Review Article

Militant and Rebel Organization(s)

Sarah E. Parkinson and Sherry Zaks

Fotini Christia, *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Zachariah Cherian Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers: Insurgent Governance and Civilian Life During War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

Wendy Pearlman, *Violence, Nonviolence, and the Palestinian National Movement* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Paul Staniland, *Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014).

Whether in Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, or the Philippines, scholars are asking new questions about militant organizations, including how their structures, internal dynamics, and relationships with each other influence key outcomes both during and after war. This article examines four works of cutting-edge research that focus explicitly on militant organizations and movements *qua* organizations, rather than on individual fighters, ethnic groups, or nebulous collectives of insurgents or terrorists.

This analytical pivot towards organizations accomplishes four important goals. First, many of the most salient civil war outcomes are fundamentally organizational in nature. Dynamics that produce patterns of violence, non-violent strategy adoption, long-term resilience, and post-conflict transformations—to name just a few—all occur at the organizational level. Studies that move toward a more comprehensive understanding of militant organizations will be able to provide more precise and critical insight into these outcomes. Second, this scholarship recognizes that organizational dynamics are distinct from both individual behaviors (such as a person's decision to join a rebellion) and collective action (such as a community's adoption of specific symbols of protest).

Organizations shape and constrain their members' conduct; understanding members' behavior thus necessitates analyzing the social structures that mold their choices. Third, organizational approaches make an analytic distinction between shared identification on the one hand—whether ethnic, religious, or political—and organization on the other. In other words, this new thread of scholarship breaks down the assumption that social identifications—e.g., "Tamil," "Alawi," or "communist"—are coterminous with military or political organizations. This distinction challenges the salience of designations such as "ethnic group" as an explanatory variable, thereby forcing scholars to articulate and test whether it is the "ethnic" or the "group" that is doing the heavy lifting. Fourth, by adopting a framework that acknowledges the key dimensions of the groups they study, researchers can use organizational approaches to make more analytically precise comparisons between militant organizations and other armed organizations, such as state armies, paramilitary groups, and militias.

Despite the clear shift toward organization-level analyses, the literature still lacks an explicit conceptual template of organizational components. This notable omission is problematic on two fronts: (1) the concept "organization" takes on an ad-hoc meaning: different scholars use it to refer to different and sometimes selective parts of militant groups, and (2) scholars who wish to adopt this focus lack a set of conceptual tools to build an organizational research agenda.

In light of this issue, this article proceeds in four parts. First, we provide a conceptual template of organizations and their constituent elements. This overview of organizational theory defines organizations, elaborates on their internal workings, and outlines the framework's analytic purchase for exploring core outcomes of interest. Second, we briefly trace the history of civil war scholarship to contextualize the shift toward organizational approaches. We cite four books as evidence of this emerging field of research. We then underscore how a more explicit organizational approach can shed light on political outcomes at all levels: from the adoption of nonviolence and provision of social services, to militant group resilience in the face of counterinsurgency strategies, to the capacity to transform from a militant organization into another type of group entirely—such as a political party or a peacekeeping force. Finally, we highlight two promising research agendas: one centering on tracing the origins and dynamics of organizational structure, and another examining the effects of organizational structure on both classic and emerging outcomes of interest in civil war studies.

What's in an Organization?

Drawing on organizational sociology,[1] we conceptualize organizations as collections of roles, linked by relations, which produce behaviors, to work toward goals within a given context. We argue that a comprehensive research agenda of militant and rebel organizations is incomplete without dedicated exploration of each of these factors. To elucidate these dimensions, Table 1 presents each component, its definition, and a set of

examples. We briefly elaborate on each dimension in turn and discuss the stakes of incorporating each organizational component into analyses of rebellion.

First, organizations contain roles. A role is a position defined by the skills it possesses, its practices, the tasks assigned to it, the objectives associated with it, its relationships to other roles, and its historical legacy as a position that others have occupied.[2] For example, a physician possesses medical training and performs medical procedures at the request of patients with the goal of curing medical ailments. The position of "physician" is defined in part by its practices and in part by relationship to others, such as patients, nurses, and lab techs. A role can encompass an individual who inhabits a particular job—such as a nurse—or an organizational sub-division assigned a task—such as the surgical unit within a hospital, or a political messaging wing within an insurgency.

Incorporating roles into analyses of militant organizations provides a crucial inroad into rigorously studying insurgent diversification (i.e., the different types of sub-units within a group: combat, logistics, intelligence, or public relations). What

Table 1 Four Dimensions of Organizations

Dimension	Definition		Examples
Role	A position defined by the skills it possesses, its practices or assigned tasks, its objectives, and its relationships to other roles	Individual	Colonel, smuggler, informant, judge, physician, diplomat, propagandist, secretary
		Collective	Platoon, rebel group, paramilitary, judiciary, intelligence wing, hospital, information ministry, internal faction, spoiler
Relations	Social linkages between roles	Intra-organizational	Formal/codified: Military hierarchy, resource flows (e.g., salaries), discourse
			Informal: Primary group cohesion, moral obligation, friendship, rivalry, gossip
		Inter- and extra-organizational	Formal/codified: Alliance, state sponsorship, prisoner exchange, rhetoric
			Informal: Intelligence sharing, tacit acceptance of underground economies
Behaviors	Actions and activities		Protest, violence, civilian targeting, service provision, diplomacy, fence sitting, demilitarization, looting, cultural production
Goals	Aims, ends pursued		Survival, power acquisition, control of territory, political influence, regime overthrow, profit, recognition, fun, revenge

kind of non-combat wings does a militant group have? When does it form new task-specific divisions? Does that group's behavior differ from groups lacking those sub-units? How does diversification affect long-term prospects for survival? With a clear template for defining individual roles and subdivisions (i.e., collective roles), scholars can move beyond homogenous, combat-centric conceptions of militant organizations and toward more comprehensive models that accurately reflect their variation. As such, this dimension opens the door to more incisive comparisons between groups and more nuanced analyses of the same group over time.

The second dimension of organizations consists of the relations between roles. Relations are the social linkages that define the nature, centralization, and hierarchy (if any) of the organization. In other words, relations form the backbone of organizational structure. They are often best defined in terms of their content: i.e., what specifically is flowing from one role to another. The content may be material (e.g., money or resources), behavioral (e.g., information exchange or giving orders), or social (e.g., family ties or distrust). Relations may or may not be routinized—that is, recurrent on a schedule (e.g., a report submitted every two weeks as opposed to a one-shot interaction). They also may or may not be institutionalized—that is, the interaction may be governed by rules or norms (e.g., military rank, reciprocity, secrecy). The institutions that govern relations, in turn, may themselves be formal and codified (e.g., marriage law) or informal (e.g., "we don't gossip about each other with the officers"). A military hierarchy, for example, is an institutionalized, codified system of relations constituted by a chain of command where the content of relations includes a top-down flow of orders through ranked positions. Moreover, relations are not only "positive;" they may also be "negative" (e.g., a prohibition on talking to outsiders or a violent rivalry).[3] Chuck Palahniuk, for example, perfectly illustrates institutionalized negative relations in a violent organization: "the first rule of Fight Club is: you do not talk about Fight Club."[4] In Fight Club, a prohibition on talking about the organization is fundamentally an institutionalized ban on a specific type of relational exchange to both insiders and outsiders.[5]

Analyses of militant organizations would benefit immensely from a more nuanced conceptual definition of relations. While several authors discussed here examine relations, relations in political science are often reduced to hierarchy, institutionaliza-tion, and centralization.[6] With a few notable exceptions, other types of relations are systematically omitted from analyses, yet they likely have crucial implications for the behavior, cohesion, and dynamics of militant organizations.[7]

The third dimension, behaviors, describes the activities and actions that systems of roles and relations produce. They may be related to collective action (e.g., nonviolent protest) or unexpected outcomes (e.g., violence against civilians due to indiscipline).[8] Behavior may also entail inaction such as fence-sitting while others fight. Much existing work on political violence and civil war focuses almost exclusively on the behavioral dimension of organizations to the omission of other organizational components.[9] The greatest room for improvement is to consider how behavior is shaped and constrained by relations and roles in the organization.

Finally, goals describe organizational aims and end games. They are often the motivation for organizational behaviors. For example, an organization may use violence to achieve its goal of territorial control. However, goals are also dynamic, malleable, and multi-faceted: a rebel organization that launched an offensive with the goal of capturing the state may later reframe its aims to win more seats in parliament for the population it represents. Distinct organizational sub-divisions may also have different, competing, or irreconcilable goals.[10] For example, an intelligence agency that may want to spy on another organization could be rebuked because the diplomatic wing does not want to risk getting caught. It is important to note that many scholars—particularly those examining terrorism—focus heavily on explicitly-stated goals rather than emergent aims and exigencies (e.g., survival). The insight deriving from our framework is that goals are inseparable from the roles and relations that comprise organizations. As such, by acknowledging the intricacies of the organization with the stated goals, this framework highlights the everyday routines and goals that they must prioritize to persist as an organization. This approach can reveal important areas of intra-organizational conflict and the dynamics of organizational prioritization.

The Shift toward Organizational Approaches

Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, academic attention to civil war heavily consisted of large-N and rational choice work modeling outcomes related to the causes, duration, and resolution of armed conflict within states. Much of this scholarship focused on evaluating how state-level attributes (e.g., gross domestic product) affect dependent variables such as conflict onset.[11] A different vein of contemporaneous research imported concepts from international relations theory to bear on civil war.[12] This perspective treats pre-existing sub-state collectivities—often, ethnic groups—as unified political actors battling for dominance and survival within the "anarchy" of collapsed states.[13] As such, these approaches generally present the actors who participate in civil war in one of two ways: as a dyad involving a state and insurgency, or as a multi-sided competition between bounded, immutable, naturally-institutionalized ethnic groups (e.g., Serbs and Croats). Both intellectual trajectories rely heavily on the idea of a central master cleavage—an overarching source of intra-group conflict such as uneven distribution of wealth and power between two ethnic collectives—as a motivator for civil war violence.

In a departure from macro-level explanations, some scholars began to explore the individual and group-level dynamics—that is, the micro- and meso-level dynamics—of conflict. Today's organizationally-focused scholarship draws directly from this research trajectory. Foundational works in this vein by scholars such as Timothy Wickham Crowley, Elisabeth Jean Wood, and Roger Petersen incorporate in-depth, often comparative examinations of specific rebellions and examine outcomes such as mobilization and participation in civil war.[14] Much of this work seeks to explicitly link social factors such as social embeddedness (i.e., individuals and organizations' pre-war and wartime roles and relations) to the likelihood of individual participation in insurgent

efforts. This research also draws on a robust body of sociological literature on collective action and social movements.[15] In particular, it often invokes debates surrounding resource mobilization, which focuses on how to recruit activists, raise funding, garner popular attention, and obtain the material goods necessary for protest. Research in this realm has therefore made inroads toward incorporating organizational factors, such as exploiting relations for staffing, financing, and messaging. By underscoring that participation is not limited to carrying a gun, this work thus represents the origins of research into task diversification in rebel groups. Methodologically, and in contrast to more macro-level studies, scholars often produce this research by interacting directly with participants or past participants in rebellion and by drawing on primary sources.

Contributing to the organizational push in a different way, scholarship on civilian casualties has challenged the assumption that master cleavages drive wartime violence. For example, Stathis Kalyvas argues that micro-level and often interpersonal dynamics—such as disputes between neighbors, or dynamics ostensibly characterized by "private" or "nonpolitical" relations—drive much of the killing in civil war. In short, violence is often committed by private individuals, because of private relations, in a public setting. Kalyvas' work added a crucial layer of complexity to analyses of wartime violence by breaking down core assumptions of who violent actors are and why they behave violently. From a more deliberately organizational standpoint, Jeremy Weinstein and Macartan Humphreys use economic theories of the firm to link rebels' behavior—specifically, the use of indiscriminate violence against civilians—to their initial resource endowments and organizational discipline.[16] Weinstein, for example, argues that rebellions with strong local support are less likely to abuse civilians, while those that rely on economic incentives—i.e., paid insurgents—are more likely to be violent.[17] Humphreys' and Weinstein's scholarship represents an explicit shift in the level of analysis toward the rebel organization; however, it lacks the corresponding ontological shift toward incorporating the key dimensions of organizations (i.e., roles and relations). Instead, Weinstein explains organizational behavior (patterns of violence) exclusively as a function of the environment (available resources), which in turn influences the probability that a group can police its soldiers. In many ways, this scholarship thus acted as a bridge between studies of the micro-dynamics of violence and, later, more deliberately theorized approaches to understanding organizational dynamics in conflict.[18]

Four Organization-Centered Works: Defining a New Agenda

This pioneering work shows that the practice of analytically black-boxing organizations leaves several important questions unanswered, as does studying rebel groups in a vacuum. How do the dynamics of conflict mediate violence? How do scholars account for outcomes beyond production of violence? How do relationships with civilians affect militant organizations' behavior? Notwithstanding the growing interest in micro-processes, Paul Staniland notes that "[m]ost research on civil war takes the structure of

insurgent groups as a given, rather than trying to explain it" (p. 3).[19] The following four works push the agenda forward by conceptualizing (or treating) groups as organizations, outcomes as organizational phenomena, and contexts as relational. In other words, for the scholars discussed below, group structure matters, change occurs at the organizational level, and external relations mediate behaviors and group dynamics. In addition to understanding conflict processes, these scholars offer novel insight into other important outcomes such as governance projects, organizational unity, alliance structure, and patterns of violence and protest.

Zachariah Mampilly's work *Rebel Rulers: Insurgent Governance and Civilian Life During War* asks why some rebel organizations provide public services, why they design them the way they do, and why these public services resonate with some populations while alienating others (p. 3). As a result, the outcome of "effective governance"—a group's capacity to provide stability, dispute resolution, and public goods to civilians who respond with active engagement—drives the argument (p. 17). Mampilly uses participant observation, interviews, and primary texts alongside the secondary literature to develop three contemporary case studies of militant service provision. He thus describes in fine-grained detail the institutions and practices of rebel governance (or lack thereof) at sites such as schools, hospitals, and prisons (pp. 18–20). By focusing on the mechanisms that allow rebels to generate political power (p. 8) and by spotlighting sites where "counterstate sovereignty" emerges (ch. 3), Mampilly constructively shifts the analytic spotlight off of combat violence and onto a complex array of wartime roles and relations comprising central wartime actors: militant groups, civilian populations, states, and humanitarian actors. The book thus serves as an important precursor to more recent efforts to systematically evaluate variation in rebel-civilian and rebel-state relations.[20]

Mampilly argues that "the initial preferences of rebel leaders and the interaction of insurgent organizations with a variety of other social and political actors active during the conflict itself" shape governance outcomes. Previous state-society relations, organizational goals, and ethnic politics shape said leadership preferences (pp. 15–16). In tune with other scholars, Mampilly underscores the importance of broadly investigating rebel group origins.[21] Yet, he artfully avoids reducing these processes to linear or path-dependent trajectories. Instead, he underscores and carefully traces the influence of self-reinforcing dynamics and emergent tensions within these political systems (p. 16). Moreover, rather than assuming that political structures coincide with governance or necessarily produce loyalty or legitimacy, Mampilly carefully explores the practices associated with governance projects to uncover complicated and frequently counterintuitive patterns of interaction.

Case studies set in Sri Lanka, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo flesh out these claims by testing hypotheses and painting a detailed picture of everyday civilian life in rebel-controlled territories. The Sri Lankan civil war offers an example of a secessionist rebellion where insurgents provided extensive public goods while maintaining a seemingly paradoxical symbiotic relationship with the Sri Lankan state. The ostensibly illogical "joint system" that emerged resulted from the Sri Lankan

government's efficient provision of education and health services pre-war, as well as the Tamil insurgents' unwillingness to alienate civilians by stepping in to provide their own sub-par versions of these services. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam's (LTTE's) success in constructing a civilian administration allowed it to dictate education and health policy in areas under its influence, even as the government in Colombo continued to pay civil service salaries. Both rebels and the state responded to internal fears that civilians would reject them, which produced a hybrid system of governance in rebel-controlled regions.

Sudanese and Congolese examples contrast the Sri Lankan experience. In Sudan, pre-war state weakness made it difficult for the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) to construct effective governance systems during the war. Mampilly highlights the group's mixed results: while they achieved relative success with security, education and healthcare provision varied widely (p. 130, 165). Yet above all, the Sudan case emphasizes the innovative way that the SPLM/A was able to co-opt humanitarian organizations' efforts. Rather than pursuing direct provision, the organization instead structured humanitarian projects by requiring international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) to work through the SPLM/A and to employ its members. In effect, this produced an interdependent, decentralized, and uneven system that provided public services while relieving the SPLM/A of many financial and administrative demands of doing so directly. The Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie-Goma (RCD-Goma) represents a stark contrast to the SPLM/A. Hamstrung by factionalization, low pre-war state capacity, and the perceived ethnicization of the organization itself, the rebels failed to provide effective governance. Crucially, Mampilly links a problem that can only be understood organizationally—factionalization (i.e., negative or failed internal relations)—to an important outcome in civil war studies—shadow governance. He deftly outlines how internal disputes constrained rebels' capacities and reduced them to a coercion-reliant organization dependent on external governments rather than civilian support for power (pp. 207–208). While Mampilly does not rely on an explicit organizational framework, his work on ground-level interactions reveals the content of the structure: the type and nature of relations. He reminds us that this content can be specified, and that it has critical implications for understanding organizational dynamics.

Paul Staniland's *Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse* presents an empirically rich and methodologically rigorous challenge to both state- and resource-centric approaches to understanding rebellion. In it, he explores the origins and trajectories of insurgent organizations by focusing on pre-war social networks—that is systems of relations—and specifically how they link rebel leaders to each other and to foot soldiers. Drawing on the framework established in Table 1, Staniland highlights differences in internal and external relations across rebel groups over time to provide a concrete metric for systematically comparing them. His resultant "social-institutional theory" aims to "understand when rebels can generate military and political power and when insurgent challenges instead shatter into factionalism and collapse" (p. 2). Here, he is particularly concerned with the control organizations have

over members and resources. This control, Staniland contends, directly influences more concrete outcomes of interest; for example, an organization's ability to assert discipline over its members influences the likelihood of civilian abuse.

To support this theory, Staniland presents a typology encompassing four ideal-typical modes of insurgent organizations based on the structure of prewar networks. He focuses on two axes of relations: central and local. Specifically, he presents horizontal ties between elite officers—"which link people across space and connect different geographic and social sites"—as being crucial to a unified leadership and potential for cross-regional coordination because they "make possible the consolidation of shared political visions at the regional or national level" (p. 21). Vertical ties—those between elites and social collectivities—"are created by relations of information, trust, and belief that link organizers to local communities" (p. 22). Here, Staniland notes the importance of both the content and the strength of relations; in addition to containing content such as information, each set of ties can be strong or weak.

Drawing on the four resultant combinations of strong and weak horizontal and vertical ties, Staniland then differentiates between integrated, vanguard, parochial, and fragmented groups. Integrated groups are unified, loyal, and disciplined across both axes; there are strong ties between elites in different locations and strong relationships between elites and the masses. These groups are militarily effective and resistant to centrifugal forces. Vanguards have tightly-knit central commands (strong horizontal ties) but weaker vertical ties to people on the ground. Staniland notes that while doctrinal and ideological clarity characterize these organizations, implementation among the masses is difficult and sparse. Parochial organizations are the inverse: lacking horizontal ties among leaders, strong local connections form between the leaders and the masses. These organizations are uneven from sub-unit to sub-unit, though individual sub-units may still be militarily effective and well-socialized. Fragmented organizations are exactly that: lacking in both central and local control (p. 5–11, 25–34). Staniland is careful to highlight the fact that armed conflict can change these structures via processes such as grassroots alliance building, mergers, or state counterinsurgency (p. 2, 37–55).

Staniland bases exhaustive, within-conflict, controlled comparisons of organizations in Kashmir, Afghanistan, and Sri Lanka on deep engagement with academic and historical literature as well as on-the-ground interviews with experts and actors (Kashmir and Sri Lanka), memoirs and militant writings (Sri Lanka), press accounts (Kashmir, Afghanistan, and Sri Lanka), and interviews with politicians active in insurgent groups (Sri Lanka). He also includes a cross-conflict comparison of leftist, anti-colonial groups in the Philippines, French Indochina, and Malaya. Generally, they lend credence to Staniland's social institutional theory. It is most successful in Kashmir, where Staniland aptly demonstrates the differential group-level effects of factors such as insurgency and state sponsorship (p. 97). Staniland is also clear and honest about his inability to fully explain, for example, the LTTE's extensive grassroots power "without specific social linkages"—that is, without strong pre-war connections to local communities that his theory would link to wartime community-level support (p. 177).

Moreover, he rightly recognizes that due to its structural focus, the social institutional theory has difficulty parsing the role or effects of ideology and socialization. He does not, however, clarify whether the extent to which all horizontal and all vertical ties are created equal. The reader is thus impelled to consider whether some types of ties might be more malleable, more resistant, or more fragile than others. For example, do vertical ties wrought by fledgling political parties with local villages shortly before hostilities render the same effects as vertical ties entrenched by decades or centuries of patronage arrangements? Are certain horizontal norm flows—such as those undergirded by communist ideology—consistently more compelling among leaders? These questions are ripe for future research.

The social-institutional theory is, at its core, about rebel groups' varying potential to achieve political aims by leveraging their pre-war social ties. In Staniland's world, the difficulty involved with "capturing grievance" (p. 215) and maintaining an organization cannot be underappreciated; it is a process that starts before bullets are fired and changes through combat, infiltration, counterinsurgency, ceasefire, cooptation, and negotiations. His careful comparisons allow him to clearly demonstrate that relations among militant leaders and between elites and communities must be treated as analytically separate from the modes of organization (if any) present among people who identify as ethnically or ideologically similar. But in sum, Staniland makes it abundantly obvious that "[a]n endless focus on state-centric variables—from per capita GDP to regime type to counterinsurgent doctrine—in the study of civil war has overpromised and under-delivered . . . [i]nsurgents are fighting forces that should be analyzed on their own terms, not as pale reflections of state power and purpose" (p. 223). This argument sets his work apart as staking a clear claim for organizational approaches' analytical traction in comparison to older research trajectories.

In *Violence, Nonviolence, and the Palestinian National Movement*, Wendy Pearlman presents an "organizational mediation" theory of protest that focuses on how variation in organizational cohesion affects the choice of violent or nonviolent organizational tactics. Thus, in terms of Table 1, she uses variation in relations to explain variation in behavior. Drawing on the fact that "movements rarely use violent or nonviolent protest to the complete exclusion of the other" (p. 3), she contends that the structure of a movement shapes members' interactions with both co-members and external powers, and that their tactical choices vary as a result (p.7). Pearlman is thus able to offer a crucial insight: "While the paths to violence are multiple, there is one prevailing path to nonviolent protest: a path that requires a movement to have or create internal cohesion" (p. 2). In doing so, she successfully critiques scholars who "bias their conclusions by truncating their empirical purview to moments of heightened violence and neglecting periods in which Palestinians engaged in nonviolent protest or little open protest at all" (p. 6). While the book centers on a longitudinal, within-case comparison of the Palestinian National Movement, Pearlman also presents brief comparative cases of South Africa and Northern Ireland. She uses diverse data sources including "government documents, memoirs, newspapers, survey data, and dozens of interviews conducted during years of fieldwork in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Israel," and employs process tracing and counterfactual reasoning to test her theory (p. 23).

The logic behind the argument is straightforward: "when a movement is cohesive, it enjoys the organizational power to mobilize mass participation, enforce strategic discipline, and contain disruptive dissent … when a movement is fragmented, it lacks the leadership, institutions, and collective purpose to coordinate and constrain its members" (p. 2). Three factors lend insight into the degree of cohesion within a movement: "leadership, institutions, and the population's sense of collective purpose" (p. 9). In this sense, her work is distinct from scholars who focus more centrally on organizational structures (e.g., centralized versus decentralized groups); for Pearlman, a decentralized movement can still coordinate and operate cohesively.[22] The empirical work consequently highlights key mechanisms that contribute to the nature of protest, such as institutionalization, coordination, control, outbidding, and spoiling (she summarizes the argument in Table 7.1 on p. 211). Personalized leadership also emerges as a key factor; it can constitute both a cohesion-building and destroying factor.

Throughout the book, Pearlman's empirical analysis consistently underscores how collective purpose in of itself does not produce movement unity. She highlights two key time periods when the Palestinian movement was cohesive enough to engage in collective nonviolent resistance: the early stages of the Arab Revolt, and the early stages of the first Intifada. Chapter 4, which covers the first Intifada in detail, shows how cohesion and the resulting coordination facilitated nonviolence: clarity of purpose, strong local institutions, cooperation between the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising and the Palestine Liberation Organization, and clear calls to action (e.g., "close shops on this day at this time") disincentivized individual and group noncompliance. Indeed, the implication is that the interlocking and constraining nature of grassroots organizations within the movement shaped and reinforced tactical choices just as much as a cohesive elite organizational apparatus did (the PLO). In other periods, seemingly endemic fragmentation in the Palestinian National Movement has incentivized and shaped violence against states as well as within the movement itself. On this front, the organizational mediation theory is perhaps most convincing in Pearlman's detailed analysis of outbidding within the PLO between 1965 and 1982 (ch. 3). Here, Pearlman focuses on how the structure of the PLO facilitated violence: "To the degree that the PLO was divided into factions, factions were motivated to carry out military action not only to further their goals against Israel, but also to compete with each other" (p. 93).

To an extent that the theory itself does not capture, Pearlman skillfully moves across levels of analysis in her empirical sections: movement, organization, intra-organizational faction. She then traces how intra-organizational divides—such as Fateh's *Tanzim* (an internal faction comprising West Bank members who were not exiled in Tunis with the leadership) or Hamas's "inside-outside" (e.g., Gaza elites versus leaders based in Damascus and Amman)—resonate across the respective movements. This analysis demonstrates that intra-organizational dynamics have broad implications for movement unity (chs. 5 and 6). Yet, this approach can also make the term "movement" seem too broad. It is occasionally hard to assess who or what counts as a member: Are all Palestinians and all Palestinian political factions part of the Palestinian National Movement? Or, are there potentially multiple intersecting movements?

The reader may therefore be left unsure of which actors' behaviors should be mediated by movement structure rather than influenced by the broader environment. For example, one could argue that the Fateh Revolutionary Council (the Abu Nidal Organization) had never been a PLO member, did not answer to the Palestinian leadership, did not coordinate with other Palestinian factions, had little grassroots support, and was extreme among Rejectionist Front members. However, the book analyzes its attack on the Israeli Ambassador to the United Kingdom in 1982—which Israel used as a pretext to invade Lebanon—as a breakdown in interfactional cooperation. The question is whether a group such as Fateh Revolutionary Council—a specific shade of vanguard group, in Staniland's terms—was ever likely to cooperate, and whether it should thus be included as a movement actor. Future refinements of the theory could productively consider, for example, how umbrella organizations such as the PLO mediate individual organizations' (such as the PLFP's) entry and exit into movements and what role inter-organizational relations play in those decisions.

In *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars,* Fotini Christia presents a stylized and formalized account of militant organizations' decision-making, focusing explicitly on alliance behavior within and across armed groups (in other words, inter-organizational relations). Drawing on neorealist theories of international relations, she argues that "alliance formation is tactical, motivated by a concern with victory and the maximization of wartime returns as anticipated in the political power sharing of the postconflict state" (p. 6). Organizations do not trust each other; when no group is powerful enough to win, "conflict will degenerate into a process of constant defection, alliance reconfiguration, and group fractionalization" as militants struggle to position themselves in minimum winning coalitions (p. 6). Christia sets this argument up against identity-based theories of conflict, which she contends would predict alliances along ascriptive lines (e.g., two organizations with predominantly Pashtun members would naturally ally with each other over others), rather than along tactical lines (e.g., a predominantly Pashtun organization would look for the best alliance partner independently of its members' ethnic identification). Here, she successfully pushes past the assumption that "ethnic groups" rebel, looking instead at power dynamics and militant organizations' instrumental deployment of identity narratives.

Christia supports her theory with a formal model, four conflict-level cases (two each from Afghanistan and the Balkans), a within-conflict examination of fractional-ization in three regions of Afghanistan, and a medium-N analysis of multiparty civil wars. She draws on 135 on-the-ground interviews with militants (elites and regional commanders), politicians, and subject matter experts, primary source materials such as ceasefire agreements, *fatawa*, propaganda, declassified US government documents, Guantanamo Bay testimony by Afghan detainees, geo-referenced maps of militant territorial control, and secondary sources (p. 29). The empirical evidence is well-integrated and triangulated, which corroborates Christia's arguments. Her analysis of regional level commanders demonstrates that their behaviors largely mimic those of the macro-level conflict (ch. 5). This insight lays the groundwork for productive future inquiry focused on when individuals in these roles choose to follow elites' leads.

Christia's neorealist approach to alliances is parsimonious and intuitively appealing. Yet, its simplicity might mask important dynamics of organizational change and transition. For example, given organization-level dynamics during the 1980s anti-communist Afghani *jihad*—including intra-war armed conflicts between organizations ostensibly on the same side of an alliance (e.g., Jamiat-i-Islami and Hizb-i-Islami Hekmatyar)—it seems problematic to treat the intra-mujahedin war that followed in the 1990s as a series of independent interactions between the same organizations (as Christia does). The scholarship linking recurring conflict and seemingly-new tactical repertoires to organizational histories further calls into question the assumption of independence.[23] Nevertheless, Christia's book helpfully brings to light environmental and inter-organizational relations, thereby reinforcing the implication that organizational studies cannot occur in vacuums and must take broader, changing contexts into account.

Drawing on the conceptualization of organizations outlined earlier in this article, the following section highlights these works' contributions while underscoring some of the opportunities they have missed. It encourages scholars to push the idea of an "organizational approach" further through a more explicit engagement with organizational theory.

Important Inroads and Missed Opportunities

Together, the organization- and movement-level approaches embraced by these volumes offer new insight into the ontology of rebellion and theories of militant behavior. By taking the internal dynamics of militant organizations as objects for analysis in their own right, each author's work represents an advancement over studies that privilege state-centric variables, assume a fundamental homogeneity across rebel groups, and/or rely on path-dependent frameworks that obscure crucial dynamics. Specifically, this scholarship forges a crucial link between inter- and intra-organizational relations on the one hand, and organizational behaviors and goals on the other. Each book emphasizes a different combination of the four organizational dimensions. In doing so, they reveal gaps in the current literature and opportunities for further development of the organizational perspective. In this section, we discuss how these combinations illuminate organizational outcomes and inform scholarly debate as well as how a concrete organizational template could have pushed these analyses even further. We also note how one of the organizational dimensions, roles, has been systematically neglected by political scientists, and lay out a promising research agenda that leverages knowledge of this dimension to inform organizational outcomes in the study of political violence.

Scholarship proceeding from an organizational vantage point indicates that conventional perspectives drawing on economic and principal-agent theories of the firm[24] may be misguided. Specifically, the theoretical implications of the organizational approaches reviewed above call into question the assumptions undergirding economic and principal-agent theories of rebel behavior—most notably, independent actor

assumptions, the de-emphasizing of organizational structure, and the focus on the "industrial" production of violence (rather than governance or the achievement of political outcomes via diverse tactical repertoires). Such assumptions may lead to a problematic oversimplification of intra-organizational processes and a limited understanding of militant activities and goals. For example, an exclusive focus on violence production could lead scholars to conclude that child recruitment is based on "ease of manipulation."[25] However, an assessment of an organization's incentive structures and recruitment practices may be markedly different when taking into account their broader goals of secession and long-term governance (à la Mampilly), their attempt to shift from a vanguard to an integrated structure (à la Staniland), or the end of an occupation via broad-based civil disobedience (à la Pearlman).[26]

Of the four books evaluated above, only Mampilly's explores the first dimension, roles, in depth. Although Mampilly does not self-consciously invoke organizational theory, his work is centrally concerned with tracing how non-combat subdivisions of the rebellion (i.e., units providing social services) forge ties with local populations and generate effective governance. However, doing so requires the analytical step of distinguishing among different roles within the organization. As other scholarship has clarified, examining roles within organizations can reveal, for example, the social dynamics that influence which group members radicalize,[27] or which individuals within an organizational body assume particular violent (or non-violent) tasks. Ami Pedahzur and Arie Perliger illustrate these dynamics in their exploration of how the role of "suicide bomber" emerges from sets of organizational, local, and familial relations.[28] Moreover, an increasing number of scholars are turning to questions of how non-combat sub-divisions related to logistics, political education, intelligence, and diplomacy influence key outcomes like organizational strategy, resilience, recognition, and survival.[29]

The other books examined here often sidestep the role dimension in favor of a higher level of analysis. The bulk of their contribution rests instead in the second dimension: relations. As Staniland and Pearlman demonstrate, a focus on intra-organizational and intra-movement relations reveals new sources of variation—both across organizations and within organizations over time. Staniland's and Pearlman's conceptual frameworks for relational variation provide more aggressive traction on important outcomes such as deployment of violence and aggregation of power. Staniland's network-based argument, for example, is fundamentally a story about how the configuration and strength of intra-organizational relations (between leaders) and extra-organizational relations (between leaders and communities) produce variation in organizational structures. He goes on to demonstrate that these structural variations, in turn, influence the organization's capacity to accumulate power and pursue its goals.

Promisingly, other scholarship that focuses on organizational structure—that is, systems of sub-units, relations, institutions, and internal power distribution—reinforces their findings that organizational factors influence outcomes such as timing and location of violence.[30] Operating a step higher in the unit of analysis, Christia turns her attention toward a systematically under-examined set of relations: inter-organizational relations in

the form of alliance patterns across armed groups. Though she does not directly invoke it, her description of how groups use alliances to pursue survival (among other goals) evokes potential intellectual parallels with scholarship on organizational ecology and environments, which present organizations as "species" that thrive or die in different contexts.[31] Thus, one potential extension of her work may be that rebel organizations' chances of thriving are fundamentally influenced by other organizations operating in the same context.

Taken as a whole, this work can feel a bit theoretically underpowered, particularly in its neglect of roles and difficult-to-observe relations. Embracing an organizational unit of analysis without explicitly situating it as such or exploring the content, variety, and complexity of relations over time can present a picture of static, rigid organizations rather than dynamic social entities reacting to their relational environments and political contexts.[32] While parsimonious renditions of organizational approaches have the advantage of presenting clear causal pathways to outcomes such as the production of violence, they can also mask core dynamics from analytic sight (e.g., the importance of unrecognized, non-combat subdivisions in decisions to use or avoid violence). Furthermore, these approaches tend to assume—rather than examine—the content of relations. They tend to overemphasize durable hierarchies and their content (e.g., the chain of command distributes orders) to the exclusion of other, harder-to-observe types of relations (e.g., gossip, personal rivalries, transmission of organizational memory).[33] These approaches thus eclipse many nuances of human agency in organizational contexts and elide how emergent modes of interaction shape and reinforce intra-organizational relationships and behaviors.

Organizing Agendas

The organizational template introduced above raises two brands of analytic questions, each of which gives rise to a distinct research trajectory. First, what produces different systems of organizational roles and relations—that is, organizational structures? This line of inquiry takes organizational structures as an outcome or dependent variable. We would expect analyses in this vein to examine both pre-conflict relations and conflict dynamics to explain structure and change. The second brand of questions asks how organizational structures and dynamics affect organizational outcomes of interest such as resilience, adaptability, survival, and post-war transition. Here, the inner workings of militant organizations and their contextual interactions may be leveraged to examine classical questions in civil war research or new outcomes that emerge when scholars employ organizational perspectives.

The first line of inquiry to emerge out of an organizational approach to rebellion addresses the social, material, symbolic, and environmental factors that give rise to organizational structures. Staniland's research, along with that of Petersen, Parkinson, and Pedahzur and Perliger, underscore the centrality of pre-war social relations in influencing organizational structure and role emergence. Moving forward, scholars are

better poised to delve more deeply into the nature and content of the relations that link individual roles and organizational sub-divisions. Are some types of pre-war relations—e.g., kinship or hometown—more robust than others, as research on military desertion and remilitarization suggests?[34] Do some ties facilitate individuals' personal aggregation of informal power within organizations? Studying the interaction between formal organizational hierarchies and informal relations such as patronage could potentially reveal these types of informal roles. Pearlman's research, in particular, indicates that informal patronage networks have profound effects on organizational cohesion and command-and-control.[35] Specifically, she demonstrates how Arafat's system of personal patronage and loyalty created schisms and resentment within the PLO, the PA, and the Palestinian movement as a whole, rendering those organizations unstable (pp. 72–73, 117, 131, 147–48). Yet, she also emphasizes how the "personalization of power" under both Yasir Arafat and Gerry Adams could simultaneously unite movements even as they precluded the establishment of strong formal institutions and civil society (p. 148, 208). This current ambiguity suggests a promising trajectory for researchers interested in topics ranging from informal politics to the emergence of warlords.

The second emergent agenda takes variation in militant organizational structures as a key explanatory factor for outcomes of interest in analyses of rebellion. In this way, it pulls the threads woven by early scholars such as Wood, Kalyvas, and Weinstein through to the contemporary era, but adds a more powerful organizational lens. Studies in this vein may productively re-examine how organizational structures and/or pre-war relations influence civil war onset, conflict duration, and rebel versus state victories. They may also delve into some of the more vexing questions scholars have faced, such as those related to the transformative effects of war on society or the long-term efficacy of power-sharing agreements.[36] Specifically, understanding intra- and inter-organizational relations, the variety of roles within organizations, and the types of activities (behaviors) in which militant organizations engage may shed new light on old puzzles.

A variety of the outcomes explored in the current literature are fundamentally organizational phenomena, yet few scholars explicitly frame them as such. Processes and outcomes linked to survival, resilience, adaptation to counterinsurgency, and transformation are rooted at the organizational level. Scholars exhibit a clear intuition for this fact. In the rebel-to-party transformation literature, for instance, a significant number of articles make explicit reference to "organizations" or specific organizational outcomes.[37] Despite acknowledging the nature of the phenomenon, very few make explicit reference to organizational structures and how attributes of the organization facilitate or inhibit change.

However, newer, more organization-centric perspectives are emerging. Recent work on the variety of roles in rebel organizations seeks to explain how some organizations repurpose wartime structures (e.g., political messaging wings) into political party apparatuses (e.g., as information or propaganda bureaus) in the aftermath of civil war.[38] This scholarship underscores both the importance of studying non-combat

organizational sub-divisions and the salience of understanding organizational histories in post-conflict settings. Relatedly, a new book by Sarah Zuckerman Daly examines why peace consolidates in some places and why there is remilitarization in others. Her argument—that "the geography of the armed organization's recruitment, whether local or non-local, and that of its neighboring armed actors—determines whether the organization goes back to or turns away from the use of collective violence"[39]—is clearly situated at the organizational level and attentive to inter-organizational relations as a causal factor in remilitarization. As Daly notes, "the microlevel literature [on demobilization] treats former fighters as independent agents, rather than as components of a web of ex-combatants and armed institutions that structure their postwar paths".[40] In Daly's story, groups that recruit locally and in locales where they deploy have strong pre-war networks and remain in the same geographic location after the war. Durable post-war information channels (relations) and retention of command and control make it easier for these organizations to remobilize their members into their prior roles. An explicit organizational framework is crucial for these lines of inquiry because it gives scholars the tools to articulate organizational outcomes across changing contexts.

Conclusion

The civil war literature is experiencing a notable shift toward an organizational level of analysis. Unfortunately, organizational approaches have heretofore remained outside the mainstream in political science, so scholars have been forced to adopt an ad-hoc approach to understanding organizations. The pioneering work reviewed here reveals previously overlooked dynamics that help explain both classical problems in civil war studies—such as the efficacy of negotiated settlements and determinants of insurgent survival—as well as new questions about wartime dynamics and the nature of rebel organizations themselves. This article advocates a concerted push towards a more robust study of militant groups by proposing a conceptual template of organizations and revealing two new scholarly agendas based on the study of organizational roles and relations.

NOTES

1. A comprehensive summary of the organizational sociology literature is beyond the scope of this article, but we have included a bibliography for Table 1 in an online appendix. Due to space constraints, the Appendix is not in the print version of this article. It can be viewed in the online version, at www.ingentaconnect.com/cuny/cp.
This section is particularly indebted to the approaches detailed in John F. Padgett and Walter W. Powell, *The Emergence of Organizations and Markets* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

2. In other words, a role is fundamentally defined in relational terms. In this sense, we follow Charles Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3. We borrow the language of "skills" associated with roles from Padgett and Powell, ch. 1.

3. See, e.g., Andrew V. Papachristos, "Murder by Structure: Dominance Relations and the Social Structure of Gang Homicide," *American Journal of Sociology*, 115 (July 2009), 74–128.

4. Chuck Palahniuk, *Fight Club: A Novel* (W. W. Norton, 1996), 96.

5. Combining these first two dimensions—roles and relations—produces networks. Networks—an oft-used but frequently fuzzy concept—are fundamentally systems of roles linked by relations (e.g. co-membership) and defined by the content of those relations (e.g. trust).

6. These aspects are particularly central to the literature on rebel cohesion and fragmentation. See, Pearlman (reviewed below); Kristin M. Bakke, Kathleen Gallagher Cunningham, and Lee J. Seymour, "A Plague of Initials: Fragmentation, Cohesion, and Infighting in Civil Wars," *Perspectives on Politics*, 10 (June 2012), 265–83, and Peter Krause, "The Structure of Success: How the Internal Distribution of Power Drives Armed Group Behavior and National Movement Effectiveness," *International Security*, 38 (January 2014), 72–116.

7. In addition to Staniland (reviewed below), see, for example: Roger D. Petersen, *Resistance and Rebellion: Lessons from Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Ami Pedahzur and Arie Perliger, "The Changing Nature of Suicide Attacks: A Social Network Perspective," *Social Forces*, 84 (June 2006), 1987–2008; Ami Pedahzur and Arie Perliger, *Jewish Terrorism in Israel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); Abdulkader H. Sinno, *Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010); Sarah E. Parkinson, "Organizing Rebellion: Rethinking High-Risk Mobilization and Social Networks in War," *American Political Science Review*, 107 (August 2013), 418–32; Sarah E. Parkinson, "Money Talks: Discourse, Networks, and Structure in Militant Organizations," *Perspectives on Politics*, 14 (December 2016), 976–94.

8. Jeremy M. Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

9. Tilly, 2003.

10. For an example of an argument that incorporates both movement and organizational (in this case a sub-unit of the movement) goals, see: Peter Krause, "The Political Effectiveness of Non-State Violence: A Two-Level Framework to Transform a Deceptive Debate," *Security Studies*, 22 (Spring 2013), 259–94.

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14. Timothy Wickham-Crowley, *Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America: A Comparative Study of Insurgents and Regimes since 1956* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992). Elisabeth Jean Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Roger D. Petersen, *Resistance and Rebellion: Lessons from Eastern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Scott Gates, "Recruitment and Allegiance," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 46 (February 2002), 111–30.

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17. Weinstein, 2007

18. See, e.g. scholarship on wartime sexual violence: Elisabeth Jean Wood, "Variation in Sexual Violence during War," *Politics & Society*, 34 (September 2006), 307–42; Elisabeth Jean Wood, "Armed Groups and Sexual Violence: When Is Wartime Rape Rare?" *Politics and Society*, 37 (March 2009), 131–61; Zoe Marks, "Sexual Violence in Sierra Leone's Civil War: 'Virgination,' Rape, and Marriage," *African Affairs*, 113 (January 2014), 67–87; Dara Kay Cohen, "Explaining Rape during Civil War: Cross-National Evidence (1980–2009)," *American Political Science Review*, 107 (August 2013), 461–77; Dara Kay Cohen, *Rape during Civil War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016).

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24. Works by Blattman and Beber and by Weinstein both refer to the "industrial organization of rebellion." Weinstein, ch. 1; Bernd Beber and Christopher Blattman, "The Logic of Child Soldiering and Coercion," *International Organization*, 67 (January 2013), 65–104.

25. Beber and Blattman, p. 65.

26. See, e.g. Kanisha D. Bond, "Women's Participation in Violent Political Organizations and Internal Institutional Design: Evidence from the United States, 1960–2010," Paper presented at the 2015 Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association, New Orleans, LA, February 18–21.

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30. Bakke et. al., pp. 266–72; Adria Lawrence, "Triggering Nationalist Violence: Competition and Conflict in Uprisings Against Colonial Rule," *International Security*, 35 (Fall 2010), 88–122; Jacob N. Shapiro, *The Terrorist's Dilemma: Managing Violent Covert Organizations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

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33. Parkinson, 2016.

34. Dora L. Costa and Matthew E. Kahn, *Heroes and Cowards: The Social Face of War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Theodore McLauchlin, "Desertion, Terrain, and Control of the Home Front in Civil Wars," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 58 (September 2014), 1419–44. Sarah Zukerman Daly, *Organized Violence after Civil War: The Geography of Recruitment in Latin America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

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APPENDIX

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