complete strategy profile that supports this equilibrium is as follows: Every warlord i chooses “Install” in the first stage of the game, then “Extort” in the second stage. Off the equilibrium path: If $P_F > \frac{n-s}{n}$ then play “Fight” (See Proof for Proposition 1, above); play “Install, Extort” otherwise. On the path, each warlord receives $\frac{v^*}{n}$. Consider the option of defection by a single warlord i . Choosing “Fight” in the first stage can guarantee a warlord $\frac{v}{n} - c$, but since $v^* > v$ and $c > 0$, fighting is strictly dominated by installing and extorting a figurehead president. Since none of the other warlords are playing “Accept” in the second stage, a unilateral change in strategy does not alter the “palace coup” payoff of $\frac{v^*}{n}$. Even in the off-the-path situation where all of the warlords played “Accept,” P_W cannot threaten $-x$, which means changing strategies is weakly dominated.

Lemma 2 – If the president is a “Capable” type ($p = 1$), the only Nash Subgame Perfect Equilibrium involving symmetric strategies is one in which every warlord i plays “Install, Accept.”

The complete strategy profile that supports this equilibrium is as follows: Every warlord i chooses “Install” in the first stage of the game, then “Accept” in the second stage. Off the equilibrium path: if $P_F > \frac{n-s}{n}$ then play Fight; if $P_{IA} = \frac{s-1}{n}$ play Install, Extort; and play “Install, Accept” otherwise. On the path, each warlord receives $\frac{v^*-R}{n}$. Consider the defection of a single warlord in either the first or second stage. Choosing “Fight” can guarantee a warlord $\frac{v}{n} - c$, which may compare favorably to $\frac{v^*-R}{n}$ if R is very high. Assuming $\frac{v^*-R}{n} > \frac{v}{n} - c$, however, unilaterally changing strategies in the first stage is self-defeating. In the second subgame, with none of the other warlords playing “Extort” in the second stage, a unilateral change in strategy will yield a presidential retaliation of $-x$. Off the equilibrium path, a warlord should not play “Install” if s will not be passed (as above), but an exception is the particular off-the-path case where $P_{IA} = \frac{s-1}{n}$. In this scenario warlord i is the pivotal player, and should opt for his “Extortion” payoff $\frac{v^*}{k}$ over his lower “Acceptance” payoff.

Lemma 3 – For warlord i the expected utility of installing a president in the first round is $\frac{v^*-pR}{k}$.

By *Lemma 1* and *Lemma 2*, warlords can predict all other k warlords will either play Accept (if the president is revealed to be Competent) or Extort (if the president is revealed to be *Weak*). Conditional on being in the second subgame these two possibilities are exhaustive. Knowing this, the expected utility of installing a president is $p(\frac{v^*-R}{k}) + (1-p)(\frac{v^*}{k})$, or $\frac{v^*-pR}{k}$.

If $\frac{v}{n} - c < \frac{v^* - pR}{n}$, every warlord could improve their utility by playing “Install, Coup” if the president is Weak and “Install, Accept” if the president is Competent. Strategies that support this outcome are *full incorporation* equilibria. Since spoils for any single warlord i are diminished as more warlords play IA or IE , it is also possible that $\frac{v^* - pR}{n} < \frac{v}{n} - c < \frac{v^* - pR}{s}$. In this case an interior *partial incorporation* equilibrium exists. Formally, $n - k$ warlords “Fight” while each of k warlords plays “Install, Coup” if the president is Weak and “Install, Accept” if the president is Competent, with k endogenous to game play (such that $\frac{v^* - pR}{k} \geq \frac{v}{n} - c$).

6.0.3 PROOF FOR PROPOSITION 3:

From *Lemma 3*, the decision to Install a president is rationalize-able by warlord i only if $\frac{v^* - pR}{k} > \frac{v}{n} - c$. If $\frac{v}{n} - c > \frac{v^* - pR}{s}$, then the only supportable SPNE is “State Failure.” Even if they could overcome the prisoner’s dilemma aspect of the initial game, warlords expect to do strictly worse by installing a president. Solving for the “full incorporation” equilibria yields inequalities necessary for every warlord i to cooperate and install a president: If $v^* > v + pR - c$, if $p < \frac{(v^* - v) + c}{R}$, if $R < \frac{(v^* - v) + c}{p}$, or if $c > (v^* - v) - pR$.

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