

KEY DRIVERS FOR STRATEGY ADOPTION BY NON-STATE ACTORS IN INTRA-STATE CONFLICTS. A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF FARC IN COLOMBIA AND THE SYRIAN OPPOSITION

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ABSTRACT

Non-state actors have been seen to adopt various forms of both violent and non-violent strategies in order to pursue their goals. Violent and non-violent strategies offer various tactics to compete and cooperate with the state to solve grievances. However, often the reasons for specific strategy adoption depend on state actions. If the state is to block access to the institutional apparatus, non-state actors are forced to adopt extra-institutional means. To analyse the decision-making process of non-state actors, this paper draws from a comparative case study approach as this allows the use of empirical evidence to identify key events. The cases selected for this investigation are the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the Syrian opposition. These movements have existed since 1964 and 2011 respectively, in this time these non-state actors have adapted their violent and non-violent strategies depending on various factors such as the actions of the incumbent state, potential for mobilisation and collective action, and the role of third-party actors in granting legitimacy and material support for non-state actors. The study concludes that for non-state actors to engage in sustained violent strategies three key variables must be positive; oppressive responses from the government, a degree of legitimacy afforded to a group either by international or domestic sources and a reliable supply of material resources.

Keywords: Non-State Actors, Strategy Adoption, FARC, Syrian Opposition, Non-Violent Strategies, Collective Action, Mobilisation, Third-Party Actors

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to ascertain why some non-state actors opt for non-violent strategies while others choose extremely violent strategies in the pursuit of their overall objectives in intra-state conflicts. In doing so this paper expands upon existing literature by looking specifically into select case studies. It is argued that strategy adoption by non-state actors is usually a result of a combination of influencing circumstances and external actors that pressure a group to pursue a violent or non-violent path. This process is highly case dependent on variables such as geography, the incumbent state type and behaviour, and third-party actors. Thus, a non-state actor's process of strategy adoption is unique due to their specific circumstances; however, similarities can be drawn between different instances of strategy adoption.

In order to assess why non-state actors implement particular strategies, it is necessary to discuss key concepts within the existing literature as well as understand in what way violent and non-violent strategies can be empirically observed. In addition, a discussion of current theoretical arguments will frame a comparative case study analysis of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the Syrian Opposition. This paper will analyse the key drivers of strategy adoption for these groups, drawing on theoretical arguments and additional reference to other movements.

THEORETICAL DISCUSSION

Key concepts

Conflict between states and non-state actors can generally be observed in four main categories. These categories are usually in response to state actions that are deemed negative by a resisting group, these categories as outlined by Véronique Dudouet (2013; pp. 402). In the first category, groups may utilise

non-conflictual responses. This occurs when a group faces contentious actions by another group or the state and chooses not to respond. The second category, 'conflict resolution', whereby the state and non-state actors can resolve their grievances peacefully and without contention. However, where conflict cannot be resolved, a group can seek changes through the institutional procedures of the state. This third category, 'institutional procedures' can take the form of lobbying, existing legislation that accommodates political action to solve grievances, and litigation, which uses the justice system to resolve conflict (Bouwen and McCown, 2007). While this could be said to be the most desirable way to resolve conflict, this approach is subject to ethnic biases and barriers to certain ethnic groups' participation in political systems (Thurber, 2018). Conversely, if these characteristics are absent, such as in authoritarian regimes or states with high levels of corruption, groups will have limited access to political systems in order to effect change. In addition, if groups are subjected to intrusion by the state into their affairs, repression of group norms, or violent behaviour of the state, groups may resort to the fourth category, 'collective action', which could take the form of violent or non-violent strategies (Thomas and Louis, 2013).

Violent collective action can be defined, in contrast to non-violent collective action, as a distinct political group committing organised attacks against a state or other political groups with deliberate use of weaponry (Dudouet, 2013: 403). Groups that adopt a violent approach use strategies such as sabotage, guerrilla movements, civil war, and terrorist attacks, and are not limited to any one of these strategies. In fact, it is common to see groups utilise multiple strategies depending on their situation. Non-violent collective action is typically adopted by an organised popular resistance to government or de facto government authority, either deliberately or by necessity. Non-violent strategies refer to those that deliberately and effectively reject the use of weaponry (Shuman et al., 2020).

Empirical observations

Violent collective action can be empirically observed in

coordinated acts of violence that specifically target a political entity, which in most cases is the state. These include terror attacks for which a particular identifiable group takes responsibility (Oberschall, 2004), guerrilla movements that noticeably impact the economic output of the incumbent state, and disruption to state infrastructure via sabotage (McCormick and Giordano, 2007). These acts are the stamp of a movement that possesses either insufficient popular support or access to material resources, otherwise, the violent collective action could manifest itself in the form of civil war. Civil war can be empirically observed through the creation of a new institutional apparatus by the rebels and the absence or replacement of state authorities and institutions, such as the police and military (Arjona, 2008).

Non-violent actions, as previously mentioned, can take the form of any action that seeks political change without the endorsed and practical use of violence. Therefore, there are a myriad of potential indicators that could be observed displaying this in action. However, most common indicators can be identified as boycotts, strikes, protests, marches, and petitions (Welzel, 2006). Some of these indicators could mostly be observed in Gandhi's Indian independence movement against British rule in the 20th century. The use of such non-violent strategies allowed the Satyagrahi, or civil resister movement, to pressure the far more conventionally powerful British state into political concession (Gandhi, 1930, as cited in Dittmer and Sharp, 2014: 52). This movement employed marches, non-cooperation, boycotting imported British goods, and hunger strikes. Ultimately, the British state made concessions as this non-cooperation movement became increasingly costly to manage (Scalmer, 2017).

Theoretical debate: reasons for the adopting violent strategies

A potential rationale for groups adopting violent strategies in particular is that violent strategies

increase the likelihood of objectives being achieved (Kydd and Walter, 2006). Kydd and Walter's (2006) argument focuses on insurgent movements, which found greater success when employing violent strategies, as demonstrated by Arab insurgencies against British rule prior to decolonisation. In this case, insurgents were able to achieve their goals of ending British rule by utilising a strategy of attrition designed to convince the British leadership that the increasing costs of retaining colonial control over the territory would become untenable. Kydd and Walter (2006: 51) also conveyed the effectiveness of violent acts in attracting attention to grievances from the international community as well as rallying support from the domestic population. The responses of the state can be a key factor in creating sympathy for the movement in the domestic population, particularly when it involves retributive violence. This can result in indiscriminate repression due to insurgents being difficult to identify within a population. State retributive violence often impacts civilians not affiliated with the insurgency movement, and can inadvertently lead to increased support as more individuals and communities become disenfranchised by the state. Furthermore, state retributive violence can attract attention, sympathy, and support from the international community. This can lead to international condemnation of the incumbent state, along with increasing recruitment potential for the movement as domestic and foreign populations become disenfranchised by the incumbent state (Mironova, 2021). The use of violence also aids in inter-insurgent conflict, as committing violent attacks raises their profile and thus increases attractiveness and recruitment, allowing one non-state actor to outcompete competitors (Bakke et al., 2012).

Kydd and Walters' (2006) argument that violence increases the effectiveness of strategies pursued by non-state actors is backed up with empirical examples. However, it is considered problematic by some scholars, as it could be said to fail to recognise the potential of non-violent strategies. For example, Chenoweth and Stephan (2008) challenged the assumption that the potency of violent strategies is more effective than non-violent strategies utilising large-N data and case study analysis, which yielded

the success rates of non-violent and violent movements at 53% and 26%, respectively (Stephan and Chenoweth, 2008: 8). The potential reason behind this lies in legitimacy. For example, it could be argued that in the post-9/11 world, some armed groups were marginalised because western states were unlikely to endorse or support such movements. This unwillingness of the West to endorse violent movements is exemplified by a falling rate of civil wars that result in negotiated settlements as a lack of support for armed groups to continue fighting (Howard and Stark, 2018). In addition, domestic populations may be averse to an armed group and unlikely to commit support (Schutte, 2014). Therefore, non-violent approaches allow for legitimacy in domestic and international communities, as a rejection of violent tactics allows a movement to be more widely accepted. Additionally, Chenoweth and Stephan (2008) argue that, domestically, this can encourage broader participation in the movement, as barriers to entering and leaving the movement are much lower than committing to participation in organised violence. This results in ordinary people engaging with the movement, thus generating wider popular support, and in so doing, alienating the incumbent regime. If a regime chooses to respond to non-violent movements with violence, it may find that support for the movement grows both internationally and domestically with the provision of funds and other support from third-party actors, whilst pressure mounts by way of penalties for the incumbent regime (Pierskalla, 2010). However, sanctions by the international community may yield negative results for the movement as well as the regime. Additionally, the character of the regime and its choices can also impact the success of a non-violent movement. Consider the authoritarian responses the Chinese government adopted during the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989, where non-violent strategies were thwarted through the use of violence (Benewick, 1995). The state's use of violence generated a risk to life for protesters, increasing the barriers to participation and the unwillingness of protesters to combat the state. Nonetheless, both

arguments discussed above provide some level of insight into why groups may take a certain strategic course.

While Chenoweth and Stephan (2008) make a compelling case for the effectiveness of non-violent movements, there are limitations to this argument. These become apparent when discussing secessionist movements, which were found to have little success when utilising non-violent actions. There are three main avenues open for secessionist movements to pursue their goals: institutional participation, extra-institutional non-violence, and extra-institutional violence. Secessionist movements are highly case dependent and may display a mixed use of these options (Griffiths and Wesser, 2019). Non-violent and violent extra-institutional methods mirror those of non-violent and violent collective action. An example to illustrate this is the secessionist movement in Kosovo. Initially adopting non-violent strategies, the movement saw little to no results, which caused growing frustration and led to fringe groups breaking away from the main movement, such as the Kosovo Liberation Army. Hence, the group opted for the adoption of violent strategies. Initially, these strategies took the form of small hit and run attacks on Yugoslav government and military targets. As the group grew in capacity over time, they began to conduct larger symbolic attacks on the then Serbian army. These symbolic attacks aimed to generate support domestically by dismantling the myth of the Serbian army's invincibility (Mulaj, 2008). It was this change of strategical repertoires that garnered international attention, ultimately leading to an intervention from the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) (Maliqi, 2012).

However, Griffiths and Wesser (2019), using a large-N

data and case study approach similar to Chenoweth and Stephan (2008), found no evidence that violent methods aided secessionist movements in reaching their goals, which is in contrast to the previously-discussed literature. However, it is important to note that Griffiths and Wesser (2019) look specifically at secessionist movements, whereas Chenoweth and Stephan (2008) consider all movements. Griffiths and Wesser (2019) also stressed that the success of a strategy is context-specific, asserting that no secessionist movements have found success challenging a contiguous state without utilising an institutional approach to some degree. Furthermore, a determining factor in the success of non-violent strategies often rests on the movements' ability to gain the support of state institutions, such as the security forces. Moreover, it can be achieved by existing or current members of security forces joining or being sympathetic to the movement. This is significant, as it neutralises the state's ability to use force to curb momentum; any coercive action against the movement may result in growing support for the movement from within the security forces (Nepstad, 2013a).

An important area of consideration for this discussion is why non-state actors' initial campaigns seek political change. The basis of any movement can be argued to be legitimate claims and grievances – the issues that cause the movement to be necessary and to progress (White et al., 2015). However, claims alone are not sufficient. For any movement to gain traction, there must be a degree of popular support to encourage mobilisation, which in turn impacts the availability and nature of resources.



Figure 1: "The Path from Claims to Mobilization" (White et al., 2015: 475)

As highlighted above in Figure 1 by White et al (2015), the availability of resources is a determining factor in the extent of mobilisation. In addition, the nature of the resources will play a role in the strategy a movement will take. Resources of mass mobilisation, such as communication networks, and popular support will often result in non-violent methods, however, could also be utilised in violent methods. This is adopted in order to keep barriers to participation low, thus not alienating those unable to commit to high barriers of entry and exit. Furthermore, resources of a military nature, such as weapons, will encourage insurgency, but will typically involve fewer direct participants due to barriers to participation. This approach is highly dependent on third-party actors, as military resources are expensive and difficult to obtain in large quantities. In this regard, the extent of the military resources available will impact the level of insurgency, such as whether insurgency takes the form of civil war, guerrilla warfare, terrorism, or sabotage.

Reflection

From this discussion, there are several reasons why non-state actors may adopt violent or non-violent strategies. The reasons that appear to be the most influential include the state's behaviour and how it deals with non-state actors. Furthermore, the state's capability and willingness to combat non-state actors is pivotal. It is fair to argue that stronger states, i.e., those with robust institutional hierarchies, can choose to accommodate movements within their political process to resolve grievances or block institutional approaches. If blocked, this then forces movements to adopt non-violent extra-institutional approaches. These seem to rarely turn violent, as the state is militarily and institutionally too powerful to be challenged in open warfare, and the state is less likely to resort to violence as this would damage international reputations. Secondly, resource availability and popular support are major determinants in behaviour and the adaptation of certain strategies. In addition, the pursuit of third-party allies is critical to prove legitimacy or draw international sympathy and support. Finally perceptions of the movement are important

domestically and internationally. Changing attitudes to the movement can demand pragmatic reassessments of current tactics and resource avenues. While the highlighted factors are important, one must also consider internal non-state actor changes. Changes to leadership can result in a change in strategic repertoire and the introduction of new tactics. This, however, may also result in the splintering of the movement, as the absence of the previous leader allows for dissidents to pursue their own goals.

CASE SELECTION: FARC IN COLOMBIA AND THE SYRIAN OPPOSITION

This study will take on a comparative case study approach to assess the reasons why non-state actors have adopted the approaches they have, the underlying factors that have influenced these decisions, and to what extent they have been successful. To this end, the first case study that has been selected is FARC. This example was selected as the group has a long history dating from 1964 until the present that provides insight into their behaviour over time. Beginning as a militant group, FARC adopted violent strategies as a means of protecting communities from state violence. However, in recent years, they have disarmed and joined the Colombian Congress as a political party. This makes for an interesting case study, as their tactics have changed over time, going from violent guerrilla tactics to one where institutional strategies were utilised. The second comparative example is the Syrian opposition movement, which started as peaceful protests during the Arab Spring in 2011. This movement likewise changed its strategy, albeit in a different way. The Syrian opposition movement is engaged in a violent civil war that continues to this day. It is understood that the Syrian opposition movement is a vague designation, as the rebels comprise many different factions and stakeholders. The breakaway of dissident groups demonstrated the fractionalisation of power within the movement, which prompted changes in tactics and inter-movement conflict. Both examples provide a very different set of circumstances that have influenced non-state actor behaviour.

FARC IN COLOMBIA

The Revolutionary Armed Forces in Colombia (FARC) came into being in response to the Colombian government's attempts to bring largely self-governing regions under government control in 1964. In this year, a government assault on the community of Marquetalia, with its mere 48 armed fighters, took place. These fighters fled and became the founding members of FARC. Thus, the key grievance of this movement is associated with violent government actions against a self-governing community (Black, 2011). However, FARC was unable to achieve its goals due to a lack of resources and popular support because of the communities' isolated location in rural Colombia. In addition, early FARC could not achieve their goals via institutional means due to this lack of resources and wider public support (O'Sullivan, 1983). Consequently, the best strategic option apparent to the group was violent opposition and an attempt to make the state's continued control of their territory too costly to maintain. In addition to geographical constraints, a lack of military resources led to guerrilla and sabotage tactics, as they could not compete with government forces in open warfare (Jones and Johnson, 2012), a pattern that is presented in the theoretical discussion by White et al (2015) in their paths to mobilisation.

In the 1980s, FARC's circumstances altered due to changes in the international realm. With the 'coca boom' in the 1970s and 1980s, the group was able to capitalise upon cocaine production in its areas of operation (Norman, 2017). By further consolidating this resource, they were able to develop a revenue stream that allowed them to obtain more resources such as weapons and adopt a new strategic approach (Labrousse, 2005). FARC sent personnel to Vietnam and the Soviet Union for military training, allowing them access to more sophisticated tactics of warfare (Farah and Reyes, 2016; Marks, 2002). This combination of enhanced know-how from the return of trained personnel along with material capability allowed FARC to establish territorial control over towns and cities, and to form a functional economic and infrastructure system.

In 1985, it could be argued that FARC saw some success from their violent actions, as they had become the de facto government of their area of territorial control. The Colombian government allowed the group to become a political party in tandem with the People's Army (UP) (Porch, 2011). This period of the group's history is interesting, as they continued to adopt a violent collective action approach as well as institutional means. This may have been due to the group's inherent distrust of centralised government demonstrated by the retention of arms, whilst simultaneously pursuing legitimacy. In addition, the group potentially changed objectives to gain support in political circles in order to accumulate more power and influence. Moreover, FARC's military capabilities allowed its leaders to control the drug trade revenues, enforce protection payments, and keep rival groups and government forces at bay (Smith and Hooks, 2014). Therefore, the leaders were presented with additional financial incentives to retain de facto governance of their territory. It could be argued that protecting these avenues of wealth pushed groups further towards violent behaviours (Norman, 2018). However, in the case of FARC, the coca trade is a tool to continue their proto-state actions, for it allowed the group to engage in rebel governance of their controlled territory: providing services and public goods, but also expanding their insurgent activities (Phelan, 2019a). However, one could argue that FARC's involvement in the drug trade is perhaps not a cause of violent strategy adoption, but rather a result of being isolated from international third-party actors, such as states and international organisations, that are willing to provide substantial support, creating the necessity for alternative sources of funding.

In the 2000s, the Colombian government increased its military actions against FARC with the aid of international third-party actors. These actions forced a strategic withdrawal by FARC (Ospina Ovalle, 2017). This demonstrates that third-party actions combined with changes in leadership in the Colombian government were able to impact FARC's strategic choices. As the group withdrew, they resorted to past strategies of insurgency and assassinations to ensure the group's survival and regain lost power. Ultimately, this led to increased negative perceptions of the group both in Colombia and internationally,

something that was later demonstrated by the 2008 anti-FARC rallies (Navarro, 2019). The combination of these factors and the involvement of the United Nations, which had previously condemned the group, resulted in a ceasefire in 2015 (Clayton et al., 2021). The role of the United Nations was to provide guarantees that commitments would be kept. This took the form of a tripartite monitoring and verification mechanism that included members from both FARC and the Colombian government along with United Nations personnel (Thomson, 2020). Since then, the group has been participating in the Colombian institutional framework to further their goals, and they officially disarmed in 2018 to the UN (Phelan, 2019b). This example has shed light on the way third-party actors can act as a peace broker, holding each side accountable and allowing change from violent to non-violent strategies. However, due to the frustration of their objectives not being attained institutionally, FARC dissidents have resorted to violent strategies once again – a move that has been condemned by the FARC political movement (Thomson, 2020). This demonstrates credible commitment issues are playing a role in the continuation of violent strategies (Thyne, 2017).

SYRIAN OPPOSITION

The Syrian Opposition has its roots in the Arab Spring seeking political reform in the form of regime change due to a series of grievances stemming from complicated interrelated factors such as religious and sociopolitical factors and economic decline (Gleick, 2014).

The movement possessed popular support and sufficient resources in the form of communication via social media, allowing leaders to coordinate protests that resulted in mass mobilisation (Smidi and Shahin, 2017). In this instance, drawing on the arguments of White et al (2015), the appropriate approach for the movement was non-violent collective action, as it possessed popular support; however, due to the authoritarian nature of the incumbent regime, it was unable to pursue goals through institutional processes. Protest actions were blocked by the regime in the form of reprisals (Davies, 2014). By doing this, the regime increased the barriers to participation in non-violent protests through the threat of violence which thus encouraged the adoption of alternative violent action by protesters. In doing so, Syrian president Assad caused his own security forces to side with the protesters, demonstrating the argument that state violence often backfires when used against non-violent groups (Nepstad, 2013b).

As Assad still retained a portion of the security forces, the protesters and defected security personnel could not successfully force concessions. Due to continued violence from the Assad regime and increasingly violent responses from protesters and defected military, a full civil war broke out between the Assad regime and the Syrian opposition. To understand the reasons for the change from non-violent protests seeking reforms to violent rebel movements seeking to topple an incumbent regime, it is useful to use White et al.'s (2015) model, as seen in Figure 2.

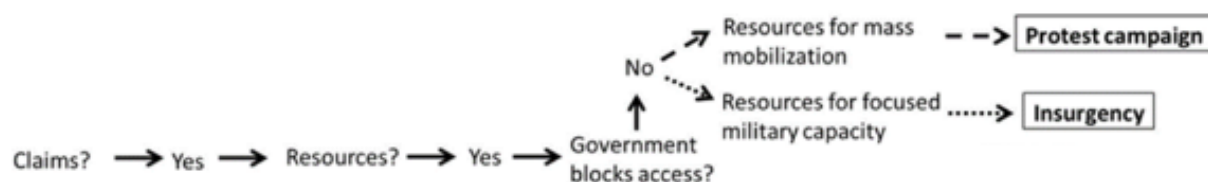


Figure 2: "Paths to Mass Mobilization" (Adapted from White et al., 2015: 480)

Figure 2 illustrates that as long as a government does not block access to mobilisation, (opposition) movements will be able to mobilise with appropriate resources. While the movement in Syria did mobilise, the government blocked access by inflicting violent measures on ordinary people.

This was also observed to some extent in the Bahrain uprising, which too was inspired by the Arab Spring, with the use of imported military deterrents from Saudi Arabia. As such, the protesters were unable to win over security forces (Nuruzzaman, 2013).

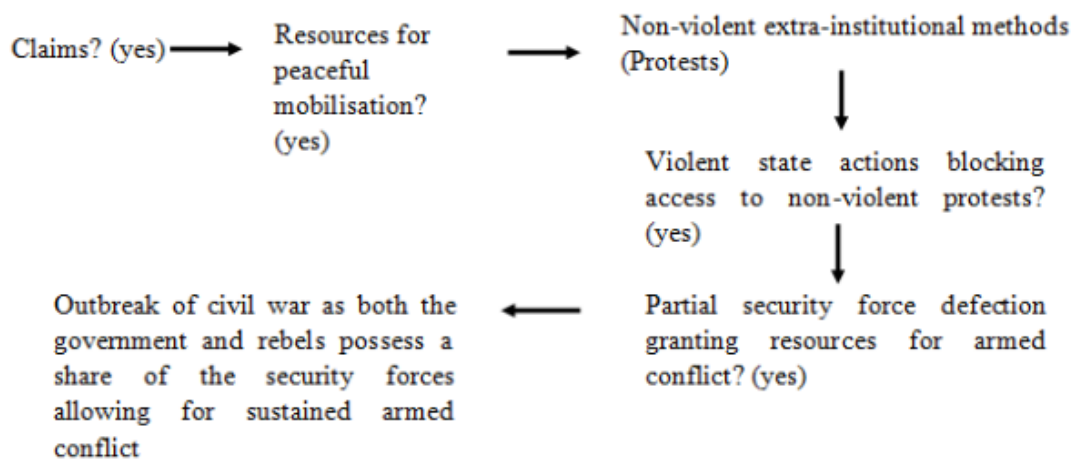


Figure 3: Path to armed resistance of the Syrian opposition

In contrast, figure 3 shows the path to violent mobilisation in Syria, displaying that Assad's methods of violent repression did stop protests, but opened a new strategic option for the rebels of armed resistance enabled by the military resources from the defected security forces. Therefore, the use of violence from the Syrian opposition to achieve their goals was due to the infeasibility of seeking solutions to grievances via institutional systems and non-violent collective action in the form of protests. This violent repression caused the defection of security forces and ended non-violent protests through increased risk to life, leading to the adoption of violent conflict due to the available resources and willingness to compete with the regime. In the case of Syria, the rebels who acted in a violent manner did not, in the views of the West, decrease their legitimacy (Brown, 2014), as was the case with FARC dissidents. This can be argued to be a result of the chain of events resulting from the ruling regime initiating violence. However, when considering the role of third-party support, one can argue in line with Chenoweth and Stephan (2008) that initial non-violent movements gain legitimacy by attracting international support.

The Syrian conflict is known to be incredibly complex

and cannot be fully analysed in a single paper. It has commanded a high degree of international attention, and the actors involved have changed the strategy and composition of the Syrian Opposition over time. This international attention is a key driver in the continuation and improbability of the Syrian Opposition utilising a peaceful strategy (Cengiz, 2020). This is because the conflict has, in essence, become a power struggle between Middle Eastern states competing for regional influence, major power competition between the United States of America and Russia, and a hotbed for radicalistic movements (Marshall, 2016). Some have argued this high degree of international attention is important, as the regional and major powers flood the conflict with resources and military expertise to continue the conflict (Hughes, 2014). Furthermore, a negotiated peace settlement in Syria is nearly impossible, as the influence of third-party actors has facilitated a deep fragmentation of the rebels. Frustrated by their inability to achieve their goals, different groups started to develop their own sub-goals, which allowed third parties to support different dissident groups and resulted in each growing in capability. A similar pattern could be observed in the previous discussion of FARC. The most prominent example of this is the

so-called 'Islamic State Iraq and Syria' (ISIL). This group facilitated the breakaway of the more radical elements of the rebel movement based on ideological extremism. This created the opportunity to pursue their own objectives, incentivised by support from international networks, such as Al-Qaeda, which widened recruitment potential to a global level.

CONCLUSION

The case studies outlined in this paper demonstrate the myriad of factors that cause non-state actors to adopt violent or non-violent strategies. Both movements were the result of state oppression and resulting grievances. However, their differing courses of action reflect the argument of White et al. (2015) that non-state actor strategies are a result of efforts that act to gather support and resources. However, as seen in these examples, the role of the incumbent state is crucial in determining non-state actor strategy. In both cases, the non-state actor only became violent due to state repression and violence, and this continuation of violence stems from external factors as well as internal factors. In the case of FARC, an external factor was the demand for coca within the international drug trade. In Syria, it was the result of third-party actors providing resources.

Fragmentation has been identified in both cases. Overall, this was due to the inability of movements to achieve results, causing dissidents to pursue differing strategic options – although in Syria, this is exacerbated by third parties. This is also reflected in the case of FARC, which was able to engage in negotiations far into the movement's lifetime. On the other hand, the Syrian opposition was so fractured that any meaningful peace negotiations were unlikely to see even remote success. Consequently, the possibility of Syrian rebels pivoting to non-violent means is unlikely due to the threat of violence from both the incumbent state and other non-state and third-party actors. The role of international actors is complex in both examples and also contradictory – the international community acted as a peace broker in Colombia, whereas in Syria, they have been said to drive the conflict, causing fragmentation and conflict proliferation. Nonetheless, while the existing literature does reflect many of the key issues as to why non-

state actors adopt the strategies they do, it is crucial to recognise that these actors are dynamic and highly case-dependent. While there are many similarities in the causes of strategy adoption, there is no guarantee that similar factors as seen in this paper's examples will apply to other contexts due to this case dependency. Despite this case dependency, it can be argued that both the FARC and Syrian examples display the general importance of three key factors for non-state actors to enact sustained violent strategies. These are violent and oppressive responses from the government, a degree of legitimacy attributed to the non-state actor from domestic and international sources and, finally, a reliable supply of material resources to enable violent actions. If these factors are positive, violent actions are likely to take place.

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