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**How civil conflicts end: Fragmented and competitive armed
oppositions and the outcomes of civil conflicts (1989-2017)**

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Abstract

In the last three decades, civil conflicts have become more complex and intractable than in the past. One reason for this development is the proliferation of rebel groups within the armed oppositions involved in these conflicts. Today, armed oppositions are more likely to be movements composed of loosely connected or competing rebel groups rather than unitary blocs. Yet, despite their centrality to the dynamics of conflict, different structural characteristics *of* and competitive and power relations *within* armed oppositions have not been taken in adequate account as possible predictors of civil conflict outcomes. To further our knowledge and cover this gap in the scholarship, the dissertation investigates how and to what extent the fragmentation, internal competition, and internal power distribution of armed oppositions affect civil conflict termination.

The dissertation develops a theory that sees the fragmentation *of*, a moderate and severe competition, and a dispersed distribution of power *within* armed oppositions as having an impact on the fighting effectiveness of the rebels, the countereffort of the government, bargaining problems, and the intensity of the conflict. This impact shapes, in turn, how civil conflicts end. This theory is tested with a nested analysis consisting of a large-N and a small-N analysis. Through the large-N analysis, the dissertation demonstrates that, at a general level, these characteristics of armed oppositions indeed affect how civil conflicts end. Through the small-N analysis, the dissertation further illustrates the causal mechanisms linking these characteristics to specific civil conflict outcomes.

With these findings, the dissertation makes two important contributions. First, it provides generalisable conclusions that remedy the limited generalisability of the scholarship on the phenomena under study. Second, it provides indications on how to resolve conflicts in which the involved oppositions are fragmented and bedevilled by internal competition, thus helping disentangle the proverbial complexity of multi-party civil conflicts.

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Introduction

In March 2011, thousands of protesters took the streets of the major Syrian cities demanding the resignation of the President Bashar al-Assad. Very soon, what started as a popular uprising in the context of the so-called Arab Spring, turned into a full-blown civil conflict involving several rebel groups contesting the authority of the Syrian regime. Between 2013 and 2015, more than 40 recognised rebel groups of different size were involved in the armed conflict with the regime as part of ISIS, al-Nusra, the Free Syrian Army, and the Syrian Democratic forces (Gade, Gabbay, *et al.* 2019, Gade, Hafez, *et al.* 2019). In the same year in which the Syrian civil conflict started, the government of Sudan was contested by as many as six rebel groups at the same time (Gleditsch *et al.* 2002, Pettersson and Eck 2018). In that year, South Sudan obtained the independence from Sudan but South Sudanese and Darfurian rebel groups, such as the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), and South Sudan Defence Movement (SSDM), were still involved in the conflict against the regime of Khartoum. More recently, in the context of another decades-long civil conflict, rebel groups such as the March 23 Movement (M23), CNPSC, and Kamuina Nsapu were all fighting the regime of the Democratic Republic of Congo at the same time. Between 2017 and 2018, at least six different rebel groups were active in a rebellion aimed at deposing the regime guided by Joseph Kabila (Gleditsch *et al.* 2002, Pettersson and Eck 2018). Beyond the duration, severity, and the strains left on civilian life, these civil conflicts have another clear element in common. At some point during each of these conflicts, there were multiple rebel groups simultaneously contesting the authority of the incumbent government.

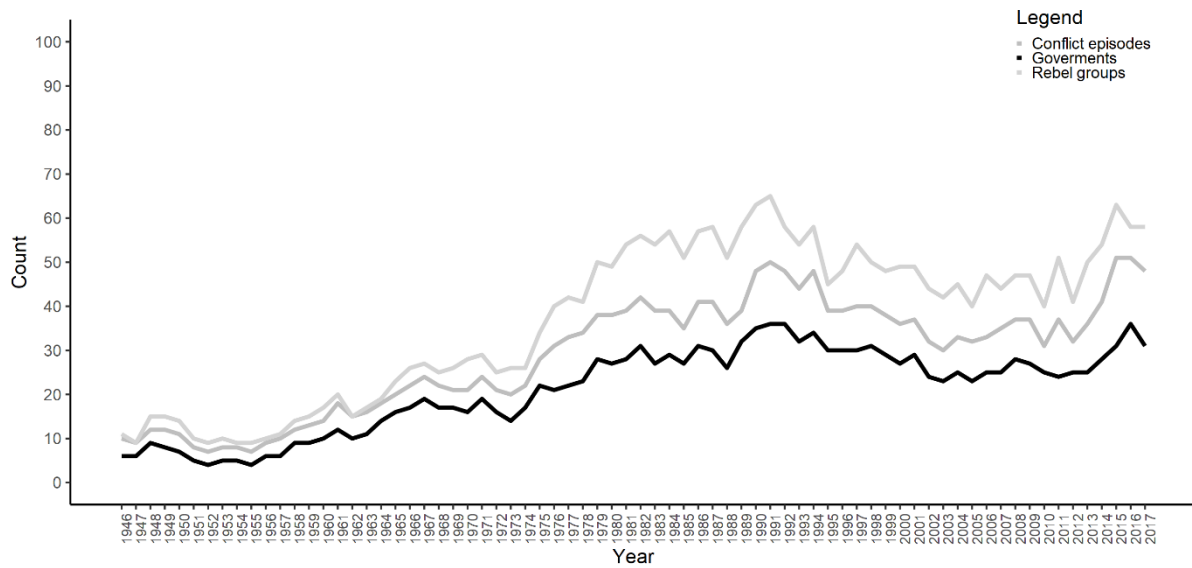
In the last three decades, civil conflicts have been characterised by the involvement of an ever-increasing number of actors. The involvement of third parties, such as states, international organisations, and different non-state actors, has surely complicated the dynamics of civil conflicts. However, it is the proliferation of rebel groups that has made these conflicts even

more violent, long-lasting, and intractable. The figure below reports – for any given year between 1946 and 2017 – the total number of governments involved in civil conflicts across the world (black line), the total number of civil conflict episodes that were being fought by these governments (dark grey line), and the total number of rebel groups involved in these very conflict episodes (light-grey line). The trend of the black line reveals that, in general, the number of states in which a civil conflict was being fought increased with time, crudely suggesting that the number of civil conflicts also increased with time. This trend is further corroborated by the direction of the dark grey line, which indicates that not only the number of civil conflicts increased with time, but also that many countries increasingly began to host more than one civil conflict episode at the same time.¹ More importantly, Figure 1 shows how, especially toward the end of the Cold War, the number of rebel groups involved in civil conflicts started to grow. If, for example, in 1947 a total of six states were fighting in as many civil conflict episodes involving a total of nine rebel groups, in 1989 a total of 32 states were fighting in 39 civil conflict episodes involving a staggering total of 58 rebel groups. This example underscores that, even if in the decades before incumbent governments were often opposed by more than one rebel group at a time, from the 1980s on it became more common for civil conflicts to involve *multiple* rebel groups at the same time.

As much as political parties, which are connected in broader political oppositions by the same basic objective of contesting the policies of the incumbent government, these multiple rebel groups are connected in broader armed oppositions by the basic objective of violently contesting the government over a certain incompatibility. As the data in Figure 1 imply, armed oppositions are rarely unitary and cohesive blocs. Rather, they are often composed of multiple coexisting and competing rebel groups. From the existing data on civil conflicts fought from

¹ Note that the number of conflict episodes is larger than the number of governments involved in civil conflicts because a government can be simultaneously involved in more than one conflict episode at once if these conflicts are fought over a different incompatibility.

Figure I.1: Governments and rebel groups involved in civil conflict episodes (1946-2017)



Note: Count of the total number of governments and rebel groups involved in civil conflict episodes per year, from 1946 to 2017. Data from 'UCDP Dyadic Dataset version 18.1, 1946-2017' (Gleditsch *et al.* 2002, Pettersson and Eck 2018). Data includes both high and low-intensity civil conflicts.

1946, it emerges that in at least half of them armed oppositions were fragmented at some point during the conflict, that is they were composed of multiple autonomous rebel groups simultaneously contesting the incumbent government (Gleditsch *et al.* 2002, Pettersson and Eck 2018, Walter 2019).

Yet, although the fragmentation of armed oppositions is a common characteristic of civil conflicts, it was only relatively recently that scholars have begun paying more attention to how it might affect the dynamics of these conflicts. Until not long ago, civil conflicts have been investigated through the lens of a predominantly state-centric approach. The attention directed toward the features of the states at conflict resulted in much less attention being paid to how the characteristics of the armed oppositions could affect the dynamics of civil conflicts (Cederman and Gleditsch 2009, Fjelde and Nilsson 2012, p. 605). Indeed, such an approach was also the result of a lack of fine-grained data that strongly limited the possibilities for conflict scholars to investigate how the activities and composition of the rebel side could affect the dynamics of these conflicts (Cederman and Gleditsch 2009). As a consequence, many

studies treated armed oppositions as unitary blocs, as if they were homogenous rebel sides rather than often a collection of multiple autonomous factions (see for example Mason and Fett 1996, Mason *et al.* 1999, Ayres 2001, Collier and Hoeffler 2004, Fearon 2004).

The last ten years have witnessed the blossoming of scholarly works focused on finding the root causes of rebel fragmentation and the impact it has on the dynamics of civil conflicts. In the latter respect, scholars have focused on assessing what impact rebel fragmentation has on the onset (Lawrence 2010, Cunningham 2013), duration (Findley and Rudloff 2012, Metternich and Wucherpfennig 2020), recurrence (Rudloff and Findley 2016), and expected levels of violence (Cunningham *et al.* 2012, Heger *et al.* 2012, Wood and Kathman 2015) of these conflicts. However, despite the relatively recent increase in the scholarship in this respect, the existing literature does not sufficiently explain how rebel fragmentation affects the termination of civil conflicts. In fact, the structural characteristics of armed oppositions, that is whether they are fragmented or not, have received limited attention by those scholars that focused on finding the determinants of civil conflict outcomes. Outcomes of civil conflicts have been mostly explained with variables related to the features of the state at conflict, the intervention of third parties, and the grievances and overall fighting capacity of the rebel side. So far, only few studies have attempted to explain how the fragmentation of armed oppositions might affect the chances of termination and the way in which civil conflicts terminate. Despite the important contribution of these studies, the existing scholarship falls short of providing generalisable conclusions on whether and how the fragmentation of armed oppositions affects conflict termination.

Seeing the rebel side of the conflict as an armed opposition opens up to an interpretation of it that is different from the ones adopted in many other studies on civil conflicts. If it is certainly reductive to see the rebel side as a monolithic bloc, so it is to approach it as a disconnected collection of rebel groups. Interpreting the rebel side as a monolithic bloc or as a

disconnected collection of rebel groups obscures the existence and importance of the relations that exist among groups connected by similar grievances. Instead, the interpretation of the rebel side as an armed opposition, potentially composed of multiple rebel groups connected by a shared incompatibility with the government, reveals the existence of relations among the groups that go beyond their simple contextual presence in the conflict environment. Rebel groups interact, cooperate, and adapt to what the other groups in the same conflict environment do. Sometimes, they even fight one another. How different relations among rebel groups that contest the same incompatibility affect the dynamics and termination of civil conflicts has been object of even more limited investigation. As a result, key questions on how competitive and power relations among rebel groups of the same armed opposition affect conflict termination remained unaddressed.

A limited knowledge of how the dynamics of civil conflicts may be influenced by differences in the structure of armed oppositions and in the competitive and power relations internal to them strongly limits our understanding of civil conflict processes and termination. For this reason, the dissertation takes on board these characteristics related to the structure of armed oppositions and to the competitive and power relations internal to them to shed light on the effects they have on civil conflict outcomes. More specifically, the dissertation aims to advance the existing knowledge in this respect by assessing *how and to what extent different armed oppositions' structural characteristics, like the fragmentation, and internal dynamics, like the competition and power distribution, affect the termination of civil conflicts.*

The main argument of the dissertation is that these characteristics of armed oppositions do indeed affect the termination of civil conflicts. In particular, it is argued that differences in these characteristics activate certain causal mechanisms that alter the dynamics of civil conflicts and, in turn, how they are likely to terminate. The dissertation develops a theory that sees the fragmentation *of*, a moderate and severe competition, and a dispersed distribution of

power *within* armed oppositions as having an impact on the fighting effectiveness of the rebels, the countereffort of the government, the bargaining problems that generally hinder negotiations, and the intensity of the conflict. As a consequence, it is argued that these characteristics contribute to altering the chances that a civil conflict terminates in either government victory, rebel victory, peace agreement, ceasefire, or low activity. The fragmentation of the armed opposition is expected, first, to reduce the overall fighting effectiveness of the armed opposition; second, to induce competition among the rebel groups over resources; third, to exacerbate bargaining problems between the government and the opposition; and fourth, to incentivise extremist behaviours by the rebel groups. Fragmentation, thus, is expected to positively affect the chances that civil conflicts end in government victory and negatively affect the chances they end in rebel victory, peace agreement, ceasefire, and low activity. Moderate levels of internal competition are expected to set in motion the very same causal mechanisms that fragmentation does, but with starker positive effects on the probability of observing government victory and starker negative effects on the probability of observing rebel victory, peace agreement, ceasefire, and low activity. Extreme levels of internal competition and a dispersed distribution of power, even though they activate the same causal mechanisms, are expected to have slightly different effects on the outcomes of civil conflicts. Compared to the fragmentation *of* and moderate levels of competition *within* armed oppositions, extreme levels of competition create the conditions for civil conflicts to be more likely to end for low activity. Considerations related to their own survival might induce the rebel groups to focus on the conflict against each other rather than the one against the government, forcing them to abandon the latter to pursue the former. A dispersed power distribution, instead, makes both conflict termination for low activity and in a ceasefire more likely to be observed, since equally strong rebel groups might feel forced to either negotiate their way out of or altogether abandon a stalemated conflict.

These theoretical expectations regarding the association of the characteristics of armed oppositions with certain civil conflict outcomes are tested through a nested analysis (Lieberman 2005). The nested analysis consists of a large-N analysis and a complementary small-N analysis. Considering the aim of the dissertation to reach generalisable conclusions for the phenomena under study, the burden of the empirical analysis is placed on the large-N analysis. The large-N analysis is carried out through a series of multilevel multinomial logistic regressions of all the civil conflicts occurred between 1989 and 2017 and is accompanied by a 3-fold cross-validation as a means to test the robustness of the statistical models. The large-N analysis is then followed by a small-N analysis, which complements the statistical analysis by putting its results to further test and by providing a more nuanced illustration of the findings that have emerged from it. The small-N analysis is carried out through a qualitative assessment of how the independent variables of the study have affected the prospects of conflict termination of four civil conflict episodes occurred in Uganda.

The dissertation demonstrates that differences in the structure, levels of internal competition, and types of internal power distribution of armed oppositions do play a role in affecting civil conflict termination. Although the analysis does not find these characteristics of armed oppositions to be significantly associated with each possible outcome of civil conflicts, it does provide robust findings and nuanced illustrations of how they affect the prospects that certain specific conflict outcomes occur. The findings indicate that the fragmentation of armed oppositions contributes to the intractability of civil conflicts, for conflict termination in either negotiated settlements or for lack of armed activity is less likely to be observed when the opposition is fragmented. Internal competition is instead found to be beneficial for the governments at conflict since their chances to achieve final victory or to find a negotiated solution increase when the armed opposition is internally competitive. Conflicts in which the

rebel groups of the opposition are at relative power parity are instead found to be more likely to end either in a ceasefire or due to lack of armed activity.

With the findings briefly outlined above, the dissertation makes two important contributions, in academic and policy terms. First, in academic terms, by finding that the fragmentation, internal competition, and internal power distribution of armed oppositions are important predictors of civil conflict outcomes, the dissertation provides generalisable findings and widely applicable conclusions regarding the impact of these important characteristics of armed oppositions on civil conflict termination. Generalisable findings in this respect are largely unavailable in the existing scholarship on conflict termination. In doing so, the dissertation not only contributes to the relatively recent strand of scholarship that adopts a disaggregated approach to the study of civil conflicts, but also helps disentangle the proverbial complexity of multiparty civil conflicts. As a result, it moves beyond some common wisdom surrounding the perceived association of these attributes of armed oppositions with certain outcomes of civil conflicts by providing empirically solid indications. Second, in policy terms, the dissertation indicates whether civil conflicts in which the armed opposition is internally divided can be resolved, either on the ground or at negotiation table, by the involved parties and what level of commitment is required from them to do so. In doing so, the dissertation highlights what is the best course of action for the actors involved to drive the conflict toward the most favourable outcome.

The dissertation is structured as follows. After the introduction, Chapter 1 reviews the existing research on civil conflict termination, focusing in particular on the scholarship that assessed how the characteristics and behaviour of the actors involved in a civil conflict can affect how it terminates. In the end, the chapter demonstrates how the existing research has not taken in adequate account as explanatory factors of conflict termination the differences in the structure, levels of internal competition, and internal power distribution of armed oppositions.

Chapter 2, once conceptualised the core concepts of the dissertation, develops a theory of the expected impact on civil conflict outcomes of these characteristics of armed oppositions. In this chapter, the hypotheses to be tested with the empirical analysis are formalised. In Chapter 3, the research design of the dissertation and the methodological choices made for the empirical analysis are discussed. In Chapter 4 the empirical analysis begins. The chapter reports the results of the large-N analysis and provides an assessment of their robustness. The large-N analysis is followed, in Chapter 5, by the small-N analysis. After having clarified the case selection procedure, the chapter delves into the Ugandan civil conflict to assess how the characteristics of the armed opposition have affected the prospects of termination of four separate civil conflict episodes. In Chapter 6, the findings of the entire empirical analysis are discussed and interpreted to provide an answer to the question that the dissertation set out to answer. Finally, the conclusion chapter pieces together the dissertation to highlight the contribution that it makes and suggest new avenues of research.

1. The determinants of civil conflicts outcomes

Up until the early 1990s, there was little systematic knowledge of what determines why civil conflicts end in a certain way. An influential book on civil conflict termination, one of the first comprehensive works on the subject, hints to the state of the art of the literature on civil conflict outcomes in the early 1990s. The editor of the book admitted that, by the time of the planning of the book, he and scholars involved in the book project were adventuring in a barely explored territory (Licklider 1993, p. 11). Although several seminal studies on the determinants of rebellions and civil conflict outbreak had already been published by that time (Gurr 1970, Tilly 1978, Skocpol 1979, Goodwin and Skocpol 1989), the study of civil conflicts was still ancillary to the study of interstate conflicts. It was with the end of the Cold war that the issue of civil conflict outcomes gained an unprecedented attention. The liberal turn of international politics, along with the increased involvement of the UN in peace operations, sparked a wave of scholarship that focused on determining what factors could favour or impair the peaceful resolution of civil conflicts. From the 1990s on, although at a slower pace than the scholarship on other dynamics of civil conflicts, the literature on outcomes has kept growing steadily.

Since then, the scholarship on conflict termination has identified several factors as determinants of civil conflict outcomes. The aim of this chapter is not to give an overview of the entire scholarship on civil conflict termination and review each possible factor that affects how these conflicts end. Rather, it aims to summarise the existing research on how the characteristics and behaviour of the actors involved in a civil conflict can affect its outcome and, finally, show that so far some important characteristics of armed oppositions have not been taken in adequate account as explanatory factors of conflict termination.

Three categories of explanatory factors are discussed to delineate the boundaries and state of the art of the literature in this respect. First, the chapter summarises the body of research concerned with how the characteristics of the state at conflict affect conflict termination.

Second, it reviews the literature on the relation between the interventions of external actors and conflict outcomes. Third, it discusses the scholarship on how factors related to the capacity and grievances of the rebels affect conflict termination. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion that highlights why the structural characteristics of the armed oppositions at conflict, along with the dynamics of competition and power within these oppositions, have not received sufficient consideration as possible determinants of civil conflict outcomes and why an empirical investigation in this respect is necessary.

1.1. How civil conflicts end: the role of state capacity

The existing scholarship has largely focused on the features of the states involved in civil conflicts to seek explanations for their outbreak, duration, or severity. Likewise, though to a lesser extent, conflict scholars have looked very closely at the features of the state to seek explanations of how civil conflicts end. In particular, conflict scholars have looked at the *capacity* of the state at conflict to understand whether it plays a role in shaping conflict termination. Different measures have been used in the literature to convey state capacity but, as some scholars aptly noted, the conceptualisation of state capacity is not an easy task (for a detailed discussion see Hendrix 2010, Sobek 2010). Researchers largely agree that the capacity of the state cannot be conveyed with a single measure and that it must be understood as a multidimensional concept. From a review of the literature it emerges that scholars have focused mainly on two dimensions of state capacity to provide an explanation of civil conflict outcomes: the political-institutional capacity and the military capacity.

1.1.1. *The political-institutional capacity of the state and the outcomes of civil conflicts*

A significant amount of literature has investigated whether the political-institutional capacity of the state involved in a civil conflict can affect how the conflict terminates. In this body of literature, the political-institutional capacity of a state is normally proxied with the regime type. The rationale behind this choice is that different regimes – democracies, autocracies, and anocracies – have a set of inherent characteristics that might affect the dynamics of civil conflicts. Only a handful of studies have tested directly whether the regime type has an impact on the outcomes of civil conflicts, but many cross-national studies have included the variable regime type in their large-N analysis. While solid correlations have been found between the probability of civil conflict outbreak and the type of regime of the state at conflict (Hegre *et al.* 2001, Fearon and Laitin 2003, but see Vreeland 2008), whether the type of regime could also be considered a predictor of civil conflict outcomes is strongly debated.

One long-established position in the literature sees democracies, compared to autocracies, as inherently incapable of countering a rebellion (Mack 1975, Krepinevich 1988, Merom 2003).² Democracies are believed to be more prone to defeat in civil conflicts because the nature of the regime itself imposes some fundamental constraints on the measures they could adopt to counter a rebellion. In particular, as violent escalations and violence against civilians are not seen favourably by democratic public opinions, democracies are strongly limited with regard to the coercive measures they can adopt to counter a rebellion (Zhukov 2007). In addition, the casualty- and cost-sensitivity of the public opinion does not only influence what the leaders of democracies could do in the realm of civil conflicts, but also for how long they could persevere with the armed effort against the rebels (Galula 1964, pp. 44–45, Horne 1970, pp. 545–548, Merom 2003).³ Conversely, autocracies are thought to be better

² For an overview of this position see Lyall (2010).

³ The effects of casualty- and cost-sensitivity of public opinions of democratic countries are relevant also in interstate conflicts, see: De mesquita and Siverson (1995); Bennett and Stam (1998); Gartner and Segura (1998).

positioned in the struggle against the rebels because they can use all the means at their disposal to counter a rebellion, do not have the same constraints that democracies have, and are not very susceptible to the inclinations of the domestic public opinion (O’neill 1990, p. 140, Zhukov 2007).⁴

Building on the proposition that democratic regimes are very sensitive to conflict costs, one important study posits that democratic regimes are more likely to seek a negotiated solution of the conflict because their leaders are inclined to avoid the costs of a prolonged and vicious struggle (Bapat 2005). As democratic leaders seek a compromise rather than a prolonged conflict until final victory, the likelihood that a democratic regime achieves a decisive victory is reduced and the chances that the civil conflict ends in negotiated settlement increase (Bapat 2005). Among the cross-national studies that investigate the relation between regime type and outcomes of civil conflicts, this study is the only one that found support for the proposition that democracies are less likely to achieve victory (Bapat 2005). This study also found democracies to be more likely than autocracies to negotiate a way out of the conflict and that they do so at the early stages of the conflict (Bapat 2005). This particular finding, however, stand in stark contrast with the findings of a subsequent study, which instead found democracies and autocracies to be equally likely to end their civil conflicts through negotiated settlement and that, rather, civil conflicts fought by democracies are more likely to get bogged down in non-decisive outcomes, like ceasefires or stalemates (Duffy Toft 2010).

On a similar vein, an influential study postulated that democracies should be better able to address the popular grievances that motivate the rebellion and should be more inclined to seek a compromise with the rebels through negotiations (DeRouen and Sobek 2004). Contrary to Bapat’s study (2005), however, the authors of this study have not found regime type to be

⁴ Zhukov (2007), however, warns that the benefits that this lack of constraints implies for autocracies in terms of planning the operations, control the population, and use of force can easily be reversed if they exceed in the use of coercive methods or ignore completely the attitudes of the population.

significantly associated with any outcome of civil conflicts. Same inconclusive results were obtained by a more recent study that advances the argument that democracies fight harder for a military victory and are unlikely to seek the negotiated settlement of the civil conflict. According to the authors of this study this occurs because ‘allowing an opposition group to succeed may set a dangerous precedent and pollute the democratic process by presenting resort to arms as a viable alternative mode of policy negotiation’ (Balch-Lindsay *et al.* 2008, p. 353). However, this proposition was not supported by the data. These last two studies are not the only ones that did not reach solid conclusions regarding the alleged correlation between regime type and certain outcomes of civil conflicts. In fact, it is common for cross-national studies that analyse the relation between regime type and specific outcomes of civil conflicts not to find a clear-cut correlation (Dixon 2009).

One of the reasons why the findings on the relation between regime type and civil conflict outcomes are either contradicting or inconclusive is that many works on the topic present some methodological flaws. Two studies in particular question the empirical validity of the previous studies that have analysed the correlation between regime type and outcomes of civil conflicts. The first study challenges the common view that democracies are inherently incapable of countering a rebellion and are more likely to be defeated (Lyll 2010). This study suggests that we should remain sceptical of this conventional wisdom because those studies that advance such an argument always rely on a non-variance research design (Lyll 2010). Once amended this methodological flaw, the study has found that democracies are not significantly more likely to be defeated than other types of regimes and when they are is because they happen to be the external occupiers of the country in which the civil conflict is being fought (Lyll 2010). The study demonstrated that regime type has often been conflated with the role of external occupier in much of the literature that portrays democracies as particularly prone to defeat in civil conflicts. The second study, instead, argues that we might not be able to observe the effect of

regime type on civil conflict outcomes because of a selection problem (Getmansky 2013). Democratic countries, as opposed to autocratic ones, are less likely to experience civil conflicts in the first place and this has an effect on what we can observe with regard to the relation between regime type and outcomes. The findings demonstrate that, once checking for this selection effect, democracy is not significantly associated to any outcome of civil conflicts (Getmansky 2013).

Although the literature suggests that the type of regime does not conclusively explain why civil conflicts end in a certain way, before dismissing completely the role of regime type as a determinant of civil conflict outcomes a note of caution is due. A comprehensive literature review on civil conflict termination points out that ‘[n]o statistical study appears to exist on the question of whether semidemocratic/semiautocratic governments (anocracies) affect the outcome of civil conflicts’ (Dixon 2009, p. 122). Introduced by Ted Gurr (1974), anocracies are regimes that lack centralised power and institutionalisation (Hendrix 2010). It has already been demonstrated that states in which the regime is an anocracy are almost four times more at risk of rebellion than full democracies and full autocracies (Hegre *et al.* 2001). There are reasons to believe that anocracies might also be linked to a lower likelihood of government victory in civil conflicts. In fact, the lack of centralised power and institutionalisation can have important effects on the ability of anocracies to stave off rebellions because they can be expected to be unable to either control or repress the contention and to be unable or most likely unwilling to address the popular grievances underlying the rebellion.⁵

⁵ In a previous article, I argued that one of the reasons why the Yemeni regime struggled in its fight against the Houthi was because it was an anocracy (Longoni 2018).

1.1.2. *The military capacity of the state and the outcomes of civil conflicts*

A great deal of scholarship has focused on whether the military capacity of the state could affect how civil conflicts terminate. In this case too, different measures of military capacity have been used to test whether a correlation exists between the military capacity of the state and certain outcomes of civil conflicts. The results in this respect are less ambiguous.

Some researchers have used measures of absolute military capacity, usually the size of the army, to look for possible correlations. Two influential studies argued that states with large armies should be able to annihilate the rebellion right from the beginning of the struggle. Their expectations were supported by the data, which confirmed that the size of the army of the state at conflict is positively correlated with government victory and negatively correlated with negotiated settlement and rebel victory (Mason and Fett 1996, Mason *et al.* 1999). Their findings have been corroborated by successive studies, which likewise have found the size of the army to be positively correlated to shorter conflicts that end in government victory (Balch-Lindsay *et al.* 2008) and negatively correlated to conflicts that end in negotiated settlements (Bapat 2005).

Some scholars suggest that the military capacity of the state and its importance in shaping the dynamics of civil conflicts could be measured only if it is put in relation to the military strength of the opponent. They maintain that absolute measures of military capacity are not very informative because they capture only the military strength of one side, not the asymmetry that might exist between the belligerents (Clayton 2013, Hultquist 2013). Until very recently, lack of data regarding the estimated military strength of the rebels has not allowed researchers to measure the military asymmetry between the state and the rebels. Owing to the recent availability of data on the military strength of the rebel groups (see for example Cunningham *et al.* 2013), measures of relative military power could be built and included in large-N analysis to produce more robust findings of how the military capacity of a state can affect the outcomes

of civil conflicts. For example, one study that analyses the impact of the relative military power of the belligerents on the probability that a civil conflict terminates in negotiated settlement has found this particular outcome to be more likely to occur when the belligerents are at parity, something that we would not have known had we used only absolute measures of military capacity (Hultquist 2013).

Other scholars, instead, stressing the importance of the political dimension of rebellions, suggested that crude military power does not automatically translate in higher chances of government victory and pointed to the strategy that governments adopt to counter a rebellion as another important predictor of civil conflicts outcomes. They argue that, in the context of asymmetric warfare, how the force is employed is as important as the military power that the state has at its disposal. On this premise is grounded the so-called population-centric approach to counterinsurgency, to which several scholars and military experts link higher chances of government victory in civil conflicts. Its effectiveness, their proponents argue, resides in the adoption of a predominantly political response rather than an exclusively military one. Being rebellions principally contests of political legitimacy, it is argued that strategies entirely based on the use of force are not effective (Sepp 2005, Petraeus 2006, Lyall and Wilson 2009). Accordingly, as the use of indiscriminate coercion is believed to have detrimental effects, coercion must be limited and aimed at striking only the rebels and separating the civilian population from them (Sepp 2005, Cohen *et al.* 2006, Greenhill and Staniland 2007, US Army 2007, Kilcullen 2009). Although some scholars have questioned the effectiveness of this approach, suggesting that it is too much influenced by Maoist conceptualisations of modern insurgencies (Kilcullen 2005, 2006, Hoffman 2007, Metz 2007) and grounded on misinterpretations of past counterinsurgency operations (Bennett 2007, 2010), it has been demonstrated that its adoption is correlated to an increased probability of government victory (Paul *et al.* 2010, Enterline *et al.* 2013).

1.2. How civil conflicts end: the role of external interventions

The features of the state at conflict do not entirely explain why civil conflicts terminate in a certain way. As some researchers aptly noted, despite the term itself points to an almost entirely domestic confrontation, civil conflicts have often a substantial external dimension (Salehyan *et al.* 2011). The importance of this external dimension led a great number of scholars to focus on the interventions of third-party actors and how they could affect the outcomes of civil conflicts. Unsurprisingly, given that external interventions in civil conflicts are very common, the intervention of third parties is the factor that more than others have attracted the attention of scholars.

External interventions in civil conflicts can come in various forms and can be carried out by different actors. They can be direct if they involve the participation in combat of an external actor on the side or on behalf of one of the belligerents, or indirect if instead they are limited to the provision of funds, weapons, training, or sanctuary. These different forms of intervention can be carried out by both state and non-state actors. Two comprehensive studies that specifically analyse the external support received by rebels have shown that both state actors and a host of non-state actors have frequently intervened in civil conflicts (Byman *et al.* 2001, Grauer and Tierney 2018). While throughout the great part of the last century external support was provided to rebels almost exclusively by states, from the end of the Cold war the main supporters of rebel groups have been non-state actors, such as other rebel or terrorist groups, diasporas, religious and ethnic communities, and wealthy individuals (Grauer and Tierney 2018).

These external actors intervene in civil conflicts with various objectives in mind. Although the objectives that these actors might pursue with their intervention are numerous, they can be summarised as follow: alter the prospects of victory of one of the opposing sides; promote the conditions for the peaceful resolution of the conflict; and/or pursue an independent

agenda. The objectives of their intervention, along with the type of support provided and to whom is provided, have different effects on the outcomes of civil conflicts and deserve a comprehensive account.

1.2.1. Biased external interventions and the outcomes of civil conflicts

It is typical that external actors intervene to provide support to one of the belligerents with the aim of expediting the military solution of the conflict. Whilst there is a wide consensus about the positive impact that rebel-biased external interventions have on creating the conditions for outcomes favourable to the rebels, evidence is more contradictory when it comes to the impact of government-biased external interventions.

In general terms, external interventions in favour of the rebels are widely thought to be linked to a higher probability of rebel victory and a lower probability of government victory (Byman *et al.* 2001, Record 2006, 2007, Lyall and Wilson 2009, Connable and Libicki 2010, Lyall 2010). In addition, rebel-biased external interventions not only increase the chances that the rebels achieve victory, but allow them to extract concessions from the incumbent government, increasing also the chances that the conflict ends in a negotiated settlement (Balch-Lindsay *et al.* 2008, Findley 2013).

Those studies that had a closer look into the relation between the type of support provided to the rebels and the outcomes of civil conflicts largely confirmed these general conclusions. In fact, direct military intervention was found to be linked to increased chances of rebel victory and decreased chances of government victory (Gent 2008, Hultquist 2013, Sullivan and Karreth 2015). Rebel-biased direct intervention is also linked to a lower probability that the civil conflict ends due to lack of armed activity, but apparently it has no impact on the chances of termination in a negotiated settlement (Sullivan and Karreth 2015). Likewise, though it certainly contributes to prolonging the conflict (Sawyer *et al.* 2017), indirect support in favour

of the rebels, such as the provision of funds or weapons, makes rebel victory the most likely outcome (Jones 2017).

The impact of government-biased external intervention on the outcomes of civil conflicts is instead more ambiguous. One important study found that external interventions on behalf of the government make the termination of civil conflicts more likely, especially if the intervener is a great power (Regan 1996). This study, however, did not clarify which specific outcome is the most likely when an external actor intervenes in favour of the government. The ambiguity regarding the correlation between government-biased external interventions and outcomes of civil conflicts revolves around whether the intervention eases the path of the incumbent government toward victory. In fact, whilst some studies have found that government-biased interventions foster the conditions for a victory for the government, other studies have not found such a clear-cut correlation. A cross-national study on external interventions in civil conflicts postulates that government-biased external interventions alter the decision calculus of the government involved in the civil conflict (Balch-Lindsay *et al.* 2008). As these interventions decrease the costs that governments have to sustain for the struggle and simultaneously increase their military capabilities, government-biased external interventions should put the incumbent governments in a better position to defeat the rebels and, at the same time, make the negotiated solution of the conflict an unappealing option (Balch-Lindsay *et al.* 2008). However, whilst the authors of this study have found that an intervention on behalf of the government improves its chances to defeat the rebels, negotiated settlements appear to be more likely when a third party intervenes militarily in support of the incumbent government (Balch-Lindsay *et al.* 2008).

Other researchers argue that the success of government-biased external interventions in bringing about outcomes that are favourable to the government depends on some conditions. According to one study, the probability of victory for a government that receives external

support is linked to the duration of the civil conflict. Governments supported by external actors are more likely to succeed only once the conflict has become protracted (Jones 2017). A key study on the termination of insurgencies has found instead that it is not the government-biased intervention *per se* that makes government victory more likely. Rather, it is the timing of the intervention, as much as the extent and type of support provided, that affects the chances of the supported government to achieve victory (Connable and Libicki 2010, pp. 49–50).

On a similar vein, another study has found that government-biased direct interventions do not necessarily translate into government victory because external actors intervene in support of governments only in the most difficult cases, when the government is unable to carry out the armed effort autonomously (Gent 2008). Accordingly, the disparity in terms of effectiveness between rebel-biased and government-biased direct interventions is due to a selection effect, for government-biased external interventions occur only when the incumbent government is unable to defeat the rebels on its own (Gent 2008). Being the situation already complicated, it is more likely that the external intervention fails to determine a positive effect on the chances of government victory (Gent 2008).

This view is challenged by a study that argues that the disparity in terms of effectiveness of rebel-biased and government-biased external interventions is not simply the result of a selection effect (Sullivan and Karreth 2015). Rather, this study postulates, the different effectiveness depends on the level of military capacity of the belligerents. External direct interventions increase the probability of victory for the recipient of the support ‘only when the main obstacle to strategic success is lack of military capacity’ (Sullivan and Karreth 2015, p. 270). Rebel-biased interventions significantly result in a higher likelihood of rebel victory because rebels characteristically lack adequate military power and virtually any external support boosts their fighting capacity. Conversely, external interventions increase the likelihood of government victory only when the government is weaker than or at parity with

the rebels in terms of conflict-fighting capacities and the intervention compensates for this deficiency (Sullivan and Karreth 2015).

Sometimes, both the government and the rebels receive support from an external actor. Building on the influential theory of *ripeness* and *mutually hurting stalemate* (see Zartman 1989, 1993), one study posited that the simultaneous interventions in favour of both the government and the rebels should create the conditions of ripeness and thus make negotiated solutions more likely to be found (Balch-Lindsay *et al.* 2008). However, the addition of other strategic actors – the external actors – generates collective action problems that make the bargaining among the parties much more complicated, fostering instead the conditions for a stalemate (Balch-Lindsay *et al.* 2008). This study has found support for this proposition as balanced external interventions cause the conflict to reach a stalemate and negotiated settlements to be less and not more likely when both the belligerents are recipients of external support (see also Balch-Lindsay and Enterline 2000, Regan 2002).

1.2.2. Neutral external interventions and the outcomes of civil conflicts

External actors often intervene in civil conflicts to favour the conditions for the negotiated resolution of the conflict. When this is their objective, external actors, both state actors and international organisations, try to do so through the mediation of the controversies between the belligerents and/or peace operations.

External actors, especially states, offer their mediation for a host of reasons. The willingness of third parties to mediate a civil conflict depends mostly on whether they have interests that are being threatened by the conflict, they are part of a defence pact that includes also the country at conflict, they share historical linkages with the belligerents, or they have previous experience as mediators (Greig and Regan 2008). Mediation is a very common tool of conflict management and from the literature it emerges that it can affect how the civil

conflicts terminate. Previous research has established that mediation is crucial for creating the conditions for the successful negotiated settlement of civil conflicts. Two influential studies have found that only with the intervention of a third party as mediator and guarantor the negotiated settlement and the post-conflict transition toward a stable political system could be successful (Walter 1997, 1999). On a similar vein, another study postulated that, although mediators do not have the power to influence the elements of irrationality and identity that characterise many civil conflicts, their role in peace processes is still crucial because they can alter the calculus of the belligerents about the benefits of a negotiated settlement and generate the conditions for durable settlements (King 1997).

External actors try to foster the conditions for the negotiated settlement of civil conflicts not only through the mediation of the controversies but also through peace operations. These operations are normally carried out under the auspices of international organisations, like the United Nations, or other regional organisations. A recent article has demonstrated that peace operations are an effective tool for managing the outbreak, escalation, continuation, and recurrence of conflict (Hegre *et al.* 2019). The literature on peace operations is vast and a detailed account on the evolution of these operations and the determinants of their success falls well beyond the scope of the current review. For the purpose of the present discussion, suffice it to say that peace operations have been indicated as having an impact also on the outcomes of civil conflicts. In general terms, civil conflicts in which peace operations are deployed are more likely to end (Doyle and Sambanis 2000). More specifically, the deployment of peace operations is linked to a higher probability that the civil conflict ends in either truce or negotiated settlement (DeRouen and Sobek 2004). These findings were partly confirmed by another study, which found that the intervention of peacekeepers under the auspices of the UN or other IGOs increases the likelihood that a civil conflict terminate in a *draw*, that is either in a stalemate or negotiated settlement (Fortna 2009).

1.2.3. Self-interested external interventions and the outcomes of civil conflicts

Finally, another common reason why external actors intervene in civil conflicts is to pursue their very own agenda. When this occurs, one study noted, the resolution of the civil conflict becomes much more complicated (Cunningham 2010). External actors bring into the conflict their own independent preferences. If they are pursuing an independent agenda, it might be expected that their preferences do not necessarily adhere to those of the main belligerents. Thus, the external actors consent to a negotiation only if and when their preferences are appeased (Cunningham 2010). This study holds that the presence of additional preferences, presumably of an actor that has more authority and power than the actual belligerents, makes the bargaining process between the opponents much more difficult and, accordingly, negotiated settlements unlikely to be finalised (Cunningham 2010). In addition, as the external actor could extract high gains from a victory in function of lower costs for fighting, negotiations automatically appear as an unappealing option to the external actor. For these reasons, self-interested external interventions can deter negotiated solutions and significantly prolong civil conflicts (Cunningham 2010).

1.3. How civil conflicts end: the role of rebels' capacity and motivations to rise

Certainly, outcomes of civil conflicts cannot be entirely explained with factors related to the characteristics of the state and the intervention of external actors. Arguably, the literature on civil conflicts focused to a larger extent on the capacity and characteristics of the states to explain the outcomes of civil conflicts, partly neglecting the equally important role that the rebels have in these conflicts. Nonetheless, it is axiomatic that rebels are part of the conflict equation and several studies have investigated whether some of their characteristics could

explain why civil conflicts end in a certain way. In particular, scholars have focused on whether the rebels' motivations to rise and measures of their capacity are correlated to specific civil conflict outcomes.

1.3.1. Rebels' grievances and the outcomes of civil conflicts

One of the most important debates in peace and conflict research revolves around whether rebels start off their rebellion because of grievances (Gurr 1970), greed (Collier and Hoeffler 1998, 2004), or because they simply have the opportunity to do so (Fearon and Laitin 2003). To a certain extent, the literature on civil conflict outcomes followed the debate on the causes of conflict outbreaks to ascertain whether the reasons why the conflict was fought in the first place could also affect the way in which it terminates.

Civil conflicts fought because of large popular grievances are believed to be intractable. Their intractability is motivated by the inherent indivisibility of the stakes of the conflict. The indivisibility of the stakes, it is widely held, makes the negotiated solutions of civil conflicts unlikely. A case in point are those civil conflicts that break out following identity- and ethnic-motivated rebellions. Stakes in these civil conflicts are seen as proverbially indivisible, reason why they are considered not amenable to negotiated settlements (see Licklider 1993, p. 15 for example). These conflicts are thought to be averse to resolution to such an extent that one influential article suggests that the only possible solution for ethnic civil conflicts is the partition of the territory of the country in ethnically separated enclaves (Kaufmann 1996). The intractability of these identity-motivated conflicts has been confirmed by a study that has found them unlikely to be settled at the negotiation table (Hultquist 2013). Moreover, from the literature it emerges that conflicts motivated by large popular grievances are not only negatively related to peaceful resolutions. Other studies, in fact, have found that the odds are

against the rebels in ethnic-, religion-, and identity-motivated civil conflicts (Mason *et al.* 1999, DeRouen and Sobek 2004).

Different dynamics emerge when the rebels rise for greed. As some scholars pointed out, the termination of the conflict might not even be the objective of the rebels who are fighting for greed (DeRouen and Sobek 2004). In these instances, the objective of the rebels is to benefit from the collapse of the authority of the state and exploit resources that they would normally be unable to extract in a fully functional polity. For this reason, beside the continuation of the conflict, a truce that allows to continue making a profit out of the conflict is the outcome that greedy rebels prefer (DeRouen and Sobek 2004).

Unlike identity- and greed-motivated conflicts, conflicts initiated by the rebels for reasons related to the control of territory are much more amenable to negotiated settlements. Some authors disagree with this proposition, arguing that territorial conflicts are less likely to be negotiated because territory might be seen as indivisible (Duffy Toft 2003), especially if such a territory has a religious value (Hassner 2003, 2009). However, much of the literature agrees that territorial conflicts are more likely to be resolved at the negotiation table, especially secessionist conflicts (Balch-Lindsay *et al.* 2008, Hultquist 2013, but see Mason *et al.* 1999).

1.3.2. Rebels' capacity and the outcomes of civil conflicts

Several studies focused on measures of rebel capacity to explain the outcomes of civil conflicts. The existing literature has focused mainly on two dimensions of rebel capacity for the explanation of outcomes: the mobilising capacity and the military capacity.

The mobilising capacity of the rebels is one of the important factors that compounds in the overall capacity measure. Rebellions are predominantly contests whose aim is to undermine the political legitimacy of the government. For this reason, rebels that manage to mobilise the population and attain its support are historically thought to be more likely to achieve victory

(O’neill 1990, pp. 70–89, Kalyvas 2006, p. 92, Trinquier 2006). The greater the popular support the rebels are able to attain, the stronger they are vis-à-vis the government in the contest for legitimacy. For this reason, rebels try to attract popular support by formulating compelling causes and convincing narratives (Tomes 2004), by exploiting common identities (Byman 2008), and by creating alternative systems of governance in the territory under their control (Weinstein 2006, pp. 163–197).

Unlike other forms of contention, however, a civil conflict is not a contest fought entirely on the political-ideological plane and the rebels’ military capacity is a crucial component of the overall capacity measure. Rebels often start the rebellion in a condition of inferiority relative to the incumbent regime and this power asymmetry can be considered the norm in civil conflicts. The literature agrees that the rebels’ path toward favourable outcomes is easier when they manage to overcome this initial power asymmetry. In fact, the stronger the rebels are militarily, the more likely they defeat the incumbent government (Mason *et al.* 1999, Gent 2008, Cunningham *et al.* 2009, Sullivan and Karreth 2015).

A high military capacity of the rebels, however, does not only translate in a higher probability of victory. One study has found that high levels of rebels’ military capacity are negatively correlated with the probability that the civil conflict terminates due to lack of armed activity (Sullivan and Karreth 2015). Other studies, instead, have found high levels of rebels’ military capacity to be positively correlated with the probability of negotiated settlement (Cunningham *et al.* 2009, Nilsson 2010). However, the most comprehensive study on whether relative rebel military capacity affects the probability that the civil conflict terminates in negotiated settlement demonstrated the existence of an inverted U-shaped curvilinear relation between rebel military capabilities and the probability of negotiated settlement (Hultquist 2013). This indicates that negotiated settlements are more likely when the rebels are at parity

in terms of power with the incumbent and less likely when there is a power asymmetry (Hultquist 2013).

Some scholars argue that the military capacity of the rebels cannot be entirely captured by measures that include only the number of fighters at their disposal. With regard to the relation between rebels' military capacity and outcomes, some scholars maintain that also the strategy that the rebels adopt in the armed struggle can influence the outcomes of civil conflicts. It is widely held in the insurgency literature that guerrilla warfare is the strategy best suited for insurgencies (see for example Nagl 2002, Kilcullen 2010). This conventional wisdom was challenged by one study that has found rebels to have greater chances to defeat the incumbent government in a civil conflict when they can count on conventional capabilities and fight in a symmetric fashion rather than in a guerrilla-like manner (Balcells and Kalyvas 2014). Another influential study argued, instead, that none of the strategies that the rebels adopt is automatically linked to higher chances of victory. Rather, is the strategic interaction that matters. Rebels have higher chances of victory when they use the opposite strategy to the one used by the incumbent government, fighting in an asymmetric manner when the opponent is fighting in a symmetric manner and *vice versa* (Arreguín-Toft 2001, 2005). As noted earlier in this section, however, rebels often start off their rebellion in a condition of power asymmetry and the possibility of fighting in a symmetric manner is often precluded to them. Guerrilla warfare is very often a strategy of necessity for rebels as they rarely possess those conventional capabilities that would allow them to fight the incumbent government in a symmetric manner.

1.4. The research gap: structural characteristics and internal dynamics of armed oppositions and their impact on civil conflicts outcomes

The literature on the determinants of civil conflict outcomes discussed so far provides powerful and convincing explanations of how and by virtue of what factors civil conflicts terminate. There remain, however, several factors that might affect the outcomes of civil conflicts about which relatively little is known. A close examination of the existing scholarship suggests that, beside motivations and capacity, not enough attention has been paid to how other fundamental attributes of the armed oppositions, such as their structural characteristics and internal competitive and power dynamics, might affect conflict termination.

As the Figure 1 in the Introduction showed, civil conflicts often do not oppose the government of a state and a united opposition movement. The complex and intractable nature of civil conflicts is due to a great extent to the involvement of armed oppositions that are composed of multiple rebel groups. The civil conflicts in Myanmar, Sudan, and Syria are prominent examples of protracted conflicts that pitted a regime against a fragmented movement of rebels. These examples underscore a common characteristic of at least half of all civil conflicts, namely that oppositions are seldom unitary movements that operate in a coordinated fashion and whose action is subjected to central command. Rather, opposition movements are often a plethora of loosely connected rebel groups that use violent means to fight a government independently from one another and, sometimes, even turn against each other. Yet, despite their centrality in shaping the dynamics of civil conflicts, the existing literature has not taken the structural characteristics and the internal competitive and power dynamics of armed oppositions in adequate account. More specifically, although the fragmentation of armed oppositions and the competition within these movements are widely known characteristics of civil conflicts, how these characteristics can affect the termination of civil conflicts has been object of limited investigation.

There are some reasons why these important features of the armed oppositions have received limited attention. Many studies in the field of civil conflicts adopted a predominantly state-centric approach. Much of the published research has focused on the features of the states at conflict, considerably neglecting the characteristics of the opposition (Cederman and Gleditsch 2009, Fjelde and Nilsson 2012, p. 605). Such an approach was conducive to analysis that have systematically overlooked how different features of armed oppositions could affect the dynamics of civil conflicts. This approach, of course, was not necessarily denotative of the intention of conflict scholars to focus exclusively on the characteristics of the state at conflict. Until recently, in fact, the lack of fine-grained data on the composition and activity of armed oppositions has significantly limited the possibility for conflict scholars to include the structural characteristics and internal dynamics of these oppositions in large-N studies of civil conflicts (Cederman and Gleditsch 2009). Consequently, most of the studies on civil conflicts were bound to treat armed oppositions as unitary entities (see for example Mason and Fett 1996, Mason *et al.* 1999, Ayres 2001, Collier and Hoeffler 2004, Fearon 2004). A limited knowledge of how armed oppositions differ in terms of composition, internal competition, and internal power distribution, and in turn of how these differences may affect several aspects of civil conflicts, can lead to a partial understanding, if not misguided inferences and explanations, of the dynamics that make these conflicts so complicated and intractable.

A number of scholars recognised that it was necessary to correct for this issue to advance our knowledge of civil conflict processes. Following what it can be defined as the disaggregation turn in civil conflict studies (Cederman and Gleditsch 2009) and owing to the more recent availability of fine-grained datasets on the actors involved in intra-state conflicts (Gleditsch *et al.* 2002, Pettersson and Eck 2018), a recent strand of research has begun to examine more meticulously the structural characteristics of armed oppositions and the impact they have on several aspects of civil conflicts.

The large majority of the existing scholarship focused on finding the root causes of the fragmentation of armed oppositions and splintering of rebel groups (Asal *et al.* 2012, Bakke *et al.* 2012, Seymour *et al.* 2016, Fjelde and Nilsson 2018). Other studies, instead, rather than focusing on its root causes, investigated whether fragmentation could explain some of the most important aspects of civil conflicts, like onset (Lawrence 2010, Cunningham 2013), duration (Findley and Rudloff 2012, Metternich and Wucherpfennig 2020), recurrence (Rudloff and Findley 2016), and expected levels and targets of violence (Cunningham *et al.* 2012, Heger *et al.* 2012, Wood and Kathman 2015).

Despite the recent uptick in the number of related publications, researchers have only just started looking at what impact different structural characteristics of armed oppositions, like their fragmentation, and their internal dynamics, like the internal competition and internal power distribution, might have on civil conflicts. Despite the progress recently made in this direction, so far only a handful of studies have analysed the relation between these characteristic of armed oppositions and the outcomes of civil conflicts. As a result, our knowledge still remains limited in some important ways.

There are four main reasons why the existing scholarship on the impact of different structural characteristics and intra-opposition dynamics on the outcomes of civil conflicts can be considered insufficient. First, the scholarship on the topic is context-specific and of limited generalisability. This is because part of the existing studies on this issue adopted a case study-based research design. For example, while it is known what impact the fragmentation of armed oppositions had on the outcomes of the conflicts in Algeria or Palestine (Krause 2014, 2017), it is unknown whether this phenomenon had similar or different effects on other civil conflicts. Thus, although these studies furthered our knowledge on the impact of fragmentation on the outcomes of civil conflicts, questions about the general applicability of their findings remain open.

Second, the related scholarship is mostly outcome-specific. As discussed briefly in the preceding sections, the main interest of conflict scholars concerned with conflict termination was to isolate the determinants of (un)successful negotiated settlements of civil conflicts. Reflecting this general trend, the scholars that investigated the impact of fragmentation on the outcomes of civil conflicts have done so focusing mainly on the impact that it has on the prospects of termination in negotiated settlements (Nilsson 2010, Lounsbury and Cook 2011). Accordingly, questions about the impact of fragmentation of armed oppositions on other possible outcomes of civil conflicts, like government victory, rebel victory, or low activity, remained largely unaddressed.

Third, the scholars who have included the fragmentation of armed oppositions in large-N studies where all the possible outcomes of civil conflicts were considered, have given a limited importance to the explanatory power of this variable or have conceptualised fragmentation in a different manner. In particular, one study that investigates the impact of non-state actors' characteristics, mainly their military capabilities, on outcomes of civil conflicts (Cunningham *et al.* 2009), touched upon the impact of fragmentation only tangentially and did not generate a set of testable hypotheses about the impact it might have on the outcomes of civil conflicts. Many hypotheses on such an impact, thus, remained unaddressed.

Finally, this body of literature almost exclusively focused on the impact of rebel fragmentation on conflict outcomes. The interpretation of the rebel side as an armed opposition reveals the existence of relations among the rebel groups that go beyond their simple contextual presence in the conflict environment. Rebel groups interact, cooperate, and adapt to what the other groups in the same conflict environment do (Metternich and Wucherpfennig 2020). Sometimes, they even fight one another. Questions related to how the internal competition and the internal power distribution of armed oppositions might affect the outcomes of civil conflicts have been largely neglected. This is because those scholars who have ventured in this new

avenue of research have done so pursuing a research agenda that privileged the investigation of how the fragmentation could affect the dynamics of civil conflicts, leaving aside direct assessments of how different levels of internal competition and power distribution might also do. With regard to the internal power distribution, one study in particular used information about the fighting power of each rebel group involved in a civil conflict. This study, however, analysed how the power of each group relative to the government could affect the outcome of civil conflicts (Cunningham *et al.* 2009). To the best of my knowledge, no study investigates how the internal power distribution of the armed oppositions could affect the outcomes of civil conflicts. Only Krause (2014, 2017) has focused on the internal power distribution of nationalist movements. However, his research specifically addresses the puzzle of how this distribution affects the chances of a nationalist movement to succeed in creating a nation state and not on how it might affect each possible outcome of civil conflicts. As a result, key questions on how competitive and power relations among rebel groups of the same armed opposition affect conflict termination at a general level remained largely unaddressed.

Knowing how civil conflicts terminate and, most importantly, which factors create the conditions for a specific outcome to occur, is as important as understanding why these conflicts break out, linger, and recur. It is only by knowing how and by virtue of what factors civil conflicts end that researchers can make sense of the proverbial complexity and intractability of these conflicts and policymakers can devise appropriate strategies to foster the conditions for a negotiated resolution. A partial knowledge of how the structural characteristics and internal relations of armed opposition might affect the dynamics of civil conflicts strongly limits our understanding of conflict processes and termination. This dissertation covers this gap in the literature and in our knowledge by assessing *how and to what extent different armed opposition' structural characteristics, like their fragmentation, and internal dynamics, like the internal competition and internal power distribution, affect the outcomes of civil conflicts.* Its

main aim is to expand our knowledge on the relation between these characteristics of armed oppositions and the outcomes of civil conflicts through the provision of a comprehensive analysis that goes beyond the existing limited in scope, context-specific, and not generalisable studies.

2. Fragmentation, internal competition, and internal power distribution: an explanatory model of the impact on conflict termination

The review of the literature revealed that the scholarship on civil conflicts does not sufficiently account for the impact that the structural characteristics and the internal competitive and power relations of armed oppositions have on conflict termination. The main argument of the dissertation is that the fragmentation *of*, the competition, and the distribution of power *within* armed oppositions can affect whether a civil conflict terminates in rebel victory, government victory, peace agreement, ceasefire, or low activity.

In this chapter, an explanatory model for the association of these characteristics of armed oppositions with specific civil conflict outcomes is illustrated. To facilitate the understanding of what comes next, both from a theoretical and methodological standpoint, the chapter begins with the conceptualisation of these characteristics and other core concepts of the dissertation. Then, the expected effects of these characteristics on each conflict outcome are discussed and the relative hypothesis are formalised.

2.1. Core concepts

In the Introduction and Chapter 1, reference was made to a series of concepts that are of critical importance for the dissertation. These concepts are widely used in the literature but, due to different interpretations of them, are often surrounded by conceptual ambiguity. It is by no means the aim of this section to discuss at length the strength and weaknesses of each conceptualisation proposed in the literature of the phenomena under study here. Although the conceptualisation provided by other scholars for these core concepts is discussed, this section

specifically aims to clarify how they are framed in the present dissertation. Following these clarifications, it would be easier to grasp the causal mechanisms that link the characteristics of armed oppositions to a specific conflict outcome and some of the operational choices that were made to conduct the analysis.

2.1.1. Civil conflict

The first concept that needs to be conceptualised is that of civil conflict. It has been argued that differences in the way civil conflicts are conceptualised might have serious consequences for the scholarship on the topic, as they can affect the results obtained by investigations on this specific type of political violence and, more in general, our understanding of the specific dynamics that characterise this phenomenon (Sambanis 2004, Sambanis and Schulhofer-Wohl 2019). According to King, the boundaries of the concept of civil conflict are often pushed so far that ‘what counts as a civil war is thus often in the eye of the beholder’, suggesting that the conceptualisation of civil conflict and the word used to refer to it, such as insurgency or rebellion, depends on the political stance of the observer (King 1997, p. 19). Other scholars instead claim that, in the end, the various conceptualisations of civil conflict converge around the same key features and that, rather, the disagreements revolve around their operationalisation (Kalyvas 2009). These differences, though small they may be, can have important consequences on aspects of crucial importance for empirical investigations, such as operationalisation and coding. As a consequence, differences in conceptualisation and operationalisation can largely affect the findings and conclusions that are drawn from studies on civil conflicts (Sambanis and Schulhofer-Wohl 2019). For this reason, it is of the utmost importance to clarify what is meant by civil conflict in the present dissertation.

The conceptualisation of civil conflict adopted in this dissertation builds on the conceptualisation of armed conflict provided by UCDP/PRIO in the codebook of the ‘Armed

conflict dataset' (Gleditsch *et al.* 2002, Pettersson and Eck 2018). UCDP/PRIO define an armed conflict as 'a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a calendar year' (Pettersson and Eck 2018). This conceptualisation contains all the necessary elements to qualify an armed conflict and to guide its operationalisation: an armed conflict is fought for an *incompatibility* concerning government, territory, or both, between at least two parties; an armed conflict can be considered as such when one of the two parties is the government of a recognised state;⁶ and an armed conflict differs from minor forms of contention, like riots, protests, or any other limited outburst of violence, because the parties resort, with a certain intensity, to the use of armed force to resolve their incompatibility. The use of armed force is deemed to be intense enough to represent an instance of conflict if it results in at least 25 battle-related deaths per calendar year (Gleditsch *et al.* 2002, Pettersson and Eck 2018). This conceptualisation of armed conflict is coherent, it adheres to my interpretation of armed conflicts, and contains all the necessary elements to embrace any type of armed conflict involving a state: extra-systemic conflicts, interstate conflicts, internal conflicts, and internationalised internal conflicts. As such, is the best starting point from which to draw the conceptualisation of civil conflict for the purpose of this dissertation.

The focus of this dissertation is civil conflicts only. Drawing from the conceptualisation of armed conflict provided by UCDP/PRIO (Gleditsch *et al.* 2002, Pettersson and Eck 2018), in this dissertation a civil conflict is conceptualised as *a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, the government of a state and an armed opposition, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a calendar*

⁶ Conflicts in which none of the parties is the recognised government of a state are defined as non-state conflicts (see Sundberg *et al.* 2012, Pettersson and Eck 2018).

year and occurs within the boundaries of the state whose government and/or territory is disputed. This conceptualisation of civil conflict contains all the elements that qualify it as an armed conflict – incompatibility, one of the parties is the government of a state, use of armed force, and minimum intensity – and the elements that qualify it as *civil*. An armed conflict can be considered a civil conflict when two additional criteria are met: the second primary party is an armed opposition and the use of armed force occurs within the boundaries of the state whose government and/or territory are disputed. Thus, this definition embraces any conflict that occurs between the government of a state and one or more rebel groups, irrespective of whether third-party states are (internationalised internal conflict) or are not involved in the dispute (internal conflict), and excludes from the analysis any conflict that occurs between two or more states (interstate conflicts) and between a state and opposition organisations outside the territory of the state (extrasystemic conflicts).

The conceptualisation of civil conflict adopted in this dissertation resembles alternative conceptualisations adopted in other seminal studies on the topic. In some way, it is similar to the one provided by Small and Singer, who conceptualise a civil conflict as ‘any armed conflict that involves (a) military action internal to the metropole (b) the active participation of the national government, and (c) effective resistance by both sides’ (Small and Singer 1982, p. 210). It also does not differ much from the one provided by Kalyvas in a seminal work on the topic, where they conceptualise a civil conflict as ‘armed combat taking place within the boundaries of a recognized sovereign entity between parties subject to a common authority at the outset of the hostilities’ (Kalyvas 2006, p. 17). In a way, it also recalls the interpretation of civil conflict as a ‘sovereignty rupture’ illustrated by Sambanis and Schulhofer-Wohl in a recent article (Sambanis and Schulhofer-Wohl 2019). These similarities confirm that different conceptualisations of civil conflicts do indeed converge around the same key features (Kalyvas 2009). However, although the conceptualisation of civil conflict adopted in this dissertation

converges towards the minimum definition of this phenomenon, it also contains some additional elements that need to be further clarified. These elements help further qualify the essential conceptualisation of civil conflict as an armed struggle between a government and non-state actor over a defined incompatibility and bring it closer to what it could be seen as an operational definition.

The first element is that of armed opposition. What an armed opposition is is discussed in detail in the next section. For the purpose of the present discussion, suffice it to say that instead of a generic non-state challenger, the conceptualisation of civil conflict adopted in this dissertation requires that the opponent of the government must be an armed opposition for the armed struggle to be considered an instance of civil conflict. This peculiarity of the conceptualisation reveals the aim of the dissertation to eschew two different approaches to the study of civil conflicts: one, overly aggregated, that interprets civil conflicts as instances of armed struggle between the government and an indefinite rebel side and, as such, overlooks the variations that exists within the rebel side in terms of autonomous actors; the other, overly disaggregated, that instead interprets civil conflicts as instances of armed struggle between the government and a rebel group and, as such, overlooks the interdependencies that exist among the rebel groups fighting the same opponent (Cederman and Gleditsch 2009, Quinn *et al.* 2019, Sambanis and Schulhofer-Wohl 2019). This conceptualisation of civil conflict positions this dissertation at a meso-level of aggregation, whereby a civil conflict remains a dyadic affair between a government and a non-state challenger but simultaneously recognises that variation exists in terms of rebel actors and that these actors might be interdependent. How this occurs in practice would be clearer from the reading of the next sections, which discuss the concepts of armed opposition and fragmentation, and of Section 3.2.2., which discusses the implications of this conceptualisation in terms of measurement, adds more technical considerations as to why this conceptualisation was chosen in the first place, and clarifies why operationalising the

civil conflict as a dyadic struggle between a government and an armed opposition is more appropriate for the present dissertation than the more common operationalisation as a dyadic conflict between a government and a rebel group.

The second element is the minimum number of fatalities. Compared to other conceptualisations of civil conflict that do not make any direct mention to the intensity of violence, the conceptualisation of civil conflict adopted in this study clarifies from the outset which is the minimum level of violence that a civil conflict must produce in a calendar year to be considered as such. The choice to add this specific element to the conceptualisation was made for two main reasons. First, as the conceptualisation of civil conflict adopted in this study draws from the one of armed conflict provided by UCDP/PRIO (Gleditsch *et al.* 2002, Pettersson and Eck 2018), and considering that the majority of the data used for the empirical analysis comes from this very source, I considered adopting their minimum intensity threshold as a logical decision to avoid consequent issues in terms of operationalisation and coding of civil conflict events. Second and more importantly, also limited levels of violence may fit the description and fall within the boundaries of what is a civil conflict. By focusing on extreme levels of violence only (i.e. 1000 fatalities per calendar year), the concept of civil conflict would be too restrictive and lead the analysis to overlook less intense but not less important instances of violent contestation. As it is the aim of this dissertation to include in the analysis any incompatibility between a government and an armed opposition contested through the use of armed force, setting the intensity level at a much higher threshold would have betrayed this aim and led the dissertation to overlook many important, albeit less intense, instances of civil conflict. Of course, the threshold is arbitrary and, as such, controversial by definition.⁷ However, in light of the two reasons expressed above, I considered the addition of this

⁷ For a deeper discussion on the minimum intensity of civil conflicts and threshold see: Sambanis (2004) and Sambanis and Schulhofer-Wohl (2019).

minimum intensity threshold to the conceptualisation of civil conflict as an appropriate choice for the purposes of the present dissertation.

2.1.2. *Armed opposition*

In recent years there has been a growing recognition among conflict scholars that the rebel side of a civil conflict cannot be considered a unitary entity but, rather, a collection of more or less loosely connected rebel groups. Rather than a unitary, institutionalised, and cohesive actor, the rebel side of the conflict can be more appropriately thought of as a movement composed of different non-state actors that mobilise around a collectively shared issue. Even though it is more common nowadays to understand the rebel side of the conflict in this way, conceptualisations of rebel movements diverge substantially in the literature.

Some scholars grounded their conceptualisation of rebel movement on the nature of the dispute between the government and the rebel groups involved in the struggle. One way in which the set of non-state actors at conflict has been collectively defined is *self-determination groups* (Cunningham 2011, Cunningham *et al.* 2012). According to this conceptualisation, *factions* are the basic unit and a self-determination *group* is the overarching structure that connects the factions together. The factions are tied together only so long that they mobilise around a shared self-determination issue. On a similar vein, some scholars defined the set of non-state groups at conflict as *nationalist movements* (Krause 2014, 2017, Mahoney 2020). According to this conceptualisation, a nationalist movement is the overarching structure that connects different rebel groups that mobilise around the shared goal of creating a new nation state. While these conceptualisations certainly have their merits, they do not fit the present dissertation for two main reasons: first, the proponents place emphasis either on nationalist or self-determination disputes; second, in the case of self-determination movements, the proponents include in their definition also non-violent factions (Cunningham 2011,

Cunningham *et al.* 2012). As this dissertation aims to analyse all possible civil conflicts and to focus specifically on active participants that use the armed force to settle their dispute, any definition of a set of rebel groups that is grounded on the nature of the dispute and/or includes non-violent factions is not apt for this dissertation.

Other scholars, instead, took an approach to the conceptualisation of rebel movements that encompasses all the possible sets of rebel groups without discriminating them based on whether they are fighting for self-determination *or* nationalist goals. In an influential article that attempts to bring clarity to the concept of fragmentation, a rebel movement is defined as an overarching structure that comprises all the rebel organisations that mobilise around a shared collective identity and make demands related to this identity and the people who share it (Bakke *et al.* 2012). In this case, what links the rebel groups in a movement are not shared nationalist or self-determination goals, but a shared identity. By placing emphasis on a shared identity it follows that rebel movements exist only insofar the rebel groups share such identity. Accordingly, all those instances in which rebel groups do not have a shared identity but still share common political interests that can link them together in a movement are excluded. The emphasis on a shared identity thus limits the scope of the conceptualisation of rebel movement in a substantial manner. The narrow scope of this conceptualisation makes it not apt for the present dissertation, for it excludes those rebel movements whose groups mobilise around a shared political issue even though they do not share the same identity.

Other scholars, instead, point to the generic incompatibility that is being contested as the connection between disparate rebel groups in a movement. Cunningham defines as *opposition movement* any set of non-state groups that contest the same incompatibility related to either government, territory, or both (2013). Moving beyond the conceptualisation of movement as the overarching structure that links together rebel groups that share nationalist *or* self-determination goals *or* a common identity, this conceptualisation introduces the

incompatibility as the tie that binds the rebel groups together. By removing the discrimination based on identity, nationalist *or* self-determination goals and focusing on the incompatibility, the scope of this conceptualisation is broad enough to embrace all the possible rebel movements. Despite the merits of this conceptualisation, however, it is still not suitable for the present dissertation. In fact, this conceptualisation does not make a direct mention to the use of force as a criterium for identifying non-state groups as active participants in civil conflicts. Without this specification, the conceptualisation of opposition movement becomes so broad that may include parties, political wings, and/or peaceful groups that mobilise against the government around the same incompatibility but are not *de facto* active participants in the civil conflict. As the interest of this dissertation lies in civil conflicts, and not political mobilisation per se, one of the central criteria for non-state groups to be considered active participants in a conflict is that they resort to armed force to contest the incompatibility.

The conceptualisation of opposition movement provided by Fjelde and Nilsson resolves this issue (2018). These scholars define as *armed opposition movement* any ‘group of armed organizations that are engaged in the same political conflict and thereby contest the same incompatibility’ (2018, note 1). This conceptualisation is similar to Cunningham’s (2013), as it identifies the incompatibility as the link between different armed organisations, but it departs from it by specifying that only *armed* organisations can be considered part of an armed opposition, that is those non-state groups that use armed force to contest the incompatibility.

Building on the definition provided by Fjelde and Nilsson (2018), in this study rebels are collectively defined as armed oppositions. An armed opposition is conceptualised as *the set of rebel groups that use armed force against the incumbent government of a state to contest the same incompatibility concerning government and/or territory*. This way of collectively defining rebel groups, I contend, is the most suitable for the current dissertation for two reasons. First, it encompasses all the possible armed oppositions, not exclusively those that fight for

self-determination *or* nationalist goals. By doing so, it embraces all the possible civil conflicts, not only those that are fought for either nationalist or self-determination reasons only, but both. As it clarifies what is the *conditio sine qua non* for a set of rebel groups to be considered an armed opposition, namely that they contest the same incompatibility, it does not matter whether they share the same identity. Rebel groups can be considered part of an overarching structure so long that they contest the same incompatibility. In doing so, this conceptualisation does not exclude those rebel groups that fight along others for the same incompatibility but do not share the same identity. Second, it includes only those groups that use armed force in their contest against the government. This reflects the intention of dealing only with active, violent, participants of the civil conflict.

2.1.3. Structural characteristics of the armed opposition

Armed oppositions can operate with variable degrees of coordination and cohesion. This specific aspect leads to the next concept that requires attention: the concept of fragmentation. Although it has found wide application in the recent literature on civil conflicts, also the concept of fragmentation is still surrounded by conceptual ambiguity.

According to Bakke et al. (2012), the concept of fragmentation has been approached in three different ways in the existing literature: as the extent of internal divisions within a rebel movement (see for example Lawrence 2010, Cunningham 2011, Cunningham *et al.* 2012, Fjelde and Nilsson 2018); as the splintering of rebel groups (see for example Asal *et al.* 2012, Findley and Rudloff 2012, Rudloff and Findley 2016); as the degree of institutionalisation among rebel groups in a movement (Pearlman and Cunningham 2012). As the conceptualisation of fragmentation adopted in the present dissertation falls squarely within the first approach, the following paragraphs outline how other scholars that have a similar

understanding of fragmentation have conceptualised it and, building on their work, the conceptualisation adopted in this dissertation is then provided.

A considerable number of scholars consider fragmentation of rebel movements as a multidimensional concept. Bakke et al. understand fragmentation as a concept that includes three different but related dimensions (2012). They argue that fragmentation refers simultaneously to the number of rebel groups within a movement, the level of institutionalisation of the movement, and the distribution of power within the movement. This conceptualisation has found wide application in the literature. However, although some scholars claimed to have adopted this specific conceptualisation, in practice they only focused on one its dimensions, namely the number of rebel groups within a movement (see for example Seymour *et al.* 2016, Mosinger 2018).

On a similar vein, also Krause considers fragmentation as a multidimensional concept (Krause 2014, 2017). In his works on the topic, fragmentation is a specific condition that is not just related to the number of groups within a movement. According to his typology of nationalist movements' structural characteristics, fragmentation occurs only when there are multiple *strong* groups in a movement that are not allied with each other (Krause 2014). By discriminating instances of fragmentation of rebel movements based on whether they are composed of multiple *strong* and *unaffiliated* groups, and not just multiple groups, Krause too introduces the dimensions of power distribution and alliances in the concept of fragmentation.

Other scholars, instead, see fragmentation as a unidimensional concept that refers exclusively to the existence of multiple rebel groups within a rebel movement. According to Cunningham, fragmentation is simply the division of a rebel movement in multiple factions (2011, 2013, Cunningham *et al.* 2012). On a similar vein, Fjelde and Nilsson conceptualise fragmentation as the existence of multiple rebel groups within an opposition movement (2018). This dissertation builds on these conceptualisations of fragmentation as a unidimensional

concept but also departs from them in some important respects. The fragmentation of an armed opposition is conceptualised as *the existence of multiple rebel groups – each of which is autonomous and contests the same incompatibility – within an armed opposition that results from either the simultaneous rebellion of two or more rebel groups against the government, the splintering of a group already involved in the conflict, and/or the emergence of new groups that are unaffiliated to the one(s) already involved in the conflict*. In line with this conceptualisation, fragmentation is not observable if the armed effort against the incumbent government is carried out by a single rebel group. While an armed opposition composed of a single rebel group can still be considered an armed opposition, for it is armed and is opposing the government, it cannot certainly be considered a fragmented armed opposition. This rebel group may be affected by internal divisions and contain factions, but if none of these factions is formally organised, has its own name, separate chain of command, and/or is subject to higher command, then fragmentation is not observable. Fragmentation is only observable if the armed effort against the incumbent government is collectively carried out by multiple rebel groups. These rebel groups are formally organised non-state armed actors that have their own name, militants, and are not subject to higher command. As discussed before, to be considered part of an overarching armed opposition these rebel groups must have mobilised against the government for reasons related to the same incompatibility. This conceptualisation of fragmentation builds significantly on the one provided by Fjelde and Nilsson (2018), except for one important difference. In this dissertation, fragmentation might be also due to the simultaneous rebellion of two or more rebel groups, and not only to the splintering of existing rebel groups or the emergence of new ones when the conflict is already underway.

The conceptualisation of fragmentation provided above calls for an additional clarification. In the present dissertation, fragmentation and *splintering* have a different connotation. In published research, the two terms have often been used interchangeably. Are

they conceptually different? If we look at the meaning of the word not quite. However, by adopting a conceptualisation of fragmentation that focuses on the existence of multiple rebel groups that results from *the simultaneous rebellion of two or more rebel groups against the government, the splintering of a group already involved in the conflict, and/or the emergence of new groups that are unaffiliated to the one/s already involved in the conflict*, than splintering assumes a different connotation, becoming one of the components of fragmentation, namely the division of a rebel group already involved in the conflict. In this dissertation, thus, fragmentation already includes the concept of splintering. The term splintering only refers to the event of a division of a rebel group in two or more actors and is not used as a synonym of fragmentation, which instead refers to a larger phenomenon of which splintering is just one of the components. In fact, only a small minority of rebel groups form following a split of the original rebel group (Walter 2019). For this reason, it is of paramount importance to clarify from the outset that this dissertation does not focus exclusively on these specific instances of split but rather on the larger phenomenon of fragmentation.

There are reasons why fragmentation in the present dissertation is interpreted as a unidimensional concept that amounts exclusively to the division of an armed opposition in multiple groups. I contend that conceptualisations of fragmentation as a multidimensional concept risk conflating excessively the concept with dimensions that deserve independent analysis. By collapsing the important dimensions of institutionalisation, power distribution, or alliances into the concept of fragmentation, it is possible that not enough attention is reserved to each of these individual dimensions and to the different effects they may have on the dynamics of civil conflicts. By conflating fragmentation with multiple phenomena that are certainly related but conceptually different, empirical investigations could fail to single out and discover the individual importance that each of them has for conflict processes. In this sense, thus, fragmentation risks becoming a concept of limited analytical use. Accordingly,

fragmentation, I argue, should be seen as a unidimensional concept that reflects the extent of internal divisions within an armed opposition, so that the impact that it may have on the dynamics of conflict can be accurately assessed without being obscured or significantly affected by other related but conceptually different phenomena. As discussed in the next sections, some of the dimensions that have been included by other scholars in a multidimensional understanding of fragmentation are analysed individually in the present dissertation.

2.1.4. Internal competition

Competition is a normal condition in multi-party settings such as civil conflicts. The conflict itself can be considered a violent competition between the government and an armed opposition over a certain incompatibility concerning the sovereign authority over the country or one of its regions. Rebel groups within an armed opposition compete with the government to attain their objectives, secession or government, but also with each other to place themselves in a position of primacy vis-à-vis the others. For the purpose of this dissertation, situations as such are seen as instances of internal competition. With internal competition I refer to the attempt of the rebel groups that are part of an armed opposition to gain advantages, both material and immaterial, at the expenses of other groups of the opposition in order to position themselves in a condition of superiority and/or have a larger share of the conflict spoils. It is internal because it occurs *within* the armed opposition, that is among rebel groups that are linked together by a common incompatibility with the government.

Rebel groups might try to gain advantages over their perceived competitors in disparate manners and it is not easy to capture these attempts with a single concept. As it often happens, complex and multifaceted phenomena like the competition among actors require measures that, although not perfect, can be used as a proxy of the main concept whose effects a study intends

to investigate. In this case, lacking a ready-made measure of internal competition, the best way to capture the concept and the impact it has on conflict processes is by looking at two prominent dimensions of internal competition: independence of the rebel groups, the condition by which groups within the opposition are neither formally nor informally allied but completely independent and unaffiliated; and intra-opposition violence, the condition by which the rebel groups, on top of the fight against the government, also engage in systematic violence against one another. These two dimensions capture two different levels of internal competition, in order of presumed severity. The first dimension, independence of the rebel groups, is seen as a moderate level of internal competition because rebel groups that find themselves in such a predicament do not share the necessary resources to pursue their fight against the government. Accordingly, as they operate in a context of finite resources, the only way to maximise their own resources is to compete with the other rebel groups to obtain the largest share of them. The second dimension, instead, is seen as a high level of internal competition because the rebel groups engage in active fight against one another to obtain the necessary resources or to altogether wipe out possible competitors for the conflict spoils. I defer a more detailed discussion about how these measures are operationalised to Chapter 3.

2.1.5. Internal power distribution

The rebel groups within an armed opposition might differ in terms of militants and resources available to them. Depending on the amount of resources available, both material and immaterial, a rebel group can be considered more or less powerful than the others and thus have greater or smaller chances to obtain its objectives, exercise control over the other groups, or obtain the largest share of conflict spoils. Power can be defined in several ways and there is a large literature – which falls beyond the scope of this section – on how it should be best conceptualised and measured. In this research, power is limited to its armed dimension only,

that is the war-fighting capacity of each actor involved in the conflict. The interest of this dissertation lies in the share that each rebel group has of the overall power of the armed opposition. Partially capturing the dimension of power included in the concept of fragmentation provided by Krause (2014, 2017), the aim is to understand how different distributions of power within the opposition affects conflict processes, that is whether the existence of a hegemonic rebel group within the opposition leads to different conflict outcomes than those observed if power is distributed more evenly across the rebel groups. Accordingly, internal power distribution refers the distribution of war-fighting capacity across the rebel groups within an armed opposition. I defer to Chapter 3 a detailed discussion of how the war-fighting capacity of each rebel group and the concentration or dispersion of power is measured.

2.1.6. Civil conflict outcomes

Finally, each possible type of civil conflict outcome requires a precise conceptualisation. Civil conflicts outcomes are not, in fact, as clear-cut as those of interstate wars, at the end of which there is a clear winner, loser, or a negotiated solution. Outcomes in civil conflicts are murkier. Civil conflicts might stop for a while and restart or draw out for long with low levels of violence. For this very reason, precise definitions of when and how a civil conflict ends are necessary.

For the purpose of this dissertation, the conceptualisation of civil conflict outcomes follows strictly the one provided in the codebook of the UCDP conflict termination dataset (Kreutz 2010). There are two main reasons behind this choice. First, their conceptualisation of each outcome is clear, coherent, and complete in all its parts. Accordingly, there is no need to provide alternative conceptualisations as the existing ones are already accurate and appropriate for the dissertation. Second, as this dataset is used as the main source for the construction of

the dependent variable of the study, different conceptualisations of each outcome might lead to discrepancies in how the observations are coded.

In line with the UCDP conflict termination data, thus, victory is the outcome of civil conflict that occurs when ‘one side in an armed conflict is either defeated or eliminated, or otherwise succumbs through capitulation, surrender, or similar public announcement’ (Kreutz 2010). Victory is achieved by the government side if the regime ‘manages to comprehensively defeat or eliminate the opposition, who may succumb to the power of the other through capitulation or public announcement’, or the rebel side if the armed opposition ‘manages to oust the government, or comprehensively defeat or eliminate the opposition, who may succumb to the power of the other through capitulation or public announcement’ (Kreutz 2010). *Peace agreement* is the outcome of civil conflict that occurs when an ‘agreement, or the first or last in a series of agreements, concerned with resolving or regulating the incompatibility - completely or a central part of - [is] signed and/or accepted by all or the main parties active in last year of conflict’ (Kreutz 2010). *Ceasefire* is the outcome that occurs when a halt of the hostilities has been agreed upon by the warring parties: ‘Ceasefire agreements, or the first or last in a series of agreements, does not include any resolution of the incompatibility. Typically, ceasefires are concerned with ending the use of force by the warring sides but they can also offer amnesty for participation in the conflict’ (Kreutz 2010). *Low activity* is the outcome that occurs when neither agreement has been signed nor one of the main parties has achieved decisive victory but the conflict simply ceases, that is the level of armed hostilities is so limited - resulting in fewer than 25 battle-related deaths in a calendar year- that the conflict cannot be considered as such anymore (Kreutz 2010). Finally, *Actor ceases to exist* is the outcome of civil conflict that occurs when ‘one side of the conflict ceases to exist, is defeated in another simultaneous conflict, or simply withdraws from contesting the incompatibility’ (Kreutz 2010).

The aim of this section was to clarify how the core concepts of the dissertation are interpreted. These clarifications were made to facilitate the understanding of the following sections, in which is discussed the expected effect that the fragmentation, internal competition, and internal power distribution have on each conflict outcome.

2.2. Fragmentation of armed oppositions and civil conflict outcomes

In recent years, the fragmentation of armed oppositions has been object of increasing attention. The blossoming literature on fragmentation, partly inspired by the necessity to make sense of violent multiparty conflicts, has mostly focused on finding the reasons why armed oppositions fragment in the first place. From this body of literature, it emerged that fragmentation occurs for several reasons. First, armed oppositions might fragment due to the response of the state to the rebellion. It has been demonstrated that state repression (McLauchlin and Pearlman 2012, Seymour *et al.* 2016, Fjelde and Nilsson 2018, Walther and Pedersen 2020), state concessions (Nilsson 2010, Seymour *et al.* 2016, Fjelde and Nilsson 2018), and the institution of non-inclusive peace processes (Reiter 2015, Plank 2017) can lead armed oppositions to fragment. Second, fragmentation might also be brought about by some characteristics inherent to the opposition itself and the rebel groups of which is composed. A number of studies have established that fragmentation might occur because of lack of organisational cohesion, either due to factionalised leadership (Asal *et al.* 2012), poor internal discipline and control (Bakke *et al.* 2012, Staniland 2014, Walther and Pedersen 2020), and diversity in rebel groups' preferences, both in terms of demands (Seymour *et al.* 2016) and strategy (Bakke *et al.* 2012). Third, fragmentation might also result from contextual factors, such as battlefield dynamics (Lounsbery and Cook 2011, Christia 2012, Woldemariam 2016), power shifts (Christia 2012), or low barriers to entry the political contestation (Fjelde and Nilsson 2018, Walter 2019).

While the existing scholarship provides solid explanations as to why fragmentation occurs, it does not sufficiently explain how and to what extent it affects conflict termination. As discussed in Chapter 1, most of the existing studies – which are not numerous – on the purported link between fragmentation and the outcomes of civil conflicts are either limited in scope, for they have focused almost exclusively on negotiated settlements, or in the generalisability of their findings, for they have largely adopted case study-based designs that do not provide indications of the effects at the cross-national level. As a result, our knowledge is limited with regard to how and by virtue of what causal mechanisms different structural characteristics of armed oppositions affect conflict termination.

The fragmentation of armed oppositions is expected to substantially affect the way civil conflicts terminate. In this section, the theoretical expectations regarding its impact on all the possible outcomes of civil outcomes are laid out. Fragmentation is expected to set in motion four main causal mechanisms that, in turn, affect how civil conflicts end: first, fragmentation reduces the overall fighting effectiveness of the armed opposition; second, it induces competition among the rebel groups of the opposition over the available resources; third, it exacerbates bargaining problems between the government and the opposition; and fourth, it incentivises extremist behaviours by the rebel groups. Fragmentation, thus, is expected to positively affect the chances that civil conflicts end in government victory and negatively affect the chances they end in rebel victory, peace agreement, ceasefire, and low activity. The causal process that connects fragmentation to an increased or a decreased probability that a specific outcome occurs is detailed in the following paragraphs, starting from government and rebel victory.

Government and rebel victory

Several authors have observed that fragmented oppositions are less likely to be successful in achieving their objectives (Gamson 1975, p. 110, O’neill 1990, p. 124, Pearlman 2011, Krause 2014). One of the most important reasons identified in the literature as to why they are less successful is that fragmented oppositions are troubled by coordination problems. Multiple rebel groups within the same conflict system tend to operate in dissonance rather than in a coordinated fashion (Christia 2012, p. 43), decreasing their chances to defeat the contested government. Other scholars argue that fragmented oppositions, at the same time, should make it more difficult for the contested government to bring the conflict to an end. Governments struggle to terminate the conflict when they are facing multiple rebel groups because they have to fight simultaneously on multiple open fronts (Akcinaroglu 2012). Building on these indications emerging from the literature and further unpacking the causal mechanisms behind the link between fragmentation and victories in civil conflicts, I argue that fragmentation sets in motion two mechanisms that, in turn, are linked to an increase in the probability of government victory and a decrease in the probability of rebel victory.

First, fragmentation largely reduces the overall military effectiveness of the opposition. Compared to a cohesive armed opposition, a fragmented opposition composed of multiple rebel groups is more likely to operate in an uncoordinated fashion. Rebel groups are autonomous in devising their strategy and tactics to pursue the armed effort against the government. Accordingly, as they are not subordinated to a central authority that can ensure that each of the groups is operating in consonance, fragmented oppositions are poorly coordinated, both strategically and tactically. Coordination between the rebel groups can be considered a basic requirement for the effective conduct of the armed struggle against an often disproportionately stronger enemy. Such a lack of coordination negatively affects the overall opposition and individual rebel group’s ability to carry out effective military actions against the contested

government, further widening the common asymmetry between the opposition and the contested government.

Second, fragmentation also causes waste of resources and competition over them. Rebel groups operate in a context of limited resources, both material, like military and financial resources, and immaterial, like the support of a sympathetic population. These resources are fundamental for each rebel group to pursue the armed struggle against the government and ensure survival. While material resources are necessary to sustain the war-fighting capacity of each rebel group, immaterial resources such as popular support guarantee a constant inflow of militants and reinforce the strength of the rebel groups' claims. As the number of groups within the opposition increases, the more intense becomes the competition among the rebel groups to secure these resources. As groups draw from a finite pool of resources, fragmented oppositions can be expected to be unable to capitalise on the available resources, to the detriment of their effort. If these resources were pooled together, the armed opposition could extract the most out of them. Instead, when each group possess only a small share of these resources and constantly competes with other rebel groups to increase the size of said share, these resources can be misused and, especially the immaterial ones, might dissolve, for popular support and militants' availability are not easy to maintain. For the reasons above, thus, fragmentation is expected to be associated with a decrease in the probability that the conflict terminates in rebel victory.

Conversely, governments can exploit the weakness of a fragmented opposition and exert their military superiority with ease. The government is expected to benefit from this situation because, even the weakest one, might find it easier to obtain the much sought-after victory if the opposition that it is facing is poorly coordinated and overall less effective in projecting its war-fighting capacity. It is common for governments to be far superior to armed oppositions in terms of war-fighting capacities. Armed oppositions often face an unsurmountable challenge against a counterpart that is superior in almost any respect. If, in addition to this, the armed

opposition is even weaker due to its fragmentation, then it becomes even easier for the government to succeed. However, the positive effect that fragmentation has on the chances of government victory is observable only for moderate levels of fragmentation. A conflict in which the opposition is excessively fragmented might not necessarily be more likely to end in government victory. As Akcinaroglu argued, a large number of rebel groups might result in an equal number of open fronts in which government forces have to battle (2012). Compelled to over-stretch, the government forces might not be necessarily able to exert their superiority. Accordingly, I expect fragmentation to be associated with an increase in the probability of government victory, but that this positive effect might be mitigated when the opposition is excessively fragmented.

Peace agreement and ceasefire

Previous research has returned mixed results with regard to the impact of fragmentation on the chances that a civil conflict ends in a negotiated settlement. A number of studies have established that fragmentation might have negative consequences for the prospects of peaceful resolution of civil conflicts. One reason why it is so is because fragmentation magnifies information problems, making bargaining more difficult (Cunningham 2006, 2013). Information problems refer to the difficulty for the belligerents to gauge information about the opponent's strength and resolve. In general terms, the parties at conflict have substantial incentives to withhold or misrepresent information about their ability and intention to see the conflict through. By concealing these information, the parties can convince their adversary that they would be able to outlast it or, more simply, they avoid giving an advantage that the adversary can use at a later stage (Walter 1999). In civil conflicts, information problems are proverbially severe, as it is difficult to gather precise information on rebel groups (Walter 2009). These information problems might become more severe when the armed opposition is

fragmented. According to one study, the more information that need to be collected and the harder it is to collect them, the more time combatants need to agree on a settlement (Walter 2009). Another study has found that the larger the number of veto players, such as rebel groups, in a civil conflict, the more severe the information problems and, in turn, the less likely the conflict would be resolved through negotiation (Cunningham 2006). On a similar vein, another study argued that information about capability and resolve of the belligerents are more difficult to gauge in multiparty civil conflicts. While the costs of a multiparty conflict might push the actors to consider peaceful negotiations as a viable option, if these information problems remain unresolved, peace agreements are difficult to be concluded (Findley 2013).

A second reason identified by the literature as to why fragmentation makes the negotiated solution of civil conflicts more difficult is the increased commitment problems. Some studies have demonstrated that fragmented oppositions are incapable of credibly committing to a negotiated deal (Cunningham 2013, Krause 2014). One of the main reason why it is so is because rebel groups of an opposition might benefit from spoiling other groups' attempts to negotiate with the government (Stedman 1997, Kydd and Walter 2002, Pearlman 2011, Cunningham *et al.* 2012).

Finally, the scholarship indicated that fragmentation might be an obstacle to the peaceful resolution of civil conflicts also because it might result in the proliferation of diverse demands and preferences. As these diverse preferences are impossible for the government to simultaneously accommodate, the peaceful resolution of the civil conflict becomes more difficult to reach (Cunningham 2006, Seymour *et al.* 2016).

On a different vein, other scholars have found that fragmentation does not necessarily reduce, or even increases, the chances that a civil conflict ends in a negotiated settlement. One study contends that the rebel groups of a fragmented movement are not necessarily more committed to war and, accordingly, fragmentation does not automatically decrease the chances of

termination in negotiated settlement (Findley and Rudloff 2012). In fact, a successive study has not found a significant correlation between the presence of multiple rebel groups and a decreased probability that a negotiated settlement is concluded (Findley 2013). Another study, instead, has found that the likelihood of negotiated settlements actually increases when there are multiple rebel groups and that governments are more likely to negotiate with the weaker ones as the number of groups increases (Nilsson 2010).

Building on the existing literature, I expect fragmentation to set in motion a third causal mechanism that, in turn, determines a decrease in the probability that a conflict ends in peace agreement or ceasefire. Fragmentation is expected to substantially exacerbate bargaining problems, which in turn make the peaceful resolution of civil conflicts more difficult to obtain. There are several reasons why it is so. First, as highlighted in previous research, fragmentation can negatively affect information problems. The larger the number of rebel groups within an opposition, the more difficult for the government to gather information about the strength and resolve of each rebel group. This is simply a consequence of the fact that rebel groups are multiple and that the government is required to gather information on each of them. Beyond this simple numerical consequences, information problems are expected to be worse because rebel groups in a fragmented opposition have even higher incentives to withhold information about their strength and resolve. Rebel groups of a fragmented opposition not only have to conceal these information from the government but also from the other rebel groups, since they could otherwise use these information as a leverage to gain a competitive advantage within the opposition.

Second, fragmentation aggravates commitment problems. In general terms, rebel groups are not perceived as credible bargaining partners (Bapat 2005). Rebel groups in fragmented oppositions might be seen as even less credible. This is because each group might have different incentives and intentions to continue the armed struggle, which might make them less inclined

to fully commit to a negotiated deal once it has been signed. In addition, as the governments are unable to verify the credibility and trustworthiness of their adversaries, they can be wary that the groups would actually honour the deal and thus prefer not to enter negotiations with a fragmented opposition. The negative effect of these commitment problems can be even more severe for the chances of conflict termination in ceasefire. Ceasefires are less formalised attempts than peace agreements to bring the conflict to a negotiated end. As it does not necessarily involve negotiations over the nature of the dispute, but just an agreement on halting the violence, a ceasefire requires a high level of commitment from the parties to sign it and avoid its collapse. When the groups are several, it is possible that at least one of them, for individual benefits, does not wish to stop the violence or is willing to resort to combat for strategic reasons after the ceasefire has been signed, thus determining its premature collapse .

Third, fragmentation is tightly linked with the different preferences of the rebel groups that make up the opposition. To each group within the opposition corresponds a unique set of preferences regarding the contested incompatibility. These preferences are oftentimes at the origin of the fragmentation itself and groups might be expected to place on them a high value, thus resulting in a decreased willingness of the groups to compromise. Simultaneously accommodating these preferences might prove hard for a government willing to negotiate with a fragmented armed opposition, especially when some of the rebel groups are not accommodative towards alternatives. While the government strategy of *winning away pieces*, executed through the negotiation with one rebel group at a time, can still be an option to reduce the number of active groups in the conflict (Nilsson 2010), it might still prove hard for the government to accommodate very diverse preferences, especially if they require concessions that are deemed excessive or can set a dangerous precedent for future negotiations.

Fourth, fragmentation incentivises spoiler behaviours.⁸ The origins of spoiler behaviours can be found not only in the relations between the two primary parties involved in a nascent peace process, the government and the armed opposition, but also in the structural characteristic of the opposition. Fragmentation indicates the presence of multiple groups within the opposition, each of which might differ in terms of leadership, objectives, demands, deceptive nature and so on. Each of these characteristics of the rebel groups might nurture a spoiler attitude. The presence of potential spoilers may generate the government's distrust of the rebel groups, which, accordingly, might not see the negotiations as a fruitful enterprise. Stedman indicated in spoilers the greatest source of risk for peace making (Stedman 1997). By pursuing acts that sabotage the trust of the government in the ability of the opposition to stick to a negotiated deal (Kydd and Walter 2002) and by resorting to violence throughout the entire negotiation phase (Reiter 2015), spoilers can effectively bring the nascent peace process to collapse. From a simply numerical standpoint, the higher the number of spoilers, the more difficult to manage them and ensure the success of the negotiations (Stedman 1997). Groups in a fragmented opposition might have different preferences regarding the continuation of the fight and the medium/long-term objectives. Thus, they might have all the incentives to act as spoilers and sabotage the nascent peace process if such an act can bring about any individual advantage. For the reasons discussed above, thus, I expect fragmentation to be associated with a decrease in the chances that a civil conflict ends in peace agreement or ceasefire.

⁸ The literature on spoilers in civil conflicts is extensive and a detailed discussion of the effects of spoiler behaviours on peace processes falls beyond the scope of this chapter. For the original interpretation of the concept of spoiler see Stedman (1997). For a recent discussion on its use in the literature and applicability see Nilsson and Kovacs (2011).

Low activity

Fragmentation can also affect the probability that a civil conflict terminates due to low activity. Although not much in the literature has been said in this respect, some of the works related to the levels and direction of violence in civil conflicts can help predicting in which way fragmentation might affect the chances of conflict termination for lack of armed activity. One important indication emerges from the literature: civil conflicts in which the opposition is fragmented tend to be more violent. In these contexts, rebel groups are more likely to aggressively outbid other groups by resorting to an excessive use of lethal power against the government and the constituent population of other groups (Cunningham et al. 2012, Wood and Kathman 2015). In addition, rebel groups of fragmented oppositions, especially those who have splintered from other groups, are more likely to use violent tactics (Asal *et al.* 2012) and attack co-ethnic civilians (Cunningham *et al.* 2012, Wood and Kathman 2015).

Building on these indications emerging from the literature, I expect fragmentation to set in motion a fourth causal mechanism that, in turn, determines a decrease in the probability that the civil conflict ends due to lack of armed activity. In fact, fragmentation is expected to push the armed opposition towards extremist tactics and civilian victimisation. Rebel groups of a fragmented opposition strive to gain a position of prominence within the opposition and vis-à-vis the government. One way to do so is to aggressively outbid the other groups by excessively resorting to the use of lethal power against the government and the constituent population of other groups. Through this method, rebel groups attempt to extract larger concessions from the government and gain a competitive advantage within the opposition. The adoption of more extremist tactics by the rebel groups leads to a general increase in the intensity of the conflict, for not only the lethality of the rebel groups increases, but also because the government is forced to resort to harsher responses to counter acts of extreme violence and civilian victimisation. Such an increase in the level of intensity thus makes conflict termination due to

lack of armed activity less likely to be observed. The discussion above leads to the following hypothesis:

***Hypothesis 1:** civil conflicts in which the armed opposition is fragmented are more likely to end in government victory and less likely to end in rebel victory, peace agreement, ceasefire, and low activity than those in which the armed opposition is not fragmented.*

2.3. Internal competition of armed oppositions and civil conflict outcomes

Structural characteristics are not the only attributes of armed oppositions that might have an impact on the outcomes of civil conflicts. In fact, a mere count of the number of rebel groups within an opposition does not provide a full picture of how rebel characteristics might affect conflict termination. The relations that exist among the groups of a fragmented opposition must also be taken into careful account to assess how the characteristics of armed opposition might affect the prospects of termination of civil conflicts.

The competitive relations among rebel groups of fragmented oppositions are expected to play a role in shaping conflict termination. In some instances, groups might be willing to form alliances to carry out the armed effort in a concerted manner and focus on the struggle against the government. In other instances, instead, groups might be unaffiliated, have incompatible preferences, pursue independent strategies, and even fight one another on top of the fight with the government. The presence of many groups within an opposition might not necessarily cause competition among them, but when it does and the competition among rebel groups is significant, these competitive relations can considerably affect the dynamics of civil conflicts. For this reason, the dissertation looks specifically at two levels of internal competition, in order of presumed severity, to assess how they affect the prospects of conflict termination: the condition in which the groups are not allied and operate independently; and the condition in

which the groups fight one another in the shadow of the conflict against the government. These two levels of competition within an opposition and how they are expected to affect conflict outcomes are discussed in turn in the following sections.

2.3.1. Independence of rebel groups

Alliances among the rebel groups of an armed opposition may mitigate the effects of fragmentation discussed in the previous section. By striking alliances, rebel groups renounce to the competition with one another to focus on the shared endeavour of fighting the government. In a sense, alliances among rebel groups bring a fragmented opposition as close as it can get to a unitary, cohesive, opposition that operates in a coordinated fashion. However, although alliances can be very convenient for rebel groups, they are difficult to initiate. What makes alliances difficult to initiate is that rebel groups, albeit aware of the benefits they can bring about, are often reticent to join forces. This might be because of commitment problems (Bapat and Bond 2012), fear of losing their autonomy, or ideological divides (Gade, Gabbay, *et al.* 2019).

When groups decide to pursue the armed effort independently can be expected to compete with one another in order to get the largest share of concessions and conflict spoils. For this reason, the independence of rebel groups, that is the condition in which groups are not allied and pursue the armed effort independently, can be considered denotative of competition within the opposition. The independence of rebel groups is expected to set in motion the very same causal mechanisms that fragmentation does. However, the effects of this level of internal competition can be expected to be even starker. First, when rebel groups are independent, the overall fighting effectiveness of the armed opposition is further reduced. Second, competition among the rebel groups over the available resources is more severe. Third, bargaining problems between the government and the opposition are further exacerbated. Fourth, extremist

behaviours of the rebel groups are further incentivised. The independence of rebel groups, thus, is expected to positively affect the chances that civil conflicts end in government victory and negatively affect the chances they end in either rebel victory, peace agreement, ceasefire, and low activity. In the following paragraphs, the causal process that connects this level of internal competition to an increased or a decreased probability that a specific outcome occurs is illustrated.

Government and rebel victory

Previous research has established that alliances among rebel groups can be beneficial for the armed effort of the opposition. Allied groups, some studies suggest, have the opportunity to pool resources and operate in a more coordinated manner against the common enemy (Akcinaroglu 2012, Bapat and Bond 2012). Conversely, rebel groups that are not allied and operate independently can rely only on their own strength, are poorly coordinated, and consequently are less effective in their fight against the government (Akcinaroglu 2012). For these very reasons, civil conflicts in which the rebel groups are allied should be more likely to end in rebel victory and less likely to end in government victory compared to those in which the groups are independent (Akcinaroglu 2012). On a different vein, another study contends that alliances among rebel groups, while certainly bringers of substantial benefits, still do not allow a fragmented opposition to reach the level of efficiency of a unitary actor because the ‘ability among allies to pool common strengths is eclipsed by even greater division, animus, and mutual fear between them’ (Zeigler 2016, p. 4). While this latter study does not go as far as to indicate whether alliances among groups favour or not the conditions for rebel victory, the position expressed suggests that alliances do not automatically translate in increased chances of rebel victory, as rebel groups can still be competitive and unable to exploit the benefits that alliances should guarantee.

My arguments build directly on the main indications emerging from the literature, namely that alliances among rebel groups promote a more efficient use of the resources and coordinated action, while, conversely, the independence of groups foments the competition among the groups and elicits uncoordinated action. More specifically, I argue that, compared to a situation in which the groups are allied, a condition of independence of the groups sets in motion two mechanisms that, in turn, determine a decrease in the probability of rebel victory and an increase the probability of government victory. The mechanisms at play are the same ones previously discussed.

First, the independence of groups has an even stronger negative impact than fragmentation on the overall military effectiveness of the opposition. Alliances are sought to and determine an increase of the capabilities of the rebel groups and their fighting efficiency (cfr. Gade, Gabbay, *et al.* 2019). When the groups are not allied, they remain independent in devising parochial strategies and carrying out the armed effort. As mentioned before, coordination and cooperation can be considered a basic requirement for effective military operations against a stronger opponent. Lacking this basic requirement, an opposition whose groups are independent is weaker and less coordinated than one whose groups are allied and, consequently, more likely to be defeated.

Second, the independence of rebel groups also triggers competition over resources. When rebel groups are independent, each group relies on its own strength and resources because there is no power- and resource-sharing mechanism in place. Accordingly, each group strives to maximise the resources needed to pursue its own objective. As the rebel groups of the opposition draw from a finite pool of resources, these resources must be found at the expenses of other groups. This condition determines an active competition among the groups of the opposition over the available resources. Compared to an opposition whose groups are allied,

independent groups are unable to take full advantage of the strength multiplicative effect they would have obtained if they had joined forces and pooled resources.

In line with the considerations made for the effect of fragmentation on government victories, this condition of increased weakness of the armed opposition determined by the independence of groups can be exploited by the government. The opposition that the government faces is less coordinated and effective than one whose groups are allied. Therefore, if in addition to fragmentation the armed opposition is even weaker because its groups are independent and competitive, then it should become even easier for the government to achieve victory.

Peace agreement and ceasefire

There are only few studies regarding the relation between alliances among rebel groups and outcomes of civil conflicts. The most comprehensive study to date on the topic contends that negotiated settlements should be less likely when rebel groups are allied (Akcinaroglu 2012).⁹ The reason why it is so is that alliances among rebel groups increase information problems. These information problems are increased because the alliances among rebel groups are often informal and, as such, it is harder for the government to obtain information about the full extent of the cooperation among the groups (Akcinaroglu 2012). Accordingly, these increased information problems make negotiated solutions of civil conflicts less likely to be reached (Akcinaroglu 2012). In addition, the study also contends that negotiated settlements should be less likely when rebel groups have long-lasting alliances. As the author notes, when groups

⁹ This specific study focuses specifically on the outcomes of civil conflicts at the dyadic level government-rebel group. Accordingly, the impact of alliances is assessed on the outcome of the conflict between the government and a single rebel group, not the outcome of the entire conflict, that is when the conflict between the government and the armed opposition has ceased. Nevertheless, despite the differences in unit of analysis, the arguments put forward by this study are applicable to the present dissertation.

manage to maintain a strong relationship over the years they are less susceptible to governments' divide and rule strategies carried out through concessions to single components of the alliances (Akcinaroglu 2012).

In contrast to this study, in the present dissertation is the condition of independence of groups that is expected to determine a decrease in the probability of negotiated settlements of civil conflicts. The mechanism at play is the same one discussed previously for the relation between fragmentation and negotiated settlements of civil conflicts. In fact, the independence of rebel groups is expected to further exacerbate the bargaining problems that hinder negotiations. This happens for several reasons. First, compared to when the groups are allied, the independence of groups largely increases information problems. This is because independent groups have higher incentives than allied ones to withhold information about their strength and resolve. While allied groups care not to reveal these information to the government only, independent groups are compelled to be even more careful not to reveal any information in order not to give an advantage to the government *and* other competing groups. Accordingly, the independence of rebel groups can be expected to make it even harder for the government to gather information because the groups have higher incentives to withhold them. My position in this respect stands in stark contrast with the arguments provided by Akcinaroglu (2012), who argues instead that alliances among rebel groups increase information problems. Despite the soundness of their arguments, it is difficult to consider conflicts in which the groups are allied to be worse in terms of information problems than conflicts in which groups are independent and have all the incentives to hide, from the government and other groups, all the information regarding their strength and resolve. If anything, information problems might be considered equally severe in both situations, but it is difficult to see alliances among rebel groups as more deleterious for information problems than the independence of said groups. In addition, information problems are but a part of the bargaining problems that may derail negotiations.

Bargaining failures are also due to other problems, discussed in the following paragraphs, which are more severe when rebel groups are independent rather than allied.

Second, the fact itself that the rebel groups are independent suggests that they may have very different preferences and likely incompatible demands. Conversely, alliances among groups indicate that at least a basic agreement exists among the groups in terms of preferences, both in terms of how the incompatibility should be settled or on the dividends that each component of the alliance should obtain from the settlement. As the preferences of independent groups can differ substantially, it might turn out to be very difficult for the government to accommodate each of them in order to reach a final agreement, especially if they are incompatible.

Finally, independent rebel groups might perceive other groups' attempt to negotiate with the government as disadvantageous, especially if they have different preferences regarding the settlement of the incompatibility. These perceived disadvantages can incentivise independent groups to act as spoilers. While allied groups have little incentives to act as spoilers because the decision itself to enter negotiations with the government is shared by the components of the alliance and so are the demands put forward for the final settlement, independent rebel groups can be incentivised to bring the peace process to collapse if they perceive that their demands have not been satisfactorily met and/or the negotiations are favouring other groups. For these reasons, therefore, civil conflicts in which the rebel groups are independent are expected to be less likely to end in peace agreement than conflicts in which the groups are allied.

The considerations above are valid for ceasefires too. Ceasefires between the government and allied groups might be agreed and hold for longer. When groups are allied, in fact, it is more likely that they would honour the ceasefire since the decision of halting the hostilities was shared among the parties of the alliance. Moreover, a group that is part of an alliance has

fewer incentives to resume the armed effort than an independent group. The resumption of violence to pursue independent strategies could jeopardise the alliance and, with it, the whole armed effort against the government. For this reason, the independence of rebel groups is also expected to determine a decrease in the probability of ceasefire compared a situation in which the groups of the armed opposition are allied.

Low activity

The independence of rebel groups is expected to set in motion a fourth causal mechanism that, in turn, determines a decrease in the probability of low activity. As discussed for fragmentation, also the independence of rebel groups is expected to compel the groups towards extremist behaviours and civilian victimisation. The fact that groups are independent implies that they can resort to lethal means as much as they please. Each group decides when and against whom use violence in a completely unrestrained manner and some of them may choose to adopt extremist positions for strategic reasons (Kydd and Walter 2002). In a highly competitive context as the one produced by the presence of multiple independent groups, groups have no centrally imposed or agreed upon obligation to limit the use of violence against the government, other groups, or civilians if they perceive extreme violence to be the best strategy to achieve their objectives and outbid the adversaries. Accordingly, extremist tactics lead to a further increase in the intensity of the conflict because both the lethality of the rebel groups and of the government increases. Such an increase in the level of intensity, partly due to the more extremist behaviours of the groups and partly due to the harsher response of the government to these behaviours, makes conflict termination due to lack of armed activity less likely to be observed. The discussion above leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: *civil conflicts in which the armed opposition is fragmented and the rebel groups are independent are more likely to end in government victory and less likely to end in rebel victory, peace agreement, ceasefire, and low activity than those in which the rebel groups are allied.*

2.3.2. *Intra-opposition violence*

Internal competition within the opposition does not necessarily result in instances of fratricidal violence among the rebel groups that are part of it. However, the literature suggests that rebel groups are very likely to fight one another (Cunningham *et al.* 2009). The scholarship on the topic has found that violence among rebel groups occurs mostly because of ideological and ethnic reasons (Fjelde and Nilsson 2012, Gade, Hafez, *et al.* 2019, Hafez 2020), resource competition (Fjelde and Nilsson 2012, Nygård and Weintraub 2015), and power competition and distribution (Fjelde and Nilsson 2012, Nygård and Weintraub 2015, Pischedda 2015, 2018, Gade, Hafez, *et al.* 2019).

Fratricidal violence among rebel groups can be considered denotative of the highest possible level of internal competition. In cases as such, rebel groups of the same opposition do not engage in a nonviolent competition against one another to attain more resources, concessions, or support from civilian constituencies, but they actively fight one another to extract resources from or altogether wipe out other competing rebel groups. Such an extreme level of internal competition is expected to have similar but starker effects on conflict processes than those that the fragmentation and moderate internal competition have. More specifically, intra-opposition violence is expected to set in motion the same causal mechanisms illustrated before but with more severe effects. First, intra-opposition violence further reduces the overall fighting effectiveness of the armed opposition. Second, it determines extremely severe competition over the available resources. Third, it makes bargaining problems insurmountable.

Finally, it pushes the rebel groups towards more extremist behaviours. However, even though the causal mechanisms are the same, such an extreme level of internal competition is expected to have slightly different effects on the outcomes of civil conflicts. In fact, intra-opposition violence is expected to positively affect the chances that civil conflicts end in government victory and low activity and negatively affect the chances that they end in either rebel victory, peace agreement, and ceasefire. The causal process linking this extreme level of internal competition to an increased or a decreased outcome probability is discussed in the following paragraphs.

Government and rebel victory

The scholarship on violence among rebel groups has focused mostly on finding its root causes rather than the impact it might have on dynamics and outcomes of civil conflicts. Nevertheless, this body of literature provides some useful indications of how violence among rebel groups might affect conflict termination. A number of studies have postulated that violence among groups might negatively affect the prospects of rebel victory and, conversely, positively affect those of government victory. Some studies have pointed to the diversion of resources of the rebel groups from the conflict against the government to the one against one another as a major reason for defeat. According to Fjelde and Nilsson, violence among rebel groups contributes to weakening the opposition in a substantial manner, to the benefit of the government (2012). On a similar vein, Pischedda argues that violence among rebel groups might substantially benefit the government, for the groups divert important resources from the conflict against the government to fight one another, thus wasting the opportunity to obtain territorial gains or final victory (Pischedda 2015, 2018). Other scholars, instead, raised attention to the risk of side-switching determined by rebel infighting. According to Staniland and his theory of *fratricidal flipping*, violence among rebel groups might lead those groups that are unable to resist the

aggressions of other rebel groups to defect to the government (Staniland 2012). It follows, thus, that defecting rebel groups contribute to reinforce the government side of the conflict, increasing the chances that the conflict terminates in government victory.

Building on this literature, I too argue that such an extreme level of internal competition is surely detrimental for the armed effort of the opposition. Intra-opposition violence is expected to set in motion the same two mechanisms discussed before – reduced military effectiveness and competition/waste of the available resources – which in turn determine a decrease in the probability of rebel victory and an increase in the probability of government victory. Intra-opposition violence is expected to have an extremely negative impact on the armed oppositions' overall military effectiveness because rival rebel groups divert fighting resources from the struggle against the government to the one against another. As a direct consequence, the existing power asymmetry between the opposition and the government widens. The opposition becomes weaker vis-à-vis the government not only because of uncoordinated action, but also because of rivalry and extreme competition among the groups. Accordingly, intra-opposition violence can be expected to have extremely negative effects on the probability that a civil conflict terminates in rebel victory. Conversely, the government can largely benefit from the rivalry within the opposition. Compared to situations in which the opposition is simply fragmented and moderately competitive, the incumbent should find it easier to exert its military superiority when the opposition is substantially weakened by instances of fratricidal violence.

Peace agreement and ceasefire

Intra-opposition violence can also be expected to contribute to the intractability of civil conflicts. In fact, fratricidal violence is expected to set in motion the same mechanism that links fragmentation and independence of groups to a reduced probability that the conflict ends in

peace agreement or ceasefire. The obstacles to negotiations that the fragmentation and the moderate internal competition determine are surely aggravated when groups fight one another.

First, information problems are expected to further increase. If independent groups are expected to have high incentives to withhold information about their strength and resolve, the incentives for groups that engage in fratricidal violence can be expected to be even higher. Compared to groups that do not fight one another, which are compelled to withhold information mostly to avoid giving an advantage to the other competitors, groups that engage in fratricidal violence are forced to be even more careful in not revealing information because of survival concerns. It is in these information, especially those about their actual strength, that for a rebel group under attack by the government and other rebel groups lies the difference between survival and annihilation. Accordingly, intra-opposition violence can be expected to make it extremely hard for the government to gather information since the groups have the highest possible incentives to withhold them.

Second, if the independence of the rebel groups suggested that they may have very different preferences, instances of intra-opposition violence suggest that the preferences of the rebel groups are not only highly diverse, but also incompatible and antagonistic. Groups that actively fight one another are surely more likely to hold preferences that follow zero-sum logics rather than more rational cost-benefits calculations. Accordingly, as it becomes impossible for the government to accommodate *either us or them* preferences, bringing the conflict to a negotiated settlement appears like an impossible endeavour for the parties.

Finally, intra-opposition violence might lead the groups not to participate to or sabotage the negotiations if these are seen as profitable for rival groups. In fact, rival groups are expected to be more likely than non-rival groups to act as spoilers if the negotiations favour any of the rivals. For all the reasons discussed above, thus, civil conflicts in which the rebel groups fight

one another are expected to be less likely to end in peace agreement and ceasefire than conflicts in which the groups do not.

Low activity

The detrimental effects of internal violence are not limited to the dilapidation of the opposition's military capacity and the increased difficulties in negotiating a way out of the conflict. Vicious rivalry among rebel groups translates also in increased extremism and in higher levels of violence. Groups are not only simultaneously involved in the fight against the government and the one against one another, but also, as one study has found, more likely to use violence against the civilian population (Wood and Kathman 2015). According to this study, dynamics of inter-rebel violence have detrimental effects for both the rebel groups themselves and for civilian life. The authors argue that violence among rebel groups can result in an increased predisposition of the rebel groups to target the civilian constituency of the rival groups or even their very own if they perceive that support is faltering (Wood and Kathman 2015).

In line with the indications emerging from the literature and with the previous discussion on the impact of fragmentation and moderate internal competition, intra-opposition violence should determine a decrease in the probability of conflict termination for low activity. This is because the intensity of the conflict substantially increases, given that the rebel groups are simultaneously fighting the government, other rebel groups, and also targeting innocent civilians. However, while it is true that intra-opposition violence certainly increases the conflict intensity, it does not necessarily result in a reduced probability that the conflict ends for low activity.

In fact, when rebel groups fight one another, the conflict against each other becomes more salient than the one against the government. Considerations related to their own survival or the

political primacy within the opposition might emerge and force the groups to focus on the conflict against each other rather than the one against the government. For this reason, I expect instances of intra-opposition violence to determine an increase in the probability of low activity as the groups that are simultaneously engaged in the fight against the government and other rebel groups might abandon the former, which terminates for low activity, to pursue the latter, which instead becomes an instance of non-state conflict. The discussion above leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: *civil conflicts in which the armed opposition is fragmented and its rebel groups fight one another are more likely to end in government victory and low activity and less likely to end in rebel victory, peace agreement, and ceasefire than those in which the rebel groups do not fight one another.*

2.4. Internal power distribution of armed oppositions and civil conflict outcomes

The structural characteristics of and the competitive dynamics within armed oppositions still do not provide a complete picture of how the attributes of the rebel side might affect conflict termination. As one important study aptly noted, armed oppositions might differ widely in terms of internal power distribution but limited attention has been paid to how these differences may affect the dynamics of civil conflicts (Bakke *et al.* 2012). Though some years have passed since the publication of this study, still very little has been done to assess whether and how different distributions of power within armed oppositions affect civil conflict outcomes. Similarly to the study cited, I likewise contend that differences in how power is distributed within an armed opposition can shape the termination of civil conflicts.

I expect a dispersed distribution of power, that is the condition in which of two or more rebel groups within an opposition are at a parity in terms of strength, to set in motion the same four main causal mechanisms discussed before. Similarly to what it was seen for the armed opposition structural characteristics, a dispersed distribution of power within the opposition is expected to reduce the overall fighting effectiveness of the armed opposition, induce competition among the rebel groups over the available resources, exacerbate bargaining problems, and incentivise extremist behaviours. Although the mechanisms at play are the same, other conditions strictly related to the dispersion of power shape the effects that this variable has on civil conflict outcomes in a manner that differs substantially from the ones illustrated for the previous variables. In fact, a dispersed distribution of power is expected to positively affect the chances that a civil conflict ends in ceasefire and low activity and negatively affect the chances that it ends in government victory, rebel victory or peace agreement. In the following paragraphs the causal process connecting a dispersed distribution of power within the opposition with increased or decreased outcome probabilities is illustrated.

Government and rebel victory

How different distribution of power across rebel groups might affect the dynamics of civil conflicts has gained increasing attention in the recent scholarship. However, only a handful of studies provide indications on how it might affect their termination. Some studies suggest that parity of strength among the rebel groups should encourage them to coordinate their effort, thus reinforcing their stand vis-à-vis the government (Christia 2012, Findley and Rudloff 2012, Popovic 2018). On a different vein, the most comprehensive studies on the relation between power distribution and rebel success contend that hegemonic movements, those which include a group that is much stronger than the others, are more likely to achieve strategic success and

that, conversely, movements in which power is more evenly distributed are more likely to be competitive and squander their chances to succeed (Krause 2014, 2017).

Building on these limited indications, but also departing from them in some important respects, I argue that a dispersed distribution of power within the opposition is detrimental to the armed effort of the opposition. A dispersed distribution of power is expected to set in motion the same two causal mechanisms that connect the fragmentation and internal competition to victories in conflict, though with different results. As much as fragmentation and internal competition, a dispersed distribution of power is expected to substantially reduce the overall effectiveness of the armed opposition and to determine competition over and misuse of the resources potentially available to the opposition. Despite the incentives to cooperate that some studies contend that materialise when rebel groups are equally strong (Christia 2012, Findley and Rudloff 2012, Popovic 2018), coordination among rebel groups is not that easy to obtain, especially if said groups differ in terms of preferences, ideology, and/or strategy. Irrespective of how strong they are relative to the others, rebel groups are expected to continue pursuing the armed effort on their own if the differences among them in terms of preferences, ideology, and/or strategy are significant enough to have justified their intention to go about the armed struggle separately in the first place. In a way, the incentives to cooperate resulting from a dispersed distribution of power are outweighed by the various differences among rebel groups, which induce them to continue the armed effort on their own rather than coordinate. When equally strong groups do not coordinate, they do not take advantage of the full strength they would have had if they had shared forces and resources and applied a common strategy. Being equal in terms of strength implies also that none of the groups is able to subsume the others. In this case, thus, the full potential strength of the armed opposition remains divided in multiple poles and not maximised. Conversely, when power is concentrated in a single group, that is one rebel group is hegemonic, the problem of misuse of the available strength is less

likely to arise. Having the almost undivided strength at its disposal and a single strategy, a hegemonic group can represent a more dangerous peril to the fate of the government than two or more equally strong groups that follow their own path independently. Accordingly, civil conflicts in which power is dispersed within the opposition are expected to be less likely to end in rebel victory than conflicts in which power within the opposition is concentrated in a hegemonic group.

However, a dispersed distribution of power, though it contributes to weakening the armed opposition, does not necessarily translate in an increased probability of government victory. If a fragmented armed opposition includes a hegemonic group, the government can direct its armed response to this group and pay less attention to the other weaker groups as they represent a menace that is not unbearable or can be dealt with at a later stage of the conflict. When groups are at parity, instead, they all pose a serious challenge to the government's authority. In that case, the government is compelled to deal with all of them simultaneously. Facing equally dangerous menaces on multiple fronts rather than just one on which it can concentrate its military response, the government is expected to struggle much more in exerting its military superiority and, consequently, the chances it would achieve final victory decrease.

Peace agreement and ceasefire

A dispersed distribution of power across the rebel groups can also cause a decrease in the probability of peace agreement. The causal mechanism involved is the same, for a dispersed distribution of power is expected to exacerbate bargaining problems. Even though the impact on the common bargaining problems cannot be considered as strong as the one that internal competition brings about, a dispersed distribution of power can still be detrimental for the prospects of conflict termination in peace agreement. When power is concentrated in a single rebel group, the hegemonic actor is the only one with which the government has to negotiate.

The other smaller, weaker rebel groups could be either defeated on the ground or, facing the possibility of annihilation by the overly stronger government forces, feel forced to adapt their positions to the one of the stronger group and follow suit in negotiating the end of the conflict. Being mainly one the actor with which the government has to deal, the information and commitment problems are largely reduced and only the preferences of the stronger actor have to be accommodated. Conversely, when power is dispersed within the opposition and two or more groups are equally strong, each of them can exercise a power of veto in the negotiations with the government, there are more preferences to be accommodated, more information to be gathered, and also commitment problems may arise if one of the groups is not satisfied with the negotiated terms. For these reasons, civil conflicts in which power is dispersed within the opposition are expected to be less likely to end in peace agreement than conflicts in which power within the opposition is concentrated in a hegemonic group.

A dispersed distribution of power is expected to have a different effect on the chances that the conflict ends in a stable ceasefire. When two or more groups within the opposition are equally strong, none of them might be able to singlehandedly defeat the government and acquire a position of primacy within the opposition by subsuming one of the other rebel groups or amassing sufficient resources to gain an advantage over the others. In such a situation, rebel groups might find themselves in a position of deadlock, as they struggle to succeed in battle and are unable to better position themselves within the opposition. Stalemates in civil conflicts are believed to be a favourable condition for pushing the parties towards a negotiated solution (Zartman 1989, Findley 2013). One recent study has found that battle stalemates incentivise the rebel groups to propose negotiations to the government because the continued fighting does not bear any benefit (Pechenkina and Thomas 2020). The fact that rebel groups are in a condition of parity does not necessarily mean that they are at parity with the government too, hence the stalemate, but, as discussed above, the opposite holds true, since a dispersed

distribution of power is expected to widen the power asymmetry between the government and the opposition. Rather than a total stalemate, dispersion of power determines a condition of stalemate that is *internal* to the armed opposition itself. This condition of internal stalemate might have the same consequences highlighted by Pechenkina and Thomas to the willingness of the rebels to negotiate (2020). In fact, this internal stalemate might profoundly reduce the benefits of continued fighting for the rebel groups and, thus, incentivise them to seek a negotiated solution, given that outright victory or primacy within the opposition are unattainable. However, this condition of stalemate internal to the opposition does not produce the proverbial ripe moment for negotiations, because it does not alter the incentives for the government to negotiate, nor helps solving the bargaining problems that the fragmentation and dispersion of power contribute to exacerbate.

Accordingly, facing the possibility of a costly deadlock, difficulties in negotiating a way out of the conflict, and the impossibility of achieving outright victory, a ceasefire might be perceived by the rebel groups as the second-best option to victory, an outcome that they might actively seek and be acceptable for the government too. For this reason, I expect a dispersed distribution of power to have a positive impact on the probability of ceasefire.

Low activity

On a similar vein, I also expect a dispersed power distribution to determine an increase in the probability of low activity. Compared to a situation in which a rebel group is in a hegemonic position, power balance within the opposition might draw the groups into a spiral of aggressive outbidding. Similarly to what it was seen for fragmentation, rebel groups that are at parity may decide to increase the lethality of their action against the government and the constituent population of other groups in order to gain a position of primacy within the opposition or to extract larger concessions from the government. As a consequence, the increased extremism at

the hand of the rebel groups leads to a general increase in the intensity of the conflict, because both the rebel groups' armed effort and the government response to it becomes more violent.

This mechanism should determine a decrease in the probability that the conflict terminates in low activity. However, as discussed before, parity of strength among the groups might produce the conditions for a stalemate within the opposition. In a situation of internal stalemate determined by a power balance, and considered the difficulties in negotiating an end to the conflict illustrated above, the rebel groups might be tempted to abandon the armed effort altogether instead of continuing a costly, fruitless fight. This, in turn, determines an increase in the probability that the conflict terminates due to lack of armed activity. The discussion above leads to the following hypothesis:

***Hypothesis 4:** civil conflicts in which the armed opposition is fragmented and power is dispersed among the rebel groups are more likely to end in ceasefire and low activity and less likely to end in rebel victory, government victory, and peace agreement than those in which power is concentrated in a hegemonic rebel group*

This final hypothesis concludes the theoretical discussion on the causal processes that link the fragmentation, internal competition, and internal power distribution of armed oppositions with conflict termination. The table below summarises the main theoretical expectations. Before turning to the empirical test of the propositions illustrated in this chapter, the following chapter clarifies the methodological choices that were made to perform the analysis.

Table 2.0.1. Variables, causal mechanisms, and hypotheses

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Causal mechanisms</i>	<i>Hypotheses</i>
Structural characteristics		
Fragmentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces military effectiveness of the armed opposition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ An excessive fragmentation might be problematic for the government too. • Induces waste of and competition over the available resources • Exacerbates bargaining problems • Instigates extremism and civilian victimisation 	H1: civil conflicts in which the armed opposition is fragmented are more likely to end in government victory and less likely to end in rebel victory, peace agreement, ceasefire, and low activity than those in which the armed opposition is not fragmented.
Internal competition		
Independence of groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces military effectiveness of the armed opposition • Induces waste of and competition over the available resources • Exacerbates bargaining problems • Instigates extremism and civilian victimisation 	H2: civil conflicts in which the armed opposition is fragmented and the rebel groups are independent are more likely to end in government victory and less likely to end in rebel victory, peace agreement, ceasefire, and low activity than those in which the rebel groups are allied.
Intra-opposition violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces military effectiveness of the armed opposition • Induces waste of and competition over the available resources • Exacerbates bargaining problems • Instigates extremism and civilian victimisation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ but diverges the rebel groups' effort from the conflict against the government to the one among themselves 	H3: civil conflicts in which the armed opposition is fragmented and its rebel groups fight one another are more likely to end in government victory and low activity and less likely to end in rebel victory, peace agreement, and ceasefire than those in which the rebel groups do not fight one another.

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Causal mechanisms</i>	<i>Hypotheses</i>
Internal power distribution		
Dispersed distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces military effectiveness of the armed opposition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ but the government has to face equally dangerous challenges from multiple fronts • Induces waste of and competition over the available resources • Exacerbates bargaining problems • Instigates extremism and civilian victimisation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ but costly stalemates can change the calculations of the rebel groups 	<p>H4: civil conflicts in which the armed opposition is fragmented and power is dispersed the rebel groups are more likely to end in ceasefire and low activity and less likely to end in rebel victory, government victory, and peace agreement than those in which power is concentrated in a single rebel group</p>

3. Research design

The dissertation aims to reach generalisable conclusions and assess as comprehensively as possible the impact that the fragmentation, internal competition, and internal power distribution of armed oppositions have on the outcomes of civil conflicts. To do so, it is necessary to both identify to what extent the aforementioned factors are associated with the probability that a certain conflict outcome occurs and to illustrate the causal mechanisms that link these factors to the conflict outcomes. While quantitative techniques allow a study to test the associations between variables on a large number of cases and reach generalisations about them, qualitative techniques allow for more nuanced explanations of these associations, simultaneously illuminating the importance of contextual and intervening factors. Through a *nested analysis*, the dissertation aims to couple both methodological approaches with the objective of profiting from the best qualities of each.

3.1. Methodological approach: nested analysis

In light of the scope of the dissertation, a nested analysis is the best strategy for the empirical investigation. The dissertation adopts Lieberman's interpretation of the nested analysis (2005). This approach entails the combination of the statistical analysis of a large sample with the thorough analysis of a small number of case studies drawn from the same sample (Lieberman 2005). A nested analysis starts with a large-N analysis, designed to test a battery of hypotheses about the correlation of a set of variables with the outcome of interest. This large-N analysis is then complemented with a small-N analysis that can take one of two forms depending on the overall fit of the large-N analysis. If the overall fit of the large-N analysis is strong and the results are deemed robust, the aim of the small-N analysis is to provide a further test of the model(s) goodness-of-fit and underlying hypotheses. Conversely, if the fit of the model is weak and the results are not robust, its objective is to investigate the cases in order to find new

predictors, alternative hypotheses, and rival explanations for the outcome of interest (Lieberman 2005).

The nested analysis, thus, permits to combine both quantitative and qualitative approaches and, consequently, to achieve the aims of the dissertation to both reach generalisable conclusions and illustrate the causal mechanisms linking the variables of interest to certain specific civil conflict outcomes. By bridging the two approaches, the nested analysis permits to go beyond quantitative ‘overgeneralised macro-models’ and qualitative ‘myopic micro-investigations’ (Cederman and Vogt 2017), providing a methodological framework within which large-N and small-N analyses become complementary. The specific aspects and the methods used for each part of the analysis are discussed in turn in the following sections.

3.2. Large-N analysis

The large-N analysis consists of the statistical analysis of the impact that fragmentation, internal competition, and internal power distribution of armed oppositions have on the outcomes of civil conflicts at the cross-national level. To perform this analysis, some choices were made in terms of timeframe, unit of analysis, variables specification, statistical methods and modelling. These are discussed in turn.

3.2.1. *Timeframe*

The analysis covers the period between 1989 and 2017. Spanning over almost three decades, the timeframe allows for the analysis of numerous episodes of civil conflicts and is wide enough to allow for a general assessment of the phenomena under study via a large-N analysis. This specific timeframe was chosen for three main reasons. First, because it refers to the period in which it was most likely to observe the fragmentation of armed oppositions. As Figure 1 in the Introduction has shown, compared to the Cold War period, the ratio of the number of rebel

groups to the number of conflict episodes was constantly higher in the post-Cold War period up to 2017.

Second, the timeframe was chosen because it refers to the period for which more accurate and fine-grained data on the activity and composition of armed oppositions is available. Data regarding civil conflicts occurred before the 90s are normally fewer and of inferior accuracy. Especially data regarding the number of rebel militants, precise battle location, groups involved, and battle-related deaths for civil conflicts prior to the 90s are too sparse to be of good use to large-N analyses. For this reason, it was decided to sacrifice the scope of the analysis in terms of timeframe so to obtain more reliable results using accurate and trustworthy data.

Finally, this specific timeframe was also chosen because civil conflicts before 1989 were influenced by the distortive effects of the Cold War. Many civil conflicts in that period can be accurately described as proxy wars between the two superpowers and, accordingly, followed logics and dynamics that differ substantially from those of more recent civil conflicts. As these distortive effects could influence the causal path toward the outcome of interest, they were removed from the analysis by considering only the post-Cold War period. By doing so, it is possible to have a clearer and unbiased picture of the impact of the variables under study, limiting the effects that disproportionate third-party interventions have in civil conflicts. For the reasons above, thus, the timeframe 1989-2017 was considered the most suitable for the present dissertation and adopted for the analysis.

3.2.2. Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis of the dissertation is the conflict dyad government-armed opposition per year, namely a yearly instance of civil conflict between a government and an armed opposition. A dyad government-armed opposition is formed when a civil conflict episode starts. In line

with the conceptualisation of civil conflict provided in Chapter 2, a dyad is formed when a government and an armed opposition use armed force to settle a dispute related to government and/or territory and the use of armed force results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a calendar year. Provided that it still meets the minimum criteria above, the same dyad re-enters the dataset as many times as the number of years until the conflict terminates. A dyad ceases to exist when it does not fulfil the minimum criteria outlined in the conceptualisation, that is the dyad-year does not reach the minimum threshold of 25 battle-related deaths in a calendar year or one of the primary sides of the conflict drops out of the conflict equation. When a dyad ceases to exist and fails to re-enter the dataset, the conflict is considered terminated. To the last active dyad of a conflict episode is associated one of the categories of the dependent variable, namely a definitive civil conflict outcome.

Before discussing how the dependent variable is constructed, some additional comments are required to clarify why this specific unit of analysis was chosen. The first comment in this respect aims to clarify why the conflict dyad government-armed opposition was chosen in the first place instead of the more common dyad government-rebel group. I contend that the yearly dyad government-rebel group is not apt for studies on outcomes of civil conflicts. Studies that rely on this specific dyad as unit of analysis are able to assess only specific group-level terminations and not conflict-level terminations. Group-level terminations might occur while the civil conflict is still being fought by the government with other rebel groups and, accordingly, even if a specific group-level termination occurred it is by no means indicative of how the entire civil conflict has ended. As a consequence, studies that use this dyad as unit of analysis inflate the effects that certain variables might have on conflict termination, for they record an excessive number of outcomes that are not, in fact, the *final* outcome of the conflict. To make an example related to the present dissertation, imagine a conflict in which a government manages to negotiate a peace agreement with three out of four rebel groups of an

opposition and that the only remaining rebel group keeps fighting until it manages to defeat the government. Studies that rely on the dyad government-rebel group as unit of analysis would record four outcomes for the same conflict, three peace agreements and one rebel victory. If conflict termination is intended, as it is in this dissertation, as the *total* cessation of the armed activity, the conflict has to be considered terminated in rebel victory, since it was still active when the peace agreements with the other rebel groups were signed. A study that relies on the dyad government-rebel group would record three peace agreements for a conflict that, in fact, terminated only after the victory of the last rebel group. If this coding of outcomes is applied to many civil conflicts, the consequences of using this unit of analysis might be substantial. Going back to the example, a statistical analysis might pick up the association of a certain independent variable with peace agreements that is in fact non-existent, given that not as many conflict episodes as the data record have actually ended in peace agreement. Compared to this dissertation, thus, studies that use the dyad government-rebel group can provide indications only on how certain variables affect the termination of the dyad government-rebel group, not the entire conflict.

As this dissertation is concerned with conflict-level terminations, a disaggregation at the conflict episode level was adopted (Cederman and Gleditsch 2009). Compared to the government-rebel group dyad, the dyad government-armed opposition is more apt as the unit of analysis of the present dissertation because it allows for the recording of the outcome of the civil conflict when the armed activity has stopped completely and no rebel group is contesting the authority of the government anymore, that is the *actual* end of the conflict. As Cederman and Gleditsch have noted, a disaggregation at the conflict level ‘allows for more detailed analyses of actor constellations and conflict characteristics and to evaluate how these influence prospects for settlements, the duration of violence, as well as the likelihood of specific outcomes’ (2009, p. 491). In addition, an excessive disaggregation can carry the risk of

overlooking processes that occur at the meso- or macro-level of analysis (Cederman and Gleditsch 2009, Sambanis and Schulhofer-Wohl 2019). Such a risk would have become reality for the present dissertation had the dyad government-rebel group been adopted. In fact, as some scholars have aptly noted (Quinn *et al.* 2019, Sambanis and Schulhofer-Wohl 2019), the dyad government-rebel group treats the conflict between the two actors as an independent process, overlooking the interdependencies that exist between rebel groups. By doing so, the dyad remains somehow unaffected by what happens in the context of a multiparty civil conflict and underestimates the impact that the existence of other rebel groups in the conflict, their behaviour, and the relations among them can have on conflict processes. This problem was also noticed in a recent article on conflict duration that, while still adopting the dyad government-rebel group as unit of analysis, resorted to a sophisticated spatial econometric approach to model the interdependence among the dyads pertaining to the same conflict (Metternich and Wucherpfennig 2020). In this dissertation, instead, this issue is resolved by adopting the dyad government-armed opposition as unit of analysis and modelling a set of variables that allow for an assessment of the impact that the presence of multiple groups, their behaviour and relations can have on conflict outcomes.

The second important clarification concerns the choice of using a yearly unit of analysis instead of a more fine-grained one, such as a monthly unit of analysis. In recent years, thanks especially to the availability of more fine-grained data on certain aspects of civil conflicts, several studies have adopted more time-sensitive units of analysis, often using monthly data for their empirical analysis. While the benefits of disaggregating to carry out more time-sensitive analyses are surely evident, not all studies can or should accommodate monthly unit of analysis. Such is the case for the present dissertation. In fact, most of the variables of the dissertation, both independent and control, capture slowly-changing characteristics of armed oppositions and of the overall civil conflict context. These variables are obviously subject to

fluctuations, but these are not as frequent as to justify keeping track of them monthly. For some other variables, instead, using monthly data would have been impossible considering the paucity of fine-grained data already at the yearly level. For these reasons, thus, using a yearly unit of analysis is the most sensible and appropriate choice for the present dissertation. The rationale behind this choice will appear even clearer once discussed, in the following section, the specifics of the variables adopted in the study.

3.2.3. Definition of variables and data

Dependent variable

The dependent variable of this study is a categorical variable that includes all the possible outcomes of civil conflicts. For the construction of this variable, the dissertation relies on the UCDP conflict termination dataset (Kreutz 2010). This source of data was chosen because is the most up to date available; the observations it contains are clustered in conflict episodes, thus allowing for a more precise coding of different conflict episodes depending on the incompatibility;¹⁰ and is disaggregated in yearly observations, thus allowing for a more precise and time-sensitive coding of the observations.

The UCDP conflict termination dataset lists six possible civil conflict outcomes: peace agreement, ceasefire agreement, victory for government side, victory for rebel side, low activity, and actor ceases to exist (Kreutz 2010). This list of possible outcomes is comprehensive, but for the present dissertation some adaptations had to be made for both technical and analytical reasons. The first adaptation that was made is the inclusion of another

¹⁰ This dataset contains also instances of coup d'états. Coup d'états are significantly different from civil conflicts, for they are not instances of uprisings of an armed opposition as defined in Chapter 2 but, rather, of the mutiny of parts of the existing administration of the country at conflict. As they follow very different dynamics, all the instances of coups were removed from the list of civil conflicts that are analysed here. As a reference for the exclusion of the observations related to coup d'états, this study relied on the list of successful and failed coups produced by the Polity IV project (Marshall and Marshall 2018).

category, *Continuation of conflict*. This category does not represent an outcome of civil conflict but is rather a *status quo* category. As discussed in more detail in the next section, the dissertation employs a statistical method specifically designed for investigations of categorical dependent variables. Thus, the choice of adding this category is purely technical and is related to the necessity of having a reference category against which the odds of the other civil conflict outcomes are computed. Choosing the dyad government-opposition per year required that all the observations had to be associated with an outcome category. Therefore, it was necessary to choose an outcome category with which all the dyads referring to a conflict-year when the conflict was not finished could be associated.

The second adaptation that was made in the construction of the dependent variable pertains the outcome *actor ceases to exist*, which is excluded from the list of possible outcomes. In this dissertation, if one of the two primary parties, the government and the armed opposition, ceases to exist and the conflict terminates, then the outcome is necessarily victory for one of the opposing parties or conflict termination due to lack of activity. Instead, if it is one of the rebel groups of the opposition that ceases to exist, either because is incorporated into another rebel group or has been defeated on the ground, the civil conflict is considered concluded only at the point in which the last rebel remaining rebel group of the opposition has been defeated, has retracted from the conflict, or signed an agreement with the government. In summary, the dependent variable contains the following categories, each associated to a specific outcome of civil conflict or its continuation: *Continuation of conflict*, *Victory for government side*, *Victory for rebel side*, *Peace agreement*, *Ceasefire*, and *Low activity*.

Conflict termination is recorded at the conflict-level per year, thus the government-armed opposition dyadic level. Which of the above categories is associated to the yearly dyad depends on whether and how the conflict has ended. If the civil conflict episode, once started, continues in the next calendar year, the yearly dyad is associated with the category *continuation of*

conflict. If the yearly dyad ceases to exist - i.e. the conflict episode has ended - the last active dyad of the conflict episode is associated with *victory for government side* if the government has defeated the armed opposition; *victory for rebel side* if the armed opposition has defeated the government; *peace agreement* if the primary parties resolve the incompatibility through a comprehensive peace agreement; *ceasefire* if the parties agree to a halt of the hostilities, without resolving their incompatibility; and *low activity* if no peace agreement or ceasefire have been concluded nor a decisive victory has been achieved by either party but the conflict intensity falls anyway below the critical threshold of 25 battle-related deaths in a calendar year.

Nevertheless, civil conflict outcomes are often not clear-cut. Accordingly, some additional specifications are needed to better clarify when a conflict episode can be considered concluded. As mentioned before, a conflict episode ends when the dyad-year fails to fulfil the minimum criteria for a *full* calendar year. This coding decision has some implications that need to be fully explained. Three situations are particularly important in this respect. First, if the conflict episode stops but it restarts after a brief lapse, shorter than one calendar year, and is fought over the same incompatibility, the dyad formed as a result of the conflict relapse enters the dataset as part of the same conflict episode and the preceding yearly dyad of the episode is coded as *continuation of conflict*. Second, if the conflict episode stops but it restarts after a break longer than one calendar year and is fought over the same incompatibility, the dyad-year formed as a result of the conflict relapse must be considered the first of a new conflict episode while the dyad-year prior to the conflict interruption as the last active dyad-year of the previous conflict episode. The latter is associated to a definitive outcome and the conflict episode it relates to is considered concluded. The rationale behind this choice is that a conflict that restarts after a significant period of time is interpreted as a new episode of conflict, and not the mere continuation of the same one. In this interpretation were followed the coding guidelines provided in the codebook of the UCDP conflict termination dataset (Kreutz 2010). Third, if the

conflict episode stops and when it restarts is fought over a different incompatibility, it does not matter how much time separates the two conflict spells because they can be considered two different conflict episodes. This is because they are fought for a different incompatibility. Accordingly, the dyad-year formed as a result of the conflict relapse must be considered the first of a new conflict episode while the dyad-year prior to the conflict cessation as the last active dyad-year of the previous conflict episode and associated to a definitive outcome.

A final note on the construction of the dependent variable concerns the manual coding of some missing observations. The UCDP conflict termination dataset reports information on civil conflicts up until 2015 (Kreutz 2010). As this research explores the outcomes of civil conflict occurred up to 2017, some manual coding of the missing observations for the years 2015-2017 was required. In order to ensure the homogeneity of the data, the missing observations were coded using information reported in either the ‘UCDP Dyadic Dataset version 18.1’ if the conflicts were active in those 3 years (Gleditsch *et al.* 2002, Pettersson and Eck 2018), or in the UCDP conflict encyclopaedia if the conflict ended during those 3 years (UCDP 2020). In the unlikely case that no information about conflict termination were reported in the UCDP encyclopaedia, secondary sources were consulted to find information about how a conflict ended and code the observation following closely the UCDP coding procedures, as reported in the codebook of the UCDP conflict termination dataset (Kreutz 2010).

Independent variables

The analysis contains four independent variables. The first independent variable of the study is called *Fragmentation* and is a measure of the fragmentation of the armed opposition. With this variable, the analysis aims to capture the effect of fragmentation on the outcomes of civil conflicts and test whether there are any differences in outcome probabilities when the opposition is fragmented or not and when the number of rebel groups it is composed of

increases. In line with the arguments advanced in Chapter 2 with respect to the conceptualisation of fragmentation as a unidimensional concept, the variable fragmentation measures exclusively the number of rebel groups that were part of an armed opposition in a given year of a conflict episode. Accordingly, this variable is modelled as a count variable that records, for any yearly dyad of a conflict episode, the number of rebel groups composing the armed opposition. It can take the value of 1 if the armed opposition was composed of only one rebel group and, thus, was not fragmented, or two, three, four, and so on if in a year of conflict episode the armed opposition was fragmented and composed of as many groups. As the marginal effect of the addition of a rebel group when the opposition is already highly fragmented is expected to be smaller than the same unitary change when the opposition is lowly fragmented (e.g. unitary change from five to six groups is expected to have a smaller effect on outcomes probability compared to the same unitary change from two to three groups), the variable was transformed in a logarithmic form (cfr. Cunningham 2011, 2013, Cunningham *et al.* 2012).

To construct this variable, the study relies on the ‘UCDP Dyadic Dataset version 18.1’ (Gleditsch *et al.* 2002, Pettersson and Eck 2018). This dataset was selected because is the most fine-grained available and it identifies all the rebel groups involved in a civil conflict episode, the incompatibility they are disputing, against whom they are fighting, and the location of the conflict for each given year of a conflict episode. With these information, it could be recorded the number of rebel groups that in each year of the conflict episode were disputing the same incompatibility through the use of armed force against the incumbent government of a state.

The second independent variable is *Alliances* and is a measure of the severity of the internal competition. This variable captures whether alliances among the rebel groups of the opposition and lack thereof can affect the outcomes of civil conflicts. This variable is modelled as a binary variable that takes the value of 1 if there is evidence that at least one rebel group

within the opposition was allied with another rebel group, and 0 if no such alliance existed, that is all the groups of the opposition were independent. With alliance is meant any instance of coordination between rebel groups amounting to shared training, shared resources, and strategic and tactical cooperation. The data for this variable was fetched from the dataset on alliances among rebel groups produced by Akcinaroglu (2012). This dataset was selected because it is the most up to date available and because, due its disaggregated structure, it was easily adaptable to the UCDP datasets on which this study relies for the construction of the other variables. As this dataset replicates the structure of and contains the same information reported in the UCDP Dyadic dataset plus the information on the alliances among rebel groups, the homogeneity of the data was preserved.

There are two limitations that arise from using this data for the construction of the analysis that need to be fully accounted for. First, the data produced by Akcinaroglu (2012) reports instances of alliances among rebel groups irrespective of whether they are part of the same conflict episode, hence part of the same armed opposition. Accordingly, it also records alliances among groups that are active in different conflict episodes. As the dataset, in the way it was published, reports only the name of one side of the alliance and not the one of the other side of the alliance, it was not always possible to establish from the data whether both parties of the alliance were part of the same opposition. As there are no other available alternatives, this is the only data that could be used to construct the variable, even though it does not perfectly capture the alliances among rebel groups of the same armed opposition. This is certainly an important limitation of the variable. However, as the intention is to test whether the condition of independence of groups – the condition in which none of the groups is allied with another – affect the outcomes of civil conflicts, I contend that the variable constructed with this data still allows for a test of the causal mechanisms illustrated in the theoretical chapter. In fact, the positive effects for the armed opposition deriving from the fact that the

rebel groups are allied with other groups are expected to be the similar either if the alliance is among groups of the same opposition or with groups external to it. At the very basic level, alliances among groups determine more availability and better use of resources than a condition of independence of groups, irrespective of whether the alliance is among groups of the same opposition or with groups that are not part of it. On the other hand, the negative effects of the independence of groups for the armed opposition remain unaltered, since it does not matter whether this independence is due to the fact that rebel groups are not allied with others within or outside the opposition, still independence remains. Accordingly, even if the data available is not perfectly tailored for the test that this dissertation performs, it is the only data that captures as precisely as currently possible the concept of independence of rebel groups.

Second, this data contains information up to 2008. Accordingly, some manual coding of the missing observations was required. For the manual coding of the missing observations, it was followed as closely as possible the coding procedure outlined by Akcinaroglu (2012). To do so, information were sought on the UCDP conflict encyclopaedia (UCDP 2020) and the missing observations were coded if information related to coordination between rebel groups amounting to shared training, shared resources, and strategic and tactical cooperation were reported in said source; if no information were available, secondary literature, such as scholarly literature and reports from international organisations, non-governmental organisations, and think tanks, was consulted and the missing observations coded accordingly; if no information were available in these sources too, it was used the common multiple imputation strategy for longitudinal studies of carrying the last observation forward (LOCF) or the next observation backwards (NOCB) if the missing observations were within a 5-year range from the closest recorded observation; finally, if even this multiple imputation strategy was impossible, it was adopted the conservative assumption that it is more likely that a rebel group was not allied with another rebel group in a given year of conflict episode if information about such an alliance

were nowhere to be found. By expanding Akcinaroglu’s dataset, the data on alliances among rebel groups that is used in this research is the most up to date available.

The third independent variable is *intra-opposition violence* and is the second measure of the severity of the internal competition. With this variable, the study aims to capture the effect that the fratricidal violence of the rebel groups within the armed oppositions has on the outcomes of civil conflicts. This variable is constructed as a binary variable that takes the value of 1 if in a year of conflict episode at least two rebel groups of the opposition engaged in violent clashes against one another and 0 otherwise. For violent clashes is intended any instance of ‘use of armed force between two organized armed groups, neither of which is the government of a state, which results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a year’ (Sundberg *et al.* 2012). The data for this variable was retrieved from the ‘UCDP non-state conflict dataset v. 18.1’ (Sundberg *et al.* 2012, Pettersson and Eck 2018). This dataset was chosen because, to the best of my knowledge, it is the only one available that reports instances of non-state conflicts.

The fourth independent variable is *internal power distribution* and measures how power is distributed within the opposition. This variable is constructed as a binary variable. It takes the value of 0 if power was concentrated in one single group, that is a group within the opposition was in a hegemonic position in terms of strength. The strongest group was considered to be in a hegemonic position when it had twice as many militants as the second largest group:

$$\left(\frac{\text{militants second largest group}}{\text{militants largest group}} \leq 0.5 \right) \quad (1)$$

Conversely, the variable takes the value of 1 if power was more dispersed within the opposition, that is two or more rebel groups were relatively equal in terms of strength. Even if one specific group within the opposition was stronger than the others, it was not considered to be in a

hegemonic position unless it had twice as many militants as the second largest group. When the equation below did not hold, no group was in a hegemonic position and power was considered dispersed across the rebel groups.

$$\left(\frac{\text{militants second largest group}}{\text{militants largest group}} > 0.5 \right) \quad (2)$$

This equation reflects the specific choice of the dissertation to focus on two specific conditions related to the distribution of power within the armed opposition. These conditions reflect two distinct situations: one that sees a rebel group within an armed opposition as being hegemonic, thus indicating a *concentrated* internal power distribution, and the other that sees no rebel group in a hegemonic position, thus indicating a *dispersed* power distribution. This equation was purposely defined to capture these exact conditions, upon which the arguments and the related hypothesis were based. Alternative ways to compute power dispersion within the opposition have been considered. However, while these measures are indeed valid for different purposes, the equation adopted is the one that more accurately captures the condition of power dispersion as delineated in the theory.

One alternative measure that was considered is the one adopted by Fjelde and Nilsson (2012) to assess rebel groups' relative power, which could be adapted as follows for the purpose of the present analysis: $\left(PD = 1 \text{ if } \frac{\text{militants largest group}}{\text{militants all groups in the opposition}} < 0.5 \right)$. This measure was deemed to be not appropriate because, while perfectly capable of capturing the individual rebel group strength relative to other rebel groups, it is not able to properly capture different distributions of power as intended here, for it ignores the variation that exist in terms of individual strength of the rebel groups lumped together in the denominator.

Two additional measures were also considered, both drawn from an article on UN mission composition by Bove and Ruggeri (Bove and Ruggeri 2016): one index of fractionalisation adapted from the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI) and one index of polarisation adapted from the Reynal-Querol index (Reynal-Querol 2002).¹¹ However, while these measures are perfectly capable of capturing the overall dispersion of power within the opposition and its polarisation, they fail to systematically capture power distribution the way is intended in this dissertation. In fact, they are over-reliant on the count of the number of groups and are unable to distinguish when one of them is hegemonic. For example, imagine a prototypical situation in which an armed opposition is composed of four groups, with respectively 24000, 12000, 10000, and 10000 militants. According to my interpretation of power distribution and the equation 1 above, this situation reflects a hegemonic distribution of power ($12000/24000 = 0.5 = \text{hegemonic distribution}$). Imagine that the two weakest rebel groups exit the conflict because they have been defeated by the government, the distribution of power would remain the same because the strongest group is still in a hegemonic position ($12000/24000 = 0.5 = \text{hegemonic distribution}$). This demonstrates that the equation devised to measure power distribution is able to consistently and systematically capture whether there is a hegemonic player or not within the opposition – and consequently whether power is concentrated (0) or dispersed (1) – irrespective of the number of groups that are part of it. Instead, the fractionalisation index and the polarisation index (Bove and Ruggeri 2016) would indeed fail to do so, for the value they would produce depends on the number of groups of the opposition. Going back to the example, for the two different situations described above they would provide very different values. Accordingly, it would be impossible to determine *ex-ante* a threshold for these measures that

¹¹ The Fractionalisation index is described by the following equation: $FRAC = \sum_{i=1}^N \pi_i(1 - \pi_i)$. The RQ index by the following $RQ = 4 \sum_{i=1}^N \pi_i^2(1 - \pi_i)$. In both equations π_i refers to the proportion of militants in a i rebel group.

allows to discriminate consistently and systematically between a concentrated (0) and dispersed (1) internal power distribution as intended in this dissertation.

For this variable, data was drawn from the UCDP encyclopaedia (UCDP 2020). If this source did not report information about the strength of a rebel group, I coded the missing observations for this variable by looking first at secondary literature, such as scholarly literature and reports of international organisations, non-governmental organisations, and think tanks; second, if no information were found in these sources, the LOCF-NOCB multiple imputation strategy was employed if the closest recorded observation was within a 5-year time span from the missing observation; if none of the above was possible, information were retrieved from the ‘Non-state actors in armed conflict’ dataset, compiled by Cunningham and co-authors (Cunningham *et al.* 2013); finally, if not even this source reported any information, the observation was left missing. It is important to note the contribution that the dissertation makes with this variable. First in terms of data, since the data on the number of rebel groups militants used to build this variable is the most up to date currently available. In addition to this, and differently from the most commonly used ‘Non-state actors in armed conflict’ dataset (Cunningham *et al.* 2013), the data on rebel groups militants is recorded yearly and not for the entire conflict episode, thus allowing for a more time-sensitive analysis. This data can surely be of use for other cross-national studies on civil conflicts. Second in terms of measurement, since most of the existing cross-national studies have either used measures of power of the overall rebel side or of the single rebel group. This dissertation, instead, offers the first measure of yearly distribution of power across the rebel groups involved in a conflict episode, which is particularly useful for capturing how different power relations among the rebel groups of an armed opposition can affect the overall conflict dynamics.

Control variables

The large-N analysis also includes a set of control variables. These variables capture some important conditions that can be correlated to the dependent and independent variables of the study. The addition of these control variables aims to reduce the risk of omitted variable bias and allows the analysis to control for the effect of potential confounders.

The first control variable is called *rebel capacity* and is a measure of the overall military capacity of the armed opposition relative to the government. This control variable was included because, as discussed in Chapter 1, some studies have demonstrated that the military capacity of the actors involved in a civil conflict, the government and the rebels, but especially the asymmetry of power between the two, is a crucial factor in shaping conflict outcomes. By controlling for this variable, the analysis isolates the effect of the independent variables while keeping the balance of power between the armed opposition and the government constant. It is constructed as a binary variable that takes the value of 1 if the armed opposition was at relative parity or stronger than the government and 0 if it was weaker. The data for this variable was retrieved from the UCDP conflict encyclopaedia (UCDP 2020) for the armed oppositions' militants levels and, in case of missing information, from secondary sources and the 'Non-state actors in armed conflict' dataset (Cunningham *et al.* 2013). For the troops levels of the states at conflict the data was drawn from the IISS military balance (IISS, several years). The yearly observations for *rebel capacity* were coded as 1 if the ratio of the total number of troops of the armed opposition and the total number of troops of the government was equal or higher than 0.9:¹²

$$\left(\frac{\text{total troops rebels}}{\text{total troops government}} \geq 0.9 \right) \quad (3)$$

¹² This equation reflects the intention to capture a condition of at least rough parity, hence 0.9 instead of 1.

Conversely, the observations were coded as 0 if the ratio was lower than 0.9:

$$\left(\frac{\text{total troops rebels}}{\text{total troops government}} < 0.9 \right) \quad (4)$$

In this case too, if no information related to a specific government and/or armed opposition for a specific year of conflict episode were found in the mentioned sources, the LOCF-NOCB strategy of multiple imputation was adopted up to a maximum of 5 years. Only if this strategy was not possible either, the observation was left missing.

The second control variable is called *regime type* and measures whether the government involved in the civil conflict was either a democracy, autocracy, or anocracy. This variable was included in the analysis because, as discussed in Chapter 1, some studies have indicated that how a civil conflict ends might also depend on whether the contested government is a democracy, autocracy, or anocracy. It is constructed as a binary variable that takes the value of 0 if the regime was an anocracy and 1 if the regime was either a full democracy or a full autocracy. The data for this variable was drawn from the dataset produced by the Polity IV project, which assigns a score to the polity of each recognised state (Marshall *et al.* 2002). The categorisation of the type of regime is based on the scores assigned to the polity by Polity IV . It has become consolidated practice to categorise democracies as those polities that have a score between +6 and +10, autocracies those that have a score between -6 and -10, and anocracies those that have a score between -5 and +5 or -66, -77, -88. Accordingly, an observation was given the value of 0 if the polity score for the government involved in the civil conflict in a year of conflict episode was between -5 and +5 or -66, -77, -88, and of 1 if the polity score was either between -10 and -6 or +6 and +10.

The third and fourth control variables are measures of the intervention of third-party states in a civil conflict. These variables were included in the models because it has been demonstrated that the partisan intervention of third-party states might alter the outcomes of

civil conflicts. From the literature on third-party support, it emerged that the effect of this support on the outcomes of civil conflicts depends on whom is the beneficiary of this support. For this reason, two control variables related to external support are used, one is *pro-rebel external support* and the other is *pro-government external support*. Both variables are constructed as binary variables. *Pro-rebel external support* takes the value of 1 if at least one of the rebel groups within the opposition was the beneficiary of financial and/or military support, either in terms of troops or weapons, from a third-party state and 0 otherwise. The same applies to *pro-government external support* and the yearly observation was given the value of 1 if the government was the beneficiary of financial and/or military support from a third-party state and 0 otherwise.

The data for these variables was drawn from different sources. With regard to the variable *pro-rebel external support*, the data was taken from the dataset on support to rebel groups by third-party states produced by San-Akca (2015, 2016). This dataset was chosen because it reports information regarding different types of support provided by third-party states to rebel groups and follows the structure of the UCDP datasets used in this dissertation, thus ensuring the homogeneity of the data. The dissertation is only concerned with instances of *substantial* support, namely types of support that can alter the balance of power on the ground. For this reason, only the information related to the military, in terms of troops and weapons, and financial support by third-party states to a given rebel group in a given conflict year was taken from this source. As this dataset reports information only up to 2010, however, some manual coding was required. For the manual coding of the missing observations for this variable, the following procedure was followed: information were first sought on the UCDP encyclopaedia (UCDP 2020); if no information were available in this source, secondary sources such as scholarly literature and reports from international organisations, non-governmental organisations, and think tanks were consulted; if no information were available in these

sources, the strategy of multiple imputation LOCF-NOCB strategy up to a maximum of 5 years was employed; if none of the above was possible, it was then adopted the conservative assumption that, if no information regarding support from a third-party state to a rebel group in terms of weapons, troops, and/or financial aid in a given year of conflict episode could be found, it is more likely that a rebel group did not (or only allegedly) receive any kind of support from a third-party state in that specific year and the missing observation was coded as 0.

The data related to pro-government external support was retrieved instead from the ‘UCDP External Support in Armed Conflict 1975–2009’ (Högbladh *et al.* 2011) for the information up until 2009 and from the ‘UCDP Dyadic Dataset version 18.1, 1946-2017’ (Gleditsch *et al.* 2002, Pettersson and Eck 2018) and other sources for the data from 2010 to 2017. The UCDP Dyadic Dataset reports only information related to the military intervention of third-party state in support of the primary parties. Accordingly, some manual coding was necessary with regard to other types of third-party state support, in terms of weapons provision or financial aid, for the civil conflicts from 2009 to 2017. Data in this respect was retrieved from the UCDP encyclopaedia (UCDP 2020) and secondary literature. In this case too, if no information were available in these sources, the strategy of multiple imputation LOCF-NOCB strategy up to a maximum of 5 years was employed; if none of the above was possible, it was then adopted the conservative assumption that, if no information regarding support from a third-party state in terms of weapons and financial aid in a given year of conflict episode could be found, it is more likely that the government did not receive (or only allegedly received) support from a third-party state and the missing observation was coded as 0.

The last control variable is related to the intensity of the conflict. The variable *intensity level* is constructed as a binary variable that takes the value of 1 if a conflict episode during an entire calendar year was particularly violent and 0 otherwise. Intensity was measured in terms of recorded battle-related deaths in a calendar year, following the coding of the ‘UCDP Dyadic

Dataset version 18.1, 1946-2017' (Gleditsch *et al.* 2002, Pettersson and Eck 2018), from which the data for this variable was taken. Accordingly, the value of 1 was assigned to any year of conflict episode in which at least 1000 battle-related deaths have occurred and 0 if the number of battle-related deaths fell between 25 and 999.¹³

¹³ As mentioned before, 25 battle-related deaths in a calendar year is the minimum threshold for a civil conflict episode to be considered active.

Table 3.1: Variables summary: type, possible values, and data

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Type of variable</i>	<i>Possible values</i>	<i>Data source</i>
Dependent Variable			
Civil conflict outcomes	Categorical variable with multiple unordered categories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuation of conflict (reference) • Peace agreement • Ceasefire • Government victory • Rebel victory • Low activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UCDP conflict termination dataset 2-2015 (Kreutz 2010) • Manual coding

Continues next page

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Type of variable</i>	<i>Possible values</i>	<i>Data source</i>
Independent variables			
Fragmentation	Count variable	1 to ∞	UCDP Dyadic Dataset version 18.1 (Gleditsch <i>et al.</i> 2002, Pettersson and Eck 2018)
Alliances	Binary variable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 if none of the rebel groups is allied with another rebel group • 1 if at least one rebel group is allied with another rebel group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alliances among rebel groups (Akcinaroglu 2012) • Manual coding
Intra-opposition violence	Binary variable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 if none of rebel groups of the opposition engage in violent clashes against one another • 1 if at least two rebel groups of the opposition engage in violent clashes against one another 	UCDP non-state conflict dataset v. 18.1 (Sundberg <i>et al.</i> 2012, Pettersson and Eck 2018)
Internal power distribution	Binary variable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 if power is concentrated in one single group (hegemonic) • 1 if power is dispersed within the opposition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UCDP encyclopaedia (UCDP 2020) • Secondary literature • Non-state actors in armed conflict (Cunningham <i>et al.</i> 2013)

Continues next page

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Type of variable</i>	<i>Possible values</i>	<i>Data source</i>
Control variables			
Rebel capacity	Binary variable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 if the armed opposition is weaker than the government • 1 if the armed opposition is at relative parity or stronger than the government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Armed opposition militants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ UCDP encyclopaedia (UCDP 2020) ▫ Secondary literature ▫ Non-state actors in armed conflict (Cunningham et al. 2013) • Government troops <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ IISS military balance (IISS, several years)
Regime type	Binary variable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 if the regime is an anocracy • 1 if the regime is either a stable democracy or a stable autocracy 	Polity IV project (Marshall <i>et al.</i> 2002)
Pro-rebel support	Binary variable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 if none of the rebel groups within the opposition is the beneficiary of financial and/or military support from a third-party state • 1 if at least one of the rebel groups within the opposition is the beneficiary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to rebel groups by third-party states (San-Akca 2015, 2016) • Manual coding

Continues next page

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Type of variable</i>	<i>Possible values</i>	<i>Data source</i>
Pro-government support	Binary variable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 if the government is not beneficiary of financial and/or military support from a third-party state • 1 if the government is beneficiary of financial and/or military support from a third-party state 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UCDP External Support in Armed Conflict 1975–2009 (Högbladh <i>et al.</i> 2011) • UCDP Dyadic Dataset version 18.1, 1946-2017 (Gleditsch <i>et al.</i> 2002, Pettersson and Eck 2018) • Manual coding
Intensity level	Binary variable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 if the number of battle-related deaths in the calendar year falls between 25 and 999 • 1 if the number of battle-related deaths in the calendar year exceeds 999 	UCDP Dyadic Dataset version 18.1 (Gleditsch <i>et al.</i> 2002, Pettersson and Eck 2018)

3.2.4. Statistical techniques and models

Multinomial logistic regression (MNL) is the statistical method that best suits analysis with categorical dependent variables with unordered categories. Although other statistical methods can potentially be used in studies whose dependent variable is categorical with multiple categories, such as Probit models, ordered logit models, or competing risk models, MNL has become the go-to method – mainly due to its ease of computation and accuracy of the estimates compared to other statistical methods – for analysis with unordered categorical dependent variables.

As the dependent variable of the dissertation is a categorical variable with unordered categories, this method is employed in the large-N analysis. In general terms, this type of dependent variable requires to interpret the regression function as a predicted probability. When the dependent variable is binary, the predicted value of the outcome is the probability that the outcome equals 1. When the dependent variable is multi-category, the predicted value of one of the categories of dependent variable is the probability that that particular category equals 1. The logistic regression relies on one cumulative distribution function, the logistic distribution, to provide a model for the relation between independent variables and dependent variable when the latter is categorical.¹⁴ The MNL can be considered an extension of the binomial logistic regression because it runs binomial logistic regressions for all the possible categories of the dependent variable. It requires to choose one of the categories of the variable as a reference category and to create as many logits as the number of remaining categories of the variable. Against this reference category, the log-odds of the other categories of the dependent variable are computed.

In this analysis, the dependent variable has six categories and *continuation of conflict* was chosen as the reference category. Accordingly, in the statistical models described below,

¹⁴ A detailed discussion of the mechanics of logistic regression analysis falls beyond the scope of the dissertation. For a more detailed discussion see (Long 1997, Menard 2002, Hosmer *et al.* 2013, Fox 2016, Agresti 2019).

the log-odds of each possible conflict outcome, namely *peace agreement*, *ceasefire*, *victory for government side*, *victory for rebel side*, and *low activity*, are computed against the log-odds that the conflict continues. In doing so, the analysis returns the odds of conflict termination and the odds of each possible civil conflict outcome, conditional on the values of the independent variables.

Estimation

The large-N analysis is run on a dataset of 1064 observations. Each observation relates to a calendar year of conflict episode occurred between 1989 and 2017 and to each of them is associated one of the categories of the dependent variable and a value for the independent and control variables. The large-N analysis consists of six MNL models. Models 1, 2, 3, and 4 are bivariate models on the impact of each independent variable on the outcomes of civil conflicts. Accordingly, Model 1 tests the impact on civil conflict outcomes of *fragmentation*, Model 2 of *alliances*, Model 3 of *intra-opposition violence*, and Model 4 of *power distribution*. These bivariate models are included in the large-N analysis to assess the impact that these variables have in shaping the outcomes of civil conflicts individually.

From these bivariate models the analysis moves to the multivariate analysis. It starts with Model 5, a multivariate model that contains all the independent variables of the study, without any control variables. This model is included in the large-N analysis to assess whether these variables have, if any, an effect in shaping the outcomes of civil conflicts and whether the direction, magnitude, and significance of the coefficients remain constant when all the independent variables are taken simultaneously into account. From this multivariate model without confounders, the analysis then moves to the final model, which contains all the independent variables of the study and the set of potential confounders. This model allows for a full assessment of the impact, if any, of the independent variables on the outcomes of civil

conflicts, while controlling for the other important factors that can affect conflict termination and can act as confounders/interfere in the causal path that the large-N analysis aims to uncover. By comparing the estimates of the full model to the ones of the bivariate models and the multivariate model without confounders, the analysis provides a full picture of the extent to which fragmentation, internal competition, and internal power distribution affect how civil conflicts terminate when other relevant factors are kept under control.

Thus, the large-N is put through a very strict test of robustness that starts from a simple bivariate analysis, proceeds with a multivariate analysis with and without potential confounders, and ends with a 3-fold cross-validation, discussed in more detail in the following section. The large-N analysis is voluntarily set up to be as strict as possible so to ascertain whether the results it produces remain constant across different model specifications and can be considered solid.

Given the panel structure of the data, the models are fitted as multilevel regressions instead of standard, single-level regressions. One of the fundamental assumptions of logistic regression is that the observations in the data are independent, that is the value of an observation does not depend on the value of other observations. This assumption can be seriously violated when longitudinal, time-series, cross-section data is used (Fox 2016, p. 700). This is because the value of an observation for a specific year might depend on the value that an observation within the same cluster had the previous years, which in turn might determine a within-cluster correlation of the errors (Fox 2016, p. 718, Agresti 2019, p. 253). Within-cluster correlation can lead to serious inferential problems because the inaccurate estimate of the standard errors would produce imprecise p-values and, consequently, induce misinterpretation of the significance levels from which the conclusions of the study are drawn (Holmes Finch *et al.* 2019, p. 29). Multilevel regressions take into account the clustered structure of the data and the non-independence of the unit-level observations within the clusters – the conflict episodes –

thus producing reliable estimates and standard errors.¹⁵ For this reason, a multilevel approach to regression is more suitable for the present dissertation, since it permits to correct the issue of non-independence of the observations in the data. For the purpose of this analysis, as it is plausible that the unconditional probability of a certain outcome is close to 0 for some conflicts (i.e. rebel victory in a conflict that opposes a small armed opposition against a strong and functional government) while it is not for some others, the multilevel MNLR models are fitted so to allow the intercept for each outcome to vary by conflict episode.

Diagnostics and robustness of fit

The robustness of the results of the statistical analysis is assessed through hypothesis testing, evaluation of the significance of the estimates, assessment of common measures of fit, and finally through resampling techniques for model validation.

In terms of hypothesis testing, tests are performed taking into account the technical peculiarities of the MNLR. The hypothesis test for a single coefficient in the models refers to the two-sided Wald test of the null hypothesis that the impact of a variable on a j outcome against the reference category is equal to 0 (i.e. impact of fragmentation on ceasefire vs. continuation = 0).

In terms of measure of fit, scalar measures of fit for logistic regressions are used to assess the robustness of the results. In particular, the analysis is assessed through information criteria, such as the *widely applicable information criterion* (WAIC). As they have little meaning in themselves, they are used to compare the fit of the different models through the assessment of how much they diverge in the different models that are fit.

¹⁵ A discussion regarding the mechanics of the multilevel regression falls beyond the scope of this dissertation; for a more detailed discussion see: (Gelman and Hill 2006, Fox 2016, Agresti 2019, Holmes Finch *et al.* 2019).

Although scalar measures of fit provide useful information, they are not optimal to assess the robustness of the results and validate a logistic regression model (Long 1997). Accordingly, the evaluation of the fit of the model based *exclusively* on the assessment of the measures of fit would be insufficient. This evaluation is thus followed by an additional assessment carried out through resampling methods. Resampling methods are statistical simulation techniques that permit to draw multiple samples from the original dataset used for the research and analyse the data emerging from those samples (Carsey and Harden 2014). Drawing different samples allows a researcher to re-run their statistical model over different samples to assess whether the estimates it yields – and the conclusions that stem from them – are solid even if one, two, *nth* different samples were used for the analysis. In doing so, a stricter test of the associations emerging from the model is performed, which indicates whether these associations are idiosyncratic to the dataset used or, instead, representative of general underlying causal patterns.

For the purpose of this analysis, the resampling method of multifold cross-validation (CV) is used for the validation of the models and test the robustness of the results. Through a CV is possible to test the performance of a statistical model by looking at how well it predicts *out-of-sample* observations (Carsey and Harden 2014, p. 255). In general terms, multifold CV requires to divide the dataset available for the analysis in different portions, or folds. One fold, normally the larger one, is employed to fit the model, which is then used as the reference. The other folds are used to fit the model and evaluate its performance against the reference (Carsey and Harden 2014). In this analysis, I perform a 3-fold CV.¹⁶ To do so, the dataset is divided in three folds: one fold, the so-called train data, contains 50% of the observations; the two other folds, the test data, contain 25% of the observations each. The full multivariate Model 6 is then

¹⁶ The number of folds has been chosen based on the number of observations on which the statistical analysis is run. Each fold should contain at least a few hundred observations to have some validity.

fit to each fold of the dataset. The *receiver operator characteristic* (ROC) curve and the estimates of the *area under the curve* (AUC) of the model run on the train data are compared with those of the models run on the test data. If the values of these measures remain constant across all the subsamples of the data, then the model is considered validated. I defer a more detailed discussion of how it is performed to the next chapter. Through the assessment of the significance of the models' estimates, the values of the measures of fit, and the performance with a 3-fold cross-validation, the large-N analysis is put through to a strict test of the robustness to guarantee its reliability and the generalisability of the findings that emerge from it.

3.3. Small-N analysis

The methodological approach that underpins this study requires to complement the large-N analysis with a small-N analysis. Its aim is to put to further test the findings of the large-N analysis and/or find unobserved causal relationships. In this dissertation, the small-N analysis is carried out through the in-depth investigation of one case study.

Since the small-N analysis is complementary to the large-N analysis, it is the latter that informs the selection of cases. The strategy of case selection depends on the assessment of the overall fit of the large-N analysis and robustness of the findings. Following Lieberman's indications on the possible case selections strategies in nested analysis, the following options are available (2005). If the large-N produces solid findings, the aim of the small-N analysis is to further test the goodness of fit of the model(s). In that case, two strategies of case selection are available. First, one can choose the cases randomly, putting the findings through the strictest test possible (Lieberman 2005). Second, one can deliberately select cases that are well predicted by the model (Lieberman 2005). In the present study, the case might potentially be either a randomly selected one or a deliberately selected one that represents an example of a

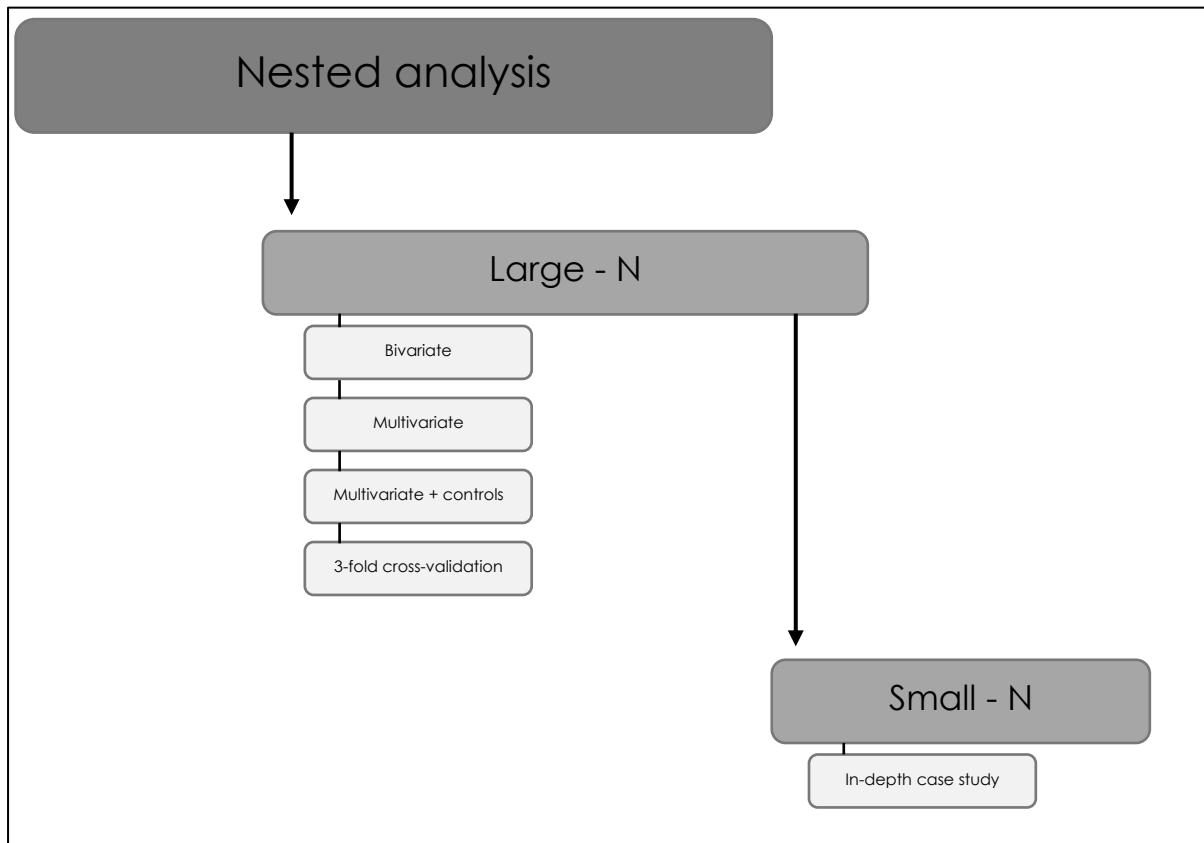
civil conflict in the *regression line*. If, instead, the large-N analysis does not produce robust findings, the aim of the focused comparison is to find alternative explanations for the phenomenon of interest (Lieberman 2005). In that instance, one might choose a case that is well predicted by the large-N analysis and/or one that was not, that is it should have had a different outcome according to predictions.

Highlighting the possible strategies of case selection and the place this case study takes in the entire architecture of the dissertation suffices for the present chapter, for the large-N analysis is yet to be reported and its results to be assessed. The complete discussion on the case selection strategy chosen and, consequently, of the reasons why a specific case was selected, is deferred to Chapter 5, which follows the large-N analysis.

There are two limitations in respect to the small-N analysis that needs to be clearly acknowledged, one related to the number of cases and one related to the sources used to carry it out. First, a qualitative analysis consisting of a single case study certainly limits the contribution that it could provide to the dissertation. Second, the small-N analysis is entirely conducted using secondary sources. Accordingly, it relies mostly on think tanks reports, UN and other IGOs and NGOs reports, newswires, and existing scholarship. Although I appreciate that a small-N analysis consisting of two or more case studies and based on data collected through field work and interviews would be of greater empirical value, the limited duration of the PhD program (3-year fixed term), along with the Covid-19 pandemic and the difficulties inherent to conducting research in former and actual conflict zones, made field work impossible for me to conduct and forced the dissertation to be based on a single rather than multiple case studies due to time constraints. Despite these limitations, I contend that this case study, also considering its complementary nature to the principal part of the study, the large-N analysis, is nonetheless a valuable addition to the dissertation, since it still contributes substantially to the

entire process of theory testing. Now that that all the methodological aspects have been clarified, the dissertation turns to the empirical investigation, starting with the large-N analysis.

Figure 3.1: Research design



4. Large-N analysis

The dissertation set out to identify whether some under-explored characteristics of armed oppositions could explain how civil conflicts terminate. The previous chapters have summarised the relevant literature for the present study, discussed how these under-explored characteristics of armed oppositions are expected to affect civil conflict outcomes, and defined the methodological choices made to conduct the empirical investigation. This chapter reports the results of the central part of the investigation, the large-N analysis, to provide an answer to the research question of the study: how and to what extent do the fragmentation, the internal competition, and internal power distribution of armed oppositions affect the outcomes of civil conflicts? To test the hypotheses of the study, a robust large-N analysis was designed to take full advantage of the available data. Each section of this chapter focuses on a step of this analysis. Section 4.1. describes the distribution of the dependent and independent variables. Section 4.2. reports the results of four bivariate models for the impact on civil conflict outcomes of fragmentation, independence of rebel groups, intra-opposition violence, and internal power distribution of armed oppositions. Section 4.3. reports the results of the multivariate models for the impact of all four independent variables, both unconditional and conditional on potential confounders. Finally, Section 4.4. examines the models' performance and goodness of fit and reports the results of a final test of robustness, a 3-fold cross-validation, through which the predictive capacity of the full model is assessed. This chapter deals specifically with the more technical aspects of the investigation, such as evaluations of numerical estimates, significance, and fit, and it constitutes the basis for the full interpretation of the findings and their implications that takes place in Chapter 6.

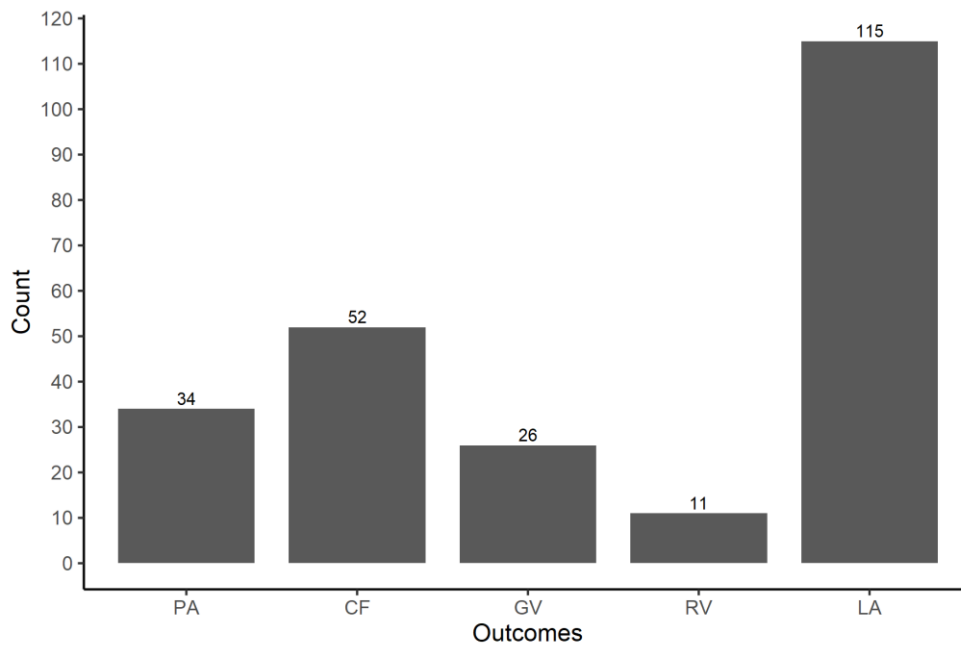
4.1. Descriptive statistics

The large-N analysis looks at 285 episodes of civil conflict occurred across the world between 1989 and 2017. By looking at the distribution of the observations for the dependent and independent variables it is possible to gauge some preliminary information about which values of these variables are the most common and which responses the statistical analysis would likely provide.

Figure 1 reports the distribution of the dependent variable, that is how the civil conflict episodes occurred between 1989 and 2017 have ended. The bar chart shows that victories for either side, the government and the rebels, were the least common outcomes. In the time period under consideration, there have been 37 instances of decisive victories. In 26 civil conflict episodes it was the government of the state that decisively defeated the armed opposition, while in only 11 instances it was the armed opposition that managed to overthrow the government. Accordingly, 9 per cent of the civil conflict episodes ended in government victory while only 3.8 per cent in rebel victory. Such a small proportion of rebel victories is not surprising since armed oppositions usually encounter a range of difficulties from the outset, including power asymmetry with the government, harsh repression, and fluctuating popular support. Thus, it is no surprise that rebel victories are such a rare occurrence. This small proportion of rebel victories has implications for the large-N analysis. In fact, it is difficult to imagine that the statistical analysis could find a pattern in the data regarding the impact of the independent variables on the probability that this outcome occurs.

Negotiated outcomes occurred more often than decisive victories. A total of 76 civil conflict episodes were resolved at the negotiation table. In only 34 instances were the parties able to fully resolve their incompatibility through a peace agreement. This indicates that 12 per cent of the civil conflict episodes ended because the parties agreed to terminate the conflict and

Figure 4.1. Distribution of civil conflict outcomes (1989-2017)



Note: Count of civil conflicts terminated in peace agreement (PA), ceasefire (CF), government victory (GV), rebel victory (RV), and low activity (LA) in the period 1989-2017.

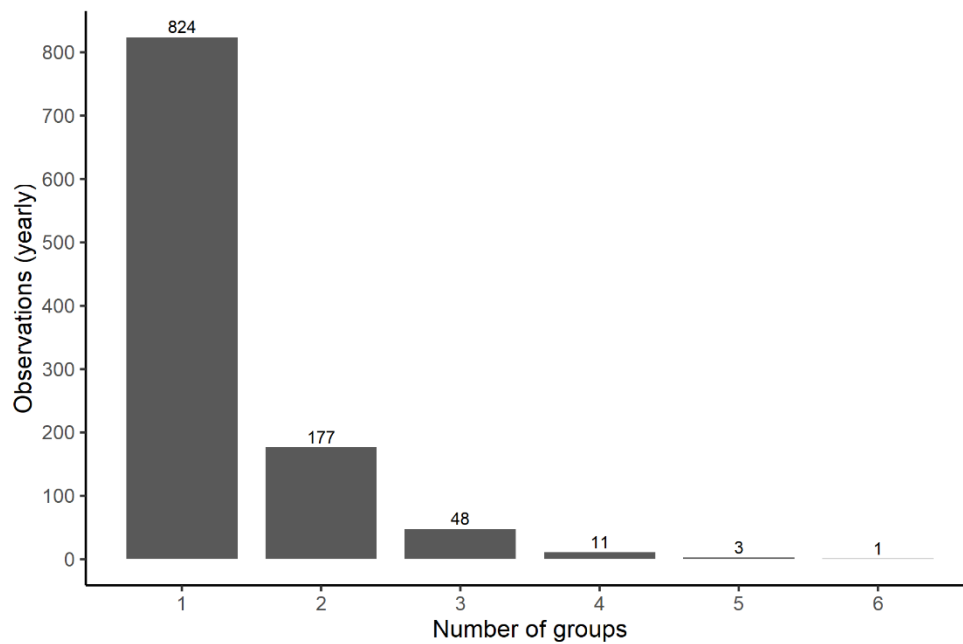
took the necessary steps to resolve the issues that had provoked its outbreak in the first place. More often, however, the parties at conflict were not able to resolve their incompatibility. In fact, 52 episodes of civil conflict ended with a ceasefire (18 per cent), that is governments and armed oppositions agreed to a halt of hostilities but did not fully resolve their incompatibility. The distribution of outcomes indicates that it was easier for the parties to agree to a ceasefire than fully settle the controversy.

Finally, the distribution of outcomes shows that most civil conflict episodes ended due to lack of armed activity, without any actor obtaining decisive victory or an agreement being signed. Out of 285 civil conflict episodes, 115 (40 per cent) simply ceased. Although, to the best of my knowledge, no study has yet investigated the determinants of low activity, there are several reasons why this outcome is surprisingly common: armed oppositions retract from the conflict because they do not have enough strength to keep pursuing the armed effort; retreat for a period of time to regroup and reorganise before starting the armed effort again; or

disintegrate due to lack of organisation, leadership change, or mass defection by their militants, without however conceding defeat. The high number of conflict episodes ended due to lack of armed activity calls for some additional clarification. Given that it is the rebels who retreat from the armed effort, it might appear reasonable to consider low activity as an instance of government victory. Accordingly, the two outcomes and related observations might be pooled together. However, conflict termination due to lack of armed activity occurs when the conflict ceases but the government has not formally defeated the armed opposition or provoked its unambiguous capitulation, since the rebel groups of which it is composed have not been disbanded nor conceded defeat. For this reason, low activity cannot be strictly considered an instance of government victory. This central difference between the two outcomes requires that low activity be treated separately. The high number of conflict episodes ended due to lack of armed activity indicates that if the two outcomes were pooled together, the outcome government victory would be conflated with many instances of conflict termination that cannot be strictly considered as cases of government victory.

The distribution of the main independent variable, fragmentation of the armed opposition, shows that armed oppositions are not as often fragmented as it is generally perceived. While it is true that in half of all civil conflict episodes armed oppositions have experienced some sort of fragmentation at some point during the conflict (Gleditsch *et al.* 2002, Pettersson and Eck 2018, Walter 2019), Figure 2 shows that in the large majority of civil conflict episode-years the armed opposition was composed of only one rebel group and thus – following the definition of *fragmentation* in Chapter 2 – it was not fragmented. This means that fragmentation occurred in several civil conflict episodes, but usually armed oppositions did not remain fragmented for the entire duration of the conflict episode. For the period under consideration, if the armed oppositions were fragmented, they were normally composed of two rebel groups and, to a lesser extent, three rebel groups. Based on the distribution, higher values

Figure 4.2. Distribution of the fragmentation of armed oppositions (1989-2017)



Note: Count of yearly observations of civil conflict episodes in which the armed opposition was fragmented or not and the number of rebel groups of which it was composed.

of fragmentation were unlikely, as only in 11 dyad-year observations was an armed opposition composed of four groups, three times of five groups, and only once of six groups.¹⁷

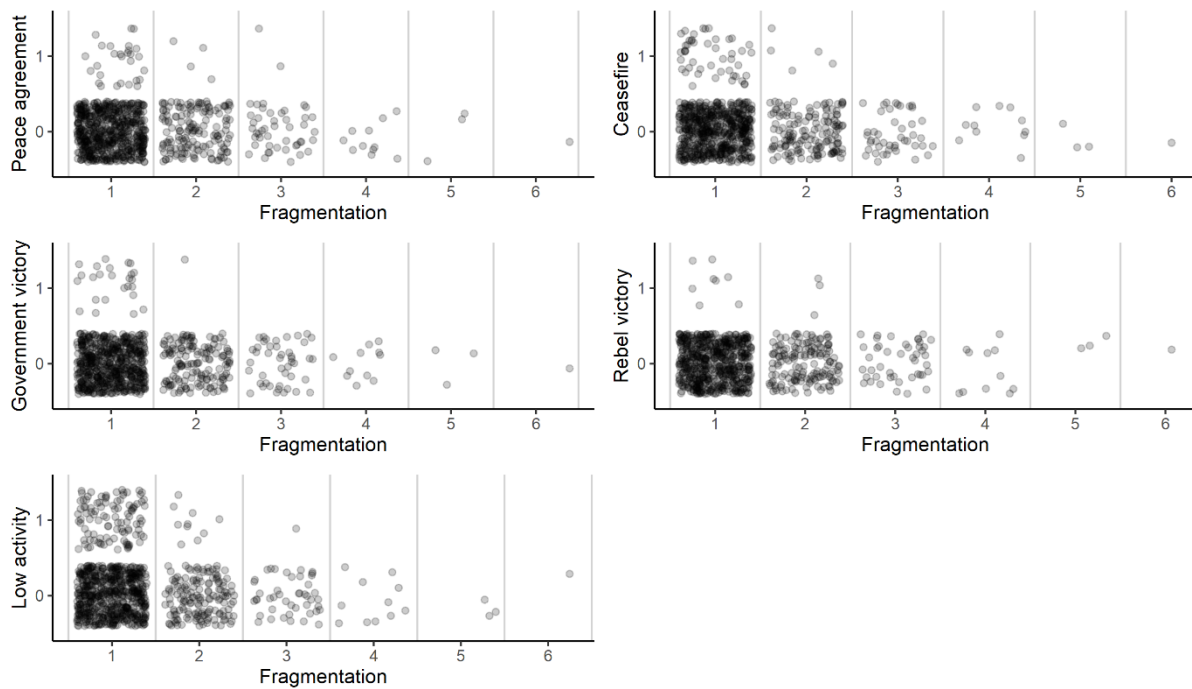
These descriptive statistics require some additional clarifications, both in terms of what they mean and why certain choices were made in terms of operationalisation. Counting the total number of rebel groups active in a country in a given year of conflict without

¹⁷ There have been some yearly instances of civil conflict in which the armed opposition was composed of more than 6 rebel groups. A clear example is provided by the still ongoing conflict in Syria (at the time of writing), in which, as reported in the introduction, dozens of non-state armed groups were contesting the same incompatibility against the government of Assad. The civil conflict in Syria, however, as well as the civil conflicts that opposed India and the collection of Sikh insurgents and Thailand and the plethora of Patani insurgents, have all been removed from the analysis. This is because of a problem with the available data. For very complex cases such as the ones mentioned, the UCDP coders have been unable to identify all the rebel groups involved in the conflict or attribute specific violent actions to specific rebel groups. For these few cases, as it is reported in the UCDP conflict encyclopaedia (UCDP 2020) and as some of the coders have personally told the author, a catch-all term like Syrian/Sikh/Patani insurgents was used to refer to all the rebel groups involved in the conflict. Adding the observations related to these conflicts in the analysis would be problematic, as each yearly observation would report the value 1 for fragmentation when, in fact, the number of groups within the opposition was much higher than that. The fact itself that a group of expert coders was unable to code the yearly observations related to these conflicts has discouraged me from manually coding these observations by using secondary sources. For this reason, it was decided that removing these instances of civil conflict episodes was the most sensible choice.

distinguishing for conflict episodes can produce imprecise estimates of the actual impact that fragmentation has on conflict outcomes. Some conflict episodes that are simultaneously active within the same country are often fought for very different incompatibilities, do not overlap, and occur in regions that might be far away from each other. In these cases, the fact that two distinct rebel groups are fighting for a different incompatibility in two different regions does not represent an instance of fragmentation. In fact, these two groups should not be considered part of a single armed opposition because they have different objectives and are fighting for a different set of reasons. On the other hand, when the two rebel groups are fighting for the same incompatibility – that is they are part of the same conflict episode and same armed opposition – it is an instance of actual fragmentation because the rebel groups have decided to remain autonomous, even though they are pursuing the same core objective, and the activity of one might have repercussions on the activity of the other. For these reasons, the actual effect of fragmentation can be more accurately measured within the same conflict episode. The operationalisation of fragmentation of the armed opposition in the present study is more restrictive than those alternatives that ignore the existence in a given year of simultaneous conflict episodes being fought in a single country. Framed as such it is clearer why the fragmentation of armed oppositions in a given year of conflict episode was not that common.

The first descriptive examination of the bivariate relationship between fragmentation and conflict termination indicates that, in a year of conflict episode, all the definitive conflict outcomes were less likely to occur when the opposition was fragmented. As Figure 3 shows, this means that, in practice, it was more likely to observe the continuation of the conflict when the armed opposition was fragmented. In fact, some outcomes – such as ceasefires, government victory, and rebel victory – never occurred in conflicts with medium and high levels of fragmentation. As the top row of the graphs in this figure show, these outcomes mostly occurred when the armed opposition was not fragmented. Only in few instances did they occur

Figure 4.3. Outcomes distribution conditional on the fragmentation of the armed opposition (1989-2017)

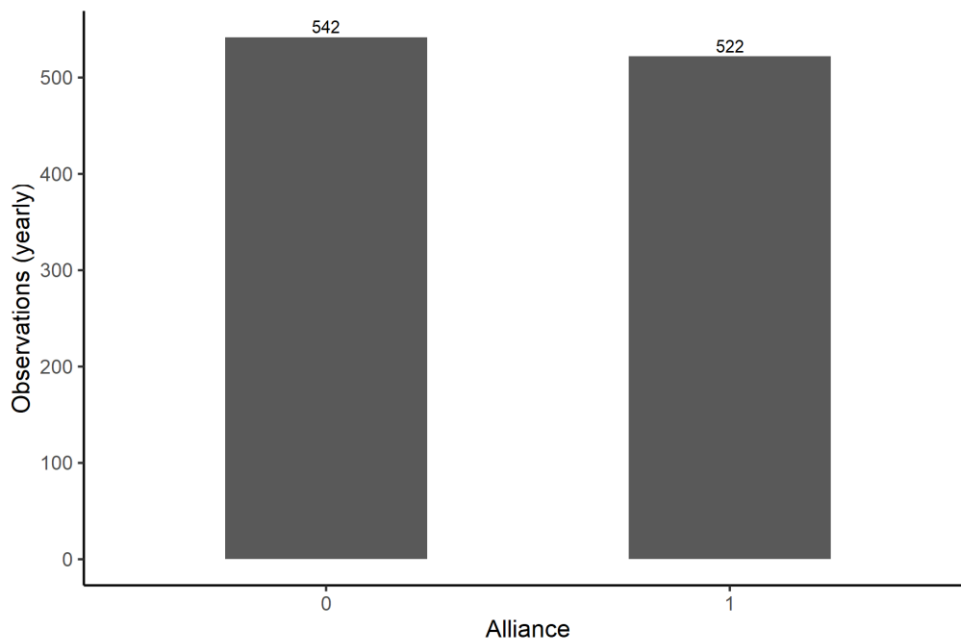


Note: the Y axis on each graph reports the yearly observations of civil conflict episodes that were coded as continuation of conflict (0) and those coded as the specific outcome indicated in the label (1), namely the conflict episodes that have terminated with the outcome specified in the label, conditional on the value of fragmentation of the armed opposition.

when the opposition was fragmented and composed of two groups. A similar pattern can be observed for peace agreements and low activities. It appears, however, that in a handful of cases these outcomes occurred in conflicts characterised by medium levels of fragmentation of the opposition. With regard to all the conflict episodes in which the armed opposition was composed of more than three rebel groups, instead, Figure 3 shows that they ended only after the number of rebel groups within the opposition had reduced. These indications from the data are, so far, only descriptive. In the next section, the bivariate relationship between fragmentation and conflict outcomes, as well as between the other independent variables and conflict outcomes, are more precisely specified with the first four regression models.

The second independent variable of the study, alliances among rebel groups, is an indicator of whether the rebel groups of an armed opposition are allied with other rebel groups. As the distribution of this variable shows, it was more common during the period under analysis

Figure 4.4. Distribution of alliances of the rebel groups of the armed oppositions (1989-2017)

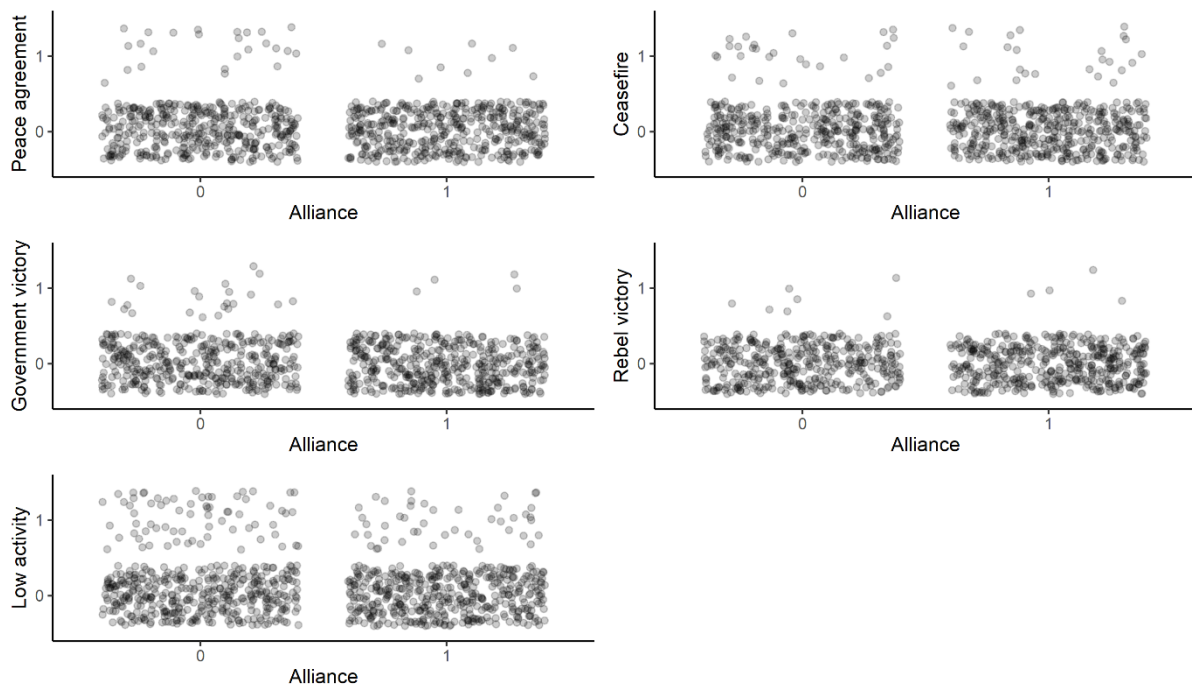


Note: Count of yearly observations of civil conflict episodes in which the rebel groups of the armed oppositions were allied with other rebel groups.

that the rebel groups were not allied with other rebel groups. As Figure 4 shows, however, alliances among rebel groups are not that uncommon. The difference between yearly observations of civil conflict episodes in which the groups were allied or not is marginal. Rebel groups relied on other rebel allies in 522 dyad-year observations while only in 542 they could not.

With regard to the bivariate relationship between alliances among rebel groups and conflict termination, Figure 5 shows that some civil conflict outcomes appear to be less likely when the rebel groups of the armed opposition have other rebel allies. In the top row of the graphs for peace agreement and government victory, it is evident that there have been fewer instances of these outcomes when the rebel groups were allied. This holds true also for the outcome rebel victory, but in this case the difference between the number of rebel victories

Figure 4.5. Outcomes distribution conditional on the alliances among rebel groups (1989-2017)

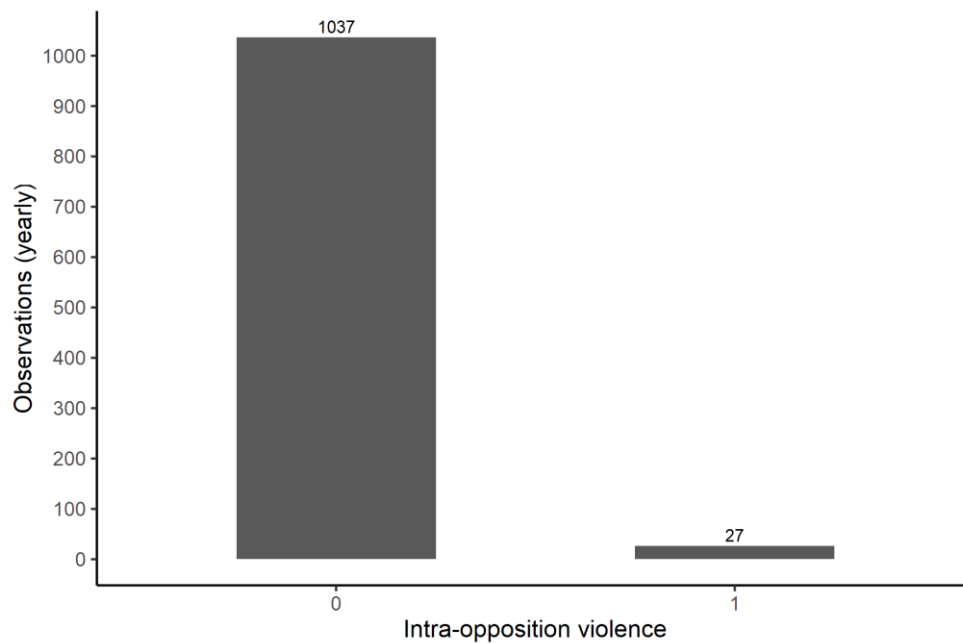


Note: the Y axis on each graph reports the yearly observations of civil conflict episodes that were coded as continuation of conflict (0) and those coded as the specific outcome indicated in the label (1), namely the conflict episodes that have terminated with the outcome specified in the label, conditional on the value of alliances of the rebel groups of the armed opposition.

occurred when the groups were allied and when they were not is marginal. Similarly, conflict episodes ended in a ceasefire or due to lack of activity when the rebel groups were allied appear to be almost as numerous as those terminated when the groups were not.

The distribution of the third independent variable of the study, intra-opposition violence, shows that instances of fratricidal violence among the rebel groups of an armed opposition were very uncommon. What is striking in Figure 6 is that intra-opposition violence occurred in only 27 conflict episode-years. This value might appear counterintuitively low since many studies maintain that violence among rebel groups is a common occurrence (Cunningham *et al.* 2009, Fjelde and Nilsson 2012, Nygård and Weintraub 2015). The discrepancy in this respect between this dissertation and previous studies on the determinants and consequences of the violence among rebel groups is due to the way the variable is constructed. The aim of the present study is to assess whether instances of violent rivalry among rebel groups of the

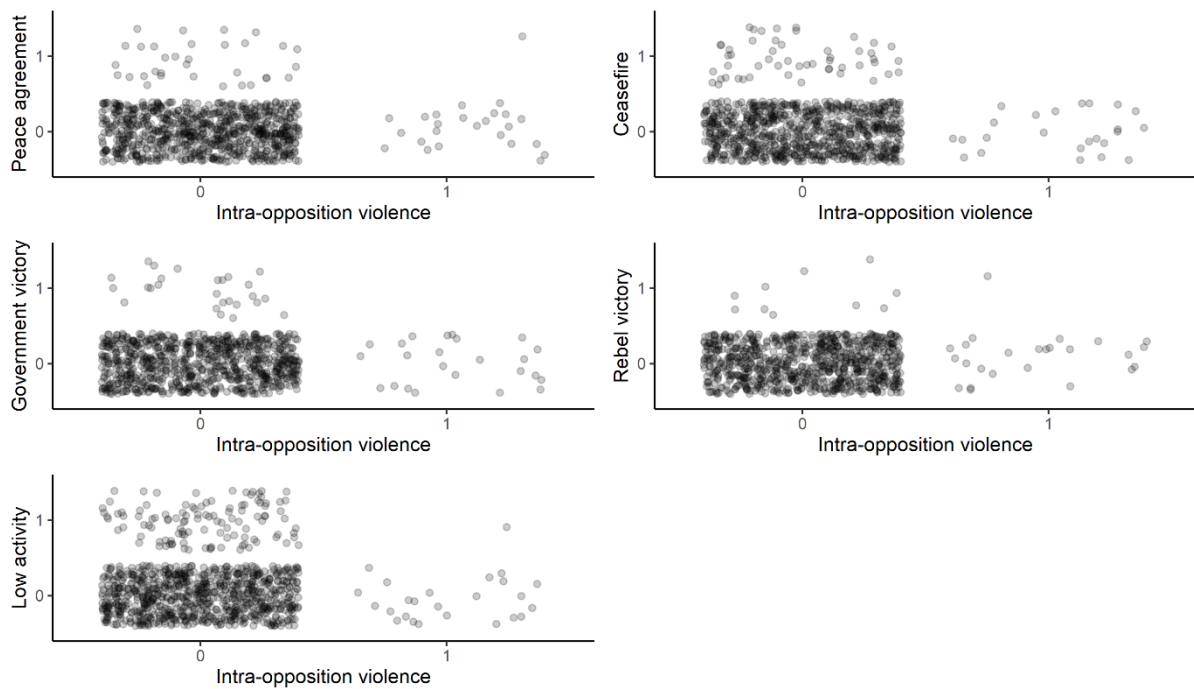
Figure 4.6. Distribution of intra-opposition violence (1989-2017)



Note: Count of yearly observations of civil conflict episodes in which the rebel groups of the armed oppositions were involved in violence against one another.

same armed opposition affect conflict termination instead of instances of rivalry among rebel groups *irrespective* of whether these groups were part of the same armed opposition, namely involved in the same conflict episode. By imposing this constraint, which is necessary to perform the test of the specific dynamics of internal competition that this study aims to investigate, a very small number of observations of intra-opposition violence was returned, as Figure 6 demonstrates. Of course, such a small proportion of observations of intra-opposition violence has implications for the statistical analysis. The number of observations is, in fact, too small to expect that it could alter the probability of any conflict outcome. Figure 7 portrays the problem clearly. In most of the few conflict episode-years in which intra-opposition violence have occurred, the conflict continued. Only three conflict episodes ended in cases that were characterised by intra-opposition violence. One ended in a peace agreement, one in a rebel victory, and one due to lack of armed activity. Although any conclusion about whether intra-opposition violence has an impact on the outcomes of civil conflict is discussed in the next

Figure 4.7. Outcomes distribution conditional on intra-opposition violence (1989-2017)

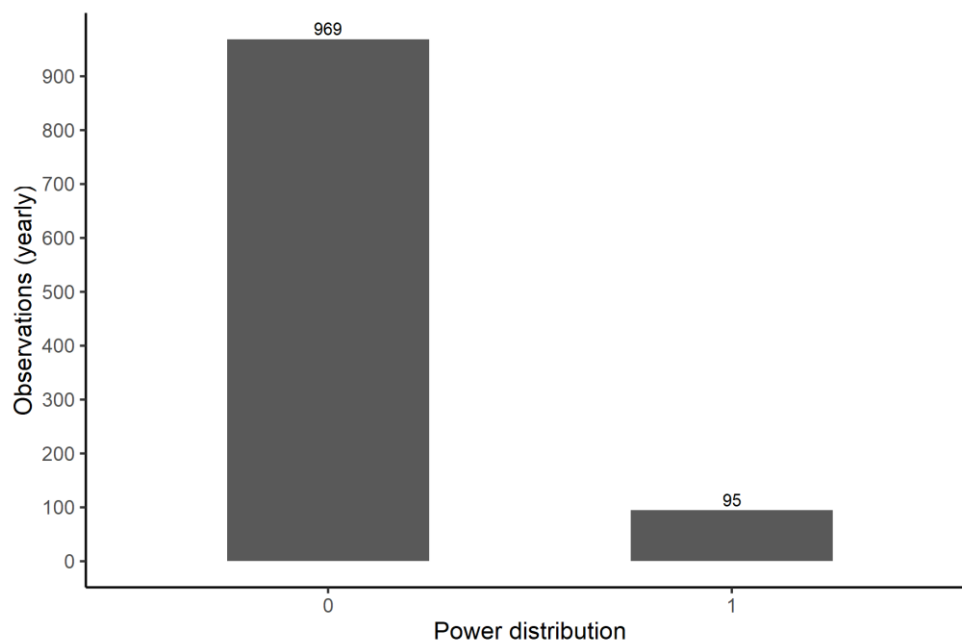


Note: the Y axis on each graph reports the yearly observations of civil conflict episodes that were coded as continuation of conflict (0) and those coded as the specific outcome indicated in the label (1), namely the conflict episodes that have terminated with the outcome specified in the label, conditional on the value intra-opposition violence.

section, this first descriptive investigation indicates that it would be difficult for the regression models to find an association between intra-opposition violence and any specific civil conflict outcome.

The fourth independent variable measures the distribution of power within the armed opposition involved in the civil conflict. This variable distinguishes between two conditions: whether power is concentrated in a single, hegemonic rebel group (0) or is dispersed within the opposition (1). Figure 8 shows that a condition of *hegemonic* power distribution was much more common than a *dispersed* one, either because the armed opposition was composed by a single rebel group, which was *de facto* the hegemon of the rebel side, or because one of the groups was much stronger than the others. In 969 conflict episode-year observations, power within the opposition was concentrated in a single rebel actor, while in 95 observations it was

Figure 4.8. Distribution of the internal power distribution within the armed opposition (1989-2017)

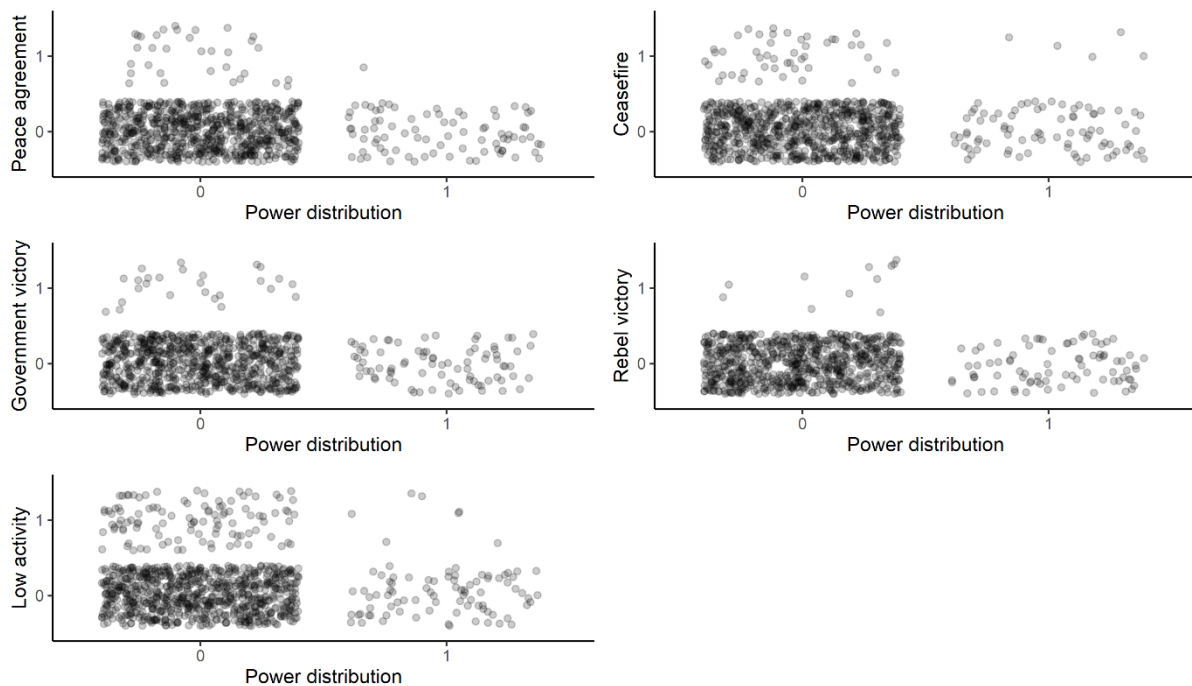


Note: Count of yearly observations of civil conflict episodes in which the distribution of power within the armed opposition was hegemonic (0) or dispersed (1).

dispersed across the armed opposition. In this case too, the number of observations for a dispersed distribution of power is not large and is more common that one rebel group is in a hegemonic position in fragmented oppositions.

Figure 9 shows that an association between internal power distribution and conflict outcomes may exist. By looking at the upper-right part of each graph in the grid, it is possible to see that a dispersed distribution of power might be negatively associated with the probability of observing conflict termination due to government or rebel victory. In fact, between 1989 and 2017 there were no instances of government or rebel victories when power within the opposition was dispersed. Only in one case did the civil conflict terminate following a peace agreement, while in five cases the conflict terminated in ceasefire. When power was dispersed, thus, the most common outcome was low activity, indicating that a positive association might exist between a dispersed distribution of power and this outcome.

Figure 4.9. Outcomes distribution conditional on internal power distribution (1989-2017)



Note: the Y axis on each graph reports the yearly observations of civil conflict episodes that were coded as continuation of conflict (0) and those coded as the specific outcome indicated in the label (1), namely the conflict episodes that have terminated with the outcome specified in the label, conditional on the value of internal power distribution.

4.2. Bivariate analysis

The descriptive statistics showed that the independent variables may be associated with certain outcomes of civil conflicts. To empirically test these associations, the analysis in this section employs four bivariate multilevel multinomial logistic regression (MLMNL) models to measure the impact of each independent variable on conflict termination.¹⁸ These models and their results are discussed in turn.

¹⁸ The MLMNL models were computed using the 'Brms' package in R (Bürkner 2017, 2018). This package has been specifically developed to perform Bayesian analysis and was used for the analysis because, at the time the it was run, the available frequentist R packages for logistic regression analysis could not either accommodate the multilevel approach (this was the case of the package 'NNET', Venables and Ripley 2002) or the multi-category unordered type of dependent variable of this study (this was the case of the package LME4, Bates *et al.* 2015). Although a package for Bayesian analysis was used, a frequentist approach to the analysis was maintained by setting weakly informative priors for all the coefficients, namely T-student distributions with 7 degrees of freedom, mean 0, and variance 10. The results reported are thus the same, or significantly similar, to the ones a strictly frequentist package would have produced.

4.2.1. Bivariate model 1: fragmentation of armed oppositions

Table 1 reports the results of Model 1, which assesses the impact of the fragmentation of armed oppositions on the outcomes of civil conflicts. The regression table shows that, in comparison to the reference category continuation of conflict, fragmentation is negatively associated with all the civil conflict outcomes, except rebel victory. The coefficients for government and rebel victory show the strongest association with fragmentation, negative for the former and positive for the latter. The weakest association is with the outcome peace agreement. Among these coefficients, the ones for the impact of fragmentation on ceasefire, government victory, and low activity are statistically significant. The coefficient for government victory is, however, significant only at the $p < 0.1$ level. The model did not find a statistically significant relationship between fragmentation and the outcomes peace agreement and rebel victory.

The results of the analysis in log-odds are reported to provide a full picture of the association between the independent variable and the outcomes of civil conflicts. However, these coefficients are not very informative by themselves and difficult to interpret. In particular, what a negative or positive impact of the independent variable on a j outcome vs. the reference category means in practice is difficult to convey. For this reason, here and for the rest of the large-N analysis, the regression output of the fitted model is displayed to indicate the direction of the estimates and their associated significance levels but for the interpretation of the results the predicted probabilities for each fitted model are also reported, since they are more easily interpretable and convey a more immediate message (Fox 2003, Fox and Hong 2009).

Starting from the impact of fragmentation on the probability that a civil conflict terminates *at all*, Table 2 shows that fragmentation determines an increase in the probability that the civil conflict continues rather than terminate. Moving from no fragmentation to a condition of fragmentation, the probability that the conflict continues increases as the value of

Table 4.1. Model 1: estimated log-odds of civil conflict outcomes by fragmentation of armed oppositions (1989-2017)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>									
	Peace agreement		Ceasefire		Government victory		Rebel victory		Low activity	
	β	<i>p</i>	β	<i>p</i>	β	<i>p</i>	β	<i>p</i>	β	<i>p</i>
Fragmentation	-0.66	0.324	-1.58**	0.048	-3.50*	0.080	2.49	0.246	-1.37**	0.022
	(0.67)		(0.80)		(2.00)		(2.15)		(0.60)	
Constant	-3.87***	0.001	-3.36***	0.001	-6.98***	0.001	-13.73***	0.009	-1.93***	0.001
	(0.54)		(0.46)		(1.79)		(5.27)		(0.24)	
N	1064									
WAIC	3538.4									

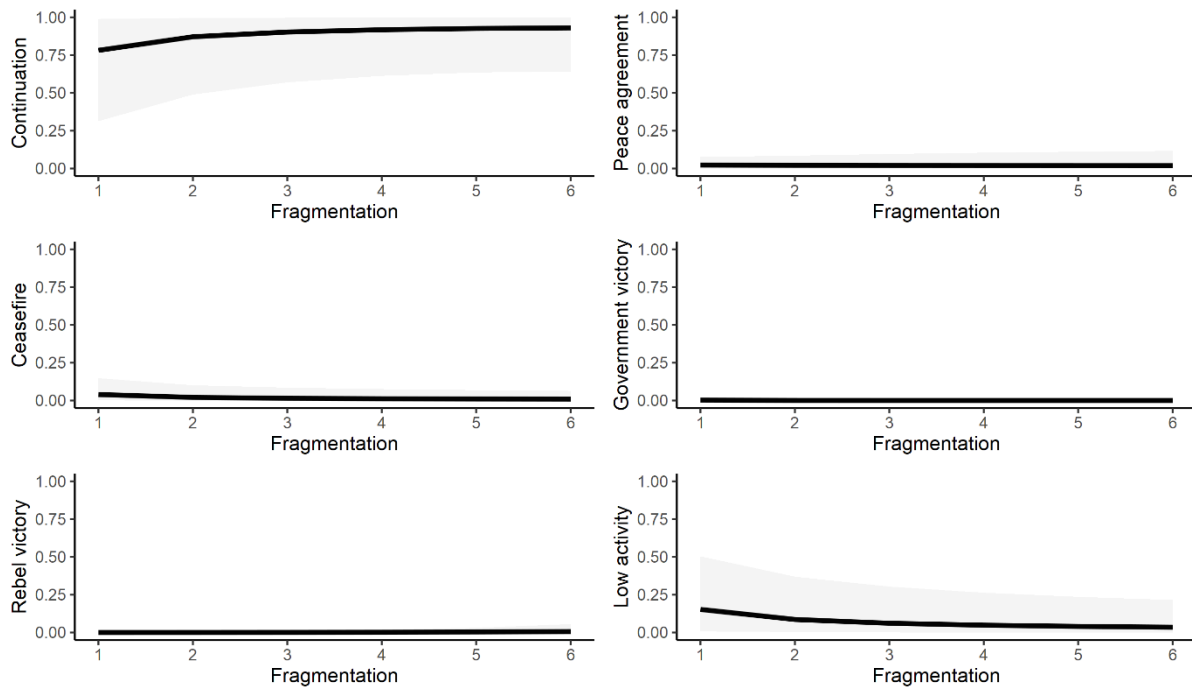
*Note: The coefficients in the column β refer to the fixed effects of fragmentation on the log-odds of a specific category *j* of the dependent variable (e.g. Peace agreement) against the reference category, continuation of conflict. Standard errors in parenthesis. The significance level on the coefficients refers to a two-sided Wald test for the single coefficient continuation of conflict vs. *j* outcome. Only the first 3 decimal places of the *p*-value are reported, with thresholds for statistical significance set at * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. For values $p < 0.001$, the value of 0.001 is reported by convention in the *p* column.*

Table 4.2. Model 1: predicted probabilities of conflict continuation and conflict outcomes by fragmentation of armed oppositions (1989-2017)

<i>Variables/levels</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>					
	Continuation	Peace agreement	Ceasefire	Govt. victory	Rebel victory	Low activity
	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
Fragmentation						
1 group	0.78166	0.02326	0.03954	0.00268	0.00021	0.15266
2 groups	0.87155	0.02085	0.02048	0.00059	0.00044	0.08608
3 groups	0.90281	0.01996	0.01466	0.00035	0.00094	0.06127
4 groups	0.91806	0.01954	0.01183	0.00028	0.00190	0.04840
5 groups	0.92629	0.01930	0.01012	0.00024	0.00362	0.04044
6 groups	0.93038	0.01912	0.00895	0.00023	0.00635	0.03497

Note: Estimates in proportions. As the predicted probabilities are very small for certain outcomes, 5 decimal places are reported.

Figure 4.10. Model 1: Predicted probabilities of conflict continuation and conflict outcomes by fragmentation of armed oppositions (1989-2017)



Note: The Y axis on each graph reports the probability in proportions of the specific outcome indicated in the label conditional on the values of fragmentation, reported in the X axis.

fragmentation increases. When the opposition is highly fragmented, it is almost impossible that the conflict terminates. This trend is clearly visible from Figure 10, as the line for continuation of conflict conditional on fragmentation indicates how the probability of conflict continuation increases the larger the number of rebel groups within the armed opposition. The confidence interval for continuation of conflict is large for small levels of fragmentation and it reduces for higher levels. Despite its width, the confidence interval follows closely the increasing trend of the estimated line. Accordingly, it is possible to conclude that fragmentation, when taken in isolation, is associated with an increase in the probability that the conflict continues.

With regard to the definitive outcomes of civil conflicts, Table 1 shows that the probability that they occur decreases as the number of groups within the opposition increases. All the outcomes except rebel victory follow this trend. This trend, however, is barely visible in Figure 10, because the predicted probabilities for each outcome are very small. Since the

probability of continuation is this large, the marginal increase/decrease of the probability of each outcome seems negligible. These increases/decreases are not irrelevant though. For visualisation purposes, here and in the rest of the large-N analysis an additional computation with the fitted data at hand was made. By taking the predicted probability of a specific outcome and dividing it by the total probability of termination – that is excluding continuation of conflict from the pool of possible outcomes – then it can be seen how important these marginal decreases/increases actually are.¹⁹ By doing so, it is possible to visualise more clearly the direction of the association among fragmentation and civil conflict outcomes and which outcome is more likely for any given value of the variable. Table 3 and Figure 11 report the results of this additional computation.

Starting from the probability of conflict termination in peace agreement, the results show that fragmentation is associated with an increase in the probability that this outcome occurs. For conflicts in which the armed opposition is not fragmented, there is a 10 per cent probability that the conflict is settled at the negotiation table, while those in which the opposition is composed of two groups are almost 6 per cent more likely to terminate in this way. Table 3 shows that the increase is constant, as the probability keeps increasing the larger the value of fragmentation, although the marginal increment tends to become smaller moving from one level of fragmentation to the next. Fragmentation was expected to have a negative effect on the chances that the actors would find a negotiated solution to the conflict. These results contradict the theoretical expectations but, as the estimate for the impact of fragmentation on peace agreements is not statistically significant, no definitive conclusion can be drawn as to whether this is the actual impact of this variable on the probability of conflict termination in peace agreement.

¹⁹ For fragmentation = 2, for example, this is computed as $\frac{\pi_j}{\pi_T} | (Frag = 2)$, where $\pi_T = 1 - \pi_C | (Frag = 2)$. The probability of peace agreement when fragmentation = 2 is equal : $\frac{\pi_{PA}}{\pi_T} | (Frag = 2) = \frac{0.02085}{1-0.87155} = \frac{0.02085}{0.12845} = 0.1623$ (16.23%).

Table 3 shows that the probability of ceasefire is negatively affected by the fragmentation of the armed opposition. When an armed opposition is composed of two groups, ceasefires are two per cent less likely than when is not fragmented. The higher the number of groups within the opposition, the lower the chances to observe conflict termination in ceasefire. The small marginal decrease moving from one level of fragmentation to the next demonstrates that it does not matter much how many rebel groups are part of a fragmented armed opposition. What it matters most, rather, is whether the opposition is fragmented at all to determine a decrease in the probability that the conflict terminates in ceasefire. Fragmentation was expected to determine such an effect on the probability of ceasefire and these statistically significant results lend support to the theoretical expectations in this respect.

When fragmentation is taken in isolation, it appears that it is associated with a decrease in the probability that the conflict ends in government victory. These results go against the theoretical expectations, for fragmentation was expected to determine an increase in the chances that the government achieves victory. Table 3 indicates that the decrease in the probability is very small. These results, however, should be taken with a pinch of salt. The estimate reported in Table 1 showed a low statistical significance that invite to a prudent interpretation of the impact of fragmentation on the probability of government victory.

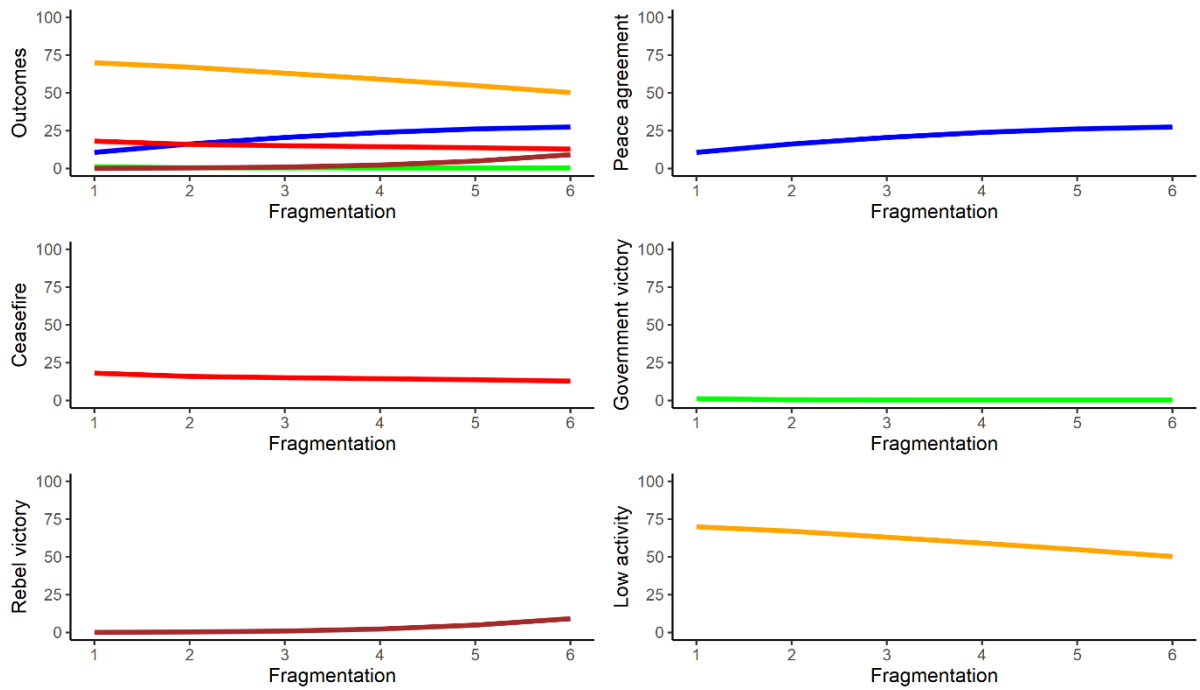
Contrary to the expectations, also the probability of rebel victory increases when the armed opposition is fragmented. Figure 11 shows that rebel victories in conflicts where the armed opposition is fragmented are just marginally more likely than in conflicts where it is not fragmented. Surprisingly, the probability increases substantially when the number of rebel groups is large. As anticipated in the Section 4.1., though, the number of rebel victories occurred during the timeframe under consideration are too few to allow for a correct estimation of the impact of fragmentation on the probability that this outcome occurs. The lack of statistical significance demonstrates that the model was unable to correctly infer the association

Table 4.3. Model 1: predicted probabilities (%) of civil conflict outcomes by fragmentation of armed oppositions (1989-2017)

<i>Variables/levels</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>									
	Peace agreement		Ceasefire		Government victory		Rebel victory		Low activity	
	<i>P%</i>	Δ	<i>P%</i>	Δ	<i>P%</i>	Δ	<i>P%</i>	Δ	<i>P%</i>	Δ
Fragmentation										
1 group	10.65	-	18.11	-	1.23	-	0.09	-	69.92	-
2 groups	16.23	5.58	15.94	-2.17	0.46	-0.77	0.35	0.26	67.02	-2.90
3 groups	20.54	4.31	15.09	-0.85	0.37	-0.09	0.96	0.61	63.05	-3.97
4 groups	23.85	3.31	14.44	-0.65	0.34	-0.03	2.31	1.35	59.07	-3.98
5 groups	26.18	2.33	13.72	-0.72	0.33	-0.01	4.91	2.60	54.86	-4.21
6 groups	27.47	1.29	12.86	-0.86	0.33	0.00	9.12	4.21	50.23	-4.63

Note: Estimates in percentage. The column Δ reports the change in outcome probability moving from one level of fragmentation to the next.

Figure 4.11. Model 1: predicted probabilities (%) of civil conflict outcomes by fragmentation of armed oppositions (1989-2017)



Note: The Y axis on each graph reports the probability in percentage of the specific outcome indicated in the label conditional on the values of fragmentation, reported in the X axis.

from the data. Accordingly, Model 1 cannot confirm whether fragmentation has a negative effect on the probability that the armed opposition achieves decisive victory.

Finally, Model 1 indicates that fragmentation, when taken in isolation, is associated with a decrease in the probability that the conflict terminates due to lack of activity. Figure 11 shows this effect clearly. Compared to conflicts where the armed opposition is not fragmented, conflicts in which it is composed of two groups are three per cent less likely to terminate in low activity. As the number of rebel groups within the opposition increases, the probability keeps decreasing as well. As discussed in the theoretical chapter, fragmentation was expected to have such a negative impact on the probability of conflict termination for lack of armed activity. Accordingly, as the estimates show a strong statistical significance, Model 1 lends substantial support to the theoretical expectations.

4.2.2. Bivariate model 2: independence of rebel groups

Model 2 assesses the impact of the independence of rebel groups of armed oppositions on the outcomes of civil conflicts. The coefficients in Table 4 show that alliances among rebel groups are negatively associated with the log-odds of peace agreement, government victory, and low activity against continuation of conflict. Conversely, they are positively associated with the log-odds of ceasefire and rebel victory, although in both cases the association is small. The coefficients for victory for the government and peace agreement show the strongest association, while the weakest association is with the outcome rebel victory. Among these, the coefficients for the impact of alliances on peace agreement, government victory, and low activity are statistically significant. However, the one for low activity is not strongly significant, as $p = 0.070$. The coefficients for the impact on ceasefire and rebel victory, instead, are not statistically significant.

From the regression table, it appears that alliances, when taken in isolation, have a statistically significant impact on the odds that some civil conflict outcomes occur. As outlined in the theoretical framework, the analysis is concerned with how the independence of rebel groups, that is when the groups are independent, affects conflict termination compared to a condition in which the groups are allied. The following tables and graphs help better understand such an impact, as the results of Model 2 are converted in predicted probabilities of conflict outcomes.

Starting from the probability that the conflict terminates *at all*, Table 5 shows that the independence of groups is associated with a decrease in the probability that the civil conflict continues. When the groups are independent, in fact, the probability that the conflict continues decreases by roughly seven per cent. Figure 12 Clearly shows this effect but also that this estimate has a large confidence interval, which spans over almost the entire probability spectrum. Despite the large confidence interval, however, there is still an indication in the data

Table 4.4. Model 2: estimated log-odds of civil conflict outcomes by independence of rebel groups of armed oppositions (1989-2017)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>									
	Peace agreement		Ceasefire		Government victory		Rebel victory		Low activity	
	β	<i>p</i>	β	<i>p</i>	β	<i>p</i>	β	<i>p</i>	β	<i>p</i>
Alliance (1)	-1.17**	0.012	0.10	0.827	-2.32**	0.019	0.04	0.977	-0.67*	0.070
	(0.47)		(0.46)		(0.99)		(1.44)		(0.37)	
Constant	-3.32***	0.001	-3.77***	0.001	-5.97***	0.001	-11.37**	0.010	-1.83***	0.001
	(0.50)		(0.59)		(1.55)		(4.44)		(0.28)	
N	1064									
WAIC	3084.9									

*Note: The coefficients in the column β refer to the fixed effects of independence of rebel groups on the log-odds of a specific category *j* of the dependent variable (e.g. Peace agreement) against the reference category, continuation of conflict. Standard errors in parenthesis. The significance level on the coefficients refers to a two-sided Wald test for the single coefficient continuation of conflict vs. *j* outcome. Only the first 3 decimal places of the *p*-value are reported, with thresholds for statistical significance set at **p*<0.1; ***p*<0.05; ****p*<0.01. For values *p*<0.001, the value of 0.001 is reported by convention in the *p* column.*

that when independence of groups is taken in isolation there is a tendency towards the termination of conflict.

With regard to the definitive outcomes of civil conflicts, Table 5 indicates that, except ceasefire, the probability that they occur increases when rebel groups are independent. For these outcomes, the confidence intervals of the estimated probability are reasonably small. The lower and upper bounds of the confidence intervals for the statistically significant results indicate the tendency to increase of the probability of peace agreement, government victory, and low activity when rebel groups are independent. The interval for low activity is quite large instead, as it spans across half of the probability spectrum for a condition of independence of groups.

The direction of the probability of conflict outcomes conditional on the independence of groups is barely visible in this graph, because such probabilities happen to be very small. The following table and figure exclude continuation of conflict from the pool of possible outcomes for a better visualisation of the results. Table 6 shows that when rebel groups are independent the probability that the civil conflict is settled through a peace agreement is almost seven per cent higher than when groups are allied. The independence of rebel groups was expected to determine a decrease in the probability of peace agreement. However, these statistically significant results demonstrate that when independence is taken in isolation the opposite holds true, as the probability of peace agreement increases if the rebel groups are independent.

With regard to the other possible settlement of civil conflicts, the independence of groups appears to determine a decrease in the probability of ceasefire. The decrease is substantial, for the probability that the conflict terminates through a ceasefire is 22 per cent when the rebel groups are allied and 11 per cent when they are not, with a decrease of 11 per cent. Independence of groups was expected to negatively affect the chances of termination in ceasefire. The results show such is the case when independence of groups is taken in isolation.

Table 4.5. Model 2: predicted probabilities of conflict continuation and conflict outcomes by independence of rebel groups of armed oppositions (1989-2017)

Variables/levels	Outcomes					
	Continuation	Peace agreement	Ceasefire	Govt. victory	Rebel victory	Low activity
	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
Alliance						
Independent	0.77780	0.03643	0.02510	0.00524	0.00055	0.15488
Allied	0.85110	0.01439	0.03341	0.00086	0.00043	0.09982

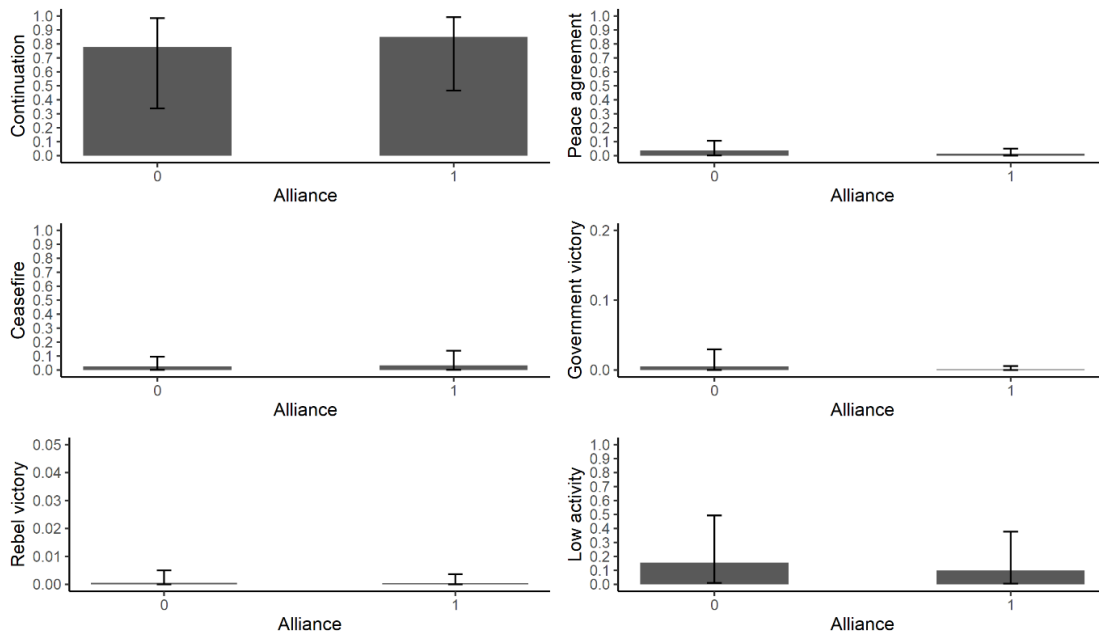
Note: Estimates in proportions. As the predicted probabilities are very small for certain outcomes, 5 decimal places are reported.

Table 4.6. Model 2: predicted probabilities (%) of civil conflict outcomes by independence of rebel groups of armed oppositions (1989-2017)

Variables/levels	Outcomes									
	Peace agreement		Ceasefire		Government victory		Rebel victory		Low activity	
	<i>P%</i>	Δ	<i>P%</i>	Δ	<i>P%</i>	Δ	<i>P%</i>	Δ	<i>P%</i>	Δ
Alliance										
Independent	16.40	-	11.29	-	2.36	-	0.25	-	69.70	-
Allied	9.66	-6.74	22.44	11.15	0.58	-1.78	0.29	0.04	67.04	-2.66

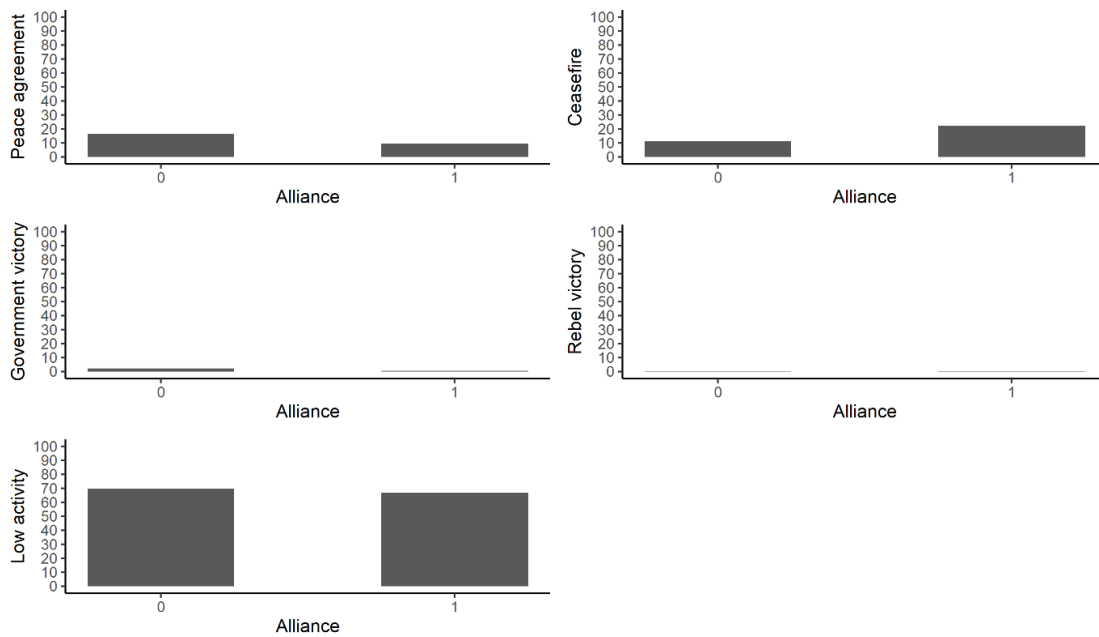
Note: Estimates in percentage. The column Δ reports the change in outcome probability moving from a condition in which the rebel groups are independent to a condition in which they are allied.

Figure 4.12. Model 2: Predicted probabilities of conflict continuation and conflict outcomes by independence of rebel groups of armed oppositions (1989-2017)



Note: The Y axis on each graph reports the probability in proportions of the specific outcome indicated in the label conditional on the values of independence of rebel groups, reported in the X axis.

Figure 4.13. Model 2: predicted probabilities (%) of civil conflict outcomes by independence of rebel groups of armed oppositions (1989-2017)



Note: The Y axis on each graph reports the probability in percentage of the specific outcome indicated in the label conditional on the values of independence of rebel groups, reported in the X axis.

However, as the coefficient for the impact of alliances on ceasefires reported in Table 4 is not statistically significant, no definitive conclusions can be drawn at this stage as to whether the independence of groups negatively affects the probability of ceasefire.

Governments appear to be more likely to achieve victory when the rebel groups of the armed opposition are independent. As Table 6 shows, the increase in probability is very small, as governments are only close to two per cent more likely to defeat the opposition when the rebel groups are independent. Despite the small impact, these results lend support to the theoretical expectations. Independence of rebel groups was expected to determine more favourable conditions for the government's effort against the armed opposition, which in turn would lead to an increase in the probability of government victory. These statistically significant results indicate that, when independence of groups is taken in isolation, the variable acts as predicted.

Mirroring the results obtained for the outcome government victory, Table 6 shows that conflicts in which the rebel groups of the armed opposition are independent tend to be less likely to terminate in rebel victory than those in which the groups are allied. The difference is marginal, however, as the probability of rebel victory is only 0.4 per cent smaller for conflicts where the groups are Independent. Even though the difference is minimal, these results seem to confirm the theoretical expectations, since armed oppositions composed of unallied rebel groups were expected to be more at disadvantage in the armed effort compared to oppositions composed of allied and cooperative rebel groups. However, as the estimate is not statistically significant, the analysis cannot confirm with certainty whether the one estimated is the actual impact of the independence of rebel groups on the probability of rebel victory.

Finally, the independence of rebel groups is associated with an increase, albeit small, in the probability of conflict termination due to lack of armed activity. When rebel groups are independent, in fact, Table 6 shows that low activity is almost three per cent more likely than

when the groups are allied. The increase is minimal but goes in the opposite direction to the one predicted in the theoretical chapter. The independence of groups was expected to determine a decrease in the probability of observing the termination of the conflict due to lack of armed activity. These results suggest otherwise, contradicting the theoretical expectations in this respect. The estimate for such an impact is lowly significant and, accordingly, it is the duty of the multivariate models reported later on in the chapter to confirm whether this is the actual impact of the independence of rebel groups on the probability of low activity.

4.2.3. Bivariate model 3: intra-opposition violence

Table 7 reports the regression output of Model 3. This model assesses the impact on civil conflict outcomes of the variable intra-opposition violence, namely instances of armed rivalry among the rebel groups of the same armed opposition. Table 7 shows some peculiar but non-significant results. All the coefficients, except the one for rebel victory, indicate a negative association of intra-opposition violence with the outcomes of civil conflicts against the reference category continuation of conflict. It should be noted, in particular, the magnitude of the negative association of intra-opposition violence with ceasefire and government victory, which indicates that the chances to observe these outcomes when rebel groups fight one another are very low. However, none of the coefficients evidence with certainty whether the one reported is the actual impact of intra-opposition violence on civil conflict outcomes. In fact, none of them falls close to statistical significance. The reason why it is so was already anticipated in the descriptive statistics section. It is not surprising that no statistically significant results were obtained given the few instances of intra-opposition violence in the period under consideration. For the same reason, this variable is not expected to perform better in the more complex multivariate models. Considering the non-significant results of the model, discussing at length how this variable affects the probability of conflict outcomes would not add much

Table 4.7. Model 3: estimated log-odds of civil conflict outcomes by intra-opposition violence of armed oppositions (1989-2017)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>									
	Peace agreement		Ceasefire		Government victory		Rebel victory		Low activity	
	β	<i>p</i>	β	<i>p</i>	β	<i>p</i>	β	<i>p</i>	β	<i>p</i>
Intra-opposition violence (1)	-0.05	0.971	-8.99	0.232	-9.94	0.201	3.02	0.202	-0.83	0.556
	(1.39)		(7.53)		(7.79)		(2.37)		(1.41)	
Constant	-3.97***	0.001	-3.60***	0.001	-7.93***	0.001	-11.65***	0.004	-2.10***	0.001
	(0.54)		(0.47)		(2.04)		(4.13)		(0.25)	
N	1064									
WAIC	3439.8									

*Note: The coefficients in the column β refer to the fixed effects of intra-opposition violence on the log-odds of a specific category *j* of the dependent variable (e.g. Peace agreement) against the reference category, continuation of conflict. Standard errors in parenthesis. The significance level on the coefficients refers to a two-sided Wald test for the single coefficient continuation of conflict vs. *j* outcome. Only the first 3 decimal places of the *p*-value are reported, with thresholds for statistical significance set at **p*<0.1; ***p*<0.05; ****p*<0.01. For values *p*<0.001, the value of 0.001 is reported by convention in the *p* column.*

more than what it is already discernible from the regression output. Nevertheless, the tables and figures with the results in predicted probabilities are reported, for they are the basis upon which a comparison with the results of the following multivariate models is made.

Table 8 and Figure 14 report the probabilities of conflict continuation and termination conditional on whether the rebel groups within the armed opposition fight one another. Starting from the probability that the conflict continues as opposed to terminate, it appears that instances of intra-opposition violence lead the conflict to drag on for longer. The large confidence intervals for the probability of conflict continuation of conflict suggest that no trust should be put in these estimates.

The same holds for the definitive outcomes of civil conflicts. Table 9 and Figure 15 show better what is the estimated impact of this variable, returning some counterintuitive results. Contrary to expectations, conflict in which rebel groups are rival are more likely to terminate in peace agreement than those in which the groups refrain from fighting one another. The difference is substantial, as the probability of peace agreement increases by 15 per cent when groups engage in fratricidal violence. Intra-opposition was expected to have negative consequences on the prospects of a negotiated solution of the conflict, but the results of the model seems to suggest otherwise. However, as the estimate is not significant, the actual impact of this variable on the probability of peace agreement remains unclear.

Intra-opposition violence was also expected to determine a decrease in the probability of conflict termination in a ceasefire and Table 9 suggests that violence among rebel groups does determine such a decrease. Compared to when groups do not fight one another, the probability of ceasefire is almost 15 per cent lower when they do. This substantial difference lends support to the theoretical expectations regarding the impact of this variable but, even in this case, the lack of significance does not permit to draw definitive conclusions.

Table 4.8. Model 3: predicted probabilities of conflict continuation and conflict outcomes by intra-opposition violence of armed oppositions (1989-2017)

<i>Variables/levels</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>					
	Continuation	Peace agreement	Ceasefire	Govt. victory	Rebel victory	Low activity
	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
Intra-opposition violence						
Not rival	0.80437	0.02222	0.03324	0.00139	0.00046	0.13832
Rival	0.83994	0.04145	0.00395	0.00020	0.00550	0.10895

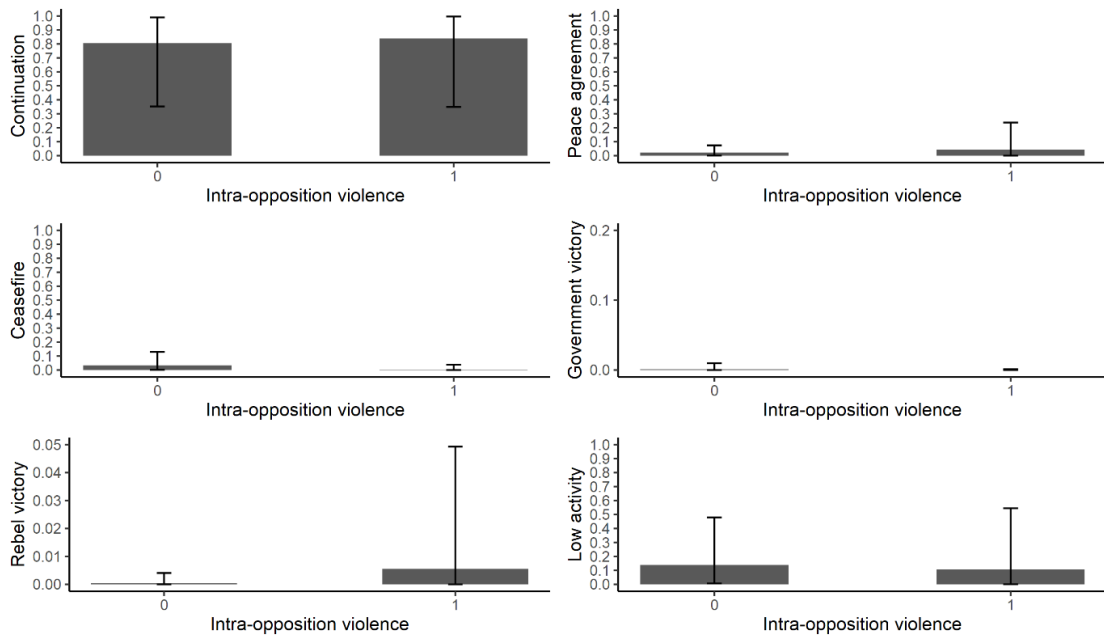
Note: Estimates in proportions. As the predicted probabilities are very small for certain outcomes, 5 decimal places are reported.

Table 4.9. Model 3: predicted probabilities (%) of civil conflict outcomes by intra-opposition violence of armed oppositions (1989-2017)

<i>Variables/levels</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>									
	Peace agreement		Ceasefire		Government victory		Rebel victory		Low activity	
	<i>P%</i>	Δ	<i>P%</i>	Δ	<i>P%</i>	Δ	<i>P%</i>	Δ	<i>P%</i>	Δ
Intra-opposition violence										
Not rival	11.36	-	16.99	-	0.71	-	0.24	-	70.71	-
Rival	25.90	14.54	2.47	-14.52	0.13	-0.58	3.43	3.19	68.07	-2.64

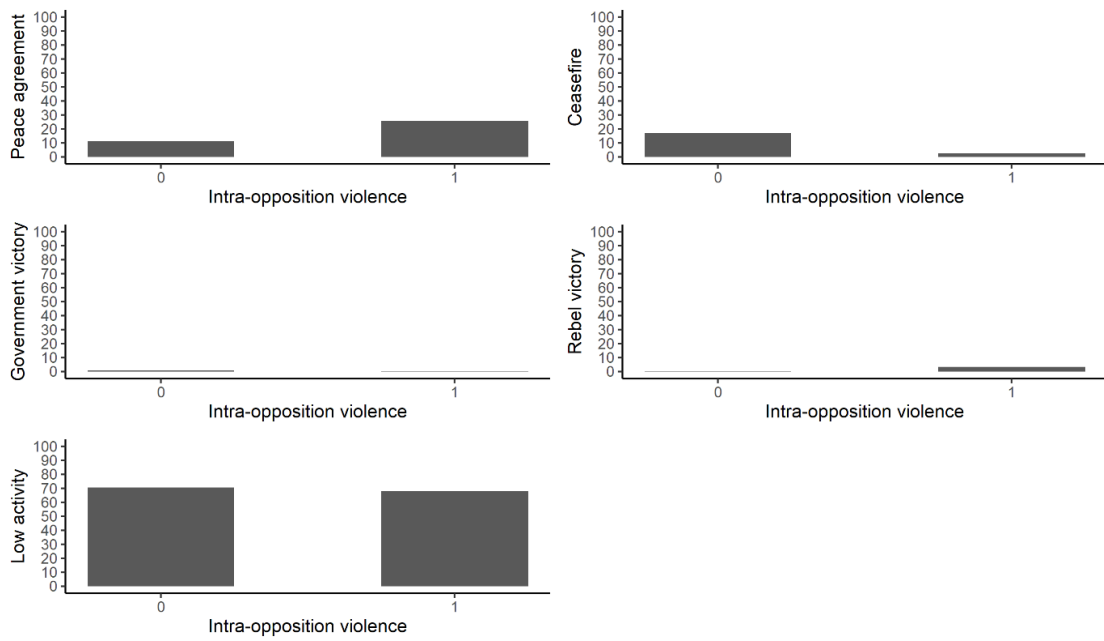
Note: Estimates in percentage. The column Δ reports the change in outcome probability moving from a condition in which the rebel groups do not fight each other to a condition in which they do.

Figure 4.14. Model 3: Predicted probabilities of conflict continuation and conflict outcomes by intra-opposition violence of armed oppositions (1989-2017)



Note: The Y axis on each graph reports the probability in proportions of the specific outcome indicated in the label conditional on the values of intra-opposition violence, reported in the X axis.

Figure 4.15. Model 3: predicted probabilities (%) of civil conflict outcomes by intra-opposition violence of armed oppositions (1989-2017)



Note: The Y axis on each graph reports the probability in percentage of the specific outcome indicated in the label conditional on the values of intra-opposition violence, reported in the X axis.

The results for the impact on government victory and rebel victory go against the theoretical expectations. Intra-opposition violence was expected to act as a weakening factor for the armed opposition that, in turn, would hamper its armed effort and facilitate the government's. Table 9 shows that the opposite holds, as government victories become 0.5 per cent less likely and rebel victories three per cent more likely when the rebel groups fight one another. These results are counterintuitive, as it is difficult to imagine that intra-opposition violence might have this impact on the probability of government and rebel victory. The results are not statistically significant and accordingly there is no certainty that Model 3 correctly estimated the impact of the variable on these outcomes.

Finally, the results in Table 9 also show that instances of intra-opposition violence are associated with a reduced probability that the conflict terminates due to lack of armed activity. Once again, this association contradicts the expectations, for fratricidal rivalry among rebel groups was expected to force the rebel groups to privilege the fight against one another and abandon the armed effort against the government. From the table, it emerges that when groups are engaged in fratricidal violence civil conflict are almost three per cent less likely to terminate due to lack of armed activity. As much as for the other outcomes, however, the results for the impact of intra-opposition violence on the chances of low activity are not statistically significant and no conclusions can be drawn from them.

4.2.4. Bivariate model 4: internal power distribution

The last bivariate model analyses the impact on conflict outcomes of the distribution of power within the armed opposition. Table 10 reports the results in log-odds of this model and shows that a dispersed distribution of power, namely a condition in which two or more rebel groups within the opposition are at parity in terms of strength, is negatively associated with the log-odds of peace agreement, government victory, and rebel victory against the reference category

Table 4.10. Model 4: estimated log-odds of civil conflict outcomes by internal power distribution of armed oppositions (1989-2017)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>									
	Peace agreement		Ceasefire		Government victory		Rebel victory		Low activity	
	β	<i>p</i>	β	<i>p</i>	β	<i>p</i>	β	<i>p</i>	β	<i>p</i>
Internal power distribution (1)	-1.95	0.160	0.33	0.627	-10.24	0.165	-8.21	0.266	0.02	0.973
	(1.39)		(0.68)		(7.38)		(7.39)		(0.61)	
Constant	-3.89***	0.001	-3.74***	0.001	-7.59***	0.001	-9.67***	0.005	-2.12***	0.001
	(0.55)		(0.51)		(1.88)		(3.48)		(0.25)	
N	1064									
WAIC	3321.1									

*Note: The coefficients in the column β refer to the fixed effects of a dispersed distribution of power on the log-odds of a specific category *j* of the dependent variable (e.g. Peace agreement) against the reference category, continuation of conflict. Standard errors in parenthesis. The significance level on the coefficients refers to a two-sided Wald test for the single coefficient continuation of conflict vs. *j* outcome. Only the first 3 decimal places of the *p*-value are reported, with thresholds for statistical significance set at **p*<0.1; ***p*<0.05; ****p*<0.01. For values *p*<0.001, the value of 0.001 is reported by convention in the *p* column.*

continuation of conflict. It is, instead, positively associated with the log-odds of ceasefire and low activity. Among the coefficients, the ones for the impact on the odds of government victory and rebel victory show the strongest association. None of them is, however, statistically significant.

In this case too, discussing the results in terms of predicted probabilities might appear as a trivial exercise, considering the poor performance of this variable in the bivariate Model 4. However, as it was true for Model 3, the results in predicted probabilities need to be compared to those emerging from the multivariate models presented in the following section to establish whether the indications provided by the entire large-N analysis can be considered valid. Accordingly, Table 11 and Figure 16 report the results converted in predicted probabilities.

Starting from the probability that the conflict terminates *at all*, the results show that whether power is dispersed within the opposition or concentrated in a single hegemonic group has no effect on the probability that the conflict continues. The estimates in this respect, as Table 11 shows, are very similar.

With regard to the definitive outcomes of civil conflicts, the results appear to be largely in line with the theoretical expectations outlined in Chapter 2. Table 12 and Figure 17 display the results more clearly. Starting from the impact of power distribution on the probability that the conflict terminates with a peace agreement, Table 12 indicates that when power is dispersed within the opposition as opposed to concentrated in a hegemonic rebel group, peace agreements are almost 10 per cent less likely to be signed by the parties. A dispersed distribution of power was expected to determine such a decrease in the probability but, even though the variable acts as expected, the estimate for the impact of internal power distribution on the probability of peace agreement is not statistically significant.

Table 4.11. Model 4: predicted probabilities of conflict continuation and conflict outcomes by internal power distribution of armed oppositions (1989-2017)

Variables/levels	Outcomes					
	Continuation	Peace agreement	Ceasefire	Govt. victory	Rebel victory	Low activity
	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
Internal power distribution						
Hegemonic	0.80534	0.02433	0.02971	0.00175	0.00107	0.13780
Dispersed	0.80005	0.00668	0.04490	0.00006	0.00013	0.14818

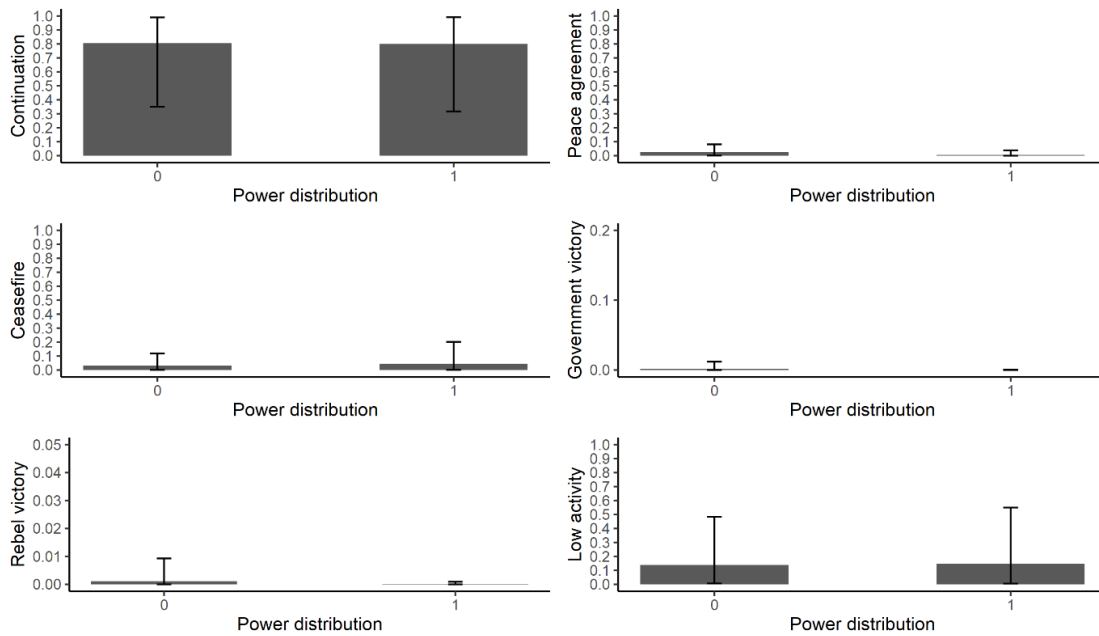
Note: Estimates in proportions. As the predicted probabilities are very small for certain outcomes, 5 decimal places are reported.

Table 4.12. Model 4: predicted probabilities (%) of civil conflict outcomes by internal power distribution of armed oppositions (1989-2017)

Variables/levels	Outcomes									
	Peace agreement		Ceasefire		Government victory		Rebel victory		Low activity	
	<i>P%</i>	Δ	<i>P%</i>	Δ	<i>P%</i>	Δ	<i>P%</i>	Δ	<i>P%</i>	Δ
Internal power distribution										
Hegemonic	12.50	-	15.26	-	0.90	-	0.55	-	70.79	-
Dispersed	3.34	-9.16	22.45	7.19	0.03	-0.87	0.07	-0.48	74.11	3.32

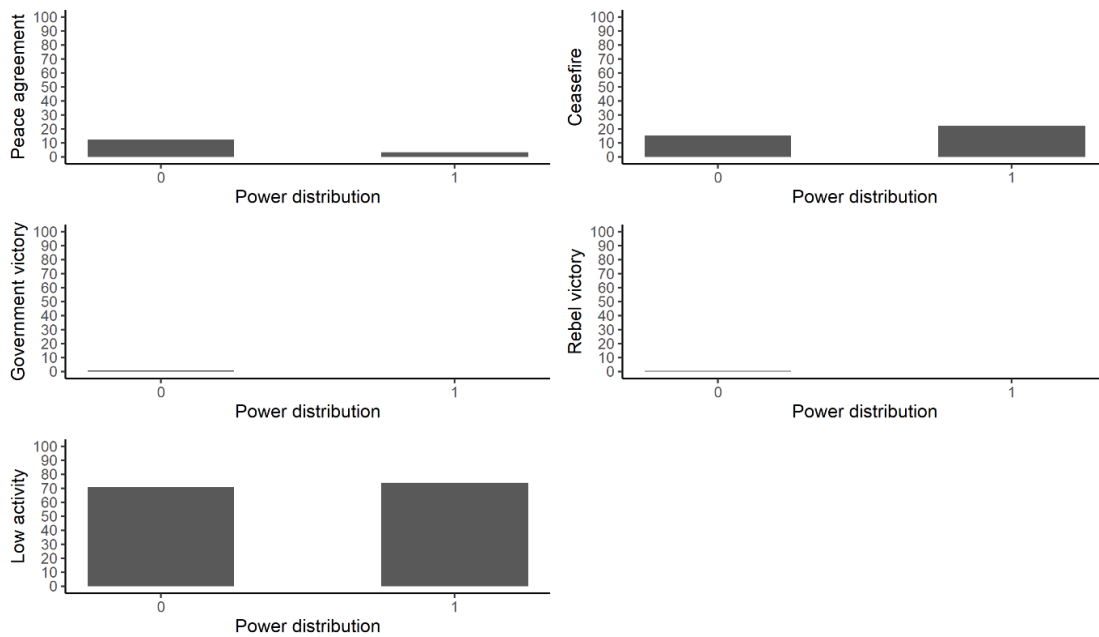
Note: Estimates in percentage. The column Δ reports the change in outcome probability moving from a condition in which power within the opposition is concentrated in a single group to a condition in which two or more rebel groups are equally strong.

Figure 4.16. Model 4: Predicted probabilities of conflict continuation and conflict outcomes by internal power distribution of armed oppositions (1989-2017)



Note: The Y axis on each graph reports the probability in proportions of the specific outcome indicated in the label conditional on the values of internal power distribution, reported in the X axis.

Figure 4.17. Model 4: predicted probabilities (%) of civil conflict outcomes by internal power distribution of armed oppositions (1989-2017)



Note: The Y axis on each graph reports the probability in percentage of the specific outcome indicated in the label conditional on the values of internal power distribution, reported in the X axis.

Ceasefires, instead, are more likely to occur when power is evenly distributed within the armed opposition. Compared to when one rebel group is in a hegemonic position, the probability to observe a ceasefire is 22 per cent higher when two or more rebel groups are at parity in terms of power, with an increase of seven per cent. A dispersed distribution of power was expected to be associated with such an increase in the probability that the conflict ends in ceasefire, since equally strong rebel groups might find themselves facing the possibility of a costly deadlock that makes ceasefires an appealing alternative to final victory. The results in Table 12 seem to indicate that this might be the case but are not statistically significant.

With regard to the probability of government victory, the results suggest that when power is dispersed within the opposition this outcome becomes slightly less likely. The marginal decrease in probability for conflicts in which power is dispersed within the opposition is so small that how power is distributed does not seem to have much relevance. In fact, when power is dispersed, the probability that the conflict terminates in government victory is just 0.8 smaller than when power is concentrated in a single group. Despite this minimal decrease, the results appear to confirm the theoretical expectations on the impact of this variable. A dispersed distribution of power was expected to determine a decrease in the probability that the conflict terminates in government victory. The results in Table 12 indicate that a dispersed distribution of power does have such an effect on the probability of government victory but in this case too they are not statistically significant.

The reduction in the probability of government victory is not mirrored by an increase in the probability of rebel victory. In this case too, the marginal decrease is not substantial, as the probability of rebel victory for conflicts in which power is dispersed within the armed opposition is just 0.48 per cent lower than the one for conflicts in which power is concentrated. This small reduction in probability still appears to confirm the theoretical expectations regarding the impact of this variable. Once again, though, as the results are not significant no

definitive conclusions can be drawn as to whether the one estimated is the actual impact of a dispersed distribution of power on the probability of rebel victory.

Finally, and in line with the expectations, the probability that the conflict terminates due to lack of activity appears to be positively affected by a dispersed distribution of power. Compared to conflicts in which one rebel group is in a dominant position, conflicts where power is more evenly distributed within the opposition are three per cent more likely to end for low activity. A dispersed distribution of power was expected to determine this decrease and the results in Table 12 are in line with the expectations but, once again, they are not statistically significant.

This section presented the results of a first bivariate investigation of the associations that exist between the independent variables and the outcomes of civil conflict. The results in this respect were not very remarkable, especially because two models, those for the impact of intra-opposition violence and internal power distribution, did not yield any significant results. These bivariate models, however, represented only a preliminary analysis of the associations between the independent variables and civil conflict outcomes. In the next section, the large-N analysis investigates further whether these associations are confirmed or disproved when all the independent variables are considered simultaneously and potential confounders are added.

4.3. Multivariate analysis

In this section, the models presented contain all the independent variables at once to examine their effects when they are taken simultaneously into account. First, the impact of these variables is assessed net of the influence of potential confounders, namely some of the factors that the existing research has found to be correlated with civil conflict outcomes. Next, these confounders are added to the model to ascertain whether they alter the patterns of association uncovered in the preceding models. By doing so, the large-N analysis determines how civil

conflict termination is affected when structural characteristics of and competitive and power dynamics within armed oppositions combine with one another and with other important determinants of civil conflict outcomes.

4.3.1. Multivariate model 5: fragmentation, internal competition, and internal power distribution

Model 5 assesses the impact of all the independent variables on civil conflict outcomes, excluding potential confounders. Table 13 reports the results in log-odds and the coefficients refer to the impact of each independent variable on the conflict outcome specified in the label against the reference category continuation of conflict. Starting from the coefficients for the effects of fragmentation, Table 13 shows that, moving from the bivariate to the multivariate framework, the results have not changed substantially in terms of direction, strength, and significance of the association. In terms of direction of the coefficients, apart from the one for rebel victory, all the others show a negative association with fragmentation. This is in line with the direction observed in the bivariate Model 1. Similarly, Model 5 found a weak association of fragmentation with the log-odds of peace agreement and a strong association with the ones of rebel victory. The only noteworthy difference is that fragmentation appears to have a stronger negative association with the log-odds of ceasefire. Among these coefficients, those for ceasefire and low activity are statistically significant. Compared to Model 1, the coefficient for the impact of fragmentation on the log-odds of government victory loses significance, while the coefficient for the impact on low activity shows a higher statistical significance.

The estimates for the impact of alliances among rebel groups maintained similar direction and strength of correlation as well. Apart from the coefficient for rebel victory, which indicated

Table 4.13. Model 5: estimated log-odds of civil conflict outcomes by structural characteristics, internal competition, and power distribution of armed oppositions (1989-2017)

Variables	Outcomes									
	Peace agreement		Ceasefire		Government victory		Rebel victory		Low activity	
	β	p	β	p	β	p	β	p	β	p
Fragmentation	-0.04	0.961	-9.72**	0.047	-1.01	0.669	3.08	0.291	-2.67***	0.008
	(0.82)		(4.90)		(2.37)		(2.92)		(1.01)	
Alliance (1)	-1.11**	0.029	0.28	0.551	-2.16*	0.055	-0.12	0.950	-0.54	0.155
	(0.51)		(0.47)		(1.13)		(1.92)		(0.38)	
Intra-opposition violence (1)	0.14	0.927	-7.36	0.355	-9.28	0.238	2.36	0.452	0.60	0.691
	(1.53)		(7.97)		(7.88)		(3.14)		(1.51)	
Internal power distribution (1)	-1.58	0.279	7.09**	0.041	-9.05	0.219	-9.09	0.224	2.01**	0.030
	(1.46)		(3.48)		(7.37)		(7.48)		(0.93)	
Constant	-3.45***	0.001	-3.52***	0.001	-6.52***	0.001	-15.60**	0.011	-1.77***	0.001
	(0.56)		(0.56)		(1.91)		(6.14)		(0.28)	
N	1064									
WAIC	3692.5									

Note: The coefficients in the column β refer to the fixed effects of the independent variables on the log-odds of a specific category j of the dependent variable (e.g. Peace agreement) against the reference category, continuation of conflict. Standard errors in parenthesis. The significance level on the coefficients refers to a two-sided Wald test for the single coefficient continuation of conflict vs. j outcome. Only the first 3 decimal places of the p -value are reported, with thresholds for statistical significance set at * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. For values $p < 0.001$, the value of 0.001 is reported by convention in the p column.

a small positive association in the bivariate analysis while here is negative, the direction of the coefficients for the impact of alliances on the log-odds of all the other outcomes remained unaltered. Accordingly, alliances are negatively associated with the log-odds of peace agreement, government victory, rebel victory, and low activity and positively associated with the log-odds of ceasefire. Among these coefficients, the model found alliances to be more strongly associated with the log-odds of peace agreement and government victory. In terms of significance, some minor differences with the bivariate Model 2 must be noted. The most evident difference among the estimates of Model 2 and 5 is the coefficient for the impact of alliances on the log-odds of low activity. While the bivariate model indicated a lowly significant effect ($p = 0.07$), in the multivariate model the coefficient for low activity loses significance. Conversely, the coefficients for the impact of alliances on log-odds of peace agreement and government victory remained almost unaltered. The coefficient for government victory was significant at $p = 0.05$ in the bivariate model while in the multivariate at $p = 0.055$. Even though the p-value crosses the common 0.05 significance level, the difference between p-values is too small to suggest a different interpretation of their statistical significance.

With regard to the impact of intra-opposition violence, Model 5 yields again ambiguous results, but with some differences compared to the bivariate Model 3. Table 13 shows that the coefficients for the effects of this variable on the log-odds of ceasefire, government victory, and rebel victory remained unchanged, while those for the impact on peace agreement and low activity are now negative. These changes indicate that both models struggled to estimate the impact on conflict outcomes of instances of rivalry among rebel groups, as once again none of the coefficients is statistically significant.

The estimates of Model 5 for the impact of internal power distribution on conflict outcomes present some similarities and some differences with the ones observed in the bivariate Model 4. Table 13 shows that, as much as when power distribution was taken in

isolation, also in the multivariate framework a dispersion of power within the opposition is negatively associated with the log-odds of peace agreement, government victory, and rebel victory and positively associated with the log-odds of ceasefire and low activity. In terms of the magnitude of the association, the coefficients remained mostly unaltered, with the ones for the impact on government victory and rebel victory still showing the strongest association. In this respect, the only difference that must be recorded compared to the estimates of the bivariate analysis is that the magnitude of the association with the log-odds of ceasefire increased substantially. While in terms of direction and magnitude of the association the bivariate and multivariate models showed no substantial discrepancy, there are some important differences between the two models in terms of significance. In the bivariate model, none of the coefficients was found to be statistically significant. The multivariate model, instead, identifies a statistically significant association of a dispersed power distribution with the log-odds of ceasefire and low activity.

Now that the direction, magnitude, and significance of the association between the independent variables and civil conflict outcomes in the multivariate framework have been discussed, the analysis moves forward with the test of the hypothesis of the study by assessing the impact that each variable has on the probability that a specific outcome occurs. To isolate the effect of fragmentation individually and simulate a *standard condition*, all the other variables in the model were kept at their modal value. In this way, the variation in outcomes probability moving from one level of fragmentation to another could not be ascribed to the other variables but to fragmentation only. Independence of groups, intra-opposition violence, and power distribution were in turn interacted with fragmentation while keeping the remaining independent variables in the model at their modal value. By doing so, it is possible to assess how these variables affect civil conflict termination, conditional on how fragmented the armed opposition is.

Fragmentation of the armed opposition

Starting from the structural characteristics of armed oppositions, Table 14 shows that fragmentation is associated with an increase in the probability that the civil conflict continues. Compared to when the armed opposition is not fragmented, the probability that the conflict continues increases to 89 per cent when the opposition is composed of two groups. In the multivariate analysis, however, it can be noticed that the increase in the probability of conflict continuation conditional on fragmentation is not constant as it was in the bivariate analysis. Figure 18 shows this trend more clearly, as the probability of conflict continuation is higher only when the armed opposition is composed of two or three rebel groups. When the groups are more than three, then the probability that the conflict continues starts decreasing. Accordingly, while it is true that when the armed opposition is fragmented the conflict more likely continues, the presence of too many groups pushes towards the end of the conflict.

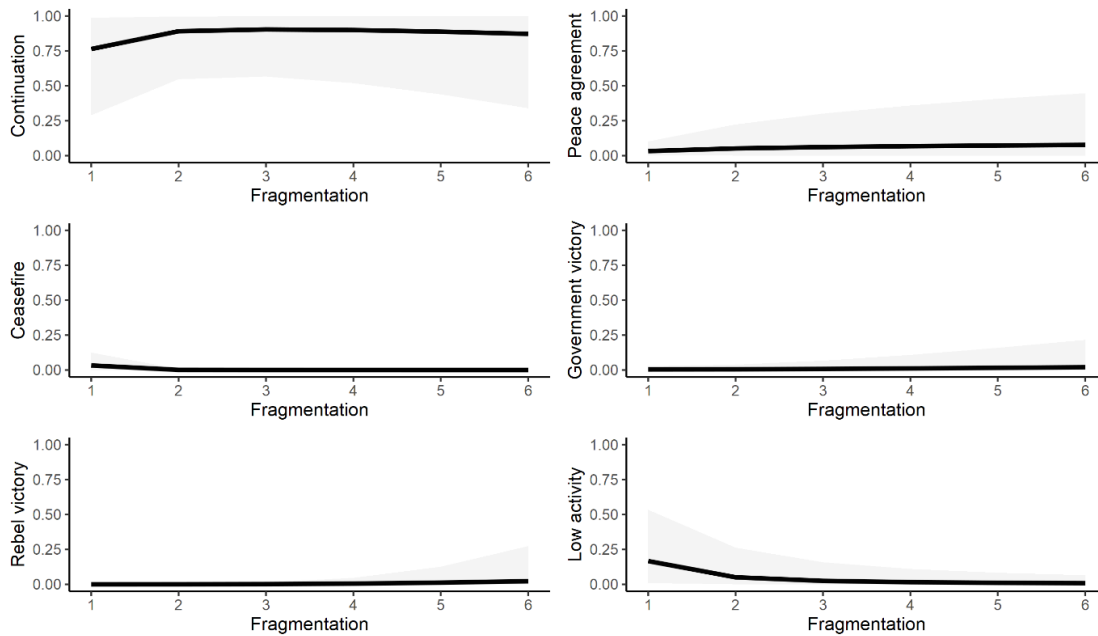
With regard to the definitive outcomes of civil conflicts, the change in probability associated to a marginal change in the variable seems too small to conclude that fragmentation has an actual impact in altering the odds that a specific outcome occurs. However, Table 15 and Figure 19, which report the results excluding the probability of conflict continuation, show a different picture. Starting from the impact of fragmentation on the probability that the conflict ends in peace agreement, the chances of observing such an outcome increase when the armed opposition is fragmented. When the opposition is composed of two groups, the probability to observe a peace agreement increases by 33 per cent compared to when the opposition is not fragmented. Looking at the curve in Figure 19, this probability increases for low and middle values of fragmentation and decreases for higher ones. These results show that when an armed opposition is fragmented, the probability of peace agreement follows a direction that goes against the theoretical expectations also in the multivariate framework. However, these results are not statistically significant and the null hypothesis in this case cannot be rejected.

Table 4.14. Model 5: predicted probabilities of conflict continuation and conflict outcomes by fragmentation of armed oppositions, holding constant internal competition and power distribution (1989-2017)

<i>Variables/levels</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>					
	Continuation	Peace agreement	Ceasefire	Govt. victory	Rebel victory	Low activity
	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
Fragmentation						
1 group	0.76380	0.03287	0.03256	0.00423	0.00010	0.16645
2 groups	0.89115	0.05201	0.00093	0.00503	0.00047	0.05042
3 groups	0.90387	0.06152	0.00027	0.00780	0.00175	0.02479
4 groups	0.89943	0.06815	0.00013	0.01153	0.00531	0.01545
5 groups	0.88786	0.07313	0.00008	0.01569	0.01235	0.01089
6 groups	0.87229	0.07701	0.00006	0.01987	0.02252	0.00826

Note: Estimates in proportions. To isolate the effect of fragmentation, the probabilities were computed holding the other variables in the model at their modal value: Alliances = 0, intra-opposition violence = 0, and internal power distribution = 0. As the predicted probabilities are very small for certain outcomes, 5 decimal places are reported.

Figure 4.18. Model 5: Predicted probabilities of civil conflict continuation and outcomes by fragmentation of armed oppositions holding constant internal competition and power distribution (1989-2017)



Note: The Y axis on each graph reports the probability in proportions of the specific outcome indicated in the label conditional on the values of fragmentation, reported in the X axis.

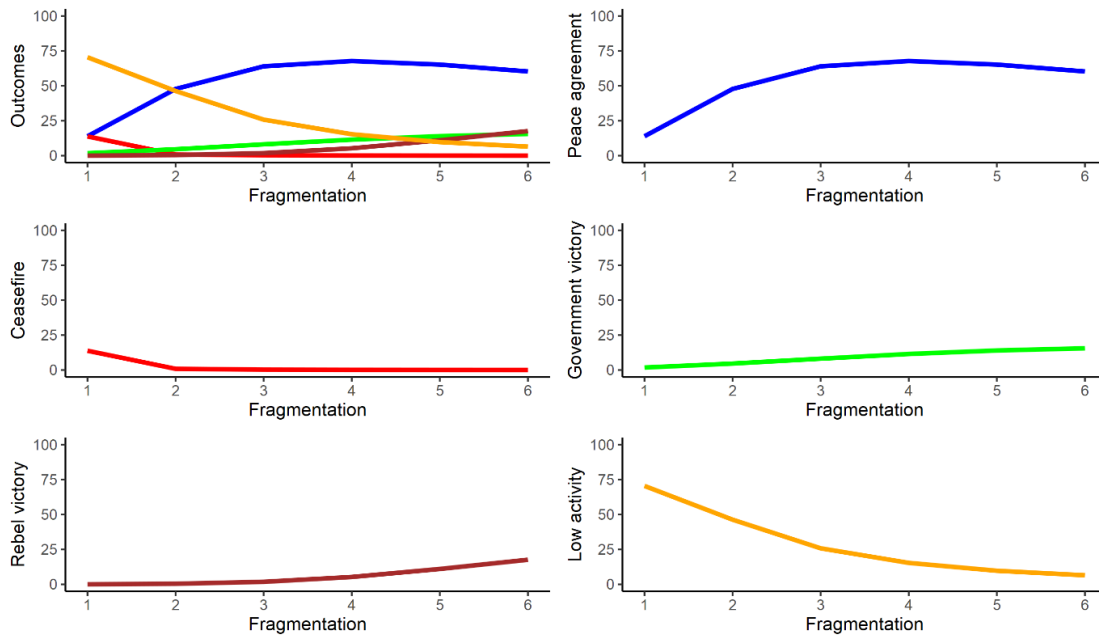
Differently from peace agreement, the probability to observe a ceasefire is close to null when the armed opposition is fragmented. Moving to a condition of fragmentation, the probability that the conflict terminates following a ceasefire decreases by almost 13 per cent, becoming an extremely unlikely possibility when the rebel groups within the opposition are more than two. In practice, while 14 out 100 civil conflicts terminate in ceasefire when the armed opposition is not fragmented, only one does terminate in this way when the armed opposition is composed of two rebel groups and zero when the groups are three or more. In comparison with the bivariate analysis, Figure 19 shows that the decrease in probability is larger moving from a condition of no fragmentation to a condition of fragmentation. While the bivariate model estimated a gently decreasing trend in the probability of ceasefire moving from one level of fragmentation to the next, when controlling for the other independent variables the results show that fragmentation curtails any chance of observing a conflict termination via ceasefire. These

Table 4.15. Model 5: predicted probabilities (%) of civil conflict outcomes by fragmentation of armed oppositions, holding constant internal competition and power distribution (1989-2017)

Variables/levels	Outcomes									
	Peace agreement		Ceasefire		Government victory		Rebel victory		Low activity	
	P%	Δ	P%	Δ	P%	Δ	P%	Δ	P%	Δ
Fragmentation										
1 group	13.91	-	13.78	-	1.79	-	0.04	-	70.47	-
2 groups	47.78	33.87	0.85	-12.93	4.62	2.83	0.43	0.39	46.32	-24.15
3 groups	63.99	16.21	0.28	-0.57	8.12	3.50	1.82	1.39	25.79	-20.53
4 groups	67.76	3.77	0.13	-0.15	11.47	3.35	5.28	3.46	15.36	-10.43
5 groups	65.21	-2.55	0.07	-0.06	13.99	2.52	11.01	5.73	9.71	-5.65
6 groups	60.30	-4.91	0.04	-0.03	15.56	1.57	17.63	6.62	6.47	-3.24

Note: Estimates in percentage. The column Δ reports the change in outcome probability moving from one level of fragmentation to the next. To isolate the effect of fragmentation, the probabilities were computed holding the other variables in the model at their modal value: alliances = 0, intra-opposition violence = 0, and internal power distribution = 0.

Figure 4.19. Model 5: predicted probabilities (%) of civil conflict outcomes by fragmentation of armed oppositions, holding constant internal competition and power distribution (1989-2017)



Note: The Y axis on each graph reports the probability in percentage of the specific outcome indicated in the label conditional on the values of fragmentation, reported in the X axis.

statistically significant results confirm once again the theoretical expectations.

The fragmentation of the armed opposition contributes to increase the probability of government victory. The effect of fragmentation in the multivariate framework differs from the one observed when it was taken in isolation. In fact, while in the bivariate analysis fragmentation had a small negative impact on the probability of observing a decisive victory for the government, in Model 5 the opposite holds true. Figure 19 indicates that the larger the number of groups within the opposition, the more likely that the conflict ends in government victory. In the multivariate framework the results lend support to the theoretical expectations. However, while the estimate for the effect of fragmentation was weakly significant in the bivariate analysis, it is not in the multivariate analysis. Accordingly, even though these results provide support to the expectations, the null hypothesis for the impact of fragmentation on the probability of government victory cannot be rejected.

As in the bivariate analysis, the results for the impact of fragmentation on the probability of rebel victory go against the hypothesis outlined in Chapter 2. Fragmentation was expected to determine a decrease in the chances of rebel victory but, both in Model 2 and Model 5, the results appear to indicate that the opposite holds true. In fact, Figure 19 shows that when an armed opposition is fragmented, especially highly fragmented, rebels are more likely to achieve victory compared to when is not fragmented. This might have to do both with the fact that the models had some difficulties in estimating the determinants of rebel victory – given the few occurrences between 1989 and 2017 – and with the fact that fragmentation might have picked up some variance in the odds of rebel victory that is explained instead by the overall armed opposition strength. As in the case of government victory, however, these results are not statistically significant and no definitive conclusion can be drawn about the impact of fragmentation on the chances of rebel victory.

Finally, the fragmentation of armed oppositions appears to have a strong impact on the probability that the conflict terminates due to lack of armed activity. Table 15 shows that, compared to when the armed opposition is not fragmented, the probability that the conflict simply ceases is 24 per cent lower when there are two rebel groups and 44 per cent lower when the groups are three. This means that, when the armed opposition is not fragmented, as many as 70 out 100 civil conflicts end due to lack of activity, while 46 terminate in this way when it is fragmented and composed of two groups and less than 10 when is highly fragmented. Compared to the bivariate analysis, the direction of the probability of low activity conditional on fragmentation remained unaltered but a more acute decrease can be observed. When fragmentation is considered together with the other independent variables, it appears that each marginal increase in the number of rebel groups within the opposition has a much stronger effect in reducing the chances of observing conflict termination due to lack of activity. As much

as in Model 1, these results are statistically significant and provide support to the theoretical expectations.

Independence of rebel groups

Both when taken in isolation and when considered together with the other independent variables of the study, whether the rebel groups are allied or not has similar effects on conflict outcomes. Table 16 shows that the impact of the independence of groups on the probability of conflict outcomes remained stable moving from the bivariate to the multivariate analysis. Starting from the probability of conflict continuation as opposed to termination, Table 16 shows that the independence of groups decreases the chances of conflict continuation and, conversely, increases the chances of conflict termination. Despite the large confidence interval for this estimate, the grey line in Figure 20 shows that the probability that the conflict continues is lower when the rebel groups do not have other rebel allies. In this respect, thus, Model 5 returns the same results that were obtained in Model 2.

With regard to the definitive outcomes of civil conflicts, the independence of groups appears to have the same effect that the bivariate analysis indicated. The results in this respect appear solid for most conflict outcomes, as Figure 20 shows small confidence intervals that follow closely the estimated probabilities for all levels of fragmentation. The only exceptions in this respect are the outcomes peace agreement, for which the model returns a large confidence interval, especially for high levels of fragmentation, and low activity, which instead shows a large confidence interval for low levels of fragmentation. Overall, the results appear to be robust despite the large confidence intervals for these two outcomes.

Table 17 and Figure 21 report the results excluding continuation of conflict from the pool of possible outcomes to show more clearly how the independence of rebel groups affects conflict termination. Starting from the probability of conflict termination in peace agreement,

Table 17 confirms the results obtained in the bivariate analysis. Even when independence of groups is accounted for together with the other independent variables, this outcome is more likely to be observed when the rebel groups of the armed opposition are independent. For example, when an armed opposition is fragmented and composed of two independent rebel groups, the probability that the conflict ends in peace agreement is 12 per cent higher than when the groups are allied. This difference in probability remains stable for all levels of fragmentation, although it is evident from Figure 21 that when the rebel groups within the opposition are several it does not really matter whether they are allied or not as the probability that the conflict ends in peace agreement is nearly the same. As in Model 2, these statistically significant results go against the theoretical expectations.

With regard to the other possible negotiated solution of civil conflicts, ceasefires, Table 17 shows that it is less likely to observe a conflict termination in a ceasefire if the rebel groups of the armed opposition are independent. This is in line with what it was observed in the bivariate analysis, but in this case the difference in probability of ceasefire is so small that it is not very important whether the groups are allied or not. The chances that a conflict ends in ceasefire are so vigorously affected by the fragmentation of the armed opposition that this outcome is almost impossible to be observed when the opposition is composed of two or more rebel groups, irrespective of the ties that bind these groups. These results still lend support to the theoretical expectations but are not statistically significant and, accordingly, no definitive conclusions can be drawn as to whether the independence of rebel groups affects the probability of observing a ceasefire.

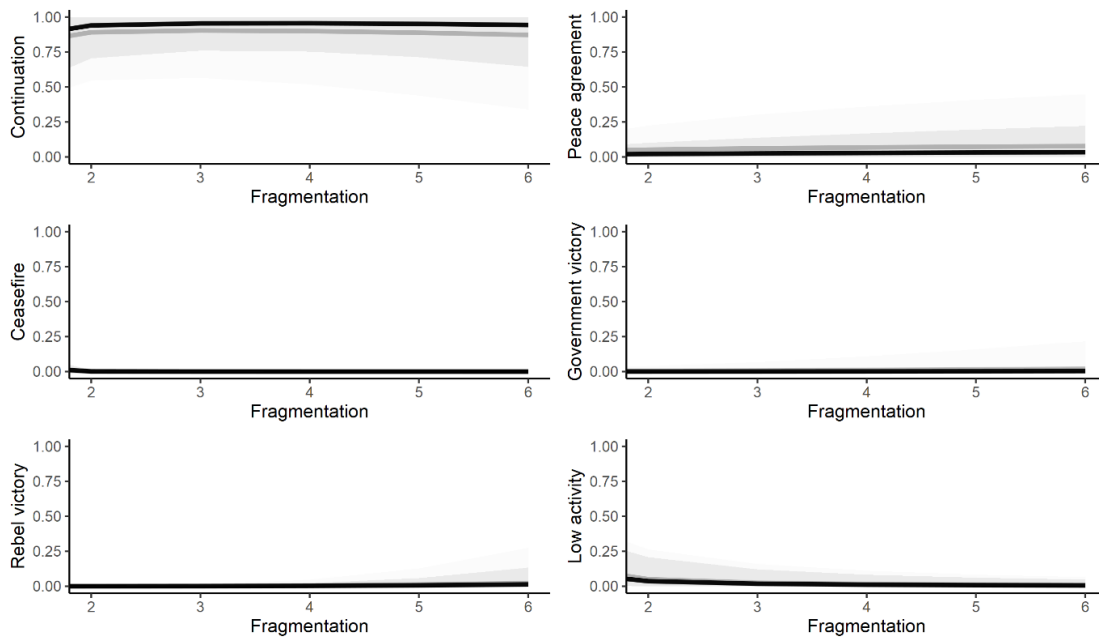
As it was observed in the bivariate analysis, also the results of Model 5 indicate that the probability of government victory is higher when the rebel groups of the armed opposition are independent. The grey line in Figure 21 shows that the chances for the government to achieve decisive victory increase the larger the number of independent rebel groups in the opposition.

Table 4.16. Model 5: predicted probabilities of conflict continuation and conflict outcomes by independence of rebel groups, conditional on fragmentation and holding constant intra-opposition violence and power distribution (1989-2017)

<i>Variables/levels</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>					
	Continuation	Peace agreement	Ceasefire	Govt. victory	Rebel victory	Low activity
	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
Fragmentation						
2 groups						
Independent	0.89115	0.05201	0.00093	0.00503	0.00047	0.05042
Allied	0.94017	0.02092	0.00138	0.00085	0.00031	0.03638
3 groups						
Independent	0.90387	0.06152	0.00027	0.00780	0.00175	0.02479
Allied	0.95434	0.02512	0.00040	0.00122	0.00097	0.01795
4 groups						
Independent	0.89943	0.06815	0.00013	0.01153	0.00531	0.01545
Allied	0.95541	0.02855	0.00020	0.00181	0.00279	0.01124
5 groups						
Independent	0.88786	0.07313	0.00008	0.01569	0.01235	0.01089
Allied	0.95111	0.03150	0.00012	0.00261	0.00670	0.00795
6 groups						
Independent	0.87229	0.07701	0.00006	0.01987	0.02252	0.00826
Allied	0.94297	0.03404	0.00008	0.00360	0.01325	0.00605

Note: Estimates in proportions. To isolate the effect of independence of rebel groups for each given value of fragmentation, the probabilities were computed holding the other variables in the model at their modal value: intra-opposition violence = 0 and internal power distribution = 0. As the predicted probabilities are very small for certain outcomes, 5 decimal places are reported.

Figure 4.20. Model 5: Predicted probabilities of civil conflict continuation and outcomes by independence of rebel groups of armed oppositions, holding constant intra-opposition violence and power distribution (1989-2017)



Note: The Y axis on each graph reports the probability in proportions of the specific outcome indicated in the label given the value of alliances, black line if the groups are allied, grey line if the groups are independent, conditional on the values of fragmentation, reported in the X axis.

For low levels of fragmentation, instead, it does not matter much whether the groups are independent for altering the probability of government victory. In fact, the probability that this is outcome occurs is 4.6 per cent when the armed opposition is composed of two independent groups, while only 1.4 per cent when the groups are allied. Table 17 shows that this difference increases as the number of groups increases, becoming almost 10 per cent more likely for the government to defeat the opposition when the latter is composed of six independent rebel groups. These statistically significant results indicate, both in the bivariate and the multivariate models, that the theoretical expectations in this respect were correct.

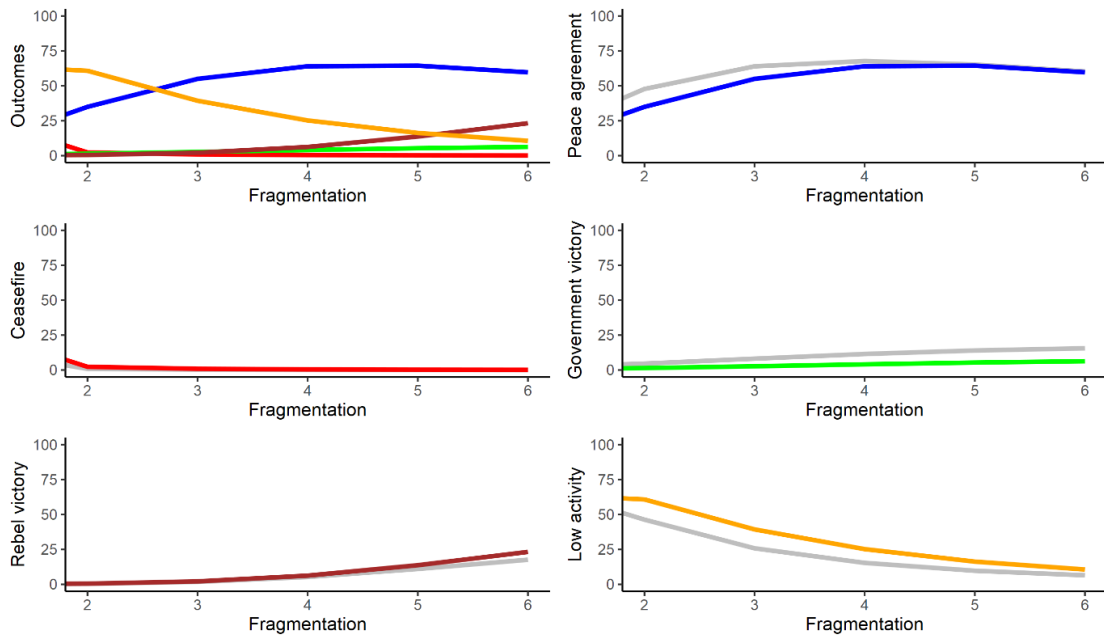
The results discussed above mirror the ones for the outcome rebel victory. As Table 17 shows, compared to a situation in which the rebel groups are allied, when they are independent the probability that the armed opposition defeats the government is lower. These results are in line with what it was observed in the bivariate model. The difference in probability is small

Table 4.17. Model 5: predicted probabilities (%) of civil conflict outcomes by independence of rebel groups of armed oppositions, conditional on fragmentation and holding constant intra-opposition violence and power distribution (1989-2017)

Variables/levels	Outcomes										
	Peace agreement		Ceasefire		Government victory		Rebel victory		Low activity		
	P%	Δ	P%	Δ	P%	Δ	P%	Δ	P%	Δ	
Fragmentation											
2 groups											
Independent	47.78	-	0.85	-	4.62	-	0.43	-	46.32	-	
Allied	34.96	-12.82	2.31	1.46	1.42	-3.20	0.51	0.08	60.79	14.47	
3 groups											
Independent	63.99	-	0.28	-	8.12	-	1.82	-	25.79	-	
Allied	55.01	-8.98	0.87	0.59	2.68	-5.44	2.12	0.30	39.32	13.53	
4 groups											
Independent	67.76	-	0.13	-	11.47	-	5.28	-	15.36	-	
Allied	64.03	-3.73	0.44	0.31	4.07	-7.40	6.26	0.98	25.20	9.84	
5 groups											
Independent	65.21	-	0.07	-	13.99	-	11.01	-	9.71	-	
Allied	64.03	-0.78	0.25	0.18	5.34	-8.65	13.71	2.70	16.27	6.56	
6 groups											
Independent	60.30	-	0.04	-	15.56	-	17.63	-	6.47	-	
Allied	56.69	-0.61	0.15	0.11	6.31	-9.25	23.23	5.60	10.62	4.15	

Note: Estimates in percentage. The column Δ reports the change in outcome probability moving from a condition in which the rebel groups are independent to a condition in which they are allied. To isolate the effect of alliances for each given value of fragmentation, the probabilities were computed holding the other variables in the model at their modal value: intra-opposition violence = 0 and internal power distribution = 0.

Figure 4.21. Model 5: predicted probabilities (%) of civil conflict outcomes by independence of rebel groups, holding constant intra-opposition violence and power distribution (1989-2017)



Note: The Y axis on each graph reports the probability in percentage of the specific outcome indicated in the label given the value of alliances, coloured line if the groups are allied, grey line if the groups are independent, conditional on the values of fragmentation, reported in the X axis.

enough to suggest that victory is so difficult to achieve for an armed opposition that whether its rebel groups are allied or not does not matter much for altering its chances to defeat the government. These estimates lend support to the theoretical expectations regarding the impact of the independence of rebel groups on the probability of rebel victory. However, as they are not statistically significant, no definitive conclusion in this respect can be drawn from the analysis.

The estimate for the impact of the independence of groups on the probability of conflict termination for low activity is the only one that changed direction moving from the bivariate to the multivariate framework. When alliances are not taken in isolation, it appears that they have a different effect on low activity than the one originally estimated. Model 5, in fact, identifies a negative impact of the independence of groups on the probability of low activity. Figure 21 shows that, especially for low and middle levels of fragmentation, the probability

that the conflict simply ceases is constantly lower when the rebel groups are independent. This change of direction brings the estimates closer to the theoretical expectations. The independence of rebel groups was in fact expected to determine such a decrease in the probability of observing the termination of the conflict due to lack of armed activity. This time, however, the results are not statistically significant and, although they go in the predicted direction, they do not allow to draw conclusions as to whether the independence of rebel groups determines a decrease in the probability of low activity. The next model will indicate more accurately which is the actual impact of this variable on this specific outcome.

Intra-opposition violence

In line with the bivariate analysis, Model 5 did not return any statistically significant estimate for the impact of intra-opposition violence on civil conflict outcomes. As none of the model estimates is significant, the discussion on the direction of the probability of conflict outcomes might seem useless. However, as mentioned before, a brief discussion of how intra-opposition violence affects the chances of conflict termination is still necessary to show whether the models performed similarly in estimation terms.

Starting from the probability that the conflict continues, Table 18 indicates that when the rebel groups within a fragmented opposition are rival, there are lower chances that the conflict drags on and, conversely, higher chances that it terminates. This is true when the opposition is not excessively fragmented. For larger values of fragmentation, whether the rebel groups fight one another or not loses relevance. The results differ from those observed in the bivariate analysis, where it appeared that when the rebel groups are rival the probability of conflict continuation increases. The large confidence interval for this estimate, displayed in Figure 22, indicates that the estimated impact of intra-opposition violence on the probability of conflict continuation is not reliable.

This is not the only change of direction from the bivariate analysis. In fact, Table 18 shows that also the probability that the conflict terminates in peace agreement or low activity when the groups are rival differ from Model 3. When the groups are rival there are lower chances that the conflict terminates in peace agreement and higher chances that it terminates in low activity, the opposite of what it was observed in Model 3. These changes are more visible in Table 19 and Figure 23, where the results are reported excluding continuation of conflict from the pool of possible outcomes.

Looking more closely at the probability of conflict termination through a peace agreement, Figure 23 shows clearly that rivalry among rebel groups is associated to a lower probability that an agreement is signed. Compared to a conflict in which the rebel groups do not engage in fratricidal violence, conflicts in which the groups are rival are one to six per cent less likely to terminate in peace agreement, depending on the value of fragmentation. Differently from the bivariate analysis, the results of Model 5 follow the direction predicted in the theoretical framework. However, the non-significance of the results does not allow for the rejection of the null hypothesis.

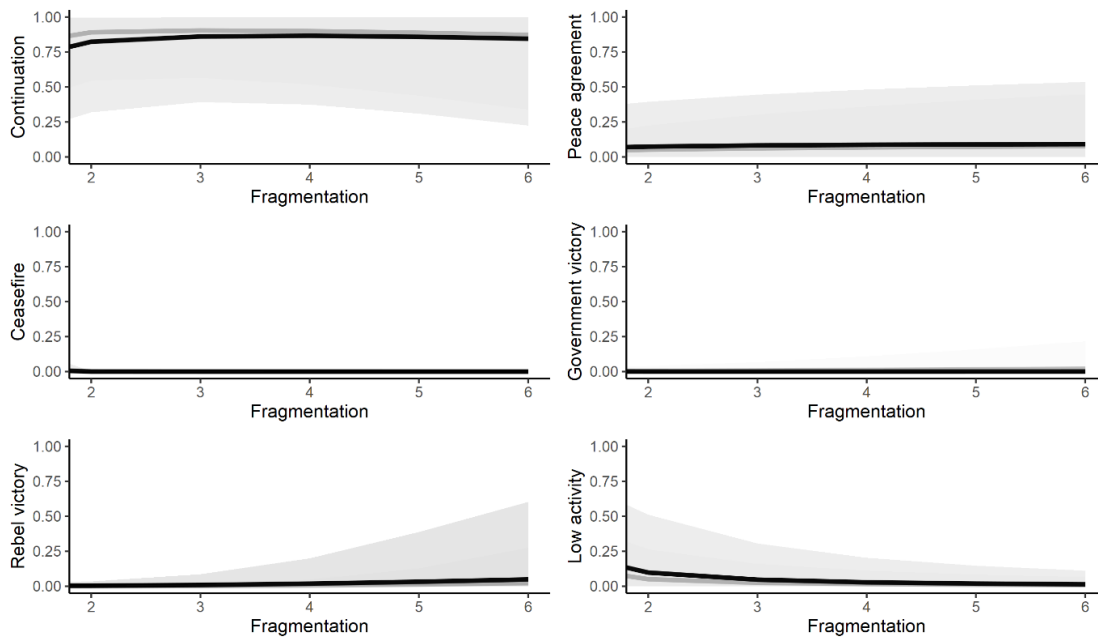
The probability of ceasefire too is lower when the rebel groups of the opposition are rival. This result is in line with what it was observed in the bivariate analysis. The difference in terms of probability for when the groups do or do not fight one another is not very large. Looking at how intra-opposition violence interacts with fragmentation, Table 19 shows that the probability that the conflict ends in a ceasefire when the groups are rival is surely lower, but the impact of fragmentation on the chances of conflict termination via ceasefire is so strong that does not matter that much whether the groups are rival or not. Once again, these results lend support to the theoretical expectations, but no definitive conclusions can be drawn from these non-significant estimates.

Table 4.18. Model 5: predicted probabilities of conflict continuation and conflict outcomes by intra-opposition violence of armed oppositions, conditional on fragmentation and holding constant independence of rebel groups and power distribution (1989-2017)

<i>Variables/levels</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>					
	<i>Continuation</i>	<i>Peace agreement</i>	<i>Ceasefire</i>	<i>Govt. victory</i>	<i>Rebel victory</i>	<i>Low activity</i>
	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
<i>Fragmentation</i>						
<i>2 groups</i>						
Not rival	0.89115	0.05201	0.00093	0.00503	0.00047	0.05042
Rival	0.82350	0.07391	0.00042	0.00061	0.00387	0.09769
<i>3 groups</i>						
Not rival	0.90387	0.06152	0.00027	0.00780	0.00175	0.02479
Rival	0.86110	0.08218	0.00009	0.00052	0.00901	0.04711
<i>4 groups</i>						
Not rival	0.89943	0.06815	0.00013	0.01153	0.00531	0.01545
Rival	0.86608	0.08671	0.00003	0.00057	0.01854	0.02806
<i>5 groups</i>						
Not rival	0.88786	0.07313	0.00008	0.01569	0.01235	0.01089
Rival	0.85861	0.08950	0.00002	0.00068	0.03225	0.01893
<i>6 groups</i>						
Not rival	0.87229	0.07701	0.00006	0.01987	0.02252	0.00826
Rival	0.84512	0.09134	0.00001	0.00081	0.04888	0.01383

Note: Estimates in proportions. To isolate the effect of intra-opposition violence for each given value of fragmentation, the probabilities were computed holding the other variables in the model at their modal value: independence of rebel groups = 0 and internal power distribution = 0. Fragmentation begins from the value of 2 as for intra-opposition violence to occur the armed opposition must be composed of at least 2 groups. As the predicted probabilities are very small for certain outcomes, 5 decimal places are reported.

Figure 4.22 Model 5: Predicted probabilities of civil conflict continuation and outcomes by intra-opposition violence of armed oppositions, holding constant independence of rebel groups and power distribution (1989-2017)



Note: The Y axis on each graph reports the probability in proportions of the specific outcome indicated in the label given the value of intra-opposition violence, black line if the groups are rival, grey line if the groups are not, conditional on the values of fragmentation, reported in the X axis.

The same surprising results obtained in the bivariate model with regard to the impact of intra-opposition violence on the probability that the conflict ends in government victory are confirmed by Model 5 too. In fact, the model finds that, when the rebel groups of the armed opposition are rival, the government is less likely to achieve a decisive victory compared to when the groups are not rival. Figure 23 shows that the difference in probability is substantial for all levels of fragmentation and that becomes larger for higher values of fragmentation. For conflicts in which the rival rebel groups are several, the probability of government victory is more than 10 per cent lower compared to conflicts where the groups are not rival. These results go completely against the theoretical expectations outlined in Chapter 2, but again their lack of significance does not allow to put trust in these estimates.

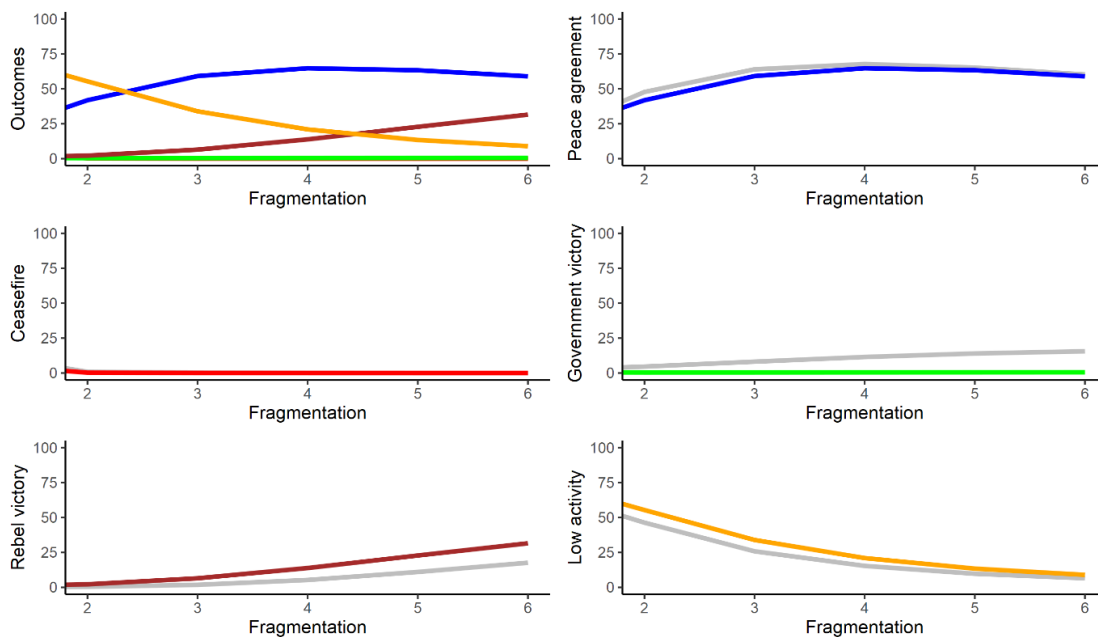
Conversely, Table 19 indicates that conflicts in which the rebel groups are rival are more likely to terminate in rebel victory than those in which are not rival. These ambiguous results

Table 4.19. Model 5: predicted probabilities (%) of civil conflict outcomes by intra-opposition violence of armed oppositions, conditional on fragmentation and holding constant independence of rebel groups and power distribution (1989-2017)

Variables/levels	Outcomes										
	Peace agreement		Ceasefire		Government victory		Rebel victory		Low activity		
	P%	Δ	P%	Δ	P%	Δ	P%	Δ	P%	Δ	
Fragmentation											
2 groups											
Not rival	47.78	-	0.85	-	4.62	-	0.43	-	46.32	-	
Rival	41.87	-5.91	0.24	-0.61	0.35	-4.27	2.19	1.76	55.35	9.03	
3 groups											
Not rival	63.99	-	0.28	-	8.12	-	1.82	-	25.79	-	
Rival	59.17	-4.82	0.06	-0.22	0.37	-7.75	6.49	4.67	33.91	8.12	
4 groups											
Not rival	67.76	-	0.13	-	11.47	-	5.28	-	15.36	-	
Rival	64.75	-3.01	0.03	-0.10	0.43	-11.04	13.84	8.56	20.95	5.59	
5 groups											
Not rival	65.21	-	0.07	-	13.99	-	11.01	-	9.71	-	
Rival	63.30	-1.91	0.01	-0.06	0.48	-13.51	22.81	11.80	13.39	3.68	
6 groups											
Not rival	60.30	-	0.04	-	15.56	-	17.63	-	6.47	-	
Rival	59.98	-1.32	0.01	-0.03	0.52	-15.04	31.56	13.93	8.93	2.46	

Note: Estimates in percentage. The column Δ reports the change in outcome probability moving from a condition in which the rebel groups do not fight each other to a condition in which they do. To isolate the effect of intra-opposition violence for each given value of fragmentation, the probabilities were computed holding the other variables in the model at their modal value: independence of rebel groups = 0 and internal power distribution = 0. Fragmentation begins from the value of 2 as for intra-opposition violence to occur the armed opposition must be composed of at least 2 groups.

Figure 4.23: Model 5: Predicted probabilities of civil conflict outcomes (%) by intra-opposition violence of armed oppositions, holding constant independence of rebel groups and power distribution (1989-2017)



Note: The Y axis on each graph reports the probability in proportions of the specific outcome indicated in the label given the value of intra-opposition violence, coloured line if the groups are rival, grey line if the groups are not, conditional on the values of fragmentation, reported in the X axis.

are in line with those returned by Model 3. What is striking is that the probability of rebel victory for conflicts in which the groups fight one another increases constantly as the number of groups within the opposition increases, suggesting that to a larger number of rival groups correspond higher chances that the armed opposition defeats the government. As much as the results for the impact on government victory, these results go strongly against the expectations. Fratricidal rivalry was expected to determine the opposite effect but the results seem to suggest otherwise. However, as these results are not statistically significant, the model was not able to clarify whether the one returned is the actual effect that intra-opposition violence has on the probability of rebel victory.

As briefly mentioned earlier, intra-opposition violence appears to have an effect on the probability of conflict termination due to lack of activity that differs from the one originally foreseen in Model 3. When intra-opposition violence is assessed together with the other

independent variables, it appears to determine a positive effect on the probability that the conflict ends in low activity. For low and middle values of fragmentation, the chances that the conflict simply ceases are always more than five per cent higher when the rebel groups of the opposition fight one another compared to when they do not. For higher values of fragmentation, however, whether the groups are rival loses importance as the probability of low activity is nearly the same. Differently from the bivariate model, the results of Model 5 on the impact of intra-opposition violence on the probability of conflict termination due to lack of armed activity lend support to the theoretical expectations. Rivalry among groups was expected to determine such an increase in the probability of observing low activity but also in this case no definitive conclusions can be drawn in this respect.

Internal power distribution

Moving from the bivariate to the multivariate model without confounders, no substantial differences can be recorded with regard to the impact on conflict outcomes of the last independent variable of the model, the distribution of power within the armed opposition. The estimates remained stable in the two different model specifications. The only difference, or better, improvement, is that Model 5 returns statistically significant estimates for the impact of a dispersed distribution of power on the probability of conflict termination in ceasefire and low activity, whereas Model 4 did not.

When no rebel group within an armed opposition is in a dominant position, the probability that the conflict continues is higher compared to when power is concentrated in a single group. This is true when the armed opposition is composed of two or three rebel groups. For higher values of fragmentation, instead, the probability of conflict continuation is higher when power is concentrated in a single group as opposed to equally shared by two or more groups. Table 20 and Figure 24 show that the probability trend of the definitive outcomes is

more stable and unidirectional than the one for the probability of conflict continuation. Overall, Figure 24 shows that the estimates for the other conflict outcomes have reasonably small confidence intervals, apart from the one for the probability of low activity. Table 21 and Figure 25, in which continuation of conflict is excluded, show more clearly the importance of this variable in shaping how civil conflicts terminate.

Starting from the probability of conflict termination following a peace agreement, Model 5 indicates that the negotiated solution of the conflict is less likely when power is dispersed compared to when is concentrated in a single rebel group. This is in line with the results obtained in Model 4, but the difference in this case is larger, especially for low levels of fragmentation. For example, when the armed opposition is composed of three groups and none of them is in a dominant position, a civil conflict is 50 cent less likely to terminate in peace agreement than one in which one of the rebel groups is in a hegemonic position. Figure 25 shows that the difference of the impact of a dispersed and hegemonic distribution of power on the probability of peace agreement tends to reduce for higher levels of fragmentation. These results are perfectly in line with the theoretical expectations in this respect but, although the results seem to suggest that the variable acts in the predicted direction, they are not statistically significant.

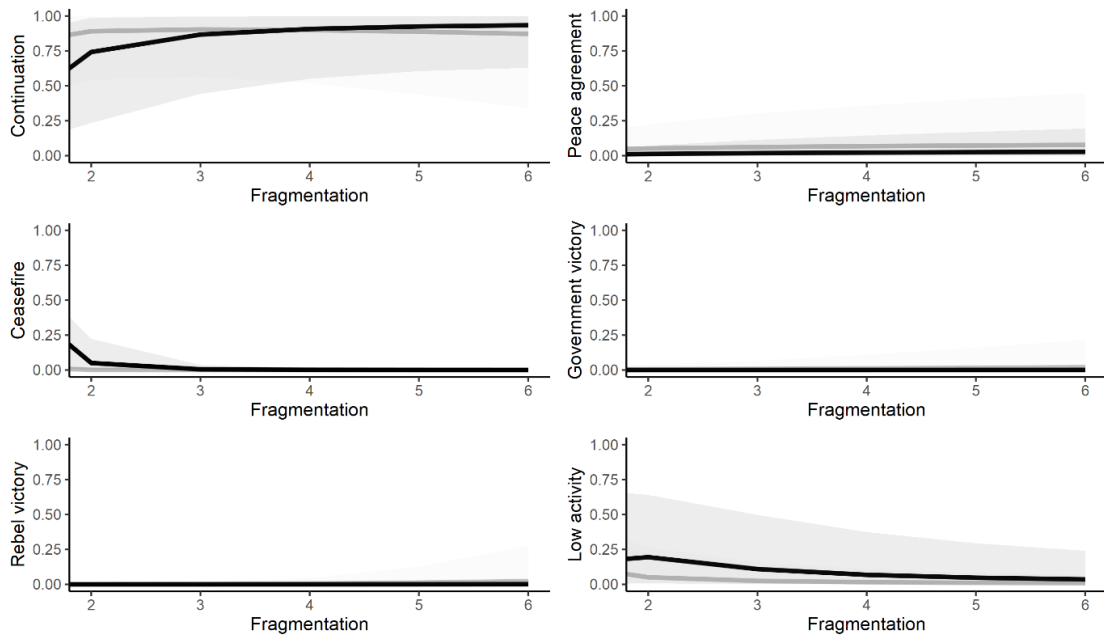
A dispersed distribution of power appears to have the opposite effect on the probability that the conflict terminates in ceasefire. Table 21 shows that when power is dispersed the probability of ceasefire is higher than when power is concentrated in a hegemonic group. This trend confirms what it was observed in the bivariate analysis, also in terms of the difference in the probability. In fact, as Table 21 demonstrates, unless the armed opposition is composed of two groups, whether power is dispersed or concentrated has only a minor impact in altering the probability of ceasefire. This confirms what it was observed for all the independent variables discussed previously, namely that fragmentation has such a strong effect in curtailing the

Table 4.20. Model 5: predicted probabilities of conflict continuation and conflict outcomes by internal power distribution of armed oppositions, conditional on fragmentation and holding internal competition constant (1989-2017)

<i>Variables/levels</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>					
	Continuation	Peace agreement	Ceasefire	Govt. victory	Rebel victory	Low activity
	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
Fragmentation						
2 groups						
Hegemonic	0.89115	0.05201	0.00093	0.00503	0.00047	0.05042
Dispersed	0.74233	0.01260	0.05020	0.00029	0.00002	0.19456
3 groups						
Hegemonic	0.90387	0.06152	0.00027	0.00780	0.00175	0.02479
Dispersed	0.86734	0.01842	0.00479	0.00035	0.00007	0.10902
4 groups						
Hegemonic	0.89943	0.06815	0.00013	0.01153	0.00531	0.01545
Dispersed	0.90752	0.02218	0.00158	0.00047	0.00024	0.06801
5 groups						
Hegemonic	0.88786	0.07313	0.00008	0.01569	0.01235	0.01089
Dispersed	0.92541	0.02516	0.00079	0.00062	0.00066	0.04737
6 groups						
Hegemonic	0.87229	0.07701	0.00006	0.01987	0.02252	0.00826
Dispersed	0.93402	0.02769	0.00048	0.00080	0.00146	0.03553

Note: Estimates in proportions. To isolate the effect of the internal power distribution for each given value of fragmentation, the probabilities were computed holding the other variables in the model at their modal value: independence of rebel groups = 0 and intra-opposition violence = 0. Fragmentation begins from the value of 2 as the concept of power distribution requires the armed opposition to be composed of at least 2 groups. As the predicted probabilities are very small for certain outcomes, 5 decimal places are reported.

Figure 4.24. Model 5: Predicted probabilities of civil conflict continuation and outcomes by internal power distribution of armed oppositions, holding internal competition constant (1989-2017)



Note: The Y axis on each graph reports the probability in proportions of the specific outcome indicated in the label given the value of internal power distribution, black line if power is dispersed, grey line if is concentrated, conditional on the values of fragmentation, reported in the X axis.

prospects of ceasefire that power and competitive relations among the rebel groups of the opposition do not have a strong impact in altering the probability the conflict ends in a ceasefire. Nevertheless, the impact of a dispersed power distribution exists, albeit small, and it is associated with a decrease in the probability of observing conflict termination via a ceasefire. As the estimates are statistically significant, these results confirm the theoretical expectations in this respect.

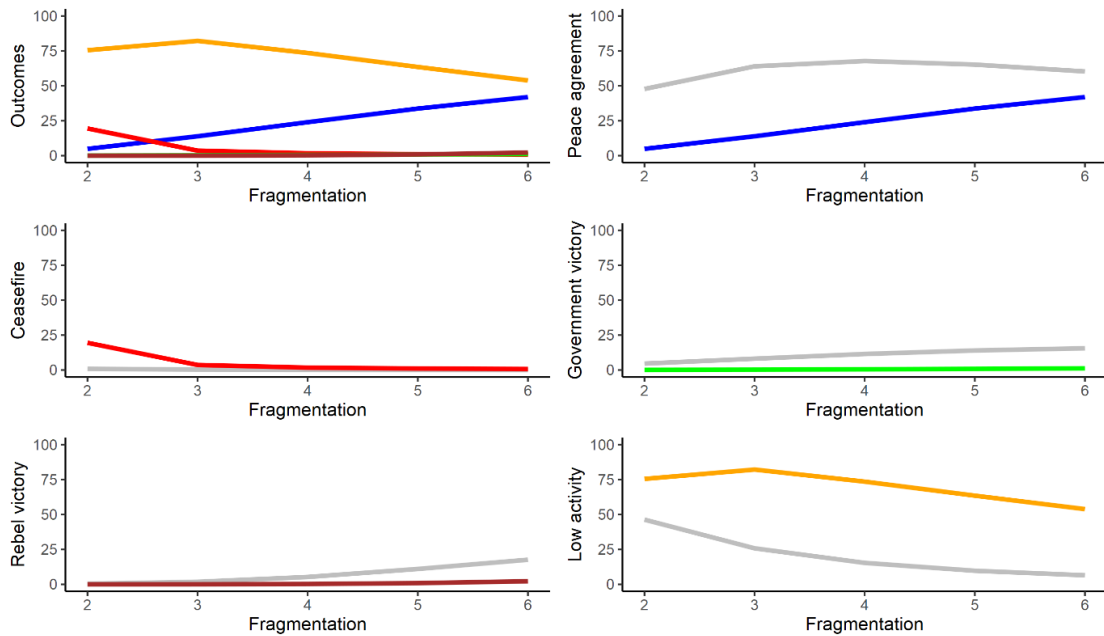
The expectations for the impact of a dispersed distribution of power on the probability of government victory do not find confirmation in the data, as the estimate that Model 5 yields is not statistically significant. As Table 21 shows, the model indicates that when an armed opposition is fragmented and none of its groups is in a dominant position, the probability of government victory is constantly lower. Figure 25 shows also that the higher the number of equally strong groups within the opposition the lower the chances that the government achieves

Table 4.21. Model 5: predicted probabilities (%) of civil conflict outcomes by internal power distribution of armed oppositions, conditional on fragmentation and holding internal competition constant (1989-2017)

Variables/levels	Outcomes										
	Peace agreement		Ceasefire		Government victory		Rebel victory		Low activity		
	P%	Δ	P%	Δ	P%	Δ	P%	Δ	P%	Δ	
Fragmentation											
2 groups											
Hegemonic	47.78	-	0.85	-	4.62	-	0.43	-	46.32	-	
Dispersed	4.89	-42.89	19.48	18.63	0.11	-4.51	0.01	-0.42	75.51	29.19	
3 groups											
Hegemonic	63.99	-	0.28	-	8.12	-	1.82	-	25.79	-	
Dispersed	13.89	-50.10	3.61	3.33	0.27	-7.85	0.05	-1.77	82.18	56.39	
4 groups											
Hegemonic	67.76	-	0.13	-	11.47	-	5.28	-	15.36	-	
Dispersed	23.98	-43.78	1.71	1.58	0.50	-10.97	0.26	-5.02	73.55	58.19	
5 groups											
Hegemonic	65.21	-	0.07	-	13.99	-	11.01	-	9.71	-	
Dispersed	33.73	-31.48	1.06	0.99	0.83	-13.16	0.88	-10.13	63.50	53.79	
6 groups											
Hegemonic	60.30	-	0.04	-	15.56	-	17.63	-	6.47	-	
Dispersed	41.97	-18.33	0.73	0.69	1.21	-14.35	2.22	-15.41	53.86	47.39	

Note: Estimates in percentage. The column Δ reports the change in outcome probability moving from a condition in which power within the opposition is concentrated in a single group to a condition in which power is dispersed. To isolate the effect of internal power distribution for each given value of fragmentation, the probabilities were computed holding the other variables in the model at their modal value: independence of rebel groups = 0 and intra-opposition violence = 0. Fragmentation begins from the value of 2 as the concept of power distribution requires the armed opposition to be composed of at least 2 groups.

Figure 4.25. Model 5: Predicted probabilities of civil conflict outcomes (%) by internal power distribution of armed oppositions, holding internal competition constant (1989-2017)



Note: The Y axis on each graph reports the probability in percentage of the specific outcome indicated in the label given the value of internal power distribution, coloured line if power is dispersed, grey line if is hegemonic, conditional on the values of fragmentation, reported in the X axis.

a decisive victory. These results, thus, lend support to the theoretical expectations but the non-significance does not permit to conclude whether the one estimated is the actual impact of a dispersed power distribution on the odds of government victory.

Similar conclusions can be drawn with regard to the impact of a dispersed distribution of power on the probability of rebel victory. Both in the bivariate and multivariate models, it appears that the chances for an armed opposition to defeat the government are constantly lower when power is dispersed within the opposition. The negative effects of a dispersed distribution of power on the prospects of rebel victory are particularly strong when the groups within the opposition are several. When the groups are few, instead, how power is distributed within the opposition is not as meaningful. These results, as much as those obtained in the bivariate analysis, lend support to the theoretical propositions. The expectations in this respect pointed to a dispersed distribution of power as a detrimental condition for the armed opposition and the

models seem to suggest such is this case. The lack of statistical significance of the estimates, however, does not allow to draw definitive conclusions in this respect.

Finally, the probability that the conflict terminates due lack of activity appear to be positively affected by a dispersed distribution of power within the opposition. When rebel groups within the opposition are equally strong, conflict termination for lack of armed activity is much higher compared to when one of the groups is in a hegemonic position. For middle levels of fragmentation, conflict termination due to lack of activity is more than 50 per cent more likely when power is dispersed within the opposition. Compared to the bivariate analysis, Model 5 yields statistically significant estimates and, accordingly, these results lend strong support to the theoretical expectations outlined in Chapter 2.

The multivariate analysis largely confirmed the patterns of association emerged from the bivariate analysis. Either taken in isolation or together with the other independent variables, each independent variable appears to have, with variable magnitude and significance, a specific impact on the outcomes of civil conflicts. These variables, however, are certainly not the only ones that affect how civil conflicts terminate. In the next model, a list of potential confounders is added to ascertain whether the impact of the independent variables uncovered by Model 5 is confirmed when controlling for other important predictors of civil conflict termination.

4.3.2. Multivariate model 6: fragmentation, internal competition, internal power distribution, and confounders

As Chapter 1 discussed in detail, many other factors, such as the capacity of the state or the intervention of third parties, have an established importance in affecting how civil conflicts end. These factors may have an impact not only on conflict termination, but also on the extent to which the independent variables of the study affect civil conflict outcomes. These factors might insert themselves in the causal path between the independent variables and civil conflict

outcomes, altering, reducing, or boosting the impact these variables have on how civil conflicts terminate. Accordingly, to test whether the indications emerging from the previous models are robust, this section reports the results of a final model that includes as confounders those factors that the existing research has found to be the most important determinants of civil conflict outcomes. By including these confounders, the large-N analysis can confirm whether the one observed so far is the actual impact of the independent variables on conflict outcomes. Table 22 reports the results of Model 6, which contains all the independent variables of the study and a set of potential confounders.

Starting from the structural characteristics of the armed opposition, the table shows a negative association of fragmentation with the log-odds of ceasefire and low activity against continuation of conflict, and a positive association with peace agreement, government victory, and rebel victory. Among these coefficients, the ones that show the strongest association are those for ceasefire and rebel victory. Of the two, ceasefire appear to be by large the outcome mostly affected by fragmentation. In terms of direction and magnitude of the association, the coefficients that remained largely unaltered following the addition of confounders are those for ceasefire, rebel victory, and low activity. This indicates that the confounders do not modify the impact that fragmentation has on the chances to observe these specific conflict outcomes. The fact that the coefficients for ceasefire and low activity remained strongly significant throughout the entire analysis confirms the solidity of the results in this respect.

The major difference of this model with both the bivariate and multivariate model without confounders is that in this case the addition of confounders caused a change of direction in the association of fragmentation with the log-odds of peace agreement and government victory. These are now positive while in Model 1 and 5 were negative. While the change of direction of the impact of fragmentation on peace agreements does not require much interpretation since the association was weak and non-significant throughout the entire

analysis, the change for the impact on the odds of government victory requires more attention. The coefficient for government victory was negative and significant at the 0.1 level in Model 1 and negative but not significant in Model 5. Now it is positive and not significant. This change of significance and direction indicates that there are other factors that are more important than fragmentation in affecting the prospects of government victory. Alliances among rebel groups is certainly one of them, since both multivariate models confirm that whether the groups are allied or not has a stronger and significant impact on the chances of observing government victory. In addition to this, Model 6 indicates that factors such as regime type and third-party support for either the rebels or the government have a greater importance than fragmentation in altering the chances of government victory. These additional factors are most certainly the ones that provoked the change of direction in the estimate, for the variable fragmentation in the previous models was picking up some of the variance of the odds of government victory that is due to these factors. Now, the impact of fragmentation on government victory is more accurately estimated.

The coefficients for the impact of alliances among the rebel groups of the armed opposition on civil conflict outcomes are similar to the ones observed in Model 2 and 5, both in terms of direction and magnitude of the association. The coefficients for the association of alliances with the log-odds of peace agreement, government victory, rebel victory, and low activity remained negative and the one for the association with ceasefire positive. Once again, Model 6 indicates that alliances have a stronger impact on the log-odds of peace agreement and government victory. Among these coefficients, those for the association of alliances with peace agreement and government victory are strongly significant at the 0.05 level. The coefficient for low activity is instead significant at the 0.1 level. This is in line with what it was observed in the bivariate model and only slightly different to what it was observed in the multivariate model without confounders. Compared to Model 5, in fact, this model identifies again a statistically

Table 4.22. Model 6: estimated log-odds of civil conflict outcomes by structural characteristics, internal competition, and power distribution of armed oppositions, controlling for potential confounders (1989-2017)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>									
	Peace agreement		Ceasefire		Government victory		Rebel victory		Low activity	
	β	p	β	p	β	p	β	p	β	p
Fragmentation	0.21 (0.95)	0.825	-9.81** (4.92)	0.046	0.85 (2.91)	0.770	4.94 (4.26)	0.246	-2.31** (1.06)	0.029
Alliance (1)	-1.16** (0.59)	0.049	0.51 (0.54)	0.344	-3.03** (1.54)	0.049	-0.69 (3.62)	0.848	-0.62* (0.37)	0.093
Intra-opposition violence (1)	-0.05 (1.68)	0.976	-7.05 (8.22)	0.391	-10.48 (8.32)	0.207	5.46 (5.11)	0.285	1.59 (1.67)	0.341
Internal power distribution (1)	-1.86 (1.59)	0.242	7.09** (3.49)	0.042	-10.70 (7.52)	0.154	-9.62 (8.10)	0.234	1.95** (0.97)	0.044
Rebel capacity (1)	1.67 (1.15)	0.146	-9.42 (7.94)	0.235	-2.12 (3.72)	0.568	-5.20 (3.79)	0.170	-10.07 (7.55)	0.182
Regime type (1)	0.17 (0.55)	0.757	-0.25 (0.50)	0.617	-2.62* (1.58)	0.097	-9.80** (4.25)	0.021	0.13 (0.38)	0.732
Pro-rebel support (1)	0.14 (0.58)	0.809	0.16 (0.49)	0.744	-3.26** (1.49)	0.028	1.06 (3.77)	0.778	-0.26 (0.38)	0.493
Pro-government support (1)	0.03 (0.54)	0.955	-1.66*** (0.58)	0.004	-2.16* (1.30)	0.096	1.40 (3.54)	0.692	-0.42 (0.38)	0.269
Intensity level (1)	-1.70** (0.82)	0.038	-0.35 (0.68)	0.606	-0.16 (1.62)	0.921	6.08* (3.49)	0.081	-11.35* (6.43)	0.077
Constant	-4.04*** (0.91)	0.001	-2.99*** (0.67)	0.001	-6.19** (2.49)	0.012	-29.18*** (10.09)	0.003	-1.17*** (0.38)	0.002

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*Note: The coefficients in the column β refer to the fixed effects of the variables on the log-odds of a specific category j of the dependent variable (e.g. Peace agreement) against the reference category, continuation of conflict. Standard errors in parenthesis. The significance level on the coefficients refers to a two-sided Wald test for the single coefficient continuation of conflict vs. j outcome. Only the first 3 decimal places of the p -value are reported, with thresholds for statistical significance set at $*p<0.1$; $**p<0.05$; $***p<0.01$. For values $p<0.001$, the value of 0.001 is reported by convention in the p column.*

significant correlation between alliances and the log-odds of low activity, albeit weak. The addition of potential confounders, thus, did not determine any substantial change in the estimated impact that alliances have on conflict outcomes.

Once again, none of the coefficients for the impact of intra-opposition violence on the outcomes of civil conflicts is statistically significant. This is in line with what it was observed in both the bivariate model and the multivariate model without confounders. In this respect, as much as in terms of magnitude and direction of the association, the results remained similar throughout the entire analysis. The only difference that can be noticed is in the direction of the association between intra-opposition violence and the log-odds of peace agreement, which was positive in Model 5 while is negative here, and low activity, which was negative in the bivariate model and is positive here. As the models struggled to establish a pattern of association of this variable with any conflict outcome, this changes of direction do not have a substantive meaning. Despite the general similarities across models, it is important to notice that the addition of confounders played a role anyway in modifying the impact of intra-opposition violence estimated in the previous models. It appears that both the log-odds of peace agreement and low activity are affected by the intensity of the conflict. More violent conflicts appear to be statistically significantly and negatively associated with the log-odds of peace agreement and low activity. This implies that the variable intra-opposition violence was picking up some of the variance in the log-odds of peace agreement and low activity that is explained by the overall violence in the conflict environment, not the one exclusively due to the rivalry among the rebel groups. It seems, accordingly, that is the general violence within the conflict system that is more important in shaping how a civil conflict terminates than whether the groups of the same armed opposition engage in violent activities against one another.

Model 6 yields very similar results to the ones observed in the previous models also with regard to the impact of different distributions of power within the armed opposition. The

coefficients indicate that a dispersed distribution of power is negatively associated with the log-odds of peace agreement, government victory, and rebel victory against continuation of conflict. It is, instead positively associated with the log-odds of ceasefire and low activity. Again, Model 6 indicates that a dispersed power distribution has a stronger impact on the log-odds of government and rebel victory. As much as Model 5, this model identifies a highly statistically significant association between this variable and the log-odds of ceasefire and low activity. In terms of direction and magnitude, the coefficients for the impact of a dispersed distribution of power remained constant throughout the analysis, irrespective of how the model was specified. This means that the other factors that affect how civil conflicts terminate do not play a role in altering the impact that a dispersed distribution of power has on conflict outcomes. This is confirmed by the fact that moving from the multivariate model without confounders to the one with confounders presently discussed, none of the coefficients is noticeably different.

For this final model as well, the analysis moves to the evaluation of the impact that the independent variables have on the probability of conflict outcomes and to the test of the hypotheses. As for Model 5, in this case too the effect of fragmentation was individually isolated by keeping all the other variables in the model, now also including the control variables, at their modal value. Likewise, independence of groups, intra-opposition violence, and power distribution were interacted with fragmentation in turn while keeping the other independent and control variables in the model at their modal value.

Fragmentation of the armed opposition

Table 23 reports the probability of conflict continuation and conflict outcomes conditional on the fragmentation of the armed opposition, controlling for potential confounders. Starting from the impact of this variable on the probability of conflict termination, the results show that

fragmentation is associated with an increase in the probability that the conflict continues. This is in line with the results obtained in the previous models. The only difference is that this model estimates a small decrease in the probability of continuation for values of fragmentation higher than two. This means that civil conflicts are longer when the opposition is fragmented and composed of two groups than when the opposition it is not fragmented, but when the groups are three or more this probability starts decreasing. Figure 26 shows that the addition of the other independent variables and confounders mitigates the upward trend of the probability of conflict continuation that was observed in the bivariate model. The large confidence interval for high values of fragmentation suggests, however, that such a decrease should be taken *cum grano salis*.

With regard to the outcomes of civil conflicts, there are no substantial differences with the results returned by the previous models. The main difference with the estimates obtained in Model 5 is that in this case the confidence intervals for some outcomes tend to be larger the larger the value of fragmentation. This applies particularly to the probability of peace agreement and government victory conditional on fragmentation. The estimates for these two outcomes, however, are not statistically significant and thus it is not surprising that the estimates yield larger confidence intervals. For visualisation purposes, Table 24 and Figure 27 report the results excluding continuation from the pool of outcomes. Through them, the actual impact that fragmentation has on conflict outcomes can be more easily inferred.

Starting from the chances of observing conflict termination in peace agreement, it appears that the probability that this outcome occurs increases for low and middle levels of fragmentation and then decreases for higher levels. Moving from a condition of no fragmentation to a condition in which the armed opposition is composed of two groups, Table 24 shows that the probability that the conflict ends in peace agreement increases by 18 per cent. The same one-group increase from four to five rebel groups instead is associated with a

decrease by 0.36 per cent. In this respect, the results are like the ones obtained in the multivariate model without confounders and only slightly different from the ones obtained in the bivariate model. In the latter case, the curve for the impact of fragmentation on the probability of peace agreement remained flat rather than decreasing for high levels of fragmentation. Fragmentation was expected to determine a decrease in the probability that the conflict terminates through a peace agreement. Although this is what happens for high levels of fragmentation, lending only partial support to the theoretical expectations, these results are not and never have been statistically significant throughout the analysis. Accordingly, no definitive conclusions can be drawn as to whether fragmentation affects the probability that the conflict ends in peace agreement.

In line with what it was observed in the previous models, fragmentation is associated with a decrease in the probability that the conflict ends in a ceasefire. Table 24 shows that even low levels of fragmentation completely erase the chances of observing a ceasefire. In fact, moving from a condition of no fragmentation to a condition in which the armed opposition is composed of two groups, there is a seven per cent decrease in the probability of observing a ceasefire and, as the number of rebel groups within the opposition increases, the probability keeps decreasing getting closer to zero. As the entire large-N analysis has shown, the theoretical expectations on the impact of fragmentation on the chances of ceasefire have found strong support in the data. In fact, also Model 6 demonstrates that fragmentation has a statistically significant negative effect on the probability that a civil conflict ends in a ceasefire.

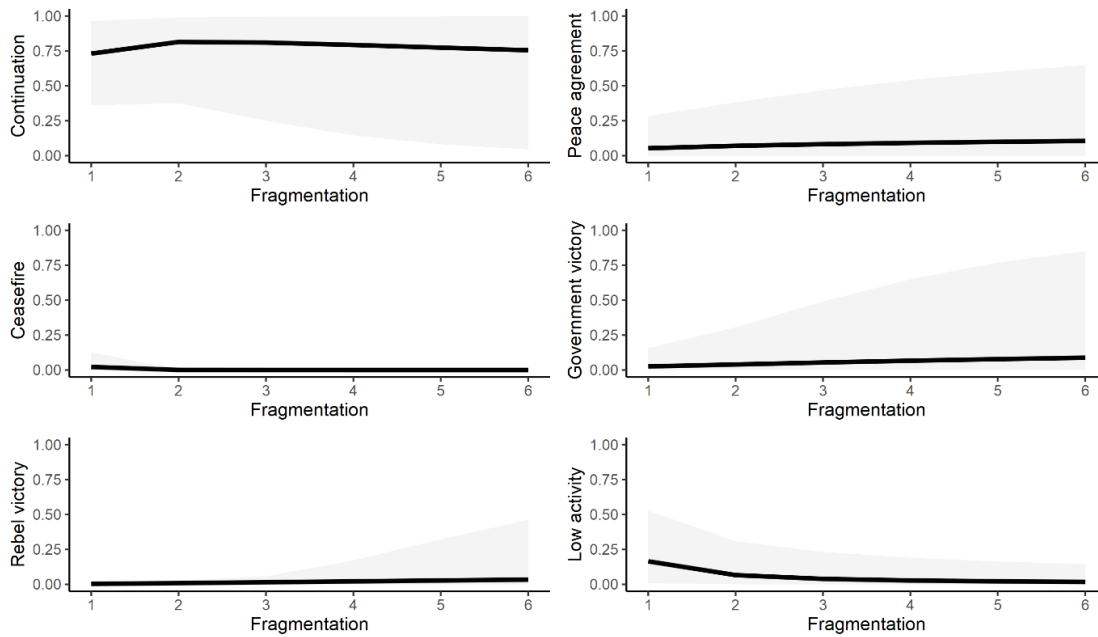
Similarly to what it was observed in the model without confounders, the probability of government victory increases substantially when the armed opposition is fragmented. If there is a nine per cent probability that the government achieves victory when the armed opposition is not fragmented, this probability increases to 21 per cent when the opposition is composed of two groups. These results are similar to those of the multivariate model without confounders

Table 4.23. Model 6: predicted probabilities of conflict continuation and conflict outcomes by fragmentation of armed oppositions, holding constant internal competition, power distribution, and potential confounders (1989-2017)

<i>Variables/levels</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>					
	Continuation	Peace agreement	Ceasefire	Govt. victory	Rebel victory	Low activity
	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
Fragmentation						
1 group	0.73106	0.05337	0.02183	0.02565	0.00333	0.16474
2 groups	0.81438	0.07052	0.00063	0.03974	0.00874	0.06598
3 groups	0.80970	0.08226	0.00018	0.05386	0.01495	0.03905
4 groups	0.79271	0.09156	0.00009	0.06666	0.02138	0.02760
5 groups	0.77363	0.09917	0.00006	0.07796	0.02774	0.02145
6 groups	0.75495	0.10550	0.00004	0.08789	0.03397	0.01766

Note: Estimates in proportions. To isolate the effect of fragmentation, the probabilities were computed holding the other variables in the model, both independent and control, at their modal value: independence or rebel groups = 0, intra-opposition violence = 0, internal power distribution = 0, rebel capacity = 0, regime type = 1, pro-rebel support = 0, pro-government support = 1, and intensity level = 0. As the predicted probabilities are very small for certain outcomes, 5 decimal places are reported.

Figure 4.26. Model 6: Predicted probabilities of civil conflict continuation and outcomes by fragmentation of armed oppositions, holding constant internal competition, power distribution, and potential confounders (1989-2017)



Note: The Y axis on each graph reports the probability in proportions of the specific outcome indicated in the label conditional on the values of fragmentation, reported in the X axis.

but it appears that, when controlling for these confounders, the probability of government victory when the opposition is fragmented is quite higher than what the Model 5 initially suggested. These results lend clear support to the theoretical expectations, as fragmentation was expected to determine such an increase in the probability of government victory. However, as they are not statistically significant, the analysis does not allow to draw definitive conclusions as to whether this is the actual impact that fragmentation has on the probability of government victory.

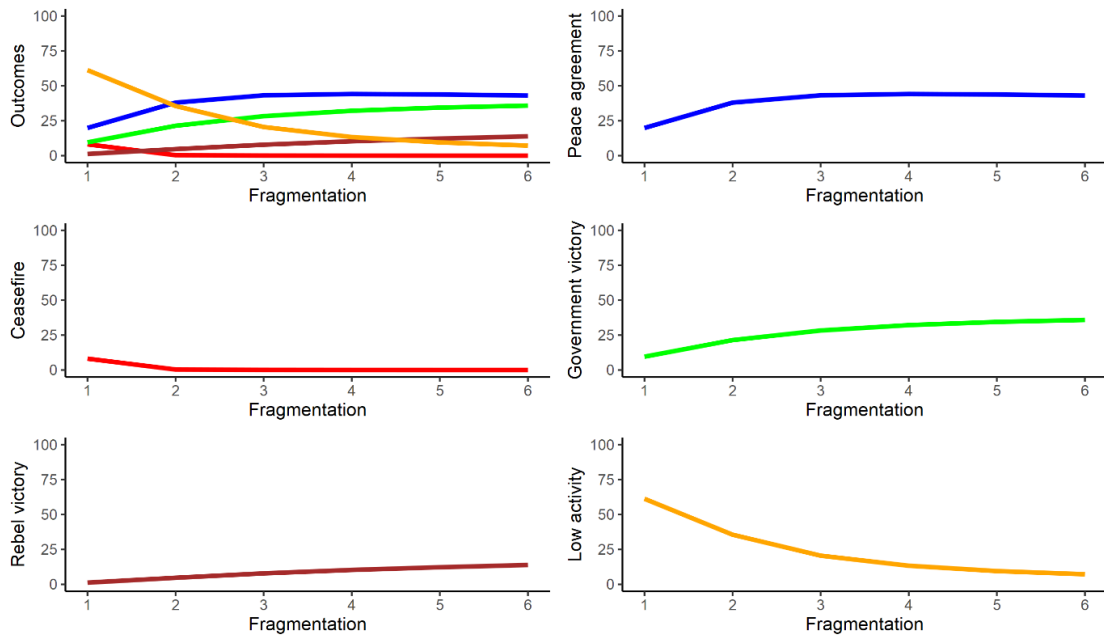
Definitive conclusions cannot be drawn for the outcome rebel victory as well. Once again, the results are not statistically significant and go in the opposite direction than the one outlined in Chapter 2. In fact, and as it was observed in the previous steps of the analysis, fragmentation is associated with an increase in the probability of rebel victory while it was expected to determine the opposite effect. However, the lack of significance of the estimates, in Model 6 as much as the previous ones, does not permit to confirm with a certain confidence

Table 4.24. Model 6: predicted probabilities (%) of civil conflict outcomes by fragmentation of armed oppositions, holding constant internal competition, power distribution, and potential confounders (1989-2017)

Variables/levels	Outcomes									
	Peace agreement		Ceasefire		Government victory		Rebel victory		Low activity	
	P%	Δ	P%	Δ	P%	Δ	P%	Δ	P%	Δ
Fragmentation										
1 group	19.85	-	8.12	-	9.54	-	1.24	-	61.26	-
2 groups	37.99	18.14	0.34	-7.78	21.41	11.87	4.71	3.47	35.55	-25.71
3 groups	43.22	5.23	0.10	-0.24	28.30	6.89	7.86	3.15	20.52	-15.03
4 groups	44.17	0.95	0.04	-0.06	32.16	3.86	10.31	2.45	13.32	-7.2
5 groups	43.81	-0.36	0.02	-0.02	34.44	2.28	12.25	1.94	9.48	-3.84
6 groups	43.05	-0.76	0.02	0	35.86	1.42	13.86	1.61	7.21	-2.27

Note: Estimates in percentage. The column Δ reports the change in outcome probability moving from one level of fragmentation to the next. To isolate the effect of fragmentation, the probabilities were computed holding the other variables in the model at their modal value: independence of rebel groups = 0, intra-opposition violence = 0, internal power distribution = 0, rebel capacity = 0, regime type = 1, pro-rebel support = 0, pro-government support = 1, and intensity level = 0.

Figure 4.27. Model 6: predicted probabilities (%) of civil conflict outcomes by fragmentation of armed oppositions, holding constant internal competition, power distribution, and potential confounders (1989-2017)



Note: The Y axis on each graph reports the probability in percentage of the specific outcome indicated in the label conditional on the values of fragmentation, reported in the X axis.

whether fragmentation does determine an actual increase in the probability that the conflict ends in rebel victory.

With regard to the association of fragmentation with the last outcome, low activity, the model indicates once again that it is less likely that a conflict terminates due to lack of armed activity when the armed opposition is fragmented. Even after controlling for potential confounders, the impact that fragmentation has on the probability of observing low activity remained largely unaltered. The only difference inheres the magnitude of the impact. In fact, controlling for the potential confounders, fragmentation appears to have a stronger impact on the probability that the conflict ends due to lack of activity than originally estimated. Compared to the bivariate analysis, the results of Model 6 indicate that civil conflicts in which the armed opposition is composed of two groups are 25 per cent less likely to terminate due to lack of activity than those in which the armed opposition is not fragmented. In the bivariate model, it

was only 3 per cent less likely. The statistically significant results obtained throughout the entire analysis lend strong support to the theoretical expectations in this respect.

Independence of rebel groups

The addition of confounders did not determine major changes in the impact that the independence of rebel groups has on the outcomes of civil conflicts. Table 25 reports the predicted probabilities of conflict outcomes for conflicts in which the rebel groups are allied or not, conditional on the fragmentation of the armed opposition and controlling for the other independent variables and potential confounders. Starting from the probability of conflict continuation as opposed to termination, Table 25 shows that when the rebel groups are independent the chances that the conflict continues are lower compared to when the groups are allied. The grey line in Figure 28 shows this trend more clearly. These results are in line with the ones obtained in both Model 2 and Model 5, when the variable was considered in isolation and without confounders.

With regard to the definitive outcomes of civil conflicts, no noticeable difference is recorded with respect to the results obtained in the previous models. The results show that the addition of confounders to the model did not determine any major change from the estimates obtained in Model 5. The only exception is that the results for the impact on conflict outcomes of the independence of rebel groups conditional on high values of fragmentation are less accurate, given the larger confidence intervals. Table 26 and Figure 29 show more clearly how the probability of conflict outcomes change depending on whether the groups within the opposition are allied or independent.

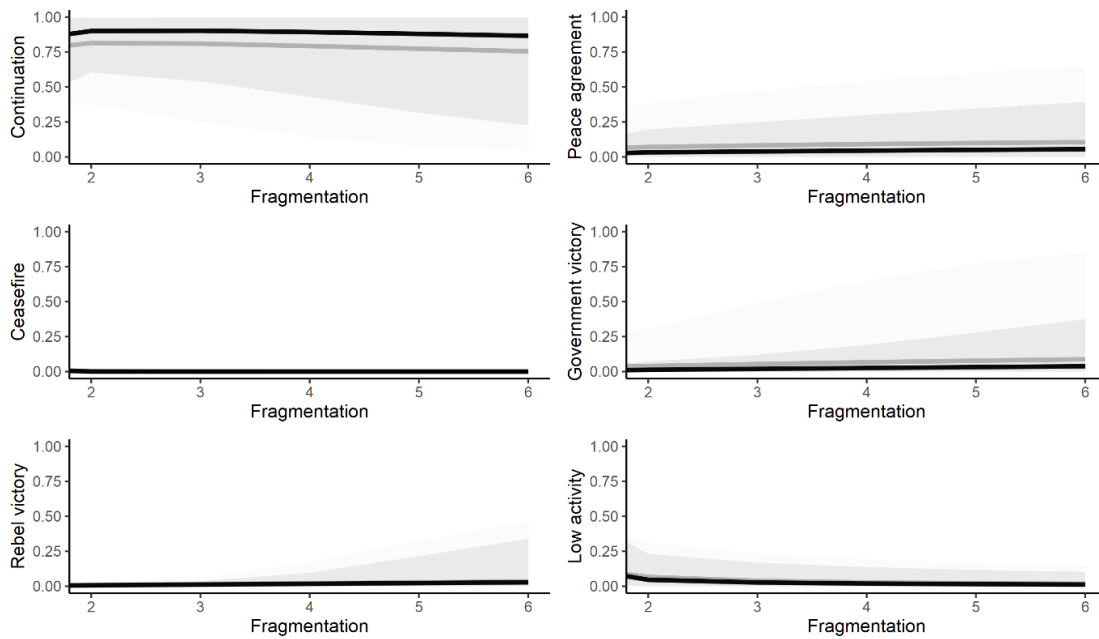
Looking at the grey line in Figure 29 for the outcome peace agreement, it is visible that this outcome is more likely when the groups are independent compared to when they are allied. This is particularly true for conflicts in which the opposition is lowly fragmented. When the

Table 4.25. Model 6: predicted probabilities of conflict continuation and conflict outcomes by independence of rebel groups of armed oppositions, holding constant intra-opposition violence, power distribution, and potential confounders (1989-2017)

<i>Variables/levels</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>					
	Continuation	Peace agreement	Ceasefire	Govt. victory	Rebel victory	Low activity
	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
Fragmentation						
2 groups						
Independent	0.81438	0.07052	0.00063	0.03974	0.00874	0.06598
Allied	0.90020	0.03269	0.00105	0.01294	0.00706	0.04606
3 groups						
Independent	0.80970	0.08226	0.00018	0.05386	0.01495	0.03905
Allied	0.90217	0.03917	0.00030	0.01924	0.01208	0.02705
4 groups						
Independent	0.79271	0.09156	0.00009	0.06666	0.02138	0.02760
Allied	0.89253	0.04503	0.00015	0.02569	0.01745	0.01916
5 groups						
Independent	0.77363	0.09917	0.00006	0.07796	0.02774	0.02145
Allied	0.87970	0.05032	0.00009	0.03200	0.02292	0.01496
6 groups						
Independent	0.75495	0.10550	0.00004	0.08789	0.03397	0.01766
Allied	0.86605	0.05509	0.00006	0.03805	0.02836	0.01239

Note: Estimates in proportions. To isolate the effect of independence of rebel groups for each given value of fragmentation, the probabilities were computed holding the other variables in the model, both independent and control, at their modal value: intra-opposition violence = 0, internal power distribution = 0, rebel capacity = 0, regime type = 1, pro-rebel support = 0, pro-government support = 1, and intensity level = 0. As the predicted probabilities are very small for certain outcomes, 5 decimal places are reported.

Figure 4.28. Model 6: Predicted probabilities of civil conflict continuation and outcomes by independence of rebel groups of armed oppositions, holding constant intra-opposition violence, power distribution, and potential confounders (1989-2017)



Note: The Y axis on each graph reports the probability in proportions of the specific outcome indicated in the label given the value of independence of groups, black line if the groups are allied, grey line if the groups are independent, conditional on the values of fragmentation, reported in the X axis.

armed opposition is composed of two groups, the probability that the conflict ends in peace agreement when the rebel groups are independent is three per cent higher than when the groups are allied. For higher values of fragmentation, although the probability of peace agreement is always positively affected by the independence of rebel groups, it matters much less whether the groups have other rebel allies or not. This is in line with what it was observed in both bivariate Model 2 and multivariate Model 5. Thus, the addition of confounders did not result in any change in the impact that alliances have on the probability that the conflict terminates through a peace agreement. The independence of rebel groups was expected to determine a decrease in the probability of observing this outcome but, as the statistically significant results obtained throughout the entire analysis confirm, the opposite holds true, disproving the theoretical expectations in this respect.

The independence of rebel groups does not have a major impact in altering the chances that the conflict terminates in ceasefire. Figure 29 shows that whether the groups are allied or not is not very relevant for altering the probability of ceasefire. In fact, for any value of fragmentation, the probability that the civil conflict terminates with a ceasefire when the rebel groups are independent is less than one per cent lower than when the groups are allied. This is in line with what it was observed in the previous models, as the independence of rebel groups determined a very minimal decrease in the probability of ceasefire in all model specifications. These results lend partial support to my theoretical expectations in this respect, as the independence of rebel groups was expected to have a negative effect on the probability that the civil conflict terminates with a stable ceasefire. As these results are not statistically significant, however, no definitive conclusion can be drawn as to whether the independence of rebel groups determines an even minimum reduction in the probability that the conflict ends in ceasefire.

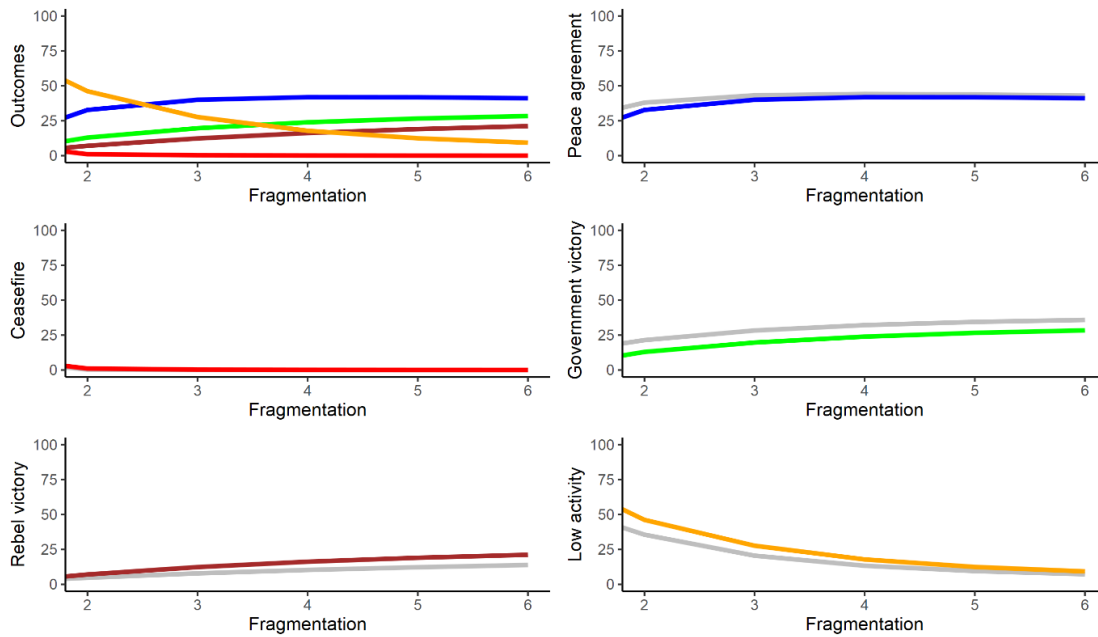
The opposite holds for the outcome government victory. The theoretical expectations in this respect suggested that the independence of rebel groups should make it easier for the government to achieve a definitive victory. Model 6 confirms such is the case. In line with what it was observed in the previous steps of the analysis, governments appear to have higher chances of defeating the armed opposition when the rebel groups of which it is composed are independent. This holds true irrespective of the number of groups within the opposition. The grey line in Figure 29 displays this effect clearly. Depending on the value of fragmentation, the probability of government victory is 7.5 to 8.6 per cent higher when the rebel groups are independent. Accordingly, given that all the models returned statistically significant estimates for the impact of the independence of rebel groups on the probability that the government achieves victory, the analysis lends strong support to the theoretical expectations in this respect.

Table 4.26. Model 6: predicted probabilities (%) of civil conflict outcomes by independence of rebel groups of armed oppositions, conditional on fragmentation and holding constant intra-opposition violence, power distribution, and potential confounders (1989-2017)

Variables/levels	Outcomes										
	Peace agreement		Ceasefire		Government victory		Rebel victory		Low activity		
	P%	Δ	P%	Δ	P%	Δ	P%	Δ	P%	Δ	
Fragmentation											
2 groups											
Independent	37.99	-	0.34	-	21.41	-	4.71	-	35.55	-	
Allied	32.76	-5.23	1.05	0.71	12.96	-8.45	7.07	2.36	46.15	10.60	
3 groups											
Independent	43.22	-	0.10	-	28.30	-	7.86	-	20.52	-	
Allied	40.03	-3.19	0.30	0.20	19.67	-8.63	12.35	4.49	27.65	7.13	
4 groups											
Independent	44.17	-	0.04	-	32.16	-	10.31	-	13.32	-	
Allied	41.90	-2.27	0.14	0.10	23.90	-8.26	16.23	5.92	17.83	4.51	
5 groups											
Independent	43.81	-	0.02	-	34.44	-	12.25	-	9.48	-	
Allied	41.83	-1.98	0.07	0.05	26.60	-7.84	19.05	6.80	12.44	2.96	
6 groups											
Independent	43.05	-	0.02	-	35.86	-	13.86	-	7.21	-	
Allied	41.13	-1.92	0.05	0.03	28.40	-7.46	21.17	7.31	9.25	2.04	

Note: Estimates in percentage. The column Δ reports the change in outcome probability moving from a condition in which the rebel groups are independent to a condition in which they are allied. To isolate the effect of independence of rebel groups for each given value of fragmentation, the probabilities were computed holding the other variables in the model at their modal value: intra-opposition violence = 0, internal power distribution = 0, rebel capacity = 0, regime type = 1, pro-rebel support = 0, pro-government support = 1, and intensity level = 0.

Figure 4.29. Model 6: Predicted probabilities of civil conflict outcomes (%) by independence of rebel groups of armed oppositions, holding constant intra-opposition violence, power distribution, and potential confounders (1989-2017)



Note: The Y axis on each graph reports the probability in percentage of the specific outcome indicated in the label given the value of independence of groups, coloured line if the groups are allied, grey line if the groups are independent, conditional on the values of fragmentation, reported in the X axis.

In line with the above, the independence of rebel groups appears to determine a decrease in the probability that the armed opposition defeats the government. Following the addition of confounders to the model, it appears that when it comes to rebel victory the distinction between conflicts in which the groups are allied or not is more evident. For all values of fragmentation, in fact, but especially for larger ones, rebel victory is two to seven per cent less likely when said groups are independent. Even though, here and throughout the entire analysis, the results lent support to the theoretical expectations, they are not statistically significant and no definitive conclusions can be drawn as to whether armed oppositions composed of independent rebel groups have lower chances to defeat the government on the ground.

Finally, it appears that the independence of rebel groups also determines a decrease in the probability of conflict termination due to lack of armed activity. This confirms what it was observed in the multivariate model without confounders but disproves what it was found in the bivariate Model 2. Accordingly, unless independence of rebel groups is assessed in isolation,

it appears to have a negative impact on the chances that the conflict terminates due to lack of activity. Table 26 demonstrates that when the armed opposition is lowly fragmented, the probability of low activity is constantly lower when the groups are independent compared to when they are allied. For higher levels of fragmentation, instead, it does not really matter whether the groups are allied or not as fragmentation has a stronger impact in determining whether the conflict terminates due to lack of activity. These results lend support to the theoretical expectations but the low significance of the model's estimate, as much as the change of direction from the bivariate to the multivariate analysis, suggest that that some caution must be exercised in interpreting these results.

Intra-opposition violence

The addition of confounders to the multivariate model did not determine any major change in the impact that intra-opposition violence has on the probability of conflict outcomes. Once again, none of the estimates produced by the model in this respect are significant. Accordingly, the hypothesis outlined in the theoretical chapter could not find confirmation in the data. As stated before, the results in terms of predicted probabilities are reported anyway to assess whether the models performed similarly in terms of estimation. Table 27 reports the difference in predicted probabilities of conflict outcomes for civil conflicts in which the groups within the opposition fight one another or not.

The results indicate that the probability that the conflict continues when the rebel groups are rival is lower compared to when they are not. It appears that when the groups fight one another, the chances that the conflict continues are always lower when the armed opposition is not excessively fragmented. When the armed opposition is composed of four or more rebel groups, instead, whether they engage in fratricidal rivalry does not alter the prospects of

conflict termination. However, the very large confidence interval suggests that not much trust should be put in this estimate.

With regard to the definitive outcomes of civil conflicts, the addition of confounders to the multivariate model did not determine any substantial difference as well. Compared to the estimates obtained in the previous model, the only differences pertain the confidence intervals, which are larger for certain outcomes, such as peace agreement, rebel victory, and low activity. Compared to the bivariate Model 3, the differences in the estimates returned by this model are more evident. Differently from Model 3, Model 6 indicates that the probability that the conflict terminates in peace agreement is negatively affected by instances of intra-opposition violence. Table 28 shows that when rebel groups fight one another, peace agreements appear to be 12 per cent less likely when the groups are two and eight per cent less likely when are three. For higher values of fragmentation, whether the groups are rival or not loses relevance. These results differ from those obtained with Model 3 but are in line with those obtained with Model 5 and, once again, lend support to the theoretical expectations. As the estimate for the impact of intra-opposition violence on the probability of peace agreement is not significant, no definitive conclusions can be drawn in this respect.

The other civil conflict outcome for which there has been a change of direction from the bivariate analysis is low activity. When intra-opposition violence was taken in isolation, it appeared that its impact on the probability that the conflict terminates due to lack of armed activity was negative. In the multivariate framework, both in the model with and without confounders, the opposite seems to occur. When rebel groups are rival, in fact, the probability that the conflict terminates due to lack of activity is constantly higher, for all levels of fragmentation, compared to when they are not rival. This is in line with the theoretical expectations but in this case too the lack of statistical significance does not allow the analysis to establish with certainty whether intra-opposition violence determines a decrease in the

Table 4.27. Model 6: predicted probabilities of conflict continuation and conflict outcomes by intra-opposition violence of armed oppositions, holding constant independence of rebel groups, power distribution, and potential confounders (1989-2017)

<i>Variables/levels</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>					
	Continuation	Peace agreement	Ceasefire	Govt. victory	Rebel victory	Low activity
	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
Fragmentation						
2 groups						
Not rival	0.81438	0.07052	0.00063	0.03974	0.00874	0.06598
Rival	0.68762	0.08012	0.00043	0.00635	0.02880	0.19668
3 groups						
Not rival	0.80970	0.08226	0.00018	0.05386	0.01495	0.03905
Rival	0.73379	0.09138	0.00009	0.00821	0.0412	0.12532
4 groups						
Not rival	0.79271	0.09156	0.00009	0.06666	0.02138	0.02760
Rival	0.74694	0.09969	0.00004	0.01022	0.05275	0.09036
5 groups						
Not rival	0.77363	0.09917	0.00006	0.07796	0.02774	0.02145
Rival	0.74765	0.10631	0.00002	0.01223	0.06346	0.07032
6 groups						
Not rival	0.75495	0.10550	0.00004	0.08789	0.03397	0.01766
Rival	0.74301	0.11180	0.00001	0.01418	0.07346	0.05755

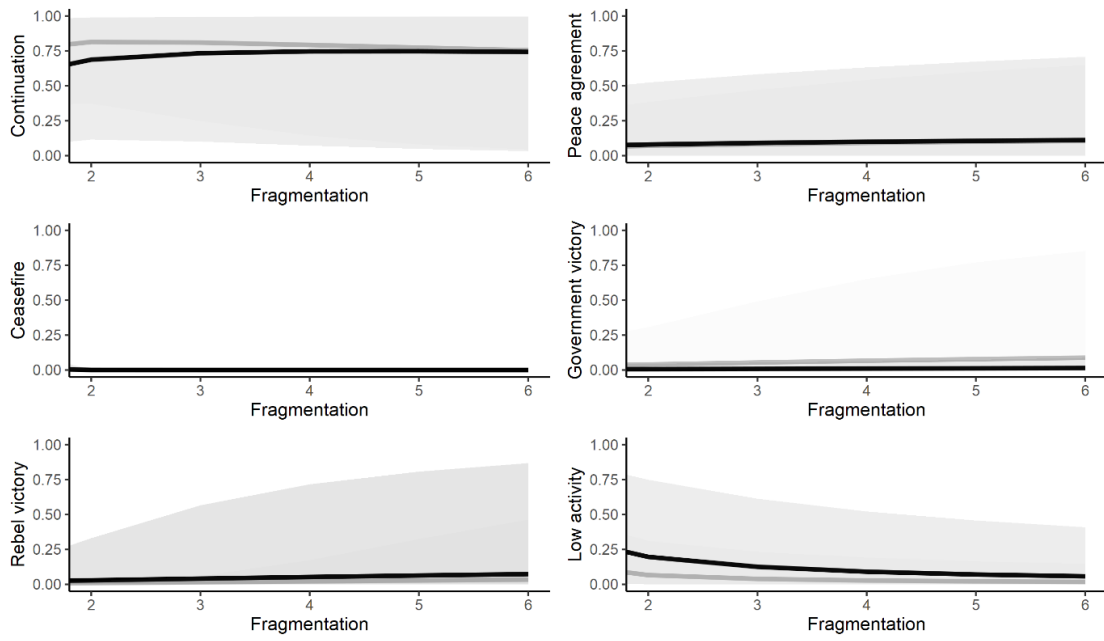
Note: Estimates in proportions. To isolate the effect of intra-opposition violence for each given value of fragmentation, the probabilities were computed holding the other variables in the model, both independent and control, at their modal value: independence of rebel groups = 0, internal power distribution = 0, rebel capacity = 0, regime type = 1, pro-rebel support = 0, pro-government support = 1, and intensity level = 0. Fragmentation begins from the value of 2 as for intra-opposition violence to occur the armed opposition must be composed of at least 2 groups. As the predicted probabilities are very small for certain outcomes, 5 decimal places are reported.

Table 4.28. Model 6: predicted probabilities (%) of civil conflict outcomes by intra-opposition violence of armed oppositions, conditional on fragmentation and holding constant independence of rebel groups, power distribution, and potential confounders (1989-2017)

Variables/levels	Outcomes									
	Peace agreement		Ceasefire		Government victory		Rebel victory		Low activity	
	P%	Δ	P%	Δ	P%	Δ	P%	Δ	P%	Δ
Fragmentation										
2 groups										
Not rival	37.99	-	0.34	-	21.41	-	4.71	-	35.55	-
Rival	25.65	-12.34	0.14	-0.20	2.03	-19.38	9.22	4.51	62.96	27.41
3 groups										
Not rival	43.22	-	0.10	-	28.30	-	7.86	-	20.52	-
Rival	34.33	-8.89	0.03	-0.07	3.09	-25.21	15.48	7.62	47.08	26.56
4 groups										
Not rival	44.17	-	0.04	-	32.16	-	10.31	-	13.32	-
Rival	39.39	-4.78	0.02	-0.02	4.04	-28.12	20.84	10.53	35.71	22.39
5 groups										
Not rival	43.81	-	0.02	-	34.44	-	12.25	-	9.48	-
Rival	42.13	-1.68	0.01	-0.01	4.85	-29.59	25.15	12.90	27.87	18.39
6 groups										
Not rival	43.05	-	0.02	-	35.86	-	13.86	-	7.21	-
Rival	43.50	0.45	0.01	-0.01	5.52	-30.34	28.58	14.72	22.39	15.18

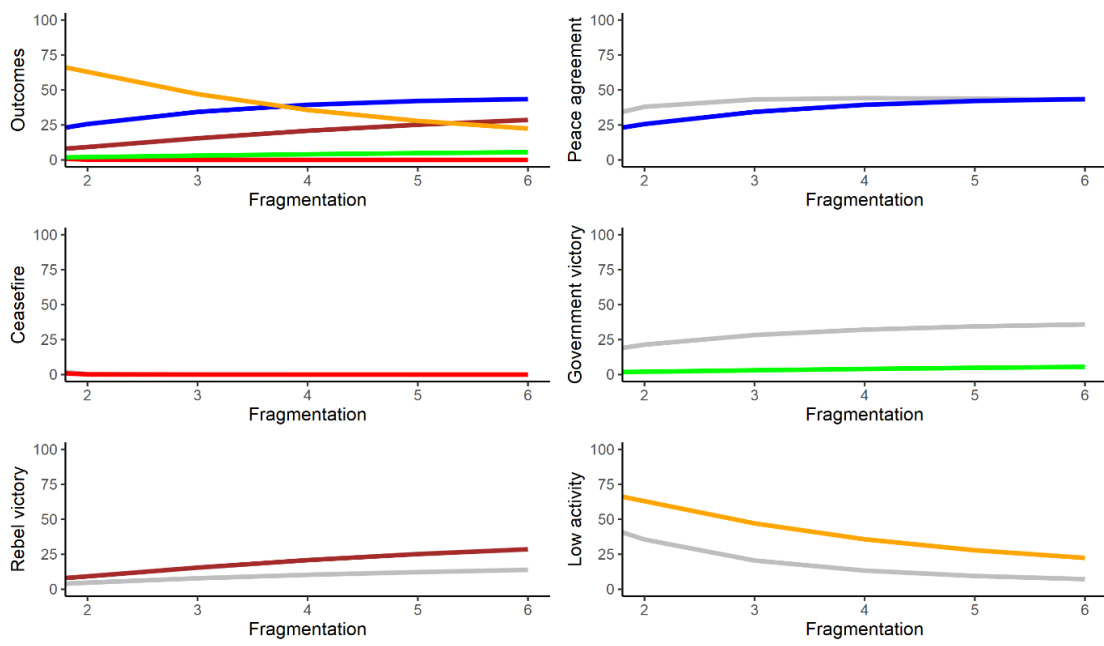
Note: Estimates in percentage. The column Δ reports the change in outcome probability moving from a condition in which the rebel groups do not fight each other to a condition in which they do. To isolate the effect of intra-opposition violence for each given value of fragmentation, the probabilities were computed holding the other variables in the model at their modal value: independence of rebel groups = 0, internal power distribution = 0, rebel capacity = 0, regime type = 1, pro-rebel support = 0, pro-government support = 1, and intensity level = 0. Fragmentation begins from the value of 2 as for intra-opposition violence to occur the armed opposition must be composed of at least 2 groups.

Figure 4.30. Model 6: Predicted probabilities of civil conflict continuation and outcomes by intra-opposition violence of armed oppositions, holding constant independence, power distribution, and confounders (1989-2017)



Note: The Y axis on each graph reports the probability in proportions of the specific outcome indicated in the label given the value of intra-opposition violence, black line if the groups are rival, grey line if the groups are not, conditional on the values of fragmentation, reported in the X axis.

Figure 4.31. Model 6: Predicted probabilities of civil conflict outcomes (%) by intra-opposition violence of armed oppositions, holding constant independence, power distribution, and confounders (1989-2017)



Note: The Y axis on each graph reports the probability in proportions of the specific outcome indicated in the label given the value of intra-opposition violence, coloured line if the groups are rival, grey line if the groups are not, conditional on the values of fragmentation, reported in the X axis.

probability of conflict termination due to lack of activity.

All the estimates for the other outcomes remained the same throughout the entire analysis. As none of these estimates is significant though, no definitive conclusions can be drawn as to whether the impact of intra-opposition violence on these outcomes is the one foreseen in the theoretical chapter.

Internal power distribution

Table 29 and Figure 32 show how a dispersed distribution of power affects conflict termination. Even after controlling for some important confounders, a dispersed distribution of power does not have a straightforward impact on the chances that the conflict continues. This is in line with the results obtained in Model 5, as Figure 32 shows that when power is dispersed within an armed opposition composed of just two rebel groups, the probability that the conflict continues is lower compared to when one of these groups is in a dominant position. For higher values of fragmentation, the opposite appears to occur, as the conflict is instead more likely to continue when power is dispersed within the opposition. The large confidence interval for this estimate suggests that the impact of a dispersed distribution of power on the probability of conflict continuation when the armed opposition is highly fragmented is still dubious.

Likewise, the results for the impact of a dispersed distribution of power on the definitive civil conflict outcomes do not differ much from those obtained in the previous steps of the large-N analysis. Table 30 and especially Figure 33 show more clearly how a dispersed distribution of power affects conflict outcomes.

In line with what it was observed in the bivariate and multivariate model without confounders, a dispersed distribution of power appears to have a strong negative effect on the probability that the conflict ends with a peace agreement. Especially for low and middle values of fragmentation, the probability that this outcome occurs is constantly more than 20 per cent

lower when the rebel groups within the opposition are equally strong. Once again, for higher values of fragmentation, how power is distributed loses relevance. As a dispersed distribution of power within the opposition determines a decrease in the probability of peace agreement compared to a hegemonic distribution of power, the model with confounders confirms the theoretical expectations. As much as for the other models though, the estimates returned by Model 6 are not statistically significant and the null hypothesis on the impact that a dispersed distribution of power has on the probability of peace agreement cannot be rejected.

The impact that a dispersed distribution of power has on the probability that the conflict terminates through a ceasefire was not affected by the addition of confounders to the model either. As it was observed in the bivariate and multivariate model without confounders, Table 30 shows that when power within the armed opposition is dispersed the probability of observing a ceasefire is constantly higher. The effect of a dispersed distribution of power is stronger when the opposition is composed of two equally strong rebel groups (+11 per cent), while for higher values of fragmentation ceasefires are already so unlikely that how power is distributed within the opposition loses relevance. A dispersion of power within the opposition was expected to determine this very effect on the probability of ceasefire. As these results are strongly significant and remained stable throughout the entire analysis, it can be concluded that the theoretical expectations in this respect have found strong support in the data.

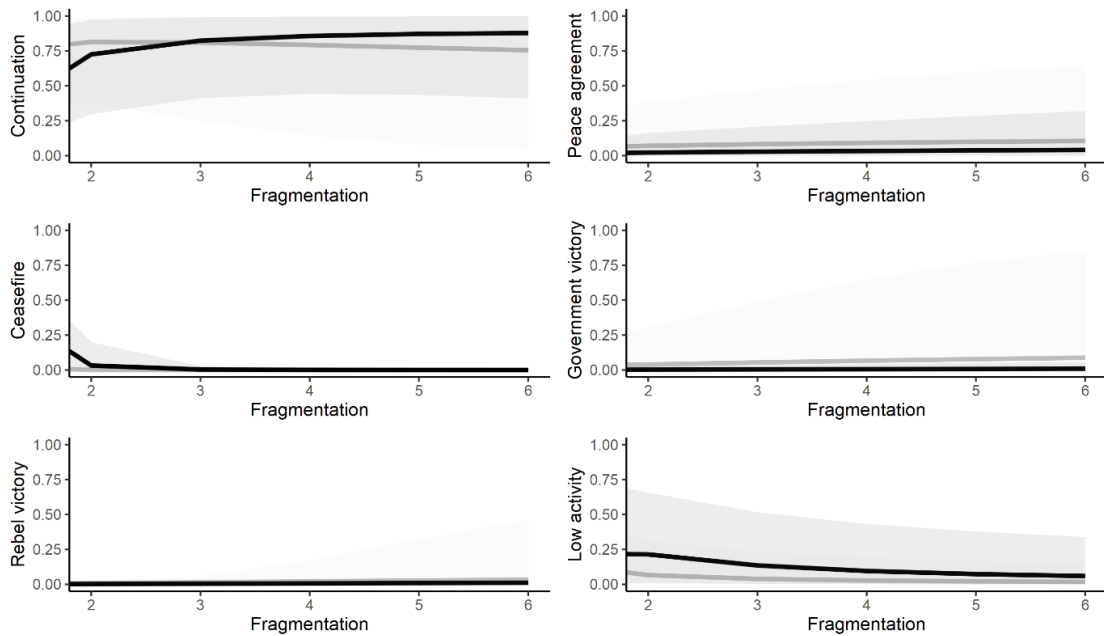
In line with the results obtained in the previous models, Model 6 also indicates that a dispersed distribution of power negatively affects the chances of government victory. In line with the theoretical expectations, when power is dispersed, governments might find it more difficult to defeat the armed opposition. Following the addition of confounders, the negative effect appears to be even starker. This effect holds for all values of fragmentation, although it appears to be even stronger the higher the number of rebel groups within the opposition. Government victory is, in fact, 28 per cent less likely when groups within the opposition are at

Table 4.29. Model 6: predicted probabilities of conflict continuation and conflict outcomes by internal power distribution of armed oppositions, holding constant internal competition and potential confounders (1989-2017)

<i>Variables/levels</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>					
	Continuation	Peace agreement	Ceasefire	Govt. victory	Rebel victory	Low activity
	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
Fragmentation						
2 groups						
Hegemonic	0.81438	0.07052	0.00063	0.03974	0.00874	0.06598
Dispersed	0.72546	0.02257	0.03211	0.00292	0.00258	0.21437
3 groups						
Hegemonic	0.80970	0.08226	0.00018	0.05386	0.01495	0.03905
Dispersed	0.82380	0.02870	0.00333	0.00431	0.00459	0.13528
4 groups						
Hegemonic	0.79271	0.09156	0.00009	0.06666	0.02138	0.02760
Dispersed	0.85725	0.03344	0.00108	0.00587	0.00686	0.09550
5 groups						
Hegemonic	0.77363	0.09917	0.00006	0.07796	0.02774	0.02145
Dispersed	0.87181	0.03762	0.00054	0.00753	0.00925	0.07325
6 groups						
Hegemonic	0.75495	0.10550	0.00004	0.08789	0.03397	0.01766
Dispersed	0.87795	0.04142	0.00033	0.00922	0.01171	0.05936

Note: Estimates in proportions. To isolate the effect of internal power distribution for each given value of fragmentation, the probabilities were computed holding the other variables in the model, both independent and control, at their modal value: independence of rebel groups = 0, intra-opposition violence = 0, rebel capacity = 0, regime type = 1, pro-rebel support = 0, pro-government support = 1, and intensity level = 0. Fragmentation begins from the value of 2 as the concept of power distribution requires the armed opposition to be composed of at least 2 groups. As the predicted probabilities are very small for certain outcomes, 5 decimal places are reported.

Figure 4.32. Model 6: Predicted probabilities of civil conflict continuation and outcomes by internal power distribution of armed oppositions, holding constant internal competition and potential confounders (1989-2017)



Note: The Y axis on each graph reports the probability in proportions of the specific outcome indicated in the label given the value of internal power distribution, black line if power is dispersed, grey line if is hegemonic, conditional on the values of fragmentation, reported in the X axis.

least three and none of them is in a hegemonic position. These results are, however, not statistically significant. Accordingly, even if they lend support to the theoretical expectations, no definitive conclusion can be drawn from the analysis as to whether a dispersed distribution of power affects the probability that the conflict terminates in government victory.

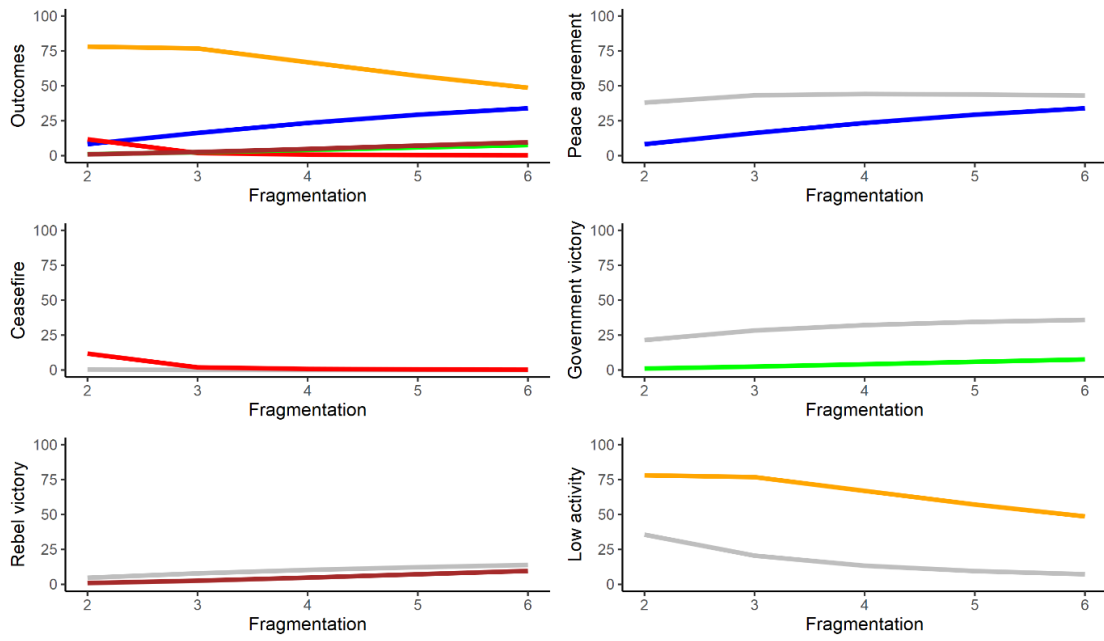
The same holds for the impact of this variable on the probability that the conflict ends in rebel victory. Similarly to what it was observed in the bivariate and multivariate model without confounders, a dispersion of power negatively affects the probability of rebel victory. These results are in line with the theoretical expectations, as a fragmented armed opposition in which one of the rebel groups is hegemonic is expected to have more chances to defeat the government compared to one in which power is dispersed across the rebel groups. The difference between the two sets of probability of rebel victory for when power is dispersed or hegemonic is small, suggesting that the distribution of power does not have a strong effect in altering the probability

Table 4.30. Model 6: predicted probabilities (%) of civil conflict outcomes by internal power distribution of armed oppositions, conditional on fragmentation and holding constant internal competition and potential confounders (1989-2017)

Variables/levels	Outcomes										
	Peace agreement		Ceasefire		Government victory		Rebel victory		Low activity		
	P%	Δ	P%	Δ	P%	Δ	P%	Δ	P%	Δ	
Fragmentation											
2 groups											
Hegemonic	37.99	-	0.34	-	21.41	-	4.71	-	35.55	-	
Dispersed	8.22	-29.77	11.70	11.36	1.06	-20.35	0.94	-3.77	78.08	42.53	
3 groups											
Hegemonic	43.22	-	0.10	-	28.30	-	7.86	-	20.52	-	
Dispersed	16.29	-26.93	1.89	1.79	2.45	-25.85	2.60	-5.26	76.77	56.25	
4 groups											
Hegemonic	44.17	-	0.04	-	32.16	-	10.31	-	13.32	-	
Dispersed	23.42	-20.75	0.76	0.72	4.11	-28.05	4.80	-5.51	66.90	53.58	
5 groups											
Hegemonic	43.81	-	0.02	-	34.44	-	12.25	-	9.48	-	
Dispersed	29.35	-14.46	0.42	0.40	5.87	-28.57	7.22	-5.03	57.14	47.66	
6 groups											
Hegemonic	43.05	-	0.02	-	35.86	-	13.86	-	7.21	-	
Dispersed	33.94	-9.11	0.27	0.25	7.56	-28.30	9.59	-4.27	48.64	41.43	

Note: Estimates in percentage. The column Δ reports the change in outcome probability moving from a condition in which power within the opposition is concentrated in a single group to a condition in which power is dispersed. To isolate the effect of internal power distribution for each given value of fragmentation, the probabilities were computed holding the other variables in the model at their modal value: independence of rebel groups = 0, intra-opposition violence = 0, rebel capacity = 0, regime type = 1, pro-rebel support = 0, pro-government support = 1, and intensity level = 0

Figure 4.33. Model 6: Predicted probabilities of civil conflict outcomes (%) by internal power distribution of armed oppositions, holding constant internal competition and potential confounders (1989-2017)



Note: The Y axis on each graph reports the probability in percentage of the specific outcome indicated in the label given the value of internal power distribution, black line if power is dispersed, grey line if is hegemonic, conditional on the values of fragmentation, reported in the X axis.

that this outcome occurs. In this case too, although the results lend support to the expectations, the lack of significance of the estimates does not allow the analysis to determine with confidence whether a dispersion of power negatively affects the probability that the conflict terminates in rebel victory.

Finally, a dispersed distribution of power has a very strong impact on the probability of conflict termination due to lack of armed activity. As predicted – and similarly to what it was observed in the previous steps of the large-N analysis – a dispersion of power within the armed opposition might determine conditions of stalemate among the actors involved that could force the rebel groups of the opposition to reconsider or altogether abandon the armed effort. The results of Model 6 reported in Table 30 show that, for all values of fragmentation, when power is dispersed within the opposition the probability that the conflict terminates due to lack of activity is 40 to 50 per cent higher than when the armed opposition is fragmented but one rebel

group is in a dominant position. The strong statistical significance of the results in this respect, along with the fact that the estimates remained stable throughout the entire large-N analysis, provide strong support to the Hypothesis 4 of the study.

The report on the results of the final model of the large-N analysis showed that the addition of confounders has not altered substantially the impact of the independent variables that was identified by the bivariate and multivariate model without confounders. Looking at the entire large-N analysis, it can be argued that the large majority of the estimates have maintained similar direction, magnitude, and significance. In some cases, it has proven impossible to determine with certainty whether the characteristics of the armed opposition affect the chances that a specific conflict outcome occurs. In many others, the analysis demonstrated a stable and unambiguous correlation of the independent variables with specific types of conflict termination. Table 31 summarises the whole large-N analysis to show that the majority of the results resisted the test of going through different model specifications. Accordingly, the results of the large-N analysis can be considered robust and accurate in identifying in which ways the characteristics of armed oppositions object of the study affect conflict termination. Table 31 makes the case for a qualitative assessment of the robustness of the results. The next section investigates further whether the results discussed so far can be considered robust.

Table 4.31. Summary of the results of the large-N analysis

	<i>Outcomes</i>														
	Peace agreement			Ceasefire			Government victory			Rebel victory			Low activity		
	<i>Sign.</i>	<i>Dir.</i>	<i>Hyp.</i>	<i>Sign.</i>	<i>Dir.</i>	<i>Hyp.</i>	<i>Sign.</i>	<i>Dir.</i>	<i>Hyp.</i>	<i>Sign.</i>	<i>Dir.</i>	<i>Hyp.</i>	<i>Sign.</i>	<i>Dir.</i>	<i>Hyp.</i>
Fragmentation															
Bivariate	—	▲	▼	**	▼	▼	*	▼	▲	—	▲	▼	**	▼	▼
Multivariate	—	▲	▼	**	▼	▼	—	▲	▲	—	▲	▼	***	▼	▼
Multivariate + controls	—	▲	▼	**	▼	▼	—	▲	▲	—	▲	▼	**	▼	▼
Independence of groups															
Bivariate	**	▲	▼	—	▼	▼	**	▲	▲	—	▼	▼	*	▲	▼
Multivariate	**	▲	▼	—	▼	▼	*	▲	▲	—	▼	▼	—	▼	▼
Multivariate + controls	**	▲	▼	—	▼	▼	**	▲	▲	—	▼	▼	*	▼	▼
Intra-opposition violence															
Bivariate	—	▲	▼	—	▼	▼	—	▼	▲	—	▲	▼	—	▼	▲
Multivariate	—	▼	▼	—	▼	▼	—	▼	▲	—	▲	▼	—	▲	▲
Multivariate + controls	—	▼	▼	—	▼	▼	—	▼	▲	—	▲	▼	—	▲	▲
Power distribution															
Bivariate	—	▼	▼	—	▲	▲	—	▼	▼	—	▼	▼	—	▲	▲
Multivariate	—	▼	▼	**	▲	▲	—	▼	▼	—	▼	▼	**	▲	▲
Multivariate + controls	—	▼	▼	**	▲	▲	—	▼	▼	—	▼	▼	**	▲	▲

Note: For each civil conflict outcome is reported the level of significance of the estimates obtained in each regression model of the analysis and the predicted and estimated direction of the probability of the outcome conditional on the independent variable indicated in the row. The significance level on the coefficients refers to a two-sided Wald test for the single coefficient continuation of conflict vs. *j* outcome, with thresholds for statistical significance set at * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. The symbol — indicates that the coefficient in the model was not statistically significant.

4.4. Robustness of the models and solidity of the findings

This section evaluates the overall robustness of the results obtained from the large-N analysis. This is done by assessing whether the multilevel approach of the regression was beneficial, by comparing the performance of the bivariate and the multivariate models in terms of goodness of fit, and by evaluating the predictive capacity of the models through a 3-fold cross-validation. This assessment allows for a more detailed and confident interpretation of the results of the large-N analysis and their implications.

4.4.1. Multilevel approach

One of the most important methodological choices of the dissertation was the adoption of a multilevel approach to fit the MNL models of the large-N analysis. As discussed in Chapter 3, this choice was made to correct for the issue of non-independence of the observations deriving from the clustered structure of the data used for the analysis. To test whether this choice was appropriate, an intercept-only (or *empty*) model was fit beforehand to assess whether the clustered structure of the data could explain some of the variance of the dependent variable (Hox *et al.* 2017). The purpose of this test was to determine whether the clustering of observations could impair the models' ability to accurately estimate the correlation between the independent variables and civil conflict outcomes and the associated errors. This model contains only the dependent variable and through it is possible to compute a standardised measure that indicates to what extent the variance of the dependent variable is due to the grouping of the observations in clusters, namely the civil conflict episodes. This measure is called *Intra-class correlation* (ICC) and ranges from zero to one. Values close to one indicate that the observations within the clusters are correlated and that almost the total variance of the variable is due to clustered structure of the data (Gelman and Hill 2006, p. 448, Hox *et al.* 2017, p. 13). In such cases, a multilevel approach, or any other similar method designed to account

for within-cluster correlation, is the only way forward to obtain accurate estimates and associated errors. There is no standard threshold value upon which a decision can be made as to whether a multilevel approach is not only beneficial but mandatory. In general terms, however, even if some of the variance is explained by the clustered structure of the data, using a multilevel approach would certainly not only do any harm, but be also beneficial in terms of fit and estimation accuracy (Gelman and Hill 2006).

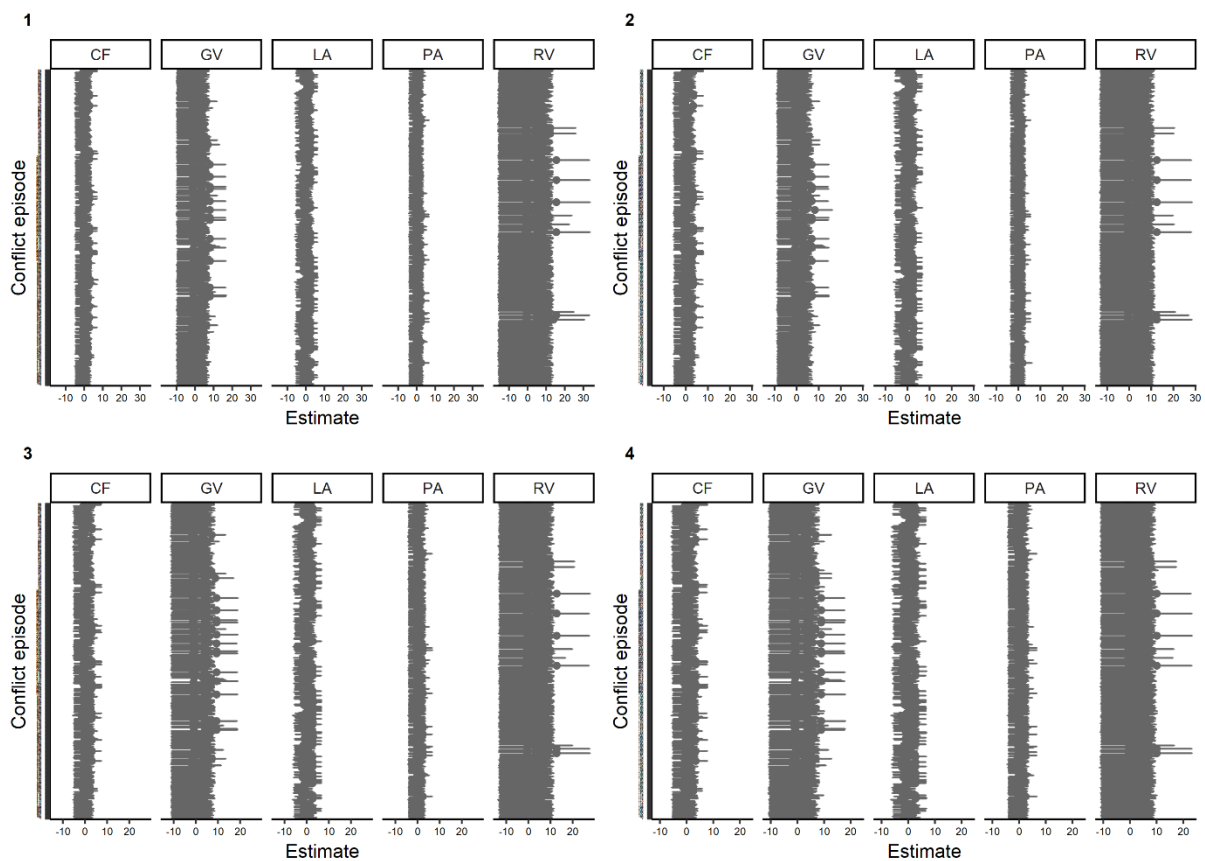
The empty model returned a value for the ICC equal to 0.11. This value indicates that 11 per cent of the variance of the dependent variable is due to the clustered structure of the data. This means that some of the observations within the conflict episodes are not completely independent but rather are correlated. Using data characterised by within-class correlation due to non-independence of the observations leads to the violation of one of the main assumptions of regression analysis, namely that all the observations must be independent (Gelman and Hill 2006, Hox *et al.* 2017). For the large-N analysis, thus, even though the value of the ICC is not very large, using a multilevel approach to perform the multinomial logistic regression models was an appropriate choice as through it was possible to correct for the issue of non-independence of the observations.

Having clarified this rather technical but important point, the appropriateness of using a multilevel approach is further confirmed by Figures 34 and 35, which report for each civil conflict episode the intercept and confidence interval of each conflict outcome.²⁰ The intercept is the only parameter modelled as random in the models, which is what makes them multilevel. By looking at the intercept of each outcome for each conflict episode, it is possible to assess whether modelling the intercept as a random term was justified. Since the models are different, the estimates for the intercepts are not equal and thus it is opportune to show the graph for each model to understand whether modelling the intercept as the random term was indeed necessary.

²⁰ The idea for this graph was taken from (Fang and Van de Schoot 2019)

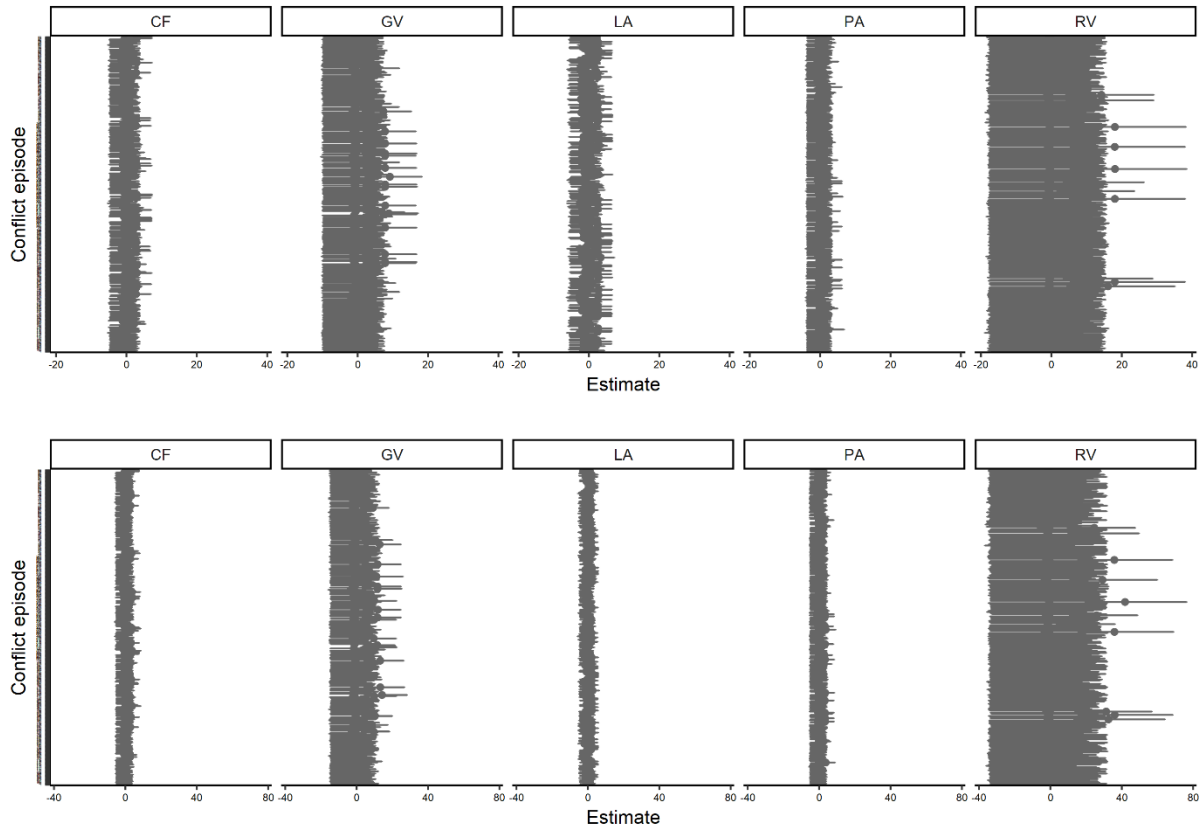
If the intercepts and their confidence intervals for each outcome are substantially similar across all the conflict episodes – that is the point estimate and the upper and lower bounds of the intervals have similar values – then modelling the intercept of the model as random would not have been necessary and a single-level approach would have been sufficient. This is clearly not the case here. As Figure 34 shows, there is a considerable variation across conflict episodes in terms of unconditional probability of civil conflict outcomes since the values of the intercepts and intervals of each outcome differ substantially across conflict episodes. Had the intercepts and intervals been similar for all conflict episodes, then they would have been located on the

Figure 4.34. Multilevel multinomial logistic regression bivariate models: distribution of the random term, the intercept of each civil conflict outcome for each civil conflict episode of the analysis (1989-2017)



Note: Each graph refers to the bivariate model indicated by the label on the top-left corner. On the vertical axis is reported the ID code for a specific civil conflict episode included in the analysis and in the horizontal axis the value of the intercept in log-odds, namely the baseline log-odds of the specific outcome indicated by the label at the top versus the reference category continuation of conflict. Each line in the graph represents the estimate and confidence interval of the baseline log-odds that a specific conflict episode ends with the outcome indicated on top. For each outcome, the more variation in these baseline log-odds across civil conflict episodes, the more appropriate to set the intercept as the random term in the model. Horizontal axis for each outcome allowed to vary for visualisation purposes.

Figure 4.35. Multilevel multinomial logistic regression multivariate models: distribution of the random term, intercept of each civil conflict outcome for each civil conflict episode of the analysis (1989-2017)



Note: The top graph refers to the multivariate model without confounders and the one at the bottom to the model with confounders. On the vertical axis is reported the ID code for a specific civil conflict episode included in the analysis and in the horizontal axis the value of the intercept in log-odds, namely the baseline log-odds of the specific outcome indicated by the label at the top versus the reference category continuation of conflict. Each line in the graph represents the estimate and confidence interval of the baseline log-odds that a specific conflict episode ends with the outcome indicated on top. For each outcome, the more variation in these baseline log-odds across civil conflict episodes, the more appropriate to set the intercept as the random term in the model. Horizontal axis for each outcome allowed to vary for visualisation purposes.

same point in the axis without much variation and, graphically, form a tidy, straight *caterpillar*. As shown by the graphs for the four bivariate models, substantial variation exists across conflict episodes. The models indicate that the intercepts of all the outcomes differ between conflict episodes. This pattern holds true for all the outcomes of civil conflict, but government victory and rebel victory show much more variation across conflict episodes than the others. In fact, with regard to these two specific outcomes, the estimates of some intercepts and related intervals for some conflict episodes are also quite distant from those of other episodes.

Very similar conclusions can be reached by looking at the graphs for the random term of the multivariate analysis in Figure 35. The estimates, in fact, appear to be very similar to the ones observed in the graph for the bivariate models, in particular those for the model without confounders. The graphs thus demonstrate that, in all the models, the unconditional probability of conflict outcomes varies substantially across conflict episodes. Given these differences across conflict episodes, it appears that the clustered structure plays a role in explaining the variance of the dependent variable. An observation of a conflict episode might be more likely to take a certain value of the dependent variable than an observation of a different conflict episode just because it is part of that specific conflict episode, which has a different baseline outcome probability. Thus, being part of the cluster affects the value that an observation takes. This indicates that modelling the intercept of each outcome as a random term was beneficial in terms of model fit, for the multilevel approach eliminates this issue by resolving the problems that derive from the non-independence of the observations due to data clustering.

4.4.2. Goodness of fit

Now that the appropriateness of the multilevel approach has been discussed, the performance of the models in terms of fit is assessed. Looking at the values of the measures of fit, it appears that the models performed satisfactorily, further highlighting the robustness of the results. With regard to the bivariate models, all of them are fairly similar in terms of values of the selected measure of fit, the widely applicable information criterion (WAIC). Three out of four models have returned almost identical values of WAIC, as the difference among them is just of few units. The only one that can be considered different in terms of fit is Model 2. This model, in fact, is the best performing among the bivariate ones, as it has the lowest value for WAIC.

Moving from the bivariate models to the multivariate model without confounders, not much have changed in terms of the value of the information criterion. The value for WAIC in

the Model 5 is certainly higher than the one of the bivariate models, but the difference is not that large. Following the interpretation of any information criteria, this seems to suggest that the bivariate models fit the data better than the multivariate model without confounders. However, information criteria, in order to promote the selection of the most parsimonious model among possible alternatives, introduce a *penalty* for the addition of variables to regression models, which leads to a natural increase in their value (Long 1997, p. 109). Thus, considering the penalty introduced by the addition of more variables to the initial bivariate models, the performance in terms of fit of Model 5 can be considered better than the one of the bivariate models. In fact, even though three variables were added to the initial bivariate models, the difference in the value of the information criterion remains very small – 154 units higher than Model 1, 608 than Model 2, 253 than Model 3, and 371 than Model 4 – suggesting that the inclusion of all the independent variables in a single model was beneficial for better explaining the variation of the dependent variable.

The addition of the confounders had an impact on the fit of the model. While, as discussed before, this addition did not lead to substantial differences in the direction and significance of the estimates, it did result in a noticeable difference in terms of the value of the measures of fit. The value of the WAIC for Model 6 is much larger than the one of the bivariate models and the multivariate model without confounders. However, an increase in the value of WAIC was to be expected since five more control variables were added to the model. Even though the increase compared to the previous models is substantial, it can be seen as a natural consequence of the addition of multiple variables rather than a clear indication of the poor fit of the model. Accordingly, it can be argued that also Model 6 has performed as satisfactorily as the preceding ones. Thus, the assessment of the values of the measures of fit for each model further indicates that the large-N analysis was able to return robust results on the impact of the independent

variables on the outcomes of civil conflicts.²¹ To further assess whether this is the case, I turn to the final test of robustness of the large-N analysis, a 3-fold cross-validation.

4.4.3. 3-fold cross-validation

In the methodological chapter, it was noted that information criteria are a useful starting point to compare the fit of different models. However, an evaluation of the fit of the models based *exclusively* on these measures is insufficient. For this reason, a 3-fold cross-validation was devised to further test the robustness of the large-N analysis.

Cross-validation is often used as a strategy for model selection (Arlot and Celisse 2010). In this specific case, cross-validation was not used for the selection of a model that performs better among possible alternative models. Rather, it was used to test whether the model would perform equally, or similarly, well if the data used for the analysis were different from those at hand. The data is not different, but with cross-validation it is possible to simulate new data and different distributions to test how well the model performs using these simulated datasets. By doing so, it is possible to ascertain whether the conclusions drawn from a model are robust and generalisable or, instead, they only capture the idiosyncrasies of the specific distributions in the data used for the analysis.

As specified in the methodological chapter, cross-validation is performed by dividing the data available in multiple folds, whereby the larger one (train data) is used to fit the model that becomes the reference against which the models fitted in the other folds (test data) are compared (Zhang 1993, Arlot and Celisse 2010, Carsey and Harden 2014). One of the assumptions of cross-validation is that the simulation works so long that the data is identically and independently distributed (Zhang 1993). This assumption, however, can be relaxed to work

²¹ Further robustness tests, such as multicollinearity tests, are performed in the Appendix.

with data that does not meet this requirement (Arlot and Celisse 2010). In the case of the present study, the data is not identically and independently distributed because the observations are clustered in conflict episodes. For this reason, a slightly modified approach to data partition was adopted, namely a stratified sampling procedure. If three datasets had been created just by partitioning the data randomly into three parts, the observations coming from different conflict episodes would have been mixed. As the observations within the same conflict episode might be correlated – hence the multilevel approach – removing them from the cluster could lead to inferential problems as the model would not be able to return reliable estimates because is ignoring the correlation that might exist among observations of the same cluster. Had this been done, the conditions for an appropriate evaluation of the model performance would have not been created. The problem of how to best subsample multilevel-structured data and the lack of a clear procedure on how to do it has been noted in literature (Wang and Gelman 2015). Accordingly, a subsampling procedure that could preserve the structure of the data was specifically devised. It consists of a stratified sampling procedure that entails the random draw of entire conflict episodes from the original dataset rather than of single observations. By doing so, both the randomness of the data needed to ensure the validity of the cross-validation and the clustered structure of the original data was preserved.

The train data needed 50 per cent of the observations. Instead of randomly drawing 532 observations, 50 per cent of the conflict episodes was drawn. As episodes had variable duration – some were just one year long and others more than 10 – the random draw of half of the conflict episodes produced train data with an excess of observations. To adjust for this problem, the number of conflict episodes in excess of the quota of 532 observations was removed randomly from the train data. The conflict episodes removed were reinserted in the list of conflict episodes from which the random draw for the test data would be made. As the same conflict episodes could not appear in both train and test data, from the list of remaining conflict

episodes a number of conflict episodes equivalent to 25 per cent of the total observations was drawn. Similarly, the excess of observations was reduced by removing at random as many conflict episodes as necessary to bring the first portion of the test data to the quota of roughly 266 observations. At this point, those conflict episodes that had not been drawn for the other datasets were the ones included the second portion of test data.

The model chosen to run this test was Model 6, for it is the most complete among the alternatives and it has demonstrated to be able to accurately estimate the impact of the independent variables on civil conflict outcomes while controlling for other important confounders. Model 6 was fitted to each generated fold of data to compare the values of a measure of fit of the model run on the train data – the reference – and the same measures of the model run on the test data. Model 6 can be considered validated and the results it returned robust if the value for the selected measure of fit obtained from the model fitted to the test data is similar to the one obtained from the one fitted to the train data.

Any measure of fit would have been acceptable but for the present analysis it was decided to test the predictive capacity of Model 6 by comparing the *receiver operator curve* (ROC) and the related *area under curve* (AUC) obtained from fitting the model to the train and test data. These measures were chosen because they convey an immediate and easy to interpret message. A ROC plots the sensitivity and the specificity of the model to summarise its predictive capacity. Sensitivity is a measure ranging from zero to one that provides an indication of the capacity of the model to correctly predict the observed positives, while the specificity indicates the capacity to correctly predict the observed negatives.²² The higher the value of these two

²² More specifically, specificity is the ratio of the true positives with the sum of the true positives and the false negatives, where for true positive is intended the positive observations correctly predicted as positive and for false negatives the observed positive predicted as negative ($\frac{TP}{TP+FN}$). Conversely, sensitivity is the ratio of the true negatives with the sum of the true negatives and the false positives, where for true negatives is intended the negative observations correctly predicted as negative and for false positives the observed negative predicted as positive ($\frac{TN}{TN+FP}$).

measures, the better the predictive capacity of the model. The interpretation of the ROC curve is simple: the higher the value of sensitivity and specificity, the closer the curve gets to the upper-left corner of the graph and the better the prediction capacity of the model (Hand and Till 2001). Conversely, the lower those values, the closer the curve gets to the bottom-right corner and the worse the predictive capacity of the model. Curves that adhere to the diagonal line indicate that the model has no better predictive capacity than a coin flip.

This predictive performance is clearly summarised by the AUC, that is computed from the ROC through quadrature (Hand and Till 2001). This measure too ranges from zero to one but in terms of interpretation there are not definitive indications of what values indicate a good predictive performance of the model, but only guidelines that depend on the specific discipline. The prevalent interpretation in social sciences considers values of AUC close and higher than 0.8 as indicating excellent predictive capacity, close to 0.7 as fair, and close to 0.5 as poor. These interpretive criteria are applied to this analysis.

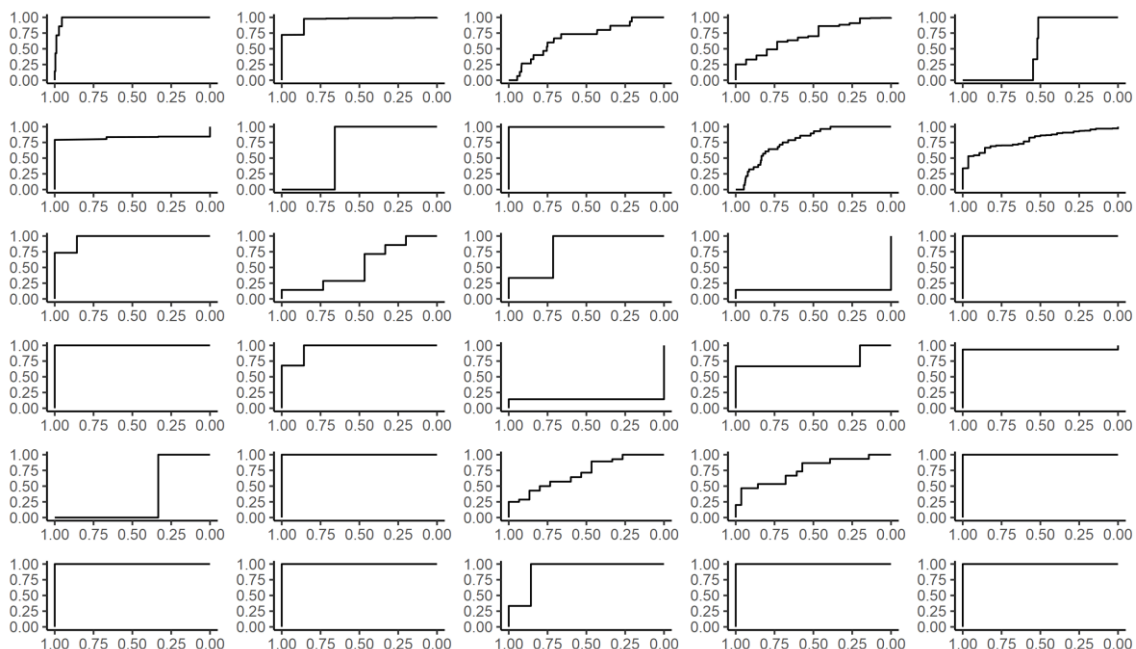
The above approach is easily applicable when the dependent variable is binary but in this study there is an added complexity because the dependent variable has more than two categories. For this reason, multiclass ROCs were computed to compare any possible pairwise combination of outcomes, following the so-called one-vs-one approach (Hand and Till 2001). Then, the mean of all the AUCs of all the pairwise ROCs was computed, a single measure as easily interpretable as the AUC for binary classifications that summarises the predictive performance of the model (Hand and Till 2001, p. 177).

Figure 36 reports the ROC curves of each pairwise combination of civil conflict outcomes including continuation of conflict for Model 6 fitted to the train fold. Through these ROCs a single AUC was computed for the train data. The value of the AUC of Model 6 fitted to the train data, the reference model, is 0.79. This indicates an excellent capacity of Model 6 in predicting civil conflict outcomes conditional on the independent and control variables.

To consider the model validated and the results obtained with the large-N analysis robust, the same model fitted to the test data must show equivalent or fairly similar predictive capacity by returning a value of AUC that falls within the range of acceptable predictive capacity. Figure 37 and 38 report the pairwise ROC curves of Model 6 fitted in the two portions of the test data. The value for the AUC of the Model 6 fitted to the first portion of the test data returns a value for the AUC of 0.71. Once again, the model shows a good predictive capacity. The value of AUC is lower than the one observed for the train data but is still within a range of good predictive performance.

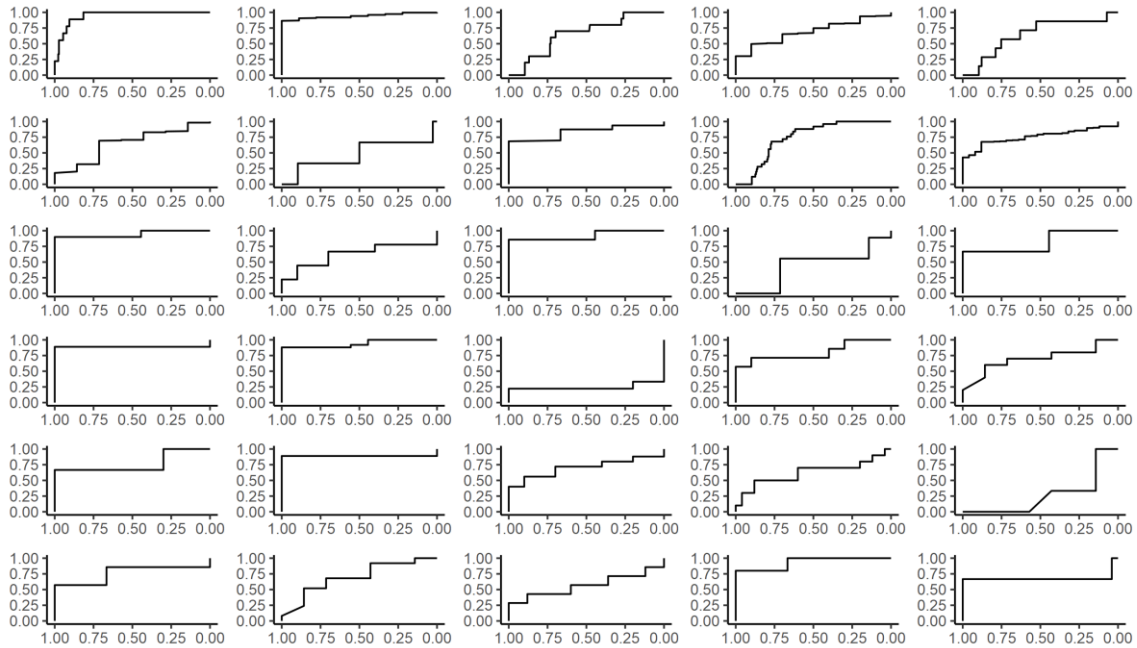
With regard to the model fitted to second portion of the test data, the value for the AUC is 0.69, lower than the one observed for the train data and only slightly lower than the one observed for the first portion of the test data. Although this value is lower, is still within a range of good predictive performance. As it is just 0.01 away from the value of 0.7, the predictive

Figure 4.36. Multilevel multinomial regression model 6 fitted in the train data: ROC curves for each pairwise combination of civil conflict outcomes



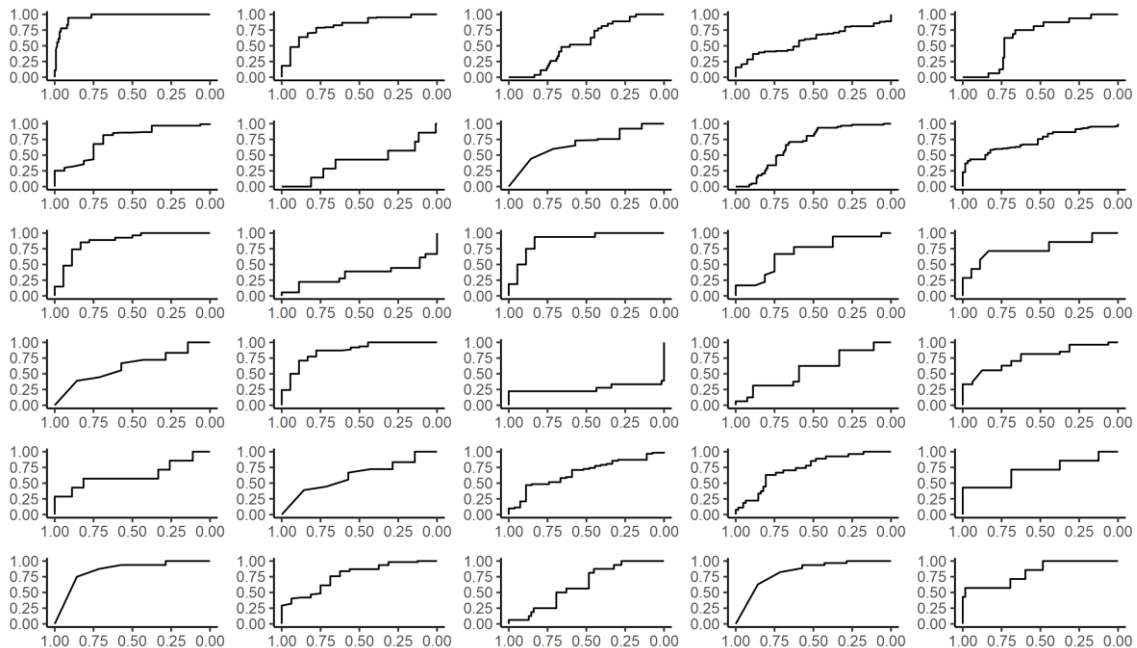
Note: each graph reports the ROC curve of a single pairwise combination of civil conflict outcomes. The Y axis reports the value for the sensitivity and the X axis the value for the specificity for the pairwise combination.

Figure 4.37. Multilevel multinomial regression model 6 fitted in the first fold of the test data: ROC curves for each pairwise combination of civil conflict outcomes



Note: each graph reports the ROC curve of a single pairwise combination of civil conflict outcomes. The Y axis reports the value for the sensitivity and the X axis the value for the specificity for the pairwise combination.

Figure 4.38. Multilevel multinomial regression model 6 fitted in the second fold of the test data: ROC curves for each pairwise combination of civil conflict outcomes



Note: each graph reports the ROC curve of a single pairwise combination of civil conflict outcomes. The Y axis reports the value for the sensitivity and the X axis the value for the specificity for the pairwise combination.

predictive capacity of Model 6 fitted in this portion of data can be considered fairly similar to the ones observed in the models fitted in the train data and first portion of the test data.

As the value of the AUC for Model 6 fitted in the test data is not substantively different from the one obtained with the train data, the 3-fold cross-validation demonstrates that the multivariate model with confounders is accurate in predicting the outcomes of civil conflicts conditional on the independent and control variables. In fact, the model appears to be able to perform satisfactorily in terms of predictive capacity even when simulated new data is used. Accordingly, given the stable predictive capacity of the model, it has been demonstrated that the results it returned can be considered robust.

The 3-fold cross-validation concludes the assessment of the robustness of the large-N analysis. The results of the large-N analysis provided a solid and generalisable answer to the question this study set out to answer. From the results reported in the present chapter, it emerged that characteristics related to the structure, such as fragmentation, and to the dynamics internal to armed oppositions, such as internal competition and internal power distribution, facilitate or hamper certain types of conflict termination.

The findings in this respect, and the conclusions that are drawn from them, should be considered robust for a host of reasons. First, the large-N analysis was devised in such a way that each and every result was put to a strict test of robustness. The impact of each independent variable was assessed in isolation, collectively with the impact of the other independent variables, and conditional on potential confounders. The results were shown to have resistance to different model specifications, as confirmed by the fact that throughout the entire analysis the coefficients for the impact of the independent variables largely maintained similar direction, magnitude, and level of statistical significance. This indicates that the results are indicative of solid associations.

Second, it was shown in Section 4.4. that the statistical models used for the analysis performed satisfactorily, both in terms of estimation and goodness-of-fit measures. It was demonstrated that the multilevel approach to the regression was able to resolve the issues deriving from the clustered structure of the data. It was also demonstrated that the regression models, by taking into account the potential correlation among non-independent observations through the multilevel approach, were able to estimate the impact of the independent variables on the outcomes of civil conflicts more accurately than more common single-level models.

Finally, it was also showed that the results obtained were not only resistant to different model specifications, but also to the simulation of using *new data* carried out through the 3-fold cross-validation. Even after altering the structure of the data with this simulation, the models maintained similar predictive capacity. This shows that the models would have been able to correctly predict the impact of the independent variables on the outcomes of civil conflicts even if the data used for the analysis had been *different* from the one at hand. This 3-fold cross-validation thus further demonstrated that the results obtained with the large-N analysis are robust because the models were accurate in uncovering fundamental patterns of correlation between the independent variables and conflict outcomes.

This chapter has dealt specifically with the technical aspects of the investigation, limiting the discussion to the numerical estimates that the models yielded and to the assessments of significance and fit. It was demonstrated that the large-N analysis was able to produce robust and generalisable findings with regard to the impact that different structural characteristics of and competitive and power dynamics within the armed oppositions have on conflict outcomes. To have a better grasp of how these attributes of armed oppositions affect civil conflicts in practice and to further confirm the validity of the results presented in this chapter, the dissertation now turns to the final step of the analysis, the complementary small-N analysis,

the object of Chapter 5. After the small-N analysis, the results presented in this chapter, along with the indications emerging from the case study, are interpreted and discussed in Chapter 6.

5. Small-N analysis

The report of the results of the large-N analysis in Chapter 4 concluded the first and most important stage of the empirical investigation. In line with the nested analysis approach adopted, the large-N analysis needs to be complemented with a small-N analysis of the phenomenon under study. This small-N analysis, the object of the present chapter, is the last stage of the empirical investigation.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the small-N analysis could take one of two possible pathways depending on the robustness of the results of the large-N analysis: it could be aimed at further testing the results of the large-N analysis if they are robust or, if they are not, it could be aimed at finding alternative explanations and uncover different causal mechanisms for the phenomenon under study. Chapter 4 showed that the large-N analysis did produce solid and robust results with regard to the impact that the fragmentation, internal competition, and internal power distribution of armed oppositions have on conflict termination. Accordingly, in this dissertation the small-N analysis takes the first pathway. The small-N analysis has quite limited scope conditions: its purpose is only to complement the large-N analysis by putting the results that it returned to further test. Being a small-N analysis, the conclusions emerging from it are by no means generalisable as the ones emerging from the large-N analysis and should exclusively be seen as nuanced illustrations of the causal mechanisms tested with the large-N analysis. Before proceeding with the analysis, the next section explains the case selection strategy and procedure. In the following sections, the analysis is carried out through the in-depth investigation of the case study.

5.1. Case selection strategy and procedure

According to Lieberman, when the results of the large-N analysis are robust and the purpose of the case study is confirmatory, two different case selection strategies are possible (2005). The first is the random selection of one or more case studies among those contained in the sample used for the large-N analysis. The second is the deliberate selection of case studies from the sample that are well predicted by the large-N analysis, or on the regression line (Lieberman 2005). Not both strategies, however, can be applied to the present dissertation. The strategy of random selection of the case study would certainly be the most appropriate for this dissertation, since it would allow to put the findings of the large-N analysis to the strictest test possible. However, this strategy of case selection is not applicable to this dissertation because of reasons related to the sources used for the analysis of the case study. Since the small-N analysis, as discussed in Chapter 3, relies entirely on secondary sources, the selected case study must be one for which there is abundance of secondary documents. Although it is not difficult to find secondary sources about virtually any civil conflict ever occurred, it is undoubted that some have attracted much less attention than others. Paucity of data regarding a specific randomly selected case, thus, could dictate the selection of a different case, thus making the strategy of selection no longer random. Therefore, the deliberate selection of a case is the strategy adopted for this dissertation.

In order to maintain the ability of the small-N analysis to be *testing* while at the same time resorting to a deliberate case selection strategy, it was considered more appropriate to look for a case that can be classified as *typical* with respect to the phenomena under study. To select a case that can be considered as such and to maximise the *testing* ability of the small-N analysis, some rules for the selection procedure were set.

First, the selection had to be based on the independent variables of the dissertation. The dissertation investigates the impact of fragmentation and other characteristics of the armed

opposition that are closely related to it. Accordingly, it would be illogical to select a case of conflict in which the armed opposition has never been fragmented. For this reason, the selected civil conflict must have been at least characterised by the fragmentation of the armed opposition. This is an indispensable condition for the small-N analysis to have any validity. Similarly, but less importantly, the case study had also to be characterised by certain conditions of the other independent variables that were expected to affect conflict termination. Thus, the selection procedure had to consider also whether the case presented some variation in the independent variables other than fragmentation. As it can be very difficult, if not impossible, to find a specific case that perfectly adheres to all the conditions of the independent variables expected to affect conflict termination, this rule could be relaxed and, among a set of possible options, the case in which the armed opposition, *ceteris paribus*, was characterised by the largest presence of these conditions of the independent variables could be selected. For example, if one option were a civil conflict in which the armed opposition was fragmented but its groups were always allied, not rival, and power was hegemonically distributed and one in which the armed opposition was fragmented and its groups were often independent, rival, and power still hegemonically distributed, the latter could be chosen since it is the one in which are present most of the conditions of interest of the independent variables.

Second, although the selected case had to be on the regression line, it was decided to maximise the utility of the small-N analysis and to avoid the risk of introducing bias in the case selection by not taking into account the final outcome of the civil conflict selected, that is by not using the dependent variable to inform the selection. The confirmatory and *testing* power of the small-N analysis is stronger, I contend, if there is no selection at all on the dependent variable. Given the solidity of the results of the large-N analysis, grounding the selection procedure solely on the independent variables was considered sufficient to find a case that provides some confirmation of the results obtained, namely that certain conditions of the

independent variables should affect the conflict process in such a way as to influence whether a specific conflict outcome becomes more or less likely.

Finally, the selection procedure had also to consider whether secondary resources related to the specific conflict were accessible and of sufficient amount and quality to at least enable the reconstruction of the conflict events and to trace the possible effects that the independent variables had on the conflict process. Thus, it had to be privileged the selection of a case for which, *ceteris paribus*, there was sufficient data over one that was equally suitable but for which data was insufficient.

The procedure led to the selection of the civil conflict episode occurred in Uganda between 1994 and 2011. In line with the procedure, this conflict episode was selected because it offered adequate variation in the independent variables and a substantial number of secondary sources was available at the time of writing. To maximise the testing capacity of the small-N analysis and to partly cover for the limitations discussed in Chapter 3, it was decided to expand the scope of the analysis by adding to this single conflict episode all the ones that occurred in Uganda between 1980 and 2017. This was done because all these conflict episodes are interconnected and analysing only one of them as if it occurred in a vacuum could only provide a partial account of the dynamics that characterised the Ugandan case. Accordingly, the small-N analysis was carried out through the assessment of four different conflict episodes occurred in Uganda in 1980-1986, 1986-1992, 1994-2011, and 2013-2017. Of these four episodes, only the one occurred between 1980 and 1986 falls entirely outside the timeframe of the present dissertation. However, this specific conflict episode, as it is discussed in the following sections, was too important for the dynamics of the ones that followed to be left out of the small-N analysis. In fact, it was with this episode that Yoweri Museveni ascended to power and it is in this very episode that lie the origins of the following ones. The small-N analysis would certainly miss out if this episode were to be omitted. In addition, this episode also offered the

opportunity to test the results of the analysis out of the sample, thus giving indications of whether the results obtained by the large-N analysis could be applicable also to civil conflicts that occurred in a different period than the one delimited by the time frame of the dissertation.

All the episodes offer a substantial variation with regard to the conditions of the independent variables. In fact, they all present long periods of fragmentation of the armed opposition, instances of independence of the rebel groups alternated with instances of cooperation among them, instances of extreme competition and fratricidal violence, and also, albeit to a lesser extent, some variation in the distribution of power within the opposition. These features guaranteed that also the additional conflict episodes complied with the selection procedure, thus not betraying the spirit and aims of the small-N analysis devised for the dissertation. Owing to this variation in the independent variables, all the episodes offer great examples of the phenomena object of the dissertation. The conflict episodes are analysed next, following a brief account of the historical and social background.

5.2. Ugandan civil conflict: historical and social background

Uganda was a protectorate of the United Kingdom since 1894. In 1962, it gained independence from the British and the first elections were held. Independent Uganda was plagued since its origins by deep societal divisions, some of which were also the direct product of decades of colonial rule. Pre-existing ethnic cleavages and divisive colonial policies lied at the root of the difficulties in creating a united independence movement first and a unified nation-state then (International Crisis Group 2004, UCDP 2020a). From the independence process emerged a fractured state and the many attempts that were made by the Ugandan rulers to try and overcome these cleavages only contributed to further reinvigorate the divisions (Okello 2002, International Crisis Group 2012a).

Among the several lines of societal divisions in Uganda, the most deep-rooted and most relevant for the dynamics of conflict is undoubtedly the north-south divide. The rift between north and south of Uganda finds its origins mostly in the period of colonial rule, when British colonial policies brought about the development and advancement of the south vis-à-vis the economic and social marginalisation of the north (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999). While the south was treated by the British rulers as the administrative and economic centre, the north was perceived as a region of little use beyond that of a human repository of labourers and soldiers (Atkinson 2009, Dunn 2010). This divide found ways to self-perpetrate once the British rulers were gone, with Ugandan rulers alimenting the cleavage with policies of calculated marginalisation and exclusion of the north from the neopatrimonial redistributive system (International Crisis Group 2004, Van Acker 2004, Golooba Mutebi 2008, Dunn 2010).

The north-south divide is not the only cleavage that characterised the history of independent Uganda, since also other ethnic divisions and inter-ethnic competition were intertwined with the Ugandan social and political dimensions. It is in this context of societal divisions, political marginalisation, and lack of state legitimacy that lie the origins of the almost uninterrupted violence that characterised Uganda's social and political life since its independence (Golooba Mutebi 2008). Political violence is a prominent if not distinctive feature of Uganda's history, for the country witnessed continuous conflict for almost its entire existence as an independent state (UCDP 2020a). In fact, leaving aside general political turmoil and coups d'état, internal violence and civil conflicts have been very common throughout the period post-independence up until today. Armed groups, often motivated by marginalisation, ethnic-based grievances, or spirit of pure revenge, emerged with ease and revolted against the different regimes of Uganda throughout the whole post-independence period (UCDP 2020). Political violence could be seen as the go-to method to settle the social and political controversies in Uganda. It is no coincidence, in fact, that Uganda has been host of one of the

most brutal civil conflicts in history, the one against Kony's Lord's resistance army (LRA), which generated hundreds of thousands of displaced people, large number of abductions, and bipartisan brutality on the civilian population.

The colonial past and the strains it left, the ethnic competition and marginalisation, and the short-sighted if not altogether exclusionary governmental policies set the stage for a highly conflictual environment that created the conditions for repeated episodes of civil conflict. These conflict episodes are discussed in the following sections.

5.3. Ugandan civil conflict: episode 1 (1980-1986)

The first civil conflict episode of the small-N analysis began in 1980, when elements of the army of the deposed regime rose up against the new regime of Milton Obote. The origins of this conflict episode lie in some crucial events occurred just one year before. The previous regime, guided by Idi Amin, attracted considerable hostility from segments of the population and the administration itself. As dissatisfaction with the regime grew, anti-government groups began to organise and cooperate to overthrow it (Gersony 1997). The two most important groups, Front for National Salvation (Fronasa), guided by Yoweri Museveni, and Kikoosi Maalum (KM), guided by Milton Obote, coalesced in the broader Uganda National Liberation Front (UNLF) (UCDP 2020b). Owing to the external support of Tanzania, the UNLF managed to overthrow the regime of Idi Amin in 1979 (Gersony 1997). Following the capture of the capital, the then Ugandan army disbanded and fled to Sudan and Zaire (Gersony 1997, Project 2004). Aiming to reinstall the previous regime, the remnants of Amin forces reorganised to launch a rebellion against the new regime of Milton Obote.

Former Ugandan National Army (FUNA)

Origins:

Rebel group born from the remnants of the armed forces of Idi Amin's regime (UCDP 2020b)

Grievances & objectives:

FUNA rose up to restore the Amin regime, regain the position of power lost at the hands of UNLF, and more generally to respond to the marginalisation and revenge that the UNLF was enacting against the supporters of the previous regime (Project 2004). The group, however, failed to articulate a political agenda and, as the conflict went on, it appeared that they were fighting just to restore their previous role within the army (Project 2004).

Structure & membership:

Army-like structure. The members were mostly former soldiers of the Amin's regime.

Popular support:

The failure in articulating a coherent political agenda had some costs in terms of popular support. In fact, while initially FUNA was backed by the supporters of the previous regime in exile, popular support started to decrease when it was clear that the rebel group did not have a clear political agenda and when civilians became targets of the regime's forces (Project 2004).

External support:

Unclear but some allegations point to support provided by Libya.

5.3.1. *Period 1980-1983*

The hostilities began when the remnants of Amin's forces launched an attack against the regime forces in October 1980 (Project 2004). The attack was carried out by the so-called Former Ugandan National Army (FUNA), which, as the name suggests, was a rebel group composed almost exclusively of the remnants of the previous regime forces. At the beginning of the conflict, the armed opposition was composed exclusively of FUNA and the first attacks carried out by this rebel group were quite successful. In October 1980, the rebel group launched a large-scale invasion, with which it managed to capture some army barracks and an important portion of land in West-Nile (Project 2004, UCDP 2020b).

These initial successes, however, were soon to be frustrated by the internal tensions emerged within FUNA. In early 1981, ethnic divisions caused the splintering of the rebel group. Tensions between the Kakwas and the Aringa ethnic groups led the two factions to part ways,

Uganda National Rescue Front (UNRF)

Origins:

Rebel group born from the splintering of FUNA (UCDP 2020b)

Grievances & objectives:

Restore the Amin regime, regain the position of power lost at the hands of UNLF, and more generally to respond to the marginalisation and revenge that the UNLF was enacting against the supporters of the previous regime (Project 2004). The group, however, failed to articulate a political agenda and, as the conflict went on, it appeared that they were fighting just to restore their previous role within the army (Project 2004).

Structure & membership:

Army-like structure. The members were mostly former soldiers of the Amin's regime.

Popular support:

Low support as the group did not have a clearly articulated political agenda and civilians became targets of the regime's forces (Project 2004).

External support:

Unclear but some allegations point to support provided by Libya.

with the latter forming a new rebel group called Uganda National Rescue Front (UNRF) (UCDP 2020b). Ethnic differences apart, not much else differentiated the two rebel groups of the armed opposition. Just few months after the start of the conflict, therefore, the armed opposition became fragmented with the splintering of FUNA and the emergence of UNRF.

UNRF, however, was not the only rebel group that emerged in that period, as two other groups were formed between 1981 and 1982, further contributing to the fragmentation of the armed opposition. Both groups emerged as a result of internal tensions within the new regime. The first, and most important, was the National Resistance Army (NRA). NRA is the direct descendant of one the rebel groups involved in the previous conflict against the regime of Amin, the Fronasa group guided by Museveni. Following the deposition of Amin, Fronasa was supposed to take on an important role in the new national army but in few months it became evident that the dominant player in the army was KM, the former rebel group guided by Obote (UCDP 2020b). The decision of Museveni to take up the arms again were, however, mostly related to the political developments that followed the deposition of Amin's regime. Museveni

National Resistance Army (NRA)

Origins:

Former Fronasa, the rebel group guided by Museveni reformed as NRA following tensions within the regime, of which it was initially part (UCDP 2020b).

Grievances & objectives:

Political marginalisation and unfair elections led the group to rebel, with the aim of settling the scores with the new Obote regime and installing Museveni in position of power (UCDP 2020b).

Structure & membership:

Army-like structure at first, more mobile and guerrilla-oriented following Operation Bonanza.

Popular support:

Substantial in the Luwero triangle, limited in other areas of Uganda

External support:

Unclear but the participation of Libya to the discussions to form the Ugandan Popular Front point to Libyan external support (UCDP 2020c)

formed his own political party and participated to the elections of the 1980 but, fearing that Obote would rig them, he promised to fight any government that would ascend to power through unfair elections (UCDP 2020b). As feared by Museveni, rigged elections gained Obote the presidency of Uganda and the promise to take up the arms was maintained, with the NRA beginning its armed struggle against the regime in 1981 (Gersony 1997). The second rebel group that emerged in this period was the Ugandan Freedom Movement (UFM) and, as much as NRA, was born as a result of divisions within the new regime. Due to poor coordination and limited popular support, this group was destined to be only a minor player in the conflict episode. What is important to note is that between 1981 and 1982, the armed opposition was substantially fragmented, since FUNA, UNRF, NRA, and UFM were simultaneously fighting the government.

While initially successful, FUNA began to lose ground and suffer from the regime countermeasures as soon as rifts within the group began to emerge. The splintering of FUNA brought an additional autonomous rebel group in the conflict. Both FUNA and UNRF were

deployed in West Nile and began to fight the regime independently (UCDP 2020b). At this point, the armed opposition could not act as a coordinated force, since the groups did not only stop cooperating, but they actively competed against one another for the leadership of the anti-government opposition, the support of the West Nilers, and resources, such as weapons allegedly provided by Libya (Project 2004). More importantly, the two groups began fighting one another as soon as they split. Infighting led to a serious weakening of FUNA, as UNRF managed to impose high costs on the group (Project 2004, UCDP 2020b). As a result of infighting between the groups, FUNA was forced to retreat in Sudan and Zaire and from there was able to only occasionally launch attacks against the regime (UCDP 2020b). At the end of 1981, FUNA had been degraded to such an extent that it had to abandon the armed effort.

With FUNA out of the conflict, the other rebel groups of the armed opposition, UNRF, NRA, and UFM, made some attempts to coordinate. Facilitated by the mediation of Libya's Muammar Gheddafi, an agreement was signed by the three groups to unite under a broader organisation called Ugandan Popular Front (UCDP 2020c). However, this attempt at joining hands failed and the organisation never materialised (UCDP 2020c). The rebel groups of the opposition never went beyond mere good relationships motivated by the shared objective of overthrowing Obote's regime and an agreement between NRA and UNRF not to fight one another (Gersony 1997, Project 2004).

In 1982 both UNRF and UFM suffered from the response of the regime. While the UFM was only a minor player in the conflict episode, which the regime could crush without too much effort (UCDP 2020b), the UNRF was a much tougher opponent, which required the regime to mount a large-scale offensive to wreck it. During the Christmas period of 1982, the regime launched a large operation against the UNRF consisting of large sweeps in the West Nile territory (UCDP 2020b). The operation was quite successful in delivering a serious blow to the UNRF, which had to abandon the conflict in 1983.

After the Christmas offensive against the UNRF, the regime launched another large-scale operation, this time against the NRA. The regime deployed 75% of the armed forces in the so-called Operation Bonanza, making it the largest operation ever carried out against the NRA. The operation was successful in forcing the NRA to retreat from their area of operations, the Luwero triangle, and in delivering a serious blow to the group, at the cost of more than 300,000 deaths between militants and civilians (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999, UCDP 2020b). However, despite the large deployment, the operation failed to crush the rebel group, which following the retreat became more mobile, but it certainly was not a spent force (UCDP 2020b). At this point, with the UNRF on its way out and the NRA withstanding the regime's countermeasures, by mid-1983 the NRA was the only active group and the opposition was no longer fragmented. These events opened a new phase of the conflict episode.

5.3.2. Period 1984-1986

The operation Bonanza carried out by the Ugandan regime did not succeed in wiping out the NRA. The operation indeed managed to weaken the rebel group, but the switch to more mobile guerrilla tactics granted the NRA some successes. As of 1984, the rebel group managed to carry out some successful attacks on army barracks close to the capital, while the regime army proved incapable of making any progress against the group (UCDP 2020b). At this point, the rebel group, also thanks to a large popular support and the tendency of the army to carry out mass reprisals rather than targeted operations, started to regain the terrain lost with operation Bonanza (UCDP 2020b). But if the progress of the regime was already hampered by the prowess of the NRA, the events of 1985 further contributed to the deterioration of the regime's predicament.

Social discontent, internal divisions, and the conflict against NRA posed serious problems to the stability of the Obote regime (Gersony 1997). While the NRA was advancing

also in the Rwenzori mountains, the regime had to deal with increasing tensions among different ethnic groups within the army (UCDP 2020b). These tensions contributed to further weaken a war-weary and demoralised army and, eventually, led to a full-blown coup d'état. In fact, in July 1985, the Acholi contingent of the Ugandan army staged a coup and managed to overthrow the Obote regime. The General Tito Okello Lutwa was installed as president and a ruling military junta was formed (Gersony 1997, Doom and Vlassenroot 1999, Atkinson 2009). Following the coup and the rise to power of the Acholi ethnic group, the army disbanded and entire battalions defected to join the NRA (UCDP 2020b). The mass defections contributed to boost the strength of the armed opposition, which could now count on almost 20,000 militants under the banner of the NRA. At that point, the armed opposition began to lay eyes on the final victory of the conflict.

Since the beginning, the military junta appeared unfit to run the government (Atkinson 2009). In the attempt to improve its predicament vis-à-vis the armed opposition, the junta tried to co-opt in the new government all the rebel groups that had been involved in the conflict against Obote, including those that were inactive in that period (Gersony 1997). Under the sponsorship of Sudan, the junta began the negotiations for a peaceful settlement with the NRA (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999). These negotiations bore fruit as the junta and the NRA signed the Nairobi peace agreement in late 1985 (UCDP 2020b). At that point, however, the armed opposition was too strong and well-positioned toward final victory to fully commit to the negotiated process. In fact, just one month after signing the peace agreement, it reneged on its obligations and resumed the armed effort (Gersony 1997). In 1986, the NRA had the upper hand and proceeded with the final attack on the regime. At the end of January, following a nine-day siege, the armed opposition captured the capital Kampala, overthrowing the regime (UCDP 2020b). The success of the NRA marks the end of this conflict episode and the rise to power of Yoweri Museveni.

5.3.3. *Impact of the independent variables*

This first episode of conflict offers important insights of the impact that the independent variables have on the prospects of termination of civil conflicts. Starting from the fragmentation of the armed opposition, it appears that this variable played an important role in shaping the conflict process. At first, the armed opposition was cohesive and composed of a large rebel group, which was essentially the union of different factions. Initially, the armed opposition managed to score some successes, with FUNA carrying out a successful large-scale invasion. These initial operations did not bring the rebels close to defeating the regime but proved that the armed opposition was an efficient fighting force able to challenge the stability of the regime. As soon as rifts within FUNA began to materialise and following the emergence of new rebel groups, the armed opposition became weaker vis-à-vis the regime. Lack of univocal strategy and coordination are at the origins of the enfeeblement of the armed opposition. If things started to become dire for the armed opposition, the fragmentation played instead in the hands of the regime, which did not have to face a coherent and organised force and could score some important successes with its countermeasures. As the conflict went on, the rebel groups did not manage nor appeared to be willing to find ways to coordinate their effort. The opposition, thus, remained uncoordinated, even though all the groups were fighting for the same objective and could have obtained some benefits from more cohesion. The tendency of the rebel groups of going *solo*, each following its own strategy and direction, did not bring about any benefit for the armed opposition, for it started to suffer increasingly from the regime pressure.

At the end of the first period, all the rebel groups were either defeated or forced to abandon the armed conflict by the successful response of the regime. The only exception was the NRA, which managed to withstand the large operation to eradicate it and, by the end of the first period, it was the only rebel group left of the armed opposition. The fact that, when

cohesive, the armed opposition managed to carry out some successful operations showed that cohesion, rather than fragmentation, was beneficial and enabled the armed opposition to mount a coherent and organised challenge against the regime. Conversely, the events of the conflict showed that fragmentation had a weakening effect for the opposition, for it contributed to make it uncoordinated and, as such, unable to seriously challenge the government authority.

Fragmentation was not the only characteristic of the armed opposition that affected the dynamics of the conflict episode. Internal competition, both moderate and severe, played in fact an important role. With regard to the effects of moderate levels of internal competition, it appears that, as soon as the opposition fragmented, the rebel groups started to compete against one another for resources and for the support of the target population. This was particularly true for FUNA and UNRF, which shared the very same civilian constituency and brought to the conflict the same grievances. When the armed opposition was fragmented, the rebel groups never managed to join hands and form alliances that could have benefited their collective armed effort. The isolated attempt to join forces of the NRA, UNRF, and UFM shows that the groups were cognisant of the benefits that alliances could have produced. An alliance at that stage would have probably produced more favourable conditions for the armed opposition by promoting a coherent and coordinated armed effort against the regime. As this attempt to form an alliance failed, the rebel groups remained independent and could not solve the problems that were affecting the effectiveness of their struggle against the regime.

These events illustrated some of the causal mechanisms linking instances of moderate competition to decreased chances of conflict termination in rebel victory and increased chances of termination in government victory. Overall, the moderate competition within the armed opposition, resulting from the independence of the rebel groups and the active competition over resources and popular support, appeared to play against the armed opposition. In fact, as the rebel groups were competing over resources and independently pursuing their objectives

without cooperating, they failed to mount a serious challenge to the regime that could have brought them closer to final victory. For the very same reasons, the regime's effort was instead facilitated, since it was facing a competitive, uncooperative, and poorly organised opponent.

In addition to these instances of moderate competition, the armed opposition was also plagued by instances of severe competition. Albeit severe competition characterised the conflict only for a brief period, the episodes of fratricidal violence between FUNA and UNRF had serious repercussions. These instances of fratricidal violence demonstrated the detrimental effects of severe internal competition for the effort of the armed opposition and the positive effects for the regime's one. By focusing on fighting one another rather than the regime, the rebel groups diverted human and material resources from the struggle against the regime to the one against each other. Due to this internecine, both groups, but FUNA in particular, suffered serious losses in terms of militants and resources, thus reducing the overall strength and effectiveness of the armed opposition. Following these events, in fact, it became easier for the regime to push both groups out of the conflict. Therefore, the extreme internal competition did not only largely contribute to weakening the whole armed opposition and thus jeopardise the entire effort against the regime, but also facilitated the regime's response to the rebellion.

The acquired strength of the NRA vis-à-vis the Obote regime is surely the most important factor that explains the final success of the opposition in this conflict episode. However, also the cohesion of the opposition showed in the second period of the episode played an important role, especially if compared to the periods of fragmentation and internal competition of the first phase of the episode. In fact, rather than being divided in multiple, independent, and rival poles, the overall power of the armed opposition in the second period was concentrated under a single and cohesive rebel group that could employ such a strength more efficiently through a single strategy and harmonic effort compared to when the opposition was fragmented. The challenge that the armed opposition started to pose to the regime's stability when it was cohesive and its

final success confirm the causal mechanisms foreseen in Chapter 2, especially with regard to the impact of fragmentation (and lack thereof) on the chances of conflict termination in government and rebel victory. In fact, while the events of the first period of conflict demonstrated how fragmentation and internal competition can act as a serious obstacle for the effort of the armed opposition and, conversely be beneficial for the regime, the events of the second period showed the exact opposite. Even though the acquired strength played a prominent role in placing the armed opposition in a good position toward final victory, the fact that this strength was organised, administered, and employed by a single cohesive rebel group helped not to disperse the fighting potential, to the clear benefit of the opposition and detriment of the regime.

In addition to the effects on the chances of conflict termination in either government or rebel victory, this conflict episode also offers some insights on the effects of fragmentation and internal competition on the chances of negotiated settlement of civil conflicts. If when the opposition was fragmented the possibility of putting an end to the conflict through a peace agreement or a ceasefire were minimal to non-existent, when the opposition was no longer fragmented an attempt to negotiate a way out of the conflict was made. When the opposition was fragmented and competitive, the regime did not appear to have any incentives to negotiate the conflict termination, nor the groups appeared to be interested in a peaceful settlement. Conversely, when the opposition was not fragmented, the parties appeared more willing to entertain negotiations. Much of this change of direction is certainly due to the difficulties that the regime was going through as a result of internal tensions, which undoubtedly provided more incentives to negotiate a way out of the conflict. However, also the fact that the armed opposition was no longer fragmented and competitive played a role in promoting this attempt of peaceful settlement. The NRA indeed participated reluctantly to the negotiations, but in the end these culminated in the Nairobi agreement anyway. As the NRA was the only active rebel

group, the regime could more easily negotiate the options of conflict termination, for the terms were to be discussed with a single actor. As it is easier to accommodate the preferences and requests, however demanding may be, of a single rather than multiple rebel groups, the regime could more easily commit to the negotiated solution of the conflict. Similarly, also the NRA could more easily entertain negotiations since it was sure that it was the only recipient of large government concessions. At the same time, given the position of force, the NRA could also afford to leave open the outside option of resuming the conflict. If the Nairobi agreement collapsed is because toward the end of the conflict the armed opposition was too strong to fully commit to the agreement, as final victory was at hand. Despite the failure of the peace process, however, the negotiation attempts give credit to the theoretical expectations regarding the decreased chances of conflict termination in ceasefire or peace agreement when the armed opposition is fragmented and competitive and the increased ones when it is not.

Finally, also the distribution of power played a role in affecting the conflict dynamics, albeit to a lesser extent. The events of the first period of conflict demonstrate that power dispersion within the opposition has detrimental effects for both the opposition and the government. Following the fragmentation of the armed opposition, power was distributed almost equally between FUNA and UNRF, with NRA having fewer militants at their disposal. At that point, the armed opposition had quite a substantial strength at its disposal, presumably sufficient to mount a serious challenge to the regime. Such strength, however, was dispersed in two poles, which were uncooperative and also engaged in fratricidal violence. Being dispersed, the overall power of the armed opposition could not be maximised and employed effectively, since each group was fighting independently and also misusing it by fighting against one another. It would surely have been put to better use if it were concentrated in a single hegemonic actor, which would have had the majority of militants at its disposal and

deployed such a force in a more coherent and harmonic manner than how the armed opposition did in the first period of the conflict episode.

However, while power dispersion had detrimental effects for the armed opposition, thus illustrating the causal mechanism linking power dispersion to reduced chances of rebel victory, it surely did not play in the hands of the regime either. Even though the job of the regime was facilitated by the severe competition within the opposition, the fact that the groups were fairly equal in terms of power meant that it had to take the challenges both posed equally seriously anyway. During this time, in fact, it was simultaneously engaged in the response to FUNA and UNRF. This was not beneficial for the regime since it could not focus its overwhelming force on a single front. Once FUNA disappeared from the conflict and the UNRF was seriously depleted by the previous years of internecine and crackdown, power was then concentrated into the hands of the NRA. At this point, the regime could focus on the NRA only, as the Bonanza operation has shown. In this operation, in fact, the regime could concentrate three quarters of its armed force against the NRA, while leaving the UNRF temporarily aside. Therefore, these events demonstrate that, even if it is not as relevant as the other variables for explaining the trajectory of the conflict, power dispersion can have detrimental effects for both the armed opposition and the government and that, conversely, the concentration of power in a hegemonic actor makes the response of the government easier, since it can afford to focus its force on a single front rather than multiple ones.

The capture of the capital by the NRA marked the conclusion of the first conflict episode of the small-N analysis. Violence in Uganda, however, was bound to restart very soon after the termination of this episode. In fact, only few months separated this episode from the following conflict spell. This second conflict episode is the object of the next section.

5.4. Ugandan civil conflict: episode 2 (1986-1992)

The second conflict episode of the small-N analysis began right after the end of the first one. This time, however, the former rebels of the NRA were in charge of the government of Uganda. Due to the change of government, the previous conflict episode is considered terminated in rebel victory and, in line with the coding procedure outlined in Chapter 3, the one discussed in the present section as a new separate episode.

Of course, even though they are separate, the two conflict episodes are interconnected, for in the termination of the first episode and the events that immediately followed the success of the NRA lie the origins of this second episode of conflict. In fact, as soon as the NRA overthrew the regime, the army disbanded and the former soldiers fled north. The NRA began a retaliation against the Acholi ethnic group, of which the former regime was mainly composed, by pursuing the fleeing soldiers and committing gross human rights violations against Acholi civilians (Atkinson 2009). Ousted from power and persecuted, the Acholi were very soon in the mood for settling scores with the new regime guided by the former NRA (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999). This second episode of conflict broke out as a result of these events.

5.4.1. Period 1986-1988

In 1986, a rebel group called Uganda People's Democratic Army (UPDA) was formed with the aim of overthrowing the new regime guided by Museveni. The UPDA was essentially the union of different factions brought together by the shared desire to overthrow Museveni's regime. When the army of Obote's regime disbanded, many senior officers fled to Sudan, carrying with them weaponry and soldiers (Day 2011). In Sudan, they regrouped and joined hands with other opponents of Museveni, such as collaborators and supporters of the two former presidents of Uganda, Obote and Idi Amin (Gersony 1997, Doom and Vlassenroot 1999). This union of

Uganda People's Democratic Army (UPDA)

Origins:

Rebel group born from the union of the remnants of the armed forces of Obote's regime with other opponents of Museveni (Gersony 1997, Doom and Vlassenroot 1999, Day 2011)

Grievances & objectives:

UPDA rose up to overthrow the regime and take the power away from Museveni. The rebellion was motivated by the desire to avenge the NRA retaliation against the Acholi and to reverse the humiliation suffered following their removal from a position of power (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999, International Crisis Group 2004, Day 2011)

Structure & membership:

Army-like structure with battalions and brigades. The members were mostly former soldiers of Obote's regime.

Popular support:

Large popular support within the Acholi ethnic group, owing to the framing of the conflict as a struggle for the broader grievances of the ethnic group (Gersony 1997, Day 2011)

External support:

Sudan initially tolerated the presence of UPDA within its boundaries. However, it did not provide any form of support to the UPDA and as of 1987 it did not allow the presence of group members in its territory (Day 2011)

different opposers of Museveni resulted in the creation of the UPDA by the spring of 1986. Only few months later, the group carried out its first attacks against the new regime.

The conflict episode started with the UPDA crossing the borders of Sudan to launch a large-scale invasion of northern Uganda in August 1986 (UCDP 2020b). At first, the UPDA attacks on the regime forces were quite successful and the rebel group proved to be proficient at both conventional and guerrilla operations (Gersony 1997, Doom and Vlassenroot 1999, UCDP 2020b). This initial success, however, was bound to be short-lived. Already by the end of 1986, the resources available started to peter out and the group's rank and file were losing morale (Gersony 1997, Doom and Vlassenroot 1999). Yet, the paucity of resources and low morale were not the main reasons for the downturn of the rebel group. Rather, it was the splintering of the UPDA that brought it to a difficult predicament.

The rebellion of the UPDA to raise the grievances of the Acholi population revitalised the political and spiritual identity of the ethnic group (Day 2019a). It is in this context of

Holy Spirit Movement (HSM)

Origins:

Born as a battalion of the UPDA initially, the HSM splintered to become an autonomous rebel group (Gersony 1997, Branch 2005, Day 2011, 2019a)

Grievances & objectives:

The HSM rose up to overthrow the regime but, differently from the UPDA, its objectives were less clearly articulated. The rebellion had its origins in other ethnic and spiritually motivated grievances. Lakwena herself and the grievances raised gave the group more the traits of a cult rather than a politically motivated rebel group (see Behrend 1999 for a more detailed account)

Structure & membership:

Army-like structure but the group did not follow the precepts of conventional warfare. Rather, very peculiar and unconventional tactics (i.e. prohibition for the militants to take cover, use of stones that supposedly would turn into grenades instead of weapons) (Gersony 1997, Van Acker 2004, Branch 2005). The members were Acholi militants previously part of the UPDA and other Acholi recruits that believed in Lakwena's spiritual powers.

Popular support:

Larger popular support within the Acholi ethnic group than the UPDA, owing to the spiritual traits of the rebellion and the perceived power of Lakwena as a spirit medium (Gersony 1997, International Crisis Group 2004, Branch 2005)

External support:

None

political and spiritual revitalisation that must be interpreted the emergence of the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM). Initially, the HSM was a battalion within the UPDA, formed by a spirit medium called Alice Lakwena (Day 2011, 2019a). Lakwena managed to convince the UPDA commanders to entrust her with militants, weapons, and the authority to lead a battalion in the conflict against the regime (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999, Branch 2005). Although the tactics that she adopted were peculiar to say the least, Lakwena managed to score some initial successes. These attacks caught by surprise both the UPDA and especially the regime, which lost to the HSM weapons and equipment (Gersony 1997). When the UPDA tried to obtain the resources captured by the HSM, Lakwena refused and the relations with the UPDA leaders quickly deteriorated (Gersony 1997). Soon after, the HSM tried to gain control of the UPDA and began attacking the UPDA battalions that failed to subordinate to Lakwena (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999, Branch 2005). Failing to gain control of the rebel group, the HSM splintered

from the UPDA to form an autonomous group, taking along 2000 militants and weapons (Day 2019a). But if the situation was already grim for the armed opposition because of the splintering of the UPDA, the continuing confrontational relations between the two groups after they parted ways made it even worse. Museveni himself declared that the two groups were doing a great favour to the regime by killing each other and taking off the army the burden of fighting them (Branch 2005). As of late 1986, the armed opposition was already fragmented and highly competitive.

The HSM was not, however, the only rebel group that emerged in this first period of the conflict episode. In 1987, a new rebel group opposed to Museveni's regime emerged, the Uganda People's Army (UPA). Despite the UPA remained active for several years, its role in the conflict was destined to remain minor. However, there are some events that make its presence as part of the armed opposition important for the current discussion. The UPA, in fact, was involved with the other rebel groups of the opposition in attempts of cooperation first and confrontational relations after. Soon after it was formed, UPA demonstrated its willingness to cooperate by sending a contingent of militants to support the HSM as it was entering Lango (UCDP 2020d). By that time, negotiations were underway among the three rebel groups to unite in a broader organisation. However, due to the resistance of Lakwena, who wanted to be in charge of the organisation, the negotiations fell apart (UCDP 2020d). Following these failed negotiations, cooperation and alliances never materialised and the groups of the opposition either proceeded in their own direction or outright fought one another. In the case of the UPA, it soon became involved in intra-opposition violence with the HSM. In fact, when the HSM entered the Teso region, the UPA clashed with Lakwena's forces, suffering many losses among the leaders of the group and the civilian population (Van Acker 2004).

In 1988, the conflict episode acquired further complexity with the emergence of yet another rebel group, one that was destined to leave an indelible mark in the history of Uganda:

Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)

Origins:

Born as a battalion of the UPDA initially, the LRA then splintered to become an autonomous rebel group (GerSONY 1997, Behrend 1999, Day 2019a)

Grievances & objectives:

There is a debate over the grievances and objectives of the LRA. Some analysts maintain that the LRA had clear objectives and grievances to fight for. They maintain that the LRA rose up to settle the scores with Museveni's regime, put an end to perceived injustices, and more generally avenge the Acholi marginalisation and repression (International Crisis Group 2004, 2005a, Lomo and Hovil 2004, Lancaster *et al.* 2011). Among them, some have noted that in any case the LRA brutal methods toward the Acholi themselves were at odds with the stated political agenda (International Crisis Group 2004, 2006b).

Others, instead, maintain that the LRA objectives and grievances were non-existent or difficult to discern. Among them, some went as far as to contend that the LRA was 'strikingly devoid of political content' (GerSONY 1997) or just a Sudan's proxy (Prunier 2004), while others argued that the objectives and grievances existed but were poorly articulated and, as such, difficult to discern (International Crisis Group 2006b, IISS 2008).

Structure & membership:

The LRA presented an army-like structure with four brigades (International Crisis Group 2004, Day 2019a). Initially, the structure was due to the presence of former soldiers and the influence of Sudan's armed forces (Lancaster *et al.* 2011). However, this structure was maintained also in successive phases of the conflict, when the group became more mobile. Despite the structure, the LRA did not resort to conventional tactics, but rather adopted guerrilla tactics, owing to the necessity to avoid direct contact with the regime forces, to maximise mobility for survival reasons, and exploit the good knowledge of the area of operations and reconnaissance capacities (International Crisis Group 2004, Lancaster *et al.* 2011). Initially, the LRA was almost exclusively composed of Acholi former soldiers. As years passed, the composition of the group changed significantly owing to the extensive practice of forced abductions.

Popular support:

Popular support for the LRA was rather unsteady. It certainly enjoyed a smaller popular support within the Acholi ethnic group than the UPDA and HSM (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999). This limited support vanished almost completely following the implementation by the group of practices of forced recruitment and abductions within the Acholi population (Cakaj 2010). As the conflict progressed, the LRA stopped making any effort to win this support back, as it would rather resort to force to obtain what it needed from the population (Lomo and Hovil 2004, Lancaster *et al.* 2011).

External support:

The LRA have always maintained strong ties with Sudan. Although Sudan support throughout the years of conflict fluctuated, the assistance of Sudan was one of the main reasons for the LRA strength and survivability (International Crisis Group 2004, Day 2011). Sudanese support helped the LRA become an organised and well-supplied fighting force, which at times had even better equipment than the Ugandan army itself (Lomo and Hovil 2004, Branch 2005, Dunn 2010). This support must be read in the context of the hostile relations between Uganda and Sudan. In fact, Sudan began supporting the LRA in response to the Ugandan support to the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999, Cakaj 2010, Day 2011). Uganda and Sudan were fighting a proxy war through the LRA and SPLA and, only when it ended following the normalisation of the relationship between the two countries, the Sudanese support for the LRA almost completely ceased.

the LRA. As much as the HSM, the LRA too can be considered a splinter group, for it originated within the UPDA. The group was guided since its inception by Joseph Kony, an Acholi soldier and cousin of Alice Lakwena that would soon become infamous. Initially, Kony

joined the so-called Black Battalion of the UPDA with the role of advisor, before becoming the commander (Gersony 1997). During his time as commander of the battalion, he started to make proselytes among the militants to form its own contingent of fighters (Behrend 1999, Lomo and Hovil 2004). Similarly to Lakwena, he adopted rather unconventional tactics in the battles against the regime forces, which costed him some heavy losses and, more importantly the resentment of the UPDA senior commanders. In late 1987, the UPDA commanders ordered his arrest but he managed to escape, taking along 800 fighters (Gersony 1997, Doom and Vlassenroot 1999, Day 2019a), some of whom had been persuaded while the others outright kidnapped (Behrend 1999). The splintering of the LRA provoked a further deterioration of the already hostile relations among the Acholi rebel groups. When the LRA was still part of the UPDA, it is reported that Kony attempted to form an alliance with the HSM but his offer was turned down by Lakwena (Dunn 2010). As soon as the LRA parted ways with the UPDA, it was in direct competition with all the Acholi groups at conflict (Dunn 2010).

The splintering of the LRA contributed to further weaken the UPDA and the broader armed opposition. Due to the splintering, the UPDA suffered a further draining of militants and resources, which cumulated with the ones already suffered following the splintering of the HSM. By late 1987, fragmentation and internecine among the rebel groups had weakened the armed opposition to such an extent that both the UPDA and the HSM had to abandon the armed struggle following major setbacks. With regard to the HSM, it tried to resist the regime countermeasures throughout the whole year but, by November 1987, it was surrounded and defeated by the regime forces near Kampala (Gersony 1997, UCDP 2020b). The UPDA, instead, seriously weakened by defections, resource depletion, and fratricidal violence, suffered important defeats throughout the year that forced the group to sign an agreement with the regime to avoid complete defeat (Gersony 1997, Day 2011, 2019a). Elements of the UPDA in disagreement with the deal joined the LRA, contributing to reinforce the rebel group (Gersony

1997, Behrend 1999, Van Acker 2004). At the end of this first phase of the conflict episode, the armed opposition was still fragmented, as it was composed by the LRA and the UPA, but Kony's group became the dominant actor (Day 2011).

5.4.2. Period 1989-1992

Following the demise of the UPDA and the HSM, the conflict episode continued with both the LRA and the UPA engaged in the struggle against the regime. The departure of the once most prominent rebel group caused a temporary lull in fighting, as the intensity of the conflict at this stage was rather limited compared to the previous phase. In 1991, Museveni's regime decided to step up its effort against the LRA, launching a large-scale operation called Operation North. The operation has been indicated as the first real attempt of the regime to wipe out the LRA (Branch 2005). The regime carried out a 5-month long cordon-and-search operation with the aim to eradicate the LRA from its main area of deployment in northern Uganda (Gersony 1997, Branch 2005, UCDP 2020e). The operation was quite successful and the regime had a serious chance to finish off the LRA once and for all. However, it failed to seize this opportunity. The failure to finish off the LRA raised some concerns as to whether the regime was really committed to eradicate the rebel group. The regime position on the matter was that lack of competence in the deployment of the armed forces was behind the failure to defeat the LRA (Gersony 1997). Doubts remained as to whether the armed force purposely refrained from finishing off the LRA in order to justify their continued deployment and keep government funds coming through (Gersony 1997). These doubts were to become a recurring theme also in successive phases of the conflict.

The LRA suffered great difficulties during the operation, to the extent that it also tried to join forces with the UPA in the attempt to resist the crackdown of the regime. This attempt at cooperation almost came to fruition following the discussions between the leaders of the

groups. However, quibbles over resources between Kony and Hitler Eregu, leader of the UPA, brought the alliance between the rebel groups to collapse (Day 2019a). Lacking any cooperation between the groups of the armed opposition, the LRA had to deal on its own with the regime offensive. Even though the regime did not manage to finish off the LRA, the operation still had serious repercussions for the rebel group. The operation, in fact, seriously weakened the LRA, whose militants were largely reduced as a result of the offensive (Gersony 1997, Day 2019a). The operation impacted the LRA so greatly that it had to abandon the armed effort in late 1991.

At this point, and for the first time since 1986, the armed opposition is no longer fragmented, for only the UPA was active in 1992. The conflict continued but at a very low intensity and the UPA appeared unable to pose a serious challenge to the regime. The rebel group, in fact, was going through a period of internal tensions, which culminated with the departure of the leader Eregu, along with some militants, from the group (UCDP 2020f). By mid-1992, the armed activity of the UPA, now greatly depleted and with only few militants left, ceased completely and the conflict episodes terminated for low activity.

5.4.3. Impact of the independent variables

Also this second conflict episode of the small-N analysis offers important indications of how the independent variables of the study affect the termination of civil conflicts. The fragmentation of the armed opposition played a clear role in the conflict episode. Initially, the armed opposition was composed of a single, large, rebel group that was essentially the union of different factions that found in the UPDA a suitable outlet to raise their common grievances. When still united, the opposition demonstrated to be a quite proficient fighting force, as it carried out a successful invasion from Sudan and scored some successes also in subsequent battles. Of course, it was not sufficient to pose an unbearable menace to the regime but at least

the opposition showed a level of efficiency and coordination that was nonetheless adequate to pose a serious challenge.

Following the splintering, the armed opposition became weaker, both because the HSM siphoned militants from the main group, the UPDA, but also and more importantly because the overall strength of the opposition was divided in multiple poles that operated following their own direction. Lacking a univocal direction, strategy, and effort, the armed opposition was surely worse off than when it was composed of the UPDA only. From that moment on, the armed opposition began suffering some major battle setbacks. In this respect, the situation became even worse when further fragmentation occurred. While the emergence of the UPA did not play a major role in altering the course of the conflict, the splintering of the LRA from the UPDA did certainly contribute to further weaken the armed opposition. The splintering of the LRA did not only result in a further drain of resources and militants from the UPDA, but also in the establishment of yet another rebel group that operated autonomously and in dissonance with the others. At that point, fragmentation had contributed to weaken the armed opposition to such an extent that both the UPDA and the HSM suffered fatal setbacks that forced them to abandon the armed effort. Following the demise of the UPDA and the HSM, the armed opposition remained fragmented, with the LRA and the UPA carrying out the armed effort. In the second period too, the rebel groups operated autonomously and were largely disconnected, even though they were both contesting the regime and the very same incompatibility.

Similarly to the first conflict episode, also the events of this second episode provide confirmation of the causal mechanisms linking fragmentation to decreased chances of rebel victory and increased chances of government victory. The battle successes obtained at the beginning of the conflict episode showed that when the opposition was not fragmented it was more efficient and, accordingly, more capable of posing a serious challenge to the

government's stability compared to when it was fragmented. When it was fragmented, instead, the opposition lacked a sufficient degree of cohesion and coordination to be able to seriously threaten the stability of the regime. Accordingly, the events of this conflict episode illustrated again that fragmentation can significantly hamper the effort of the armed opposition and, conversely, facilitate the response of the government.

The events of this conflict episode showed that fragmentation also played a role in reducing the chances of conflict termination in negotiated settlement. Throughout the entire period in which the opposition was fragmented, negotiated settlements appeared to be completely off the table. In fact, fragmentation contributed to weaken the armed opposition to the extent that it placed the regime in a position of clear control, thus removing any incentive for the regime to negotiate. Accordingly, even though it did not necessarily contribute to an evident increase in bargaining problems, fragmentation contributed to remove the incentives for the regime to consider a negotiated solution to the conflict. This applies to both ceasefires and comprehensive peace agreements.

Even more than fragmentation, however, what appears to have played a crucial role for altering the dynamics of the conflict episode is the competition within the armed opposition, both moderate and severe. The events of the conflict episode showed that even moderate levels of internal competition can be detrimental to the effort of the armed opposition and, conversely, positive for the effort of the regime. In the first phase, the moderate competition among the rebel groups revolved mainly around resources, such as weapons, militants, and popular support. The groups tried to attain the necessary resources for the struggle directly from the other groups of the opposition, by seizing militants and weapons from them. In this regard, it is also important to note that the UPDA and the splinters groups HSM and LRA all competed for the same constituency, since were all of Acholi origins and all claimed to be representing the Acholi popular grievances. Even though all the groups had a common enemy and shared

the same grievances, there has never been any sort of cooperation between them. It appears that cooperation through alliances that could reduce the negative effects of the direct competition was never really sought after by the rebel groups. Accordingly, each group of the opposition continued to follow its own direction and compete with each other.

This competition resulted in a problematic lack of cooperation among the rebel groups. Such a lack of cooperation certainly did not help the armed opposition reach a level of efficiency that was even close to the one showed at the beginning of the conflict when it was not fragmented. As a result, the armed opposition could not operate as a coherent fighting force that could pose a serious challenge to the regime. In the last phase in particular, the rebel groups were incredibly susceptible to the regime countermeasures, which appeared to be impossible for the groups to withstand. To remedy this predicament, the rebel groups tried to find ways to cooperate. Such a cooperation attempt came in response to the battle setbacks that the LRA was suffering during Operation North. This cooperation attempt demonstrates once again that rebel groups were indeed cognisant of the benefits that increased cooperation through alliances would bring about and that, conversely, competition among them was detrimental to their effort. However, in this case too, the competitive dynamics within the opposition prevailed and cooperation between the LRA and UPA never materialised. The competitive relations and the lack of cooperation contributed to magnify the negative effects that the fragmentation already had for the effort of the armed opposition and, conversely, the positive ones for the government. It seems clear that, had the rebel groups found ways to cooperate in this final phase of conflict, they would have been able to at least withstand the regime countermeasures. The LRA remained alone in its attempt to resist the regime offensive and was depleted to such an extent that it had to (temporarily) abandon the armed struggle.

Severe competition within the armed opposition played an even larger role than moderate competition in shaping the dynamics of the conflict episode. Even before its splintering, the

different factions within the UPDA began attacking one another in the attempt to violently outbid and subsume the others. Fratricidal violence continued unabated, and even reached higher levels of intensity, following the splintering of the HSM and the LRA from the UPDA. In this context of severe internal competition within the opposition, even the UPA, which has always been quite detached from the other rebel groups, participated in these instances of fratricidal violence. By doing so, the rebel groups distracted human and material resources from the struggle against the regime to fight one another. Therefore, they actively contributed to waste of their overall fighting potential and generated substantial losses that resulted in the depletion of the armed opposition. As confirmed by Museveni himself, internecine within the opposition played a detrimental role for the effort of the armed opposition while contextually facilitated the effort of the government. In fact, these instances of intra-opposition violence largely played in the hands of the regime, which let the rebel groups fight one another before proceeding with the eradication of the two strongest ones, UPDA and HSM.

The moderate and severe competition within the opposition also contributed to make the negotiated solution of the conflict unattainable. A total ceasefire and, even more, a comprehensive peace agreement seemed completely out of reach when the opposition was competitive. It is difficult to imagine, in fact, how these negotiated solutions could be reached in a conflict context in which the regime had no incentives to negotiate and the groups themselves operated following competitive and zero-sum logics averse to mediation. Lacking any intention to mediate the controversy, bringing all the parties to the table appeared like an unsurmountable challenge. The events of this episode thus provide an illustration of how negotiated solutions of civil conflicts can become more difficult to reach when armed oppositions are internally competitive.

Finally, also the distribution of power within the armed opposition played a role in affecting the dynamics of conflict, albeit minor. As soon as the HSM splintered from the

UPDA, power within the opposition was dispersed between the rebel groups rather than concentrated in a hegemonic group. In fact, the HSM managed to distract from the UPDA a substantial number of militants and also to attract new recruits from the largely supportive Acholi population. Accordingly, the HSM had a substantial strength at its disposal since the beginning. Although an important difference remained between the UPDA and the HSM in terms of share of the overall power at their disposal, the former could not be considered the hegemonic actor even if it were stronger than the latter. With the emergence of the LRA, and the consequent further drain of militants from the UPDA, all the groups had a fairly similar share of the overall power of the armed opposition.

This dispersion of power within the opposition did not create major problems for the regime. While the regime had certainly to take the challenge that all the rebel groups posed equally seriously, it remained in clear control even though it had to deal with multiple, equally strong rebel groups. In fact, the competitive relations among the groups and the fact that they were all deployed in the same front in northern Uganda reduced the negative effects of having to deal with multiple groups at once. But while the dispersion of power within the opposition did not majorly affect the effort of the government, it appears instead that it was quite problematic for the armed opposition. The dispersion of power created some issues with regard to how the overall power was exerted against the regime. As the overall power of the armed opposition was dispersed across multiple uncooperative and highly competitive groups, it could not be maximised and employed effectively, since each group was wasting it by fighting the regime independently and by fighting one another. If power had been concentrated in a single hegemonic actor, the UPDA in this case, it could have been employed much more efficiently, since the hegemonic group would have had the majority of militants at its disposal and the chance to employ such power in a more coherent and harmonic way. Therefore, the events of this conflict episode illustrated how the dispersion of power across rebel groups might

negatively affect the efficiency of the armed opposition and, ultimately, the prospects of conflict termination in rebel victory.

In the final year of the conflict episode, the armed opposition was no longer fragmented, but it still paid the consequences of the previous years of fragmentation and competition. By that time, the only surviving rebel group was the UPA, a group that had been already depleted in the years before and for which it was just a matter of time before it would be either defeated or would have to abandon the armed conflict. At that point, the armed opposition had already collapsed due to the previous years of fragmentation and competition and there was nothing that the UPA could do to change the course of events.

The conflict episode terminated for lack of activity when the opposition was not fragmented, thus providing a confirmation of the theoretical expectations and the findings of the large-N analysis that this outcome is more likely to be observed when the opposition is not fragmented. However, the outcome of the conflict episode *per se* does not provide many elements to discuss. Rather, it is the entire conflict process that did, as the events of this conflict episode showed that, as expected, the fragmentation of and the competition within the armed opposition are deeply detrimental for the prospects of both rebel victory and negotiated settlements, and beneficial instead for the prospects of government victory.

The civil conflict in Uganda did not terminate with this episode. In fact, it took only two years for a new spell of conflict to begin. This third conflict episode of the small-N analysis is discussed in the next section.

5.5. Ugandan civil conflict: episode 3 (1994-2011)

The third conflict episode of the small-N analysis began in 1994, with the uprising of the LRA. Once again, the origins of this conflict episode need to be found in the events leading to the termination of the previous one and those that immediately followed. In the previous conflict

episode, the regime failed to seize the opportunity to completely eradicate the LRA. Between the two conflict spells, the regime and the LRA tried to find a negotiated solution to their incompatibility. The negotiations began in 1993, when the two parties, thanks to the regime negotiator Betty Bigombe, agreed to entertain discussions (Gersony 1997, UCDP 2020b). The negotiations continued into 1994 and led to Kony's commitment to disarm in 6 months' time (UCDP 2020e). By February 1994, however, the negotiations fell apart, with the parties denouncing each other's deceptiveness and Museveni issuing an ultimatum to the LRA: either surrender in seven days or face a military solution (Gersony 1997, Day 2019b, UCDP 2020e). The LRA chose the latter option. Several accounts suggest that the parties were not really committed to the negotiations. The regime undermined the negotiations quite clearly, issuing an ultimatum and adopting a rigid position that suggested it would rather continue a low intensity conflict that could legitimise sustained military expenditures to a negotiated solution (International Crisis Group 2008). The LRA, for its part, was clearly stalling and using the negotiations to buy time to reorganise and obtain crucial resources from external donors (Gersony 1997, Day 2019b, UCDP 2020e). At that point, the stage was set for the resumption of the hostilities.

5.5.1. Period 1994-1999

The conflict episode started right after the collapse of the negotiations. In mid-February the LRA crossed the border from South Sudan to launch a large-scale operation in northern Uganda (Gersony 1997, UCDP 2020e). Since the start, it was clear that the LRA had made good use of the time between the conflict spells, for it re-emerged well-armed and well-equipped (Day 2019b). It was apparent that the LRA had been drawn into the proxy war between Uganda and Sudan, with Sudan heavily supporting the rebel group to both undermine the Ugandan regime and obtain assistance with its domestic challenges, mostly the ones posed by the SPLA (Day

2019b). The support granted by the Sudanese regime was substantial, for it provided the LRA with weapons, sanctuary, and military training (UCDP 2020b). At least initially, it made the group better equipped than the Ugandan army itself (Day 2019b). Of course, the Sudanese support came at a high cost for the LRA because in return it had to face the SPLA numerous times throughout the conflict episode, suffering many casualties and distracting militants and resources from the struggle against Museveni's regime (Day 2011, UCDP 2020e).

Following the first attacks, the LRA managed to set a foothold in northern Uganda and to bring the conflict to a high level of intensity. The conflict carried on along these lines up until late 1995, when its duties in Sudan and some setbacks against the SPLA obliged the LRA to reduce its activity in Uganda (UCDP 2020e). Up until this point, conflict in Uganda was a matter between the regime of Museveni and the LRA. As of 1996, however, things began to change when new rebel groups emerged and the armed opposition became fragmented.

The first rebel group to emerge were the so-called Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). Based on the Rwenzori mountains, across the border between the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Uganda, the rebel group was a union of different factions of Islamic inspiration (Romkema 2007, Day 2011, Scorgie 2011, International Crisis Group 2012b, Titeca and Vlassenroot 2012). The ADF launched its first attacks in late 1996, crossing the border from DRC to carry out some operations against soft targets within Ugandan territory (Romkema 2007, Titeca and Vlassenroot 2012). The operations continued along the same lines in 1997, with the group making small-scale incursions in the eastern districts of Uganda (UCDP 2020g). The first large-scale operation of the ADF took place in June 1997, when it tried to capture an entire town but was successfully countered by the regime forces (International Crisis Group 2012b). Following this operation, the regime obtained the authorisation from the Congolese president Kabila to deploy its forces across the border but it soon became evident that the Ugandan armed forces lacked the necessary skills and equipment to pursue the ADF in

Allied Democratic Forces (ADF)

Origins:

Union of different factions of Islamist inspiration. In 1993, NALU, a group of militants that already challenged the Ugandan government but was never disbanded (Scorgie 2011), joined hands with a group of disaffected Muslim youth, including elements from the Tabliq Youth Movement (Romkema 2007, Day 2011, Titeca and Vlassenroot 2012). The union came about thanks to the support of both Sudanese and Congolese secret services (International Crisis Group 2012b).

Grievances & objectives:

The ADF is the only group in Uganda that can be considered an Islamist organisation (International Crisis Group 2012b). Despite this predominant characteristic, the ADF never managed to articulate a coherent political agenda, to the extent that it has been described as a ‘rebellion without a cause’ (Hovil and Werker 2005, Romkema 2007, Titeca and Vlassenroot 2012). At the very basic level, the ADF rose up to overthrow the regime of Museveni, hence its connection to the armed opposition. All factions within the group shared the objective to depose Museveni, since all were part of the previously overthrown regimes of Obote and Amin (Romkema 2007, Scorgie 2011, International Crisis Group 2012b), and to substitute it with a Muslim ruler (United Nations 2010, 2011b, 2014a).

Structure & membership:

Army-like with battalions (United Nations 2010). However, the ADF never used a traditional military ranking system (United Nations 2011b) and was flexible, both in terms of structure and tactics, for it mostly resorted to guerrilla, terrorism, and tried to avoid direct engagement with army forces (Hovil and Werker 2005, Romkema 2007, Titeca and Vlassenroot 2012). Initially, the members of the group were mostly former militants of NALU and of Ugandan Islamist factions, then forced abductions altered its composition.

Popular support:

The ADF never really enjoyed popular support. On one hand, the lack of popular support was due to the fact that the ADF was essentially a ‘rebel group in exile’, since, despite the Ugandan origins, it was based in DRC for its entire existence (International Crisis Group 2012b, Titeca and Vlassenroot 2012). On the other hand, lack of popular support was also due to the absence of a clear political agenda and to the violent practices carried out against civilians (Scorgie 2011).

External support:

The ADF received support mostly from Sudan and Zaire/DRC in the context of the proxy wars with Uganda (Hovil and Werker 2005, United Nations 2010, Scorgie 2011, Titeca and Vlassenroot 2012). To a lesser extent, also from Iraq and Islamist groups, such as Al Qaeda, Al Shabaab, and other jihadist movements (United Nations 2010, 2011a, 2011b, Titeca and Vlassenroot 2012)

the terrain of the Rwenzori mountains (International Crisis Group 2012b). At this point, the regime even tried to approach the ADF for a peaceful resolution, but when the group responded with a list of conditions for peace, the regime retracted its offer (UCDP 2020g). While the ADF seemed apparently detached from the operations of the other rebel groups of the opposition, it indeed was not, at least initially. In fact, the ADF was involved in a first attempt of cooperation among the rebel groups of the opposition, as it participated to a three-month military training

West Nile Bank Front (WNBF)

Origins:

Born from the union of the remnants of the army of the regime of Idi Amin under the leadership of the former UA and FUNA member Juma Oris (Project 2004, Day 2011, UCDP 2020b).

Grievances & objectives:

The WNBF rose up mainly to vindicate the marginalisation of the West Nile. The main objectives of the rebellion oscillated between deposing Museveni to reinstall Amin in a position of power and creating an independent state in West Nile (Day 2011, UCDP 2020b).

Structure & membership:

Unclear structure, likely similar to a conventional army due to the influence of the members, which for the majority were former soldiers of the Amin regime.

Popular support:

Minimal popular support, mainly because of the brutality of their practices toward the civilian population, including forced abductions (Project 2004).

External support:

The WNBF was supported by Sudan, which also assisted its creation in the context of the proxy war against Uganda (Day 2011).

under Sudanese sponsorship with the LRA and the so-called West Nile Bank Front (WNBF) (Project 2004, International Crisis Group 2012b).

The WNBF was the second rebel group that emerged in that period. Based mostly in South Sudan but with a strong interest in the West Nile region, the group was mainly composed of former soldiers and supporters of Idi Amin and was created with the assistance of Sudan, in which the group had most of its hideouts (Project 2004, UCDP 2020b). From a battlefield perspective, the WNBF managed to carry out only limited incursions into Uganda from its bases in South Sudan. These operations had limited effects and soon the rebel group had to deal with major issues in the host country. As of late 1996, the SPLA began targeting the bases of WNBF in South Sudan (Project 2004). Only few months later, the Sudanese rebel group crushed the WNBF in an ambush (UCDP 2020b). Thus, the role played by this rebel group in the conflict episode was minimal, since it was active only in 1996. However, its presence is relevant for the present discussion both because of the attempted cooperation with the other

Uganda National Rescue Front II (UNRF II)

Origins:

Born as a splinter faction of WNBF initially, then took over the rebellion in West Nile when the parent group left the conflict (Project 2004, Day 2011, UCDP 2020b).

Grievances & objectives:

The grievance of the UNRF II were similar to those of the WNBF, as they too rose up mainly to vindicate the marginalisation of the West Nile. Their objectives, however, were clearer, as they did not aim to overthrow the regime of Museveni but to make West Nile a peaceful and developed region to which they could return (Project 2004, Day 2011).

Structure & membership:

Unclear structure, likely similar to a conventional army due to the influence of the members, which for the majority were former soldiers of the Amin regime.

Popular support:

Unclear

External support:

The UNRF II too was supported by Sudan, which also assisted its creation when the WNBF began crumbling (Project 2004, Day 2011).

rebel groups of the armed opposition and because, in 1997, another rebel group emerged from its ranks. In fact, the uprising in West Nile was not over with the demise of the WNBF. A new rebel group, the Uganda National Rescue Front II (UNRF II), took on the armed struggle in West Nile initiated by the WNBF. The UNRF II was essentially a splinter faction of the WNBF and, in a way, it followed the same trajectory of the parent group (Project 2004, Day 2011). As much as the WNBF, also the UNRF II had most of hideouts in South Sudan and, accordingly, it had to deal with the very same issues. Attacks of the SPLA on the rear bases in South Sudan contributed to degrade the rebel group and, by 1998, it had to abandon the armed effort against the regime of Uganda. Despite the limited role of these two rebel groups, their presence is important for the current discussion since both can be considered part of the armed opposition and, thus, relevant for the assessment of the impact of fragmentation on the dynamics of conflict.

In the background of the emergence of these new rebel groups, the armed struggle of the LRA with the regime continued unabated. Throughout 1996 and 1997, the LRA too had to deal

with serious issues in Sudan. In this period, the LRA clashed numerous times with the SPLA and had many of its bases overrun by the Sudanese group (UCDP 2020e). Despite the difficulties in the host country, the LRA managed to keep the pressure high on the Ugandan regime and maintain the conflict at a significant level of intensity (UCDP 2020e). However, the difficulties that the LRA was experiencing in Sudan had some consequences. To relieve the pressure, the LRA approached the regime looking for a negotiated solution of the conflict. Despite the intention of the regime to annihilate the LRA remained unaltered, some talks were held in various occasions throughout 1996 and 1997 (Gersony 1997, Lomo and Hovil 2004, UCDP 2020e). The talks revolved around the opportunity of signing a ceasefire but, although they came close to be successful in 1998, a ceasefire never materialised (UCDP 2020e). At that point, the LRA put in standby the armed struggle with the regime to focus on the issues in the host country.

As soon as the LRA reduced its activity in Uganda, the regime stepped up its effort against the only rebel group active in 1999, the ADF. The regime crackdown on the ADF came mainly in response to the quite spectacular terrorist attack of the rebel group in the capital Kampala, where it bombed two restaurants (International Crisis Group 2012b). The operation struck a nerve with the regime, which responded with a large-scale operation in the Rwenzori mountains. The operation Mountain Sweep consisted of a large cordon-and-search mission in the mountainous area where the ADF had its hideouts (International Crisis Group 2012b). The operation resulted in the capture and killing of many militants and commanders of the ADF and, in the end, it was quite successful in degrading the group (Romkema 2007). Following the operation, the ADF approached the regime seeking a peaceful resolution and the regime was apparently open to the possibility. However, there are no records that any talks between the parties were held and the conflict continued into 2000. With this failed attempt to negotiate a way out of the conflict ends the first phase of the episode.

5.5.2. Period 2000-2006

The second phase of the conflict episode begins with the return of the LRA to battle. At the beginning of 2000, the rebel group resumed its incursions from southern Sudan, but its activity was limited to attacks to soft targets and civilians (UCDP 2020e). The activity of the LRA continued along these lines for the following two years and it was clear that the group was unable to step up its effort. The reason for the LRA reduced lethality in this phase of conflict needs to be found in the agreement between Uganda and Sudan to end their proxy war (Day 2019a). In fact, after months of negotiations between the two governments, in 1999 Uganda and Sudan signed the Nairobi peace agreement. With the agreement, both parties agreed to cease the support provided to the rebel groups active in each other territory (UCDP 2020h). Despite some doubts remained as to the correct implementation of the accord in the following years (UCDP 2020h), successive events in the episode left no doubts that the Sudanese support for the LRA had dramatically reduced.

While dealing with the return of the LRA, the regime simultaneously carried on with the operation Mountain Sweep to eradicate the ADF. The operation continued along the borders between Uganda and the DRC and, by 2001, the regime managed to push the rebel group out of Uganda (International Crisis Group 2011). At that point, most its militants had been eliminated or forced into hiding in the mountains beyond the Ugandan border (Romkema 2007, Titeca and Vlassenroot 2012). Museveni himself declared the conflict with the ADF to be over by 2001 but, even though the rebel group became inactive by late 2002, the regime failed to completely eradicate it (UCDP 2020g).

Once dealt with the ADF, the regime could focus exclusively on the LRA. Thanks to the newfound spirit of cooperation between Uganda and Sudan, the Ugandan regime was given permission by the Sudanese counterpart to enter its territory for a large operation aimed at wiping out the rebel group (Day 2019a, UCDP 2020e). In 2002, more than 10,000 Ugandan

soldiers crossed the borders of southern Sudan to enact the so-called Operation Iron Fist (Day 2019a). The operation was supposed to deliver a decisive blow on the LRA but, in reality, it was a failure (International Crisis Group 2004, Atkinson 2009). While the operation was certainly successful in destroying most of the hideouts of the LRA, it failed to degrade the fighting capacity of the rebel group (Day 2011). The militants of the rebel group, apparently aware of the incoming attack, managed to disperse and relocate deeper within Sudan and in some areas of northern Uganda (International Crisis Group 2004, Atkinson 2009). To demonstrate that the operation did little damage to its fighting capacity, the LRA immediately responded by increasing its activity in northern Uganda, mostly targeting civilians and committing gross human rights abuses (Atkinson 2009, UCDP 2020e). However, the operation was not without consequences for the LRA, which could no longer count on most of its bases in southern Sudan, one of the main reasons for the LRA survival until then (International Crisis Group 2004).

The LRA, now the only active group of the opposition, had to find ways to come out of this predicament. The strategy of the group to regain the lost ground was to spread its area of operations to eastern Uganda, toward the Teso and Lango regions (Lomo and Hovil 2004). This strategy was motivated by at least three main reasons. First, the LRA wanted to give a more national dimension to their rebellion, in order to include other segments of the Ugandan population and spread the area of deployment of the army (International Crisis Group 2004). Second, it was in great need of material resources and supplies and considered these areas as a suitable reservoir to draw from. Third and most importantly, it was convinced that it could obtain support from the former rebel groups of those areas (Lomo and Hovil 2004, UCDP 2020e). The strategy of the LRA did not pay off, as the population of those areas appeared averse to cooperation (International Crisis Group 2004). In fact, more than 2,000 militants of

the former rebel group UPA preferred to side with the Ugandan army rather than the LRA (Lomo and Hovil 2004).

Having exhausted the options for acquiring more strength, in 2004 the LRA approached the regime seeking a negotiated solution to the conflict. The regime seemed open to the possibility and an initial 7-day ceasefire was agreed by the parties. This was the first of a series of temporary ceasefires agreed by the parties but the negotiations collapsed toward the end of 2004 amidst accusations of the regime that the LRA was once again using the talks to stall (UCDP 2020e). The conflict continued throughout 2005, with the LRA carrying out brutal attacks, especially against civilians, but contextually showing that its fighting capacity was much reduced (International Crisis Group 2005a, 2005b, 2006a).

Despite the protraction of conflict, however, these initial contacts helped make a breach in the hostility between the regime and the LRA, producing the conditions for the first meaningful peace process of the Ugandan conflict. In 2006, the so-called Juba peace process began. According to many analysts, both the regime and the LRA had good reasons to entertain negotiations. From the LRA standpoint, analysts indicated two reasons. Some argued that the LRA was going through a period of prolonged weakness and was basically a spent force struggling to survive. As such, it needed a negotiated way out of the conflict before being crushed. Others, especially those who did not consider the LRA as depleted as many had claimed, argued instead that the reason behind the LRA decision to entertain negotiations was purely strategic, for peace talks offered the group the opportunity to relieve the military pressure and reorganise (International Crisis Group 2006b). Compared to previous attempts of negotiation, for the first time the regime too appeared to have some incentives to negotiate. Analysts pointed to three main reasons. First, the regime was beginning to suffer the increasing international pressure, as international attention began to turn to the deteriorating humanitarian conditions in Uganda (IISS 2008). Second, the negotiations presented Museveni with the

chance to cleanse his own image from various accusations, which included charges for corruption and for the inability to solve the humanitarian crisis in northern Uganda (International Crisis Group 2006b). Finally, the period of hesitation was becoming costly and a solution for the conflict with the LRA needed to be found before the group could amass resources and fighters again (International Crisis Group 2006b).

Substantial progress was made toward the negotiated solution of the conflict throughout 2006 and a formal ceasefire was agreed by the parties in August (International Crisis Group 2006b, 2007). However, despite the unprecedented incentives of both parties to find a peaceful solution, the negotiations did not bring about a comprehensive peace deal. The ceasefire signed in August was renewed a few more times throughout the year, with both parties violating its terms in several occasions (International Crisis Group 2007). In the end, the only tangible result of the Juba process was the reduction of the conflict intensity and temporary withdrawal of the LRA from active conflict, but a final deal was never signed.

5.5.3. Period 2007-2011

The temporary withdrawal of the LRA from the conflict did not put an end to the episode. In fact, the re-emergence of the ADF in 2007 kept alive the conflict over government in Uganda. ADF was not active in the Ugandan conflict since 2002, following the crackdown carried out by the regime with the operation Mountain Sweep. In that occasion, the regime failed to completely eradicate the rebel group. Since the operation, the ADF was not dormant but its activity was based in the DRC, where it had its bases (Romkema 2007, International Crisis Group 2012b, Titeca and Vlassenroot 2012).

In early 2007, the ADF crossed again the borders to carry out a series of attacks and set up new bases within the Ugandan territory (UCDP 2020g). In the attempt to finally solve what had become a shared problem, the regimes of Uganda and DRC signed a pact to regulate the

joint effort to fight the ADF (Titeca and Vlassenroot 2012). Conflict between the parties continued for few months, reaching a significant intensity, but the regime managed to thwart the attacks of the ADF (International Crisis Group 2012b). At this point of the conflict, the ADF was quite weak, also because one of its internal factions, NALU, decided to part ways (International Crisis Group 2012b). Its armed activity proved quite ineffective and by 2008 the group tried once again to resume the negotiations with the regime. Even though the regime appeared to be open to the possibility, the negotiations never really took off (International Crisis Group 2012b, Titeca and Vlassenroot 2012).

At the same time, the LRA emerged once again after a brief period of inactivity. During this period of inactivity, the rebel group continued the negotiations with the regime and several partial agreements were signed. A final agreement was signed in February 2008 and all was set for a final ceremony in South Sudan, where Kony was supposed to put his signature on the final peace agreement to end the hostilities (International Crisis Group 2008, UCDP 2020b). However, Kony did not show up at this and subsequent ceremonies organised by the parties to sign the final agreement (IISS 2008, Atkinson 2009, UCDP 2020b). By mid-2008, the LRA resumed its attacks and many incidents in South Sudan, DRC, and Central African Republic (CAR) were attributed to the rebel group (International Crisis Group 2008). The resumption of the hostilities revealed that the LRA had definitely abandoned the negotiations and that it had used the peace process to reorganise for armed conflict (International Crisis Group 2008, UCDP 2020b). The resumption of the hostilities marked the end of the Juba peace process.

At this stage, the LRA appeared to be following an ingenious strategy of avoiding direct contact with the regime forces. This strategy consisted of the deployment of its forces in the shared borders between South Sudan, DRC, and CAR, in an area in which the armies of each of these countries, but most importantly of Uganda, would find it difficult to track them down (IISS 2008, International Crisis Group 2008). The main bases of the group were instead located

in the DRC, in the Garamba National Park (International Crisis Group 2008). The choice to set up their bases in this large area of the DRC was no coincidence. In fact, Kony chose the Garamba Park to be closer to the ADF, which also had its hideouts in the area (Lancaster *et al.* 2011). The LRA was seeking to improve its position vis-à-vis the regime through an alliance with the ADF and other defunct Ugandan rebel groups (IISS 2008). Contacts between the LRA and the ADF began during the Juba peace process and some sources indicate that the two groups discussed the possibility of merging in a broader organisation (Romkema 2007). Even though there is no clear evidence of an actual collaboration between the groups, the relocation of the LRA bases in the area strongly suggest that the LRA was seeking cooperation.

The collapse of the Juba peace process did not catch the regime off-guard. Before the end of the negotiations, Museveni opened talks with South Sudan and the DRC for the participation to a joint operation to eradicate the LRA (International Crisis Group 2010). While initially hesitant, the promised support of the United States eventually convinced South Sudan and the DRC to participate (International Crisis Group 2010). Following a period of intelligence gathering thanks to US technology, the three countries decided to proceed with the operation (Atkinson 2009). The plan of the so-called Operation Lightning Thunder consisted of three phases. First, Ugandan jets assisted by US intelligence would carry out a surprise attack on the LRA camps. Second, special forces deployed in the area would proceed with the capture or killing of the LRA militants. Finally, the Uganda infantry would proceed with the final clean-up of the area (Atkinson 2009, International Crisis Group 2010).

On the 14th of December 2008, the operation was launched with the planned airstrikes over the Garamba park (UCDP 2020b). Within few hours, however, it became apparent that the entire operation was a disaster. The surprise airstrike was not that surprising for the LRA, which apparently was aware of the incoming operation and had time to move out of Garamba (Atkinson 2009, International Crisis Group 2010). In addition, bad weather conditions did not

allow the deployment of the jet fighters, obliging the Ugandan forces to resort to much slower helicopters to carry out the attack. Consequently, the special forces could never be deployed and the infantry was of little use, since it reached the area of operations one week later, when Kony and its militants had already been long gone (International Crisis Group 2010). The operation, intended to deliver a sudden knock-out blow to the LRA, failed spectacularly to achieve its objectives. It continued throughout 2009, increasingly resembling a war of attrition (International Crisis Group 2010). The operation was eventually handed over to the DRC army, since the visible presence of Ugandan forces became controversial for the President Kabila (International Crisis Group 2010, UCDP 2020b). The forces of the DRC launched the so-called operation Rudia II, but the situation did not improve substantially (United Nations 2009, 2010).

The LRA suffered some consequences from the operation but, in the end, it was yet not defeated. To show that it was not a spent force, the rebel group resumed its brutal attacks on civilians, including the infamous attack of the Christmas eve of 2008. Following the operation, the rebel group gave a great demonstration of its flexibility. The six contingents that prior to the operation had their base in Garamba divided in smaller units to be more mobile and avoid direct confrontation with the armies that were pursuing them (International Crisis Group 2010). It was the first time that the LRA had its units so far apart from each other and scattered over three different countries (Cakaj 2010). The transformation of the rebel group into a light and highly mobile force had some consequences, both for the chasing armies and for the group itself. The scattering of the LRA in small units over a large ungoverned area greatly complicated the job of the regime forces that were trying to capture Kony and its militants (International Crisis Group 2010). But while the division into small units granted the LRA more chances to avoid capture, it also provoked an erosion of its cohesion and efficiency. Many analysts agree that in this period of conflict the LRA had entered a survival mode (Lancaster *et al.* 2011, Day 2019b) and it could be considered ‘a causeless and homeless guerrilla group

for which the most pressing concern is day-to-day survival' (International Crisis Group 2010, p. 10). Despite this decline, however, the LRA was not a spent force and maintained its ability to cause harm even with small contingents of fighters (Cakaj 2010, 2011).

The regional hunt of the LRA continued throughout 2010, with Ugandan, DRC, CAR, and South Sudanese forces chasing the rebel group. In reality though, the hunt was carried mostly by the Ugandan forces, for the other states were either too weak militarily or not sufficiently committed to defeating the rebel group (International Crisis Group 2010, Lancaster *et al.* 2011, UCDP 2020e). The search operations for Kony became even less effective when the Ugandan regime largely diminished the troops employed in the hunt (International Crisis Group 2011, United Nations 2011a). At this stage of the conflict, the LRA was a reduced force that had been out of Uganda for several years and, as such, it was no longer considered a real risk for the security of the country (International Crisis Group 2011, Lancaster *et al.* 2011). For this reason, Museveni scaled down all the operations against the LRA so that he could put the regime's military resources to more politically relevant and rewarding uses. Of course, the reduction in effort determined also a reduction in the possibilities for the chasing armies to locate and capture the LRA (International Crisis Group 2011).

The regional hunt for the LRA acquired a more formal and concerted dimension when the African Union (AU), under the pressure of its member states and the US, agreed to launch a regional mission to finally defeat the rebel group (International Crisis Group 2011, United Nations 2011b). The mission was launched to facilitate the already existing multinational operation carried out by Uganda, DRC, CAR, and South Sudan (International Crisis Group 2011, UCDP 2020b). The mission acquired an even more prominent international dimension when the US, a long-standing ally of Uganda's Museveni, decided to intervene in assistance of the Ugandan forces (International Crisis Group 2011). The decision followed the 2010 'LRA Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act', promulgated by President Barack Obama

to reaffirm the commitment of the US administration to support the African allies involved in the conflict with the LRA (Dagne 2011, US Department of State 2012). The support consisted in the deployment in Uganda of 100 troops, who were not to participate in active conflict but rather play an advisory role (International Crisis Group 2011). Such a limited support was certainly not decisive with respect to the overall scope of the operations against the LRA but yet it contributed to give a more international dimension to the hunt for Kony.

Just before the termination of the conflict episode, the ADF re-emerged once again and was recorded as active in 2011. Its activity was quite limited and mostly occurred in the DRC, where it was trying to withstand the attacks of the Congolese forces (International Crisis Group 2012b). The ADF had some skirmishes with Ugandan forces too, hence why the group was recorded as active in this final stage of the episode. It appears that the threat posed by the ADF had become pressing for the regime, not much for the armed activity of the group, but rather for its relations with other Islamist groups. Although many of the claims appear to be poorly substantiated, several sources reported that the ADF had links with the most important global and regional Islamist threats, such as al Qaeda and Al-Shabaab (Romkema 2007, International Crisis Group 2012b, Titeca and Vlassenroot 2012). The extent of the relations between the ADF and these prominent Islamist groups is unclear, but some sources indicate that some militants of Al-Shabaab assisted the Ugandan group in the attack in Kampala and have provided bomb-making training to the militants of the group (United Nations 2011b, International Crisis Group 2012b). Irrespective of the support received by external groups and the interpretation given by the regime to the threat posed by the group, the ADF at this stage was quite weak and appeared to be unable to pose a substantial menace to the security of Uganda.

In 2011, thus, both groups of the armed opposition, the ADF and the LRA, were unable to mount a sustained challenge to the stability of the regime. Both hunted by multinational

coalitions and much reduced in strength, the two groups substantially de-escalated their effort in 2011, to the extent that both were recorded as inactive in the following year. Accordingly, as the conflict intensity decreased but the armed opposition had not been formally defeated, the conflict episode terminated for low activity.

5.5.4. Impact of the independent variables

Also this third episode has showed that the independent variables of the study, although not all to the same degree, have played a role in shaping the dynamics of the conflict. The fragmentation of the armed opposition had indeed a substantial relevance. At the beginning of the episode, the armed opposition was not fragmented, for it was composed exclusively of the LRA. At that point, the variable did not have major effects. The resumption of the hostilities was mainly due to the failed negotiations of the regime with the LRA and the push toward renewed armed activity coming from Sudan. Immediately after the beginning of the hostilities, the intensity of the conflict increased. The factor that predominantly affected the increase in tempo and effectiveness of the LRA operations was the external support of Sudan, which helped turning the rebel group into a force to be seriously reckoned with. Of course, the fact that the armed opposition at that stage was large, cohesive, and operated with a univocal strategy also contributed to the effectiveness of the armed effort. However, it appears that, more than a clear consequence of being cohesive, it was the external support that played a more prominent role in enabling the armed opposition to carry out a sustained challenge against the regime.

The effects of fragmentation became visible at a later stage of the episode. In 1996, the armed opposition became fragmented, with the emergence of the ADF and the WNBF. One year later, the opposition fragmented further with the splintering of UNRF II from WNBF. The activity of the UNRF II and WNBF appeared to be quite limited, since soon after their

emergence these two West Nilers groups were wiped out by the regime. Following the exit of these two groups from the conflict, the armed opposition remained fragmented, with the LRA and the ADF carrying out the armed effort simultaneously up until 2003. Both rebel groups had to deal with some serious issues throughout that period. On one hand, the ADF suffered greatly from the increasing crackdown of the regime, culminated in the operation Mountain Sweep. The operation did not crush the ADF but contributed to substantially degrade it and push it out of Uganda. On the other hand, the LRA had first to deal with the cessation of the external support provided by Sudan, then to endure great hardship following the crackdown of the regime carried out through the operation Iron Fist.

The events of this period provide some confirmations of how the fragmentation of the armed opposition can be detrimental to its armed effort and beneficial for the regime. As soon as the opposition fragmented, the rebel groups tried to increase the intensity of their armed effort. The addition of new rebel groups brought into the conflict an increased number of militants. Yet, despite the rebel groups possessed a quite significant number of militants at their disposal, they remained unable to pose a considerable challenge to the regime's stability. Much of their difficulties had certainly to do with the simultaneous engagement of most of them in a double struggle against the Ugandan regime and the SPLA in South Sudan. However, it still appears that the armed opposition, despite the decent fighting potential, was unable to project its force as it could, for the groups carried on following their own path and different strategies.

The same conclusions apply to the period immediately after the demise of the UNRF II and the WNBF, when the ADF and the LRA were the only surviving groups. In fact, even when the groups of the opposition were only two, they continued the armed effort following separate directions. As such, the rebel groups were much less effective and more susceptible to the regime crackdown throughout the entire period, especially if compared to the initial phase of the conflict, when the opposition was not fragmented. Although it is not possible to know with

certainty what would have happened in this phase had the groups been more cooperative, it appears clearly that the presence of multiple autonomous groups did not play in the hands of the rebels, but rather the regime, which managed to score some important successes, first against the minor players of the conflict, the WMBF and the UNRF II, and then against the main ones, the LRA and the ADF.

The fragmentation of the armed opposition did not only affect the prospects of conflict termination in rebel and government victory, but also those of termination in negotiated settlement. In fact, when the opposition was fragmented, some attempts to negotiate a peaceful solution of the conflict were made. Talks were held at different stages with the major players of the armed opposition, but in the end they did not bear any fruit. The most important attempts made were the ones between the regime and the LRA. The regime, however, despite some initial discussions, did not seem very receptive of the idea of negotiating. In a way, these events provide a confirmation of the theoretical expectations regarding the reduced chances of peaceful settlements when the armed opposition is fragmented. In this case, a deterioration of the bargaining problems due to the fragmentation of the opposition can be noticed. In fact, as the armed opposition was not strong and cohesive enough to represent a serious menace its stability, the regime lacked incentives and commitment to negotiate a way out of the conflict, favouring the military option over any other possible negotiated option. In addition to this, the regime had no trust in the groups of the opposition, especially the LRA, which had used negotiations before to stall and reorganise when it was under pressure. All these elements connected to the fragmentation of the armed opposition made the chances of conflict termination in peace agreement or ceasefire rather slim.

As of 2003, the armed opposition was no longer fragmented. With the temporary demise of the ADF, the LRA remained the only active rebel group of the opposition. The reduction of the rebel groups in the conflict episode brought about some immediate changes. While the

chances of conflict termination in government and rebel victory did not change much, it appears instead that the chances of termination in either ceasefire or peace agreement increased substantially as soon as the opposition was no longer fragmented. Talks between the parties – the regime and the LRA – started straight after the demise of the ADF, since some discussions to sign a ceasefire were already held in February 2003. These initial talks, as much as those held occasionally in the successive two years, did not produce any major result but it was apparent that, as time passed, the discussions were becoming more serious and frequent. For the first time during the conflict, the parties appeared increasingly inclined to negotiate a way out of the conflict, as the series of temporary ceasefires, high level talks, and preliminary negotiations of this period showed. Eventually, these off-and-on discussions led to the most important peace attempt ever made in Uganda, the Juba peace process.

In order to understand how fragmentation, or better the lack thereof in this instance, contributed to shape the course of events in this period is necessary to illustrate the context surrounding the peace process. As specified on many occasions in Chapter 2, one of the main obstacles toward the negotiated settlement of civil conflicts are bargaining problems. Of course, these bargaining problems undoubtedly characterised also the Juba peace process. In this specific case, two were the main obstacles toward the negotiated solution of the conflict. First, the process was characterised by mutual distrust, for both the LRA and the regime did not fully believe in the opponent's good faith. The regime, in particular, reiterated several times its distrust in the LRA, recalling the previous occasions in which the rebel group had used talks to reorganise (International Crisis Group 2006b). Second, the process was characterised by limited commitment by both parties, which partly explains the mutual distrust. On the side of the regime, the actual commitment to the peace process was limited because the favourite option of conflict resolution has always been decisive victory over its challengers, especially the LRA (International Crisis Group 2006b). It seems, in fact, that while part of the regime and

the negotiators took the talks seriously, Museveni and the core leadership of the regime did so much more reluctantly, for they still favoured the annihilation of the LRA over granting concessions (IISS 2008, International Crisis Group 2008, 2010). On the opposition side, the commitment to the peace process was limited because the LRA knew it could use the negotiations to buy time to regroup. Yet, for the very first time a real attempt to solve the incompatibility between the regime and the LRA was made. The regime, while still favouring the military option, did put some effort in trying to address the causes of the conflict. Rather than focusing on the surrender of the LRA only, as many analysts were expecting, the regime presented some plans to resolve the incompatibility, improve the conditions in northern Uganda, deal with the demobilisation of the rebels and invited the LRA to highlight the inadequacies of its plans (International Crisis Group 2006b). Nothing of sort had ever happened in the Ugandan conflict before.

Fragmentation, or better lack thereof, had surely something to do with this peace process and more generally with the prospects of negotiated settlement of the Ugandan conflict. It seems implausible that a peace process of this proportion would have ever materialised had the opposition been fragmented. The fact that the opposition was composed of only one group seemed to be beneficial for the negotiations, for it largely reduced the information problems and the preferences that the regime had to accommodate. In fact, the regime had to gather information on a single actor, for which it had already good knowledge regarding its strength and resolve, and it needed to accommodate only its preferences. Keeping the peace process alive and making progress in this respect appeared already as a huge enterprise even if the rebel group was only one. Accordingly, it is difficult to imagine that a peace process could even exist, let alone progress, had the rebel groups been more than one, especially considering the amount of negotiations that it took to reach a viable agreement with a single group and the general distrust that characterised the relations among all the parties that have been at conflict

in this episode. All in all, thus, bargaining problems still existed, as it is normal to expect in peace processes between regimes and rebels. However, these bargaining problems would have been certainly greater had the opposition been fragmented, since greater information problems and diverse preferences would have added up to the already existing limited commitment and mutual distrust. In the end, the peace process fell short of producing a comprehensive peace agreement, but at least a ceasefire between the parties was achieved.

Accordingly, the events of this episode of conflict showed that fragmentation (and lack thereof) did affect the prospects of peaceful resolution of the conflict. In fact, while the chance of termination in negotiated settlement appeared slim to non-existent when the opposition was fragmented, they indeed increased when the opposition was not fragmented anymore. This suggests that civil conflicts in which the opposition is fragmented are less likely to be resolved at the negotiation table than conflicts in which the opposition is composed of a single rebel actor. Although the episode did not end in ceasefire following the Juba peace process because the ADF almost contextually resumed its armed activity, this does not alter the conclusion that the fragmentation of the Ugandan opposition dissuaded the negotiated termination of the conflict while the opposite occurred when it was no longer fragmented.

The events of this episode also provide some indications of the effects that the competition among rebel groups might have on the prospects of conflict termination. Compared to the previous conflict episodes, this third episode was not characterised by clear instances of active competition among the rebel groups of the opposition. However, in this episode too the rebel groups failed to find ways to cooperate and, accordingly, to reduce the even minimal levels of competition that normally exist among actors that are fighting the same incompatibility.

Similarly to the previous episodes, some minimal attempts at cooperating were made. In this case, cooperation among the rebel groups was limited to the period of shared training of

the LRA, ADF, and WNBF under Sudan sponsorship in 1996 and the attempted merger of the LRA with the ADF in 2007. However, these attempts did not lead to any alliance among the groups, nor to any other form of substantial cooperation short of a formal alliance. The events of this episode suggest that the Ugandan rebel groups never sought cooperation in a systematic way, but exclusively to come out of difficult predicaments and when their situation was almost irremediably compromised. By looking in particular at the events that followed the failed merger of the LRA with the ADF, it is clear that an alliance between the two groups at that stage would have been useful. In fact, in the following months the ADF was forced out of the conflict again by the regime and the LRA suffered greatly from both the regime crackdown through the operation Lightning Thunder and the regional hunt that ensued immediately after. Undoubtedly, a greater cooperation could have helped the two rebel groups better withstand the crackdown carried out by the regime on each of them. Thus, despite the groups of the opposition have never been in direct competition, they remained uncooperative throughout the entire episode.

Such a lack of cooperation had some effects in shaping the dynamics of the conflict, for it substantially magnified the effects of fragmentation discussed earlier on. In fact, if the fragmentation already contributed to turning the armed opposition into a non-cohesive force, the moderate competition among the groups contributed to make it even more so. Had the groups found ways to cooperate, the armed opposition would have certainly been able to better employ its full potential and project its force in a much more cohesive and efficient manner, despite the fragmentation. Having failed to do so, the armed opposition remained ineffective and enormously susceptible to the countermeasures of the regime. In this respect, thus, the events of this episode provide an illustration of how deleterious even moderate levels of competition might be for the armed opposition and how favourable, instead, might be for the government.

In this episode there were no recorded instances of severe internal competition, since none of the rebel groups engaged in fratricidal violence with the other rebel groups of the opposition. Accordingly, this variable did not play any role in the episode. In this respect, however, it must be noted that the rebel groups did engage in violent activities with other rebel groups, but these groups were external to the armed opposition and involved in a civil conflict occurring in a different country. These instances of violence with external rebel groups are not strictly related to the phenomenon of interest for the present dissertation but, as they contributed to alter the dynamics of the conflict episode presently discussed, they still deserve some comments.

With the only exception of the ADF, all the rebel groups that have been part of the armed opposition in this episode have also been involved in violent activities against the Sudanese rebel group SPLA. At different stages, the LRA, WNBF, and UNRF II engaged the SPLA in battle, both as a repayment for the support provided by Sudan and also to defend themselves from the attacks of the Sudanese rebel group. These instances of *inter-* rather than *intra-*opposition violence had deleterious impacts for the armed opposition, for they resulted in all the rebel groups suffering many losses, both in terms of militants and resources. Accordingly, it can be inferred that while these instances of violence among groups do not represent the instances of intra-opposition violence that the dissertation is concerned about, this inter-rebel violence still played a role to be accounted for. While it played no role in affecting the chances of conflict termination in negotiated settlements, since the groups involved were not fighting for the same incompatibility, they surely brought about detrimental effects for the armed opposition and beneficial effects for the Ugandan regime. These instances of inter-rebel violence had the same effects that intra-opposition violence was expected to bring about. The armed opposition was, in fact, weakened by these instances of inter-rebel violence, for the rebel groups not only suffered many losses, thus causing a reduction in the fighting potential of the

opposition, but also distracted human and material resources from the struggle against the regime to employ them against the SPLA.

To a certain extent, these events also provide some indications of how instances of violence among rebel groups might alter the prospects of conflict termination due to lack of activity. The fact that both the LRA (only temporarily) and the WNBF had to abandon the armed effort against the regime to focus on resisting the attacks of the SPLA suggests that violence among groups might contribute to make conflict termination in low activity more likely to occur. As expected, in fact, violence among rebel groups forces them to put in standby or altogether abandon the armed struggle against the government in order to focus all their energy and attention to the one against each other.

Finally, the distribution of power within the armed opposition played only a minor role in shaping the dynamics of conflict in this episode. For almost the entire period in which the armed opposition was fragmented, power has been concentrated in a hegemonic rebel group, the LRA. The only stage in which power was dispersed within the opposition was between 1997 and 1998, namely the period of greater fragmentation of the opposition. The dispersion of power across the rebel groups appeared to have played a role in shaping the effectiveness of the effort of the opposition in that period. In fact, the dispersion of power within the opposition was detrimental for the opposition effort since it created once again some issues with how the overall power could be employed against the regime. The overall power of the opposition could not be maximised and exerted effectively because it was dispersed across multiple autonomous and uncooperative groups, which were essentially misusing it by fighting the regime independently from one another and by following different strategies. The overall power would have certainly been exerted much more effectively if it were concentrated in a single hegemonic group, for such a group could have counted on the majority of militants and the opportunity to use this power in a more coherent and less disjointed manner. In successive phases, the

distribution of power within the opposition did not appear to have a major role. In fact, even though the LRA was the hegemonic group, the overall power of the opposition vis-à-vis the regime had diminished to such an extent after years of continued struggle that how it was distributed became almost irrelevant for altering the prospects of rebel victory.

The same holds for the prospects of government victory. As much as for the opposition, the period in which power was dispersed was detrimental for the regime's effort. In that specific period, the regime was obliged to take the challenge that each rebel group posed equally seriously, mainly because the groups were deployed in different fronts and, as such, it could not afford to ignore any of them in order to focus on one at a time. Overall, however, the regime appeared largely in control throughout the entire episode and it is difficult to see how the distribution of power within the opposition had any particular effects on its armed effort beyond those mentioned above. With regard to the other possible outcomes, instead, it does not appear that in this specific episode the distribution of power played any role at all in altering the prospects that they would occur.

In the final period of the conflict episode the effect of the independent variables was quite limited. Following the failed attempt to cooperate, the rebel groups were completely disconnected and, the LRA in particular, scattered across a large swathe of territory in three different countries. At that stage, both groups were only focused on avoiding capture rather than proactively engaging the enemy. Toward the end of the episode, the LRA was also hunted by a large multilateral mission guided by the AU and assisted by the US. The regime was in complete control and the opposition did no longer represent a major security concern at that stage. Accordingly, any positive outcome for the opposition appeared to be completely out of reach, for both final victory and any sort of peaceful termination were completely off the table. The supremacy of the regime and its partners was so considerable at this stage that the only options left for the armed opposition were either to be completely defeated or to vanish.

Accordingly, it is the supremacy of the coalition against the Ugandan rebels the factor that, more than others, affected the events leading to the termination of the conflict. However, if the opposition found itself in such a predicament is mostly because of what occurred before. In fact, the condition of the armed opposition at this final stage of the conflict is the direct result of the previous years of regime crackdown, fragmentation, and lack of cooperation. Therefore, while at this final stage the supremacy of the opponent was the main factor affecting how the civil conflict could terminate, years of fragmentation and lack of cooperation certainly contributed to put the opposition up against the wall. In the end, the conflict terminated for lack of armed activity, for as of 2012 both rebel groups, the ADF and the LRA, were no longer active. The outcome of the episode might appear as a total victory for the regime. In truth, however, the regime failed once again to completely eradicate the rebel groups. As a result, following a brief period of inactivity, the rebel groups re-emerged once again and new conflict episode began. This fourth episode is the object of the next section.

5.6. Ugandan civil conflict: episode 4 (2013-2017)

The final conflict episode of the small-N analysis began in 2013, when the two main rebel groups of the previous episode, the LRA and the ADF, emerged once again. At the end of the previous episode it was stressed that the Ugandan regime, assisted in its effort by a multinational coalition, had failed once again to completely crush the rebel groups of the opposition. As a result, after less than two years of inactivity, both the LRA and the ADF were still alive and able to cause harm, albeit to a limited extent compared to the previous conflict spells. With regard to the LRA, its re-emergence does not represent a return to proactive fighting against the regime. Rather, its return must be seen as a result of the attempts of the multinational coalition guided by the AU to track down the group contingents. The ADF, instead, acquired some strength in between the two conflict spells and was still able to carry

out lethal attacks (United Nations 2014a). As the two groups re-emerged in the same year, the armed opposition was fragmented since the beginning of the conflict episode. However, as the events discussed below illustrate, the two groups were entirely disconnected in this final conflict episode.

5.6.1. Period 2013-2017

There is not a clear-cut event that marked the beginning of this fourth episode of conflict in Uganda. This episode started as a result of the increased intensity of violence between the regime and both the LRA and the ADF in the context of the regional effort against the two groups that began in the previous episode.

The multinational hunt for Kony and the scattered contingents of the LRA continued throughout the period in between the two conflict episodes. During this time, the coalition guided by the AU was reinforced through a more tangible participation of all the states that were concerned about the activities and whereabouts of the LRA. Between 2012 and 2013, the DRC, CAR, and South Sudan provided the AU-guided mission with approximately 500 soldiers each (UCDP 2020b). Thanks to this shared participation, the mission aimed at eradicating the LRA could continue in this initial phase of the episode. However, the entire mission was plagued by operational problems and political tensions that substantially hindered its effectiveness. Despite the shared participation to the mission, the main contributor was Uganda. The participation of the other states remained, in fact, quite limited.

The limited commitment of the other states was not the major problem of the mission. Rather, it was the mutual distrust between the participating countries that hampered the efficiency of the coalition in pursuit of the LRA. In many occasions, in fact, Ugandan troops were not allowed access to certain areas of the other participating countries in which it was believed LRA contingents were hiding (UCDP 2020b). In addition, the political crisis that

broke out in 2013 in both South Sudan and CAR resulted in a reduced participation of these two countries to the mission, with the withdrawal of both soldiers and access permissions (Resolve 2013, UCDP 2020b). The operation, thus, despite some instances in which it managed to locate and engage with the LRA contingents, proved to be quite ineffective. Not even the renewed participation of the US to the operation on the side of the Ugandan forces, mostly consisting of intelligence-gathering support, has helped the AU mission achieve better levels of operational efficiency (Resolve 2013).

Yet, despite the difficulties of the AU mission in carrying out the very activities for which it was formed, the LRA at this stage of conflict appeared to be completely unable to pose a challenge to the Ugandan regime. The military pressure of the mission, along with an increasing rate of defections, contributed to substantially weaken the rebel group (Resolve 2013, UCDP 2020b). Forced to hide to avoid capture and with its contingents scattered far away from each other, the LRA began to lose cohesion. Kony himself, once the fervent leader of incredibly committed fighters, started to lose grip on his units (Resolve 2016, Day 2019a).

A few years into the conflict episode and the LRA was no longer considered a threat from a military perspective (Day 2019a). As of 2015, the armed activity of the LRA decreased to such an extent that has been recorded as inactive ever since. From that year on, the armed opposition was no longer fragmented, as the ADF remained the only active rebel group in the conflict against the regime. The exit of the LRA from the conflict episode marked the end of an almost 30-year long armed effort against the Ugandan regime. The LRA did not completely disappear, as some very limited activity was recorded also in 2019. However, the group has completely lost its relevance and even the Ugandan forces ceased the pursuit activities of its remnants (UCDP 2020b).

The ADF followed a similar trajectory to the LRA, although to a certain extent its conditions at the beginning of the conflict were not as desperate. The ADF results active in the

conflict in Uganda since 2013, but it must be noted that most of its activities took place in the neighbouring DRC. In the DRC, it was subject to continuous military pressure from the Congolese forces, which carried out some operations against the group during the episode. The armed activity of the ADF resumed by mid-2013, when, taking advantage of the shift in the attention of the Congolese regime toward other rebel groups, it carried out some attacks, mainly against the civilian population (UCDP 2020b). The Congolese regime reacted by launching the Operation Sukola in 2014. The operation was quite successful and the Congolese forces, supported by the UN contingent of the operation MONUSCO, managed to capture the bases of the ADF and scatter the group in smaller units along the borders with Uganda (United Nations 2014b, 2016). Following the operation, the activity of the group in the DRC and most importantly in Uganda decreased dramatically. As of 2015, the ADF lost its cohesion, partly because its units, similarly to the LRA, were scattered across a large swathe of territory and partly because of the arrest of its leader Jamil Mukulu (United Nations 2016). With its units far away from each other and without a centralised leadership, from 2015 the ADF was a much-reduced threat compared to the past. Some attacks against the group were carried out also in 2016 and 2017, including one by the Ugandan forces in the Erengeti triangle at the border with DRC (UCDP 2020b). However, the conflict at that stage entered a new dimension of limited activity. These final events of 2017 conclude the account of the conflict episode for the purpose of the small-N analysis.

5.6.2. Recent events

At the time of writing, the conflict episode discussed in this section has not ended yet. Information with regard to the latest events are still too sparse to be of use for the current analysis. Accordingly, the events of the conflict episode occurred between 2018 and 2020 were

excluded from the analysis. For the sake of completeness and to provide an idea of where the conflict is heading, the main events after 2017 are briefly discussed below.

Throughout this latest period, the ADF was still the only group of the opposition contesting the Ugandan regime. As in the previous phases of the episode, the rebel group was recorded as active in the conflict against the Ugandan regime but the bulk of the armed activity took place in the DRC. In 2018, the ADF was targeted once again by the Congolese forces. New military operations under the shared banner of the DRC and MONUSCO were carried out to eradicate the remaining units of the ADF in several areas of along the borders with Uganda (United Nations 2018, UCDP 2020b). Further operations were also carried out in 2019. These latest operations targeted and managed to capture the so-called Madina complex, the main camp of the ADF in the DRC (UCDP 2020b).

At the time of writing, the ADF is a depleted force compared to the past and it does no longer appear to be a threat, especially for the security and stability of the Ugandan regime. The recent activity of the rebel group, along with its current condition of much-diminished force, indicates that the conflict with the Ugandan might soon terminate or, at most, continue at a very low level of intensity. The current conditions, which see the ADF engaged mostly in the DRC evading capture and the Ugandan forces having a rather minimal possibility of engaging with the militants of the group, indicate that the most likely way of termination of the conflict episode might be low activity. However, as it is not the aim of this work to adventure into predictions of how the conflict might end, the next section assesses what information this unfinished conflict episode can still provide with regard to the impact of the independent variables of the study on the prospects of conflict termination.

5.6.3. Impact of the independent variables

In this final conflict episode, the independent variables of the study do not appear to have played an important role in shaping the dynamics of the conflict and its prospects of termination. This final conflict episode resumed with a precise reproduction of the conditions observed toward the end of the previous episode. In fact, at the beginning of this episode the opposition was still fragmented and composed of the same two rebel groups, both of which were targeted by multiple states. As much as in the final phase of the previous episode, the two groups and their sub-units are scattered across a very large territory between Uganda, DRC, CAR, and South Sudan. Therefore, the two groups of the opposition are still disconnected and, at this stage of conflict, do not appear to have any relation whatsoever. They are also much reduced in size and strength compared to the previous conflict spell. Accordingly, while the fragmentation and the lack of cooperation between the groups certainly did not help the effort of the opposition against the regime, it cannot be claimed that these factors played a major role. In fact, what is apparent in this final episode is that the armed opposition had very limited possibilities of challenging the stability of the regime irrespective of its structural characteristics, internal competitive relations, and internal distribution of power. At this point, the rebel groups were so weak that there was nothing they could actively do to alter the course of the conflict. This predicament became even worse when the ADF, the only active group following the demise of the LRA in 2015, splintered in many smaller units disconnected from each other. At that point, even the last remaining group of the opposition was weak, decentralised, and most importantly unable to do anything more than hiding and resisting.

Of course, much of the current predicament of the Ugandan opposition is the result of the previous years of fragmentation and lack of cooperation, which have strongly contributed to degrade its efficiency and fighting capacity. However, in this final conflict episode, the only factor affecting the prospects of conflict termination is the overwhelming superiority of the

regime and its regional partners. With such a superiority, in fact, any outcome other than government victory and low activity have always been off the table and it is difficult to imagine how any combination of the independent variables of the study could have altered this situation.

This episode concludes the small-N analysis and the empirical investigation of how the structural characteristics of and the competitive and power dynamics within armed oppositions affect conflict termination. This small-N analysis was able to provide some confirmations of the results obtained with the large-N analysis and the theoretical expectations on the impact of the independent variables on civil conflict termination. The extent of the confirmation provided by the small-N analysis, along with an interpretation of the results of the large-N analysis, are discussed in the next chapter.

6. How civil conflicts end: the role of fragmentation, internal competition, and internal power distribution of armed oppositions

The dissertation identified the structural characteristics, internal competition, and internal power distribution as crucial attributes of armed oppositions that could affect civil conflict termination. The large-N analysis demonstrated that these attributes of armed oppositions do affect how civil conflicts end. So far, however, only the more technical details of the association between these attributes and conflict outcomes have been illustrated. The small-N analysis confirmed some of the associations uncovered by the large-N analysis and corroborated some of the theoretical expectations regarding these associations. In this chapter, the results of the entire empirical analysis are further discussed to provide an interpretation of them and their implications. In doing so, the chapter also highlights the contribution that the dissertation makes, both for the study of conflict and for policy.

6.1. Fragmentation

The first attribute of armed oppositions that this dissertation looked at is their structural characteristics. The analysis focused on examining whether conflict termination is affected by the fragmentation of the armed oppositions at conflict. Even though fragmentation is not significantly associated with an increased or decreased probability that each possible outcome of civil conflict occurs, the analysis demonstrated that some important correlations exist between this attribute of armed oppositions and some specific conflict outcomes.

From the existing literature, it emerged that the fragmentation of armed oppositions should indeed play a role in affecting the chances that the conflict terminates with the decisive

victory of one of the sides at conflict. Fragmentation has been found to be detrimental for the effort of the armed opposition, since it deters coordination and elicits competition among the rebel groups of which it is composed (Christia 2012, Krause 2014). Even though some studies have found that it is not necessarily correlated to increased chances that the government achieves final victory (Akcinaroglu 2012), fragmentation is also thought to be advantageous for the effort of the government, which can benefit from the weakness of a fragmented opposition.

These indications emerging from the literature were incorporated in the theory regarding the impact of fragmentation on victories in civil conflicts. The theory identified two causal mechanisms that link fragmentation to an increased probability of government victory and a decreased probability of rebel victory. Fragmentation was expected to determine a reduction in the overall fighting efficiency of the armed opposition and an increase in the competition over the available resources among its rebel groups. Fragmentation was therefore expected to act as a weakening factor for the opposition, which in turn makes victory for the rebels less likely and victory for the government more likely. The results of the large-N analysis, however, did not suggest conclusively that either the indications emerging from the literature nor the arguments put forward in Chapter 2 were correct in identifying the impact that fragmentation has on victories in civil conflicts at a general level. Throughout the entire large-N analysis, in fact, no significant relation was uncovered between the fragmentation of armed oppositions and either government or rebel victory.

I contend that it is reasonable to expect that, as indicated by previous research, fragmented oppositions might suffer from coordination problems and, thus, have a harder time in achieving their objectives. I maintain that it is equally reasonable to expect that fragmentation sets in motion the two mechanisms discussed above, since rebel groups can be expected to lack coordination and to compete/misuse their resources when they are part of a

fragmented opposition. At the very minimum, it is hard to believe that fragmented oppositions are more coordinated and use the available resources more efficiently than a cohesive opposition. The episodes of the Ugandan conflict showed that the armed opposition struggled much more when it was fragmented, mainly because of coordination problems and lack of a univocal strategy and direction. However, while it might be possible that fragmentation, due to these mechanisms, has in some conflict contexts the impact foreseen in the theory, the large-N analysis was unable to establish whether it does so at the general level and to determine whether an underlying pattern of association between fragmentation and victories in civil conflicts exists.

Looking more closely at government victories, only in the bivariate analysis fragmentation was found to be significantly correlated with lower chances that a civil conflict ends in that way. The weak correlation and the fact that the model reflects the impact of fragmentation when taken in isolation suggest that the results of the bivariate model are not indicative of a general pattern of association between fragmentation and government victory. In fact, the correlation disappeared when fragmentation was assessed together with the other independent and control variables. This leads to the conclusion that structural characteristics of armed oppositions do not have a major role in affecting the prospects of government victory. Fragmentation was expected to widen the large power asymmetry between the government and the armed opposition that commonly characterise civil conflicts and, even if some studies and some of the episodes of the small-N analysis have suggested such is the case, this condition of superiority still does not appear to be sufficient to grant the government a substantial advantage over the counterpart at a general level. The results of the multivariate analysis point to an increase in the probability of government victory when the opposition is fragmented, an effect that was also confirmed by the small-N analysis. However, as the results of the multivariate analysis were not statistically significant, it was not possible to ascertain whether in general

the fragmentation of the opposition plays in the hands of the government as anticipated in the theory.

Similar conclusions can be drawn for the impact of different structural characteristics of armed oppositions on rebel victories. In this respect, the large-N analysis provided counterintuitive results, as fragmentation appeared to have a positive effect on the probability that the conflict terminates in rebel victory. However, the lack of significance of the estimates throughout the entire large-N analysis signals the absence of any conclusive evidence with regard to the impact of fragmentation on this particular outcome. The possibility of obtaining inconclusive results was already foreseen in the previous chapters and these results clearly show that rebel victories were so few that it was difficult for the models to isolate their determinants with a certain degree of confidence. The sign of the estimates for rebel victory in the models indicates that these estimates were driven by few cases in which the opposition was fragmented and achieved victory. The small-N analysis provided instead completely different indications. Episode 1, 2, and 3 in particular showed quite clearly how fragmentation was detrimental for the armed opposition, for it promoted uncoordinated action and reduced the fighting efficiency of the Ugandan opposition, thus contributing to a substantial decrease of the chances it could obtain final victory. These particular conflict episodes, along with the ones that have driven the direction of the estimates of the large-N analysis, cannot be considered representative of an underlying pattern of association between structural characteristics and rebel victory. Accordingly, at the present stage it was not possible to ascertain whether the fragmentation of armed oppositions plays a significant role in altering the probability of rebel victory at a general level and further research is needed to shed more light in this respect.

Structural characteristics of armed oppositions play instead a more prominent role in altering the chances that the parties find a negotiated way out of the conflict. In this case too, the evidence is mixed but the results of the analysis still provided some important indications

as to how the fragmentation of armed oppositions affects the probability that civil conflicts end with a negotiated solution. The mixed evidence returned by the large-N analysis did not come as a surprise, since also the literature in this respect is not in agreement with regard to the impact of fragmentation on the negotiated settlement of civil conflicts. One major line of thought in the literature sees fragmentation as an important obstacle towards the settlement of civil conflicts, mainly because of the increased bargaining problems caused by the fragmentation (Cunningham 2006, 2013, Walter 2009, Krause 2014, Seymour *et al.* 2016). On a different vein, other scholars do not necessarily see fragmentation as an obstacle, since governments might find it easier to take the rebel groups out of the equation by negotiating one by one with them, especially if they are weak (Nilsson 2010). These indications were included in the theory illustrated in Chapter 2 and my propositions fell squarely within the first camp. In fact, fragmentation was expected to increase the already existing bargaining problems and, in turn, contribute to a decrease in the probability of observing both peace agreements and ceasefires.

With regard to peace agreements, the results of the large-N analysis do not seem to confirm either the positions emerging from the literature nor those put forward in my theory. The lack of statistical significance does not allow to draw definitive conclusions regarding the actual impact that fragmentation has on the prospects of conflict termination in peace agreement. In this respect, the null findings of the present dissertation are in line with those of earlier studies (Findley 2013). At least with respect to the propositions put forward in this dissertation, the positive effect of fragmentation on the prospects of peace agreements is somehow counterintuitive. The sign of the relation between fragmentation and peace agreement, constantly positive throughout the entire large-N analysis, might indicate that the scholars who do not see fragmentation as an obstacle toward the negotiated solution of conflicts have a strong point in this respect. Although I see the merits of this position, however, strategies

of the government oriented toward winning away pieces, that is negotiating with one rebel group at a time, might surely lead to more negotiations, but not necessarily successful ones. In fact, even though the results for the outcome peace agreement do not significantly confirm the expectations, I still contend that is difficult to believe that fragmentation does not contribute to exacerbate the bargaining problems that normally hinder the negotiated solution of civil conflicts. If fragmentation, at the very basic level, equates to the presence of an increased number of actors involved in the conflict, it follows that when the opposition is fragmented the government is forced to gather information, deal with, and accommodate the preferences of a larger number of actors, thus making any negotiated solution harder to be obtained. In fact, the small-N analysis strongly pointed in this direction. The events of the episodes 1, 2, and especially 3 of the Ugandan civil conflict illustrated how difficult it might be to reach a peace agreement when the armed opposition is fragmented. In these episodes, the chances of conflict termination in peace agreement were almost non-existent, at best very minimal, every time that the opposition was fragmented. In each of the mentioned episodes, bargaining problems deteriorated in concomitance with the fragmentation of the opposition. Information problems, mutual distrust, and lack of incentives were much more evident every time that the Ugandan opposition was fragmented. In fact, it was no coincidence that the only time in which the rebels and the Ugandan regime came close to signing a peace agreement was when the opposition was no longer fragmented, with the Juba process involving the regime of Museveni and the LRA.

The small-N analysis is not the only part of the dissertation suggesting that negotiated settlements of civil conflicts are much more difficult to be observed when the armed opposition is fragmented. Also the results of the analysis for the impact of fragmentation on ceasefires strongly point in this direction. In this case, the results of the large-N showed that the structural characteristics of the armed opposition have an important effect in altering the chances that a

conflict terminates in a ceasefire. The strong significance of the estimates, along with the fact that they remained constant throughout the entire large-N analysis, demonstrate that fragmentation is linked to substantially reduced chances of observing conflict termination in ceasefire. The solidity of the results in this respect was further confirmed by the small-N analysis, which illustrated clearly how the chances of conflict termination in a stable ceasefire were non-existent when the opposition was fragmented.

Even though peace agreements and ceasefires are different types of outcomes, for which partly different dynamics apply, the expectations on how fragmentation would affect them were substantially the same. For the very same reasons as to why peace agreements were considered unlikely to be concluded when the opposition is fragmented, namely increased bargaining problems, so were ceasefires and the results strongly indicated, also with considerable effects size in the large-N analysis, that an underlying negative pattern of association between fragmentation and the negotiated settlement of civil conflicts exists at the general level. Even though the impact of fragmentation on peace agreements needs further investigation, in light of the non-significant results in the present analysis and the mixed ones in the literature, the solid results regarding the impact on ceasefires do still provide important indications of how fragmentation leads to increased bargaining problems, thus making in general the negotiated settlement of civil conflicts harder to be reached by the parties.

Finally, the analysis showed that the structural characteristics of armed oppositions have a substantial importance in altering the chances of conflict termination due to lack of armed activity. Low activity is a complex outcome that has been partly neglected by the existing literature. For this reason, published research does not provide strong indications as to why civil conflicts might end in this way, even though, as shown in the Chapter 4, they do so very often. From the work of scholars who analysed the relation between fragmentation and the intensity and direction of violence at the hand of rebel groups, some indications were drawn on

how fragmentation might also affect the probability of conflict termination in low activity. These few indications were incorporated in the theory that was developed in this respect and it revolved around a basic principle, for which evidence was found in previous research: fragmentation contributes to an increase in the intensity of the conflict due to more extremist behaviours adopted by the rebel groups (Cunningham *et al.* 2012, Wood and Kathman 2015). Accordingly, as the intensity of conflicts in which the opposition is fragmented tend to increase, conflict termination due to lack of activity was considered unlikely since this outcome occurs only when the reduction of violence is so substantial to bring the tally of conflict related deaths below 25 in a calendar year.

The strong significance and consistence of the estimates across all the models of the large-N analysis demonstrated that an underlying causal pattern linking structural characteristics and the outcome low activity exists at a general level. The large-N analysis demonstrated that fragmentation, either when taken in isolation or together with the other independent and control variables, is strongly and negatively correlated with the probability that a civil conflict ends due to lack of armed activity. These findings were further corroborated by the small-N analysis, which illustrated, especially with the episode 2, that chances of conflict termination for lack of activity tend to be quite low when the opposition is fragmented and that, instead, they increase when is not. Accordingly, the expectations found strong confirmation as the entire analysis showed that fragmentation reduces the chances to observe conflict termination in low activity. The most plausible explanation for their correlation is that fragmentation not only contributes to make the fighting against the government more intense, but it also elicits the groups to adopt more extremist behaviours compared to conflicts in which the opposition is not fragmented. As a consequence of the increased intensity due to fragmentation, thus, conflict termination for low activity becomes less likely to be observed.

Taken together, the results of the analysis suggest that differences in the structure of armed oppositions do affect conflict termination. While the role they play is not as substantial as it was expected to be, especially in light of the non-significant effects on the prospects of government and rebel victories, structural characteristics of armed oppositions are still important for affecting the chances that civil conflicts terminate in negotiated settlements or due to lack of armed activity. Overall, the effect of fragmentation on the outcomes of civil conflicts can be considered negative. In fact, even if it is not clear whether at a general level it facilitates the termination through decisive victory, it is clear that it makes the cessation of the conflict, either negotiated or not, more difficult to be obtained. In this sense, fragmentation can be seen as contributing factor to the already common intractability of civil conflicts. These are important findings for the study of civil conflicts since they provide important indications of the detrimental effects of fragmentation for conflict resolution. These generalisable findings contribute to the existing research and lay the groundwork for future investigations that aim to further examine the intractability and resistance to termination of multiparty civil conflicts.

These findings also have implications for policy. As structural characteristics of armed oppositions were shown to have an impact on the outcomes of civil conflicts, each actor involved in the conflict must recognise the importance of the fragmentation of the armed opposition to either exploit or minimise its impact. Contested governments are certainly those that should try to exploit the divisions among the rebel groups of fragmented oppositions. As highlighted in the preceding paragraphs, although the analysis did not provide definitive indications as to whether it actually reduces the overall strength of the armed opposition, it is unlikely that fragmentation is more beneficial to the armed opposition than its cohesiveness. This particular aspect was illustrated clearly by the episodes of the Ugandan civil conflict. In light of the increased weakness of the opposition due to its internal divisions, the government must be ready to find ways to exploit this weakness and try to isolate each rebel group of the

opposition by breaking any attempt of coordination among them that would improve their fighting efficiency.

More importantly, the government should also avoid putting too much trust on the ability of a fragmented armed opposition to commit to a ceasefire. As demonstrated repeatedly by both the LRA and the ADF in the Ugandan conflict, ceasefires are often signed for tactical reasons by rebel groups that are not fully committed to peace and that are rather just temporarily struggling to sustain the armed effort. Since the results showed that ceasefires are unlikely to be signed and hold for long when armed oppositions are fragmented, governments would certainly be better off investing their time and resources in trying to resolve or at least mitigate the bargaining problems that act as an obstacle for peace agreements, especially if the armed effort does not seem to play out the way they expected. Despite the inherent difficulties in negotiating with fragmented oppositions, governments still have some options that would help them find negotiated solutions of the conflict. One way to do so is by approaching those rebel groups that have sensible and accessible preferences so to privilege the discussions with them while cracking down on those groups that have incompatible or excessive preferences. The information problems remain surely difficult to resolve but engaging in discussions with the less radical groups while combating the more radical ones can be a way for the governments to keep degrading the overall strength of the opposition and bring the conflict to a negotiated solution sooner.

The same applies to third parties that support the government or participate to the conflict with an unbiased agenda. Support in military terms can surely help the government exploit the difficulties that the armed opposition endures due to its fragmentation. However, time and resources might be better applied towards the negotiated resolution of the conflict. Especially third parties that participate to the conflict in a neutral manner, should not put too much trust on ceasefires as a possible stable solution of multiparty civil conflicts. They should promote

ceasefires only as temporary measures incorporated in peace-making strategies of larger breadth that provide tangible measures directed towards the minimisation of the bargaining problems and the solution of the incompatibility that provoked the outbreak of the conflict in the first place. Conversely, those third parties that instead support the armed opposition should focus on trying to mitigate the differences among the rebel groups and support the cohesion of the armed opposition. By doing so, larger cooperation and better use of resources can be achieved for a more effective armed effort. This could help the armed opposition to either increase the chances to defeat the government on the ground or, at least, to extract larger concessions from the government in a negotiated deal.

Rebel groups of fragmented oppositions should instead actively seek more effective coordination and use of resources in order not to further expand the power gap with the government. Unions, alliances, or even shared strategies among the rebel groups of a fragmented opposition might be of considerable value in this respect, for they would reduce the coordination problems that impair the overall fighting effectiveness of the opposition. In addition, despite it might seem a valid option for extracting concessions, rebel groups should try to avoid resorting to increased extremism to achieve their objectives. Increased extremism might not necessarily make the government cave, but rather provoke an uptick in the violent repression in response, thus placing the opposition in an even worse predicament. Furthermore, by placing themselves on the radical end of the spectrum, rebel groups might obtain even less in terms of negotiating power, for the government would not trust them should they wish one day to negotiate a way out of the conflict.

6.2. Internal competition

Structural characteristics are not the only attribute of armed oppositions that matters for conflict termination. Competition can be considered a natural characteristic of the relations among the

rebel groups of fragmented oppositions. In a way, even the closest rebel groups compete against one another to obtain the largest possible share of the conflict spoils. This dissertation aimed at examining whether competitive relations among the rebel groups of fragmented oppositions could shape the termination of civil conflicts. Thus, while at first the analysis aimed at examining how the sheer presence of multiple rebel groups within the same opposition affects conflict termination, it then moved beyond the simple fragmentation of the opposition to assess how the competitive relations among these multiple rebel groups do.

The analysis looked at two specific levels of competition within the armed opposition: the independence of rebel groups and intra-opposition violence. With the first level, the analysis aimed at understanding whether moderate instances of internal competition, represented by cases of independence of the rebel groups, could favour or impair certain types of conflict termination. With the second level, instead, the analysis aimed at understanding whether instances of severe internal competition do. The results of the analysis showed that when armed oppositions are fragmented it is not only the number of rebel groups that compose them that is important for affecting conflict termination, but also the competitive relations among the rebel groups. Even though not both levels of internal competition returned conclusive evidence, the results still provide some important indications on the impact that the competitive relations among rebel groups of fragmented oppositions have on how civil conflicts end.

The large-N analysis demonstrated that moderate levels of internal competition represented by the independence of the rebel groups play a role in affecting civil conflict termination. In this dissertation, independence of rebel groups is understood as a condition in which none of them is allied with other groups. Although the analysis did not find this condition to be significantly associated with each possible outcome of civil conflicts, from the models it

emerged that some important correlations exist between the independence of rebel groups and some specific conflict outcomes.

First of all, the analysis showed that the independence of rebel groups surely plays a role in affecting the chances that civil conflicts terminate with a decisive victory. The existing literature, although sparse, frames alliances among rebel groups as a beneficial condition for the effort of the armed opposition. Above all, alliances among rebel groups are formed to increase their capabilities and the efficiency of their armed effort (Gade, Gabbay, *et al.* 2019). Some studies have found that alliances among rebel groups do generate the desired effects, since allied groups can pool resources and coordinate their strategy and effort, thus improving their position vis-à-vis the incumbent government (Akcinaroglu 2012, Bapat and Bond 2012). Building upon these indications emerging from the literature, the theory illustrated in Chapter 2 foresaw the activation of two causal mechanisms as a consequence of the *absence* of alliances among rebel groups. First, the independence of the rebel groups, as opposed to a condition in which the groups are allied, was expected to reduce the fighting effectiveness of the armed opposition because of lack of coordination and cooperation among them. Second, it was also expected to trigger competition over and misuse of the resources available to the rebel groups. That is because independent groups do not share or pool resources as allied ones do and thus have to compete with one another to obtain the share of them necessary to sustain their violent mobilisation. For these reasons, conflicts in which the rebel groups of the opposition are independent were expected to be less likely to terminate in rebel victory and more likely to terminate in government victory.

The analysis confirmed both the indications emerging from the literature and the propositions put forward in Chapter 2. In fact, the large-N analysis demonstrated that the independence of rebel groups plays an important role in affecting the chances that civil conflicts terminate in government victory. Throughout the entire large-N analysis, the estimates

for the impact of the independence of groups on the probability of conflict termination in government victory remained stable, indicating a strong solidity of the results in this respect. These results indicate that, either when taken in isolation or together with other variables, moderately competitive relations among the rebel groups of the opposition are associated with a higher likelihood that civil conflicts end in government victory. The findings of the large-N analysis thus strongly confirm the theoretical expectations, as armed oppositions that are entirely composed of independent rebel groups are weaker in terms of fighting efficiency than those whose groups are allied. I argued that the reason why it is so is that the independence of groups contributes to widen the existing power asymmetry between the armed opposition and the government, since the rebel groups are troubled by severe coordination problems, compete over and are unable to maximise the already scant resources at their disposal. The increased weakness of the armed opposition due to the competitive relations among its rebel groups can thus be exploited by the government, which finds itself better positioned toward final victory.

These expectations and the results of the large-N analysis were largely corroborated by the small-N analysis. The episodes of conflict in Uganda illustrated quite clearly how the moderate competition within the armed opposition, resulting from the independence of the rebel groups and the active competition over resources and popular support, negatively affected its effort and, conversely, positively affected the government's one. The Ugandan rebel groups often competed over resources and, almost invariably throughout all the conflict episodes, pursued their objectives independently and without cooperating. In the second and third conflict episodes in particular, these competitive relations contributed to seriously weaken the armed opposition vis-à-vis the government. Accordingly, as the Ugandan government was facing a competitive, uncooperative, and poorly organised opponent, its effort against the opposition was largely facilitated.

This effect was the one that also fragmentation was expected to determine. In that respect, the results of the analysis did not provide conclusive evidence but the results for independence of groups suggest that the expectations regarding the impact of fragmentation on the chances of government victory were not entirely unsound. In fact, the results indicate that, rather than fragmentation per se, it is the competitive relations among the rebel groups within fragmented oppositions that positively affects the prospects of government victory. Rebel groups in a conflict system can be several without this condition playing a major role in affecting the prospects of government victory, but if they are independent and compete with one another, then government victory does indeed become more likely. Therefore, while the existence of multiple rebel groups does not necessarily bring about positive effects for the government, it surely does the competition among them. Moderate levels of internal competition determine an enfeeblement of the armed opposition that plays in the hands of the government, which conversely struggles much less compared to when it faces a fragmented opposition whose groups coordinate and cooperate.

The results returned by the analysis for the impact on government victories are mirrored by those for the impact on rebel victories. Throughout the entire analysis, instances of moderate internal competition were shown to be negatively correlated with the probability that civil conflicts end in rebel victory. Accordingly, rebel victories seem less likely to occur when the rebel groups of a fragmented opposition are independent compared to when they are allied. In this case, though, the results of the large-N analysis were not statistically significant. The same conclusions reached with regard to the impact of fragmentation on rebel victory apply here as well. In fact, the very same problem that has not allowed the large-N analysis to provide conclusive evidence as to whether fragmentation affects the prospects of rebel victory, namely a small number of instances in the sample, applies to the examination of the impact of the independence of rebel groups as well. Differently from the results for the impact of

fragmentation, however, the direction of the results for the impact of the independence of groups points toward a confirmation of the theoretical expectations. Also the small-N analysis did provide a clear confirmation of the results of the large-N analysis and of the detrimental effects that moderate levels of internal competition have for the chances of conflict termination in rebel victory. It is true that the large-N analysis failed to identify an underlying pattern of association at a general level and, as such, it is not possible at this stage to draw any conclusion regarding the correlation between the independence of groups and reduced chances of conflict termination in rebel victory. However, by reading these results together with the ones for the impact on government victory and by considering the evidence gathered from the small-N analysis, it appears plausible that rebel victory becomes indeed less likely when the rebel groups are independent and competitive.

Moderate levels of internal competition also play a role in shaping the chances of conflict termination through a negotiated settlement. As it was observed for the association between fragmentation and the negotiated solution of civil conflicts, once again the analysis provided mixed and, to a certain extent, counterintuitive evidence. The existing literature does not provide strong indications as to how alliances among rebel groups or lack thereof might affect the negotiated settlement of civil conflicts. To date, only one study has tackled the issue head on and found civil conflicts to be less likely to end in peace agreement when the rebel groups are allied (Akcinaroglu 2012). Substantially departing from these scholarly indications, it was argued in Chapter 2 that the independence of rebel groups should put in motion the same causal mechanism that links fragmentation to decreased chances of conflict termination in peace agreement. The independence of the rebel groups, as opposed to a condition in which the groups are allied, was expected to further exacerbate the existing bargaining problems and, in turn, determine a decrease in the probability that civil conflicts terminate in peace agreements or ceasefire.

The results of the large-N analysis for the impact of the independence of groups on peace agreements paint a completely different picture. These results, in fact, showed that the independence of the rebel groups has a positive effect on the probability of conflict termination in peace agreement. Contrary to my theoretical expectations, but in line with the findings of the aforementioned study (Akcinaroglu 2012), civil conflicts are more likely to end in peace agreement when the rebel groups of the armed opposition are independent rather than when they are allied. The unequivocal direction and the strong significance of the estimates throughout the large-N analysis highlights the solidity of these results, thus indicating that an underlying pattern of association between the independence of rebel groups and increased chances of conflict termination in peace agreement exists at a general level.

These results are surprising because, at least in light of my theoretical stance, it seemed reasonable to expect that the independence of rebel groups would further exacerbate the bargaining problems that hinder the negotiated solution of civil conflicts. Alliances among rebel groups were, in fact, expected to bring about some benefits in this respect while the independence of groups do exactly the opposite. First, the independence of groups was expected to increase information problems because independent groups have more incentives than allied ones to withhold information about their strength and resolve. Second, the very fact that the rebel groups are independent was considered denotative of the existence of diverse preferences among the groups that are difficult for the government to simultaneously accommodate in a peace agreement. Finally, the independence of the rebel groups was also expected to incentivise them to act as spoilers if the negotiation of the government with other rebel groups is perceived as disadvantageous. The analysis of the Ugandan civil conflict gives credit to these theoretical expectations. All the episodes of the Ugandan conflict, the episode 2 in particular, illustrated quite clearly how even moderate levels of internal competition can contribute to remove any incentive for the government to negotiate a peace agreement and

prompt the rebel groups to follow zero-sum logics averse to mediation. However, while this might be what happens in certain conflict contexts, such as the Ugandan one, the results of the large-N analysis clearly indicate that at a general level moderate competition within armed oppositions favours rather than impairs the signing of peace agreements.

There are some possible explanations as to why, at a general level, moderate internal competition is linked to larger rather than smaller chances that the conflict ends with a peace agreement. One possible explanation is that allied rebel groups, compared to independent ones, have different perceptions of their strength and the objectives they can achieve with their armed effort. As allied rebel groups pool resources and coordinate their actions, they might perceive themselves as strong enough to obtain final victory and feel more equipped than independent ones to continue the armed mobilisation until the end. Conversely, independent rebel groups might recognise the difficulties of fighting the government on their own and thus feel a higher pressure to settle the controversy at the negotiation table rather than risk a complete defeat. Thus, despite the diverse preferences, independent groups might be more open than allied ones to sign a peace agreement since they might perceive the negotiations as the only way to have some of their demands met or at least avoid defeat. A second possible explanation is that allied rebel groups enter the negotiations from a stronger negotiating position compared to independent rebel groups. Having the perception that they could obtain final victory, allied rebel groups can afford to enter the negotiations with high demands and stick to their position since they are open to resume fighting should the government fail to accommodate their requests. The high demands and the rigidity of allied rebel groups might thus make peace agreements less likely to be signed. Conversely, since return to combat might not be perceived as a viable option, independent rebel groups might present the government with more reasonable requests and be more accommodative in negotiating their position, thus making peace agreements more likely to be finalised. These are only some possible suggestions of why

independence of rebel groups is associated with increased chances of conflict termination in peace agreement. More research is surely needed to understand why and by virtue of what causal mechanisms it occurs.

The results of the large-N analysis for the impact of moderate levels of internal competition on the chances that civil conflicts end in a ceasefire appear to confirm instead the positions expressed in the theory. In both the bivariate and the multivariate analysis, the independence of the rebel groups of the opposition was negatively associated with the probability that civil conflicts end in a ceasefire. However, the estimates for the impact of this variables on ceasefires never achieved significance throughout the entire large-N analysis. Accordingly, it has not been found any conclusive evidence suggesting that an underlying pattern of association exists between the independence of the rebel groups and the chances of conflict termination in ceasefire. As discussed before, civil conflicts were expected to be less likely to end in a ceasefire when the groups of a fragmented opposition are independent and competitive. The small-N analysis, in particular the conflict episode 2, suggested such is the case, as moderate levels of internal competition in the Ugandan context contributed to nurture attitudes averse to mediation within the armed opposition and to remove the incentives for the government to negotiate. The small-N analysis thus corroborated both the theoretical expectations and the results of the large-N analysis. However, even though both the large-N and the small-N analysis provide some support to the theoretical expectations, the lack of significance of the estimates of the large-N analysis does not allow to make definitive claims as to whether the independence of rebel groups negatively affects the prospects of conflict termination in ceasefire at a general level.

The most likely explanation for these inconclusive results is that the fragmentation of the armed opposition affects the prospects of ceasefire to such an extent that whether the rebel groups are independent or not becomes in fact negligible. It is possible that the sole presence of multiple

rebel groups within the same opposition makes ceasefires so unlikely to be observed that whether these groups have competitive relations or not does not matter much. Therefore, even if the independence of the rebel groups can bring about some negative effects on the probability that civil conflicts terminate in a ceasefire, these effects are not strong enough to boost those already determined by fragmentation.

The evidence regarding the impact of moderate levels of internal competition on the chances that civil conflicts end due to lack of armed activity are mixed and should be interpreted *cum grano salis*. When taken in isolation, in fact, it appears that the independence of the rebel groups contributes to an increase in the probability that a civil conflict ends for low activity. The low significance and the fact that the independence of rebel groups was considered only in isolation suggest that not much trust should be placed in the results of the bivariate model. For the nature of the model itself, which considers all the main factors that affect the outcomes of civil conflicts, the results of the final multivariate model are surely more reliable. The low significance of the results suggests that caution must still be exercised in their interpretation but it appears that the independence of rebel groups does actually contribute to a decrease in the probability of conflict termination due to lack of armed activity.

These results appear to be more plausible, at least from my theoretical standpoint. The existing literature does not provide any indication as to how moderate levels of internal competition might affect the prospects of conflict termination due to lack of armed activity. Building on the line of thought developed to explain the effects of fragmentation on this outcome, it was argued that the independence of rebel groups should put in motion the same causal mechanism, but with stronger effects, that links fragmentation to decreased chances that a civil conflict terminates for low activity. In fact, if fragmentation was found to increase the intensity of the conflicts, the independence of the rebel groups can be expected to do so even more. The reason why it is so is because independent rebel groups are more competitive and

have no obligation to limit the use of violence if they see it fit to obtain their objectives and/or outbid the other rebel groups.

Although the small-N analysis was unable to illustrate this mechanism, the results of the large-N analysis appear to indicate this might be a possible explanation, since when the rebel groups are independent the probability that civil conflicts simply cease decreases substantially. This is in line with what it was observed for fragmentation, although in that case the estimates have obtained stronger significance. Despite the low significance of the results for the impact of moderate levels of internal competition, reading these two results together provides more confidence in the interpretation of the negative association between the independence of the rebel groups and low activity. It is possible that the fragmentation of the armed opposition is the main driver of these results and that is the simple presence of multiple rebel groups in the conflict system that determines a decrease in the probability of conflict termination due to lack of armed activity. However, even if the independence of rebel groups might not have strong effects, it still appears to have a role in affecting the chances of low activity that provides confirmation of the theoretical expectations in this respect.

The large-N analysis did not find extreme levels of internal competition, represented by instances of fratricidal violence among the rebel groups of armed oppositions, to be an important determinant of civil conflict outcomes. Violence among rebel groups is surely detrimental for certain dynamics of civil conflicts but apparently it does not play a significant role in affecting how civil conflicts end.

The body of literature concerned with fratricidal violence has mostly focused on finding the root causes of this phenomenon (Fjelde and Nilsson 2012, Nygård and Weintraub 2015, Pischedda 2015, 2018, Gade, Hafez, *et al.* 2019, Hafez 2020), but considerably less on the impact it might have on the outcomes of civil conflicts. From this literature, some indications still emerged that could be related to how intra-opposition violence might affect conflict

termination, since violence among rebel groups has been considered reason for resource diversion and increased extremism on the side of the rebel groups (Fjelde and Nilsson 2012, Pischedda 2015, 2018, Wood and Kathman 2015). Building on these limited indications and following the line of thought developed for the theory on the impact of fragmentation and moderate levels of internal competition on conflict outcomes, intra-opposition violence was expected to set in motion the same four causal mechanisms that link fragmentation and moderate internal competition to civil conflict termination, but with starker effects. Intra-opposition violence was expected to determine a further decrease in the armed opposition's overall strength due to resource diversion and active fighting among the rebel groups; trigger extreme competition among the groups over the available resources; further exacerbate the bargaining problems; and induce the groups to adopt extremist behaviours. However, due to its extremity, the effects of this level of internal competition were expected to be partially different from those that the fragmentation and a moderate internal competition were expected to have. In fact, intra-opposition violence was expected to determine an increase in the probability that a civil conflict terminates in either government victory or low activity and a decrease in the probability that it terminates in either rebel victory, peace agreement, or ceasefire.

None of these expectations found confirmation in the large-N analysis. The results that the analysis provided are difficult to interpret, since the estimates across all the models never reached statistical significance. Accordingly, no definitive conclusions can be drawn from the analysis, as correlations between intra-opposition violence and civil conflict outcome proved impossible to uncover. The reason behind these poor results is, as already anticipated, the lack of observations of intra-opposition violence in the data. The direction of the estimates in the models is driven by few observations and therefore the results are only representative of few idiosyncratic examples of intra-opposition violence rather than a general pattern of association. These null results do not categorically exclude that extreme levels of internal competition do

not have an impact on conflict termination, but from the present analysis and with the data available it is impossible to draw any conclusion that goes beyond this idiosyncratic level of evidence. Accordingly, discussing at length and providing an interpretation of the alleged impact of intra-opposition violence on each possible civil conflict outcome would be a fruitless exercise, especially considering the spirit of the dissertation and its aim to uncover general patterns of association between specific attributes of armed oppositions and the outcomes of civil conflicts.

Paradoxically, it is in the lack of observations of intra-opposition violence in the sample that lies the main interesting finding regarding this variable. Many studies, in fact, describe fratricidal violence among rebel groups as a very common occurrence in civil conflicts (see for example Cunningham *et al.* 2009). However, while it is true that rebel groups of the same armed opposition compete against one another, it is instead unlikely they do so to such an extent as to resort to intense fratricidal violence when they are involved in the same struggle against the government.²³ The very few observations in the sample are a clear evidence of this phenomenon as , only in 27 out of 1064 dyad-year observations rebel groups that were part the same armed opposition did fight one another while simultaneously fighting the government. This evidence sheds some doubts on the common wisdom that portrays violence among rebel groups as a very common occurrence in civil conflicts. It is certainly true that rebel groups that fight for a different incompatibility – that is they are not part of the same conflict episode – or smaller militia groups often engage in violence against one another, but fratricidal violence is not the norm for rebel groups that are involved in the same conflict episode and are fighting for the same incompatibility. The actual impact of fratricidal violence on conflict dynamics at a general level need thus to be partly re-evaluated, avoiding speculative generalisations and by

²³ As specified in Chapter 3, instances of intra-opposition violence are considered to be intense if they result in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a calendar year.

not taking the most violent civil conflicts as one-size-fits-all examples both of the frequency and impact of fratricidal violence on the dynamics of conflict.

The only indications regarding the effects of this variable come from the small-N analysis. Episode 2 in particular, and to a certain extent also episode 3, illustrated the detrimental effects that intra-opposition violence might have for the prospect of rebel victory and the positive ones for those of government victory. With regard to the episode 2, the fratricidal violence among the Acholi rebel groups, UPDA, HSM, and LRA, largely contributed to weaken the armed opposition. The same happened in episode 3, even though in that case the rebel groups of the opposition were engaged in violent activities with rebel groups external to the opposition and active in a different country. In these episodes of the Ugandan conflict, the rebel groups of the opposition distracted human and material resources from the fight against the regime to the one against one another. In doing so, they misused their fighting potential and incurred in substantial losses. These instances of fratricidal violence thus resulted in the depletion of the armed opposition and, consequently, in the reduction of the chances it could ever achieve final victory. The opposite holds true for the Ugandan government, which instead had its effort largely facilitated by the rebel groups self-destructive behaviours.

Episode 2 also showed how instances of severe internal competition can be detrimental for the prospects of conflict termination in negotiated settlements. In that case, antagonistic views, enmity, and sense of revenge made the rebel groups completely indisposed toward mediation. This animosity among the rebel groups thus actively contributed to reduce the already limited chances of negotiating a way out of the conflict, either through a ceasefire or a peace agreement.

To a certain extent, episode 3 showed how violence among rebel groups might contribute to make conflict termination in low activity more likely to occur. In that episode, the LRA and WNBF had to put their armed effort against the Ugandan regime in standby in order to focus

on the SPLA, the Sudanese rebel group that was challenging with its attacks the very own existence of the two groups of the Ugandan opposition.

Overall, thus, the small-N analysis confirmed my theoretical expectations regarding the impact of severe levels of internal competition on conflict outcomes. The propositions put forward in Chapter 2 were clearly illustrated by the Ugandan civil conflict, especially those linking intra-opposition violence to increased chances of conflict termination in government victory and decreased chances of termination in rebel victory and negotiated settlement. However, the small-N analysis provided just illustrations and no general pattern of association can be uncovered from them. Accordingly, further research in this respect is needed, in particular comparative case studies that could provide more solid indications than single-case study research on extreme cases of fratricidal violence or large-N analysis such as the one carried out in the present dissertation.

The analysis demonstrated that competitive relations among the rebel groups of fragmented armed oppositions can affect how civil conflicts end. This is an important finding for the study of conflict as it establishes that, at a general level, not only the structural characteristics but also the competitive relations among the rebel groups of an armed opposition play a role in shaping conflict termination. The analysis was able to find evidence for the impact on conflict outcomes of moderate levels of competition, while it proved impossible to ascertain how extreme levels of competition among rebel groups affect conflict termination at a general level. Further research is needed especially in this respect but, even if the analysis failed to identify the full extent of the impact of internal competition on conflict outcomes, it still provided important indications that represent a substantial advancement in our knowledge of how competitive relations among rebel groups affect conflict termination.

Of course, these findings do not have implications only for the study of conflict, but also for policy. Similarly to what it was argued for the impact of fragmentation, the actors involved

in civil conflicts must take into account the competitive relations among the rebel groups to either exploit or minimise the impact they have. Contested governments are surely the main beneficiaries of the competition among rebel groups. As the results of the analysis showed, internal competition contributes to substantially weaken the armed opposition. Governments that are facing an armed opposition troubled by internal competition must then strive to exploit this condition in order to achieve final victory. The weakness of the armed opposition due to its internal competition should grant the contested governments more incentives to continue the fight until the end because, even despite the costs, they are well positioned toward final victory. When rebel groups are competitive, governments find themselves in the best possible position not only because they can either win or force the rebel groups to abandon the conflict altogether, but also because even if they ever decide to peacefully settle the incompatibility, they have more chances to do so successfully. As the results clearly indicated, in fact, peace agreements are more likely to be implemented when rebel groups are moderately competitive. Accordingly, despite the inherent difficulties in negotiating a way out of a civil conflict, governments might also decide to put more effort in finding a negotiated solution to the conflict if they see in that option the most fruitful way forward.

As the competition within armed oppositions facilitates only favourable outcomes for contested governments, they should try to capture all the chances they get from this predicament of the opposition. In the event that the rebel groups of the armed opposition are allied or cooperate, instead, governments should try then to produce the conditions for the opposition to become internally competitive by trying to break or sabotage the alliances or any instance of cooperation among rebel groups. To do so, they should focus not only on the military response to the rebellion, but also on the political side of it, by trying to plant the seeds of political discord among the rebel groups, break the political proximity among them, or

expose their differences so to dissuade cooperation among them and rather incentivise the competition.

Conversely, rebel groups should try to find ways to reduce the competition and the distance among them by seeking alliances that would grant much needed cooperation and coordination. This is fundamental for armed oppositions since internal competition and lack of coordination do not bring about any positive effect for them. If the differences among the rebel groups appear to be so irreconcilable that not even instrumental alliances can be formed to at least improve their stand vis-à-vis the government, then they should try to pursue the best possible outcome available to them, namely a peace agreement. Signing a peace agreement would certainly bring about small concessions to the rebel groups. Even these small concessions, though, would still be better than the defeat that they would eventually suffer if they do not do anything to reduce the competition among them.

Finally, also the third-party actors involved in the conflict should take into account the competitive relations among the rebel groups of the opposition. Third parties that intervene to assist the response of the government to the rebellion might not have much to contribute to, given that governments that are facing fragmented and internally competitive armed oppositions have already a great advantage. Conversely, those third-party actors that support the armed opposition should instead try to find ways to reduce the internal competition and put aside differences among the rebel groups. By doing so, third parties might contribute to improve the coordination and cooperation among the rebel groups and, in turn, contribute to improve their chances vis-à-vis the government. This is a crucial requirement if the final victory of the rebels is the outcome the third party is aiming to facilitate. Alternatively, if the positions of the rebel groups appear to be irreconcilable and its support fails to reduce the distance among the groups, then the third party on the side of the rebels should push toward the negotiated

settlement of the conflict, by highlighting how that would be the only positive outcome that a rebel group of a fragmented and competitive armed opposition could ever obtain.

6.3. Internal power distribution

Up to this point, the analysis demonstrated that the structural characteristics and the internal competition of armed oppositions play a role in affecting conflict termination. Along with the structural characteristics and the internal competition, the dissertation aimed at understanding whether differences in how power is distributed within the armed opposition also do. In Chapter 2, it was argued that how power is distributed within a fragmented opposition and the relations among rebel groups emerging from different distributions of power, either hegemonic, if one of the rebel group is in a dominant position, or dispersed, if two or more rebel groups are at parity in terms of power, do play a role in shaping the termination of civil conflicts. Although the internal power distribution of armed oppositions is not statistically significantly associated with each and every civil conflict outcome, the analysis demonstrated that some important correlations exist with some specific outcomes.

The few indications emerging from the literature suggested that victories in civil conflicts might be affected by how power is distributed across the rebel groups at conflict. The literature in this respect is sparse but the two most comprehensive studies on the issue found that hegemonic rebel movements, namely those in which one of the rebel groups is overly stronger than the others, are more likely to achieve strategic success (Krause 2014, 2017). The implications of these findings are clear: hegemonic movements are better off than movements within which power is evenly distributed because they are less competitive and more coordinated. Accordingly, the former can be expected to be more successful than the latter in their armed effort against the contested government. The case study-based evidence provided

by the cited studies were incorporated in the theoretical framework of the present dissertation to test whether the same conclusions could be drawn at a general level.

Starting from these indications and further developing the line of thought that led to the postulation of the impact that fragmentation and internal competition have on victories in civil conflict, it was argued in Chapter 2 that a dispersed distribution of power activates the usual causal mechanisms, but with partly different effects on the chances of victory in conflict. First, as much as fragmentation and internal competition, a dispersed distribution of power was expected to determine a reduction of the overall military effectiveness of the armed opposition because it incentivises the rebel groups to carry out the armed effort on their own rather than in a coordinated manner and because the overall strength available to them is not maximised. Second, a dispersed distribution of power was also expected to incentivise competition over and misuse of the resources available to the rebel groups. A dispersed distribution of power was thus expected to be a detrimental factor for the armed opposition, which makes rebel victory less likely to be observed. However, compared to fragmentation and internal competition, a dispersed distribution of power was not expected to automatically determine an increase in the probability of government victory. When power is dispersed within the armed opposition, two or more rebel groups are fairly similar in terms of strength at their disposal. Accordingly, governments were expected to be forced to respond to equally dangerous challenges originating from multiple fronts simultaneously, rather than a single one on which they could devote their undivided military attention. As it becomes harder for the government to manage multiple and equally dangerous challenges all at once, a dispersed distribution of power was expected to be a detrimental factor for the government too. A dispersed distribution, of power, thus, was expected to make government victory less likely to be observed as well. The results of the large-N analysis, however, did not provide conclusive evidence to confirm whether the indications emerging from the literature and the propositions put forward in

Chapter 2 were correct in identifying the impact that a dispersed power distribution has on victories in civil conflicts. With regard to government victory, the estimates of the large-N analysis never achieved statistical significance. Accordingly, even when taken in isolation or together with the other factors that affect conflict termination, how power is distributed within the armed opposition does not appear to play a major role in affecting the chances that the conflict ends in government victory. The direction of the estimates points toward a confirmation of my theoretical expectations, since the probability that the conflict terminates in government victory is constantly lower when power is dispersed within the armed opposition compared to when power is concentrated in a hegemonic rebel group. These results seem to indicate that governments do in fact find it harder to defeat equally strong rebel groups rather than two or more groups of which one is in a hegemonic position.

The small-N analysis confirmed this causal mechanism linking a dispersed distribution of power with reduced chances of government victory. Episode 1 and 3 illustrated why a dispersed distribution of power can be detrimental for the government effort. In both episodes, in fact, rebel groups of similar strength were deployed in different fronts. In such a condition, the Ugandan regime was forced to split its forces over multiple fronts. For that reason, it found it more difficult to make progress in degrading the opponents. Conversely, the regime countermeasures were more successful when, during the very same episodes, the power of the opposition was concentrated in a hegemonic group against which it could concentrate its overwhelming force.

However, even though the direction of the estimates of the large-N analysis and the examples offered by the small-N analysis provided some confirmation to the theoretical expectations, there is no significant evidence that a dispersion of power affects the chances of government victory at a general level. Given the lack of significance of the results of the large-N, it appears that, at a general level, the challenges that the government encounters when

dealing with a fragmented opposition do not differ much if said opposition is composed of multiple equally strong rebel groups or multiple groups with just one of them in a hegemonic position. Further qualitative and comparative research is indeed necessary to uncover the impact that different distributions of power across the rebel groups have on the chances of conflict termination in government victory.

The same conclusions apply to the impact of a dispersed distribution of power on rebel victories. In this case too, the estimates never achieved statistical significance throughout the entire large-N analysis. From the results, therefore, no definitive conclusion can be drawn as to whether different distributions of power play a role in affecting the chances of rebel victory at a general level. Once again, these inconclusive results do not come as a surprise considering the few instances of civil conflicts terminated in rebel victory during the period under consideration, too few to allow the analysis to determine whether internal power distribution has any effect on the chances that armed oppositions achieve final victory.

The direction of the estimates seems to indicate that rebel victory should indeed be less likely when power is dispersed within the opposition. This would be in line with both the indications emerging from the literature and the arguments that the dissertation advanced in this respect. An armed opposition composed of equally strong rebel groups was expected to lack coordination and be less effective in projecting its fighting capacity than one in which power is concentrated in a hegemonic rebel group, which instead is more coordinated and able to maximise the resources at its disposal. For that reason, a dispersed distribution of power was expected to determine a decrease in the chances of conflict termination in rebel victory. The small-N analysis provided confirmation of both these theoretical expectations and the results of the large-N analysis. In fact, episode 1, 2, and 3 of the Ugandan civil conflict illustrated why a dispersed distribution of power can be detrimental for the effort of the armed opposition. Even though in some cases the impact of the variable was minimal, especially if compared to

the nefarious effects of fragmentation and internal competition, these conflict episodes showed that the distribution of power had some consequences for the efficiency of the armed effort of the opposition. In these episodes, the power of the armed opposition happened to be at times dispersed across multiple uncooperative and competitive rebel groups. As such, this overall power could not be maximised and employed effectively, for the rebel groups were misusing it by fighting the regime independently from one another and, sometimes, also by fighting one another. From the events of these conflict episodes, it was clear that the overall power at the disposal of the rebel groups could have been employed much more efficiently and harmonically if it had been concentrated in a hegemonic rebel group, with a single strategy and the majority of militants at its disposal. However, although the results of both the large-N and small-N analysis seem to suggest that a dispersed distribution of power is a detrimental factor for the armed opposition, the study was unable to uncover a generalisable pattern of association between internal power distribution and rebel victories. Accordingly, further research is needed to provide more solid indications in this respect than the present dissertation was able to provide.

Internal power distribution appears to have, instead, more important effects on the chances of conflict termination in a negotiated settlement. While the large-N analysis did not provide conclusive evidence as to whether different distributions of power within the armed opposition affect the chances that a civil conflict ends in a peace agreement, the results demonstrated that they do significantly affect the chances that the conflict terminates in a ceasefire.

In general terms, very little is known regarding whether differences in distribution of power across rebel groups have an impact on the probability of conflict termination in negotiated settlements, since previous research has mostly focused on understanding whether differences in terms of strength of the entire rebel side or of single rebel groups relative to the

government could affect the negotiated solution of civil conflicts. Building on the arguments illustrated in Chapter 2, it was argued that a dispersed distribution of power within an armed opposition activates the usual causal mechanism that links fragmentation and internal competition with decreased chances of conflict termination in negotiated settlement, but with partly different effects. In fact, like fragmentation and internal competition, also a dispersed distribution of power was expected to further exacerbate the existing bargaining problems that act as an obstacle to the negotiated solution of civil conflicts. The effects of a dispersed power distribution on the bargaining problems were expected to then determine a decrease in the probability of observing conflict termination in a peace agreement and, in theory, following the reasoning developed in the entire Chapter 2, also of the probability of ceasefire. However, it was also argued that a dispersed distribution of power also determines a condition of stalemate within the armed opposition that leads the rebel groups to see a ceasefire as a favourable option. Thus, while a dispersed power distribution was expected to negatively affect the bargaining problems and in turn make civil conflicts less likely to end in peace agreement, the increased propension of the rebel groups to sign a ceasefire determined by conditions of stalemate internal to the opposition was expected to make civil conflicts more likely to end in a ceasefire. The results of the large-N analysis confirmed only partially the expectations in this respect.

Starting from the impact of internal power distribution on the chances of conflict termination in peace agreement, the large-N analysis failed to identify a statistically significant association between internal power distribution and peace agreements. Accordingly, either when taken in isolation or together with other important determinants of civil conflict outcomes, how power is distributed within the opposition does not appear to have a major role in affecting the probability that a civil conflict ends in peace agreement. The direction of the

estimates provides support to my expectations, since they suggest that when power is dispersed within the armed opposition the probability of peace agreement is constantly lower.

The reason why it might be so must be found in the bargaining problems. I contend that it is reasonable to consider a dispersed distribution of power as detrimental for the chances of negotiating a way out of the conflict, since equally strong rebel groups have surely their own set of preferences and are strong enough to exercise a power of veto or to make the negotiations collapse altogether should they not be satisfied with the terms of the deal. Conversely, it would certainly be easier to conclude the negotiations if the government has to deal with a hegemonic actor, which has unitary preferences, a substantial ability to commit to the negotiated terms, and also enough strength to force the other rebel groups to acquiescence should they try to make the deal collapse. The direction of the estimates, driven by some specific conflict episodes, indicates that the explanation provided might adequately illustrate the reasons why a dispersed distribution of power hinders the signing of peace agreements. However, in absence of clear evidence coming from the large-N analysis, it is not possible to make any conclusive claim as to whether the one discussed is the actual impact that a dispersed distribution of power has on the chances of conflict termination in peace agreement at a general level. Unfortunately, the small-N analysis too was unable to illustrate whether such is the case and, accordingly, more comparative research is required to ascertain whether differences in how power is distributed across rebel groups have a role in shaping the probability that a conflict terminates in peace agreement.

The results of the large-N analysis demonstrated that the internal power distribution does instead significantly affect the chances that a civil conflict ends with a ceasefire. Throughout the analysis, the estimates remained stable in terms of direction and significance, clearly indicating that when power is dispersed within the armed opposition civil conflicts are more likely to end with a ceasefire. These results of the large-N analysis strongly confirm the

theoretical expectations. The small-N analysis was unable to better illustrate the causal mechanism behind such an effect, for in the Ugandan conflict it does not appear that how power was distributed played a particular role in affecting the prospects of termination in ceasefire. However, this does not alter the general conclusion emerging from the large-N analysis.

I contend that the reason why the prospects of conflict termination in ceasefire are negatively affected is because, compared to a hegemonic distribution, a dispersed distribution can be seen as denotative of a relative power parity among the rebel groups that in turn determines a condition of internal stalemate within the armed opposition. This is internal stalemate occurs because the rebel groups, being fairly similar in terms of strength, do not have the chances to outbid the other rebel groups nor to subsume them through direct engagement. Accordingly, as the rebel groups are unable to gain a competitive advantage over the others, they remain at parity and find themselves in a condition of stalemate, internal to the armed opposition.

Conditions of internal stalemates do not affect conflict termination in the same way as stalemates between the government and the rebels do. Stalemates between the government and the rebels, it is widely held in the literature, bring about conditions for the actors that are mutually hurting and, consequently, make negotiated settlements more likely to be concluded since the actors prefer to negotiate rather than continue a fruitless and costly fight. Conditions of internal stalemate, instead, have consequences for the prospects of negotiated settlements of civil conflicts that are similar but not equal to those of a general stalemate. While in conditions of a general stalemate the government too has the incentives to negotiate a way out of the conflict since continued fight is mutually hurting, when only the rebel groups are in a condition of stalemate, this stalemate is internal to the opposition, hurting only for them, and, as such, it does not bring about any additional incentive for the government to negotiate. Accordingly, when power is dispersed within the opposition, the rebel groups find themselves in a difficult

predicament, since their weakness and lack of coordination do not allow them to achieve final victory, unresolved bargaining problems do not allow them to find a comprehensive peace agreement with the government, and power parity do not allow them to outbid the other rebel groups so to gain a competitive advantage and improve their stand vis-à-vis the government. Accordingly, facing only two options, continuing a costly and fruitless fight or putting down the arms, it becomes easy for the rebel groups to choose the former, for at least it guarantees the cessation of the hostilities and saves them from final defeat. Of course, also the government must agree on signing a ceasefire with the rebel groups. Given the difficulties in signing a peace agreement and achieving final victory, also the government might see in a ceasefire a favourable option. For these reasons, thus, I argue that civil conflicts are more likely to end in a ceasefire when power is dispersed across the rebel groups of the armed opposition.

Finally, the results of the large-N analysis showed that internal power distribution has significant effects on the chances that a civil conflict ends for low activity. Throughout the analysis the estimates remained stable in terms of direction, decidedly indicating that civil conflicts in which power is dispersed within the armed opposition are more likely to end due to lack of armed activity than conflicts in which one of the rebel groups is in a hegemonic position. These results strongly confirm the theoretical expectations.

Following the reasoning illustrated above regarding the impact of a dispersed power distribution on ceasefires, conflict termination for low activity was in fact expected to be more likely when power is dispersed within the opposition. The reason why it is so, I contend, is because abandoning the armed effort altogether is the only option left for the rebel groups should they fail to agree to a ceasefire with the government. When discussing the impact that different structural characteristics of the armed opposition have on the chances of conflict termination for low activity, it was argued that fragmentation incentivises the rebel groups to compete with one another and to adopt more extremist behaviours, thus determining an

increase in the conflict intensity that would make conflict termination due to lack of armed activity less likely to be observed. For the very same reasons, a dispersed distribution of power does indeed contribute to an increase of the conflict intensity, since rebel groups at relative parity still try to outbid the others with increased extremism and civilian victimisation. However, such an increase in extremism is outweighed by survival and cost-benefits calculations that equally strong rebel groups of an armed opposition, finding themselves in a condition of internal stalemate, are forced to make. Since all the other favourable outcomes for the rebel groups appear to be precluded, including ceasefires if the rebel groups fail to find an agreement with the government, this condition of stalemate leads the groups to consider abandoning the conflict as a viable option or, at the very least, the only possible alternative to continuing a fruitless and costly fight. For these reasons, therefore, I contend that a dispersed distribution of power positively affects the chances of conflict termination due to lack of armed activity. Even though more research is surely needed in this respect, also considering the fact that the small-N analysis did not provide an illustration of the mechanisms discussed above, the results of the large-N analysis do suggest that it exists an underlying causal pattern linking a dispersed power distribution to increased chances that a civil conflict terminates for lack of armed activity.

Therefore, the analysis demonstrated that also how power is distributed within the armed opposition plays a role in affecting how civil conflicts terminate. The findings in this respect have important implications for the study of conflict, since the existing scholarship has so far provided only very limited indications of how differences in relative power and power relations among rebel groups affect the outcomes of civil conflicts. By moving beyond the case study evidence available in the literature, this dissertation introduces in this respect an element of novelty to the existing scholarship. This study is surely a starting point in this respect but the indications that it provided of how conditions of stalemate among rebel groups can alter their

cost-benefit calculations and in turn the termination of civil conflicts deserve further investigation.

These findings also have implications for policy. Although the analysis was unable to identify with certainty whether a dispersed distribution of power within the armed opposition is detrimental to the armed effort of the government and its chances to achieve final victory, it is difficult to believe that having multiple, equally strong challengers is beneficial for the government, for it is forced to deal with them all at once and potentially on different fronts. The small-N analysis illustrated quite clearly such is the case. Given the likely difficulties in achieving victory, governments must then try different avenues of resolution, keeping in mind that a dispersed distribution of power is detrimental for the rebel groups too. Continuing the armed effort in pursuit of final victory remains of course a valid option for governments, since rebel groups might find it even more difficult to achieve victory. However, as this can be indeed a costly option, it would be more profitable for the governments to try and reduce the bargaining problems in order to pave the way for the negotiation of a comprehensive peace agreement or at least a ceasefire. Given the effects that a dispersed distribution of power has on the chances of conflict termination in a ceasefire, governments should remain open to this possibility as at least a starting point for future negotiations, considering that rebel groups appear to be more inclined to agree to one when they are at relative parity.

Conversely, the rebel groups of the armed opposition should try to break the condition of internal stalemate, either by uniting forces completely or at least by forming alliances that would enable them to maximise the resources at their disposal and boost their fighting efficiency. If positions and preferences appear to be irreconcilable, then rebel groups must be ready to carefully assess the costs and benefits of a prolonged armed effort and remain open to a negotiated solution of the conflict. At worst, should a negotiated settlement turn out to be unreachable, rebel groups must then be ready to retract from the conflict completely, as

abandoning the rebellion would still be better than a prolonged and costly engagement that is unlikely to bring about any positive result.

Finally, also the third parties involved in the conflict should consider the internal distribution of power of the armed opposition in order to better serve their purpose. Third parties that support the government should try to provide it with the capabilities to fight equally dangerous challenges on multiple fronts or at least to sustain a prolonged effort. If final victory remains unachievable due to the inherent difficulties in defeating the rebels, then the support to the government must be aimed at trying to reduce the bargaining problems so to steer the conflict towards a negotiated solution. On a similar vein, those third parties that intervene in conflict in a neutral manner should focus all their efforts in trying to minimise the bargaining problems so to foster the conditions for a negotiated settlement of the conflict, also exploiting the propension of the actors to sign a ceasefire to at least achieve, as a starting point, the complete halt of the hostilities. Third parties that support the rebels should instead try to incentivise the cooperation among equally strong groups, so that they could maximise all the strength and resources at their disposal and employ them in a more harmonic and effective manner. Alternatively, should cooperation among rebel groups turn out to be impossible, then their support should be aimed at breaking the condition of internal stalemate, by boosting the capabilities of only one of them in order to indirectly create an imbalance of power that could place a single rebel group in a position of predominance and force the other groups to either cooperate or be incorporated by the stronger rebel group.

This chapter provided an interpretation of the results of the large-N analysis performed in Chapter 4, discussed the extent of confirmation provided by the small-N analysis of those very results, and finally offered some possible explanations of why the important but underexplored characteristics of armed oppositions object of the study affect conflict termination the way they do. The discussion showed that it is not sufficient to look only at the

characteristics of the state at conflict or at the characteristics and behaviours of third parties involved to understand why civil conflicts terminate in a certain way. In fact, it was shown that it is equally important to also consider the characteristics of the armed oppositions at conflict to have a complete picture of what shapes civil conflict termination. In this respect, the discussion in the present chapter demonstrated that the structural characteristics, internal competition, and internal power distribution of armed oppositions do play an important role in shaping conflict termination. The results in this respect that the present chapter discussed did not conclusively indicate that these attributes of armed opposition significantly affect each and every possible outcome of civil conflicts. In some cases, the analysis unequivocally demonstrated that these attributes substantially contribute to facilitate or hinder specific civil conflict outcomes. In other cases, the evidence was not conclusive. Yet, despite some inconclusive evidence, the chapter provided indications of the important role that these attributes of armed oppositions play in affecting how civil conflicts end. Each of the findings presented in this chapter have a key relevance for both the study of conflict and policy. These findings, thus, not only complement the existing scholarship and advance it by providing a substantial and novel contribution, but also open up for further investigations aimed at better understanding how the characteristics of armed oppositions shape the termination of multiparty civil conflicts.

Conclusion

What determines how a civil conflict terminates is difficult to single out with certainty. The way in which a civil conflict ends is the consequence of the impact of a host of different factors. Previous research has established that some of the characteristics and behaviour of the actors involved affect not only the dynamics of civil conflicts, but also how they terminate. Characteristics of the state at conflict, such as its political-institutional capacity and its military capacity, have been found to be correlated with specific types of conflict termination. The behaviour of third parties, along with the type and extent of their interventions, have also been identified as important determinants of how these conflicts end. Several lines of evidence have indicated that also some of the characteristics of the rebel side of the conflict, such as their fighting capacity or the grievances that motivate their violent mobilisation, do play a role in shaping conflict termination. However, not all the possible factors affecting conflict termination have received the attention they deserve in the scholarship on civil conflicts. The tendency in the scholarship to focus more on the role of the state and third parties, the inclination to consider the rebel side as a unitary entity, and the lack until not long ago of fine-grained data regarding the rebel actors at conflict, have resulted in little attention being paid to how some other fundamental attributes of armed oppositions could affect the termination of civil conflicts. This dissertation identified the structural characteristics, internal competition, and internal power distribution as crucial attributes of armed oppositions that could affect how civil conflicts terminate.

These attributes of armed oppositions are certainly not novel or unknown to scholars and observers of civil conflicts. Yet, a close look at the existing scholarship revealed that they have not been taken into adequate account as explanatory factors of civil conflict termination. The scholarship on the fragmentation of the rebel side of the conflict has provided some important indications of how it affects conflict termination. However, this body of literature fell short of

providing indications of how fragmentation affects each and every possible outcome of civil conflicts at a general level. But while fragmentation has attracted the attention of scholars looking for explanations for conflict termination, the competitive and power relations that might exist among rebel groups of the same opposition have attracted much less interest. Partly because the rebel side of the conflict has long been seen as a homogenous bloc, partly because many studies adopted an overly disaggregated approach that overlooks the existence of relations among rebel groups, also the competitive and power relations within armed oppositions have not been taken into adequate account as possible determinants of civil conflict termination. This dissertation argued that an insufficient knowledge of how the dynamics of civil conflicts are influenced by different structural characteristics, levels of internal competition, and types of internal power distribution of armed oppositions greatly limits our understanding of civil conflict processes and termination.

The dissertation set out with the aim of covering this gap in the scholarship and in our knowledge by assessing how and to what extent different armed oppositions' structural characteristics, like the fragmentation, and internal dynamics, like the competition and power distribution, affect the termination of civil conflicts at a cross-national level. A theory was developed in this respect, which foresaw the fragmentation *of*, a moderate and severe competition, and a dispersed distribution of power *within* armed oppositions as having specific effects on the fighting effectiveness of the rebels, effort of the government, bargaining problems, and intensity of the conflict. As a consequence, the theory foresaw these characteristics of the armed oppositions as having specific effects on the chances that a civil conflict terminates in either government victory, rebel victory, peace agreement, ceasefire, or low activity.

To cover for what is missing in the existing scholarship on fragmentation and expand our limited knowledge of how the internal competition and power distribution of armed oppositions

affect conflict termination, a robust nested analysis was devised, so to reach generalisable conclusions and contextually offer nuanced illustrations of the phenomena under study. Through the large-N analysis, carried out with a series of multilevel multinomial logistic regressions, the dissertation was able to offer solid and robust indications of how these characteristics of armed oppositions affect conflict termination at a general level. Through the small-N analysis, it was able instead to provide some additional confirmation of the results of the large-N analysis and to illustrate the causal mechanisms linking these characteristics of armed oppositions to certain specific civil conflict outcomes.

The dissertation found that the structural characteristics, internal competition, and internal power distribution of armed oppositions do indeed affect the chances that a civil conflict terminates in a certain way. The findings indicated that the structural characteristics of armed oppositions play an important role in affecting the chances that civil conflicts terminate in negotiated settlements or due to lack of armed activity. These findings were in line with the theoretical expectations, for fragmentation was expected to exacerbate the pre-existing bargaining problems that normally hinder negotiated settlements and to determine an increase in the intensity of civil conflicts. As such, fragmentation was expected to be linked to lower chances of observing conflict termination in negotiated settlements and low activity. This effect was strongly confirmed by the analysis, as civil conflicts in which the opposition is fragmented were shown to be less likely to terminate in negotiated settlements or for lack of armed activity. Fragmentation was also expected to reduce the overall fighting effectiveness and coordination of armed oppositions, making in turn rebel victory less and government victory more likely to be observed. The analysis was, however, unable to provide general indications of how fragmentation affects the chances of conflict termination in decisive victory, either for the government or the opposition. Overall, from the analysis it emerged clearly that fragmentation has negative effects for civil conflicts, since it makes their termination, either negotiated or not,

less likely to be observed. These results, thus, demonstrated that the fragmentation of armed oppositions strongly contributes to the already common intractability of civil conflicts.

The analysis also confirmed one of the main arguments of the dissertation, namely that is not sufficient to look only at the structural characteristics of an armed opposition but is crucial to look also at the competitive relations among the rebel groups of which is composed to better understand how the characteristics of the rebel side affect conflict termination. The analysis found strong evidence for the impact of moderate levels of competition on conflict outcomes but failed to provide significant indications of how extreme levels of competition affect conflict termination at a general level. Moderate levels of internal competition were found to have positive effects on the prospects of conflict termination in government victory and negative effects on those of termination in low activity. These results were in line with the theoretical expectations. Internal competition was expected to be a detrimental factor for the fighting efficiency and overall coordination of the armed opposition. Such an effect was expected to make, in turn, government victory more and rebel victory less likely to be observed. The analysis strongly indicated such is the case for government victories, which were found to be significantly more likely to be observed when the opposition is internally competitive. With regard to rebel victories, instead, the large-N analysis was unable to find a significant correlation, but the results of both the large-N and small-N analysis point to a confirmation of the expectations. Internal competition was also expected to contribute to an increase in the level of extremism and intensity of the conflict. As such, it was expected to be linked to reduced chances of conflict termination for lack of armed activity, an effect that was confirmed by the analysis. Quite surprisingly, internal competition was found to be linked to higher chances of conflict termination in peace agreement. These results are at odds with the theoretical expectations, for internal competition was expected to exacerbate, even more than fragmentation, the bargaining problems that generally hamper the negotiated solution of civil

conflicts. The analysis showed that the opposite holds true, for peace agreements are more likely to be signed when moderately competitive relations among the rebel groups exist within an opposition. Overall, thus, internal competition was found to be detrimental for armed oppositions and beneficial for the governments at conflict. This holds true also with respect to the impact of severe levels of internal competition. Although the analysis was unable to find significant associations between severe levels of competition and any civil conflict outcome, the qualitative assessment of the impact of this variable in the Ugandan conflict episodes indicated quite clearly that a severe internal competition is a scourge for rebels and a boon for the governments at conflict.

Finally, the analysis confirmed that it is also important to look at how power is distributed within armed oppositions – and the relations among the rebel groups that arise depending on how power is distributed – to have a better sense of how the characteristics of the rebel side might affect conflict termination. In this respect, the analysis demonstrated that a dispersed distribution of power within the armed opposition favours the termination of civil conflicts in either ceasefire or for lack of armed activity. Compared to a hegemonic distribution of power, a dispersed distribution was expected to determine a condition of internal stalemate within the armed opposition and that such a condition would boost the chances of conflict termination in ceasefire and low activity. When in this condition, the rebel groups of the opposition were expected to be more open to the option of putting down the arms, either by trying to sign a ceasefire with the government or by abandoning the armed struggle altogether. The results strongly confirmed these expectations, as conflict termination in ceasefire and low activity was found to be more likely to occur when power within the opposition is dispersed. From the analysis, no clear indications emerged instead with regard to the impact of the internal power distribution of armed oppositions on the prospects of conflict termination in peace agreement and decisive victory, either for the regime or the opposition. Overall, from the analysis it

emerged that a dispersed distribution of power does not have positive effects for the prospects of conflict termination. While it is true that such a distribution of power boosts the chances of termination in ceasefire and low activity, it takes time for the rebel groups of an opposition to realise that putting down the arms might be the best option for them. Consequently, civil conflicts in which the rebel groups of the opposition are at a relative parity might drag on for longer before reaching their natural end and, even when they do, conflict termination in ceasefire or low activity tend to leave open the possibility of conflict relapse and, as such, to be rather temporary.

Through these findings, the dissertation makes two important contributions. The first contribution is related to the study of civil conflicts. In this respect, the dissertation offers solid and generalisable conclusions of how characteristics related to the armed opposition affect the prospects of termination of civil conflicts. The contribution lies in the fact that indications at a general level of whether and how structural characteristics, internal competition, and internal power distribution of armed opposition affect conflict termination were quite limited in the existing scholarship. Most of the existing research related to the object of the dissertation focused on the fragmentation of the rebels. Within this body of scholarship, the few studies that assessed the impact of fragmentation on conflict termination were limited in some ways. In this respect, the dissertation goes beyond the existing limited in scope, context-specific, and outcome-specific scholarship on the topic by contributing with novel generalisable findings of how fragmentation affects all the possible civil conflict outcomes at a cross-national level. In addition to this, the dissertation further contributes to our knowledge by providing indications not only of how fragmentation affects the termination of civil conflicts, but also how the relations among the rebel groups of fragmented armed oppositions do. In this regard, the indications from the existing scholarship are even more limited and the analysis demonstrated clearly that these relations need to be considered to have a firmer grasp on how the

characteristics of the rebels affect conflict processes. This is an important finding for the study of conflict as it establishes that, at a general level, not only the structural characteristics but also the competitive and power relations among the rebel groups of an armed opposition play an important role in shaping conflict termination. In doing so, the dissertation introduces elements of novelty to the body of scholarship on civil conflicts and help disentangle the well-known complexity of multiparty civil conflicts.

The second contribution that this dissertation makes is in terms of policy. With the robust findings of the analysis, the dissertation indicated whether civil conflicts in which the armed opposition is internally divided and competitive can be resolved, either on the ground or at negotiation table, by the involved parties and what level of commitment is required to do so. In doing so, the analysis highlighted which is the best course of action for the parties involved to drive the conflict toward the most favourable outcome and which alternative conducts they should adopt to avoid remaining entangled in prolonged, fruitless, and devastating civil conflicts.

Of course, the dissertation leaves the door open for further research on the topic. Not all civil conflict outcomes were in fact found to be significantly associated with the characteristics of armed oppositions object of the study. In particular, as the analysis failed to identify how the fragmentation, internal competition, and internal power distribution of armed oppositions affect the prospects of termination in rebel victory, more research adopting a comparative and qualitative approach is needed in this respect to understand whether these characteristics of armed oppositions do play a role in shaping the chances that rebels achieve final victory. Some questions regarding how severe levels of internal competition affect civil conflict termination have also remained unanswered. The restrictive conceptualisation of this kind of competition adopted in the present dissertation resulted in too few instances of this phenomenon being analysed to understand how it affects conflict termination at a general level. In this case too,

further comparative and qualitative research might help providing more solid indications than the present dissertation was able to offer. Finally, this dissertation specifically dealt with the association of these under-explored characteristics of armed oppositions with civil conflict termination. In doing so, it laid the groundwork for future investigations that aim to further examine the intractability and resistance to termination of multiparty civil conflicts. Future research can use the findings of this dissertation as a starting point to further assess how the characteristics of armed oppositions affect the reconstruction phases, demobilisation and reintegration processes, and more generally the transition toward non-contentious politics after multiparty civil conflict

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Appendix

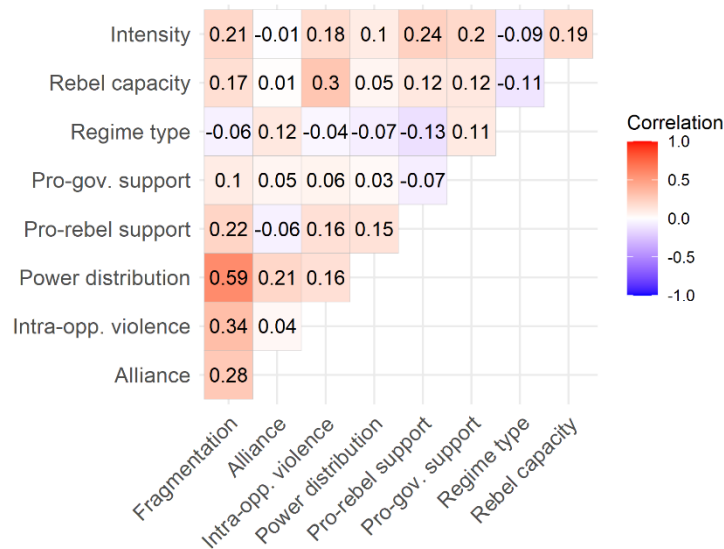
Appendix A: Multicollinearity test

The dissertation presented a series of statistical models aimed at assessing whether some characteristics of armed oppositions could affect how civil conflicts terminate. As these characteristics are complementary, some concerns may arise as to whether the variables capturing these characteristics are correlated. In such cases, intercorrelation among independent variables might, at best, make one of them redundant or, at worst, altogether impair model estimation. To assess whether this is the case and dispel any concern in this respect, I performed a further robustness test to check whether the independent variables are correlated with one another and with the control variables. By doing so, it can be assessed whether multicollinearity issues have affected the fit of the statistical models.

To begin, a simple correlation test of all the independent variables and control variables was performed. From this test, it emerged that the independent variables are not alarmingly correlated to one another nor with the any of the control variables. As Graph 1 shows, in fact, all the variables display reasonable levels of correlation. The only correlation that raises some concerns is the one between fragmentation and power distribution, which are correlated to a larger extent than the other variables (0.59). Admittedly, this correlation value is considerable. However, it is not overly concerning. In fact, the correlation value 0.59 is considerably lower than the value of 1, which would represent a perfect positive correlation. As the variables are not perfectly correlated, none of them can be considered redundant, that is, neither of them exactly replicates the effect of the other. High levels of correlation between two independent variables, however, can still have distortive effects in terms of model estimation. Although there is no standard threshold that indicates when a correlation value is representative of a level of correlation so critical that it would impair model estimation, previous studies have

demonstrated that correlation between variables becomes problematic for model estimation when its value is higher than 0.7 (Dormann *et al.* 2013).

Figure A.1. Correlation among independent variables and control variables



As the correlation value for all the independent variables, including fragmentation and power distribution, is lower than this threshold, this test demonstrates that the performance of the statistical models is not impaired by correlation among the independent variables.

The results of this simple correlation test are already satisfying in removing the concerns regarding possible multicollinearity. However, to leave no stone unturned, I also proceeded with the calculation of the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for each variable included in the full Model 6. VIF is generally considered to be a more accurate measure of multicollinearity in a model but is normally an exclusive of linear/continuous predictors. However, it is possible to compute the VIF also for categorical predictors, as those included in my models, through the so called Generalised VIF (GVIF) (Fox 2016, Fox and Weisberg 2019). As Table 1 shows, the results of the computation of the GVIFs for all the variables in Model 6 indicate that the model was not affected by multicollinearity issues. In fact, all the GVIF values are quite low and close to 1, i.e. the minimum bound of this measure. The two variables that show the highest values are once again fragmentation and power distribution. In this case too, though, these values do

not raise major concerns. Although there is no standard threshold for the interpretation of VIF values, existing literature (James *et al.* 2013) – and what has now become a rule of thumb – indicates that only VIF values equal or higher than 10 signal considerable multicollinearity issues. Stricter interpretations of VIF values set at 5 the critical value for multicollinearity but, as none of the GVIF values reported in the table get even closer to either threshold, this final test conclusively dispel any multicollinearity concern.

Table A.1. Generalised Variance Inflation Factors of the variables in Model 6

<i>Variables</i>	<i>(G)VIF</i>
Fragmentation	2.21
Alliance (1)	1.08
Intra-opposition violence (1)	1.21
Internal power distribution (1)	1.94
Rebel capacity (1)	1.05
Regime type (1)	1.05
Pro-rebel support (1)	1.09
Pro-government support (1)	1.05
Intensity level (1)	1.07