# Armed Groups and the Balance of Power

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Anthony Vinci

LSE international studies

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This new book provides a framework for understanding the international relations of armed groups, including terrorist organizations, insurgencies and warlords, which play an increasingly important role in the international system.

Specifically, the book argues that such groups can be understood as taking part in the balance of power with states and other armed groups, as they are empirically sovereign non-state actors that are motivated by the pursuit of power and exist as part of an anarchic, self-help system. This radically new approach offers a renewed conceptualization of Neorealism, and provides new insights into debates about sovereignty, non-state actors, new wars, counterterrorism, and counterinsurgency. The approach is illustrated through case studies on Somali warlords, the security complex between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA), Sudan and Uganda, as well as Al Qaeda. The book provides insights into such issues as how non-state actors can be integrated into structural theories of international relations, and also offers pragmatic methodologies for the foreign policy or military practitioner, such as how to best deter terrorists.

This book will be of much interest to students of international security, insurgency, terrorism and IR in general.

**Anthony Vinci** has a PhD in International Relations from the London School of Economics.

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*Anthony Vinci*

# Armed Groups and the Balance of Power

## The international relations of terrorists, warlords and insurgents

**Anthony Vinci**

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**This book is dedicated to Pat and Nancy Vinci.**

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# Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| ADF | Allied Democratic Forces |
| C3 | Command, Control, and Communication |
| CAR | Central African Republic |
| DRC | Democratic Republic of Congo |
| ECOMOG | ECOWAS Monitoring Group |
| ECOWAS | Economic Community of West African States |
| FARC | Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia |
| GoS | Government of Sudan |
| HSM | Holy Spirit Movement |
| IGAD | Inter-Governmental Authority on Development |
| IGO | intergovernmental organization |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| IPE | International Political Economy |
| IR | international relations |
| IRA | Irish Republican Army |
| JI | Jemaah Islamiyah |
| LRA | Lord's Resistance Army |
| MNC | multi-national corporation |
| MOU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| NGO | nongovernmental organization |
| NPFL | National Patriotic Front of Liberia |
| NRA | National Resistance Army |
| NRM | National Resistance Movement |
| NSA | non-state actor |
| NSC | National Salvation Council |
| OLF | Oromo Liberation Front |
| OLS | Operation Lifeline Sudan |
| PLO | Palestinian Liberation Organization |
| PMC | private military company |
| RPG | rocket propelled grenades |
| RRA | Rahanwein Resistance Army |
| RUF | Revolutionary United Front |

| | |
|---|---|
| SNA | Somali National Alliance |
| SNF | Somali National Front |
| SNM | Somali National Movement |
| SNSA | sovereign non-state actor |
| SPLA | Sudanese People's Liberation Army |
| SPLM | Sudanese People's Liberation Movement |
| SRRC | Sudanese Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Committee |
| SRRC | Somalia Reconciliation and Restoration Council |
| SSDF | Somali Salvation Democratic Front |
| TFR | Task Force Ranger |
| TNG | transitional national government |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNDOS | United Nations Development Office for Somalia |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| UNITA | National Union for Total Independence of Angola |
| UNITAF | UN International Task Force |
| UNOSOM | United Nations Operation in Somalia |
| UPDA | Uganda People's Democratic Army |
| UPDF | Ugandan People's Defense Force |
| US | United States |
| USC | United Somali Congress |
| USC/PM | United Somali Congress/Peace Movement |
| WSLF | Western Somali Liberation Front |

# 1 Introduction

Armed groups, including terrorists, warlords and insurgencies, are becoming increasingly significant actors in international relations. For most of the Cold War armed groups acted locally or if they acted internationally, they usually did so via another state. However, by the end of the Cold War, armed groups started having international lives of their own in which they interacted on a political, economic or military level across state borders at will.[1] This 'globalization of insurgency' has been attributed to multiple factors, including the improvement in transport technology, proliferation of information and communication technology, deregulation of international markets, and an increase in migration which have allowed many types of non-state actors (NSAs), including armed groups, to break their local bonds.[2] Although, this internationalization was most evident initially in the case of terrorists groups, it has come to include other types of armed groups such as warlord organizations and insurgencies.

There are numerous examples of armed groups taking part in international relations. In particular, wars across international borders are common. For instance, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) moved its operations from Uganda to Sudan and more recently to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Central African Republic (CAR), all the while attacking targets in Uganda as well as Sudan. Al Qaeda is a truly global organization that attacks nations anywhere in the world. We also see armed groups practicing what is best described as diplomacy. For example, Jonas Savimbi, the leader of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) in Angola, famously visited with President Ronald Reagan. Osama bin Laden has offered a truce to European nations via television broadcast. Armed groups have begun to have large international economic stakes, with for instance, Charles Taylor and his National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) making millions from the international sale of diamonds and timber.

At the same time, local armed groups are increasingly raising policy concerns for other international actors. States and related inter-governmental organizations (IGOs), such as the United Nations (UN), now have to consider armed groups in their policy deliberations. State failure has meant that a state government may no longer be able to cope with armed groups within its territory. The implication is that international organizations or states may have to relate directly with an armed group. For instance, the UN has had to directly contend

with militias in Somalia on a military, diplomatic and economic level. States' foreign policies may also demand alliances with armed groups, as the US found in its war in Afghanistan where it has had to align with warlords and militias on a regular basis. Similarly, the power of asymmetric warfare has meant that even the most powerful states may be threatened by even relatively small armed groups, as illustrated by Al Qaeda's attacks on 11 September 2001.

While armed groups' influence on states and other international actors was also common during the Cold War, it has become a more significant issue now due to two factors. Firstly, armed groups are more independent from states than in the past and therefore have potentially separate policy goals, which cannot be addressed by only considering a state's motivations. Secondly, armed groups are relatively more powerful actors now, while many states have become relatively less powerful, and can therefore demand more equitable relationships. Together, these factors – independence and relative power – have produced a situation in which armed groups must be considered relevant international actors. To put it simply, at this point if we don't understand armed group international relations, we don't understand international relations fully.

With the growth in the importance of the international relations of armed groups, it has become necessary for International Relations (IR) as a field of study to make sense of these interactions. IR is duty-bound to analyze and theorize about all international actors in order to fulfill its purpose of understanding, describing and explaining international affairs. The issue of armed group international relations is not just of academic importance but also has serious implications for political and military choices. Indeed, IR has always stood on a line in which it both attempts to find theoretical explanations but also provides the underpinnings for political and military decisions. Understanding armed groups better, and specifically within the context of an international state system, will allow political and military decision makers to better make their decisions. Such a refocusing of academic debate is already occurring in the field of Strategic Studies, where the study of counterterrorism and counterinsurgency is as mainstream as more traditional interstate warfare.

The expansion of the field of IR to study newly empowered actors in the international system is not unprecedented. Although IR was able to provide adequate explanations of state relations during much of the 20th century, a growth in the power and relevancy of NSAs occurred in the 1960s and 70s. Theorists soon came to realize that in order to explain international relations it was necessary to incorporate NSAs such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), like Greenpeace, and multinational corporations (MNCs), like Exxon-Mobil. This led to a new set of concepts, including the term NSA, and theoretical frameworks for understanding these organizations' international relations.[3] This time, however, rather than IR, other fields like Development Studies, Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency, Strategic Studies and Comparative Politics have tended to take on the mantel of studying armed groups. However, IR is the field best equipped to study the international relations of armed groups and it is with this in mind that this study has been undertaken.

This book specifically addresses the question of how armed groups, including terrorists, warlords and insurgents, interact in the international system, or put in another way, asks what the international relations of armed groups are. The following chapters will provide a means for describing and explaining the international relations of armed groups through the balance of power. As will come to light, this same approach will also describe and explain the relations of armed groups in civil wars. Moreover in making this argument, other areas of debate will be addressed as well, such as the internal structure of armed groups, the motivations of terrorists, warlords and insurgents and the nature of peace agreements. In answering this question, the groundwork will be laid for making the right policy choices by statesmen and military leaders using the same tried and true methods of IR thought that we apply to states.

## Armed groups

There are several reasons for why it is so difficult to address the question of armed group international relations. One of the most daunting aspects is that armed groups differ not only from states but also radically from each other. Even a casual observation of armed groups immediately shows that there are many different types of active armed groups. These range from highly decentralized, cellular structured international organizations to state-like, long-term rebellions. Briefly, it is possible to differentiate at least three different types of armed groups that have relevance to international relations – insurgencies, warlord organizations and terrorist groups.

There are guerilla insurgencies, such as the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA). The SPLA fought a civil war against the government of Sudan from 1983 until 2005. It had thousands of soldiers and controlled an area larger than many European countries. It had a multilayered leadership structure, foreign policy, a strong and disciplined army and the ability to administer and govern different tribes within its territory.[4]

Other armed groups include warlords and their organizations, such as Charles Taylor and the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). The NPFL began fighting the Liberian government headed by Samuel Doe in 1989. After being repulsed by the Liberian army and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Cease-fire Monitoring Group, (ECOMOG) army, it set up its own government in central Liberia known as the National Patriotic Reconstruction Assembly Government (NPRAG), alternatively known as 'Taylorland'. The NPFL was notorious for using brutal tactics against its opponents as well as civilian villagers, such as hacking off hands and selling alluvial diamonds and timber to fund its fighting. After taking control of Monrovia, Taylor was even elected President in 1997.[5]

There are also terrorist groups, such as Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). JI uses bombings and other attacks against civilians to bring about its political goals, including the 2002 Bali bombings that targeted Australian tourists. The Southeast Asia based group preaches a fundamentalist form of Islam and appears to have

connections with several other terrorist groups including Al Qaeda. A truly networked organization, JI has survived through the arrest of hundreds of its combatants, including its top military strategist Riduan Isamuddin (better known as 'Hambali').[6]

Each of these groups differs in at least organizational structure, means of warfare and goals. For example, terrorist groups are networked organizations with 'cellular' structures and symbolically use violence against civilians to bring 'widespread attention to a political grievance and/or [to provoke] a draconian or unsustainable response'.[7] Prima fasciae, it seems that their international relations will differ radically from, for instance, a traditional guerilla insurgency, which will tend to use a relationship with civilian society for support. Both groups differ from warlords who purposefully commit atrocities and use rampages of barbaric violence to create disorder.

Although armed groups such as the SPLA, NPFL and JI differ markedly, they are alike in pertinent ways. (Chapter 2 will examine the nature of armed groups in more detail). Briefly, however, we can expect that armed groups have a leadership and ability to act as a cohesive whole to some degree. They have the ability to obtain materials and to motivate men to fight. Finally, they have a military ability due to having some form of soldiers and weaponry that give them the ability to combat other actors. Armed groups are also non-state groups in that they are independent of the state's authority. In effect, the term armed group refers to military actors such as insurgent groups, terrorists groups and warlord organizations that encompass a cohesive group of men who have military power. This ranges from small bands of infantry with small arms up to large scale armies with aircraft and tracked vehicles. These groups are able to commit violence in a cohesive and purposeful manner for a significant amount of time. Given these similarities across different groups, we can define armed groups as non-state organizations that have the capacity for sustained and systematic military action.

This definition precludes short-term mobs of people as well as small scale criminal groups, which although having a capacity for violence, are not able to commit violence systematically and at a level at which we would refer to it as military. Occasionally criminal groups do obtain a military ability, especially during state collapse. At such a time, they would cross the line to becoming an armed group.[8]

Also precluded are groups that are best considered as proxies of states. Such organizations are fully funded, armed and managed by a state sponsor and have little to no life beyond the state. These groups are essentially part of another actor and attempts at explaining its actions are best made through analysis of the patron. It is the separation from other actors that makes armed groups a 'group'. This is, of course, a difficult line to draw as many armed groups are funded by states to some degree. The differentiating feature is the degree to which these groups are independent of the state. Chapter 2 will specifically address this independence factor.

Similarly, militias represent a middle area. Militias are by definition armed.

They are however, the armed extension of another group, usually a civilian political community like a clan or tribe. In some instances, the armed militia wing of a clan does essentially take over, as it did in Somalia in some cases.[9] In other cases, the militia is only a short-term arming of individuals who are otherwise civilians and part of a larger community. The relevancy of this differentiation will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2 and then again in a case study on Somali armed groups.

Certain terrorist groups present a particularly difficult problem for definition. Some groups that are classed as terrorist groups, including Hezbollah, are clearly armed groups. The reason for this is that such groups are in many ways similar to what we would call insurgencies in that they have an army (or semi-professional to professional group of armed men), leadership, bases of operation and even a government-like organization. Al Qaeda on the other hand is much more difficult to define because it is decentralized. Some would even call it a movement rather than a 'group' per se. However, a group like Al Qaeda still appears to have the essential aspects of an armed group in that there remains a central cadre of leaders and fighters. With these challenges in mind, an entire case study will be devoted to Al Qaeda.

Mercenaries and Private Military Companies (PMCs) are also armed and, in cases like Executive Outcomes or Blackwater, have a very powerful military ability.[10] However, these groups are best considered as companies who provide services to a state and subject themselves to its laws. When PMCs do act in an international relations manner, such as when Blackwater fights in Iraq, it is as an extension of a state, in this case the US, since it is the government that decides their strategic actions (while the PMCs tend to maintain control over their tactical decisions). Therefore their international relations choices are best determined by analysis of US foreign policy. Of course, we can imagine a rogue PMC that no longer subjected itself to the state and rather became its own international actor. Such a group would more rightly be considered an armed group.

What we are left with are organizations including: the SPLA, the NPLF, Somalia warlords and factions, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC), Hezbollah, JI, Al Qaeda, the Tamil Tigers, the LRA as well as other similar groups. What makes such armed groups relevant to this study is that unlike other NSAs they can actually challenge the state at its own game – the monopoly of violence within a defined area or over people. They have the weapons and soldiers, even tanks necessary to confront a state's conventional military, if only in a local area. This military capacity gives armed groups a unique ability amongst non-state actors, which is to determine for themselves their internal and external relations without the interference of anyone, including the state. As will be discussed in more detail, when the state does infringe on the armed group's internal or external relations, we see the same sort of relations as between one state and another – wars, negotiations, and alliances.

## The study of armed groups

It is not to say that armed groups have not been studied before. In fact, there is a large literature on the subject. The literature can be roughly grouped into three areas. There are a significant number of Area Studies or Comparative Politics texts that focus on analyzing specific armed groups. For instance, Douglas Johnson covered the SPLA in detail.[11] Most of the essays in Rich's collection *The International Relations of Warlords* – are similarly approached from an area studies perspective.[12] Other authors, such as Bruce Hoffman in his work on terrorism, study classes of armed groups.[13] The comparative approach is especially helpful in understanding the details of a particular armed group, as well as the domestic, and sometimes, regional context.

Others study armed groups under the heading of counterterrorism or counterinsurgency. These texts address how to win against armed groups on a strategic and sometimes tactical level.[14] In making their analysis, counterterrorist and counterinsurgent literature often addresses the international relations of armed groups from a descriptive point of view. For instance, in noting that an armed group may align with a foreign state in order to obtain supplies, these studies may recommend cutting off the insurgency's supply route.

More recently, some authors have turned to looking at armed groups from the perspective of economic motivations, sometimes known as 'greed' and identity motivations, sometimes known as 'grievance'. The political economy approach is exemplified in, for instance, the work of Mats Berdal, David Keene, and Paul Collier who ask what the functional utility of violence is in civil wars.[15] Other authors such as Susan Woodward or Robert Kaplan detail how political or ethnic grievances play into motivating armed groups to fight.[16] In making their analyses, these authors may address the international relations of armed groups, such as to describe the international economic dealings of a warlord for instance.

However, these approaches to understanding armed group international relations do not provide the sort of understanding that we need. Area studies and comparative approaches provide great understanding of the details of specific armed groups but do not put their actions into context nor provide an explanation that can be applied to other groups. While counterinsurgency and counterterrorist literatures provide explanations about how to target armed groups, it does not generally provide an account of their international relations. Similarly, the greed-grievance approach focuses in on specific motivations of armed groups without addressing the other aspects of these groups such as their diplomacy. Most importantly, these literatures are divorced from the subject of IR – the very field that is specifically orientated to understanding the international relations of actors. In particular, they are divorced from the systemic theories, including the various flavors of Neorealism that dominate the field of interstate studies (at least in the US).

IR models of world politics seek to describe and explain the international relations of actors and this book essentially seeks to expand that class of actors that can be analyzed using these models. The main reason that these actors have

not been included in contemporary IR is that they are not seen as powerful or relevant enough. But as pointed out, armed groups have become important enough for us to address at the highest level of IR. This is not just the case when trying to understand international relations amongst West African states but also even the most powerful states such as the US or Western European states given the current counterterrorist and counterinsurgency wars going on. Although there is value in simplifying the international system in order to understand it better and the line does have to be drawn at some point, we need to incorporate armed groups at this point because these groups now have the capacity for influencing the entire system in a military, economic and political manner. In fact, for much of its history, the study of international relations did incorporate all sorts of armed actors through the concept of the balance of power.

The balance of power concept has been part of the debate in IR since at least Thucydides and one can imagine cavemen exhibiting some form of the concept. In modern academia, the concept of the balance of power has been formalized as the theory of Realism.[17] Realism assumes that politics is governed by laws which have their roots in human nature; that interest, in terms of power and/or security, are the factors which determine relations in an anarchic environment; and that actors are more or less rational.[18] From this basis, the concept of the balance of power relates that an equilibrium of power will form between actors who seek security (or at least actors will try to form such an equilibrium). The intricacies of Realism then explain how actors balance power, such as through alliances, and why they make certain balancing actions, for instance why a state decides to align versus go to war.

Realism is valuable in analyzing the international relations of armed groups for several reasons.[19] Armed groups, unlike say NGOs, exist in the pragmatic world of conflict and de facto power, rather than the world of international agreements and other peaceful means of relating that states have developed. Realism is a theory that is more focused on explaining such pragmatic relations. Realism's focus on these military and political aspects makes it well suited for explaining the relations of the essentially bellicose armed groups. Moreover, Realism has been applied to many epochs of international politics, from ancient Greece to the modern day, during which time it has addressed many different types of actors, ranging from empires to nation-states to city-states to warlords.

Since Kenneth Waltz's canonical work *Theory of International Relations* was published in 1979, many Realists have turned to systemic level explanations of international relations as such theories are considered more rigorous explanations of the balance of power.[20] Waltz's text formed the foundation of what has since been called Neorealism. Waltz formalized the theory of Realism by turning it into a systems theory, similar to the microeconomic theory of markets.[21] Briefly, the theory argues that states can be seen as similar units in having an economy, government and means to defend themselves. The minimum that these units want is to survive and they must pursue survival in an anarchic system in which no actor is able to structure the relations of other actors. Although similar in type and motivation, these actors differ in power

capabilities. In order to survive, an actor will seek to balance others' power through the use of internal power building such as increasing military spending or external power building such as making alliances. These moves are meant to neutralize any perceived relative power differences between the actor and other units. The system made up of these like units constrains each of the units to act in similar ways. Neorealism explains the international relations of the units through these systemic constraints rather than through more subjective differences in the units themselves.

By looking at the systemic level and not focusing on the internal features of states, Neorealism is able to make valuable explanations of international politics. The theory can explain the polarity of the system, i.e. whether it is a unipolar (in which there is one great power), bipolar (in which there are two) or multipolar (in which there are more than two) system. Also, Neorealism reveals the systemic constraints on all the possible ways any actor may act, regardless of specific types of governments or individual leaders. Therefore, Neorealism can make sense of the fact that different types of states, such as liberal democracies versus totalitarian dictatorships, act in essentially the same way at the systemic international level.

Neorealism is valuable for theorizing about armed groups for the same reasons that it is valuable for theorizing about the relations of states. Since Neorealism focuses on the constraints of the system rather than the specifics of the actor, it can be helpful in comparing armed groups with states, just as it is helpful in comparing dictatorships and democracies. Neorealism explains when and why these units act in certain ways, such as through alliances or increases in military spending, based on the system not the actor. Therefore the theory will be able to describe when and why armed groups act in ways that balance power, whether that is with other armed groups or states. Also, it is possible to go further than simply describing how armed groups relate with states and international actors; instead, it is possible to model their relations and see how they change based on what other actors do. Beyond this, Neorealism has the same benefits as Realism in that it is focused on political and military relations and does not rely on juridical legitimacy in its analysis of actors. Most importantly, Neorealism is the type of theory that is often used to study states and by incorporating armed groups into the study of states, we can better understand interstate relations as well.

Ironically, the feature of traditional 'Political' Realism that seems to make it appear more applicable to analyzing armed group relations than Neorealism actually makes it less so. Political Realism is a theory that focuses on the unit, and sometimes the individual, level of analysis. Since it is a more subjective theory – even 'an attitude regarding the human condition' (Gilpin 1986: 305) – it would be easy enough to apply this attitude to armed groups, who are often called 'Machiavellian' anyway. However, to analyze armed groups at this level would only continue the practice of focusing on the differences between armed groups and states, which only serves to make it more difficult to integrate armed groups into models of interstate relations. Therefore, it potentially falls into the

same problems as area and comparative studies in only providing a specific rather than general explanation. Neorealism, on the other hand, treats all actors as essentially the same in type and thus provides for the possibility of a general theoretical model.

This decision to use Neorealism is made even though the theory draws a starker line between states and NSAs than Realism and therefore is arguably the most state-centric theory of international relations. This will mean that the argument for using Neorealism to analyze armed groups will be considerably more complicated than the one to use Realism. In a sense, the theory must be reinvented or renewed to take into account these actors. However, the payoff will be far greater than that which would be gained from the use of another theory.

In fact, this book provides a defense of Neorealism as a theory. Neorealism is often attacked as being too state-centric to be relevant to today's world in which armed groups as well as other non-state actors are playing a much larger role in world affairs. The theory of Neorealism found its place within the confines of the Cold War, when the concern was explaining how the totalitarian Soviet Union would relate with the democratic US and why we were experiencing a bipolar world. With armed groups playing a much larger role, Neorealism seems to be at a loss. However, we must remember that Neorealism is simply a reformation of the balance of power concept that has been around for millennia. This book will provide a means for Neorealism to adapt to the contemporary system by integrating armed groups. In other words, rather than throwing away the entire machine, as some might call for, we will dust it off and add a few modifications.

## The argument

Essentially, this book seeks to add another type of actor into Waltz's theory of the market – that is armed groups. The book will do this by arguing that armed groups are like the other units in the system in the same fundamental ways (although different in aspects which do not affect how they will act in the system). In so doing, it will be possible to explain how armed groups are constrained by the system and thereby make the same explanations of armed group relations as interstate relations.

Although Neorealism tends to be more interested in explaining the system and its polarity, the theory provides more understanding than is evident just from the polarity. It provides an idea of what actors will do within the system to survive. For instance, actors may form an alliance together in order to balance the power of another more powerful actor. These insights provide another gradient of detail in understanding the international relations of states and will do so for armed groups. It is in this way that this book will describe and explain the international relations of armed groups.

This of course begs the question of how to integrate armed groups into a state-centric theory of the balance of power like Neorealism. Firstly it is helpful to look at Robert Gilpin's view of what is at the heart of Realism. Gilpin

describes three essential assumptions of Realism.[22] The first is that it is focused on group rather than individual explanations. The second is that there is a focus on power and survival by these actors. Lastly it deals with actors in an anarchic system. We can extrapolate from Gilpin's assumptions and say that these assumptions are criteria for the use of Realism for analysis. The object of study must be a group; this group must be motivated in terms of power and/or security; and, this group must exist in an anarchic system. Beyond these basic criteria for Realist analysis, there are further criteria for Neorealist analysis. These include that the actors must be a specific type of group, they must be sovereign, functionally undifferentiated, 'like units'. Furthermore, it must be possible to make the assumption that their primary motivation is survival. As with Realism, Neorealism assumes an anarchic environment. By anarchy, we mean a system in which there is no central governance over separate units.

Prima fasciae it seems that armed groups are not analyzable using Neorealism as they do not seem to meet the criteria. For instance, they do not seem to be the right kind of group in that they are not states. They do not seem to be necessarily motivated by power or survival, but rather they seem to have other motivations, such as greed or grievance. Lastly, they exist inside of the juridically defined borders of a state, which is considered to be a hierarchic, not anarchic system.

Chapters 2 and 3 will make the case that armed groups can in fact be analyzed using a Neorealist conception of the balance of power. This book will follow Gilpin's lead and explore the nature of armed groups and their role in the international system from the perspective of the three fundamental aspects of Realism. First it will examine the nature of the armed group as a functionally undifferentiated like unit which has empirical although not juridical sovereignty. Then the book will argue that these units are better understood as being motivated by survival first and foremost. This examination will involve the sort of micro-political theorizing often reserved for states and in particular will borrow many of the concepts we are accustomed to applying to states. Finally, the book will make the case that armed groups are autonomous actors that exist within an anarchic system. Once this argument is in place the book will apply the Neorealist understanding of the balance of power to armed groups and discuss some of the similarities and differences between armed groups and states when they balance power.[23]

After making these arguments, case study chapters will look at three different armed groups. The first case study will look at factions and warlords in Somalia, the second will look at the LRA's relations with Uganda, Sudan and the SPLA and the third will look at Al Qaeda. These case studies will serve as a means of demonstrating the applicability and value of applying Neorealism to understanding the international relations of armed groups. These case studies are important because the ultimate test for the value of the theory is its usefulness in explanation, especially in regards to a pragmatic field like IR.[24] For the study of international relations, usefulness is measured by the ability to describe and explain the relations of groups in the international system. As such, the truth of the definitions and theories expounded in this book will be tested in their ability to describe and explain the relations of Somali warlords, the LRA and Al Qaeda.

# 2 Armed groups

This chapter will examine armed groups in detail in order to determine if we can consider them like units which are motivated by survival. The nature of the armed group as a unit will be examined, including the territory or organization it is autonomous over, its governance, ability to motivate, economic system and military power. The point here will be to argue that armed groups are functionally undifferentiated like units that are autonomous from the state. Next the chapter will examine the nature of sovereignty and argue that armed groups are empirically sovereign, although not juridically sovereign. The chapter will then move on to examine the motivations of armed groups. It will be argued that armed groups are not primarily motivated by greed or grievance. Instead, it is argued that armed groups are motivated by the more general concept of power and that we can make the assumption that survival is the explanatory motivation.

## Failed states

A discussion of armed groups must begin with the issue of failed states. Failed states 'fail' in that they stop fulfilling the requirements of statehood – in whatever way we define a state's requirements.[1] There are many ways in which a state may fail, including the inability to provide welfare, to defend its borders, or to represent a people. In particular, it is often noted that they do not have what Max Weber sees as the central feature of statehood – a monopoly on the legitimate use of force – within their territory.[2]

There are countless theories as to specific factors leading states to weaken and fail. For instance, William Reno argues that in some cases the rulers of a state will systematically privatize the functions of the state and loot its resources, thereby leaving a hollow shell, something he calls the shadow state.[3] Alternatively, the state may have weak control over specific areas due to geographic reasons. For instance, Jeffrey Herbst provides an account of how low population densities in sub-Saharan Africa have made it especially difficult for states to maintain authority.[4] A state may not have the economic resources to control significant portions of its territory. Without economic resources, the institutions and infrastructure of the state, from roads to civil servants, cannot be

maintained.[5] Protracted conflicts, begun for different possible reasons, may also eat away at a state's ability to govern.

No matter the reason for failure, in some instances, the state will fail to the extent that the government loses some or all of its control over its territory or people. These are the states that are of importance in this discussion. Even Western states may lose some degree of control over their interiors in some instance, such as during natural disasters like hurricane Katrina. Nonetheless, such temporary losses of control are quickly subdued. In failed states, the loss of control is more long-term and involves not just the temporary diminishing of state control but also the replacement of control by another group.

## Armed groups as units

The failure of a state is not necessarily a one-way street. As the state weakens, armed groups can become relatively more powerful than the state either as a whole or in certain areas. This leads to the question, what exactly are these groups that take control from the state?

One key to understanding these groups is that they are not states. Armed groups are non-state actors (NSAs) in that they are, 'at least in principle, autonomous from the structure and machinery of the state, and of the governmental and intergovernmental bodies above the formally sovereign state' (Josselin and Wallace, 2001: 3).[6] These actors include many different types of organizations, ranging from multi-national corporations (MNCs), such as Shell Oil, to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), such as Oxfam. However, armed groups are qualitatively different from other NSAs in that they are completely autonomous and independent of the state and thus not subject to its authority whatsoever.

But what is it to be an autonomous armed group? Moreover, armed groups have the ability to defend themselves, a point that is not likely to be denied, but does this necessarily translate into being an actor in the balance of power? More specifically, it is by no means apparent that they are similar to other units in the system – and this is at the heart of most critiques that armed groups cannot be integrated into a systemic, balance of power model of international relations. This is a complicated question as there are several features that an actor must exhibit to truly be considered the right sort of unit that Neorealism has in mind.

Neorealism meets the similarity requirement of systemic theories by demanding that actors be 'like units'.[7] The basic feature of being a like unit is wrapped up in Waltz's understanding of sovereignty. He notes that to be a like unit: 'is to say that each state is like all other states in being an autonomous political unit. It is another way of saying that states are sovereign' (Waltz 1979: 95). Waltz goes on to describe sovereignty in more detail:

> [t]o say that a state is sovereign means that it decides for itself how it will cope with its internal and external problems, including whether or not to

> seek assistance form others and in doing so to limit its freedom by making commitments to them.
>
> (Ibid.: 96)

In other words, being a like unit demands that an actor be autonomous, the highest authority, and independent.[8]

## Armed groups and territory

The most basic issue to address in determining if armed groups are like units is to ask what the boundaries of the armed group organization are. This is an easy question to answer for states, since their borders are clearly defined for the most part. But armed groups do not always appear to be the highest authority over a stable, definable territory. In fact many guerilla insurgencies base their power on their ability to be fluid and give up territory when necessary for strategic purposes. Prima fasciae this seems to be a serious problem, since in the context of international relations it is often assumed that authority is territorially based and, by extension, that a definition of an armed group should be based on control of a fixed territory.

However, territorial control is not always as important as authority over people. Herbst makes the case that in Africa, due to the low population density and harsh environment, chiefs were sovereign over people, not specific tracts of land.[9] While Herbst was referring to Africa, sovereignty as authority over people can also apply to other areas and other groups. For example, we assume it in reference to nomadic tribes in Central Asia throughout history – although these groups moved, they still had a 'group' and a cohesive government with authority over the population. This sort of sovereignty was also found in Europe. For example, '[t]he Roman Empire contained political-legal units based on people, holding that Roman citizens and local tribes were ruled and treated differently although they were to be found in the same geographical area' (Vollaard 2001: 94). We commonly assume this when we think of how an American citizen is still an American citizen even if they are in another country. In the same way, someone might be considered the citizen of a country even if they were born abroad and never set foot in their country of citizenship.

Unlike the state, the population that is under the armed group's authority is not based on territory, but is instead based on membership through initiation and specific inclusion. With the state, membership is defined by being born within a specified territory, or otherwise attaching oneself to the territory. The armed group organization, on the other hand, is made up of those who are specifically initiated. In effect, this usually means those that have undergone some sort of recruitment process and are part of the patronage system. For example, a person may join and become a paid member of the militia of Mohammed Afrah Qanyare, a former Somali warlord. However, initiation into membership can be achieved in other ways, such as forceful conscription. For instance, a child who is forced to fight for the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) becomes a member

of the organization. Often the process of initiation will include imbuing physical and emotional markers, such as tattoos or shared memories of trauma. This process of initiation and inclusion differentiates those in the armed group organization from other forms of compulsive inclusion, such as being part of a family, clan, or ethnic group. In many ways, the process is similar to that employed by conventional armies to initiate and mark those who are members of the armed force – including rituals of discipline and uniforms – and to separate them from the general population.

Initiates are not only known to themselves, but are also seen as separate by other political communities. Tattoos, uniforms, costumes, speaking a different dialect or using slang are all means by which a member of the armed group organization can mark him or herself as separate from other political communities. At times initiation can include acts that make it difficult for the individual to return to another political community, such as when LRA abductees are forced to kill or maim members of their own family or village. Often, the manner in which members of the armed group organization treat civilians draws a stark line between them and the local population.[10]

Members are initiated into a clearly delineated organization, which is in essence, an enclosed political community.[11] Political community is defined by a definite in-group and out-group distinction.[12] However, this boundary determines more than just the separation of one group from another, indeed it determines – to use Carl Schmitt's terminology – friends, who are those also under the authority of the armed group, and the enemy, who are, usually, everyone else.[13] For the state this friend-enemy distinction is based on fixed territorial boundaries or, for a nomadic tribe, it is based on ethnicity and familial relation (whether imagined or real). For the armed group, this boundary is based on inclusion and retention in the armed group organization. Members are exclusively part of this political community – in the same way that those who live in a state are exclusively citizens of that state – and in this sense the political community is enclosed.[14] As with the state, the true test of citizenship is often to fight for the group in war. This too forms the test of the members in the armed group. If a man chooses to fight with the armed group above the state, he essentially takes sides with its political community and renounces the state.

Just as with states, this friend-enemy distinction must be continually redefined and reinforced. For example, in Liberia, it has been noted that '[a]s the overall threat to a faction decreased, as it did in some area after Cotonou [a multifaceted agreement between the factions, including cease-fires], cohesion reduced' (Alao, Mackinlay, and Olonisakin 1999: 47). Also, as with states, the paramount way to (re)create the friend-enemy distinction is through war. This helps to explain the armed group's continual need for conflict – without it the organization may simply dissolve. This insight echoes Weber, who notes, '[t]he charisma of the warlord rises and falls with its efficacy and also with the demand for it; the warlord becomes a permanent figure when there is a chronic state of war' (Weber 1978: 1142).

Armed groups differ from traditional interest groups in being exclusive and at odds with the state. Interest group's members attempt to bring about a course of

events, possibly even take part in international affairs, as for instance Medicines Sans Frontiers does. However, the members of those interest groups still exist within the political community of another state. They are 'part-timers' in the interest group. At the same time, the interest group as a whole defers to the laws of a state, usually the one from which the majority of its members come. The armed group is different in that its members consider themselves separated from the state, in fact, they are at odds with the state and if the state disagrees then they will fight to prove their point.

The armed group's political community is separate, but related to existent political communities, such as clans. Often armed groups arise out of a sub-national political community that has a defined physical or personal border. The most common examples of this are clans, as occurs in Somalia or Afghanistan. In such instances, we are left with a much larger political community and one that is not praetorian in nature. This clan political community is defended by the armed group. For these cases, we would take both the clan and the armed group as the single actor.

Accordingly, we should call the enclosed political community that the armed group controls a fiefdom. The term fiefdom can refer to a specific piece of territory that an armed group may more or less temporarily control. There is no doubt that armed groups sometimes control territory and the people on that territory. But there is also a second meaning of the word that is more apt for this discussion. This second meaning of the word is the sense that it is an organization which is controlled by a dominant person or group. It is more rightly in this sense that the armed group has a fiefdom.

This notion of membership rather than territorial control aligns with observations of armed groups. For example, Qanyare had control over specific pieces of territory, including, for instance, Dayinle airport. However, it was not that we associated Qanyare's authority with a specific piece of territory, even if he had controlled it for a long period of time. Rather, it was Qanyare's authority over his private militia, which was important. A defeat in one place and victory in another would cause Qanyare and his group of fighters to move, but he would still have authority over the group and be no less a warlord. In the same way, for the fighters in Qanyare's militia, their loyalty was not to a territory, but to the organization, and by extension, Qanyare himself. The men did not answer to any government or authority other than him or their assigned superior.

It is this peculiar nature of the armed group political community that makes the common armed group practice of killing or looting from local populations appear more logical. It may seem to an outsider that an armed group organization made up of individuals from the same ethnic group, religion or community of the local population would not want to prey on these people because they are 'the same people'. Therefore, when armed groups kill this local population, they are often considered to be barbaric. The reason being that we typically think of killing within our own political community as savage and murderous, whereas we can justify the killing of our political community's 'enemies'.

This is not how the situation should be understood, however. The individuals

within the armed group have their own separate political community and see the local residents that they prey on as outsiders, and possibly enemies. To members of the armed group political community it is acceptable to kill those outside of the political community in the same way as it is seen as acceptable for citizens from one nation to kill citizens from another nation during wartime, even if they are of a similar ethnic or religious background.

This allows us to understand a seemingly paradoxical organization like the LRA. The LRA is made up solely of Acholi people from northern Uganda and southern Sudan. Yet, the LRA also extensively preys upon the Acholi people – torturing, abducting, and looting from them on a regular basis. To some this may seem contradictory as it is assumed that the LRA would not want to alienate the people that they have sprung from and should militarily represent them against other groups. However, when we keep in mind that the LRA personnel have defined themselves separately from the Acholi people, their actions seem more rational. They have their own political community and it is not based on ethnicity, but on initiation and indoctrination. Therefore, to the LRA the Acholi people are as much outsiders as any other political community would be and therefore violence against them is as acceptable as against any other political community in a conflict.

The territorial flexibility of the armed group's political community is not as exceptional in international politics as might be thought. In fact, it is not unusual to think of states as having looser territory stability than is often assumed. For instance, through conquest and defeat, a single state's territory can change significantly, as illustrated in the radically changing boundaries of the German state from the beginning of World War I to the end of World War II or the formation and eventual break-up of the Soviet Union. The armed group's territorial instability should be seen in a similar light – the actor continues to exist, but changes its territory depending on conquest and defeat. What we are left with is a flexible unit but a defined unit nonetheless.

## Cohesive, functionally undifferentiated like units

Armed groups are units but actors in Neorealist models must also be what Waltz calls 'functionally undifferentiated' as it is this non differentiation which makes them like units.[15] It is this state of being a like unit that allows us to compare the actor with other actors on a systemic level. Specifically, Waltz requires that '[e]ach state has its agencies for making, executing, and interpreting laws and regulations, for raising revenues, and for defending itself' (Waltz 1979: 96).[16] These functions are aptly chosen for it is only by having these that an actor can be unitary, autonomous, and independent. Making, executing, and interpreting laws permits the actor to maintain a cohesive, unitary stance in relation to external actors, as they allow the leadership to be able to direct the entire organization cohesively enough to attain goals. The ability to raise revenues is also necessary, as it allows the actor to continue to function indefinitely. And, most importantly, autonomy can only be had with the ability to defend against aggres-

sors. The following section will detail how armed groups are functionally undifferentiated.

### *Governance*

Armed group governance is different from that found in a state, but nonetheless, it is governance. Armed groups are the opposite from the state in that the armed groups exist (or form out of the state's civilian base) and then may come to rule over people, whereas for the state, the people exist and a government forms out of them. Moreover, armed groups, '[veer] toward a total combination of military and political means. Warfare in effect becomes politics and politics warfare…' (Rich 1999: 6). All members of the armed group political community are part of a military organization, and even the economy is fundamentally wrapped up with the military. This is pure praetorism, i.e. the intervention of the military into political life and breakdown of civilian/military relations.

Consequentially, the armed group's praetorian governance structure is the same as its command, control, and communication (C3) structure. In armed groups, political organization is the same as military organization, and to command the military is to govern.[17] In order to bring about such domination, the armed group must have a: leadership, hierarchical control structure, set of tactics and strategies to carry out, and method for effectively communicating orders and receiving back word from the group.

The leadership of the armed group can set the rules of governance. For instance, Joseph Kony, the leader of the LRA, has instituted an entire quasi-religious governance and command institution. Warlords like Dostum and Taylor relied heavily on patrimonial, looting based internal economies to maintain authority. The SPLA developed an entire governance structure with several layers of administration that was similar to a state. As with other political organizations, we can classify the different means by which armed groups gain authority.

In order to effectively govern a political organization, the armed group may obtain authority from charismatic, patrimonial, or rational (legal) sources, just as states can.[18] These are the sources of political authority that Weber attributes to political organizations. Though Weber admits that authority can come simply from force, this is an unreliable form of authority and therefore the leader must legitimize his authority in some manner. As Robert Dahl notes, authority from legitimate sources 'is not only more reliable and durable than naked coercion but also enables a ruler to govern with a minimum of political resources' (Dahl 1965: 19).[19] Charismatic power originates in an individual. Patrimonial power derives from direct exchange from the top of an organization down the hierarchy. Finally, bureaucratic power is instilled in the organization itself. Armed groups tend to be non-bureaucratic organizations, although larger insurgencies may move towards having more bureaucratic forms of governance.[20]

For the armed group, patronage usually comes in the form of looted goods or other monetary inducements that flow down from the highest levels of the

organization to the lowest fighters. This patronage creates a bond between the leadership and the fighters in the political community. It is the incentive that allows the armed group leadership to retain preeminent control over the fighters, for it is a mirror of patriarchal domination. As Weber notes:

> [u]nder patriarchal domination the legitimacy of the master's orders is guaranteed by personal subjection … The fact that this concrete master is indeed their ruler is always uppermost in the minds of his subjects. The master wields his power without restraint, at his own discretion and, above all, unencumbered by rules, insofar as it is not limited by tradition or by competing power.
>
> (Weber 1978: 1006–07)

This unrestrained power, which is gained from direct, personal connections with the armed group, creates a hierarchy of power that can be observed in all armed groups, even seemingly unorganized groups. Reliance on patronage for governance is also the major factor in the armed group's ever-present need for economic exploitation, a point to be revisited later.

Although most prominent in warlord organizations, most armed groups tend to have some form of patronage associated with them and it is this reliance on patronage which helps to explain why the leader of an armed group, as an individual, is so central to the organization. The armed group's leader will almost always attempt to monopolize the financial connections that dominate the organization's economic system.[21] In so doing, the leader as an individual becomes a necessary link in the chain of organizational control. There are significant 'political' repercussions – in the sense of politics being about determining who gets what, when, and how[22] – which must be taken into account by the armed group's leader. And, in this sense, patronage is what defines the internal politics of the armed group.

Nonetheless, some insurgencies may come to maintain fairly complex forms of bureaucracy in order to govern over their own large armies and the civilians within their spheres of influence. Before the peace agreement with the government of Sudan, the SPLA was organized like a conventional military organization. Its almost continuous funding by, and training with, conventional militaries assured this. John Garang himself attended the Advanced Infantry Training Course at the US Army's Fort Benning. The ranking and organizational structure of the SPLA was based on conventional military systems. For instance, Second Lieutenant gave way to 1st Lieutenants, to Captain, to Majors, to Lt. Colonel's etc; squads of seven soldiers formed into platoons of fifty-one, four platoons were a company, a Battalion had six companies, and three Battalions formed a Brigade.[23] Within these units there were artillery, infantry, signals, engineers and logistics divisions.[24] Command was strong and discipline was relatively high.[25] Officers were professional, for instance, they were expected to attend Cadet Colleges before commissioning and had formalized training throughout their career.[26]

The SPLA's praetorian organization was combined with a budding organizational structure based along the lines of a proto-government. By late 1989, the SPLA had effective control of large areas of the southern Sudan. The regional SPLA battalions provided not only the military extension of the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) – the political wing of the SPLA – but also constituted the civil-military administration for these areas.

The civilian 'government' involved multiple layers of administrative bureaucracies, including governors, country secretaries, and town mayors. There were also various branches of the administration that dealt with welfare issues. These departments included: Woman and Children's Welfare, Youth and Sport, Education, Health, Administration for Police and Prisons, Judiciary, Legal and Constitutional Affairs, Agriculture and Forestry, Wildlife and Environment, Communications and Transportation, and Finance and Planning.[27] The Sudanese Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Committee (SRRC) was concerned with relations with the international humanitarian aid organizations and through them, welfare for the southern Sudanese; they were also responsible for controlling foreign travel into the south. Finally, the SPLM had instituted a taxation system, work permits for foreign workers and an education curriculum.[28] Although less bureaucratic than a Western European government, this system was nonetheless an example of bureaucratic authority and a good example of the degree of organization that armed groups can attain.

Charismatic power is also important for armed groups. For example, the LRA is governed by the mystic Kony, who 'uses … spiritualism to maintain control, starting with his overall vision of liberation and destruction and continuing with individual spirits that "guide" specific military tactics' (Refugee Law Project 2004: 13). Or, for instance, in Liberia 'success and influence depended more on a commander's power in his own right as a dominating personality in the faction hierarchy than on his capabilities as a military leader' (Alao, Mackinlay, and Olonisakin 1999: 47). Similarly, Osama bin Laden is the charismatic face of Al Qaeda and his words are enough to cause others who have not even met a true member of Al Qaeda to perform terrorist attacks. This too helps to explain the prominence of the leader of many armed groups for it is in him or her as an individual that charismatic authority resides.

After using patrimony, charisma and/or bureaucracy to obtain authority, this authority must then be implemented. In order to keep the organization a cohesive whole, the armed group must institute a means of projecting orders to specific units and individuals and then assuring that these orders are carried out. Armed groups have their own personalized organizational systems for maintaining a hierarchy of domination with corresponding systems of communication and discipline. With smaller groups, this may only involve messengers or radio communication from the leadership of the organization to the general troops. With larger forces, this may involve multiple layers of leadership where orders are sent down via electronic communications and intelligence delivered back up to the top via the same channels. Once communicated, orders in armed groups are generally carried out based on the authority discussed above. However, as a

last resort they may be enforced just as they are in conventional militaries, i.e. through discipline based on the threat of punishment.

With the ability to direct troops in place, an armed group must develop a strategy and set of tactics with which to manage warfare. The strategies can be borrowed, such as the guerilla strategies developed by Che Guevara or the military doctrine of a state's army, or made up by the armed group itself, as the 'Holy Spirit Tactics' of Alice Lakwena's Holy Spirit Movement.[29] In some cases, they seem to fight with essentially no strategy and few tactics other than random shooting, as is often said about warlords of the Liberian and Sierra Leonean conflicts. However, even in these instances, there is in fact a rational set of tactics and strategies.[30]

The authority and leadership structure of an armed group allows it to function as a single cohesive actor. This is apparent in well-organized armed groups like the SPLA. Even when an armed group may seem like a chaotic jumble of self-servant warlords, there is often still a structure in place. For instance, while the NPFL may not have been the most effectively governed organization, Charles Taylor's men did not completely run wild. In particular, Operation Octopus – a surprise invasion of Monrovia – though an overall failure, is generally held to have proven Taylor's ability to carry out complex, sustained military actions.[31] At the other extreme, terrorist groups like Al Qaeda have the capacity to carry out extremely well planned, long-term operations.

The exact structure of armed group organizations may differ from that of states and this may at first glance may appear to be a problem. However, if we take similarity to mean that the internal organization will become bureaucratic, then we fail to explain reality as many states have lost their grip on a truly bureaucratic form of governance and have fallen into what Christopher Clapham has called 'neopatrimonialism' or what Reno calls the shadow state.[32] But, if similarity means falling within Weber's typology of governance – e.g. patrimonial, charismatic, or bureaucratic – then it is true that armed groups are similar to states. Thus, if we are to reason that 'developing' or failed states, which may not have strong bureaucratic structures, are potentially analyzable using Neorealism then we must also reason that armed groups can be analyzed as such – and we should conclude that this is in fact the case. In fact one of the strengths of Neorealism is that it explains how states with very different forms of government, whether democratic, totalitarian or patrimonial tend to act in the international system in similar, predictable ways.

Additionally, although armed groups also differ in their ability to govern, some having weak systems of governance based on simple charisma and others having stronger systems in place, they are nonetheless like states, which also differ in their ability to govern. These quantitative differences between armed groups and states should not be seen as a liability, in fact Neorealism explicitly notes that states will differ in their capabilities. This variability is integral to a systemic theory in that, as we shall see in Chapter 3, it is the difference in power between units that allows us to determine their place in the system.

The armed group, therefore, should be seen as a structured, cohesively organ-

ized, singular actor. There is a political community and the armed group has the organizational reach to command and direct the organization. The organization can thereby act as a whole to maintain autonomy.

### *Self-perpetuation*

States are not only separate from other political communities, but are also self-perpetuating organizations. States have populations that reproduce and can be motivated to work towards the state's goals. They also have the ability to teach new generations the same rules and norms as previous generations and thereby continue to reproduce their community's organizational structure. Moreover, they have economic systems that can provide food and other basic necessities with which to survive. Finally, and most importantly for the balance of power, states can defend themselves and remain autonomous in the international system.

Likewise, the armed group political community can perpetuate itself. In order to be such a self-perpetuating organization, the armed group must be able to accomplish some very similar objectives to that of states.[33] They must also have the ability to recruit new members and motivate troops, at least at the rate necessary to sustain its ranks, to obtain the materials necessary to sustain military power, including food and weapons, and to defend themselves and remain autonomous.

### *Motivation*

In order to commit sustained military action, armed groups must be able to recruit and motivate personnel. Most importantly, an armed group's leader must be able to motivate personnel to fight for him and must therefore answer the potential recruit's question, 'why should I fight and, possibly, die for you?' We can refer to this as the problem of motivation.[34] As Paul Collier points out, there are certain dilemmas wrapped up in convincing people to fight.[35] Firstly, there is the collective action problem, in which it is a 'public good' to fight and therefore there will be free riders who want the good, but do not have an incentive to help personally. Secondly, there is a coordination problem. While people might join a large force, they are not apt to join a small one because they may feel it would not be able to accomplish the objectives. Finally, there is a time-consistency problem, in which soldiers have to fight before they achieve their objective (or attain benefits). This means that while it is easy for the leader to promise benefits, individuals recognize that he may not be trustworthy and that promises may not be made good after victory. These problems are compounded in a dynamic environment like, for instance, Somalia where it is difficult to predict the future.

Broadly speaking, these problems can be overcome and people can be motivated to fight in four ways: they can fight out of a sense of loyalty; they may feel that fighting is mutually beneficial for survival (usually because of a mutual enemy); they may simply be forced to fight; and finally, there may be economic

incentives to fight. Within these general guidelines, we can find many of the ultimate causes for individuals to be motivated to fight in an armed group.

For example, anti-government of Sudan (GoS) sentiment was the main motivating factor of the SPLA. There has been significant marginalization of many of the tribal people in the south, denial of the basic welfare expected from a government, including health and clean water, as well as second tier needs like education and political representation. Beyond these issues there are issues of religious, language, and racial persecution. As one SPLA Commander put it, 'I believe that we are being supported because we have a cause … Our people are marginalized.… We are left behind, in darkness. That's why we took up arms and fought.'[36]

Poverty is an issue in the motivation of individuals to fight as it is in many sub-Saharan African conflicts. Southern Sudan is one of the poorest areas on Earth. It also has high levels of illiteracy, poor healthcare and lack of employment. These factors make the military one of the few sources of social movement left to young men, particularly, young men from pastoralist societies with strong traditions concerning conflict and coming of age. Consequently, the SPLA can rely on a large source of recruits for its forces. For example, it is clear in areas of southern Sudan that many of the young men in nicer civilian clothes and who are generally better off are in some way affiliated with the SPLA.[37]

Tribalism also plays a role in motivating personnel to fight in the SPLA. Individual tribes are targeted by the northern government in favor of other tribes, which are selectively armed. This leads individuals loyal to the tribes to fight. Furthermore, given the danger of life in such an environment, some may join an armed group because it is a means of protection.[38]

With this motivated force in place, an armed group must move on to teach strategic doctrine to the fighters in the organization. Since such tactics and strategic doctrine is, in effect, the praetorian organization's government, or constitution, by indoctrinating new troops, the armed group reproduces and reinforces the organization over time. Even the most simple and barbaric warlord still institutes some form of training and indoctrination for the fighters. For example, the LRA gives extensive combat training to its soldiers. One returned fighter noted: 'In Sudan they gave us training for three weeks.… I was also trained to shoot, and how to put together guns and handle the weapons – antipersonnel mines, antitank mines, SMG, LMF, PKM, mortars' (interview with a returned LRA fighter, reported in HRW 1997). Additionally, new fighters in the LRA are given spiritual education and indoctrinated into the organization with formal mystical processes, for example spreading shea butter on their bodies.[39]

### *Economics*

A more straightforward problem of self-perpetuation is how to obtain and move equipment – what we can call logistics – which equates to a state's economy.

The equipment necessary to mount an armed struggle depends on the particularities of the conflict and the environment in which it is taking place. For example, the LRA has simple needs – machetes and Kalashnikovs are suitable weapons and the essentials of survival are truly basic – some millet and second hand cloths. On the other hand, the Afghan mujahideen needed Stinger missiles carried long distances on pack-animals to effectively combat the Russians. Moreover, money is necessary to feed the armed group's patronage system.

Armed groups institute economic systems in order to gain the resources necessary to perpetuate their organization – a point amply noted in the 'war economy' literature.[40] As this literature points out, there are in fact several possible avenues open to armed groups for obtaining equipment and raising funds. Many of the necessary materials for supporting an armed group's political community are easily available, including food, cloths and shelter. What is more difficult is finding weapons, the distribution of which are typically controlled by states and international organizations. However, with the globalization of the economic system, almost any good can be obtained almost anywhere if someone has the necessary funds. This is particularly true with the trade in weapons, where men such as Victor Bout are able to skirt international rules on arms trading to bring the means of war to even the most geographically remote.[41] The real impediment to obtaining the materials for war is the obtainment of hard currency to purchase these weapons.

The means of obtaining funds are evident in Somalia. There, warlords have created a range of enterprises that are given value by their ability to command force. For example, they '[stake] claims to valuable land, towns, roads, and public assets such as airports and seaports' (UNDOS 1998: 43). They then set up checkpoints, demand payment for safe passage, tax the use of airports and otherwise 'attempt to monopolize the more lucrative commercial opportunities in the area they control' (ibid.: 43).

In some instances, they will occupy land and this occupation may become institutionalized, where armed groups set up fiefdoms and trade taxation for protection from other armed groups. They have even normalized such relations, as the warlords intermarried with local women. Such fiefdoms are potentially in the interest of the farmers, relative to random banditry. Here we see Mancur Olson's logic of the stationary bandit in effect – i.e. institutionalizing banditry, rather than raiding, is more profitable for the warlord because the peasantry has more of an incentive to be productive.[42]

Warlords have also utilized international aid in both tactical and strategic ways.[43] Tactically, warlords can coerce, extort, or manipulate (by pretending to be noncombatants) humanitarian aid agencies into giving them aid. Such aid can then be directly used for the armed group's survival. Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps can also be tactically used to manipulate aid distribution, they can provide human shields and IDPs themselves can be used to attract more aid. Strategically, population movements can be used to dictate the placement of aid. Importantly, an 'aid economy', such as providing housing or security for the international agencies, can be created, which is then tapped by the armed groups

for their own funding. In some cases, a warlord will effectively force the agency to rent their protection services in order to safeguard the agency from potential insecurity, where, in fact, the threats may come from the warlord himself.

Related to this, warlords may rent the services of their organizations to MNCs. This is a different situation, however, because the private corporations, unlike NGOs and the UN, are themselves in competition. For example, there was a competition between Dole and Somalfruit.[44] The companies hired local warlords or, for liability and public relations reasons, had the farmers hire the clans for them.[45] The militias were used by both companies to influence farmers to sell bananas to them. In exchange the warlords made a profit.

Finally, warlords have turned to external supporters for funding. The Somali National Front (SNF) was funded by ex-Barre government figures living in Kenya.[46] In some cases, the armed groups acted as proxies of the foreign policies of external states, especially Egypt, Libya and Ethiopia. This has led to Egyptian and Libyan funding of, amongst others, Mohammed Farrah Aidid and Ali Mahdi in Mogadishu.[47] Ethiopia, for its part, has funded Hadawdle United Somali Congress/Peace Movement (USC/PM) militia and the SNF.[48] In some cases this external funding is enough to seriously influence the decisions of the group being funded. In fact it is a common political attack to say that, for example, someone is a proxy for Ethiopia. However, Somali warlords are able to keep themselves independent of external states and in general are not very loyal proxies.[49]

External support is a slippery slope. The question must be asked at what point does the armed group lose its independence to a patron. Smaller states run into the same problem when larger states fund them, through military, developmental or other foreign aid. However, just as with smaller states the armed group can maintain control over its actions to some degree – usually to the frustration of the funding state – and can in theory break the partnership if offered a better deal by another state. Similarly, armed groups may break partnerships or otherwise pursue their own causes. In fact, armed groups are notorious for their disloyalty. Often the means of an armed group's independence will be its use of a variety of funding sources. The ability to remain independent is testified by its ability to continue to function after leaving behind support from a patron. Case studies to follow this chapter will illustrate this independence for the SNF, LRA and Al Qaeda.

### *Military force*

Self-perpetuation does not just occur in a vacuum, armed groups must also defend themselves from those who might try to destroy them. This means defending the group's ability to be the highest authority over its internal and external affairs. An ability to remain autonomous is central to what it is to be an actor in the international system. For, armed group's autonomy allows them, like states, to make decisions and have individual internal and external relations. As noted previously, Waltz sees such actions as being central to sovereignty itself.

Armed groups are not subject to regulation by states (or any sub-state actor for that matter) because the state fails and the armed group becomes powerful enough to rival its authority. As noted, the state 'fails' as it loses control over the population within its territory. Eventually, the state's authority and, lacking that, control, are weakened to the point where another actor can exert its own control.[50] In such instances, the armed groups can wrestle away its own autonomy through the use of military force.

Armed groups are able to wrestle away and maintain autonomy from the state because they have the military ability to do so. The armed group is praetorian in nature – it is in effect an army. The nature of the armed group military force depends on the particular armed group. Examples range from conventional forces split into companies and platoons and using assault rifles and artillery to irregular units of child soldiers using machetes and technicals to terrorist cells living clandestinely and making explosives from household goods.[51] This military power is not random, it is systematic with a clear command, control and communication system to guide it cohesively. The military force may not necessarily be enough to topple a state, but it is enough to scratch out some control of territory or people for a sustained period. This military force can not only be used against the state to make them autonomous, but it is also used internally to serve as the reservoir of power that allows the armed group to maintain authority over its organization and any people the group rules over.

Military power is relative. Some armed groups have significant power equal to that of the state, as is demonstrated by their ability to take over the state as Chinese Communists did, or to at least hold their own until a peace agreement as the SPLA did. What matters, however, is not the absolute power of the armed group but rather its relative power. An armed group which would quickly be destroyed by a British military unit, as the West Side Boyz were in Sierra Leone, might be able to exert significant autonomy and destruction when confronting a smaller, less well armed state government and military. Although most armed groups would be considered weak relative to a great power, we might also say the same thing about a microstate. In reality, some armed groups are so weak that they are quickly taken over by the state. This weeding out process is expected from the perspective of the balance of power. We assume this logic with states, such as Prussia, which also come into and out of existence within the balance of power.

Given their relative weakness compared to state's conventional power, armed groups will generally turn to asymmetric forms of warfare in order to even the odds. Asymmetric warfare denotes a mismatch between the capabilities of belligerents involved, where at least one of the sides changes its tactics or strategies to exploit the asymmetry.[52] The usual type of asymmetric warfare we refer to is that practiced by guerillas. However, warlords cannot rely on the civilian population in the way that guerillas can and therefore turn to their own form of asymmetric warfare, while terrorists practice yet another type of asymmetric warfare.

Guerilla warfare relies on the support of the local population to feed, supply and hide the armed group.[53] With this support network in place, the armed group leverages its smaller and more agile posture to use ambushes, sabotage and hit

and run attacks to confront conventional forces. In doing so, the guerilla force may eventually build up enough of a power base to take on conventional forces using conventional means. However, the support of the local population is not always necessary to fight and win asymmetric wars.

Without the help of the civilian population, warlords must turn to their own breed of asymmetric warfare.[54] This type of warfare is an extremely violent and savage one. It generally involves attacking civilians rather than military targets, using 'destabilization' tactics,[55] for example, through committing conspicuous atrocities, and relying on the use of fear as a force multiplication strategy.[56] Yet, it is a highly effective form of asymmetric warfare that allows the warlord to fight protracted conflicts with states that can last decades.

Terrorists essentially turn to deception and highly asymmetric warfare to combat more powerful actors.[57] These groups tend to attack civilians and other soft targets, which are not protected military targets such as markets, often with the element of surprise combined with ruthless and highly visible violence. Before and after the attack, terrorists tend to remain practically invisible to a conventional military by 'hiding' within society through pretending to be just like one of the indigenous population. Terrorists are also notorious for their use of suicide missions which provide surprise and a terrifying effect as well as making counterattacks virtually useless.

Asymmetric military power is important to understand because even though it appears weak, it can have a huge effect on the security of even the most powerful states. The power of Al Qaeda's 9/11 attacks on the US cannot be underestimated. The Chechnyan's, SPLA's and LRA's wars lasted decades against conventionally more powerful states. When we speak of the threat from armed groups, we must not think in terms of their size, as we might with China or Russia, but rather on the effectiveness of their attack capability and this may be quite high given the advantages of asymmetric warfare.

Asymmetric power brings autonomy to armed groups that is exemplified in all that they do. For example, the NPFL answered to no authority other than Taylor. The same could be said about the militia controlled by Abdul Rashid Dostum in Afghanistan. Neither the Taliban nor any other government could count itself as an authority over the men who made up his warlord organization. This meant that when the US wanted to enlist the help of Dostum and his men, they had to deal directly with him.

In practice this means that the state can no longer expect to regulate the actions of the armed group, as it might regulate the actions of an interest group or other sub-state group through the use of laws or policing. When interacting together, the armed group and state will use the same means to interact as states use with each other, i.e. the 'diplomat and soldier' (Keohane and Nye, 1971: ix). The evidence for such autonomy can be seen in an armed group's ability to act against the interests of states and in their own interests, most obviously in terms of continuing to make war. On the other hand, the armed group can expect to control the relations of sub-groups within its own domain, such as villagers who live within a territory that it controls.

As demanded by Neorealism, the armed group's military ability allows it to maintain status as the highest authority over its internal relations. It is able to continuously control territory and/or a population and, in doing so, comes to create and maintain its own hierarchical system. For example, in southern Sudan the SPLA came to govern an extremely large area without the interference of the GoS. Similarly, in so-called Taylorland, Taylor and the NPFL maintained absolute authority over those within its territory because the Liberian state did not have the military ability to interfere.

Likewise, since the autonomous armed group has the military ability to rival the state it can maintain its own, separate, foreign relations for the simple reason that the state cannot stop it from doing so. In this way, armed groups interact with the international environment directly rather than having their interactions regulated or 'buffered' by a state. Thus, for instance, the SPLA was able to maintain its own relations with the Ethiopian state, amongst others, as well as the UN vis-à-vis Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS). A terrorist group like Al Qaeda can attack whomever it pleases around the world. But we must ask, is this control over external affairs the same as having that all important trait in international relations, sovereignty?

## Sovereignty

Armed groups are functionally undifferentiated units in that they have cohesive governance, an economic system, the ability to motivate people and a military capability. They are able to maintain control over their internal and external relations.[58] This is central to what it is for a unit to be a like unit in the Neorealist systems account of the balance of power. But is this the same thing as being sovereign? The concept of sovereignty is a complex one and the exact nature of sovereignty is notoriously difficult to describe, much less define. One helpful approach for using the concept is to separate it into constituent facets. This approach is used by Hedley Bull, Robert Jackson, and Stephen Krasner amongst others.[59] In particular, a basic and useful distinction we can speak of is between empirical and juridical sovereignty. The following section will show that although armed groups are not considered to have the juridical form of sovereignty, they do have the empirical form, and it is this form that is central to the balance of power.

## Empirical sovereignty

Being an autonomous, independent actor is central to the notion of sovereignty. The idea that autonomy and independence convey sovereignty goes back to the origins of the debate over the definition of sovereignty. Jean Bodin, the French lawyer and political thinker, noted 'he is absolutely sovereign who recognizes nothing, after God, that is greater than himself' (Bodin 2002: 271). Bodin goes on to examine in a more detail how a sovereign must be the highest authority and not subject to authority himself:

> persons who are sovereign must not be subject in any way to the commands of someone else and must be able to give the law to subjects, and to suppress or repeal disadvantageous laws and replace them with others – which cannot be done by someone who is subject to the laws or to persons having power of command over him.
>
> (Ibid.: 273)

In other words, a sovereign actor is the highest authority, one which is autonomous and independent from the commands of any other actor. Sovereignty in terms of autonomy and independence may be referred to as 'empirical sovereignty' or 'de facto sovereignty'. This view of sovereignty still remains relevant and more modern theorists such as Bull have continued to abide by it.

Bodin's account of sovereignty is exceptional in that it introduced the idea that sovereignty is indivisible.[60] This is opposed to the overlapping sovereignties of the medieval era. His view arose out of an ongoing debate about the nature of power which lower level magistrates held. Bodin's contribution was to ask 'what prerogatives a political authority must hold exclusively if it is not to acknowledge a superior or equal in its territory' (Bodin, Franklin trans. 1992: xv).

Bodin's conception of sovereignty is foundational to more modern concepts of sovereignty in that it elicits the notion of an 'exclusive' sovereignty – that there can only be one final authority over any given individual. Generally, this final, exclusive authority is the state.[61] This flows from the extension of the argument that 'there had to exist in every commonwealth a single individual or group in which the entire power of the states was concentrated' (ibid. xxii). This applied to France, as well as other kingdoms such as England or Spain, and now applies to all states.

Typically, we speak of sovereignty – as in the final, exclusive authority – in terms of control over territory, but as we saw previously in some cases sovereignty arises through control over people. Territorial control should not be a limiting factor because we can talk about sovereign groups that are definable by their control over people rather than any particular piece of territory. This personal sovereignty is applicable to armed groups in relation to their effective authority over the armed group's political community. However, this is not to say that armed groups do not also control territory. Often armed groups will formally control some piece of territory on a temporary to permanent basis. For people existing on such territory, the armed group is the sovereign, not the state. However, the ultimate basis for the armed group's sovereignty is in membership in the organization, not territory.

It is in this sense that the armed group has sovereignty – it is an empirical reality of being the highest, exclusive authority over individuals. This sovereignty is exclusive in that there is no other authority that also has final authority over the individuals that are members of the armed group's organization. Members of the armed group are loyal to the group and/or their leader, not to the state. Although they may come under the sway of other authorities,

whether religious, social, or other, these authorities are superseded by the group and leader who can overrule their dictums. For armed groups, the enclosed political community is defined by initiation and is exclusive, which means that those within it are under the authority of the sovereign exclusively. Thus, there is not the overlapping sovereignty that Herbst implies or which is theorized concerning the medieval period by Bull or John Reggie.[62] At the same time, the armed group's leadership has complete authority to make internal policy decisions and control the foreign relations of the group. Such features are the essential constituents of empirical sovereignty and hence armed groups are empirically sovereign.

This sovereignty applies even in cases where the armed group's leader forces those under him to call him sovereign. As Bodin notes concerning the tyrant who prolongs sovereignty entrusted to him, 'the tyrant is nonetheless a sovereign, just as the violent possession of a robber is true and natural possession even if against the law, and those who had it previously are dispossessed' (Bodin, Franklin trans. 1992: 6). For this reason it is necessary to separate empirical sovereignty, which exists as something that is possessed in fact, even if not legitimately, from sovereignty which is granted legitimately, either by a people or external governments.[63]

States are in most cases the highest authority over the population which lives within their borders, however, this is not what defines them as states. Rather, another view of sovereignty – which we can trace back to the convenient date of the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 – has come to dominate thought about sovereign actors. And, although armed groups are empirically sovereign, they do not possess this form of sovereignty.

## Juridical sovereignty

Armed groups are sovereign in the sense that they are autonomous and independent from other sovereign actors, but they are not considered sovereign by sovereign states. 'Juridical sovereignty' is granted recognition by the international community and signals that a state is equal to other states in the international system and, in particular, that these states will not (legitimately) interfere in the state's domestic affairs. Juridical sovereignty not only provides 'freedom-from' outside interference, to use Robert Jackson's formulation,[64] but also grants the sovereign state certain privileges such as the ability to take part in international law and contracts, to be a member of the UN and to engage in official diplomacy with other states. As Jackson puts it, states have been 'internationally enfranchised and [thereby] possess the same external rights and responsibilities as all other sovereign states' (Jackson 1993: 21). These are important privileges and they are not granted lightly.

The international community jealously guards the right to official juridical sovereignty. As a general rule NSAs are not granted juridical sovereignty. In fact, they are not even allowed to appear as if they have sovereignty by interacting on an equal basis with sovereign states. For

> when NGOs, corporations, and revolutionary movements interact directly with states, the non-states and the states are considered to operate as legal equals. Employing the logic of the law, either both or neither is sovereign. Fear of attribute recognition explains the general hesitation of government officials and senior members of international secretariats to meet with insurgents or to consider national liberation movements entitled to protection under the humanitarian laws of war.
>
> (Weiss 1995: 100)

The basis for granting sovereignty by the international community is not entirely obvious.

Empirical sovereignty is not a route to internationally recognized juridical sovereignty. Even in a case of de facto statehood like Somaliland, where there is a government which presides over a territory, has a monopoly over the legitimate use of physical force, and even possesses popular legitimacy, the international community has not granted sovereignty. With this in mind, armed groups have little chance of being granted juridical sovereignty since they do not have any bottom-up legitimacy for their rule nor do they necessarily have control over a permanent, defined territorial base.[65]

Importantly, juridical sovereignty cannot be partial – it is all or nothing.[66] This means that no matter the particular requirements of sovereignty that are met, the actor will still officially be the same as any other NSA in terms of the rights and responsibilities of sovereignty. This is true even if it is a laundry list of state-like qualities, as in the case of Somaliland. Thus, even though armed groups may possess empirical sovereignty, they are still considered as lacking in sovereignty as any other NSA.

Since armed groups lack juridical sovereignty, they are not granted the rights of sovereign states, in particular, the right of non-intervention. Under international law, and more importantly under international norms, intervention by one state into another is not legitimate, except in certain narrow instances.[67] This norm and rule protects states from outside aggression.[68] Armed groups, of course, do not have such protection. Thus, the host state is fully legitimate in combating an armed group. In fact, the host state has a positive right to protect its own sovereignty by maintaining a monopoly on the use of force within its borders.

Lack of juridical sovereignty also means that armed groups cannot formally take part in the international community. As has been pointed out, 'international recognition is a constitutive act in the sense that the absence of recognition precludes the kinds of activities that recognition itself facilitates' (Krasner 1999: 18). If an actor is not sovereign it cannot officially contribute to the same system of connections between sovereign states. If the actor cannot contribute they cannot, in theory, take part at all. Since armed groups have not contributed, they are not allowed to take part.

However, this does not necessarily mean that actors without juridical sovereignty cannot take part in international diplomacy at all. Armed groups can and

do take part in informal international diplomacy as well as economic relations, not to mention military relations. Although these relations are not exactly parallel to relations by states, they are comparable in motivations and execution. This begs the question, how is this so? The international system of states has a class of interactions and relationships which are officially closed to actors that are not juridically sovereign, yet, armed groups do take part.

The point is that there are a set of relationships which are not dependent on 'official' recognition, but are instead based on de facto recognition. These relationships are in many ways similar to the official relations between states and these are the relations which constitute those necessary to take part in the balance of power. They include diplomatic communications, contracts, alliances, joint-declarations of war, understandings about the treatment of prisoners etc. However, these relations are not part of the official set of rules and regulations that govern, or attempt to govern, the interactions amongst states. Such unofficial diplomacy, as we might call it, is the privilege of those actors that can demand it from states. In particular, empirically sovereign actors, like armed groups, are given the concession.

These relations are reciprocated because of the group's de facto authority. For instance, previous to the joining of the government, the SPLA representative to the African Union (AU) noted that 'in order to mediate, the AU or [Intergovernmental Authority on Development] IGAD needs a counterpart to Sudan. A government representative'.[69] The SPLA provides such a representative. Similarly, border issues with Ethiopia demand representation from the de facto authority, not the Sudanese government, which has no influence in the border region. Again the SPLA representative remarks: '[Ethiopia] need[s] to know who is responsible. If there is a problem on the border, they need a contact office; an authority to deal with the issue.'[70] Although there is clearly a bias by the SPLA to demonstrate its importance, the point makes logical sense: if the armed group is in control of a region, that armed group must be dealt with in that region. No matter how much Ethiopia would like to uphold the sovereignty of its neighbors (since it too relies on the maintenance of a juridically sovereign system of states) it still must face the reality that the government of Sudan did not have any say in what goes on in that particular region. This is not an exception but a general rule of how and why informal diplomacy takes place. Such mutual relations are the heart of what it is to be part of the balance of power system and will be discussed in the next chapter.

This, then, is a conceptionalization of armed groups in terms of sovereignty. Armed groups are empirically sovereign but not juridically sovereign NSAs. In a sense, armed groups are the opposite of Jackson's 'quasi-states'.[71] Quasi-states are endowed with absolute juridical sovereignty by other states, but they have limited empirical sovereignty. Armed groups, on the other hand, have empirical but not juridical sovereignty.[72] In order to differentiate armed groups from other NSAs, we might even refer to them as Sovereign Non-State Actors (SNSA).

## Motivations

Armed groups are the right kind of unit in that they are functionally undifferentiated units that are sovereign. We must, though, also ask whether they are motivated in the correct manner. This is key because in order for a systemic theory of the balance of power to work, actors must be similar (though differing in their power capabilities) and act based on a similar basis.

As has already been hinted at, armed groups certainly find some value in maintaining their autonomy. Some types of armed groups, such as warlords, use autonomy as the root of their power and it provides them with significant economic and other benefits. An illustrative example of a warlord is Mohammed Sayid Hersi's (better known as General Morgan) and his motives during the period in which he ruled Kismaayo. Morgan was a warlord in control of territory and worked to prevent civil leaders from coming into power.[73] He did so for fear that he would lose power to any rival civilian government, since 'in peace, most observers and local citizens believe that General Morgan would quickly lose his local support'.[74] In other instances, warlords have made millions of dollars from the exploitation of natural resources in areas they control.

Yet, although armed groups find value in autonomy, it is not readily apparent if we can treat such a valuation of autonomy as being the central motivating factor of the organization. For instance, an armed group could conceivably value money more than autonomy and therefore give up autonomy in order to become richer. This is an important point because in order to use a systemic theory of the balance of power, the motivations of the group must be simplified. In particular for Neorealism, the motivation must be to survive (i.e. to remain autonomous). Other theorists have taken different approaches to armed group motivation and argued – whether explicitly or implicitly – that the central motivations for such groups may be based on grievances or greed. The following section will address these motivations in order to determine whether they really should be considered the central motivation of armed groups.

## Grievance

A conventional approach for understanding the motivations of armed groups is to assume that they represent grievances of certain groups within society. In particular, such explanations refer to ethnic, tribal, or nationalist drivers in society. The catchphrase that is often used is that there are 'ancient hatreds' which come out in the form of conflict.[75] For example, the conflict(s) in the former Yugoslavia could be explained as the culmination of ongoing animosity between the Serb, Croat, and Muslim (Bosniak) ethnic groups. The implication is that armed groups are one of the vehicles for such conflict. By extension the specific actions of armed groups in Yugoslavia, such as the Serb militias, could be seen as being motivated by a desire to redress these ancient hatreds.

The implication of the grievance view for understanding the international relations of armed groups is that if it were true we would expect to see armed

groups having relationships based on their grievances. We might, for instance, see armed groups make alliances only with groups that were considered close to them in ethnicity or another identity feature while not making alliances with other actors that are considered to be different from them. We also might expect these groups to cease to operate once the grievance was redressed.

It is certainly true that some individuals, and even leaders, of armed groups may be motivated wholly or in part by grievances of various sorts. For instance, if the individual fighters are driven by a hatred of another clan, we might think that the group itself can be described as being motivated by such hatred and would make decisions in such a way. However, it is fallacious to think that the motivations of individuals in an organization are the same as the motivations of the organization as a whole. The reason is that armed groups are unitary actors in that they have the administrative structures to function as a single unit. This means that there is a distinct group level of analysis which emerges from the group's motivation and is wholly separate from the individual level of analysis. The implication of this is that the motivations of the individuals in the armed group, including the leader of the group himself, may be different from the motivations of the armed group as a whole. It is similar to how we assume that even if individuals within a state have a dislike of a particular group or another state, the state itself may still form an alliance.

Even when grievances are present for the group, they tend to be used instrumentally i.e. they are calculated actions to obtain specific goals. Specifically, these grievances are used to obtain and maintain autonomy. As discussed, there are several means that an armed group can use to motivate its combatants and loyalty to a group is one of the ways. Grievances can be used to create this loyalty. Moreover, the nature of the armed group organization demands that the friend/enemy boundary continually be maintained and redefined and grievances can also be instrumentally used for such goals. For instance, it has been pointed out that 'the black-and-white portrayal of ethnic conflict that characterized discussion of the Yugoslav case is, in fact, an understandable and potent way to generate sympathy and mobilize loyalties and support for action' (Woodward 1995: 14).[76] Isabelle Duyvesteyn also makes a similar argument about armed groups in Liberia and Somalia using grievances towards their political goals, not the other way around.[77] The basis of her arguments are that identity is fluid to some degree and that it is most often used when it is required by the armed group. Just as with states, an armed group will align with any group it must, regardless of identity factors.

Such an instrumental view is accepted as the norm in considering states in the balance of power. For states, the 'moral' drivers of policy are often illusionary and hypocritically used to stimulate the 'real' policies that are governed by other motivations. While these groups may say that they are motivated by a particular cause, and use this as propaganda, their actual actions are much more rational in nature. In other words we should take essentially the same view of armed groups as we are accustomed to taking in analyzing states.

Moreover, regardless of any particular goal of an armed group, the group

must first exist as an autonomous unit in order to address its goals. States also must bow to this simple logic. Given the rigors of the militarized environment that armed groups exist in, they must be concerned first and foremost with defending themselves from outside aggressors through military actions. In order to survive long enough in such an environment, armed groups need power – a point to be rejoined below.

## Greed

Opposed to grievance explanations for the conduct of armed groups are those who focus on the economic motivations of conflicts. This approach sees conflict in rational, instrumental terms; specifically that conflict is used by armed groups to generate wealth. As David Keen succinctly commented, 'war may be a continuation of economics by other means' (Keen 2000: 27). However, it should be kept in mind that 'this does not necessarily mean that the wars are caused by economic shortcomings, but rather that the conduct, and continuation, of the war is determined by economic incentives' (Angstrom 2005: 11). In other words, while an armed group may be initially motivated by grievances, their impetus for continuing to fight may be driven by the pursuit of economic goods. Such a view has been amply discussed in the literature and even demonstrated, to a certain extent, using statistical modeling.[78] However, the economic view of armed group motivation also fails to be explanatory for similar reasons as the grievance view.

First, individual motivations for obtaining wealth do not necessarily translate into the goals of the group. It is also true that individual fighters in an armed group are often motivated by economic incentives, such as the ability to keep what they loot. Yet, the same is true for economic profit as it is for redressing grievances. While an individual may just be fighting with a warlord to make some cash, just as a soldier may join the armed forces of a nation to get money for college, it does not necessarily mean that the armed group as a whole is driven by an urge to make money, just as it is doubtful that a nation's military is directed solely by the pursuit of profit.

However, even on the group level, economic incentives seem to motivate armed groups. This is particularly the case for warlords. As Mats Berdal notes, there is a 'popular and much publicized image of the modern warlord as concerned exclusively with plunder for personal enrichment and conspicuous displays of wealth' (Berdal 2003: 491). It is true, prima fasciae, many warlords do make large profits from their organizations. Moreover, these 'businessmen of war' tend to rely 'on violence as the main instrument of their economic activity' (Chabal and Daloz 1995: 85).

However, rather than being an end, this generated wealth is used instrumentally. Armed groups must obtain the means of fighting, from weapons to an ability to pay their soldiers. Just as with states, armed groups have significant economic needs in order to perpetuate themselves. Economic exploitation provides such a means. Others have noted the phenomenon. For instance, in the

case of the NPFL, Duyvesteyn notes that the '[t]he wealth [generated by Taylor's business dealings] was a means to an end: it was a way to keep the NPFL going. The foreign currency that was earned was used to buy equipment and train the NPFL fighters' (Duyvesteyn 2005: 83). Just as with states, we should not confuse the need of armed groups to make a profit in order to maintain itself and reinvest for future growth with it necessarily being only a profit-making enterprise.

The individual accumulation of wealth in armed groups can be explained by the nature of these organizations. Since armed groups are rarely bureaucratic organizations, with a separation between specific individuals and the structure of the group, the wealth generated by the organization must be assigned to specific individuals, and therefore it is seen accumulating in the accounts of a specific individual. This is expected in patronage models of power. The top leaders are the keystones to the patronage system and they must accumulate sufficient economic resources with which to establish and maintain the loyalty of their troops. However, this is not to say that the wealth is only meant for that particular person, nor is it to say that it is the only pursuit that drives the organization. It is more accurate to see wealth generation as a means of perpetuating the group, just as some states use conquest to perpetuate their own war machine.[79] In fact, we see similar patronage models of governance in states such as Sierra Leone, Liberia, Angola and the DRC.[80]

Finally, economic-based arguments, in general, overemphasize the role of profit in directing the actions of armed groups; rather, such goals are more productively seen as one objective among many. Armed groups are also concerned with other gains. For instance, they attempt to control larger territories or build up bigger armies. In Somalia, the various factions have continuously attempted to expand and control larger tracts of Mogadishu when possible. In northern Uganda, the LRA regularly tries to build up its army by abducting and initiating new members. Armed groups also attempt to find recognition and legitimacy for their armies. Taylor regularly broadcast to the BBC from his jungle hideouts using satellite phones and reports from Afghanistan show that the various factions of the Northern Alliance seemed to use their special operations counterparts as prestige items.[81]

## Power

These diverse pursuits by armed groups can all be summarized as a drive for power. Power, for our purposes here, can compromise anything that establishes and maintains control of men by men.[82] Such a definition of power is not without its faults and in general power is a concept whose definition is continually debated.[83] However, this particular definition is that posited by Hans Morgenthau and therefore should not be taken as too controversial in a discussion of the balance of power.

Power is multifaceted. The notion of power includes economic wealth, which is used to establish and maintain control of forces;[84] military power, which can

be used to directly control territory and people; and public legitimacy, which can be used to, amongst other things, pressure enemies. These factors can all be directed at establishing and maintaining control over men. The implication is that the pursuit of wealth, like the pursuit of territorial gain or authority over larger populations, is a means to the greater end of power.

There are many specific interests that a group may attempt to attain with the use of power. For instance, under such interests we might find the redressing of political or ethnic grievances, increasing wealth or defending against an enemy. In general, the nature of interest will be contingent and depend on the period of history in question and the political and cultural context under which policy is created. Decision makers may not even realize what it is they want, as Morgenthau also makes the important observation that we should not judge a group by what the leader thinks are his motivations, rather, we must judge it by its actions.[85]

But, in all cases, power is a route to such interests because it is a fungible attribute. The notion of fungibility means that one type of power can be used for multiple types of interests. For example, a gain in the number of fighters versus more money can fungibly be related because money can be used to obtain fighters and, vice versa, more fighters can be used to obtain money. While there are some restrictions on the fungibility of power, within the bounds of a discussion of armed groups, where power is usually military or economic in nature, we can assume that most types of power can be fungible for most types of interests.

Political leaders 'think and act in terms of interest defined as power' (Morgenthau 1993: 5) and this pursuit of power is not limited to states, but applies to all independent political groups. Morgenthau notes that a 'tendency to dominate … is an element of all human associations, from the family through fraternal and professional associations and local political organizations, to the state' (ibid.: 37). To reinforce the notion that the pursuit of power is not only a state objective, he goes on to say that '[b]oth domestic and international politics are a struggle for power, modified only by the different conditions under which this struggle takes place in domestic and international spheres' (ibid.: 39).

Armed groups, like states, will also 'think and act in terms of interest defined as power' (ibid.: 5). This is because armed groups are bound to the same logic as other political leaders. This is that by attaining power, they can attain their other interests, because power is fungible.[86] They attempt to gain power through acquiring material resources, such as more troops and more weapons, land, cash, recognition and so on. This power can, in turn, be used to meet any interests of the armed groups. In particular, power is translated into the ability to remain autonomous and independent, i.e. to survive.

## Survival

Power ensures survival. Survival is important because it is the minimum goal of any political unit, as its leaders must assure survival if they are to pursue any other less vital goals. Put another way, even though the interests of any particu-

lar group may be different, they all share at least this one objective. This is self-evident when we consider that if there were an actor that did not feel this way, it would not be around long enough to be worth considering. As Gilpin states, while groups may seek 'truth, beauty and justice … all these more noble goals will be lost unless one makes provisions for one's security in the power struggle among groups' (Gilpin 1986: 305).

Waltz takes this one step further and turns this view of the relationship between the pursuit of power and survival around. He sees the assurance of survival as the single, key driving force behind states.[87] Waltz notes that power is that which 'provides the means of maintaining one's autonomy in the face of force that others wield' (ibid.: 194). And, 'beyond the survival motive, the aims of states may be endlessly varied; they may range from the ambition to conquer the world to the desire to merely to be left alone' (ibid.: 91). These other aims may include power for the sake of power. Thus, even though wars may be partially attributable to greed or ambition, they are always motivated to some degree by fear for security.[88] The purpose to taking the Waltzian step and assuming that survival is the chief motivator is that it allows for systemic theorizing as it minimizes the variables for analysis.

We can also make the jump from the pursuit of power to the pursuit of survival with the motivation of armed groups. As has already been noted, the economic goals of armed groups are really orientated towards the perpetuation of the organization through the fulfillment of the needs of a patronage system of authority. The same goes for the use of various forms of grievance-orientated propaganda in order to motivate men to fight and potentially die. Armed groups rarely turn to the creation of truth, beauty, or justice but they do have ulterior motives. They may, for instance, wish to fill as many Swiss bank accounts as possible, but even the most savage and uneducated warlord realizes that in order to achieve these goals, the organization must survive.

This is evident when we note the extremely long-winded nature of conflicts involving armed groups. For example, even to this day, almost fifteen years after the collapse of the Somali state, the warlords and factions in Somalia continue to attempt to hold the state back from reforming. Or, as a report on the Liberian peace process notes,

> [i]n Liberia, the warlords were usually ready to negotiate but not to relinquish their power, which is what would have shown that they were genuinely interested in a peace settlement. In these circumstances, only enormous outside pressure could bring warlords into a peace process as effective participants.
>
> (Alao *et al.* 1999: 119)

In other words, armed groups will do what it takes to survive and only give up survival when they realize that their power is matched.

This desire to perpetuate the organization directs the actions of armed groups not only against internal actors, but also external or intervening forces. For

instance, in Liberia the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) wanted to 'prevent Taylor from taking power and to disarm his troops' (Duyvesteyn 2005: 30). However,

> Taylor viewed disarmament as a threat to his claims to leadership. The ECOMOG interference was a threat to his almost unstoppable advance and military success. To counter this threat, Taylor decided to attack and strive to expel the ECOMOG forces from Liberia.
>
> (Ibid.: 30)

This logic is straightforward – Taylor may have had explicit, alternative goals, however, the only way he could possibly carry them out was to first deal with the existential threats to him and his organization. This is exactly as we expect states to act. We should therefore conclude that, like states, the armed group's actions are orientated first and foremost towards perpetuating the organization.[89]

Thus, like states, armed groups may represent a particular set of interests but it is survival that we should use as the signpost of how they will act in the international system. For instance, the Soviet Union had an explicit goal of spreading world revolution and the movement towards communist states, as Stalin remarked, '[w]e can and must build socialism in the [Soviet Union]. But in order to do so we first of all have to exist' (Joseph Stalin, cited in Mearsheimer 2001: 31). Similarly, armed groups may have explicit goals, such as the change of a government in a state, building a world caliphate or simply making as much money as possible – and maybe we refer to groups with these goals as insurgents, terrorists or warlords – but survival still provides the central accountable goal which we can use to understand their actions.

## Rationality

The motivation of armed groups for power and survival meets what may be considered a supplementary feature of the balance of power, that is that it deals with rational actors. For many analysts it seems that armed groups are not rational because they are focused on grievances or economic gain. However, as we have seen, armed groups should more rightly be seen as being focused on the pursuit of survival, which is itself an inherently rational goal. Beyond survival, armed groups focus on the pursuit of power, which again is rational in nature in that power can be used for any goal.[90] Rationality for Neorealism is usually based on a neoclassical economic understanding of the term, i.e. that actors have 'consistent, ordered preferences, and that they calculate the costs and benefits of all alternative policies in order to maximize their utility in light both of those preferences and of their perceptions of the nature of reality' (Keohane 1986b: 11). For armed groups to be strategic in the sense illustrated above of making choices to survive and to act to obtain and maintain security is to say that they are rational in the neoclassical economic sense because they make the ordered preference to survive and then only after survival is assured, to attain other goals.

This begs the question, if armed groups are rational, then why do they seem so irrational and barbaric. Some would make the case that armed groups, particularly warlords and terrorists, are innately irrational and barbaric organizations.[91] The impression is that these groups employ violence for the sake of violence. But this is mistaken. As with states, if left to their own, armed groups would exist peacefully, in control of their internal and external affairs. This was the case for much of Somalia during the late 1990s. It is when their survival and autonomy over internal and external relations is infringed upon, that armed groups use military force. What we tend to see however, is that armed groups are innately threatening to states, particularly in fractured states, and this means that the state will generally try to infringe on the autonomy of the armed group (rightfully so, as the armed group is infringing on the state's internal control) and this leads to conflict. Moreover, given the armed group's need to turn to asymmetric forms of warfare, this conflict tends to be bloody and barbaric, since asymmetric warfare often demands such barbarism.

Nevertheless, the general rationality of armed groups does not preclude individual armed groups from making irrational decisions in practice. Time pressure and other factors can lead armed groups, like states, to make irrational decisions. Neorealism does not preclude such irrational decisions, rather, it argues that the system will 'weed out' those actors which act irrationally – a point to be revisited later. Thus, although there are some armed groups that may break the bounds of rationality, and for instance decide to allow their organization to be weakened, these armed groups will be terminated and replaced by other more rational armed groups.

Importantly, the notion of the driving force as the pursuit of power and survival acts as the signpost, allowing us to understand international politics. It provides a single variable for understanding what a unit will do, yet a variable that makes sense. This variable also makes it possible to avoid what Morgenthau called two popular fallacies: 'the concern with motives and the concern with ideological preferences' (Morgenthau 1993: 5). The point that Morgenthau is making is that we cannot judge what an actor will do based on the rhetoric they use, the ideology they profess or even the motivations of specific individuals. We must look at the actions of the group and the central defining factors that the unit must act on regardless of other goals – power and survival serve that purpose. This is the signpost that allows us to effectively analyze armed groups from the perspective of the balance of power, using a Neorealist approach, just as it does for states – a point which will be central to the following chapter which will address armed groups within the context of the international system.

## Conclusion

Armed groups should, like states, be considered like units in the international system. Their organization is cohesive enough to be directed, in particular, to direct military might. Although possibly lacking in an integral territory, armed groups have a closed political community that is separate from other political

communities. Moreover, they can maintain their organization and its autonomy indefinitely through enacting an economic and motivational system. This unit can defend itself and thereby maintain autonomy and empirical sovereignty. They also are motivated by the pursuit of power and survival. These are the essential features that Waltz has pointed out as being necessary to be understood as being an actor in a balance of power system.

It is a subtle but important distinction to note that armed groups should be considered like units, but not states. Being a state demands that an actor have both the empirical and juridical aspects of sovereignty. However, being a unit in a structural analysis only demands that an actor have the empirical aspects. Though Waltz generally refers to the term 'state' in his study, the theory of Neorealism is actually concerned with the interaction of like units, which Waltz is clear about. It is this confusion between unit and state that tends to make it seem so impossible to incorporate non-state actors into Neorealism understanding of the balance of power. However, by clarifying this confusion it makes sense to use the Neorealist approach with certain NSAs. Accordingly, although armed groups are still to be considered 'non-state actors', they should be taken as being the right sort of unit to fit into a balance of power and to be analyzed using Neorealism.

Armed groups occupy an odd position within the world of international actors. They are not states but neither are they normal non-state actors. Although lacking formal recognition as sovereign actors, they are able to insist on an autonomy and independence that amounts to a de facto sovereignty that other non-state actors do not have. Nevertheless, the balance of power should apply to all actors that are motivated by survival within an anarchic system.

Already, we can begin to see why the Neorealist conception of the balance of power is so useful. It allows us to compare states and armed groups, which appear to differ in many ways, but in fact are similar in relevant ways – including their cohesive nature and ability to use military power to defend their internal and external relations. It is the same way that we can consider two states that differ in so many ways, such as the democratic, open state of the US with the communist, totalitarian state of the Soviet Union or the neopatrimonial, contentious state of the Central African Republic. The next step is to exploit this situation by placing armed groups and states within the same system.

The following chapter will examine the system that armed groups and states constitute. Specifically, it will examine the nature of failed states and how failed states are connected to the international system. In doing so, it will then be possible to place armed groups understood as units within the context of the international system and thereby to develop a balance of power description of their international relations that can be described using the theory of Neorealism. Once we have made the case that armed groups and states are both like units, with similar motivations and operating in the same system, the chapter will then illustrate what it means for these actors to take part in the balance of power. From this point it will be possible to answer the question of what are armed groups' international relations.

# 3 The international system

Although the previous chapter addressed the internal aspects of armed groups, it is their foreign relations that interest us. In understanding armed groups as enclosed, sovereign units, their 'foreign' relations are those that occur with other, separate units. These 'international' relations may take place with other actors within the juridical boundaries of a single state but are nonetheless between two or more sovereign units. Given this appreciation of the situation, armed groups can be understood as existing within a system of other actors. The following chapter will examine the nature of the system in which armed groups exist, arguing that it is in fact an anarchical system.

An anarchic system is one in which there is no higher authority that ultimately has authority over units in the system. Rather, units interact as equals. This is exactly the type of system that we consider states to be in – in which each state is sovereign and interacts with other states as equals. An anarchic system is opposed to a hierarchic one in which there is a higher authority that can structure the relations of actors within the system. This is how the interiors of states are conventionally understood – the state's government has authority over all sub-state actors and can structure their interactions.

Prima fasciae, it does not appear that armed groups will fit into a balance of power as framed by Neorealism because they exist in states which we consider to be hierarchic systems. Since a Neorealist explanation of the balance of power only applies to the analysis of actors in an anarchic system, it does not appear possible to use it to analyze actors that exist within a state, and therefore we could not use it to analyze armed groups.

However, this chapter will argue that the presumption that states are always hierarchically organized is false. The assumption is that within a state, as defined by its delineated territorial boundaries, there is a sovereign and actors are hierarchically related to the central authority. But, in some cases there is not a strong sovereign that can structure all sub-state relations and there may be anarchic relations within a state's territorial boundaries.

After making the case for armed groups existing in anarchic systems, the chapter will move on to examine and illustrate the balance of power framework as defined by Neorealism. The chapter will argue that it makes sense to incorporate armed groups into this Neorealist conception of the balance of power. In

doing so, the chapter will provide the theoretical underpinnings to describe and explain the international relations of armed groups.

## Failed states and anarchic systems

In many cases, states will weaken to some degree, for instance in providing too little food or medical care to their people, limiting political participation or having economic depressions. States do however, fail completely in a couple of specific ways. Either they lose authority over a specific area or they collapse completely.

We may refer to states that have lost their authority over definable pieces of their territory as 'fragmented states' and the areas outside the state's central authority as 'fragmented areas'. An example of a fragmented state is Columbia, with its large swathe of FARC controlled territory. In some instances, the state may lose control over most or all of the territory outside of the capital city, as occurred in Liberia during that country's civil war.

In the extreme case of 'collapsed states' the state has failed in that the sovereign government is missing altogether.[1] For example, in Somalia all remnants of a state apparatus had been destroyed by the time of the 1993 UN intervention and no effective government has reappeared since. Rather, there are multiple sub-state groups that control sections of territory or segments of the population. The same goes for much of Afghanistan during the early 1990s as well as early twentieth-century China.

Clearly, this presents a problem for the traditional systemic theory conception that within states there exists a hierarchical system and that states themselves exist in an anarchic system. Fragmented states contain armed groups that do not accept the hierarchical state of affairs and leave the state essentially having holes in it. Collapsed states have no government and therefore no hierarchy to speak of.

## Waltz, anarchy, and warlords

Waltz specifically addresses the issue of failed states and anarchic systems, although he does not call them that and does not make any conclusions. After defining anarchic and hierarchic systems, Waltz asks the question 'what about borderline cases, societies that are neither clearly anarchic nor clearly hierarchic? Do they no represent a third type?' (Waltz 1979: 116).

In particular he addresses the so-called Chinese warlord period during the early twentieth century. Waltz notes that:

> Nominally a nation, China looked more like a number of separate states existing alongside one another. Mao Tse-tung in 1930, like Bolshevik leaders earlier, thought that striking a revolutionary spark would 'start a prairie fire.' Revolutionary flames would spread across China, if not throughout the world. Because the interdependence of China's provinces,

> like the interdependence of nations, was insufficiently close, the flames failed to spread. So nearly autonomous were China's provinces that the effects of war in one part of the country were only weakly registered in other parts. Battles in the Hunan hills, far from sparking national revolution, were hardly noticed in neighboring provinces. The interaction of largely self-sufficient provinces was slight and sporadic. Dependent neither on one another economically nor on the nation's center politically, they were not subject to close interdependence characteristic of organized and integrated politics.
>
> (Ibid.: 116)

This reading of Chinese history leads to questions about the nature and boundary of anarchy. Waltz remarks '[a]s a practical matter, observers may disagree in their answers to such questions as just when did China break down into anarchy, or whether the countries of Western Europe are slowly becoming one state or stubbornly remaining nine' (ibid.: 116). The essential issue here being what are the boundaries of anarchic systems? Do they necessarily lie on the juridically defined borders of states?

Waltz leaves the decision about whether or not to see such examples as anarchic or hierarchic up to argument. Beyond this he does not offer further advice on making the decision. It is, however, clear in what Waltz believes that it is necessary to make a decision as to whether they are one or the other. He remarks that:

> The point of theoretical importance is that our expectations about the fate of those areas differ wildly depending on which answer to the structural question becomes the right one. Structures defined according to two distinct ordering principles help to explain important aspects of social and political behavior.
>
> (Ibid.: 116)

The following section will make the case that in fact states containing armed groups are anarchic systems. In order to do this, the section will closely examine the notions of failed and collapsed states. This literature was not available to Waltz at the time he wrote on the subject, but by looking at it now, we can make the strong conclusion about the anarchic nature of Waltz's borderline cases.

## 'Domestic' anarchy

In order to rectify this dilemma, that failed states do not have authority in some or all of the state, we must admit that collapsed and fragmented states cannot be theoretically considered as hierarchical systems, but should rather be considered as extensions of the anarchic system. In the case of collapsed states, this is a clear comparison to make. There is in fact no central authority, no leviathan in the Hobbesian sense. This makes it a simple observation to note that the

domestic system is anarchic. The different subgroups are interacting without a higher authority.

Other theorists of so-called 'domestic anarchy' assume that this complete state of 'domestic anarchy' occurs, but we can be more precise.[2] Armed groups, which have their own enclosed political community, arise in a state and these groups become autonomous. These autonomous (i.e. sovereign) actors are motivated to maintain that sovereign control over their internal and external relations. In particular, the group will employ force if necessary in order to protect its autonomy. When there are multiple autonomous, sovereign groups that interact based on internal drives for power and security there is de facto anarchy.[3] At first the state government may be able to maintain some hierarchical order within specific areas, but as the state government itself disappears, the state becomes a collapsed state.

In the case of fragmented states, the formulation of anarchy is slightly more complicated, but it exists nonetheless. In the areas where a state has authority, it is possible to consider the political body in control as a sovereign and the areas it controls as a having a hierarchal system. However, outside of such areas there may exist actors beyond its authority. These actors may be (empirically) sovereign in their own right and are also motivated to remain autonomous. In such a system, the 'state', i.e. the body in control of a particular area and having been granted juridical sovereignty by the international community, is one actor among many. The interactions of these actors are those of one sovereign to another without a higher authority, i.e. anarchy. Thus in this situation of the fractured state, we should also see it as an anarchic system in the same way as the international system is anarchic – i.e. containing multiple 'containers' of hierarchy which relate as equals.[4]

To put it metaphorically, it is as if the doors to a house have been open, letting in the floodwaters of anarchy but there is still one room, its doors tightly shut, in which the waters have not found their way. It is here that the family continues to live, as other groups slop around the flooded remainder of the house attempting to also shut themselves in and make their own sovereign kingdoms. Yet, the outside community may still consider the house private property (though in reality the neighbors may not practice what they preach).

It might be argued that such domestic anarchy situations are only temporary and that we should instead see the activities of armed groups as an exception found only in war. This is somewhat parallel to the way in which we must reconsider a balance of power system during periods of interstate warfare – e.g. borders between actors are overrun and change rapidly. However, the framework illustrated above is flexible and helpful in understanding not just the immediate situation in a collapsed state, but also how it evolves over time. It is possible to model the growth and shrinking of armed groups in their control over areas of a state, and thus redraw the map of our anarchic system over time. This makes it possible to track the changes in the dynamic environment of a failed state. Such a long-term view is particularly helpful in states where armed groups have existed for decades, such as Uganda, Sudan and Afghanistan.

## Test of anarchy

It is necessary to be cautious in the analysis so as not to see anarchic systems where they do not exist.[5] Collapsed states are straightforward to define as anarchic, however, a fragmented state will have a government and there is often some grey area between the state simply being weak and it being fragmented. States regularly face threats to their monopoly over the legitimate use of force. Criminals, for example, are defined by their attempt to break the state's laws and they often do so violently. However, criminals are not sovereign and their actions do not create anarchy. When the state addresses the issue of crime it does so as a sovereign to an element within its hierarchy. The differentiating factor is that the armed group does threaten the effective control of the state; in fact criminals rely on the state for providing a hierarchical system in which to exist. As John Mackinlay puts it 'the Mafia live as citizens of a free society in most cases, and their freedom to move and communicate is not guaranteed by their own military strength, but by the institutions of the state' (Mackinlay 2000: 7). Even if organized criminals were able to rival the state, they probably would not since they gain value from skirting the laws not overturning them.[6] In contrast, the armed group does rival the state and has the military power to maintain its separate sovereignty.

In order to identify fragmented states this study proposes a simple theoretical test. An area is fragmented if an official of the state government cannot enter the area of the state due to the presence of an armed group with the ability to overpower any force the government can realistically muster. This is not necessarily a one-time event, but a sustained state of affairs. Simultaneously, from this we can conclude that there is an armed group present that has de facto sovereignty. Thus, the state must not only be weak, but there must also be a stronger rival able to confront and overpower it. In this way, the test is able to determine if and where an area is anarchic.

For example, a taxman would in principle – bureaucratic procedures apart – easily be able to go door to door anywhere in Belgium because he would be considered legitimate and the state's power would be overwhelming. Somalia would clearly be considered anarchic because there is not even a government to take the test. While in the FARC controlled areas of Colombia a tax collector would not be legitimate, nor could the state provide the coercive ability necessary to enter the area because FARC has a relative military superiority in certain areas. This area would therefore be considered lawless and Columbia a fragmented state. But if a taxman was in a Kurdish area of Turkey, where a Turkish state official might not be considered legitimate, he could go in with enough protection from the government to not be under threat because the government is significantly stronger than any possible Kurdish resistance. Therefore, we should not consider Turkey a fragmented state.

In cases where armed groups are more nomadic, i.e. they control people but not territory, the test is able to give us an idea of whether or not the government is able to exert authority over individuals in a similar manner. If the state is able

to rely on authority over an individual or otherwise control his or her actions, it is sovereign over that individual. If the state is unable to do this, since there is another organization that has authority or control over the individual, it does not have sovereignty over the individual. The organization of individuals that are not under the state's authority is another sovereign, and the relations between this organization and the state is marked by anarchy, rather than hierarchy. This would be the case in northern Uganda, for instance, where the members of the LRA are clearly not under the authority of the Ugandan government. Therefore Uganda should be considered a fragmented state. Although the LRA is not controlling territory in northern Uganda, the territory is nonetheless in dispute between it and the Ugandan government. The evidence is in the fact that in order for the government to confront these individuals in this territory, it relies on military units, as it would if it were to confront the troops of another state.

The situation is much more complicated with decentralized armed groups like Al Qaeda. Al Qaeda is more than just nomadic, its operatives tend to live as singletons or in small groups inside of states that we would not generally consider to be anarchic in any way, like Germany or the US. It would be pushing the definition too far to call such states fragmented, since we would be left with no truly whole states. However, the state of anarchy still exists in that the Al Qaeda units are nonetheless sovereign unto themselves and maintain a relationship determined by security between themselves and the states in question. The unique case of Al Qaeda will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

To summarize, in a territory in which there are multiple sovereigns – the system is in effect anarchic. These sovereign actors, whether they be the 'state' or an armed group, each consider themselves as the highest authority and are driven by the pursuit of power and need for security. These actors can pursue the goal of security with military power. Systems with multiple, undifferentiated units that are not under a central authority are, by definition, anarchic. We can therefore expect that the logic inherent in a balance of power approach would hold in such a situation because the actors, like in the international system, are in an anarchic environment. However, it is not clear yet whether or not this domestic anarchy is 'linked' to the international anarchic system.

## Closed versus open anarchic systems

Conventionally, domestic anarchy – when it is admitted – is seen as a separate 'closed' system within a state, in the sense that it is insulated from and different in nature than the international anarchy that is presumed under the Neorealist conception of the balance of power. Others have drawn the parallel between domestic anarchy and international anarchy.[7] In general, these authors are attempting to explain internal conflicts, and more specifically, ethnic conflicts (particularly in order to use the notion of security dilemma to illustrate the actions of ethnic or other groups within a failed state). However, they do not connect this domestic anarchy with international anarchy. For example, Stephen David notes that when central authority collapses in a state 'a microcosm of the

international system is replicated within the state' (David 1997: 557). In their quest to explain 'internal' conflicts, these authors artificially divorce their areas of study, or systems, from the outside world and model the internal armed groups as interacting only with each other. The implication is that this difference would make integration of domestic actors and international actors within the same theoretical model impossible.

The primary reason for this separation is that it is assumed that domestic anarchy is fundamentally different than international anarchy. In particular, the difference is thought to stem from the different origins and history of anarchy within versus outside of states. For example, Nelson Kasfir notes that 'within the state, anarchy does not have a priori status, rather it emerges when the state fails and it disappears when state authority returns' (Kasfir 2004: 60). The implication here being that since anarchy is not the 'natural' state of affairs, actors will make decisions differently and therefore standard IR theories of their behavior will not work. However, the argument for the exceptional nature of domestic anarchy due to its origins fails for a few reasons.

It is only contingent that a domestic hierarchy will return to all areas of a state. In Somalia or Afghanistan hierarchy has not returned for over a decade. Moreover, it can be argued that hierarchy never really existed in some areas of these states. The same could also be said of areas of the DRC and other states.

This 'natural state of affairs' argument arises because in general, hierarchical systems have been reified, as if it has always and will always exist in the same borders that they now have. However, hierarchy is itself a contingent property of a system and depends on historical circumstances for any particular area. For instance, former Soviet states like Tajikistan were once hierarchically aligned, but now have an anarchical relationship with each other, and it is possible to imagine a future in which they are hierarchically associated again. Similarly, in Somalia the assigned borders of the state once did not include the area known as Somaliland and we can imagine a future in which Somaliland is not included again. Therefore, we should not see the juridically defined borders of state as permanent, but rather accept the possibility that it may settle into separate units and vice versa.

Another point to be made is that neither the past nor the assumed future state of anarchy or hierarchy has necessary impact on the present actions of groups within an anarchic system. For instance, when an empire collapses or decolonizes, even though the states were once part of a hierarchic system, their actions will convert to reflect the anarchic environment. In the same way, even though a state may assume that it will one day be part of a hierarchic system, for instance as a member of the 'US of Europe', it will continue to act as if in an anarchic system. The parallel applies to those in collapsed states. Groups may remember being part of a hierarchy, but the immediate necessities of life under anarchy demand decision-making as if, and only as if, living under anarchy for an indefinite and potentially permanent period of time.

The hidden assumption made in thinking that domestic anarchy is temporary is that actors want a hierarchical system and will work to create and maintain

one, however, this is not necessarily the case. The assumption is that actors will recreate hierarchy if they can because they do not want to live in an anarchic system. But, it must be kept in mind that anarchy does not necessarily mean the presence of 'chaos' and violence and therefore.[8] However, anarchy only connotes that there is no central authority, other authorities may be present, under which there is a hierarchy. These authorities may in fact not be in conflict with each other. For example, even at the height of its collapse, there were still local authorities operating throughout Somalia[9] and there has at times been a return to widespread 'peace' in the sense of a lack of overt fighting, even though there is no effective central government. The same is true in the international system – although it is anarchic, it is general not very chaotic. Thus, when a state collapses we should not think of the resultant situation as violent disorder, but as anarchic because there is always another authority to take control of a piece of territory. Therefore, actors could potentially live in domestic anarchy indefinitely, as there may not be enough pressure to force them back into a hierarchical system.

It might also be held that domestic anarchy is separate from international anarchy because the two systems are still separated by the juridically defined borders of the state, regardless of state failure. However, this is not the case either as armed groups, the state, and external states and other international actors treat the state shell as open, or permeable, and the two systems as linked.

Armed groups clearly treat fragmented and collapsed states as an open anarchic system, which is intimately connected with the international system. They do not respect the authority of the state and treat it as a rival, not as the uppermost authority in a hierarchical system. Therefore they do not let the presence of any state or state-like authority stop it from interacting with other actors in the international system. As such, armed groups relate with other international actors based on their own agenda, not the host state's agenda.

In a fragmented state, the state's government will not legitimize an armed group by calling it autonomous, i.e. sovereign, but its actions against armed groups demonstrate the reality of it being an autonomous actor and potentially having its own separate external relations. (This is not an issue in collapsed states, since there is no government to speak of.) For instance, the state will generally try to refer to armed groups as criminals or otherwise deemphasize the fact that the armed group has de facto authority in a particular area. However, in its actions, the state will have to admit the reality of the autonomous armed group's authority. It will not try to enter the areas under control of the group except to combat it, as, for example, the government of Sudan had to against the SPLA controlled areas. In other words, the state treats the intrusions into armed group controlled areas as invasions. While the state may wish to regulate the international interactions of the armed group, it cannot possibly do so and must simply accept the reality of its no longer being a 'buffer' between these actors and the international system.[10]

Actors outside the domestic anarchic system also treat it as openly anarchic. While international actors have attempted to hold up the sovereignty of such

failed states and demand that other states do so as well, the fact is, their actions do not point to such a strong view of juridical sovereignty. It is increasingly common for states to intrude upon the sovereignty of failed states, thereby demonstrating the lack of a state's effective control over territory. In particular, state militaries interact in domestic anarchy as if it were international, as for example happens in US 'snatch and grab' operations in Somalia or bombings targeted at Al Qaeda members.[11] Although such operations are usually covert, in cases like US targeted bombings in Somalia, they are officially admitted by the foreign government.[12] Other states also invade at will – not in order to attack the 'state', but to attack specific armed groups. This is, for instance, what happened in 'Africa's World War' in the DRC, when Uganda and Rwanda (amongst other states) invaded the DRC to attack the Interahamwe and other militias.

Even international organizations make the admission that the state shell is permeable in some cases. For instance, the Operation Lifeline Sudan agreement between the UN, Sudan, and SPLA demonstrated that an actor other than the 'state' could be considered as a legitimate actor to be dealt with within a sovereign state and outside of its permission.[13] Or, up until the 2005 peace agreement, in order to enter southern Sudan a visa was not obtained from the Sudanese state, but from the SPLA.[14] International aid organizations regularly accept the necessity and legitimacy of obtaining the required visa. As such, they effectively treat the armed group as the sovereign unit, not the juridically defined state.

In addition, both states and international organizations also implicitly admit the de facto nature of armed group control. Some states excuse drug dealing or terrorism that erupts from areas within their territory that are out of their control. The international community will generally accept this as reality and not hold it against the state, either legally or morally. This is happening in Columbia or Afghanistan for instance. Similarly, the ECOMOG intervention applied economic sanctions to NPFL controlled areas of the Liberian state, but not to other areas, and in doing so, admitted the de facto authority of the NPFL. While this is not a formal recognition of the reality of an armed group's de facto control, it is an implicit admission.

The conclusion is that domestic anarchy is real and linked to the international anarchic system. There is a fluid connection between the domestic actors and international actors, in that they interact as part of the same system. Actors may not rhetorically refer to the system as anarchy, and juridically speaking it is not. Empirically speaking, however, international actors do treat actors in domestic anarchy as they would actors in the international anarchic system. Since actors relate as in anarchy, our analysis should reflect this.

Beyond reflecting reality, by treating domestic anarchy as a continuation of the international anarchic system – i.e. 'open system' – rather than separate from it, it is possible to integrate the understanding of 'internal' armed groups with external actors. An open anarchic system has the same rules as an international one and international actors may take part in it in the same way as they do in international anarchy, i.e. as equals. This opens the door to considering armed groups and states as being part of the same balance of power.

In a sense, this perspective involves taking the analysis of anarchic systems from the juridical level, in which actors are defined by recognition by the international community, to the empirical level, in which actors are defined by their de facto sovereignty over groups. In effect, the map of sovereignty is redrawn. Yet, it is redrawn with the same exclusivity as the juridical map of sovereignty – thereby maintaining separate, autonomous units.[15] In this way, it is possible to maintain the systematic nature of a Neorealist conception of the balance of power and thereby theorize about armed groups and integrate these NSAs into Neorealist models of the balance of power.

## Self-help system

In an anarchical environment – i.e. one in which there is no actor with authority over the other actors – populated by actors desiring to survive, actors must uphold their own interests without recourse to others. This is because there is no central authority that can do so for an actor. Security is continually under threat and since 'some states may at any time use force, all states must be prepared to do so – or live at the mercy of their more militarily vigorous neighbors' (Waltz 1979: 102). The condition of having to fend for oneself is termed 'self-help'.

The self-help system is one in which the de facto state of affairs matter most. Since there is no overarching actor that can determine the relations of the sub-actors, as in a state, each and every actor must defend itself from any threat that may arise. Therefore whether or not an actor is 'internationally recognized' as a 'legitimate' actor or state does not matter at all. Rather, if an actor is able to exert force and threaten another actor, it is a threat full stop. The actions of such an actor must be countered. It is the same for the state and the armed group. The state may see the armed group as a threat. The armed group may see the state as a threat.

Also, within a self-help system, perception matters. If a threat is perceived, it will be countered. This leads to the security dilemma, which will be discussed later. More subtly, the actor that is perceived is the one that will be countered – whether it is a single unit or an alliance. Thus, if the state perceives a unitary armed group, it will target that armed group. For instance, although the rebel groups in Darfur may be only loosely aligned, they may be perceived by the Sudanese state as a single threat and countered as such. Similarly, the armed group will perceive a threat as a threat, no matter if it comes from an alliance or not. For example, the armed groups in Somalia treated the UN and UNOSOM forces as a single entity and threat that had to be countered, even though they were in fact an alliance of multiple countries (this event will be covered in more detail in Chapter 4). Thus, whether we want to see the UN as an alliance of specific states, international organization or other type of actor matters mostly on an academic level, since from the perspective of the armed groups it is an actor that may be aligned with or fought like any other.

Given that armed groups perceive threats and are perceived as threats by states, these groups exist within such a self-help environment and must act in the

same ways as states. As with other actors, in order for armed groups 'to achieve their objectives and maintain their security, [they] … must rely on the means they can generate and the arrangements they can make for themselves' (Waltz 1979: 111). Such an environment exists within, between or outside states for the armed groups, since it is not the juridical border that matters but rather the empirical boundary of what constitutes a unitary actor.

## (Re)producing the system

The nature of the anarchic self-help system is that it continually reproduces itself. This is because sovereign units demand an anarchic environment, since they feel themselves to be the highest authority, and therefore will not accept attempts at overriding their authority. As such, any attempts at creating a hierarchical system (i.e. structuring the relations between the actors) will be met with attempts by units to buttress their sovereignty.

In fact, attempts at defeating units and trying to structure their relations may only make them stronger. When an actor is threatened, it will increase its power, sometimes through making itself a more cohesive actor. Charles Tilly made the insightful claim that 'war made the state and the state made war' (Tilly 1995: 42). Here Tilly is referring to the formation of European states that evolved into their current, strong, cohesive structure through constant wars waged against each other which necessitated enhancing cohesiveness and the build-up of power. Those states that were able to do so survived, while those that could not have gone extinct.[16]

Just as international war may strengthen states, wars between armed groups and the state (or between armed groups and armed groups) may strengthen the armed groups. The argument is parallel to Tilly's. Armed groups are in competition with each other, with the host state, and with other states. This competition forces them to strengthen their own organizational structure and economic system, or succumb. Those armed groups that do survive demand sovereignty and an anarchic system.

Simultaneously, this internal power struggle leads to a weakening of the state, considered as a whole, since stronger armed groups can better rival the state. Or, if not weaken the state overall, it can degrade its authority in specific areas. In other words, it leads to a shift from hierarchy to anarchy. The armed group's drive for sovereignty creates an anarchic system and this anarchic system further reinforces the armed group's sovereignty. This helps to explain why internal conflicts can become so protracted – it is a self-reinforcing process.

## Balance of power

The 'system', as in the anarchic system, is made up of the actors and their interactions. The actors – whether state or armed group – are each attempting to maintain their autonomy. Towards this, they will act in certain ways. The process can be described: a unit will observe the other units that it can possibly

relate with. It will then determine the relative capability of these units. If it feels that there is a security concern, in that its power is relatively lower than a possible aggressor, it will act to gain more power, relative to that actor. In particular, units will act to prevent any unit from obtaining hegemony – which would infringe on their autonomy. Thus, by 'bumping up against each other' the actors in this system both influence other actors and are in turn influenced by them. This culmination of the actors and their interactions is the system. Within this system, actors are constrained in the ways that they may act by socialization and competition. Neorealism describes and explains the interactions of the actors in this system by illustrating the patterns of relationships that may arise from these constraints. The following section will illustrate each step in this process.

## Power, hegemony and structure

Power is measured by comparing the capability of units. Capability can be in terms of resources, territory, population, military strength, political stability or other factors that allow an actor to affect another more than it is affected itself.[17] For example, we might compare the tonnage of two countries' naval fleets. Importantly, it must be kept in mind that power is relative. Actors in a self-help system interact with each other and therefore their security depends on other's interactions. This means that power must be judged in relation to another actor.

Power is the same for armed groups as it is for states. Although we are accustomed to thinking about, for instance, economic power in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), it is nonetheless economic power when a West African warlord seizes diamond mines and profits from the sale of diamonds on the international market. Just as with states, armed group power can be objectively measured in the same sense that states' can.[18] As such, states can and do make capability comparisons between themselves and armed groups and vice versa.[19]

Given the relative nature of power, actors may attempt to attain hegemony. For, as Waltz notes '[o]rganizations seek to reduce uncertainties in their environment' (Waltz 1979: 198).[20] This motivation arises naturally from the drive for security, which attempts to avert unpredictable threats. It leads actors to attempt to impose and maintain hegemony in that they will want to sustain the present system through participation 'in the management of, or [interference] in the affairs of, lesser states' (ibid.: 198). The goal of this hegemony is to maintain the system (in one's favor). In particular, great powers will have an incentive and ability to maintain hegemony in this way.

In return, other actors will seek to make sure that no actor attains hegemony since they do not want to endanger their sovereignty.[21] This means that attaining hegemony may be costly to an actor. As such, hegemony will not be sought at any cost because actors prefer security over power and therefore they 'recognize a trade-off between aggrandizement and self-preservation; they realize that a relentless search for universal domination may jeopardize their own autonomy' (Keohane 1986c: 174). This means that units will modify their pursuit of any hegemony based on their relative level of security at the time.[22]

Armed groups will of course never be a great power in absolute terms. There is simply no way that they could obtain the necessary power capability. Therefore some Neorealists may hold that armed groups should not be seen as 'real' actors in the system. Waltz, and Neorealists who have followed him, tend to focus on the great powers. This is because 'the units of greatest capability set the scene of action for others as well as for themselves' in a systems theory (Waltz 1979: 72). More specifically, states determine the system and NSAs must play by their rules. For instance, Waltz notes:

> States set the scene in which they, along with non-state actors, stage their dramas or carry on their humdrum affairs. Though they may choose to interfere little in the affairs of non-state actors for long periods of time, states nevertheless set the terms of the intercourse, whether by passively permitting informal rules to develop or by actively intervening to change rules that no longer suit them. When the crunch comes, states remake the rules by which other actors operate.
>
> (Ibid.: 94)

This is an important objection for Neorealism to make because Neorealism is founded on the belief that theories should simplify the world. In the simplification process, only the most important – i.e. most powerful – actors are analyzed. For Neorealism, these are states. Therefore Neorealists require that the great powers be addressed as the primary actors if one is to have a general theory.

However, this should not discount the analysis of smaller actors. For, Waltz also notes that

> [t]he theory once written also applies to lesser states that interact insofar as their interactions are insulated from the intervention of the great powers of a system, whether by the relative indifference of the latter or by difficulties of communication and transportation.
>
> (Ibid.: 73)

Moreover, we might note that in regional and sometimes worldwide politics, small states can have a power balancing or other effect on great powers and in this way can make systemic changes that allow for analysis by Neorealism. Therefore, we should take it that Neorealism could be used to examine regional international relations between lesser actors.

Armed groups should be considered as powerful as small states and in some cases even more powerful. Afghan warlords have had a massive effect on Central Asian regional politics and have served in alliances with great powers, including the US and Russia, as well as regional powers like Pakistan or Iran. In Liberia, when Taylor was still a warlord, he and his warlord organization were arguably more powerful than some of the states in the region, such as Sierra Leone. In an example which will be covered in more detail in Chapter 4, Somali warlords have had regional effects, as well as an effect on a great power – the

US – to the point of forcing the US to reassess its strategic intents. Finally, Al Qaeda has clearly had a global impact on the US and other Western nations. Therefore, we should consider armed groups as acceptable units for analysis to at least the degree that small states are acceptable units for analysis.

The distribution of power capabilities determines the system structure and the structure is described by its polarity. Each actor in the system will have a varying amount of power relative to other actors. In some systems, multiple actors will have an approximately equal amount of power to each other and significantly more than any other lesser powers in the system, such systems are known as 'multipolar' systems. In other systems two actors will have significantly more power than any of the other actors, this is known as a bipolar system. A 'unipolar', system arises when a single actor is significantly more powerful than any other actor.

The polarity of any given system can either be maintained or transformed. The system can be transformed through the elimination of a great power, i.e. those that determine polarity, through defeating them in war or with the empowerment of another great power. The system can be maintained if the great powers systematically do so through discouraging the empowerment of another great power or by not taking part in a system changing war, which could potentially defeat one or more of the great powers.

## Security dilemma

One might come to conclude that the anarchic system is stagnant because once an actor balances the power of another actor, there would be no further change for either party. This is because as outlined so far, the balance of power is defensive in nature – units act to assure that they have at least the power capability of another unit. However, even though the balance of power may be defensive in nature, tension and conflict in anarchic environments is still rife.[23] This is because, even without innately aggressive actors in a system, a security dilemma relationship arises between actors. The security dilemma occurs because states, or other units, will attempt to provide for their own security. In doing this they will amass power for defensive purposes. This amassing of power may then be perceived to be for offensive rather than defensive purposes to other actors (since weapons can be both defense and offensive). The perception of potential offense leads the other actors to amass power themselves for defensive purposes but, again, this may be perceived as being for offensive purposes and it is herein that the spiral of the security dilemma begins.

A security dilemma involving armed groups can occur when armed groups exist in both collapsed and fragmented states.[24] For instance, in Somalia a security dilemma arose between Somali warlords and Ethiopia. The Ethiopian state felt threatened by the armed groups within Somalia because they are obvious security threats that might either support internal Ethiopian threats, as with al Ittihad, or might be direct threats themselves. At the same time, Ethiopia's defensive maneuvering could be perceived as a threat to armed groups. This

case will be explored in more detail in Chapter 4. In fragmented states, the armed group may enter into a security dilemma with the host state itself as well as with neighboring state actors. This is expected, especially within the host state, as the armed group is another militarized actor that can existentially threaten the state. For example, the LRA presents a threat to Uganda simply by existing as an entity that is not under the authority of the state within its boundaries. This case will be covered in Chapter 5.

A benefit of applying the security dilemma concept to states and armed groups is that it can help explain intervention in terms that Neorealism can more easily explain. When states fail and armed groups appear inside of them, from a conventional Neorealist perspective, it seems that there is no reason for other states to care. In fact, it is a positively beneficial state of affairs because state failure and armed groups weaken the potentially threatening state. Therefore it would seem like states should accept the presence of failed states, possibly even promote them, and certainly not intervene in them to end this less threatening situation.[25]

Interventions do, however, make sense if one considers that an armed group can enter into a security dilemma with a neighboring state. For example, as Taylor and the NPFL grew in power, he came to represent a threat to neighboring states; eventually this threat led to an intervention. A similar situation occurred in 2006 when Ethiopia found the Union of Islamic Courts in Somalia to be too much of a threat and intervened to defeat that group. Similarly, warlords in Somalia were considered to be threats. Whether or not the warlord's actions were for defensive purposes, neighboring states might perceive a warlord's actions as offensive threats and this would lead them to take actions to obtain increased security. The action used to obtain an increase in security in the face of the threat is military intervention (i.e. war fought to weaken or eliminate the threat). Thus, the logic of security dilemmas can not only help to explain these armed group-state relations, but also provide a Neorealist conception of intervention.

It might be argued that armed groups are not strong enough threats to far-off states to ever be worth intervening. In fact debates do occur within the policy-making apparatus of states, including the general public, as to whether armed groups are enough of a threat to demand intervention. In Somalia or the Balkans the need to intervene won out while for several other wars in Africa and elsewhere, it did not. Global terrorism has tended to shift this debate towards seeing armed groups as being enough of a threat to justify armed intervention. An example of such an intervention was the US invasion of Afghanistan based on the threat of Al Qaeda.

## The international relations of states and armed groups

The profound implication of the systemic balance of power detailed so far is that it is possible to describe how units will act in the system a priori. Although the international system is anarchic, unit's actions are not chaotic. The actors cannot

do anything they please. If they were to act in just any way, they would go extinct rather quickly.

Units are constrained by the system to act in ways that ensure their security and the specific actions that ensure security will fall into certain patterns. These patterns are dictated by the nature of the system, in particular, by the distribution of power in the system. Operationally, the system shapes and constrains the types of relationships between the actors through the dual processes of socialization – in which actors create patterned relations with each other – and competition – which selects for specific behaviors – between the actors. Together, these processes influence, but do not force the actions of actors in the system. Socialization means that certain patterns of interaction will be more commonly open to an actor than others, because other actors will tend towards these sorts of patterns, and that actors may not even be able to think outside of these predictable patterns when making decisions. The process is self-reinforcing, as by repeating the pattern, the actors further reinforce the patterns of the system. The implication of competition is that while an actor may not choose to act in a particular way, a poor choice will lead to the extinction of the actor. Since actors can learn, they will soon come to know which interactions are more or less likely to lead to extinction and will make their decisions accordingly. In these ways, the possible actions of actors in the system are constrained. It is the specific patterns to which they are constrained that answers the question of how the units – whether states or armed groups – relate.

The means of affecting the distribution of power – or balancing power – at an actor's disposal are through making 'internal efforts (moves to increase economic capability, to increase military strength, to develop clever strategies) and external efforts (moves to strengthen and enlarge one's own alliance or to weaken and shrink an opposing one)' (Waltz 1979: 118). To summarize, actors will cultivate their internal power, form alliances or use war to weaken an opponent or its alliances.

It is from these actions that change occurs within the system.[26] For example, an actor might cultivate power internally, which will change the balance of power in the system by making an actor effectively 'weigh more' in capability calculations. This will cause other actors to need to change their level of power. These changes will then feed back into the system and cause the first actor to change its own power capability. Similarly, if two or more actors align, they will constitute a more powerful combined force. This will in turn cause other actors to align or cultivate power internally. This continual readjustment of the capability distribution in the system will innately move towards a balance.

However, it should also be noted that the balance of power is idealized, in practice it is very difficult to make a true balance of power effective. The most fundamental problem is that power defies measurement and there is significant exaggeration of potential rival's power.[27] This will lead to insuring a safe margin of error. Therefore, it is possible that even if the system is in reality balanced, units will still build up internal power, align, or make war in order to create a margin of safety. Thus, as with the security dilemma, shifts in the balance of

power are expected as perceptions change, even if there is no actual shift in material capabilities.

By taking a systemic view of these continual changes, we can describe and explain what is happening to the actors. The description of state relations within this system view is the culmination of the relations between the actors, whether alliances, wars or internal power building. This description is not just for a moment, it is continuously changing and adapting. The explanation for these actions is that they are in response to other actors in the system based on a mutual motivation to survive.

Just as for states, the actions of armed groups are effectively constrained by the system to have relationships based on certain patterns. Specifically, they will act to balance power through internal power cultivation, alliances, and warfare. It is in this sense that it is possible to answer the question of how armed groups relate with states and other international actors. To summarize the answer: armed groups relate with states and other international actors in essentially the same way as states – they seek to ensure their survival through the balance of power.

The following section will examine in more detail the specific patterns of relations that are carried out between armed groups and other actors in the international system. These include: internal power cultivation through obtaining and using economic resources as well as through increasing unit cohesion. Related to these internal actions, the feedback relationship of the arms race will be examined. Alliances will be examined as well as the subtle relationships of diplomacy and demonstration of power. Finally, the last resort of international relations, war, will be examined as well as the related concepts of civil war and peace agreements.

## Internal power cultivation

The build-up of power internally can involve all of the various forms of power. An actor may, for instance, attempt to increase the size of its military, develop new technology, or cultivate its economy. These processes raise the innate capability of the actor and thereby increase its intrinsic security relative to other actors – thus balancing the capability distribution in a system.

States regularly take part in internal power cultivation. The two primary forms are to obtain and use resources and to increase cohesion. For instance, they may exploit natural resources within their territory or they may turn to the sale of their natural or other resources to external actors. They then use these materials or funds for internal weapons development programs, infrastructure building, or other methods of increasing power. States also attempt to increase their internal cohesiveness, such as through building a nationalist ideology. The culmination of these processes is to effectively increase the security of the state.

Similarly to states, armed groups attempt to cultivate their power through obtaining and using resources. The relative simplicity of armed group organizations makes the truly internal development of power difficult. They are

unlikely, for instance, to build the infrastructure necessary to mine iron deposits and then to manufacture weaponry. Rather, armed groups tend to turn to looting and trade to build up their power base. In particular, armed groups are inclined to exploit natural resources that they come to control. They will sell these resources to MNCs and use the profits to obtain the sources of power, such as weapons or personnel.[28] This internal power cultivation is exactly the process of economic perpetuation discussed in Chapter 2.

A difference between armed groups and states is that the lack of juridical sovereignty is a disadvantage for armed groups in internal power-building attempts, however, it can be overcome. In particular, states can override the ability of armed groups to do business. For instance, in Liberia, '[t]he sovereign [Interim Government of National Unity] IGNU regime in Monrovia could (and did) exercise its right to bring suits in foreign courts against firms that did business with Taylor' (Reno 1998: 99). Such actions are not much different than trade embargos put against 'rogue states'. As with rogue states, embargos are not too much of a disadvantage for armed groups, as they do take part in business deals with foreign firms on a regular basis. For example, Taylor was able to circumvent most if not all embargos, as was reported:

> …a lucrative business based on diamonds, timber, iron ore, and gold was initiated with French, Belgian, Turkish, and Taiwanese firms. To circumvent the blockade that had been placed on the ports of Buchanan, Harper and Greenville by the [ECOMOG] in 1993, these products were shipped through the Ivorian port of San Pedro. Ivorian intermediaries and their French counterparts dealt directly with the NPFL in order to avoid the export controls and restrictions resulting from the embargo. The NPFL is estimated to have made $450 million from these illicit exports during the course of Liberia's war.
>
> (Hutchful and Aning 2004: 210)

At times, these may even be large, 'well respected' corporations. For example, Taylor did business with Firestone Tire and Rubber Company.[29]

To echo a point made earlier, economic exploitation should be seen as a route to maximizing security for armed groups and like states, armed groups use their ill-gotten gains to fund their security apparatus.[30] Economic gain is used instrumentally. Given the nature of the self-help system, armed groups must use such wealth to survive. If a group didn't, it would be extinguished.

Armed groups also attempt to increase the cohesiveness of their organization in order to enhance their intrinsic power. Again the instrumental use of grievances noted in Chapter 2 contributes to this and is necessary within the threatening confines of the self-help system. The large literature on identity issues and grievances provides insight into the cohesion building practices of armed groups.[31] In particular, armed groups refer to ethnic, tribal, or nationalist drivers in society. These authors describe the means by which armed groups enlist support for their organization, for instance. Such support can be straight-

forwardly translated as cohesion building leading to increased power. Again, the grievances that an armed group takes advantage of are sometimes perceived to constitute the goal of the organization. Instead, these grievances should be seen as an instrumental means to build up the power, and thereby maximize the security, of armed groups.

Related to the internal cultivation of power, armed groups may take part in arms races, just as states do. The arms race occurs when one actor builds up its internal power, thereby causing a threat to be perceived by another actor. The second actor then increases its internal power in order offset the imbalance. A spiral can ensue in which actors are continuously increasing their power, usually in the form of weapons procurement. Armed groups may have such races amongst themselves, for instance, by obtaining more and better small arms. Similarly, an armed group may increase its power relative to a state's arms buildup.

One related means of improving its security that is open to armed groups but not to states is the ability to move. The non-territorial nature of armed group sovereignty allows it to do this. Armed groups can use their lack of juridical sovereignty to their advantage by moving across juridical borders, leaving any state enemies with a difficult diplomatic situation. This is occurring presently with the LRA in Sudan, the DRC and the CAR as well as with Al Qaeda in Pakistan. In some cases, when the armed group moves across a border it is aligned with the new state, as when the LRA moved into Sudan. In other cases it is not, as with Al Qaeda. In either case, the move often provides significant defense from conventional attacks.

## Alliances

The method of balancing power most often considered is for actors to form alliances with other actors. This can occur when there are three or more actors in the system. An alliance between two states creates, for the intents and purposes of comparing power, a 'super-group' which combines the power of both actors into a whole. This super-group functions as a single actor in terms of the decision calculation of power by actors in the system.

The balance of power is a fundamental force that will draw together an actor with, potentially, anyone, even recent enemies.[32] This flexibility of relations is an important feature of the balance of power. It demands that an actor align with another regardless of ideological or other preferences. In the same way, an actor must be willing to cease an alliance in order to resume a balance. A corollary to this is that it may be necessary for a state to align with a non-state actor such as an armed group. For instance, this occurred when the US military aligned with the Northern Alliance (which itself was an alliance of armed groups) in the war in Afghanistan.

Conversely, actors may break the alliance at any time they wish if it is no longer in their interest. Alliances do not exist as any more than a compulsive movement to maximize security for two or more actors. The official diplomatic rules surrounding an alliance may help to reinforce it but do not bind the actors

in a strong way. As soon as the security calculation of one or more of the actors changes, the alliance can, though not necessarily will, be broken.

Generally, the weaker actors in a system of three or more actors will align against the stronger actor. As Waltz notes, 'because power is a means and not an end, states prefer to join the weaker of two coalitions … The first concern of states is not to maximize power but to maintain their positions in the system' (Waltz 1979: 126). The weaker states will be more appreciated on the weaker side, as they will make up a relatively larger amount of the group's power as a whole, and therefore have more say in the direction of the group. This is true, of course, only if the group is able to minimally deter the more powerful actor. Actors may, however, join the more powerful actor in a system, particularly a hegemon. This is known as 'band-wagoning'.

Armed groups also make alliances in order to balance power. As with states, armed groups wish to increase their security in relation to other actors in the system. When they cannot increase their internal power enough, they will seek to combine their forces with another actor in the system.

Armed groups may form alliances with other armed groups or with states. For example, the aptly named Northern Alliance was made up of various warlords and militias who had combined their efforts to balance the power of the Taliban, which also had its own alliances with other warlords and militias. Similarly, the US aligned with the Northern Alliance out of convenience, as both of the group's security interests rationalized such an alliance.

Like states, armed groups will form alliances based on their security interest, and therefore with anyone with whom it is in their security interest to do so. This means that armed groups will not base alliance formation solely on identity or other issues. This, for instance, allowed the Somali National Front (SNF) to form and then break an alliance with Ethiopia, an example to be covered in the next chapter, or the Christian and Animist LRA to form an alliance with the Islamic fundamentalist Sudanese government. Since security will dictate the alliance formation of armed groups, like states, can 'adjust to a shifting distribution of power by changing partners with a grace made possible by the absence of ideological and other cleavages' (Waltz 1979: 125).

Moreover, armed groups have the same concerns as expected in terms of alliances. In particular, they are concerned with relative power and therefore will only form alliances when the system forces them to do so because of the presence of a more powerful threat. Also, armed groups are concerned with their independence and therefore will be careful not to allow a more powerful ally to limit its independence. Thus, for instance, the militias and warlords which make up the so-called 'other armed groups' (OAGs) of southern Sudan only formed an alliance into the Southern Sudan Defense Forces (SSDF) when they were left with no other choice.[33] This occurred after their rival the SPLA established itself as the government of southern Sudan and threatened to destroy the OAGs now that it no longer needed to fight a war against the Sudanese government.

The means by which armed groups will form alliances may be different than that employed by states. States can use more formal processes to create alliances

based on extensive diplomatic relations, which are held to be legitimate by other states. Armed groups, on the other hand, cannot generally take part in formal, legitimate diplomatic exchanges and official treaty or alliance creation. Nonetheless, they are able to form informal alliances with other actors, including states.

One particular difference between states and armed groups in alliance formation is that in order to take part in diplomacy – via which alliances are formed – an armed group must provide proof that it can be aligned with. This is because, in order for an actor to be aligned with, it must be recognized by other relevant actors and its relative power capability must be signaled. States are recognized a priori by other states as sovereign actors which can potentially be aligned with and their relative power capability tends to already be known. Armed groups, however, must prove their potential value and relevance.

In order to remedy this, the armed group must demonstrate that it has empirical sovereignty and power. The means to doing this include taking and holding territory, defeating government troops, moving a civilian population etc. In doing so, the armed group's power can be calculated by states or other actors and, if it is found to be in their interest, an alliance will be formed. For example, when the US decided to invade Afghanistan and remove the Taliban from power, it turned to the warlords of Afghanistan who had demonstrated some power in the state – the Northern Alliance – which controlled around ten percent of Afghanistan's territory.

### *The power of juridical sovereignty*

In a sense, juridical sovereignty can be seen as a form of power, armed groups do not possess this form of power and therefore they must compensate for this. Recognition of sovereignty by other international actors grants actors some assumptions about their overall power capability. Moreover, juridical recognition may grant power in itself in that it allows an actor to take part in international organizations or obtain the benefits of formal diplomacy. In particular, it is more difficult, though not impossible, to attack another juridically sovereign state. But, it is much easier to attack an armed group, particularly if it is within the borders of a fractured state. Also, soft balancing, such as the use of alliances within an international organization, is almost impossible without juridical sovereignty.[34] Armed groups do not innately have such power, rather they need to demonstrate their power empirically. In doing this, the armed group can obtain some of the benefits of sovereign recognition, such as the ability to form (informal) alliances.

Yet, it should be noted, the lack of juridical sovereignty can also provide power in its own right. Since armed groups are not privy to the rights and responsibilities of juridically recognized states, they may freely break many of the rules that states must follow. In particular, armed groups may practice warfare without reference to the Geneva Conventions, which bind the warfare practices of states.[35] Also, as noted, armed groups may also cross international borders without recourse to the rights of states. This allows the armed group to

take advantage of an alliance with a state by 'hiding' within that state's juridical sovereignty.

## War

The nature of the relations of units in a self-help system can lead to war. As described previously, actors in an anarchic system must provide for their own security. In some instances this means building up internal power to deter aggressors or otherwise creating a balance of power through the use of alliances. All units in an anarchic system are pursuing such security goals simultaneously. However, some of these security goals may be incompatible. For example, it may be necessary for actors to physically defend themselves from aggressors or to preemptively attack other actors in order to improve the balance of power by weakening another actor.[36] If the units come into physical conflict in order to rectify these incompatible goals, it is anarchic war. In this way, war 'can only determine the allocation of gains and losses among contenders and settle for a time the question of who is the stronger' (Waltz 1979: 112).

Thus, anarchic war can be seen as a continuation of the attempt to maximize security through influencing the distribution of capabilities, i.e. balancing power. It is another option, other than aligning or building up power internally. This option is used when security goals become incompatible. Actors can use force for conquest, which can increase internal power, by allowing them to acquire resources. War can also weaken or even completely remove a rival, thereby influencing the power distribution in a favorable manner. Similarly, it may be used to break up an alliance of actors. Conversely, an actor must fight war in order to defend itself from an aggressor.[37]

Armed groups make war to improve their security situation as well. They use war to weaken their enemies in the face of threats. In fragmented states, since the state's primary motivation is to monopolize authority within its borders, it is constantly attempting to destroy armed groups. However, the primary motive of armed groups is survival and they will use war as a means to attain security. This means that there is a constant state of conflict between the two incompatible organizations.[38] Chapter 5 will discuss such a war in the fragmented state of Uganda in more detail. In collapsed states, the logic is similar. There are multiple armed groups, each with a motive to survive. In such a situation, the logic of the security dilemma causes the armed groups to wage war on each other just as it does in the international anarchic system. Chapter 4 will discuss the warfare situation in the collapsed state of Somalia in more detail. In some cases, armed groups will use direct attacks to weaken an alliance, as Al Qaeda did with the bombings in Madrid – which will be discussed in Chapter 6. Armed groups will use war to gain power. For example, Taylor fought a war in Sierra Leone (via its ally the RUF) in order to gain territory rich in alluvial diamonds and thereby added to his own economic resources. And, as with states, armed groups will stop fighting wars when it is in their security interests, as for instance, the warlords in Somalia have spent periods of years without much overt fighting.

Armed group war inside of fragmented and collapsed states can cross international borders as well. The armed group may compete with a neighboring state. For instance, the LRA has fought both Sudan and Uganda – a topic to be covered in Chapter 5. Similarly, an external state may combat an armed group. For example, the UN forces fought Somali warlords – a topic to be covered in Chapter 4.

To summarize, war involving armed groups is not only internal, i.e. against a host state or external, i.e. against another, external state. Nor is it always against states, it may involve other armed groups, or both states and other armed groups. We can call this form of warfare 'mixed wars'. Mixed wars are wars that have aspects of both interstate wars and intrastate wars. They involve non-state armed groups fighting against other non-state armed groups or states. This struggle takes places within more than one state or involves actors from more than one state in direct ways.

Once survival is ensured, armed groups may pursue other goals in their conflict. If for instance, the armed group is able to effectively defeat the state in its territorial area and remove the threat of extinction, it may turn towards the larger goal of conquest for other purposes. It is at this point, once the armed group has ensured the level of relative power necessary to survive, that we will see it attempt wider conquests, such as taking over a state, or in the case of Taylor, running for President. In the same way, it is only after assuring safety of its homeland that states will turn to conquest for the sake of goals that are not directly security related.

### *Civil war*

If armed group war is anarchic war, as with states, then what do we mean by civil war? Civil wars are those wars that are fought over the juridical sovereignty of a state. Armed groups already have the empirical sovereignty and this grants them the ability to determine their internal and external relations (up until the point of being overpowered by another actor). However, juridical sovereignty, as noted previously, is a form of power that adds to an actor's ability to survive by granting it certain benefits, such as an easier capability to align with other juridically sovereign actors, to take part in international trade or even to align with certain exclusive international organizations (i.e. alliances) of other actors, such as the UN or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Juridical sovereignty is, as previously noted, rarely granted or split, therefore, if an actor wants to obtain it, the actor must take it from another actor that has it. 'Taking' juridical sovereignty typically means coming to control the seats of juridical sovereignty, such as the capital city of a state, the statehouse, the command, control and communication centers of a state's military, radio stations and so on. As such, some armed groups will seek war in order to obtain that power from a state by actively combating the state to take over such pieces of territory or symbolic buildings.

In some instances, no actor may be able to attain juridical sovereignty. An

interesting example of this not working is in Somalia, to be discussed in Chapter 4, where no group was able to take over the seat of juridical sovereignty and therefore juridical sovereignty ceased to exist for any real group in the Somalia system. In other words, the state collapsed. Such occurrences are rare and when they happen states are unsure what to do. Sometimes other states assign (juridical) sovereignty to a 'government' which may not even exist inside the state. This happened in Somalia, where a Transitional National Government (TNG) was formed and operated from Kenya. Yet, without empirical sovereignty, such juridical sovereignty means very little. The TNG could obtain some international aid money (as is common for weak states) but it had no real control over the internal or external affairs of the piece of territory known as Somalia.

At other times, an actor may come to control the seat of juridical sovereignty but only be recognized by some states and not others. This occurred in Afghanistan when the Taliban took power. Some states, namely Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, recognized their juridical sovereignty. Other states did not. A similar occurrence happens when some neighboring states recognize a 'secessionist movement'. Again, the reality is that it is the empirical sovereignty that matters most for the balance of power. For instance, the Taliban did in fact control most of Afghanistan and could dictate internal and external affairs. Yet, it did not have the benefits of widespread recognition of its juridical sovereignty and therefore could not gain benefits such as membership in the UN. The downside to this lack of power was that the group was weaker. For example, it meant that it was much easier for the US to invade the country after 9/11, as opposed to the invasion of Iraq, a recognized state, which demanded significantly more legal wrangling with other states and the UN.

For armed groups, the decision to fight for juridical sovereignty is a matter of a power calculation. In some instances empirical sovereignty is enough relative to the dangers of trying to seriously confront a state's military. For example, after defeat at the hands of ECOMOG, the NPFL was satisfied with controlling territory outside of the capital city for years. Yet, once it obtained enough power to take Monrovia and thereby obtain juridical sovereignty, the NPFL did so (in order to assure this recognition, Taylor set up an election for the Presidency so as to appease states and other international actors like the UN). In the case of the LRA, the group found early on that it wasn't powerful enough to take over the Ugandan state and as such has held on to its empirical sovereignty and dropped any real pretence for juridical sovereignty (beyond some rhetoric).

## Surrender and peace agreements

Given the emphasis put on survival and the maintenance of autonomy, it would seem as if international actors would never give up fighting until the last man. Yet, history tells us that wars do not end in total defeat but rather both states and armed groups surrender and sign peace agreements all the time. When states sign a peace agreement they often give up their right to unadulterated control over their internal and external relations. Defeated nations may have their

government's reorganized and their militaries neutered. In some cases, states may be absorbed into other states completely or have a proxy government of some sort installed. The same happens to armed groups. More often than not insurgencies end when the insurgent group signs a peace agreement with the state. These peace agreements typically call for some degree of disarmament by the armed group, often in exchange for the installation of some or all of the armed group into the state's political and military structure.

This begs the question of when and why an armed group (or state for that matter) would decide to sign a peace agreement. Given the understanding that armed groups and states are concerned with survival and maintaining autonomy, it is not clear why they would give up such autonomy willingly. The thorough answer to this question is beyond the scope of this study but it appears that autonomy is given up at the prospect of certain annihilation. When the armed group or state faces the prospects of complete destruction it calculates that the only means to protect even the remnants of its organization and political community is to capitulate. This seems to have been the case for Czechoslovakia, which allowed itself to be taken by Nazi Germany, for instance.

Beyond the immediate question of why peace agreements are signed, there is also significant complication over what happens after they are signed. In cases like the SPLA in its civil war with Sudan, the fight came to a standstill. The SPLA and GoS concluded a peace agreement to effectively split sovereignty, with the SPLA having control over its internal relations and jointly determining the external relations of the entire Sudanese state with the northern government. Such splits in sovereignty are inherently complicated and weak as there is doubtlessly intense internal squabbling and negotiations over the direction of actions. The reason it appears to have worked so far in Sudan is that the SPLA may, as part of the agreement, pull out of the government and form a separate state after six years from the time of the agreement.

Such agreements lead to further questions about the nature of juridical and empirical sovereignty. As noted previously, our usual conception of sovereignty, as derived from Bodin, is that it is holistic. As already demonstrated, empirical sovereignty can be split within a state that has juridical sovereignty, as armed groups come to have control over people and territory. But, in the case of Sudan juridical sovereignty appears to be split, with each side having its own internal sovereignty and then splitting external sovereignty. It seems that this split is most similar to federal systems of government that allow for sub-state governments to have independent control over portions of the state. Yet, even in highly federalized governments like the US, the central, 'federal' government can override the sub-state governments if it must – if only because it controls the state's military and can thereby force any changes that it wants. In Sudan, the federal government could not force such internal changes on the southern government because the south still maintains an army strong enough to at least stalemate the northern army (although, to add in some complication, the armies are being integrated to some degree). This in fact adds some balance and stability to the power sharing agreement in that the federal government must compromise to

some degree between northern and southern demands since either side could in theory begin combating the other side.

Clearly there is a relationship between juridical and empirical sovereignty that is complex and some of the theoretical ramifications will be addressed in Chapter 7. For our purposes, it is the empirical sovereignty that matters most in that whatever group has the power and is perceived as the unit, is what creates the reactions by other units and forms the balance of power. Thus, if the unit of Sudan as a whole constitutes a single actor in the eyes of another unit, it will count as the unit. This might be the case for instance when European states deal with Sudan in order to question its actions over Chad. While, for the LRA, the SPLA government of the south may be considered a unit that is separate form the federal government located in Khartoum.

## Conclusion

An essential feature of systemic IR theories is the concept of anarchy. Like units that have a motivation for survival in an anarchic system should perform in predictable ways. Armed groups appear to meet these requirements and Neorealism should therefore be able to make some relevant descriptive, explanatory and possibly predictive comments about the international relations of such groups.

The previous chapter has described some of the concepts that should apply to armed groups from the perspective of a balance of power. All of these concepts are regularly applied to states, from internal power cultivation building to the security dilemma to alliances and wars. Without using the terms themselves, some of these comments have been applied to armed groups as well. For instance, the political economic literature on failed states often describes how armed groups take part in economic transactions to build up their military might.

By putting these concepts together and understanding them within the framework of the balance of power it is possible to say much more about armed groups and their international relations. A whole picture emerges in which armed groups can be understood from a systemic level. Their relations are not just singleton moves that have a cause and effect. Rather, armed groups are affected by other actors in the system and in turn affect other actors on a continual basis. This is the nature of a system. In describing these actions and the patterns that emerge it is not only possible to illustrate simple strategic shifts, as with alliances, but also more complex evolving interactions as with security dilemma type interactions, as well as macro changes to the nature of the entire system as with shifts from multipolar to bipolar systems. This is the value of using Neorealism to describe the international relations of states and is the same value that can be applied to armed groups.

We can also better explain other aspects of armed groups' relations within the context of interstate relations. For instance, interventions make sense in terms of a state-armed group security dilemma. Also, civil wars make sense for armed groups in terms of obtaining juridical sovereignty and for states in terms of balancing the power of armed group threats. More fundamentally, we can begin to

piece together large scale, regional or even global, balances of power that incorporate states and armed groups in case studies.

The following case study chapters will serve two purposes. Firstly they are a test of the applicability of the balance of power concept and Neorealist theory to armed groups. The point here is to ask whether it makes sense to apply the concepts and theory of Neorealism to armed groups. Do these concepts pan out as descriptions of the relations that were observed empirically? Secondly, the chapters serve as traditional case studies that apply the theory to cases and thereby provide an explanation of what happened to these actors and, to some degree, address what is likely to happen.

The first case study will examine the relations of Somali warlords with each other and with states. The second chapter will examine the international relations of the LRA with Sudan, Uganda and the SPLA. The third will examine the placement of Al Qaeda within a global balance of power. These armed groups are all very different in structure and professed motivations. However, as will be illustrated, they nonetheless interact with other actors in essentially the same manner – forming balances of power based on the security actions of other actors in the system.

In making these case studies, the chapters will focus on those aspects of the groups that best illustrate how the balance of power approach can make sense of these groups. For the case of Somalia, the chapter will take a particularly close look at the anarchic system formed there as well as how there are multiple types of groups there that have come to have similar relations. For the case of the LRA, the chapter will pay close attention to the group's motivations, which are not clearly understood, as well as its nomadic existence. For the case of Al Qaeda, the chapter will especially focus on the organization of the group because it is so dispersed and cellular in structure.

# 4 Somali warlords and militias

The intent of this case study is to both illustrate and test the theoretical approach developed in previous chapters. This chapter will begin by giving a brief overview of the collapse of the Somali state. It will then demonstrate that the state is indeed an anarchic system. The chapter will then move on to illustrate a balance of power system that includes armed groups. In particular, the chapter will single out two external actors with which armed groups in Somalia have had relations – the UN intervention forces and Ethiopia. It will be argued that an effective way to model the intervention of UN forces into Somalia, and their subsequent relations with armed groups, is as an anarchic war between Somali armed groups and the UN forces. Similarly, it will be argued that the Ethiopian – SNF alliance against al Ittihad can best be understood in terms of a dynamic balance of power.

The validity of the use of a Neorealist approach will be based on its ability to explain the relations of armed groups in Somalia in relation to hypotheses of how armed groups should act if the theory were to be true. There are several hypotheses that will be tested. These include: conflict between armed groups and other actors should be characterized as anarchic war, not law enforcement by a sovereign state. Armed groups should make or break alliances based on security interests over all other factors. When there are two or more actors present, both of which are upholding their security interests, the security dilemma should ensue, creating a spiral dynamic of conflict-preparedness and, eventually, a balance of power through internal power cultivation, alliance or war.

## History and context

The following section will provide some basic detail on the social context in which the anarchic system in Somalia formed. Afterwards, the chapter will move on to present an overview of Somali history leading up to and through the collapse of the state. This will lead to a description of the nature of the conflict.

## Social context

In many ways the nature of the Somali social structure provides a solid basis for the sort of fracturing and alliance formation expected in a balance of power.[1]

Somalis identify themselves by lineages, or clans, which are segmented based on six clan families that break down into various sub-clan units, all the way to the individual.[2] Clans are led by elders who are responsible for negotiation and dispute mediation.

In Somalia, political entrepreneurs, in general, must mobilize different segments of the clan system to support them. The mobilization can be based on proximity of relation, or they may mobilize less related groups to align against an opponent.[3] Clans might also form alliances with related clans in order to counter the perceived power of a rival clan (which will also have its own alliances).

Inversely, factions may form for two reasons. As segmentation possibilities are endless within the Somali kinship system, there is ample room for factionalization based on the needs of the clan. Factionalization is also possible, however, based on the choice of particular political entrepreneurs who make their own rational choice. For example, this seems to have been the case with Usman Ato, who split with Mohammed Aidid in 1994.[4] With this social context in mind, we can begin to see how an anarchic system might have formed within a historical context.

## Historical background

The beginning of the end might be traced back to then Somali President Siad Barre's decision to fight a war against Ethiopia to reclaim the Somali Ogaden region of Ethiopia. Initially the war seemed to be succeeding, but the Soviet Union switched its backing from Somalia to the new communist Ethiopian government and Somalia was defeated in 1978. This defeat can be seen as lying at the heart of the fracturing in Barre's dictatorial control over Somalia.

After the defeat, fighting between clans and insurgency against the government began in earnest. This was partially the result of the government's actions. A notable tactic of Barre was to create clan militias by arming them and then manipulate them into targeting rival clans.[5] He did this with, amongst others, the Hawiye/Sa'ad against the Majerten/Umar Mahumud, the Dulbahante against the Isaaq/Habar Ja'lao, the Gadabuursi against the Isaaq/Sa'ad Muuse, the Harti of Kismaayo against the Ogaden, and the Majeerteen against the Isaaq.[6] Mark Bradbury sums up the devolution of the Somali government after its defeat by Ethiopia:

> in response to the internal insurgencies that emerged after the defeat in the Ogaden, the Barre regime became increasingly autocratic and corrupt. Rather than providing protection, the state became a means of repression … Clanism increasingly became the main source of patronage and protection. The responses of those excluded from the regime's patronage networks were to move outside the state and its formal economy, further undermining the legitimacy of the state and its institutions.
>
> (Bradbury 2003: 12)

The excluded did not just leave the formal economy; they also went outside of the state's monopolization of the use of legitimate force and attempted to take part in politics with private sources of violence. There was a failed coup attempt by the Majeerteen in 1978. After the failed coup attempt, two main factions formed to combat Barre. The Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) was formed out of the regrouped coup plotters. It was based in Ethiopia, but was also backed by Libyan leader Muammar al-Qaddafi. Later, the Somali National Movement (SNM), which was largely Isaaq clan based, formed because of the long-term exclusion of northerners from the southern dominated Somali state apparatus. The SNM found its economic support from the large Isaaq diaspora and, later, from the Ethiopian army.

The SNM and SSDF were destabilizing forces for Barre. At the same time he continued support of the Ogadeni Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF), which caused persistent trouble for Ethiopia. In 1988, Barre and Ethiopian President Mengistu Haile Mariam signed a peace accord and Ethiopia stopped supporting the SNM and SSDF. When the Ethiopia government withdrew support from the SNM, it made a last ditch effort to defeat Barre.

A third faction, the United Somali Congress (USC) also joined the fight against Barre. This faction was made up of Abgaal clansmen, from Mogadishu, and Habar Gidir, led by the former General Mohammed Farah Aidid. Barre's response was to call on the Darod to kill Hawiye in Mogadishu. Eventually he began using artillery on them, at an extremely high cost to human life. This promoted a general uprising against the government.[7] The SNM, SSDF, and USC pressure on Barre, combined with the general uprising, led to the regime's fall.

The collapse of the Somali state can be traced back to 27 January 1991, when Barre fled Mogadishu. At this point the remnants of the infrastructure of the Somali state, at least that which was not already looted by Barre, was looted by the occupying militias and people of Mogadishu. In particular, much of the government's arms stores were looted. Whatever civil servants and other representatives of government who had not already fled did so then. Revenge killings of Darod clansmen, and to a certain extent all non-Hawiye, also occurred.

After the state's collapse, an Abgaal/Hawiye businessman Ali Mahdi Muhammad, was installed as president. The Isaaqs, who felt that they lost the most in the war did not accept the presidency and eventually formed Somaliland in the northwest. The SSDF went on to control the northeast and eventually formed the autonomous region of Puntland. Aidid, who chased Barre out of Mogadishu, did not accept Mahdi's rule either and after a USC party congress, was elected USC chair.[8] Tensions rose from late 1991, and soon Mogadishu collapsed into interclan fighting.[9] From this point there occurred significant maneuvering of clans and occupations of new positions throughout Somalia. Barre fled to Gedo and formed the SNF. The Hawiye, divided between the Abgaal and Habar Gidir subclans, came to control much of Mogadishu, which was formally a multi-clan area. This process of factionalization continued and as Ken Menkhaus noted, since 1992 there has been a 'devolution of warfare to lower and lower levels of clan lineages' (Menkhaus 2003: 20).

## Anarchic system

At the point of state collapse and fracturing of the factions, the Somali situation became different from many other civil war contexts. Typically in other conflicts, the state (and its juridical sovereignty) is taken over by one of the factions. However, in the Somalia-case, no faction was able to hold and retain the juridical sovereignty of the state nor even control a significant portion of the state. Rather, the situation transformed into a series of skirmishes between different militias. The eminent Somali scholar, I. M. Lewis sums it up well:

> In 1991/92, reactively influenced by the example of the SSDF, the SNM, USC and SPM, the general tendency was for every major Somali clan to form its own militia movement. Thus clans were becoming effectively self-governing entities throughout the Somali region as they carved out spheres of influence in a process which, with the abundance of modern weapons, frequently entailed savage battles with a high toll of civilian casualties. The political geography of the Somali hinterland in 1992, consequently, closely resembled that reported by European explorers in the 19th century, spears replaced by Kalashnikovs and bazookas. These clan areas could only be entered or traversed by outsiders (people of other clans, foreigners), with the consent of the locals and, usually the payment of appropriate fees or 'protection'.
>
> (Lewis 1994: 231)

In fact, it has been noted that since the collapse of the state, fighting has broken out between all clan groups.[10] Within this context, different types of armed groups formed in order to represent their interests in an anarchic environment, i.e. one in which there was no hierarchy of power or central organization capable of structuring the relations of sub-state actors. However, this is not to say that the situation became a featureless Hobbesian anarchy.

The armed groups in Somalia created a structural change – from a hierarchical system to an anarchic one. These armed groups removed the state apparatus which had been able to structure relationships in Somalia. Furthermore, no armed group was able to hold on to the juridical sovereignty of the state – leaving Somalia a truly collapsed state. Now, each group demanded that it be treated as an equal authority. Disagreements could not be solved through recourse to the state, but rather each group could only turn to itself for security. Eventually the groups ceased fighting over the control of the state apparatus altogether. As such, it was an anarchic (self-help) system by definition.

Furthermore, this anarchic system was open to the international anarchic system. The armed groups crossed borders into Kenya and Ethiopia as they willed, only being stopped by a show of force by one of these states. Other states also crossed into the hitherto Somali state borders as they willed. These included the UN intervention forces and the Ethiopian state. Both of these examples will be discussed in the following sections. This open anarchic system has dynamically shifted through time.

***Changes to the anarchic system***

The hierarchic system of the Somali state began to transform in the late 1980s as the state began to fail and forced actors to represent their own interests. The civil war, which lasted until 1991, was a more traditional civil war in that the actors fought over the state's juridical sovereignty. It was only after the state collapsed completely and Barre fled Mogadishu that it became clear to the actors that control of hierarchical state apparatus was unlikely. Even then, there were still battles over the 'rightful' leader of the state, and the ongoing battles between various factions of the Abgaal and Habr Gidir clans might be characterized as such. However, from this point, actors began to treat the system as more anarchic than hierarchic in the sense that actors fought less for a juridical state to control and more for local cities and resources, and even more pertinently, survival against other predatory actors.

Periodically since 1991, peace processes have been attempted in Somalia. Examples of these peace processes have included the Cairo Peace Conference and the First and Second Djibouti Peace Conferences, as well as various UN funded peace processes and conferences before, during, and after the intervention. Sometimes, armed groups have attempted to use their military ability on the ground in Somalia to influence these attempts at rebuilding a state. For example, an actor might attempt to control a specific city in order to convince others that he represented a constituency, and thereby gain a seat at the bargaining table. Such activities are in a sense fighting over the control of state juridical sovereignty, as would be expected in that juridical sovereignty provides another form of power.

These attempts at a peace process, climaxed over the last few years with the creation of the Transitional National Government (TNG). The TNG began to dominate political calculations of many of the actors. For example, by 2002, battles were occurring in Mogadishu between the groups who backed the TNG and those who backed the anti-TNG Somalia Reconciliation and Restoration Council (SRRC).[11] After that, battles erupted over whether Mogadishu should be the location of the TNG when it moved from Nairobi. Again, these were battles over control of juridical sovereignty in that the location of the government would provide one side with an advantage over another.

In the spring and summer of 2006, Somalia experienced another powerful change in the system. The Islamic courts and their militias combined into the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC). This group defeated an alliance of warlords, known as the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counterterrorism, and then threatened the TNG.[12] Afterwards Ethiopia intervened into Somalia and defeated the UIC. This situation is still extremely fluid and poorly understood, as such it will not be addressed in this chapter, though clearly it is an area that will need to be researched and which the balance of power approach may shed some light on.

Neorealism demands that systems either be hierarchic or anarchic and the Somali system should be considered anarchic. There was no dominating govern-

ment in Somalia and there had not been one since 1991. The collapse of the Somali state left multiple units in place and these units interacted as equals, without a higher authority. In particular, these actors have had to provide for their own security, thus making Somalia a self-help system. Together, the interactions of these actors have served to create and continually renew the anarchic system. In short, Somalia is a system that a balance of power, as described by Neorealism, should apply to.

## Somali armed groups

Multiple autonomous units constitute this Somali anarchic system described above. Since the collapse of the Somali state, there has been a lateral growth in the types of armed groups in Somalia since the civil war.[13] With the collapse of the state, the clan or 'faction' militias became the security providers and, often, the political representatives of the clans. However, some of the militia leaders were able to gain independence from the clan, thereby using the militias to represent their personal interests, as such they became warlords. Since the mid-90s, businessmen have started their own armed militias to defend their business interests. These militias have sometimes been outsourced to the Shari'a courts that have formed throughout Somalia. Related to the Shari'a court militias are Islamist militias such as al Ittihad. While these categories can overlap, and one will often evolve into another, the typology is a valuable conceptual framework with which to make comparisons. Most importantly, the assumption is that these different armed groups should act in essentially similar ways in order to balance power. The following section will provide a brief overview of each type of group in order to provide context for the sections to follow.

## Faction militias

Faction militias are the most prominent type of Somali armed group. These militias are formed along clan lines and within the clan structure. They represent the clan's political aspirations and defend its territory. Clan-based armed groups naturally formed in Somalia during the 1980s when armed groups, such as the SNM and SSDF, were forming to combat Barre's government.[14] The clan-based militia organization was the easiest way to form armed groups

> given the lack of resources (both money and weapons), the unit size requirement of guerilla warfare, and the difficulty of giving military training to individualistic camel herders, it was more efficient to opt for a military structure based on kinship segmentation.
>
> (Compagnon 1998: 77)

Faction militias are typically composed, firstly, of a 'warleader' who is the direct military commander of the militia and a representative of the clan. The warleader is assigned by the clan elders to lead the militia. Below the warleader

there is a smaller group of permanent, trained officers and soldiers, who are under his direct control. Further down is a larger group of unpaid irregulars. These men voluntarily enlist and make up the bulk of its forces. Similar to conventional reserve systems, they are called up to fight and then can demobilize back to civilian life.

The faction and clan together represent the political community. The fighters of the faction militia retain their loyalty to the clan. This provides the clan with leverage that can be used to control the warleader's actions. The warleader's ability to please the clan is based on his fulfillment of his duties to provide protection and uphold its interests as well as to provide it with spoils. Yet, the bond goes both ways, for during periods of conflict, the clan will turn to them for help, as 'the clan feel[s] that they are their savior … because they command the firepower'.[15] In this way we can see the bond between the warleader, militia, and clan.[16] This group forms the political community which is at the heart of the armed group and the feedback-loop of intersecting loyalties between clan, warleader and fighters provides the cohesive basis of command for creating a unitary actor.

Given their role as the representative of a civilian political community, faction militias are close to what we think of as true militias in that they are the temporary armed extension of a larger civilian political community. As noted in Chapters 1 and 2, militias represent a grey area when detailing the relations of armed groups. In the case of Somalia, the faction militia-clan structure can be treated as a single entity in that there is nothing else to which the clan could be connected with, i.e. a state. Moreover the anarchic nature of the situation has given the warleader ultimate control in most cases, similar to what we see in some wartime dictatorships. Without the state, the faction militia and clan become a self-sufficient group. The political/military choices of the clan/militia are made in relation to surviving against the onslaught of other militarized groups.

## Warlords

In most cases, militias exist on a continuum with a mixture of clan and personal loyalty. However, in extreme cases, a warleader may come to completely monopolize the loyalty of fighters and use the militia for non-clan based ambitions. Such men are warlords.[17] In other instances, a warlord may simply create his own personal militia. Without the benefit of the clan, such warlord organizations are typically much smaller and may resemble gangs.

Although the warlord breaks off from the greater clan community, another enclosed political community forms. This political community is made up of those who are members of the warlord organization and look to the warlord as the sole source of authority. Though most individuals in Somalia come from one clan or another, and therefore might be expected to be tied to a clan's political community. Some individuals have broken ranks with the clan and lose all or most of their loyalty to it. These men are the 'mooryaan'.

The mooryaan compromise individuals who left home (or their home clan) to come and fight for their own (non-clan) purposes. Initially they were concerned with finding a place within Barre's patronage networks from which to prosper.[18] This was usually accomplished by affiliating themselves with a strongman who would arm them and use them as enforcers. This practice continued on after the collapse of the Somali state, as their loyalty could be sold into the patronage networks of warlords and other militia leaders.[19]

Their value to warlords was obvious. These men could be paid to fight and therefore the controlling influence of the clan could be avoided. Also, since these men normally come from non-local clans, they are able to circumvent many of the rules of interclan rivalry.[20] As they are 'foreign', i.e. not from the local clans, they were free from traditional commitment issues associated with clan life, such as xeer or diya payments for transgressions.[21] Thus, looting and other generally unacceptable activities are permissible.[22]

The warlord organization is completely praetorian in nature since it does not have any civilian community. This is unlike the faction militia, which is an offshoot of a larger, civilian political community. Thus, while the structure of a warlord militia may be similar to that of a faction militia, its directive will differ. It will be driven by the interests of the warlord and warlord organization rather than clan benefit.[23] The warlord organization is very much a perfect form of armed group in that it has almost completely separated itself from other groups into a singular unit. Yet, the warlord organization must still abide by the same constraints of the anarchic system that the faction militia must – in particular, if it is to do anything, it first must survive.

## Other armed groups

Along with warlords and factions, other types of armed groups have formed in Somalia over time. Initially, businessmen funded factions and warlords, but, as the conflict progressed, this was found to be a losing investment. For example, the two main factions controlling Mogadishu in the 1990s, like other factions, received backing from businessmen. However, these administrations never put in place the security and predictability that businessmen needed and they began to lose money on their 'investment'. More generally, security was not always adequate, especially for an economy based on services and cross-regional and cross-border trade.[24] Clearly, more order and security was needed to promote commerce.

For these reasons, many businessmen dropped their support for other types of armed groups, including faction militias and warlords, in the late 1990s.[25] Thereafter, businessmen directly employed freelance militiamen, along the same militia structure outlined above, but with the businessman himself as the warleader. The businessman might also outsource this role to another experienced person. The militia members might be drawn in whole or part from the businessman's clan. In some cases the businessmen formed coalitions in order to accomplish militia formation and management.[26] These militias are in most ways like

security services for businesses (i.e. PMCs), in that they acted as a means of providing security to a company in a violent environment.

Often the businessmen outsourced their militia to the Shari'a courts that emerged in Somalia.[27] The courts were established in Mogadishu and elsewhere to provide some order through a Shari'a law system. They were financed in exchange for maintaining social stability and providing (public) protection services. These services range from relations with factions like the Rahanwein Resistance Army (RRA) to clearing the road from Mogadishu to Merka.[28] These court militias came to grow in power and by 2006 presented a powerful force in Somalia.

Related to the court militias are Islamist militias, in particular, the fundamentalist organization al Ittihad al Islaami which has maintained militias at various points since 1991.[29] Al Ittihad has controlled areas including Merka and Kismaayo and the town of Luuq in the Gedo region.[30] While they are organized like other types of militias, al Ittihad represents a religious group and in general bases its support on religion rather than clan. Though the group initially functioned like faction militias, i.e. looking to control territory, more recently they have switched their strategy to focus on controlling courts.[31]

## Autonomous actors in stateless Somalia

Although faction militias, warlords, business militias and court militias all differ in the purported purpose for existence, they still tend to act in similar ways and make expected choices in terms of balancing power. In particular, they still must act to survive. Their motivation to survive is a necessary outcome of their autonomous existence in a self-help system. In the stateless society of post-collapse Somalia, the state no longer serves its purpose as a 'buffer' between the international system and domestic actors. Nor is there a state to regulate sub-state actors or provide even basic security for individuals. In this vacuum, the various armed groups discussed above have come to provide security for themselves. Faction militias must protect themselves (their clan-based political community) just as warlords or court militias must. Beyond this, they may attempt to bring about some other activities, such as al Ittihad's attempts to spread their Islamic views.

Also, without the juridically sovereign state, armed groups in Somalia are by default empirically sovereign. The group's have authority over those within their political community and defend this autonomy from other actors who might infringe on it. The groups do at times fight over the rights of juridical sovereignty through peace conferences and dealings with the TNG. However, it is empirical sovereignty that ultimately matters most as illustrated by the TNG's inability to bring about change without overwhelming force.

The empirical sovereignty of armed groups has been recognized by other international actors who by default must interact with autonomous actors directly rather than through the state. For example, NGOs and the UN have formed Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with actors in Somalia.

Though these MOUs are not official, for all other intents and purposes they serve the same purpose as official contracts that NGOs and the UN regularly enter into with states. At the same time armed groups have been recognized as actors in the peace process outside of Somalia, which has involved international states. Although, as noted in Chapter 3, this is not necessarily an admission of sovereignty, it is clearly an admission of a certain level of autonomy. More to the point, actors including the UN, US and Ethiopia have had to contend with armed groups in Somalia just as they would with states, i.e. through forming a balance of power, because these actors can demand such relations due to their military power. This was clearly demonstrated during the UN intervention into Somalia.

## Somali armed groups and the UN intervention

The following section will examine the relations between armed groups and the UN intervention forces. The hypothesis in the case of the UN intervention is that the armed groups and intervention forces should relate in terms of anarchic war and that alliances, and all decision making for that matter, should be based on the pursuit of security and continuance of autonomy. In total, a balance of power system should have formed between armed groups and the UN, which is itself an alliance of state actors.[32]

To begin with, the intervention may be seen as an example of a mixed security dilemma. As noted in Chapter 4, mixed security dilemmas occur when states feel threatened by armed groups. Clearly Somalia as a state was not a threat to neighboring or further-off states such as the United States, since it was a collapsed state. However, the armed groups in Somalia did represent a threat to security. They also exhibited the security dilemma intensifiers, such as primarily using small arms and were notoriously predatory in behavior. Accordingly, intentional states aligned in order to rid themselves of the threat through an intervention into the Somali state and direct targeting of armed groups.

## Background to the UN intervention

The UN Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) intervention was a major internationalization of the Somalia conflict that had already been going on for years.[33] UNOSOM I began in March 1992. It involved a diplomatic mission to broker peace, which was led by Ambassador Mohammed Sahnoun. This was followed by the importation of peacekeepers to protect the Mogadishu airport. In December 1992, a US led peacekeeping force, known as the UN International Task Force (UNITAF), entered and stayed in the country until May 1993. The peacekeeping force then grew to over 30,000, it became known as UNOSOM II, and this force stayed in Somalia until March 1995.[34]

The UN did not have the permission of the Somali state to intervene, as there was no state with juridical and empirical sovereignty to negotiate with. This was taken into account by the UN Security Council in its decision to intervene, as

permission was and continues to be a requirement for intervening in states. However, the final decision to intervene was possible because of the logic that

> the normative conflict between human rights on the one hand and sovereignty and non-intervention on the other was weakened by the absence of a government in Somalia. In the case of a failed state, the respect of sovereignty loses a significant part of its relevance.
>
> (Ryter 2003: 41)

Therefore the UN took the initiative to intervene in what it felt were 'unique' circumstances.[35] This provides more evidence that the UN, and therefore in a sense the international community as a whole, felt that Somalia was no longer a closed, hierarchic system.

The UN came to treat Somali armed groups as de facto sovereign actors. This can be traced back to at least the appointment of Robert Oakley, the former US ambassador to Somalia, as the head of Operation Restore Hope (the US military name of the UNITAF operation) by President George Bush Snr. The (controversial) plan that Oakley carried out was to accommodate the armed groups in exchange for providing a semblance of order. In particular, they awarded policing and juridical powers to Aidid and Ali Mahdi in the areas they controlled.[36] The logic behind this being that the warlords and faction militias had de facto control and to attempt to defeat them would be far too costly, both for the UN and Somalis.[37]

This is not to say that the armed groups were necessarily legitimized, but that they were a fact and therefore had to be treated as recognized actors. For instance, a high-level UN source involved with the relations between the UN and armed groups notes 'de facto power gets acknowledged in any situation … it was the same here [in Somalia] … though the UN acknowledges an actor, does it grant the actor legitimacy or just remain de facto?'[38]

The general consensus is that the UN did not in fact grant true, state-like legitimacy. This view has been backed by others in the UN as well as NGOs involved on the ground in Somalia.[39] Nonetheless, it created a logic that 'only people with guns could bring the country together…' (Clarke and Gosende 2003: 148). Therefore, only the militia leaders were 'permitted both to develop the agendas and to decide who else would attend the [peace building] conferences' (ibid.: 149). This, then, is an example of how empirical sovereignty can lead to, or can be used to gain, juridical sovereignty.

## Anarchy and hierarchy

The UN effectively declared war on the armed groups, in the sense that it attempted to implement political goals through force. The mandate of UNOSOM (specifically, as set out for UNOSOM II, which was based on UNITAF) was to 'use all necessary means' to 'take appropriate action, including enforcement measures, to establish throughout Somalia a secure environment for

humanitarian assistance'.[40] Its main responsibilities included: monitoring that all factions continued to respect the cessation of hostilities and other agreements to which they had consented; preventing any resumption of violence and, if necessary, taking appropriate action; maintaining control of the heavy weapons of the organized factions which would have been brought under international control; seizing the small arms of all unauthorized armed elements; securing all ports, airports and lines of communications required for the delivery of humanitarian assistance; protecting the personnel, installations and equipment of the UN and its agencies, ICRC [International Committee of the Red Cross] as well as NGOs; continuing mine-clearing, and; assisting in repatriation of refugees and displaced persons in Somalia.[41] In 1994, the resolution was changed to exclude coercive methods for carrying out its mission – after the war between the sides had already started.[42]

The permissible coercion which was detailed in the peace keeping force's mandate at first seemed to fundamentally change the nature of the Somali system – specifically by instituting a 'leviathan' that could structure the relationships of the actors. In other words, the force's tried to institute a hierarchic system. Towards this goal,

> [t]he US military [which led UNITAF and provide the bulk of the forces] decided to use similar tactics to those employed so successfully against Iraq in Operation Desert Storm – a large and robust force to overwhelm potential opposition and lessen the opportunities for losses in battle.
>
> (Clarke and Gosende 2003: 142)

The idea was that, as in traditional state formation, an overwhelming force could provide the coercion necessary to create and sustain an authority that could structure sub-state relations within Somalia. This literally meant taking away the means of force from armed groups through disarmament as well as physically patrolling and safeguarding certain areas such as the ports and humanitarian aid locations.

This was not in line with traditional or 'first generation' peacekeeping operations in which the peacekeeping forces attempt to interpose themselves between combatants and then act as an objective observer (and at times enforcer) of compliance by the actors towards negotiations, in the same way that a state might oversee civil suits. Rather, it seemed that UNOSOM might act as another sovereign which would provide a security blanket around the nation under which the various sovereign actors would be incorporated into a hierarchic system, with the UN by default on top. This would have made Somalia a hierarchical system, similar to a state, and, potentially, could have led to an end to warlordism as their forces would become so overpowered as to make them lose autonomy. The switch from first generation to UNOSOM-type interventions may have been a sign of the relative growth in power of armed groups to threaten external states.

However, it soon became clear that the Somali armed groups simply treated UNOSOM as another actor in the anarchic system. Some actors aligned with

this new, international actor, specifically the Group of 12, which included the backers of al Mahdi.[43] Other actors aligned against the UN. Specifically there was an alliance of armed groups collected under the heading of the Somali National Alliance (SNA), which included the USC and was led by Aidid.[44] These actors felt threatened by the forces, when, for instance, the UNOSOM forces attempted to disarm them. From the perspective of the Somali armed groups, the UN was a unit like any other. In other words, it appears that some actors opted to balance power, while others opted to bandwagon.

The blatant turn to anarchic war occurred when the SNA struck back against the UN forces on 5 June 1993. On this day the UNOSOM forces were looking for weapons stored in the Radio Mogadishu building – a radio station controlled by Aidid. In the resulting attacks 25 Pakistani soldiers were killed.[45]

On 12 June, the UNOSOM forces counter-attacked with air and ground operations in Mogadishu. Several other battles ensued, the most famous of these battles was the so-called 'Black Hawk Down' episode of October 1993.[46] This battle involved SNA fighters and the United States' Task Force Ranger (TFR).

Unlike the UN peacekeepers, the TFR force was assigned the task of hunting down and arresting Aidid. The strategy for doing this was to use 'snatch' missions, which involved deploying troops from helicopters to surround a building and capture targets inside.[47] These missions were thus meant to resemble policing missions, in which threats to social order were to be neutralized.

During the mission on 3 October 1993, the TFR forces were given intelligence that several Aidid lieutenants were inside a building and the task force was to arrest them. The particular location of the mission, the Olympic Hotel near the Bakara Market, was an area controlled by Aidid and his forces. When the task force troops landed they met heavy resistance and took heavy loses (relative to loses in previous missions). In particular, the US' major technological advantage, that of its helicopters, was to some extent neutralized by the warlord's counter-tactic of launching large numbers of rocket propelled grenades (RPGs) at them simultaneously.[48] (This is a good example of the development of a group's war making ability to better balance the power of aggressors.) Using such tactics, as well as a tremendous amount of fighters, Aidid's men were able to apply significant pressure on the TFR forces and eventually rout them. The mission was considered to be a defeat by many and has been seen as (arguably) the root of the US decision to leave Somalia.

Regardless of the debate about the repercussions of the TFR mission(s), it is clear that the US and UN were attempting to create a hierarchical system in Somalia. The language surrounding the mission, such as 'arrest', points towards this. The missions themselves were designed to make the most of the US weapons and tactical advantages in order to arrest specific individuals, with as little loss of US life as possible.

This is opposed to the armed group side of the equation, for whom the missions were severe existential threats. For Aidid and his lieutenants, the snatch operations were direct threats to their military organization. Their (arguable) defeat of the TFR soldiers in October forced the US to also consider the situ-

ation in existential terms, i.e. in terms more like a traditional interstate war than a policing operation.

## Analysis – anarchic war

To summarize: the UNOSOM forces were treated by armed group actors in Somalia as any other actor would be in the balance of power – something to be aligned with or against. Some actors aligned with it, including the Group of 12. Some actors aligned against the UN, specifically the SNA. The UNOSOM forces came to represent a direct security threat as they attempted to actively disarm SNA forces. From the perspective of UNOSOM and the Group of 12, the SNA represented a threat. Similarly, from the perception of UNOSOM, the Group of 12 were allies and the SNA was a threat.

At this point, the SNA and UNOSOM forces had incompatible security goals. The SNA was concerned with maintaining its autonomy, i.e. surviving, and this involved having weapons, technicals and militiamen. The UNOSOM forces felt that their security was best met by disarming the SNA. The only resort for the SNA was to use physical, violent conflict to overcome this threat to its security, as further alliances or internal power cultivation were not working. When the opportunity arose to combat these forces in order to coerce the actors into exiting the territory that the SNA felt was theirs, they took the opportunity and attacked. The ensuing battles were not of the nature of a sovereign power attempting to coerce a sub-power, but rather of two sovereign powers attempting to battle each other in order to maintain the power capability distribution or to change it in its favor.

This was not a war over right and wrong in a state or even control of a state. There was no state to control and the UNOSOM forces certainly did not represent one. Rather, this was in effect anarchic war, where the actors were concerned with survival and the final battle would only determine the relative capability distribution in the system. This is finally illustrated by the fact that after the intervention, the SNA went back to being just another armed group amongst other armed groups – it did not become the leviathan over the state. In other words, juridical sovereignty never changed hands, rather the groups used war to 'determine the allocation of gains and losses among contenders and settle for a time the question of who is the stronger' (Waltz 1979: 112).

Nor were these battles internal in nature. For, the UN forces were clearly international, and the fact that the UN intervened without permission from a sovereign demonstrates that the system was openly and internationally anarchic. Thus, the dynamic between the SNA and UNOSOM forces was one of international anarchic war.

The system was and remained best described as a regional multipolar system within the global anarchic system. Multiple groups interacted as equals, aligning or fighting as necessary to balance power – with none serving as a power to structure the relations of sub-actors. The different armed groups actors interacted with the UNOSOM forces as equals. No actor was able to create hegemony in

the sub-system. For the UNOSOM forces to have done so would have meant fighting and winning a system changing war, but they were unable to do so. Since the UN peacekeeping forces evacuation from Somalia, the system has remained anarchic. Other international actors, however, have continued to interact with armed groups in Somalia.

## Ethiopia, the SNF and al Ittihad

Ethiopia is a major international actor in Somalia due to its shared borders and therefore its relations with armed groups and will serve as a good case to apply the balance of power approach. The following section will focus on relations between Ethiopia and the SNF in regard to the two actors' relations with al Ittihad and the aftermath of the joint Ethiopia/SNF attack on al Ittihad.

The hypothesis of a Neorealist approach is that the relations of the SNF, like those of Ethiopia, should be based on a logic of survival.[49] In particular, the SNF should make and break alliances, with Ethiopia or other actors, based only on security interests. They should also go to war with actors that threaten them if that is perceived to be the only way to eliminate the security threat. In other words, a balance of power should form in which actors change alliances in order to adapt to the power balance in the system and changes in other alliances.

## Regional rivalry

In order to understand the nature of armed group international relations with Ethiopia, it is necessary to appreciate the regional context, specifically the dynamic between Ethiopia and Arab countries. To summarize the issue, Ethiopia and Egypt can be seen as rivals for regional hegemony. An important strategic issue in particular for them is the Nile River which both countries depend on and which finds part of its source in and runs through Ethiopia before reaching Egypt. Libya has also aligned with Egypt in a bid to counter Ethiopia's potential hegemony of the region. Furthermore, Ethiopia is a Christian, secular state with a large Muslim population, which is surrounded by Muslim countries. Combined, these factors have led Ethiopia to be concerned with Muslim radicals and terrorists as a security threat. In particular, it has been feared the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) – an organization that clearly threatened Ethiopia's security as it desired to secede from the state[50] – could launch or support attacks in Ethiopia.

This regional context has combined with a security concern over the presence of armed groups across the border in Somalia. This has led to a constantly shifting set of alliances and counter-alliances with Somali actors. Ethiopia has carried out a strategy of setting up alliances with armed groups in control of land along its border, these have included over the past ten years, the Puntland de facto state, the USC/PM militia in Beled Weyn, the RRA and the Marehan SNF. Egypt and Libya have aligned with factions in Mogadishu, for example, including for example the Aidid-Mahadi alliance. In order to balance this, the Ethiopians have aligned with rival groups such as the RRA in its battles with the SNA.

Similarly, in Kismaayo, the SNA-SNF was backed by Egypt and Libya, while Ethiopia backed General Morgan.[51]

## A mutual alliance over al Ittihad

In this context of regional rivalry, buffer strategies, and shifting alliances, al Ittihad represented a threat to Ethiopia.[52] There is no direct evidence that al Ittihad supported fundamentalists that threatened Ethiopia. In fact, it seems that al Ittihad may have been against such threats to Ethiopia out of fear of reprisals.[53] Yet, for Ethiopia the threat was perceived to be real, as al Ittihad held many of the same views as the radicals which threatened Ethiopia and likely received funding from similar sources. Even if the threat was not immediate it still represented a security threat because if al Ittihad were to continue to gain power in the region it might have directly supported radical opponents to Ethiopia in the future. In other words, this was a security dilemma. As we would presume from a security dilemma logic, Ethiopia sought to rid itself of the perceived security threat. Ethiopia therefore had ample reason to align with a Somali actor against the threat.

During the same time period, al Ittihad had also become a threat for the SNF. It directly controlled Luuq and had security arrangements with other districts, such as Doolow and El Waq. In the district of Bula Hawa, the SNF and al Ittihad shared control. After UNOSOM's withdrawal, the SNF began to lose power relative to al Ittihad. The al Ittihad threat to the SNF was existential. In particular, while the SNF did not seem to care much about local politics and stability, and in fact positively undermined them, because this control was necessary for its political and economic support to survive as an armed organization. Moreover, control was a necessary bargaining chip for credibility in peace processes and therefore for the pursuit of power that arises from juridical sovereignty. This reportedly was a humiliation for the then Chairman of the SNF, Omar Haji.[54] Moreover, the comparison of al Ittihad's 'enlightened' rule, which was stable, not very corrupt, and generally much better for local residents and the international NGOs than the SNF's, further undermined the organization as it tended to progressively strengthen al Ittihad's foothold and weaken the SNF's. Moreover, al Ittihad was reportedly receiving funding from the SNF's longtime enemy, the SNA.[55] The threat therefore was a threat to the survival strategy of the SNF which relied on a parasitic existence off of the local population and NGOs, was trying to obtain juridical sovereignty and was facing an actor that was aligned with an enemy. With two armed units in close proximity, controlling and contesting resources, a security dilemma was natural.

The SNF and Ethiopia therefore made perfect allies for each other.[56] Al Ittihad was a mutual enemy of both actors. The two actors were also joined in their mutual animosity towards the SNA. The SNF had been battling the SNA faction since the civil war, and Ethiopia felt threatened by the SNA's funding from its enemies, Egypt and Libya.

Having determined that the threat would not fade, Ethiopia and the SNF

attacked al Ittihad in 1996 and then again in June 1997.[57] The second attack was enough to drive al Ittihad out of Luuq and Doolow. These attacks forced al Ittihad into the countryside, the Bay region, and into Mogadishu. Reportedly in Mogadishu, al Ittihad received support from the SNA. After the attack, al Ittihad fundamentally changed its tactics and ceased attempting to control towns as a 'normal' faction militia, but rather carried out a long-term strategy of preparing Somalia for eventual Islamic rule, mostly through influencing the Shari'a courts. Al Ittihad was therefore effectively defeated by the two allies, in that it no longer represented a direct security threat.

### *Analysis*

The preceding is an example of the logic of balance of power in action. Ethiopia felt threatened by Arab states and other potential threats, such as the OLF. The most specific threat to its security came from al Ittihad, which was an Islamic organization, and therefore a potential ally to Arab actors in the perception of Ethiopia. Al Ittihad, for its part, relied on external (Arab) support for maintaining its internal power and had a militia to protect itself. The SNF also saw al Ittihad as a threat since al Ittihad's actions in maintaining its security, such as by having a militia and in maintaining a more attractive rule than the SNF.

This threat led to an alliance between the SNF and Ethiopia in order to build-up their mutual power capability and thereby maintain a superior power capability. The alliance was made based only on the two actors' security interests. The point is all the more remarkable since there were traditional grievances between Somali's and Ethiopia that, from an identity point of view, should have proved problematic. But, these grievances were quickly overcome by strategic necessity and the pursuit of security.

Sometimes the alliance is seen as Ethiopia funding and controlling the SNF as a proxy, however, this is not the case. The alliance made strategic sense for the SNF which needed an ally to effectively rid itself of the al Ittihad threat. In fact, it seems likely that the SNF exaggerated the threat posed by al Ittihad in order to gain Ethiopia's backing. This is a common practice for armed groups in Somalia; even today various factions in Somalia will promote a rival as 'fundamentalists' or 'supporters of terrorism' in order to gain international allies, such as the United States, who they perceive as being motivated by counterterrorist goals. Also, as will be illustrated below, the SNF was able to and did break off its alliance when it felt that it was no longer in its interests.

This balancing move left the aligned powers with a preponderance of power. They used this power to defeat their mutual enemy. This created a more ideal power distribution for both actors, as their mutual threat was removed, but it also opened the alliance up for change. Since the alliance was based on a logic of mutual security, without the benefit of this justification, the alliance could not last.

## Changes in the alliance

The alliance between Ethiopia and the SNF survived the war. However, it began to change as the security calculation by each side changed. The following section will explore the changes in the alliance between Ethiopia and the SNF. The hypothesis is the same – alliances should be based solely on the security calculation of balancing power.

Immediately after the combined attack on al Ittihad, the alliance between Ethiopia and the SNF stabilized. After the attacks, the SNF and Ethiopian government, 'appeared to have a firm, mutually beneficial alliance based on a set of common political interests – combating al Ittihad, and in opposing Aidid's SNA' (UNDOS 1998: 140). Ethiopia's support allowed the SNF to effectively administer the Gedo region.[58] It governed using 'emergency law', provided regional defense against outside attackers and controlled tax collection.

Subsequently, however, the relationship became more complex. The SNF had been part of the Group of 12, which was an anti-SNA alliance led by Ali Mahdi that came to be known as the National Salvation Council (NSC) and was also backed by Ethiopia. Also, Ethiopia had been backing the 'Sodere' national reconciliation process involving this group. In the winter of 1997 Egypt came to sponsor a rival conference, to be known as the 'Cairo Conference'. This would become 'a watershed in post-intervention Somali politics, not for achieving its intended goal of national reconciliation, but for the process of political realignment it set in motion within Somalia…' (ibid.: 140).

The SNF's decisions after the Cairo Conference are interesting to note because they demonstrate both that it was not a simple proxy for Ethiopia and that its decisions were driven by motives of survival and power. Rather than staying with the NSC and Ethiopia, which would seem rational at first glance, the SNF, under Haji, switched alliances to a Mogadishu coalition of factions. This coalition was backed by Egypt and included the SNA – the previous enemies of both the SNF and Ethiopia.

The reasoning was that the NSC-Ethiopia alliance no longer provided the SNF with the maximized security and power that it needed. In the NSC, the SNF did not have the level of power that it desired, since the NSC co-chairs were General Aden Gabio, of the Darood/Aulihan/Abssame clan and Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf, of the Mijerteen clan.

Another factor came from changes in Kismaayo. The city was controlled by a Harti-Marehan (of which, the SNF was mostly made up of Marehan clansmen) coalition under Morgan. There were tensions in this alliance and in late 1997 the two sides clashed and Marehan were driven out of Kismaayo. Control of Kismaayo was extremely important because of the city's economic resources, as it was in a fertile region of Somalia, was a trading center and was a magnet for international aid due to the large IDP population. Morgan was receiving funds from Colonel Yusuf and the Mijerteen clan. At the same time, the SNA had forces in the Jubba valley and an alliance with them would provide the SNF with its only means of retaking the key city.

In order to maximize its security, the SNF changed its alliance. The factors at stake were based on the logic of survival. The new alliance was in line with the logic of security and maintaining a relative balance of power, for if an actor has the choice it will join an alliance which makes it 'more appreciated' (Waltz 1979: 127) in the sense that it retains a better position relative to actors within the coalition. The new alliance also gave the SNF the weapons it needed, though now they would come from Egypt, and the allies it needed to retake Kismaayo, which it did in June 1999.

After this break, alliances with states would play out at a sub-SNF level. Ethiopia was irritated with the switch in alliances as it had its troops on the border of areas controlled by the SNF. Moreover, it was concerned that the OLF was receiving arms and training from the SNA in the Lower Shabelle region.[59] Of course, the SNA and Haji faction of the SNF were now aligned with Egypt, thereby combining many threats into one. As such, Ethiopia aligned with the Ali Nur wing, against their new mutual enemy. In April 1999, Ethiopia and the Ali Nur faction jointly attacked the SNA backed Omar Haji wing of the SNF in order to cut off the OLF – this being expected from a security calculation perspective.

### *Analysis*

The first point to note about the preceding example is that the breakup of the Ethiopia-SNF alliance clearly demonstrated that the SNF was still independent. It was able to decide 'for itself how it will cope with its internal and external problems, including whether or not to seek assistance form others and in doing so to limit its freedom by making commitments to them' (Waltz 1979: 96). Based on its perceived relative interest, it changed its alliances as it felt necessary.

The formation and breaking of international alliances in Somalia was based on interest in security and nothing more. The SNF and Ethiopia both aligned out of mutual desire to counter a security threat. When the alliance was no longer beneficial for the SNF, it broke away and formed an alliance with its erstwhile enemy, the SNA, and another state, Egypt, which offered a more beneficial alliance in security terms.

Again, to reinforce the point, these alliances formed even though there were several cultural, historical, social and even economic reasons for them not to. For instance, 'whether these options were good or bad for the Marehan community in Gedo region was apparently not an issue which weighed heavily in the SNFs deliberations' (UNDOS 1998: 140). This fact would become an issue for the SNF, as the group split into two factions, one controlled by Omar Haji and another by Ali Nur. This serves to illustrate that the SNFs purposes were concerned with security even at the cost of clan relations. This further demonstrates the point that it was making decisions in terms of survival, not some grievances it had with the SNA (though there were many) or any attachments with Ethiopia. Thus, a balance of power based alliance between independent, security-motivated actors formed and broke as predicted.

Such motivations are not found just with the SNF, they are common to armed groups in Somalia. For instance, the SNA, which also considered the SNF an enemy, was making similar sorts of decisions about relative power balances. It also had hoped to take Kismaayo for some time, as it had stationed troops in the Jubba valley since 1993, just waiting for an opportunity to attack. The alliance with the SNF allowed it to do so. For these actors, the logic of the balance of power was the same as the system effectively constrained them into acting in certain ways.

## Conclusion

The balance of power has proven to be valuable in modeling the warfare and alliances between armed groups and other international actors in Somalia. The Somali system is clearly an anarchic one. The armed groups as well as international actors, such as the UNOSOM forces and Ethiopian state, treat it as such. During the UN intervention, the UNOSOM forces were not relating with the armed groups as a sovereign policing the state, but rather as sovereign equals fighting over the distribution of power in a system. Similarly, we should not see the Ethiopian attacks on al Ittihad as a proxy war. Rather, the Ethiopians aligned with the SNF to pursue mutual goals and when it was no longer in the SNF's favor, it ended the alliance. In both cases a balance of power system was created and maintained by units acting independently to obtain security.

The balance of power approach also explains why these events occurred as they did. During the UNOSOM intervention, anarchic war erupted between actors, not over control of the state, but over existential survival. The security dilemma arose between Ethiopia, the SNF, and al Ittihad because these actors implicitly threatened each other. This security dilemma led to outright conflict, i.e. war, in order to redress the security threat. Alliances were made and broken based on actors' interest in survival, not grievance or greed or other factors. Instead of looking at the subjective psychological beliefs of individual leaders, we must only look at the constraints of the system in order to understand why armed groups acted as they did in these situations.

This case study has demonstrated the applicability and usefulness of the balance of power approach for analyzing the international relations of armed groups and illustrated how the approach provides all of the tools necessary to describe the various relations and changes of relations between units in Somalia. Added to this, the Neorealist account of armed group international relations also provides some theoretical predictive power that may be helpful in negotiating with and otherwise responding to armed groups in Somalia. For example, alliances between armed groups and other sovereign actors should be seen through the lens of the pursuit of survival. Although economic and grievance factors play a role, they are overcome by the needs of survival. This is demonstrated in the ease by which armed groups decide to break 'traditional' alliances and realign with 'traditional' enemies. Therefore, the best way to predict the future alignment of an armed groups appears to be to calculate the

security payoff for the organization. This allows us to understand a situation like Haji's decision to break with the NSC and Ethiopia, which seemed so surprising to analysts at the time.

Likewise, this perspective explains how the various warlords in Mogadishu, who had been fighting each other for years, could align so quickly in order to attempt to try to hold off the power of the Islamic courts in 2006. This event too could have been predicted if an approach to modeling their interactions was based on a drive for relative security, rather than presently perceived grievances, economic gain or even a drive for absolute power. Their optimal calculation in such a situation was to align against the stronger actors who threatened them. In the future, the balance of power approach may again be helpful in predicting the actions of armed groups in the same way.

The application of the balance of power approach to Somalia is straightforward. The actors are clearly armed, autonomous from the state and exist in the anarchic system of a collapsed state. In turn, their actions comfortably fit into the balance of power approach. The next case study will cover a more difficult scenario which incorporates multiple states, a fractured rather than collapsed state and an actor which is not clearly survival motivated. In this way, the approach outlined in this book can better be tested and its usefulness approved.

# 5 The Lord's Resistance Army

The LRA serves as a suitably complex case study to test whether the concept of the balance of power will provide insights in describing and explaining the international relations of different types of armed groups. Whereas, the case of Somali armed groups was relatively straightforward since the state is obviously collapsed and the motivation of the actors to survive seems pretty clear-cut, the LRA on the other hand demands more of a detailed analysis because of its unclear motivations, fractured state status and confusing international relations. The group is notoriously difficult to classify, much less analyze.[1] It has been variously referred to as an insurgency, millenarian cult, or terrorist group. The LRA is often thought to be a purely Ugandan insurgency, but in fact it is mostly based in Sudan and now the DRC the CAR. It attacks both Sudanese and Ugandan targets as well as the areas under the control of the SPLA.

This chapter will begin with a brief history of the LRA, which focuses in particular on how and why the LRA formed as it did in order to provide a context for understanding its motivations. After illustrating this history, the chapter will examine the possible motivations of the organization, including grievances and political motivations, economic motivations and the role of Sudan. The argument will be made that the LRA is best seen as being motivated by the pursuit of survival. Also, since the LRA exists within a fractured rather than collapsed states, the chapter will also make the case that it is an autonomous organization. The LRA's international relations will then be examined in relation to Uganda, Sudan, and the SPLA. The specific relations with each country will be detailed based upon the concepts developed in Chapter 3 and then a holistic balance of power incorporating all the actors will be detailed.

## History and context

The roots of the conflict in northern Uganda go back, at a minimum, to the colonial period. However, the origin of the LRA as an organization occurred after Yoweri Museveni and his National Resistance Movement (NRM) took control of Uganda in 1986. At this time, multiple rebel movements arose to combat the take over.

The Uganda People's Democratic Army (UPDA) grew out of the defunct Ugandan National Liberation Army (UNLA) and various other anti-NRM forces

in an attempt to capture power from Museveni. The UPDA had credibility within the Acholi community because of its anti-Museveni stance. This allowed it to recruit soldiers with relative ease and therefore use both conventional and guerrilla tactics against the NRM and its military wing, the National Resistance Army (NRA). The UPDA also knew and used terror tactics, a point of significance to note in regards to the future of the LRA.[2]

Another group, the HSM, founded by Alice Auma (Lakwena) in 1987, also attempted to battle the NRA. Alice, who claimed to be possessed by a World War I era Italian named Lakwena, had significant Acholi support and volunteers. Also, as the UPDA lost some ground against the NRA, Alice recruited some UPDA units. The HSM used initiation rituals and so called 'Holy Spirit Tactics' based on Christianity and local beliefs to create a unique religious-military organization.[3] The LRA would go on to adopt similar tactics.

Alice's father, Severino Likoya Kiberu, attempted to reform the HSM after its defeat. While Alice had been able to rely on charisma and a willing population, Severino was forced to turn to violent means of finding support. To illustrate the point, it has been reported that one of Severino's names was otong-tong, which translates as 'one who chops victims to pieces'.[4] As the LRA would also come to do because of its unpopularity, Severino was forced to rely more heavily on the use of child soldiers.

In 1987, out of remnants of existent anti-NRA movements, Joseph Kony, a high-school drop-out and former alter boy from Gulu district, founded what would become known as the LRA. The LRA was formed when the more traditional rebel army of the UPDA was combined with the decidedly unorthodox HSM. Kony began his war by taking control of a unit of the UPDA. The aviator glasses-wearing, dread-locked Kony, who is said to be a charismatic leader, then was able to attract more volunteers from both the UPDA and the HSM. After the HSM's defeat and the signing of a peace accord by the UPDA, there were no other effective military groups to represent the Acholi against the NRM/A. Given this, many veterans from both movements joined Kony. In particular, it is reported that the most brutal officers were attracted to Kony's movement because they felt that they had no where to go back to, due to the atrocities they had committed.[5]

At first Kony's movement seemed to be a continuation of the HSM. He was 'the bearer of an apocalyptic vision, a mouthpiece of a widely accepted view that the Acholi people [were] on the verge of genocide' (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999: 22. Like Alice, Kony claimed to be possessed by spirits, including a Sudanese, Chinese, American, and former minister of Ida Amin. He also instituted cleansing processes, initiation rites, and practiced mystical acts which, amongst other things, allowed him to make his followers invincible by ritually armouring them with malailka, the Swahili word for angel.[6] However, while the original HSM had strict moral rules of behaviour, which helped increase local popularity, Kony's movement had far looser rules, and never achieved the popularity of either the HSM or the UPDA.

The Holy Spirit tactics were replaced with guerrilla tactics when remnants of

the UPDA, led by Odong Latek, joined Kony in 1988. Other commanders, including Tabuley and Vincent Otti (who until his execution in 2007 was considered second-in-command) also came over to the LRA voluntarily and contributed to the guerrilla warfare strategy and tactics used by Kony and the LRA. To this day, the LRA can be seen as a combination of these two movements, combining the brutal guerrilla tactics of the UPDA as well as, particularly in its training and command and control system, the spiritual tactics of the HSM.[7]

The period of the early/mid 1990s is considered to be a major turning point in the LRA strategy and organization for two reasons.[8] It was at this point that the Khartoum government began supplying Kony's army with new weapons and equipment and allowed the LRA to establish bases in Sudan. In addition, Kony reportedly began to feel that the Acholi people had betrayed him. He felt this because of the 'bow and arrow' civil defence militias made up of fellow Acholis, set up by the government, and by the failure of a peace process that had been championed by Betty Bigombe in 1994.[9] These changes led to a sharpening of the separation of the LRA political community and the Acholi (and more generally the Ugandan) political community.

After this period, the LRA directed much more brutal violence at the Acholi people. Major massacres occurred at Atiak in 1995, the Karuma and Acholpi camps in 1996, and Lokung-Palabek in 1997. Similar massacres continued for years afterwards. Although the LRA had attacked the Acholi before, at this point any claim to being the same political community was lost as the attacks became so severe and affected almost everyone in the ethnic group in some manner.

With the loss of what little popular support there was, the LRA instituted an increase in the number of child abductions. From the beginning, the LRA had considerably less support than either the UPDA or HSM, and therefore experienced difficulties in finding new recruits. This had detrimental effects on its ability to conduct a war against the NRA. Although the LRA had committed atrocities, as the UPDA before them, and used kidnapping for recruitment, as Severino's HSM had done, the period after the failure of the 1994 peace process fundamentally changed the way in which the LRA operated. Starting in the mid-1990s, many of the largest kidnappings occurred, such as the 1996 Aboke kidnapping, and the kidnappings became a much more regular occurrence in the north. Since then, the practice has only been further reinforced. In this way, the LRA could continue to recruit and motivate individuals.

The alliance with Sudan produced significant military benefit. The LRA created rear bases in friendly Sudan that housed large numbers of LRA fighters, their wives, and other personnel. Excursions into northern Uganda were used to attack soft targets and loot goods. At the same time, forces were used to covertly fight the SPLA in southern Sudan. The LRA also used Sudan as an excellent source for weapons. At some points in the conflict, the LRA has reportedly even had better weapons than the UPDF troops.[10] This allowed the LRA to reinforce its autonomy.

Operation Iron Fist in 2002 and Iron Fist II in 2004 have also contributed to the strategic and operational evolution of the LRA. These operations allowed the

Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF) (the new name of the NRA) to follow up and attack the LRA in southern Sudan after an agreement Uganda made with the Sudanese government. The assaults significantly weakened the LRA's fighting ability and forced it to leave its Sudanese bases. The UPDF's use of helicopter gunships was particularly effective at disrupting the LRA by making it much more difficult for them to hide. The effect of these operations was to uproot the LRA and make the group even more mobile. The events have combined to allow the LRA to revolutionize its tactics and have contributed to its evolution into the dispersed, nomadic organization that it is today.

In response to the Iron Fist operations, the LRA dispersed itself across a wider area.[11] Smaller units have spread beyond the three traditional Acholi regions – Gulu, Kitgum, and Pader. In the middle of 2003 the LRA began attacking further east, into Iteso and Langi areas.[12] In moving to these districts, they seemed to be attempting to recruit other former rebels who also may potentially have disagreements with the Museveni regime. The Refugee Law Project reports, 'the LRA came with a list of names of former UPDA rebels who had fought against the government from 1987–1992. They wanted to know the locations of these ex-fighters so as to activate them to fight the "dictatorial" Museveni government' (Refugee Law Project 2004: 35).

In other words, in order for the LRA to balance the power of Uganda it was forced to use internal strategies and external strategies. Internally the LRA made moves to 'increase military strength [and] to develop clever military strategies' (Waltz 1979: 118). These moves involved finding new motivational strategies such as kidnapping and indoctrinating new members, spreading out its operations, using terror as a means of controlling civilians and generally moving away from the less effective holy spirit tactics towards more tried and true guerilla tactics. The external strategies, in particular its alliance with Sudan, will be discussedin the following sections.

## Peace in Sudan

One of the most significant recent events for the LRA has been the peace agreement between the Sudanese government and the southern rebels, thereby ending a civil war that had lasted for over two decades. The value of the LRA to Sudan in the past has been in their use as a countermeasure to the Ugandan government's backing of the SPLA as well as being a militia to be used to directly combat the SPLA. Now that there is a peace agreement in place, the Sudanese may no longer need the LRA.

Relations between Sudan and Uganda changed to some extent after 1999 and greatly after 2001. The two countries had initially agreed to stop funding each other's respective rebel group in 1999 under an agreement brokered by the Carter Center but the funding did not really stop on either side. In a unilateral move, President Bashir announced his intent to cease funding the LRA in August of 2001. In January 2002 the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) meeting was held in Khartoum. President Museveni made the

offer to cease his country's funding of the SPLA. These presidential declarations led to more formalized agreements by both sides concerning the conflicts.

The degree to which funding ended then is debatable, but there was surely some decline by each side. The withdrawal of support from the LRA was supposed to be total. President Bashir announced a total withdrawal of support in 2002 and that '[w]e have no access and control over Joseph Kony … We are proceeding towards a new era based on the fact that Sudan is not supporting any opposition group in the region.'[13] There were reports that the Sudanese government gave the LRA 'one last' (official) shipment of weapons.[14] This was reportedly a large shipment, meant to supply the LRA until it, assumedly, could find another arms source. Beyond this, there were reports of members of the Sudanese army who were still supplying the LRA with weapons without direct orders from Khartoum, in order to relieve pressure of LRA attacks.[15]

The LRA also began attacking civilians in southern Sudan. One such attack occurred near Juba, deep within southern Sudan. The LRA reportedly ambushed and attacked southern Sudanese civilians.[16] In turn, government of Sudan forces attacked the LRA. This apparently signaled a definite end of support from Sudan and broadening of the conflict. These changes in the relationships between the LRA, Sudan, Uganda and the SPLA are signs of changes in the balance of power system amongst these units.

## Peace talks in Uganda

In parallel to the end of the conflict in southern Sudan, there has been an on-again, off-again peace process in Uganda. It began in the autumn of 2004 when Museveni enacted a unilateral ceasefire in certain areas of northern Uganda. This was to allow LRA leaders to meet safely and discuss the possibility of laying down their arms. During this time, the Ugandan internal affairs minister, Ruhakana Rugunda, and Bigombe, who is regarded as one of the few people that Kony trusts, led a government peace delegation. Samuel Kolo, then the LRA's chief spokesperson, led the talks in person, while Otti also took part in the negotiations.

The process was hopeful. Reportedly, Kony, who has rarely communicated directly with the outside world, offered to meet with the local Acholi leaders. Simultaneously, President Museveni, who has said in the past that he would not negotiate with 'terrorists', suggested the possibility of meeting with Kony.

The talks came to a head on 31 December, the day the ceasefire ended. The LRA had asked for more time to review the agreement provided by the government. However, President Museveni was unwilling to grant the extra time and renewed UPDF operations began promptly on New Year's Day.

Even with this setback, the peace process continued to move forward, though at a reduced pace. Bigombe and the negotiation team continued their contact with Kolo and Kony. In February, the government declared another 18-day cease-fire. Yet, it too ended without peace on 22 February, and UPDF and LRA attacks began again soon afterwards. Since then there have been off and on negotiations.

However, these talks have been complicated by the indictment of the LRA's leadership by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in October 2005.[17] The ICC has officially called for the arrest and trial of the top five members of the LRA. With the possibility that the leadership may be tried and put in prison, something that they are certainly concerned with, it is not clear how the peace process will proceed.

In the summer of 2006, the LRA began another round of high-level peace talks with Uganda via the government of southern Sudan.[18] At the same time, the LRA reportedly 'reorganiz[ed] its leadership and overall structure and adjust[ed] its tactics to offset the improved performance of the Ugandan military' (ICG 2005: 2). In fact, the size of its units seem[ed] to be increasing from a traditional size of four to eight fighters to ten or even fifty.[19] Moreover, the LRA has moved many if not all of its forces into the DRC, thereby spreading the conflict even further. This expansion of the war into the DRC even led to attacks by the UN on the LRA as the UN sent Guatemalan Special Forces units to attack the group.[20] More recently, the LRA has moved some of its operations into the CAR.[21] The ultimate outcome of these changes in the LRA and the peace talks are still in question and in general, the situation continues to be fluid. As such, this chapter will not address these latest changes and will instead mainly focus on the LRA up until the spring of 2005.

## LRA motivations

As is apparent from this brief reading of the LRA's history, the organization's true motivations are opaque. It is not clear whether the group actually wants to take over the Ugandan state (which it rarely proactively attacks directly), defend the Acholi's (whom it frequently targets in attacks and kidnappings) or do the bidding of Sudan (with whom it in turn allies and attacks). This provides a serious problem for the analysis of the LRA in terms of a balance of power because the theory of Neorealism demands that the actors be motivated by survival. The LRA is an interesting case because prima fasciae the group does not appear to be motivated by survival but it will be argued below that upon closer examination the group does appear to have existential motivations.[22] The case also serves to illustrate the point that, as with states, no matter the rhetorical motives or the obfuscation of the organization, survival is a 'meta-motivation' in that it is necessary to carry out any other desired goals, no matter how idiosyncratic.

## Grievance

The LRA is sometimes defined as an insurgency, in the sense that it exists to combat the Ugandan government and is therefore fighting a war to redress grievances through the changing of the state government. As noted in the historical overview, the LRA formed out of the UPDA and HSM movements, which were both rebellions against the NRM takeover. Although not explicitly documented,

we can assume that the LRA was also initially concerned with bringing about political change in Uganda. Yet, since then, the LRA has changed its political goals over time, obfuscated those it has hinted at, and, in general, rarely communicated with the outside world whatsoever. There have been many points at which the LRA could have clearly professed a political goal, yet they have not.

However, we can at least assume that resistance to the NRM government and a generally negative impact on the government are motivations. For example, in 2004 the Kenya based Sudanese magazine The Referendum published an interview with Kony in which he said, 'President Museveni cannot talk peace, he is a killer and he wanted to kill me by all means. I have asked the lords of the LRA to kill Museveni.'[23] He also confirmed that the LRA 'is fighting for the application of Ten Commandments of God and we are also fighting to liberate people living in occupied Northern Uganda'.[24] More recently, the BBC has interviewed Kony who made the case that his group was not responsible for atrocities and that the LRA is 'fighting for democracy'.[25]

These political motivations have tended to become less important over time. Paul Jackson specifically addressed the question of whether or not the LRA was driven by grievances.[26] He noted that since at least the colonial period there has been an ongoing rivalry between the northern Acholi people and southern tribes, especially the Bugandans. However, he points out that the 'clarity of grievance declined as the conflict progressed' (Jackson 2002: 47). This is evident from the LRA's increase in predation on the Acholi community since the mid-1990s.

In general, the contemporary LRA lacks any obvious political motivations that we might use to explain the conflict. It has no realistic political demands that it communicates to the outside world. Its complete lack of indigenous support has meant that there is not even a dialogue upon which the LRA could build political goals. Although the LRA may continue to believe that it is providing a counterbalance to the Ugandan government, this does not seem to drive the conflict in any meaningful way, since there is no political 'center of gravity' that it defends.

Finally, there is a relationship between an armed group's structure and the goals it has as an organization. The LRA is not structured to carry out a definable political goal. For example, insurgencies will often have a relatively large portion of its organization devoted to political issues, education, and public relations. The LRA is not organized in such a way; rather it is organized simply to survive as an organization through continual warfare.[27]

## Greed

Another possible explanation for the LRA's continuation of the conflict is that it serves as a profit-making enterprise for those involved. Certainly, the LRA's primary source of supplies is through looting. Interviews with various aid workers, officials, and analysts in the northern Ugandan region point to this.[28] Trucks carrying valuable goods are regularly looted, especially for anything that can easily be sold in the trading centers, such as bicycle tires or farm tools.[29]

Similarly, the LRA will loot villages, IDP camps, and, to a lesser extent, World Food Program (WFP) food aid.

However, the value of this looting economy is limited. Jackson finds that while there were economic repercussions from the LRA in the north, in general, economic factors have not dominated the conflict. He notes that:

> [l]ooting did, of course, take place and there were reports in the mid-1990s of shopkeepers in Gulu selling items taken in LRA ambushes but this has never amounted to more than petty theft or a small degree of black marketeering at best. In fact, both the HSM and the LRA have been remarkably lacking in any reference to personal gain.
>
> (Jackson 2002: 47)

This assessment is consistent with more recent observations from the area.[30] The general consensus among informants was that the LRA only takes what is necessary for their survival, usually food and medicine.[31] On the contrary, its members are reported to be fairly frugal. When the LRA does seek economic gain, it is for survival purposes, not profit-making.

In general, there are no natural resources to fight over, with the possible exception of fertile land. Yet, the LRA does not hold territory in the traditional sense and therefore could not take advantage of natural resources even if they did exist. It does not even control borders – a racket that has been found to be lucrative for other African armed groups.[32] Thus, while there is some degree of regular looting, this does not adequately explain the LRA's immensely violent operations.

## Survival

The motivations for the LRA's continuance of its war discussed so far have all been instrumental in nature. The conflict is seen as a means for bringing about political change or providing economic gain. Although these motivations have played a role in the past and may continue to have some effect on the conflict, they offer only a limited explanation for the continuance of the conflict. Rather, it is helpful to consider the existential motivations behind the conflict and, more generally, the perpetuation of the LRA as an organization. These existential motivations can be seen at each level of the LRA's organization.

The highest level commanders in the LRA fear for their safety if they surrender and therefore see the LRA as their only means of survival. There is a deep-rooted distrust for Museveni and his policies. This makes it difficult for the leadership to trust the Ugandan government enough to return to society for fear that they will be imprisoned or killed. This general fear is combined with more specific fears about revenge for past atrocities. For example, Otti's massacre of hundreds of civilians from his own village reportedly weighed heavily on his mind.[33] Moreover, now that the ICC threatens to arrest the uppermost rank of the LRA, there is even more fear of returning from the bush.

Second, the rebellion has become a vocation, even more than that – simply the basis of life, for many of the men and women who have been involved in it for two decades. Kony and the other top-level commanders choose their wives.[34] These wives and the men's children stay with them in the bush. The families of commanders are provided for and teachers abducted to educate the children. They also have access to food and other resources such as clothing that they would otherwise most likely not be able to obtain as poorly educated citizens in the impoverished north.[35] Additionally, the top-level commanders enjoy power which is unobtainable in normal society. Since it is highly unlikely that the LRA leadership would be absorbed into the state military, as has occurred in peace-making cases in the past in Uganda and elsewhere, there are no professional prospects for the career military men who make up the upper-echelons of the LRA. Thus, as Walter Ochora, Chairman of the Gulu Local District Council, who has met Kony, notes 'Kony is not mad. He knows what he is doing, very well. For him this war has become a way of life…'[36]

The junior commanders have more mixed motives. Some really subscribe to 'Kony's spiritualist path to Acholi emancipation and might continue to fight for a similar cause even if the LRA were to be defeated' (ICG 2004: 8). Others, and most likely the majority, simply feel that there is nothing better for them if they were to leave and return to the impoverished life within the IDP camps. Although most members of the LRA are abducted, there is anecdotal evidence that the mid-level commanders who either volunteered or moved up from the level of an abductee do find some benefit in membership.[37]

This turn to war as vocation has been noted in the context of other conflicts. Similar motivations were found in Liberia and Sierra Leone during their civil wars, where the 'lumpen' youth joined the military units for the excitement, money, and because they 'had nothing better to do'. Morten Boas summarizes the point well when he notes:

> …War becomes a trade … Youths join armed insurgencies by connecting themselves to respected and feared warlords the advantages of doing so include everything from loot, bribes and girlfriends (for the boys) to the acquisition of power for protection and revenge. Simply possessing a gun can transform a "nobody" into a "somebody". The practice of war has therefore broadened from a drama of social exclusion into a way of life and a mode of production.
>
> (Boas 2004: 212)

This is particularly the case for those born within the LRA. Officers in the LRA are provided with 'wives' and to these guerilla families, many children have been born.[38] These children have no connection with outside society and have grown up only knowing the religious and cultural institutions of the LRA. They can be seen as the heart of the LRA's organization – a core constituency which truly does not consider itself a part of wider society. As such, they will seek to uphold it at any cost.

Although the LRA no longer accepts volunteers and torturous abduction is the only route to new membership, even these abductees may have an interest in the continuation of the organization. After abduction there is a process of initiation through traumatization, in which the children will be ordered to torture and kill fellow abductees, especially family members. A standard method is to put victims in the middle of a circle and have the rest beat them to death.[39] 'This process is designed to depersonalize, terrorize, and dehumanize the abductees, alienating them from their families, from their friends and from one another, by means of violence' (Amnesty International 1999: 56). In doing this, the LRA effectively creates an incentive for abductees to not return to society for fear of reprisals for killing family members and fellow villagers – thereby leaving the impression that it is only with the LRA that they can find protection and a life. Moreover, such processes create the level of indoctrination necessary for the individuals to become part of the LRA's political community.

Such views amongst LRA members are expected because the organization has become its own, separate political community.[40] The LRA has completely separated itself from the Acholi community and any other political community. They are a praetorian political community in the Schmittian sense of there being a clear distinction between friend and enemy. Those who are members, including commanders and their wives, are supported by its structure. Whereas, everyone outside of the group – from the UPDF to Acholi civilians – are enemies who represent a threat and can potentially be preyed upon.

This political community is not based on territory or ethnicity, but rather on exclusive membership and initiation. The boundaries of the LRA's political community are defined by Kony's religion. It has been noted that the LRA 'sees itself as the righteous few…' (Van Acker 2004: 349). One must be 'chosen' – usually through abduction – to become a member and then initiated through traumatic ritual and proof of loyalty, a process that can take years. The inside-outside division is reinforced through the spiritual practices of the LRA. For example, 'after the initiation, the soldiers were forbidden to touch non-initiates or wash for three days' (Lukermoi 1990: 49). The socio-religious boundary formed by the LRA allows it to separate itself from outside political communities, including the greater Acholi population of northern Uganda and southern Sudan.

These micro-political justifications for the existential goals of the LRA organization are reinforced by the macro-actions of the organization. As will be discussed below, the LRA has acted as expected to assure its own survival, from forming and breaking alliances to making war. The justifications for a survival-orientated view of the LRA are nowhere more obvious than the fact that no matter the apparent irrationality of the organization's actions, it has survived as a unitary organization for two decades – this is not accidental.

While the LRA may have some instrumental goals, it is the survival motivations that are more helpful in explaining why the LRA continues its conflict. The organization quite literally provides for the survival of its members. It also provides for secondary existential needs, such as vocation and a sense of belonging.

For some it is nothing more than a survival strategy – 'survival by the gun'[41] – while for others, those who live comfortably in the bush, it is 'rebellion as career' (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999: 36). Together these factors cause individuals to work for the perpetuation of the organization and it is herein that we can see the root of the continuation of the conflict. The LRA provides a political community for those considered its members. Together these factors cause individuals to work for the perpetuation of the organization and thereby allow the organization to remain autonomous and independent.

## Autonomy

Combined with a separation of its political community, the LRA has also made itself autonomous from the state. It has been combating the Ugandan government continuously since 1986. During this time the organization has continued to carry out its own external and internal policy. The Ugandan government has tried to defeat the LRA militarily, but has had little success. At various times, including recently, the government has attempted negotiations as a means to end the conflict. These negotiations have failed because the LRA has simply continued to prefer autonomous existence than any possible peace offer. Though some members of the organization have taken up amnesty, the organization as a whole, led by Kony, has continued to prefer surviving as a separate entity.

The LRA is able to maintain its autonomy because of its military ability and nomadic existence. The root of the LRA's military ability is in its highly survivable units, which allow it to combat the much larger UPDF. The LRA units are all self-sufficient and can survive in the bush for long periods of time.[42] Wives and porters are brought along. The units loot their food and all other material needs. At the same time, these units are extremely light, fast, and well coordinated. If at any time the unit feels that abducted porters or wives are slowing it down, it will kill or release them. The units are closely coordinated by radio, or more commonly, cellular phones.[43] Even the smallest units are reported to have some sort of communication device.[44] Furthermore, this allows them to rejoin other units in order to head back to Sudan or the DRC or combine into a larger attack force. In general, field commanders seem to be given a high degree of control over their unit's activities and the self-sustainable nature of the units means that they can carry out the field commander's instructions indefinitely. Finally, the LRA's light, small, fast tactics do not require heavy weapons. Units generally have RPGs for ambushes as well as assault rifles, usually the ubiquitous AK-47s. However, the LRA is notoriously frugal with its rifles and only select members of the unit, usually just commanders, have one. The rest of the soldiers use machetes, axes, or even just clubs.

The LRA's tactics make it extremely good at asymmetric warfare and thereby allow it to survive in long-term war against the much more (conventionally) powerful Ugandan state. LRA combat units can outfox the much larger UPDF units and they have even learned how to avoid UPDF helicopter gunships. The ability of the LRA to be so diffuse makes it almost impossible to pin down in a

decisive battle, but its ability to move quickly and form into larger units spontaneously allows it to fight offensively when need be. Finally, its strategic use of fear has also acted as a force multiplier against the UPDF through, for instance, intimidating UPDF soldiers with atrocities.[45] In this way, the LRA has been able to survive for two decades against the odds of forces 20 to 30 times its size – and in doing so, retain its autonomy.

The group's autonomy – and in effect, its empirical sovereignty – is demonstrated in its ability to determine its own internal and external relations. The LRA's unique, cult-like internal organization demonstrate beyond a doubt that it is controlling its own internal organization. Externally, the group has survived for two decades fighting a continuous war against multiple enemies. The following section will illustrate these relations. These relations appear as we would expect them to if in fact the group were autonomous and empirically sovereign.

## LRA security complex with Uganda, Sudan, and the SPLA

The LRA has several relevant international relations. However, these relations are difficult to characterize. For example, it is usually held that the LRA is fighting an insurgent rebellion against Uganda and therefore its relations with the state are best characterized as domestic or internal in nature. However, the LRA leadership and the bulk of the organization at any given time exist inside of Sudan, the DRC or CAR, making its relations with Uganda parallel international relations. Yet, the LRA is in many ways a Ugandan organization. Moreover, to consider the LRA only in terms of an insurgent – counterinsurgent war in Uganda does little to explain its wide-ranging, regional relations.

The situation is complicated by Sudan's changing relationship with the LRA. While Sudan was an unabashed ally of the LRA, the LRA's basing in government-controlled areas of southern Sudan could probably best be characterized as an invited military. A parallel might be the nature of the United State's status of forces agreement-type relationships relationship with Germany or South Korea. Since the 'dealignment' of the two actors, however, it is a harder to characterize relationship. The LRA is not officially invited to stay inside of Sudan and the LRA's new found penchant for attacking GoS controlled villages leads to the postulation that they are not informally accepted either.

The LRA's relationship with the SPLA is even more difficult to characterize. The SPLA clearly has had effective territorial control over large areas of southern Sudan, even before the peace process. In some ways its borders are less porous than those that define the boundary between the Ugandan and Sudanese state. For the LRA, movement into SPLA 'liberated' areas before 2005 was just as illegal and fraught with danger as uninvited movement into a state and now that the peace agreement has united the government, the borders are just as dangerous for the LRA. Moreover, now that the SPLA is technically part of the greater government of a united Sudan, it is very difficult to conceptualize the relationship between the LRA, its traditional ally the GoS, and its traditional

enemy, the SPLA. The following section will describe the security complex between the actors.

## Balance of power approach

The balance of power is a valuable approach for describing and explaining the LRA's confusing international relationships with the SPLA, Sudan, and Uganda. The LRA certainly treats its relations with the two states and armed group as a sovereign actor would treat its relations with other sovereign actors. It perceives itself as a separate political community that is not hierarchically controlled by either Sudan or Uganda, and certainly not by the SPLA. As argued above, its actions are guided by the logic of survival and self-help.

The other actors also treat the LRA as an autonomous actor. Uganda treats the LRA as a rival international actor by default, even though they may not do so officially, since it is forced to relate with the LRA as a rival military, not criminal organization. While the LRA was aligned with Sudan, Sudan treated the organization as an ally. Finally, the SPLA also treats the LRA as a rival. With all of the actors treating the LRA as an autonomous actor and the group nomadically existing in several states, we should treat the group as a separate, autonomous actor when analyzing it.

Based on this view of the LRA and its relations, we can make some hypotheses about what its relations should be like. Rather than placing the balance of power between Uganda and Sudan, it is more explanatory to place it between Sudan, Uganda, the LRA, and SPLA. The difference in the two views is that the LRA and SPLA are considered to be primary, rather than proxy, actors in the balance of power. Additionally, we should hypothesize that: The LRA is fighting an anarchic war with Uganda and the SPLA. The LRA was in an alliance with Sudan. This alliance was based on interests of security by both actors. Once the alliance ended, the LRA and Sudan should become mutual threats. Finally we would expect that the LRA, SPLA, Sudan, and Uganda balance of power fluctuates depending on security calculations by each actor.

The following section will demonstrate that these hypotheses are valid. It will illustrate the regional security complex through examining the LRA's relations with each actor – Uganda, Sudan, and the SPLA. For each relationship it will be demonstrated that the relationships can be described in terms of balance of power relationships and that the theory is able to describe and explain these relationships.

## Relations between the LRA and Uganda

There are some reasons to treat the relationship between the LRA and Uganda as one of insurgent to counterinsurgent.[46] Throughout it history, the LRA has acted aggressively in attacking government forces and civilians in northern Uganda. In reply the NRA and UPDF have used three counterinsurgent strategies over time. They have used search and destroy methods to find, attack, and kill LRA

members. They have adopted a 'protected hamlet' strategy, in which they have relocated northern Uganda residents into IDP camps and set up defensive perimeters around these camps. The third method has involved all out attacks inside of Sudan against LRA base camps using helicopters and large units (i.e., the Iron Fist operations).

Anarchic war as described in Chapter 3 is a better way to describe the relations. The Ugandan government does not treat the LRA as a policing matter carried out by a hierarchical authority over a sub-state organization. Initially, many of its counterinsurgency strategies were attempting to do just that, but their failure is illustrative of the point. The government has been forced to accept that it must treat the LRA as an enemy to be fought in a war. It uses the force of its military to attack the organization, just as it might against another state. It also negotiates with the LRA in the peace process as it might with a state with which it hopes to end a war. Military attacks and peace agreements are common with armed groups but the implicit admission by the Ugandan government is important: instead of being a police matter, as say the 2008 political riots in Kenya were, the LRA was a truly military matter as an invasion by another state might be. The LRA, on the other hand, has done everything in its power to continue fighting. It has reorganized its fighters, taken up new means of recruitment and shifted its base of operations into Sudan and then the DRC. Importantly, in taking these steps, the group effectively dropped any sort of political goals or grievances in exchange for the ability to survive for a longer period of time.

The idea of the war being anarchic is subtle, but important because it answers some of our questions about the conflict. For example, this characterization of the conflict as anarchic war helps to explain why the LRA has fought such a 'pointless' and 'protracted' war – two oft-noted depictions of the conflict. It is true that there is no point in the conflict in the sense that the LRA does not have a specific goal that can be obtained in the manner of hierarchic, civil wars over judical sovereignty. Instead, the goal of the LRA is to survive and this means continuing the conflict indefinitely since it needs the conflict in order to maintain itself as an organization. This then also helps to explain the repeated failure of any attempts at peace negotiations. The LRA will try everything in its power to not allow peace because peace would mean an end to its autonomy and the existence of itself as a separate entity. Similarly, the Ugandan state will never allow the existence of an autonomous entity in its territory.

## Relations between the LRA and Sudan

The LRA's relationship with Sudan is often characterized as one of a dependent armed group as the proxy or extension of the Sudanese state's foreign policy. However, the relationship is better characterized as an alliance. There are several reasons to see the relationship in this light.

The LRA is an independent organization. The group survived as an organization before Sudanese funding and in general has maintained the ability to

remain autonomous without the backing of the GoS. The point is backed up by the fact that the LRA has continued to survive after losing Sudanese support. Furthermore, if the LRA truly were an extension of Sudan we would expect it to more exactly reflect Sudanese foreign policy, in the same way that we expect in other wings of the Sudanese government, such as its army. This is not the case. The implication of this is that the GoS would not have the necessary leverage to control the LRA as a proxy and that therefore the relationship would be characterized as one of negotiations between actors.

The relationship between the LRA and the GoS should be characterized as an alliance. Two separate actors with their own interests formed a relationship that was mutually beneficial. The alliance increased the security of Sudan by providing it with an ally to fight its enemies – Uganda and the SPLA. The alliance also brought benefit to the LRA through the increase of its power relative to the Ugandan state, since it was able to gain more weapons and equipment with which to fight as well as basing rights.

The alliance was made regardless of any identity issues – it was purely based on security motives. As noted, the LRA is a Christian/Animist organization and the GoS is Islamic Fundamentalist. These identities are at odds with each other and from an identity perspective there would be no reason for them to join. In particular, animism is wholly unacceptable to Islamic thought. Instead, it has been the pursuit of security that has led to the alliance. The LRA aligned with Sudan when peace talks failed with Uganda and Kony realized that he would need to continue the conflict with a backer. In parallel, the Sudanese state needed an ally to balance Uganda's support of the SPLA.

Finally, now that the alliance has been broken, it makes sense for both actors to revert to a relationship of mutual threat because of the security dilemma. Sudan made peace with the SPLA for wider reasons having to do with regional and global level politics. This has left no need for it to continue an alliance with the LRA, for there is no longer a security threat. Since there are two security-obsessed actors in close proximity, we should expect a security dilemma to form between the two because they may each be a potential security threat.

This did in fact occur and the LRA began fighting GoS troops and raiding GoS villages.[47] It was even reported that Kony threatened to attack the Sudanese government if he felt threatened. In an interview he remarked, 'I want to tell the Sudanese lords to keep away from us because if they attack us as they have done this month [March 2004], we will fight and set their villages on fire'.[48] However, now that Sudan Vice President Riek Machar is involved in the negotiations with the LRA, it is not clear what is the true relationship between the LRA and Sudan.

Moreover, with this threat coming from the LRA, it seems that the GoS began actively combating it. Sudan and Uganda signed an agreement to allow the Ugandan military to track the LRA anywhere in Sudan and that Sudan would join forces with the SPLA and Ugandan military to hunt the LRA.[49] This turn of events – i.e. to an anarchic war – was to be expected when a security dilemma between the LRA and Sudan formed.

## Relations between the LRA and SPLA

The LRA is fighting an anarchic war with the SPLA. The SPLA like the LRA was up until recently a non-state armed group and therefore it is obvious that there was no state apparatus that the LRA could hope to control through conflict with the SPLA. Similarly, the SPLA had nothing to gain from defeating the LRA other then to remove a threat. Essentially, the two groups were fighting each other to survive.

It might be held that the LRA is fighting its war with the SPLA in order to appease the Sudanese government, in exchange for support of the LRA's war against Uganda. This is true to an extent. Initially it seems that the LRA began fighting the SPLA as an exchange in its alliance with Sudan. The GoS used the LRA as another militia front to target the SPLA. These attacks were sometimes made jointly with the Sudanese military. Interviews with returned LRA soldiers give an idea of the sort of war going on between the LRA and SPLA. One returnee describes the situation:

> After the training, we were given guns and right away went to fight the SPLA. We fought many times against the SPLA, especially laying ambushes for the SPLA. We would wait along the road for the SPLA to collect the food which was brought from Uganda and then attack them. Kony told us that the Ugandan government is assisting the SPLA. We often fought the SPLA and UPDF together.
>
> (HRW 1998b)

Human Rights Watch interviews point to at least one such battle in 1995 in a camp called Biroka in southern Sudan and another in 1997 south of Juba.[50] This would have been relatively soon after the GoS had begun funding the LRA and long before any reconciliation process between the two countries.

Meanwhile, the conflict between the SPLA and LRA has continued on even past the peace agreement between the SPLA and GoS. Very soon after making peace with the Sudanese government, John Garang declared war on the LRA.[51] Whether or not it is agreed upon that the LRA and SPLA were fighting as proxies of Uganda or Sudan, now that both groups no longer appear to be backed by either country, the war is one between the two groups on their own.

The LRA's relationship with the SPLA makes sense from the perspective of a survival-orientated organization in a self-help environment. Just as it is in the LRA's interests to defend itself from state aggression, it is also in its interests to defend itself against a non-state aggressor like the SPLA. The SPLA controlled areas bordering the areas of southern Sudan that were inhabited by the LRA. Two militarized actors in such close proximity were bound to have conflict because of the security dilemma, in that even if neither one actively preyed on the other, their defensive maneuvering would still create an image of threat for each other and lead to conflict. Thus, while even though the historical record is

too spotty and biased to say which group was the initial aggressor, we would still predict that there would be conflict.

## Relations between the SPLA and Sudan

Another relationship in the security complex involving the LRA, Sudan, and Uganda is that between the SPLA and Sudan. The SPLA began as an insurgency using guerilla tactics to combat the government of Sudan and 'liberate' areas of the south. As the war went on, the SPLA coalesced into a definable entity that had long-term authority over fairly well defined areas and strong authority over a well-defined population. Briefly, this occurred as the SPLA came to not only control, but also effectively govern, large swaths of territory and people. Indeed, so ingrained was this control, the UN developed a relationship with the SPLA, known as OLS, which legalistically governed UN or NGO intrusions into SPLA territory. In other words, the SPLA gained empirical sovereignty and other actors confessed this sovereignty, at least tacitly.

By the late 1980s, the war was less a loose insurgency and closer to a traditional military based in well-defined territory battling another armed unit that had its own well-defined area. The rhetorical purpose of the war remained that of changing a state apparatus, but it had continued on for so long and each side had developed into such cohesive units, that the dynamic of the war was more like an anarchic war between states. For example, the purpose of many of the later battles was to control small tracks of land in order to bolster negotiation efforts. This is the sort of fighting that states take part in. It was not a question of 'settl[ing] questions of authority and right' but rather of 'determin[ing] the allocation of gains and losses among contenders…' (Waltz 1979: 112). Eventually, the SPLA gained enough power to demand and settle on juridical sovereignty in the form of the 2005 peace accords which provided the SPLA with internal sovereignty over south Sudan and shared power over a federal Sudanese government.

The war fits well into a systemic, Neorealist account of the balance of power. The sovereign state of Sudan had an interest in maintaining its borders against the incursions of the armed group, the SPLA; the same could be said for the SPLA, it looked to maintain its borders against a sovereign Sudan. The two actors were alone in their fighting of the war, as it was a self-help system. Both sides enlisted whatever means to power that they could, including aligning with other regional actors.

Now that there is 'peace' in Sudan, the situation seems to have changed, though by how much is open to debate. For example, it still seems as if the two sides have their own independent foreign policies, with for instance, each side dealing separately with Uganda over the matter of the LRA. One way to characterize the situation is that the SPLA and Sudan have aligned. Having decided that continued fighting was in neither of their interests, the two units have ended their conflict and combined their resources. The alliance is formal, but not as it may seem, a simple formation into a state, since sovereignty is shared and it is possible for the south to secede from the north.[52]

## Relations between the SPLA and Uganda

Although it is generally agreed upon that there was some sort of relationship between Uganda and the SPLA, the extent of the relationship is not entirely known. Estimates range from moral support to joint military operations.

Museveni claimed that his support for the SPLA had been 'moral support' and humanitarian assistance. After the agreements between Sudan and Uganda in 2002, the Ugandan foreign minister, James Mugame, admitted support for the SPLA, but mitigated it by noting that the support was not military in nature. His tone in the interview gives an idea of how Uganda hoped to contextualize the issue. For instance, Mugame notes: '[t]here is a lot of confusion about our support for SPLA. For us, it is a question of obligation to provide humanitarian assistance in southern Sudan. We can't stop humanitarian assistance to the people suffering there…'[53] In a related interview, Museveni gave his reasons for his support for the SPLA, which he had previously admitted as being moral in nature: 'We have been assisting the SPLA for self-defense from the Kony rebels Lord's Resistance Army which had backing from Sudan…'[54] We might describe this as soft balancing. However, the moral alliance between Uganda and the southern Sudanese is probably much more real and formal than just moral support.

A likely level of support is described by John Young: '[The Ugandan government] permitted [the SPLA] to recruit from refugee camps in [Uganda], gave logistical support to SPLA operations in southern Sudan, and not infrequently crossed the border in support of the southern rebels' (*Kenya Times*, reported in IRIN 2002: 6). This is a higher level of support that, unlike humanitarian aid, directly translates to military support. This more intensive level of support seems to cross the line from soft to hard balancing.

Some analysts have described joint SPLA-UPDF missions in Sudan – a very high level of alliance, which is clearly hard balancing. For instance, in 1995, the Sudanese government accused Uganda of backing the SPLA in attacks in southern Sudan. Radio Omdurman claimed that Uganda had stationed troops, tanks and artillery support inside of Sudan and had attacked Sudanese armed forces in the Parajok and Magawe areas which border Uganda.[55] While it is debatable whether the Uganda military was really involved in the attacks, it is not out of the question to think that it did.

Although it is clear that there is some level of alliance, it is equally as clear, this was not a dependent–patron relationship. Uganda never fully funded the SPLA or even substantially funded it, but rather it provided some moral and military support. We can thus assume that the SPLA had full independence. Aligning suited both of the actors' interests. The SPLA needed further allies against Sudan; additionally, spreading out its alliances also allowed the SPLA to broaden its support base, which further assured its independence from any one backer. The alliance also met Uganda's interests, which demanded that it to not only balance the power of Sudan, but also combat the LRA inside of Sudan.[56]

Since the institution of the peace agreement between the GoS and SPLA, the

SPLA leadership has made its alliance with Uganda public. This has become possible because the SPLA has become an official part of the Sudanese state and, (first Garang, but since his death now) Salva Kiir Mayardit is Vice President of the country. This alliance is more open and typical of interstate alliances. However, it is not yet clear whether the alliance is between Uganda and Sudan as a whole or just southern Sudan. It must also be kept in mind that as the secession date for the SPLA approaches, these relationships will change with a likely outcome being that Uganda aligns with the SPLA over northern Sudan.

## Relations between Sudan and Uganda

The relationship between Sudan and Uganda can be characterized as an oscillating history of animosity. Direct war has never broken out between the two countries. Nonetheless, the two countries have ample reason to feel threatened by each other. They share not only a land border, but also a civilizational border.[57] The Sudanese state sees itself as not so much part of Africa but of the extended Middle East and has been traditionally a Muslim and Arab dominated one. The Ugandan state is firmly centered in Africa and has always been dominated by Africans and, since colonization, Christians. The two countries share a long land border and this land border, which for each is also the location of each country's most pressing internal war.[58] There are also potential resource issues such as the fact that the Nile River, upon which Sudan is highly dependent, begins in Uganda and is therefore, in a sense, controlled by the Ugandan state. Finally, the two states are highly militarized from their extensive internal wars and this serves as an ever-present threat in security reckoning.

The relationship between Sudan and Uganda is in some ways a classic balance of power. Each state perceives the other as a threat, whether or not its actions are for defensive purposes. In order to counter this threat, the two states have turned to the use of alliances with armed groups. Sudan has used the LRA as an ally – or proxy – against Uganda. Uganda has used the SPLA as an ally – or proxy – against the Sudanese state. In this way, the regional system has become balanced – with the implicit assumption that the balance of power is primarily focused on the two states. However, this view does not adequately explain the dynamics of the relationships, rather we should turn to seeing the balance as being between four actors.

## The LRA and the balance of power

Overall, it is better to treat the relationships between the LRA, Uganda, Sudan and SPLA as a multi-unit balance of power between autonomous actors. Beyond describing the situation better, the multi-unit perspective also explains the situation better and provides a basis for predicting dynamic changes in the relationships. This approach demands seeing the armed groups involved as being autonomous actors in their own right and not proxies.

The armed groups are effectively like units in the sense that they are

autonomous, independent actors and empirically sovereign to the degree necessary to presume comparisons. It has been made clear that the LRA is not a proxy and that it has its own security goals. The point is similar for the SPLA as well. Although, the actors clearly differ in capabilities, with the LRA being weak relative to a state like Uganda (though still strong enough to remain autonomous), these differences in capabilities are expected and are what allow for system level modeling and prediction of the relations between the actors.

Each of the units has acted within its own interests and this has created a negative feedback-loop that has kept the system in balance. Uganda and Sudan had a relationship that was marked by oscillating animosity. Uganda unbalanced the state to state relationship by aligning itself with the SPLA which was Sudan's chief rival and primary threat to its national security (or vice versa, Sudan unbalanced the equation by aligning with the LRA). In order to rebalance this equation the GoS aligned with the LRA, the Ugandan government's chief rival and primary national security threat (or vice versa Uganda aligned with the SPLA).[59] In fact, Bashir referred to his alignment with the LRA in exactly these terms of balancing. For instance, in an interview he remarked:

> On the previous relationship, we used to support the LRA. We used to provide them with logistics, ammunition and everything. That was a response to support Uganda used to give to the SPLA. But now the situation is different because both parties are committed to peace.
>
> (People's Daily 2001)

Similarly, from the LRA's point of view, there was an overwhelming threat from Uganda and an alliance with Sudan was the only way to obtain the power required to confront the threat. From the perspective of the SPLA, an alliance with the like-minded Ugandan state also made sense. Also, from the perspective of the LRA, Sudan made a natural ally once it became clear that it would not defeat the NRA/M on its own.

It was only when it became clear that the SPLA was no longer a serious national security threat to Sudan, that Sudan was able to truly withdraw its funding of the LRA. This is a natural extension of the security calculation. Without a threat there is no need for an alliance. Yet, at the same time, the LRA continued to remain a threat to the SPLA and Uganda and therefore these actors quickly aligned against it. Furthermore, as soon as it became clear that the LRA was a threat to the GoS, it too joined the anti-LRA alliance.

This model of the situation is predictive. Now that the LRA is threatened by Sudan, Uganda, and the SPLA, we can predict that it will seek to regain a balance. One means has been to move into the DRC in order to protect itself from both actors. In doing so, the LRA takes advantage of its lack of juridical sovereignty. Neither Sudan nor Uganda could easily move their forces into the DRC in order to come after the LRA. On the other hand, it is easy for the LRA to make such moves because while it has no rights under international law it also has no responsibilities to constrain it. Forgoing new alliances, the LRA also took

further advantage of its ability to cross international borders in order to move into the CAR and thereby not only defend itself from Sudan and Uganda but also open a whole new front in its war – specifically, allowing it to kidnap (i.e. recruit) new members.[60]

We may also wonder if the LRA will try to find another alliance. There are various regional strategic and political issues over which it could align with neighboring actors. For example, there are tensions between Egypt and Uganda over the Nile River. The LRA would serve as a suitable balance against any threats from Uganda. Also, now that the LRA has lost support from Sudan, it may be a suitable candidate for an alliance with Ethiopia. While these predictions may or may not prove true, the balance of power approach has demonstrated its ability to provide some basis for prediction. Whereas, seeing the LRA as a proxy leaves us at a loss.

## Conclusion

At first the LRA and its relations appear opaque at best. In particular, the greed and grievance approaches to analyzing it provide little help in its analysis. However, upon closer inspection, its survival-orientated motivations provide some insight as does looking at it in terms of being its own enclosed, autonomous political community.

Taking a step back, the group's relations with other actors are just as confusing. The group nomadically exists within multiple countries. While at first being somewhat aligned with Sudan, recently it has appeared to be fighting everyone that it could, including Sudan, Uganda, the SPLA, villagers in the CAR and even the UN who tried to attack it in the DRC. By using the tools of Neorealist theory and placing the LRA within the context of a balance of power, we were able to organize and describe these relations.

Beyond just describing the situation, the balance of power approach has given explanation for why the LRA has acted as it has, such as in continuing to fight the SPLA and in targeting GoS forces. In deducing this logic it becomes possible to make predictions about the future, such as that the LRA will look for another alliance in order to reestablish a balance of power. With prediction comes the possibility of preemptive response. In this case, it may be advisable that Sudan and Uganda attempt to deny the LRA alliances with regional governments.

The case study of the LRA is clearly a more difficult one than Somalia. In particular, the state is fractured, not collapsed, and the LRA is not clearly motivated by survival upon first glance. However, an analysis using the concepts developed in this book was able to provide a description and explanation of its actions that was useful for understanding the organization and its relations.

The next case study will look into an even more difficult to understand group, Al Qaeda. Somali warlords are essentially local organizations, although they have international connections. The LRA is a nomadic organization but it still has some essential features of an enclosed group and is regional in scope. Al

Qaeda is a truly global organization and one that is highly decentralized and cellular in structure – this will present some obstacles to applying the balance of power approach. Yet, as will become clear, the balance of power approach detailed here along with some of the other concepts such as authority over people and not territory will serve to provide a description and explanation of the group's international relations.

# 6 Al Qaeda

Al Qaeda is a unique organization within world politics. On the one hand, it is one of the greatest threats to the world's most powerful nations. It has caused the deaths of thousands of civilian and military personnel. It has cost nations billions of dollars in damages as well as collateral expenses for improved security systems. It even has survived for years against a total onslaught by the world's unipolar power.

On the other hand the group has a highly cellular structure and operates in such clandestine ways that it is difficult to even pinpoint whether it is in fact a single organization. While it has a high-level leadership, this leadership is under such pressure that the world goes months or even years without hearing from them. Unlike other terrorist groups it has essentially 'franchised' itself through various alliances and the blessing of attacks. In some instances, attacks are attributed to it from individuals or groups that may have never even met someone in Al Qaeda.

Yet, as the following analysis will make clear, Al Qaeda and its relations are surprisingly well documented by the balance of power. Using the concepts developed in Chapter 2, including the flexible political community, C3 and patronage as governance and survival as a motivation, the group makes sense as an empirically sovereign unitary actor. Moreover, its actions are well described in terms of the usual balance of power patterns, including warfare to weaken enemies and their alliances, alliances with states and other armed groups and internal power cultivation through changes in organizational structure and the race to acquire new weapons.

This chapter will provide a very brief historical overview of Al Qaeda, since much of the material is well covered by other authors.[1] It will then make an analysis of the group's political community. The chapter will move on to analyze the group's command, leadership, control and communication. Next the chapter will examine the group's motivation to survive over the years. After making the case that Al Qaeda can be effectively thought of as a survival motivated, empirically sovereign unitary actor, the chapter will examine the group's international relations. This section will first look at the group's use of war (i.e. direct attacks) to weaken enemies and their alliances. Then the chapter will examine the group's alliances with states and armed groups. Finally, the chapter

will look at the group's efforts to build up its own internal power through the use of changes in its organization and the location and the acquisition of new and more powerful weapons.

## History

During the war in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union forces, Arab fighters from the Middle East came to join the Afghans in their holy war or 'jihad'. Al Qaeda grew out of individuals and organizations, including the Maktab al-Khadamat (Services Office), that took part in the war against the Soviets or who provided services to those who fought. In particular, a wealthy Saudi heir to the bin Laden construction fortune, Osama bin Laden, used his money and expertise in business to provide support to the mujahidin, or holy warriors. Bin Laden and the organization went on to not only provide the materials necessary for training individuals in terrorist tactics but also came to have the goal of organizing these individuals in such a way as to 'merge all [jihadist organizations] into one multinational consortium, with common training and economies of scale and departments devoted to everything from personnel to policymaking' (Wright 2006: 208–209).

After the war in Afghanistan, bin Laden returned to his home, Saudi Arabia. When Iraq invaded Kuwait, bin Laden offered the services of Al Qaeda for defense and upon being turned down, he became discontent with the royal family. After speaking out against the royal family, bin Laden was forced to resign his Saudi citizenship. Bin Laden and Al Qaeda then moved on to Sudan at the invitation of the leader of the National Islamic Front, Hassan al Turabi. The group settled into Sudan and trained combatants there from approximately 1992 to 1996.

In 1996, Al Qaeda moved its operations from Sudan back to Afghanistan after diplomatic pressure was put on Sudan to force the group to leave. The Taliban had taken control of large parts of Afghanistan, yet it was only recognized by a few states. Al Qaeda effectively formed an alliance with the Taliban, with whom it shared similar beliefs. In exchange for financial support, Al Qaeda received a location from which to operate. Bin Laden and Al Qaeda were thereby able to open up training camps and other forms of infrastructure.

From its new base, Al Qaeda turned more of its energies towards direct terrorist action.[2] In 1998, Al Qaeda bombed the US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Then in 2000 Al Qaeda bombed the USS Cole while it was in port in Yemen. On 11 September 2001, Al Qaeda operatives flew hijacked jets into the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon and a fourth plane, possibly aimed for the US Capital Building, crashed in Pennsylvania. These attacks led to a casualty rate and destruction of property unheard of in terrorist attacks previous to that.

After the attacks of 9/11, the US invaded Afghanistan in order to track down Al Qaeda operatives and leadership after the Taliban refused to turn them over.

In doing so, the US ousted the Taliban and killed or captured much of the Al Qaeda organization. Nonetheless, the group continued to survive and eventually fled to the border region with Pakistan and finally into Pakistan proper to regroup.

Since then, Al Qaeda leadership has largely remained in Pakistan under the protection of tribes in the border region between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Attacks have continued, including a major attack on commuter trains in Madrid, to be discussed in more detail below, and attacks on public transportation in London. While the group has been under almost constant threat since the attacks on 9/11 from the US and other allies in the war on terror, Al Qaeda has managed to survive and even in a sense expand its threat.

## Al Qaeda organization

There is a well-defined leadership at the highest level of the Al Qaeda organization that resides in Pakistan under the care of allied tribes. Bin Laden is generally considered to be the highest-ranking member of the group, provides ultimate leadership for the organization and acts as the face of the organization to many around the world. Initially at least, bin Laden provided much of the funding for the organization himself. Ayman al-Zawahiri is the second in command and is the major ideologue. Zawahiri was originally the head of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ), a terrorist group based out of Egypt and which came to align and essentially be fully incorporated into Al Qaeda. A Shurah committee advises bin Laden and Zawahiri on decisions.

Below bin Laden and Zawahiri are a level of middle management who are in charge of the day-to-day operations of the organization. This middle management level of operatives appears to have a lot of depth as the group is able to replace much of those who are killed or captured.[3] Amongst this core group, the Al Qaeda organization itself is split into several sections that handle different facets of power.[4] A Military Committee is responsible for planning and carrying out attacks. A Business Committee is responsible for taking in and spending money. A Law Committee is responsible for reviewing Islamic law to decide legality issue. Finally, an Islamic Committee is responsible for religious edicts. These committees are in effect responsible for all of those features that a government and political community must have in order to perpetuate itself. These subgroups raise and spend funds, keep the group coherent through laws and authority and provide the military power to defend itself from and attack its enemies.

Beyond this core group there is an outer layer of those who are considered to be true members of Al Qaeda and actually carry out operations. These individuals have been invited into the group and have sworn loyalty to it. The normal operational existence of many of many of these individuals is as clandestine sleeper cells – living within the society of the group's enemies. The exact number of Al Qaeda members is a matter of debate but it appears that it may be some where in the hundreds to low thousands.[5]

Outside of this circle of true members are those who trained in Al Qaeda funded training camps. This outer group may include up to 18,000 individuals who inhabit 60 countries, and who were trained in Al Qaeda camps from 1996 to 2001.[6] These individuals may be considered in some ways to be a reserve force of relatively trusted individuals who could potentially be called on for operations. In fact, the purpose of the training camps was partially to create cells of individuals from a particular country to return to that country and carry out jihad.[7]

Al Qaeda has also created a de facto enfranchisement system in which other terrorist groups may come to it for funds to carry out mutually beneficial attacks. Bruce Hoffman notes that this strategy is accomplished by Al Qaeda deliberately to

> …exploit local causes and re-align mostly parochial interests with its own transnational, pan-Islamist ideology. The transformation of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) from an organization once focused mainly on Central Asia into one that now champions Bin Laden's ambitious international vision of a re-established Caliphate is a case in point. In other instances, moreover, local cells have been surreptitiously co-opted by Al Qaeda so that, unbeknownst to their rank and file, the group pursues Al Qaeda's broader, long-range goals in addition to (or even instead of) its own, more provincial goals.
>
> (Hoffman 2004: 551–552)

Individuals who have never even met someone in Al Qaeda – sometimes known as 'lone wolf' attackers – may even stage attacks that they consider to be in the interest of shared goals with the group. These individuals subscribe to the Al Qaeda ideology but do not have an actual direct connection.

There is some discussion about where we can draw the line as to what should be considered Al Qaeda and what we should consider to be alliances or franchises. It definitely seems to be the case that there is a core group of individuals who are sworn into loyalty to the group and are members of Al Qaeda 'full-time'. Beyond this group we can draw the line using the same methodology used earlier in this book to determine the independence of armed groups. Specifically, the degree of autonomy by the allied group is determined by the degree to which the allied group is dependent on the Al Qaeda organization for support and how much control Al Qaeda leadership has over the group's actions. As will be discussed below, some groups, in particular EIJ, have almost completely merged with Al Qaeda and do not have much of an existence outside the group. Other organizations, such as Al Qaeda in Iraq retain their own support structure and can make strategic and tactical decisions. For these groups we would assume a traditional alliance. The franchised groups of individuals who have not met someone in Al Qaeda should not be considered traditional allies in the sense discussed in this book and balance of power theory in general.

What we are left with is a multi-tiered organization. At its heart there is a

central organization of individuals who we should consider part of Al Qaeda itself and over whom the group, as we shall see, has authority. It is this central group of those who have been vetted by the organization and swore an oath of loyalty that is the political community. Beyond this group there are affiliated organizations that should be thought of in terms of alliances. As with other allies, Al Qaeda may have some influence (especially in terms of who is attacked) but not always the sort of tactical control that it would have over its own member. Finally, the level of lone wolf attackers is not really part of Al Qaeda but does subscribe to Al Qaeda's ideology, as for instance we might have considered a non-NATO country was aligned with the US during the Cold War in terms of also being capitalist.

Within the Al Qaeda political community, loyalty is maintained primarily through religious ideology as it forms a bond between those in the group that crosses boundaries of ethnicity, culture and even language. At its heart, the ideology is an offshoot of the Islamic religion. However, the basis of Islam has evolved through specific thinkers, including Sayyid Qutb, a twentieth century Islamic thinker and radical who was executed by Egypt.[8] This evolved ideology has left Al Qaeda members with a mutual goal, including creating states or a caliphate that follow strict interpretations of Islamic religious thought, as well as mutual enemies, including not just the non-Muslim nations and peoples who would stop them but also those Muslims who are apostates in not upholding Shari'a law. In particular, the US was made into a common enemy for those from different backgrounds and goals in order to bring them together.[9] This common ideology and enemy bonds together those in Al Qaeda and separates its members from other political communities. The separation of the Al Qaeda political community is finalized through a literal oath of loyalty.[10]

## Authority

As is already apparent, the Al Qaeda organization is in many ways unlike the other armed groups analyzed in this book so far. The group is not a singular, co-located organization like the SPLA, nor a nomadic organization like the LRA. Rather, it is a highly cellular and compartmentalized organization. Due to this networked structure, it may not at first glance, appear that the group is a cohesive, singular actor. But, in fact authority is communicated through nodal connections between sub-groups within the organization and this provides the basis of leadership's ability to direct the organization in a cohesive manner.

One basic problem for the group – as in any decentralized organization – is communication between the nodes. The problem is especially acute for Al Qaeda because the leadership is under constant pressure from the US and Pakistani military. This pressure has made communication using traditional means, i.e. telephones or personal meetings, very difficult. Nonetheless, Al Qaeda has instituted the necessary communication techniques to keep the group together and maintain the sort of cohesiveness that we have seen in other armed groups covered so far. In particular, the group appears to have turned to more secure

means of communication. One method of communication has been through the internet.[11] Several forms of encryption or otherwise hiding messages in internet traffic exist. More generally, the group takes full advantage of online websites to advertise its cause, recruit new members and otherwise carry out operations. Secondly, couriers are often used as a secure means to carry messages between high-level commanders, as there is less chance of intercept.[12] In both cases, it appears that Al Qaeda has been able to adapt enough to continue to carry out operations and transfer communications within and outside of the organization.

Although the Al Qaeda organization is cellular, it nevertheless maintains several avenues of control that its upper echelons can use to maintain cohesiveness.[13] Traditionally money and materials have been the means through which control has been exerted, given the group's beginnings as a support organization. This allows the group to direct the operations of lower-level individuals, sub-groups and even affiliated organization by providing or withholding funding. As with many other types of armed groups, money is used as a means of patronage to both pay full-time members, and more importantly, to fund operations by the organization.

Al Qaeda has several sources of funding and disbursement. Much of Al Qaeda's operations have been funded by bin Laden himself who brings significant funds to the group from his own wealth and affiliated companies.[14] Bin Laden's access to funds may be in the millions or even billions of dollars. Yet such large sums are rarely needed as the attacks that Al Qaeda carries out are extremely inexpensive considering the effects, with for instance the 9/11 attacks costing less than $500,000 USD.[15] The group also uses charities to obtain and transfer funds and may also have access to funds derived form other illegal activities, such as opium-production in Afghanistan.[16] These funds are then dispersed around the organization via several routes, including direct couriers as well as the hadwalah system, which is a traditional, trust-based means of money transfers.

Prestige is also leveraged by the organization to maintain control. Al Qaeda is a well-established terrorist organization and it maintains a high-level of prestige, mainly because of the successful attacks of 9/11. This prestige is leveraged as a means of controlling lower echelons in the organization, as simply being allowed to be a member of Al Qaeda may be enough to maintain loyalty.[17] For Al Qaeda, '[p]ublicity was the currency bin Laden was spending, replacing his wealth with fame, and it repaid him with recruits and donations' (Wright 2006: 297). Beyond that, prestige gives the leadership a means of controlling affiliated (or aligned) organizations by 'blessing' their operations or not. A singular terrorist operation may have little effect on the policies of a government, however, when attached to the Al Qaeda name the event gains significance. This can help to bring about the political change that the sub-group is hoping for. Thus, Al Qaeda can command individuals or groups simply by admitting or not admitting their blessing for an act.

Similarly, the upper echelons may provide the plans for operations themselves or otherwise approve plans with the leverage of control over personnel

and funding. This gives them a high degree of control by specifically directing which operations to take part in. Typically, the plans are pitched to higher-ups and then if the leadership finds them to be satisfactory, they will direct and then fund the carrying out of the operation. For instance, as the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks notes, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed pitched a proposal to crash planes into buildings to bin Laden because he 'knew that the successful staging of such an attack would require personnel, money, and logistical support that only an extensive and well-funded organization like Al Qaeda could provide' (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks 2004: 149). Yet, this is not necessarily a one-way street as the operational group can negotiate the plans, as for instance Mohammed Atta did with the 9/11 attacks. For example, bin Laden wanted one of the planes to hit the Whitehouse but Atta called for hitting the Capital building because it was an easier target.[18]

Fundamentally, however, control in Al Qaeda is a matter of intensive relationships, loyalty and similar mindsets. For the central leadership, 'long relationships and similar mindsets make "control" not so much of an issue' (Decision Support Systems Inc. 2001: 8). Vetting is also key to members of the group. In particular, '[o]perational cells are composed of members whose worldview has been firmly tested – necessary to front-load, because such cells are dispersed back to their own local control' (Decision Support Systems Inc. 2001: 9). In other words, Al Qaeda members have such long relationships and are so vetted that they begin to think in the same manner towards the same goals.

Together these features of the group have allowed it to maintain itself as a single cohesive entity. There is a strong ideological bond that keeps the group together and maintains loyalty. Beyond that prestige and funding allow the group's leadership to keep control over those in the lower echelons, particular in regards to what operations are carried out. Although a networked organization, there is communication between nodes in the network and a means of directing or redirecting those nodes. Thus, even though the group is decentralized and networked, it can still maintain a similar cohesive unity to that found in other armed groups and states.

## Autonomy

The cohesive Al Qaeda organization is able to maintain autonomy. It brings a clear offensive military ability through its terrorist tactics including suicide bombings as well as the use of simultaneous attacks. The group has also developed a defensive ability as demonstrated by its survival against attacks by the US as well as many other state militaries around the world.

Offensively, Al Qaeda has developed several means of targeting its enemies. The most notorious is the use of suicide attacks. However, there is more to such attacks than just the final act of flying an airplane into a building. In fact, the group employees large-scale and long-term clandestine action. Attackers are trained clandestinely and information is highly compartmentalized, even up until the last minute. The plans for the attacks then call for Al Qaeda's signature

which is to have simultaneous attacks as well as the most stunning display possible. These means are used to create a large-scale effect that strategically employees surprise. These are the hallmarks of terrorist attacks in general but Al Qaeda has taken them to a new level of effect.

Defensively, Al Qaeda tends to rely on a clandestine existence. It is still not clear how or exactly where the leadership of the organization lives but it does appear that they move around the border area of Pakistan and Afghanistan, staying with trusted individuals. Beyond the leadership, Al Qaeda operatives tend to live clandestinely within other countries around the world. Operatives do not advertise themselves as members of Al Qaeda or as terrorists and hope that this is enough to remain under the radar of the local security services that might threaten them. It has been noted that '[i]dentity fraud and illegal migration have emerged as the lifeblood of global terrorism, as critical as any bomb, machine gun, or grenade. Terrorist organizations place a premium on clandestine international mobility, relying on an array of identity fraud techniques' (Smith 2002: 41). These techniques, whether in the form of counterfeit passports or innocuous jobs in the information technology sector allow Al Qaeda members to not only travel across borders but to live in states for long periods of time unnoticed. In the lead up to the attacks of 9/11, the operatives acted like any other suburban businessmen, all the way up until they bordered the planes.[19] These factors have made it very difficult for state security services to track down the militants, leading to the long-term survival of the group.

When members of the group are confronted head-on, as in the Tora Bora region of Afghanistan after the US invasion, they do fight using conventional military means.[20] Some Al Qaeda aligned groups, such as Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) have developed the same sort of direct action ability as the other insurgent groups, allowing it to fight or run as necessary to survive.

Yet, although Al Qaeda operatives live within other states, maintain seemingly normal lives under the control of local governments, the group is nonetheless autonomous. As noted in Chapter 2, the ultimate test of loyalty to a political community for an individual is whom he fights for when there is a conflict. Al Qaeda operatives are initiated into the Al Qaeda group and uphold it over any state they may exist within. It is parallel to a clandestine officer of a foreign government living within another state in order to sabotage it during wartime – there is no doubt as to whom such an individual is loyal. Al Qaeda is a group that is essentially made up of individuals like the state saboteur who are bonded together by their mutual initiation in the Al Qaeda political community.

In some ways, Al Qaeda appears to be a parasite in that it depends on the placement of at least its leadership and training camps in areas controlled by outside entities. For instance, the group has relied on Sudan, the Taliban and now the tribes of northern Pakistan to provide them with territory to set up camps as well as protection. Yet, Al Qaeda has maintained and continued to maintain very different goals from these protectors. In cases there has been tension with the hosting groups over Al Qaeda's actions.[21] Moreover, Al Qaeda tends to provide funding for these governments in exchange for its use of their

territory, thereby further assuring its independence. In some ways the situation is similar to what we saw with the LRA in Sudan. For Al Qaeda, as with the LRA, when necessary the group has been able to move on from its protector to settle elsewhere.

This is a very different state of affairs from other types of armed groups, which tend to control territory to some extent. Yet, it is not too far off from a nomadic group like the LRA. The LRA does not control territory either, although its fighters tend to live in groups at camps that may change locations. Al Qaeda has at times used the camp model, as in Sudan and Afghanistan but the offensive operations against the group have necessitated that the group take defensive action by cellularizing itself even further. However, the bonds of specific inclusion into a single praetorian political community still remain and define the fiefdom of the group.

Within this group, Al Qaeda maintains control over its internal relations. The leadership defines where individuals live and how they act through both the planning process as well as the ideological sway that the leadership have over lower members of the group. When individuals do abide by the laws of other states, they only do so as a means of maintaining their clandestine existence. When necessary, these individuals will gladly break the laws of the other state at the direction of their operational plan or leadership.

At the same time, Al Qaeda has control over its external relations. It carries out its goals that are separate from even the patron states within whom it has resided. This is clear with its terrorist actions but also with its relations with states. For example, Al Qaeda had very different foreign policy goals than the Taliban while it was based in Afghanistan and this even caused some tension between the groups' leadership.[22] These foreign policy goals are strived towards through specific operational acts as directed by the leadership.

With ultimate control over its internal and external relations, we can conclude that Al Qaeda is empirically sovereign. Even when it does clandestinely live within states or seek the patronage of states like Taliban controlled Afghanistan, the group continues to maintain control over its decisions. Clearly the group is not juridically sovereign. Yet, it is empirical sovereignty, which we have found to be at the center of what it is to be a like unit that can be analyzed using the concept of the balance of power.

## Motivations

Unlike its individual attackers, Al Qaeda is not suicidal. In fact, it has proven to be not only concerned with survival but also extremely robust. Since 9/11 the US has turned a huge amount of its military and political resources to combating and destroying Al Qaeda. Nevertheless, the organization has managed to survive and even regain strength to almost pre-9/11 levels.[23]

Al Qaeda has never appeared to be much of an economic wealth-generating machine, leaving the greed hypothesis with little to say. It has been reported that the group has a 30 million USD budget to spend on operations per year.[24] The

group is definitely able to generate wealth, however, there is no evidence that individual combatants are profiting from Al Qaeda's attacks or its prominence. In fact, bin Laden is usually regarded as having given up much of his own wealth to support the group.

The precise grievances over which Al Qaeda is trying to redress are a matter of some debate.[25] It has been argued that they are straightforward political goals including the withdrawal of the US from Saudi Arabia and Israel from Palestine. Other long-term goals attributed to it include the (re)creation of a global sized Caliphate that includes all of the areas formally under the control of Muslims at one time. Bin Laden himself has pointed to defending Islam from the West, whether in Palestine, Iraq or Somalia.[26] More generally, the group tends to communicate in terms of there being an existential threat and sees itself as a means of defending from that threat.

Al Qaeda has exhibited a very real concern with survival as an autonomous unit. Such defense is a logical means of carrying out its goals given that continued autonomy is necessary to carry out any goal. However, it is also evidenced by individuals within the group. For instance, regarding Al Qaeda's (and 'professional' terrorist groups in general) goal of survival Jessica Stern notes:

> …perpetuating their cadres becomes a central goal, and what started out as a moral crusade becomes a sophisticated organization. Ensuring the survival of the group demands flexibility in many areas, but especially in terms of mission. Objectives thus evolve in a variety of ways. Some groups find a new cause once their first one is achieved – much as the March of Dimes broadened its mission from finding a cure for polio to fighting birth defects after the Salk vaccine was developed.
>
> (Stern 2003: 28)

In other words, the goals of the group have evolved to give the group a reason to survive, not the other way around. Given the long-term nature of Al Qaeda's goals, this process of shifting the goals to meet the survival motivation is only that much easier. As a means of surviving as an autonomous organization and bringing about its goals, the group has effectively followed the tenets of the balance of power.

## Balance of power

Al Qaeda is surprisingly traditional in its approach to balancing power. It has turned to direct attacks against its enemies in order to weaken them on a political, military and economic level. These attacks are not just targeted at specific actors but are also targeted to disrupt alliances. Al Qaeda has also used alliances to strengthen itself relative to its enemies. Finally, the group has turned to internal power cultivation to build up its own power, specifically through rearranging and strengthening its own structure and through the obtaining of more powerful weapons.

## Direct attacks

Unlike the armed groups discussed so far, Al Qaeda has a global reach in its offensive military capability. It has attacked nations throughout the world from operating bases as distant as Sudan and Afghanistan. As with other terrorist groups, Al Qaeda's attacks have both a symbolic and instrumental effect.[27] Symbolically the attacks are directed against representations of its enemies, such as the US embassies in Tanzania and Kenya as well as the Pentagon and World Trade Center. But we must not discount the physical and material effects such attacks have had. For instance, the destruction of the towers and part of the Pentagon had huge costs in terms of lives and money to the US. Moreover, there are indirect costs attributed to such attacks, including all the costs of improving security at embassies and other potential targets, the time and effort of government officials and the large-scale economic ramifications, such as to the price of oil. Indeed, bin Laden has specifically claimed that part of the Al Qaeda strategy is to try to bankrupt the US.[28]

The instrumental aspects of the attacks did not escape the Al Qaeda leadership. We are drawn to an argument made by Zawahiri in his book *Knights under the Prophet's Banner*.[29] He notes that it is necessary to 'inflict the maximum casualties against the opponent' and the reason he gave for this is noteworthy, he remarked that it was because 'this is the language understood by the West' (Zawahiri 2001). Here al-Zawahiri is taking into account the instrumental nature of Western warfare, i.e. its obsession with cost-benefit analysis, and applying it to the plans of his own organization. The grand-scale of the 9/11 attacks is therefore partially a product of this thinking. In attempting to turn the US towards a cost benefit analysis thinking, Al Qaeda took a different, more instrumental approach, then it did when attacking the US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, which had more of a retributive and symbolic attack. The embassy bombing's effect on American lives was relatively minimal in physical terms but highly symbolic, whereas the physical affect on American lives and property for 9/11 is undeniable.

In fact, the 9/11 attacks were in bin Laden's mind at least partially acts of deterrence. He remarked in regards to the attacks that 'we should punish the oppressor in kind and that we should destroy towers in America in order that they taste some of what we tasted and so that they be deterred from killing our women and children'.[30] This line of thinking is not too far from the instrumental line of argument found in traditional balance of power based wars. Attacks are used to punish as a means to deter by implicitly promising future violence. The hope is that another actor will learn that future attacks will lead to its own harm.

The Madrid attacks exemplified another approach of the group. On 11 March 2004, ten bombs went off on four commuter trains in Madrid, Spain. The bombs exploded during rush hour and the casualties were very high, especially in comparison to the Basque separatist movement terrorist attacks that Spain had experienced.

These attacks were used as a means of weakening the Western alliance of states

that had opposed the group.[31] Previous to the attacks, in October 2003, bin Laden had remarked that '[w]e reserve the right to retaliate at the appropriate time and place against all countries involved, especially Britain, Spain, Australia, Poland and Italy…'.[32] Al Qaeda came through with this threat. The purpose of the attacks seems to have been to change the outcome of the Spanish elections, which were to be held only days after the attacks. The proximity to these dates argues for a connection. When the election was held on 14 March, the incumbent People's Party, which had been expected to remain in government, lost the election. The party lost to the Spanish Socialist Worker's Party, the leader of which, Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, had promised to withdraw Spanish troops from Iraq. In fact, it has been argued that Spain may have been specifically chosen based on a knowledgeable reading of Spanish politics at the time and how a withdrawal of Spanish troops would affect Britain's support to the war in Iraq.[33] A domino effect was hoped for, in which the attacks would lead Spain to pull out of the coalition with the US and this would then add pressure from Britain to leave the coalition. The breaking of alliances in this way is a traditional means of shifting a balance of power.

Al Qaeda has also made diplomatic moves to weaken the alliances against it. In 2004, bin Laden offered a truce to European nations in which it would not attack those countries if they did not attack it. In a recorded tape, bin Laden offered a 'truce with the European countries that do not attack Muslim countries'.[34] His apparent intent was to break the Western alliance against him by separating the European countries from the US. The leverage towards this was based on the threat of direct attacks, such as those used in Madrid.

A similar diplomatic move by the group was the speech given by Osama bin Laden on 29 October 2004 in which he was apparently trying to weaken America's internal resolve to continue the war on terror through influencing the US election. This speech, which was broadcast on Al Jazeera and then rebroadcast in the US media, was very different than previous Al Qaeda speeches in that it seemed to be directed at the US voting public, who were to go to the polls in November to vote in the Presidential election. For example, bin Laden was dressed more as a statesman than his usual mujahideen-like appearance in broadcast speeches and he spoke in a manner that was more comprehendible to Americans, in that it made fewer references to Islamic history and used more Western sounding political logic. While there is no evidence that the speech did in fact change the outcome to the election, the nature of the speech and its timing points to the logic of trying to affect the internal cohesiveness of the US.

## Alliances

Al Qaeda has strategically used alliances in order to strengthen itself. It has turned to close alliances, as with EIJ, that come to resemble complete incorporation. At other times it has made more traditional partnerships. Towards its security, Al Qaeda has even made alliances with groups that do not necessarily share the same grievances and goals, as with what is now known as Al Qaeda in Iraq.

In other cases, Al Qaeda has turned to loose, informal affiliations in order to increase its security.

EIJ was a separate terrorist group led by Zawahiri that merged with Al Qaeda in 2001. The group originally formed in Egypt with national aspirations but later expanded operations. Initially its personnel remained separate from Al Qaeda but apparently were very influential within the Al Qaeda leadership. This early stage might be considered a more traditional alliance of groups with similar ideologies. By 1998 the group had diverted its goals towards a more worldwide jihad. This was not acceptable to all members of the group and many left it.[35] Nonetheless, this set the stage for a full merger with Al Qaeda, which already had worldwide goals of jihad.

With the invasion of Iraq, multiple Sunni based insurgent groups formed to combat the US and Al Qaeda made an alliance there as well. What is now called Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), which was formed by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in 2003 as Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad, shares many of the same ideological views as Al Qaeda, including the desire to implement strict Islamic law and to create a regional caliphate. There is some dispute about the size and make up of the group,[36] but it appears to be within the range of several hundred to a few thousand members. The group is notorious for its use of ruthless attacks, including the use of chlorine gas bombs, and the imposition of Shari'a law in areas it controls. In 2004 the group made an alliance with Al Qaeda, an alliance made official with bin Laden referring to Zarqawi as an 'emir'.[37]

This alliance between bin Laden's and Zarqawi's groups was apparently a controversial decision by each side but provided benefits for both sides. Nominally they had similar goals including their views on the implementation of Islamic law and need for the creation of an Islamic caliphate. However, there were real strategic reasons to not align. In particular, Al Qaeda had not really considered Shiites as a major enemy but AQI, given the internal politics of Iraq, had significantly targeted the group. Nonetheless, the alliance provided benefits to both sides, including considerable moral and economic support from Al Qaeda to AQI and an increase in notoriety by Al Qaeda due to AQI's spectacular attacks in Iraq and continuing presence in the media.[38]

Al Qaeda has made numerous more alliances in order to assure its survival, particularly in its new home of Pakistan. The group came to include alliances and membership from Gama'a al Islamiya, Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Islam, Bangladesh's Jihad Movement, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, Sipah-e-Sahaba amongst other organizations.[39] Beyond aligning direct action goals, these alliances are also used by Al Qaeda specifically for defense. It has been suggested

> that some of Lashkar-e-Taiba's members are facilitating and assisting the movement of Al Qaeda members in Pakistan. And Indian sources claim that Lashkar-e-Taiba is now trying to play a role similar to that once played by Al Qaeda itself, coordinating and in some cases funding pro-bin Laden networks, especially in Southeast Asia and the Persian Gulf
>
> (Stern 2003: 310)

In other words, Al Qaeda is using its alliances to maintain security within Pakistan, similar to the way it had once done with the Taliban, except that now it is doing so inside a fractured state.

Al Qaeda has also used looser alliances that appear more like an enfranchisement model. In this model, individuals who were once trained in Al Qaeda camps or otherwise are affiliated with the group begin their own terrorist cells in their country of origin. These groups are targeted at more local political goals, however, they share mutual goals with Al Qaeda and often accept planning or support form the central organization. For example, JI is such a group. Most if not all of JI's top ranking members went to fight in Afghanistan during the war against the Soviets and while there made connections with Al Qaeda.[40] Since then Al Qaeda has maintained ties with JI and funded the group, yet JI retains tactical control over its operations.[41] A franchise-like model is not unheard of with states. For instance, the international communist party under the Soviet Union did resemble this model to some degree in that communist parties around the world were aligned with the Soviet Union towards the same higher goals of bringing about communist governments in remote nations and these groups often received direct or indirect funding from the Soviet Union.

Since the increase in pressure on Al Qaeda after 9/11, the group came to rely more on allies for attacks.[42] Beginning with the invasion of Afghanistan, the US killed or captured up to 80% of the group's members. Those that were not captured had to spend an inordinate amount of their time evading capture. Given this pressure, Al Qaeda necessarily relied more on allies for offensive attacks. However, the dip in its own operational ability may have only been temporary as reports indicate that Al Qaeda has returned to its pre-9/11 strength.[43] In fact, the group seems to have improved itself, such as through increasing the number of middle grade operatives so that it can more easily recover from losses.[44] Such internal power cultivation is common for the group.

## Internal power cultivation

Al Qaeda has also cultivated power internally in order to strengthen itself against the onslaught of its enemies. This is a typical response not just from armed groups but also from states when they feel under threat. The group is particularly good at adapting its own organization, tactics and even strategy to meet the threats of its enemies in order to survive.[45]

For instance, in order to better defend itself against US and other state offensives after 9/11, Al Qaeda shifted its forces from Afghanistan to Pakistan. The group has used such moves before, including to Sudan and then back to Afghanistan when it has come under threat. Moving into Pakistan allowed Al Qaeda to use its lack of juridical sovereignty to its advantage. As Pakistan still maintains a government and its rights and responsibilities under international law, the US cannot move across its borders or use force as easily. Yet, Al Qaeda can freely move back and forth across the borders and clandestinely act in whatever manner it desires. This gives the group a major defensive advantage.

Al Qaeda has also turned to attempts to increase the strength (and threat) of attacks. For instance, the group moved from truck bombs in the embassy bombings to airplanes for the 9/11 attacks. For some time however, Al Qaeda, like many states before it, has also tried to acquire weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in order to make its attacks and its threats more powerful. Bin Laden has specifically noted a desire for WMDs in broadcasts.[46] A nuclear weapon would provide the group with the most powerful threat against states since states, unlike Al Qaeda, are centralized and a single large attack could do a significant amount of damage. However, a more likely weapon may be a radiological bomb as it would achieve the terrorizing effect on civilians that Al Qaeda looks to use for strategic advantage.

## A global balance of power

The global balance of power involving Al Qaeda is extremely dynamic. The group has tended to form alliances with multiple armed groups around the world. In parallel, many nations around the world have joined to balance power against it. Unlike the previous two case studies, Al Qaeda presents a threat to states on multiple continents, not just on a regional basis. This is a testament to the strategic value of its dispersed, cellular structure as well as the power of its asymmetric attacks.

Al Qaeda's major alliances are with other armed groups. The list of organizations that are more or less affiliated with the group is long. These groups include: Al Qaeda in Iraq, Al Qaeda Organization in the Islamic Maghreb in Algeria and other Sahel and Sahara areas, the Fighting Islamic Group in Libya, Jemaah Islamiyah in southeast Asia, and other groups that have attacked in the United Kingdom, Spain and Turkey. There is a much larger list of groups who maintain some affiliation with Al Qaeda, if not alliance. Although these links are typically referred to as terror 'networks', in reality they are just the same as state alliances in that they combine the power of the organizations by uniting economic, political or military power.

Some nation-states have also supported (i.e. aligned with) Al Qaeda in the past but have come up against significant pressure from other more powerful nations. Sudan was pressured by the US to expel the organization in 1996. Afghanistan under the Taliban was pressured to expel the group in 2001 and when it didn't the US intervened. This intervention also served as a means of implicitly threatening other nations that might try to host the group. Yet, given the realities of fractured and collapsed states, such threats may mean little. For instance, Al Qaeda has already demonstrated that it can exist within Pakistan, whose government also wants to target the group, but they can do little due to the clandestine nature of the organization and the state's limited authority in the tribal areas. As noted in Chapter 3, the international community does not tend to blame fractured states for the presence of armed groups within their borders since it is understood that the fractured state does not and cannot control the groups. Al Qaeda has also tried to bring some Western nations to its side (or at least to a neutral side) as it did with the offer of a truce with Europe.

Many states have aligned against this network of armed groups. The list of states that actively target the group include the US, states in the European Union, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan. The pragmatic approach to the war on terror is that any state may align against terrorist organizations, even if the states disagree on other diplomatic issues. This is because Al Qaeda threatens so many states, ranging from the US to Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern states to Western Europe and Southeast Asia. In a sense, Al Qaeda threatens all states that do not have Shari'a law, as it has called for the destruction of the state system in favor of Islamic nations and a global caliphate. Even Muslim nations are not safe, as Al Qaeda has argued that many Muslim governments are apostate in that they have not adopted the sort of Islamic law that Al Qaeda calls for.

Together these two sets of alliances have formed what might be considered a bipolar balance of power between aligned states and aligned armed groups. This balance of power dynamically changes, as one side improves its power the other side reacts. On all conventional levels, states have more power than the armed group actors but the innate power of asymmetric warfare has nonetheless created a major threat to states from Al Qaeda and its allies. Although this is an asymmetric balance of power, in that the different sides rely on very different forms of power and terrorist groups have no juridical sovereignty, it is nonetheless a balance of power in the traditional sense.

## Conclusion

The balance of power involving Al Qaeda is the most radically different from traditional state balances of power discussed in this book. Unlike states, Al Qaeda has a dispersed, cellular political community in which individuals live clandestinely within other states. The group's attacks are directed primarily against civilians and do not usually confront state militaries.

Yet, Al Qaeda has exhibited the same sort of balancing actions that we would expect from states and other armed groups. The terrorist organization has attempted to strengthen its own internal structure and military power abilities, it has created alliances even with those it disagrees with and tried to weaken opponents as well as alliances of enemies. With two sets of mutually threatening actors and alliances, a balance of power has formed which is a version of a bipolar system.

The benefit to taking such an approach is that it puts Al Qaeda into a new perspective that allows us to take advantage of the lessons learned from centuries of thinking about balancing power. For instance, much of Al Qaeda's power lies within its alliances. Weakening the group comes not from attacking specific cells or individuals – which are all by definition expendable – but rather through breaking the bonds of its alliances. Breaking alliances has always been a solid means of shifting the balance of power in one's favor. Al Qaeda has attempted to do it to the Western alliance that targets it. The US and its allies should try the same tact in targeting Al Qaeda. Breaking alliances does not necessarily require the use of force. What is called psychological operations on

the tactical level and diplomacy on the strategic level could also be used. Al Qaeda's allies could be convinced or manipulated into believing that their alliance with Al Qaeda is counterproductive to their own goals. In doing so, as with any other armed group, they will make the calculation that it is better to break their alliance with Al Qaeda than risk their own goals. At the same time, direct attacks could weaken and intimidate Al Qaeda allies or potential allies.

Also, the concept of deterrence has conventionally been applied to states and formed a cornerstone of the balance of power during the Cold War. There has been some question about the applicability of the concept of deterrence to Al Qaeda.[47] This study lends some credence to the point that Al Qaeda can be deterred. Al Qaeda cannot be deterred based on individuals, who are expendable in the organization, but the organization itself does have a survival motivation. One possible means of deterring the group is through threatening its allies or even eliminating its allies. This might deter other groups from aligning with Al Qaeda in the future. Deterrence against the group also happens on a defensive level. For instance, the US's effort to enforce border laws and otherwise combat sleeper cells has made attacks against the US less practical for Al Qaeda. Instead, the group has tended to turn towards attacking European nations recently.[48]

Al Qaeda differs radically from states yet its actions can still be usefully described and explained in terms of the balance of power. Somali warlords resembled states in many ways, particularly in terms of having a relatively stable political community and existing within a collapses state that is easily compared with the international anarchic system. Even the LRA has a visibly enclosed political community, if a nomadic one. But Al Qaeda is such a decentralized, networked organization that one easily assumes that it should not act like nation-states. Yet, in relevant ways it does resemble states. It has an enclosed political community, bonded together by loyalty and command, control and communication mechanisms. It is concerned with survival and has the military ability to fulfill its survival needs. Accepting that these basic facets of being a like unit were met, the group's international relations can be logically seen in terms of a balance of power as described by Neorealist theory. Moreover, this approach provides value in terms of analyzing the group. This chapter has only begun such an analysis but it has done enough to make further analysis worthwhile.

# 7 Conclusion

The previous case studies have illustrated how important it is to understand the international relations of armed groups. It would not be possible to appreciate the international relations of the entire Horn of Africa (HOA) region, to include Somalia, Ethiopia, Uganda and Sudan without taking into account armed groups. West Africa, Central Asia and the Middle East are regions where armed groups also play a major role. Moreover, interstate politics since 9/11 is incomprehensible without taking into account Al Qaeda's role.

The balance of power approach was able to shed light on the relations of the armed groups in these case studies. Some of the unit's actions, such as aligning with traditional enemies did not make sense from the perspective of grievances. While, in other cases, economic motivations for conflict were minimal or absent altogether. In the case of Al Qaeda, the highly cellular structure of the group makes it appear different than other types of armed groups or political actors in general, leading to the impression by some that it simply cannot be understood using traditional theories or fought with traditional means. However, by seeing the cases in terms of the balance of power the relations of the actors can be described and explained. Moreover, and more importantly in many ways, these actors and their relations can be sensibly put into a formulation which could be combined with an analysis of state international relations.

In applying the balance of power approach to armed groups there were many hurdles to overcome. Armed groups are not states and upon first glance do not seem to have the relevant features for a balance of power analysis, including especially being sovereign actors. There are serious questions of what motivates armed groups. Also, the concept of anarchy did not seem to apply to the failed states in which armed groups exist.

These conceptual hurdles were overcome through a reexamination of what the theory of Neorealism demands of units, how armed groups function and the nature of anarchy. It was found that armed groups were the right type of group to be analyzed – they are cohesive, functionally undifferentiated, like units that are empirically sovereign. In order to make this argument it was necessary to reevaluate what we meant by authority to incorporate the idea that sovereignty could be over people, not just land. The concept of the political community was attached to the idea of specific initiation and inclusion making it necessary to

explore how political communities could be formed out of other political communities. Also, sovereignty had to be reexamined and the concept of juridical versus empirical sovereignty had to be stressed. It was found that armed group action is motivated in the right way – rather than being concerned with greed or grievance, armed groups are driven by power and survival. This argument did not dismiss the value of the greed-grievance approach to armed group analysis but rather looked at the meta-issue of survival, as is done when analyzing states.

Lastly, the nature of anarchic systems was explored in some detail and in certain kinds of states where armed groups operate – specifically fragmented and collapsed states – the system is anarchic and openly connected with the international system. The explanatory value of domestic anarchy had been posited before by other theorists as a means of explaining internal wars, however, this study took that approach one step further by connecting that anarchic system with the international system. Thus, it was demonstrated that armed groups do meet the minimal criteria of being an actor that we can analyze using a balance of power approach as theorized by Neorealism. Throughout, although many of the traditional aspects of Neorealism and the balance of power had to be questioned and addressed in these sections, the essential features of the Neorealist theory continued to be relevant.

The next step was to describe exactly how Neorealism theorizes that armed groups should act. Therefore, the theory of Neorealism was examined in detail. It was demonstrated how armed groups could fit into a Neorealist theoretical framework based on a point-by-point comparison. Some concepts such as internal power cultivation were easily transferable to the study of armed groups as the war economy literature had already covered much of the subject. Other concepts such as the security dilemma had been somewhat theorized by other IR theoreticians but needed to be further explored in order to be applied. Concepts such as war had to be newly applied to thinking about armed groups since in the traditional study of armed groups and war, the concept has had a different meaning.

Doing this made it possible to make the case that armed groups relate in essentially the same way as states – they seek to ensure their survival through the balance of power. Specifically, they relate in terms of internal power cultivation, alliances, and war. As with states, this formula explains how armed groups will relate in different circumstances. A more detailed answer was provided through an examination of the types of relationships which armed groups would form and when.

Having given the theoretical answer to the question, it was necessary to illustrate some specific examples of armed groups international relations and thereby to test if the theoretical answer was valid. This was accomplished in three case studies that attempted to describe and explain the international relations of armed groups.

The first case study examined Somali warlords. It began by noting that the Somali state is collapsed and is an open anarchic system. The case study then

moved on to compare and contrast the different types of armed groups in Somalia. The case study then examined the international relations of two specific armed groups, the SNA led by Aidid in relation to the UN forces, and the SNF led by Haji in relation to Ethiopia. It was found that in fact the armed groups did relate with these international actors as hypothesized: they followed the patterned relationships of war, the security dilemma, and alliances based on the need to ensure their survival. Thus, the case study validated the use of the balance of power to describe and explain the international relations of armed groups.

In the second case study, the LRA's relations with Uganda, Sudan, and the SPLA were examined. This case study provided a more demanding test of the theory, in that the LRA's motivations are unclear, its relations are murkier, and it existed in a fragmented, not collapsed state. It was found that the LRA is best described as being focused on survival and acted as expected within a balance of power. The Neorealist approach was able to adequately describe and explain the relations of the LRA by treating it as a separate actor in a balance of power relationship with Sudan, Uganda, and the SPLA. In other words, a multipolar balance of power was discovered where we might have only seen a regional bipolar situation.

Finally, the international relations of Al Qaeda were examined. This case study demanded a close inspection of the Al Qaeda's organization, because it is so different from other types of armed groups. Yet, it was found that Al Qaeda acts as we would expect in a balance of power, it has used direct action to weaken its enemies and their alliances, it has formed its own alliances and it has attempted to increase its internal power. In total, the group has found itself at the center of a dynamic, global balance of power between armed groups and states.

There is merit to the idea that armed groups' international relations can be described and explained as a balance of power. The validity of this answer has been demonstrated theoretically and then assessed through comparison with empirical observations. While, like other social science theoretical accounts, it is necessary to continue applying this theory and finding evidence for its validity, there is enough evidence to conclude that the question this book set out to answer has been answered. Moreover, the case studies presented here detail what an examination of the international relations of specific armed groups might look like. The following sections will explore some of the implications of this study.

## Armed groups and international relations

This book has brought out some specific insights into how armed groups relate with other international actors. It is now possible to explain some features of their international relations that were less comprehensible before. Many of these findings have been referred to throughout the text. For instance, it is possible to explain why armed groups fight such prolonged, seemingly pointless wars and, moreover, what it would take to stop them from fighting such wars. Armed

groups are concerned with survival, if they weren't then they would go extinct quickly, and only continued survival and possibly complete defeat would provide them any incentive for peace. It has become possible to explain when and why armed groups will make or break alliances with states or other international actors. For example, there is a clear explanation for why the SNF formed an alliance with Ethiopia and then why it broke that alliance. It can also be understood when and why armed groups will tend to pursue other goals, such as taking over a state. For example, Taylor would only move to run for President once the NPFL's security was guaranteed. Moreover, we can say why he did so – to obtain the power of juridical sovereignty.

In general, armed group relations should no longer be seen in a one sided view that assumes that they are based either on greed, grievance, or simply on an innate barbaric tendency. Their relations can be seen in the correct perspective of instrumentally ensuring survival and this perspective is a better fit to reality. It explains why armed groups so easily drop the façade of loyalty to a clan or ethnic group as well as why they would continue fighting a prolonged war, even when they were losing money in doing so. Their barbarism is also put in a rational framework explaining why it occurs, rather than assuming that they are simply 'crazy' or 'evil'. Thus we have been afforded a more rational analysis of armed groups.

Moreover, instead of being left to other fields for analysis or borrowing other research methods, such as the comparative approach, armed groups can now be theorized about in the same way that states can.[1] Just as analysts have gone about applying Waltz's theory to individual states, regions, and the system as a whole, analysts can now apply a Neorealist approach to the balance of power to individual armed groups and to regions where armed groups exist such as the Horn of Africa.

Armed groups' and states' relations can be modeled together and this brings theoretical as well as practical benefits. The payoff is that relations between the US and Dostum, for example, can make sense in relation to the United States' other commitments in the Central Asian region. For instance, a change in relationship between Dostum and Uzbekistan can be modeled in relation to the US and Uzbekistan's evolving alliance. Accordingly, it will be possible to model how changes in one relationship will lead to changes in the other. These relationships could potentially then be incorporated into models of the US's global balance of power.

## Boundaries of this approach

This study began with the call for IR as a discipline to address armed groups in its analysis of international politics. NSAs have become increasingly important in the world and have become the purview of IR to some degree, however, the NSAs which are typically covered are MNCs, IGOs, and NGOs. Armed groups are not generally entered into theoretical accounts of international politics. Terrorism is an exception to this rule, as it is increasingly becoming a major issue of

analysis.[2] Yet, armed groups of all types are increasingly taking part in international politics and therefore must be effectively analyzed if we are to explain international politics.

A major goal of this book has been to expand the concept of the balance of power and the theory of Neorealism to take into account non-traditional actors. There does appear to be some value in applying the concept and theory to armed groups. But what are the boundaries to the application of the theory? This book has provided some conditions for applying the theory.

The group condition demands that actors be functionally undifferentiated like units that have empirical sovereignty. As was detailed in Chapters 2 and 3, this meant meeting several requirements including: the presence of an enclosed political community; the ability to govern and command this community of individuals and thereby make it act as a single, cohesive unit; the ability to perpetuate the organization while retaining independence; and a de facto autonomy and independence from the state.

De facto states, such as Somaliland, meet the requirements set out above.[3] They are even more state-like than armed groups. They have a civil political community, which is separate from other political communities and is often held together by nationalist ties, like states are. This political community is governed by a complex administration. In general, de facto states will have some form of military that is effectively commanded and can keep the de facto state autonomous from other states. In short, the de facto state is empirically sovereign, though it is not juridically sovereign for the same reasons noted in Chapter 2.

Clans and their militias, in collapsed or fragmented states, may also be ripe for application of the theory. The clan forms a political community, which in a failed state may coalesce into a cohesive unit that develops the ability to maintain autonomy. This generally means developing a militia made up of clan members that can defend it from aggressors. The faction militias discussed in Chapter 5 are an example. It is important to note that these militias should not be taken as groups that are separate from the civilian clan since either one without the other would not fulfill the requirements for analysis. Instead the clan and the militia together form the relevant group. The militia needs the clan as the basis for its personnel and motivation. While, the clan needs the militia in order to defend its autonomy.

The issue is not quite as clear with clans or tribes that exist within fragmented states. In collapsed states there is no government and therefore if a clan or tribe wishes to survive as a political community it must use force to do so. However, in states that are not collapsed, a clan or tribe can ensure its own survival through traditional interest group politics. In cases, this may only be an issue of capability, as the state may be so strong that the clan or tribe cannot hope to defeat it and therefore it must turn to more peaceful politics to ensure its survival. However, as the state loses power and it becomes possible for the clan or tribe to maintain a militia to ensure its survival, it may do so. This appeared to be the case in Somalia where the clans had militias under the Barre government

but only became truly autonomous once the more powerful state started to fall apart. This may also be the case in Pakistan where clans have significant autonomy but still bow to the state to some degree. Yet, with the weakening of the Pakistani state, we might see complete autonomy of clans and their militias as occurred in Afghanistan.

At the point of the state's failure and the autonomy of an armed group, the balance of power system takes hold. Neorealism is sometimes critiqued for not providing and explanation of the beginning to the balance of power process. As states consolidated their borders around the time of the Treaty of Westphalia, it started to make sense to apply the balance of power to the system. However, the theory detailed by Waltz does not provide a means for describing precisely when such a theory could be legitimately applied. The grey area does appear to lie around this point of when the state's hierarchical system breaks down and the non-state actors begin to obtain autonomy and a means to effectively defend that autonomy.

It is the job of another study to fully theorize how and when actors obtain true autonomy and the theory of Neorealism becomes applicable, but this book has provided some guidelines. The military ability to defend against the state is necessary. This military ability is based on the relative power of the state's own military at the time. The true test would then be to observe battles between the state and the actor in question – when the non-state actor wins we can say with some assuredness that the balance has shifted in its favor and autonomy may be at hand. True autonomy, however, comes with a sustained ability to defeat the state or at least neutralize the state's attempts at authority.

Self-sufficiency is also a necessary part of the equation. The actor must attain some independence, both in its ability to obtain materials and motivate individuals. From this perspective, we may see actors which are at first the fully funded proxies of states gain their independence through diversifying their economic and motivational systems. The symptom of such independence that we could measure would then be the degree to which their actions could best be described as ensuring the survival of the funding state to ensuring the survival of the actor itself. When the armed group's actions are devoted to its own survival, we could legitimately begin to apply a balance of power approach to describing and explaining its actions.

A relevant case study might be to track the formation of an armed group and its eventual overtaking of a state. The case study might begin by detailing how a small armed group coalesced and then grew in strength, possibly through the incorporation of other armed groups or funding by outside actors. The case study could then illustrate how the armed group came to control portions of territory and eventually to control the entire government of the state. The NPFL would be a relevant actor to begin with. Another relevant case would be the Taliban as it moved to control a state-sized territory and then diminished back into being a more traditional insurgency. The balance of power approach could provide significant insights into such cases that are lacking in other approaches and, moreover, these cases might provide some

insight into the study of how states formed and joined the balance of power system that they currently make up.

## Armed groups and the research agenda

The study of the international relations of armed groups should become a legitimate, separate area of study in IR. It could be similar in nature to the study of international institutions, which is a sub-field of IR that has its own assumptions and theories, but which can be integrated into the broader theories of IR. Unlike in its current residence in the field of Security or Development Studies, the field of 'Armed Group International Relations' would be much broader than just security issues. It would also include diplomacy, such as a study of the OLS agreement, as well as more theoretical questions about the nature of sovereignty and anarchy.

This book has laid some of the groundwork for the inclusion of the international relations of armed groups into the discipline of IR. It has, for instance, provided a bridge between the greed and grievance literature and the IR literature through illustrating how instrumentalist thinking can be a link. It has also provided a similar link between the failed states literature and systemic theories, specifically Neorealism. By delving deeper into these literatures the links can be strengthened and thereby a holistic account of armed groups and interstate relations may be possible.

There are numerous implications for IR theory that arise from the analysis presented in this study and require further consideration. It is worth addressing a few of the issues that are comparatively important for the study of armed groups. In particular, the analysis presented in Chapters 2 and 3 provided some theoretical questions concerning the notion of sovereignty in relation to NSAs, the distinction between anarchy and hierarchy and the boundary between internal and external relations.

## Sovereignty

Chapter 3 further developed a bifurcated understanding of sovereignty. Sovereignty was shown to consist of two pieces. Empirical sovereignty is one piece, which described an actor as being de facto the highest authority over territory or a population. Juridical sovereignty referred to the admission by the international community that an actor is sovereign as well as the granting of the rights and responsibilities that go along with such an admission.

It was found that this distinction had significant theoretical implications for analysis. Specifically, it provided an avenue for making sense of what seemed to be a contradiction: armed groups are not considered to be sovereign actors, but there is also no sovereign with authority over them, yet the assumption is that some group or another is sovereign over all territory and people. Indeed, the distinction afforded an accurate reflection of reality. This study has not been the first to make such a distinction; Bull and Jackson amongst others have also done so, although they tended to address states with this distinction.[4]

The findings of this study lend credence to the idea of dividing sovereignty into different forms. At its most basic, one of these aspects of sovereignty refers to the empirical reality of an actor's authority and what it does with that de facto reality. The other aspect refers to the perceived aspects of an actor, including its inclusion in extra-organizational groups, legal treaties, and other agreements between actors. These idealized aspects exist only as a product of formal relations between actors, whereas the empirical aspects exist as de facto realities.

A next step is to further explore the nature of this bifurcated view of sovereignty in relation to NSAs. For instance, to what degree does empirical sovereignty allow non-state actors to gain some aspects of juridical sovereignty? An example is the OLS agreement between the SPLA, Sudan, and the UN.[5] The SPLA clearly had empirical sovereignty and this made humanitarian aid missions impossible without their support. In order to rectify this, the UN set up the OLS agreement between itself and the SPLA as a way to effectively regulate and organize humanitarian aid missions. However, the OLS agreement was very close to being a formal, international treaty. It was written as such, in that it resembles similar treaties with states. It was not enforceable under international law, but it certainly had (and continues to have) the standing of formal law in the view of the actors. While OLS is not a conclusive proof of juridical sovereignty it is a mid-way point and one that was brought on by the SPLA's empirical sovereignty.

Similar questions can be asked in relation to peace processes and other negotiations. For example, during the years immediately after the collapse of the Somali state, warlords were able to obtain seats in negotiations and various peace processes or state building attempts based on their demonstration of power. If the warlord could demonstrate that he had some constituency, or otherwise was a major authority in Somalia, then he would be invited. In other words, it was necessary to demonstrate some level of empirical sovereignty. A similar situation has occurred in Afghanistan. Such questions regularly come up in decisions of which armed groups to negotiate with during or after internal conflicts. The invitations are in a sense an admission of recognition and possibly even legitimacy. Again, this is a step towards juridical sovereignty and the processes behind it and its implications need to be explored.

Another area that was briefly discussed in Chapter 3, and which needs further exploration, is the nature of a bifurcated understanding of sovereignty and the nature of civil wars and peace agreements. As in the case of Sudan and the SPLA, both empirical and juridical sovereignty may end up being split and these pieces of sovereignty may interact in strange and complicated ways. A more detailed study of what is occurring under such scenarios is necessary but already it is apparent that there are some guidelines, if not rules which can be derived from these interactions.

When sovereignty is split empirically, it leads to a division of a single actor in the balance of power into at least two actors. For example, the single state of Sudan effectively became two units, the government of Sudan ruled north and the SPLA ruled south. These units made their own separate alliances, fought

wars separately (and against each other) and built up their own internal power structure.

When the state is juridically combined but still separated on an empirical level, we are left with more questions. This also occurred in Sudan where the peace agreement left Sudan with a single federal government again but the northern government of Sudan retained a military ability and so did the SPLA in the south. Moreover, the SPLA has retained a right of secession. This has meant that although there is a single Sudanese state, there may be two foreign policies emanating from it. The full ramifications of this state of affairs have not been felt yet and may not be understood until the six-year deadline on secession has passed one way or the other. Nonetheless, this does appear to be a situation in which juridical sovereignty is maintained while empirical sovereignty is divided causing there to be separate balancing occurring depending on whether or not one or both sides agree on the policy. One possibly fruitful means of understanding the situation is as an alliance between the actors in which they still maintain some autonomy.

Although not covered here, we can also imagine situations in which actors share empirical sovereignty but have split juridical sovereignty. This might be the case for states which are effectively controlled by a foreign power yet retain their standing. For example, this may be one way to understand some of the Warsaw Pact states under the Soviet Union.

More generally, the bifurcated view of sovereignty provides a new platform for describing and explaining the nature of internal and civil wars which is not present in other approaches, such as the greed-grievance approach. More generally, another area to explore is the ramifications of treating juridical sovereignty as a form of power. As discussed in Chapter 3, civil wars are fought over juridical sovereignty because it is a form of power. However, as with all power, there is a calculation over whether to act or not. An examination of such calculations may help to explain when and why some armed groups fight traditional civil wars for control over the seat of juridical sovereignty (i.e. the state's capital city) and some do not.

To take this line of thinking one step further, a group like Al Qaeda forces us to question the nature of even strong state sovereignty over its territory. Al Qaeda members exist within confines of strong states like the US and Germany. Clearly these states are not failed in the traditional sense but they exhibit the trait of a fractured state in having armed groups. As was discussed above it is more similar to how one state may have spies and saboteurs inside of another. Yet if we do come to see more groups like Al Qaeda cropping up in the world, as some have thought,[6] then we may have to reconsider the nature of state sovereignty more fundamentally. One solution may be to consider even strong states in terms of sovereignty over people, not territory. The basic precursor to sovereignty may be a person being born within a state's territory, however, true sovereignty may be based on an individual's loyalty compounded with a state's authority over that person – just as it is for an armed group.[7]

## Anarchy-hierarchy

This book has also brought out implications for the nature of the distinction between anarchy and hierarchy. This distinction is fundamental to the study of international relations. One of the insights of this study is that the anarchy-hierarchy distinction does not necessarily take hold at the boundary of the internationally enfranchised state. Empirically sovereign units can exist within the state, making the seemingly hierarchic interior of a state in effect an anarchic system.[8]

As noted in Chapter 3, Waltz also wrestled with the need to differentiate anarchy and hierarchy in failed states. This study presents one possible solution to the problem of dividing all states, even failed ones, into anarchic or hierarchic system. It has done this through expanding the anarchic system to include those portions of the state not under the control of the state apparatus. This is a relevant defense of the value of Neorealism.

An argument against the value of Neorealism as a theory is that it does not apply to the more complicated post-Cold War, globalized international system, in particular in Africa. Philip Cerny has used the model of 'neomedievalism' to describe overlapping sovereignties in the current globalized system.[9] Duffield has applied Cerny's theory to the analysis of Africa and failed states more generally.[10] The implication of these arguments is that the conventional breakdown of anarchy and hierarchy are not possible in the present international system, and therefore that Neorealism cannot be used to effectively analyze large parts of the international system.[11]

This study has presented an alternate approach to analyzing the current international system. Rather than relying on a system of overlapping sovereignties, this study has presented a picture of more subtly defined sovereignties, but no less rigid ones. States are bound by borders that are defined within and by the international community. In most cases, empirical sovereignty overlaps with these defined borders. However, this is not the case for armed groups – they force us to consider empirical rather than juridical borders as the defining feature of sovereignty. In effect therefore, this study has rearranged the anarchy/hierarchy balance along empirical, rather than juridical lines. In this way, it has been possible to continue to assume the strong break between hierarchic and anarchic systems, and thereby to incorporate a seemingly blurry system into the more mechanistic – and one might argue more rigorous – view of systemic theories like Neorealism. The benefit to such an approach is that rather than throwing out our traditional theories of IR because of a change in international politics, we can modify them and continue to use them.

A further application of the thinking behind this study would be to apply the breakdown of anarchy and hierarchy based on empirical rather than juridical lines to the international system as a whole. Such an approach might lead to the creation of a map of the international system that contained empirical rather than juridical boundaries. The map would be ever changing as sovereignty ebbed and flowed through different territories (much as the map of Europe changed almost

by the day during World War II). In fact, such a map could not effectively be shown on paper but would instead have to be illustrated on a computer screen and could even be done in real time as actors gained or lost territory. Of course, as with any map, the process of simply putting an actor on the map might legitimize it to some degree and this itself leads to some further complications. However, given the realities of the contemporary international system, such an approach is necessary to reflect reality.

## 'Internal' versus 'external' relations

This book has redefined that which we see as 'internal' versus 'international' relations. Conventionally, the separation has been based on the juridical boundaries of the state. Thus, in particular, wars have been thought of as taking place between states or within states and the study of these wars has been done using different methodologies and even in different academic departments. However, this book has defined the relevant boundary as being between empirically defined units. These units are defined by the enclosed political community and this political community's sovereignty is defined by authority over people, not over territory.

From this perspective, 'international' relations are those between enclosed, sovereign political communities. These relations may be between different states, between a state an armed group in the juridical boundary of another state, between a state and an armed group within its own territory, between armed groups within a single juridically defined state or between a non-territorial armed group like Al Qaeda and states anywhere on the globe. In all of these cases, the units are clearly delineated and exhibit the features necessary to be understood as a balance of power, including being empirically sovereign, like units that are motivated by survival and exist within an anarchic system. The approach is not limited to juridically defined borders and as the case studies have illustrated, it provides a valuable description and explanation of the relations of such groups.

This is opposed to 'internal' relations, which are those within the political community. In this light, internal relations might include, for instance, politicking over who will be the next leader of the group. Internal relations in this sense continue to be the prevue of sociology and comparative politics. However, one lesson learned is to not treat internal relations as necessarily those within the state. A 'civil war' is really one fought over juridical sovereignty but it is still fought like any other war and can be studied by the balance of power approach. Internal relations are more apt to include issues such as the election of a new leader. But, again, this is not to say that internal relations in this sense are just those of a state. Rather, we should also keep in mind those relations that occur within the armed group's political community. For example, one might be interested in the dynamics within the LRA that led Kony to have Otti executed in 2007.

This redefining of the border between internal and external relations is valuable in today's world of globalized conflicts. It no longer makes sense to speak

of a purely internal war, all armed groups are connected to the international system in some way, whether it is through arms smuggling, recruiting websites on the internet or alliances with neighboring states. Thus, when we approach a supposedly internal conflict, we really must be keeping in mind the international relations. The balance of power approach in this book allows us to do this. Moreover, the approach reminds us that wars are wars and groups relate the same whether they are defined by juridical boundaries or not. This allows us to consolidate the lessons of many fields, including IR, strategic studies, development studies and comparative politics in order to understand conflict. There are real world implications and benefits to such an approach.

## Policy implications

Even more important than theoretical concerns, the international relations of armed groups are important to understand for practical policy reasons. By making the right decisions about how to interact with an armed group, states, IGOs or NGOs can help to ease or completely relieve the threat of conflict. In order to make the right decision about how to act, however, they must know how armed groups are motivated and will act. Miscalculations about how an armed group will respond to changes in the environment can lead to incorrect and potentially dangerous responses.

This study has been an attempt to understand how armed groups relate and to provide a basis for predicting their actions and this may be directly helpful to policy makers. For example, it has been argued that rather than basing predictions of armed group action on the assumption that they will seek to obtain material wealth, it is better to base our assumptions on their motivation to ensure their own survival and increase their power in general. This helps to understand, for example, why armed groups do not simply quit their conflict once they reach a climax and begin losing money through continued conflict. It helps to understand why Savimbi continued fighting on long after losing the election in Angola and had lost his international backers. It also helps to understand why 'ethnic' militias are willing to align with traditional enemies. Similarly, it helps us to understand why the intractable LRA may never end its war and why it preys on its own people, the Acholi.

Also, the insights found in the broader study of international politics based on the theory of Neorealism now potentially become helpful in the specific case of armed groups. Neorealism has produced useful insights into interstate politics, such as allowing for the prediction of a region's balance of power. There are also several concepts that Neorealism explains and could be applied to armed groups. These same insights may now be applied to the international relations of armed groups. Conversely, armed groups may be integrated into balance of power analyses of states and may help to provide applicable insights for those analyses.

From these insights we can gain direction in deciding on practical responses whether from the perspective of state policy making, counterinsurgency or

counterterrorism. For example, from a foreign policy perspective, aligning with armed groups is a possibility, but relying only on monetary compensation to bring about these alliances may not be enough. Rather, making assurances to armed groups about the potential for the continued existence of the armed group after the conflict is over may be the best way to enlist its support.

The concept of deterrence in particular has been seen as one that may not apply to armed groups in general and terrorists in particular. This concept is often incorrectly applied by analysts to terrorists who argue that you cannot deter an individual who is willing to die in a suicide attack. While this may be true of individuals, the terrorist group itself is not likely to be suicidal. From the perspective that a terrorist group wants to survive and uses alliances as a means of balancing the power of rivals, there are some deterrence options. For example, although willing to have any single individual within the organization die, a terrorist group may not be willing to lose some of its alliances as these are more valuable.[12] This may lead to efforts to target (or threaten to target) these relationships as a means of deterring the group.

Also, in terms of ending protracted conflicts, traditional peace negotiations that involve demobilizing the armed group's army, may not be as effective as treating the situation more like peace negotiations between states. For instance, the armed group may respond better to the idea of aligning forces with the state's, than to demobilizing the organization altogether. Another implication is that the leader of an armed group may be more interested in becoming the governor of a province, which is effectively his and allows him to continue having a separate army, than a parliamentary representative, which would demand his move to a capital city and the disbandment of his organization.

Noting that armed groups form their own political communities leads to useful response options as well. For instance, in demobilizing armed group fighters, we must be sure to make programs which reintegrate combatants into local political communities, instead of assuming that they still feel like they are part of those political communities. Without taking such a step, the fighters may continue to feel alienated and turn to banditry.

Finally, the general insight that armed groups are best analyzed as international, not domestic actors, leads to the conclusion that they must be addressed as regional issues by coalitions of states, rather than as domestic problems for the host state. This assumption changes the means that we might address armed groups on a strategic, logistical and tactical level. This perception of the situation could, for instance, make the argument for intervention stronger. This international perspective is also important because by beginning from the assumption that armed groups are only local actors, it is significantly harder to block their logistical system. On a tactical level, it is necessary to come to accept that a group like Al Qaeda's use of juridical borders to its advantage is the norm and that it is necessary to take political gambits necessary to defeat such groups on a tactical level.

Hopefully, this study will be useful in easing or abating conflicts with armed groups. While there is a continual debate about the degree to which theoretical

understanding may helpfully inform real world decision-making, there appears to be some value to be gained. If only for this reason, the study of armed group international relations is useful and should be pursued. The next step after this study should therefore be to illustrate in more detail the practical application of a theoretical understanding of armed group conflicts in order to find effective ways to counter the continuing threat of armed groups to international peace and security.

# Notes

## 1 Introduction

1 See Risse-Kappen 1995 for a more in depth discussion of the nature of transnational relations.
2 Mackinlay 2002.
3 For instance, Keohane and Nye 1971, Huntington 1973. The analysis continues, with for instance the recent collection *Non-State Actors in World Politics* (Josselin and Wallace 2001).
4 For more on the SPLA, see Johnson 2003 and Oystein 2005.
5 For more on the NPFL see Reno 1998 and Duyvesteyn 2005.
6 For more on the JI see ICG 2003c.
7 Baylis *et al.* 2002.
8 At the same time, most if not all armed groups take part in activities that might be described as criminal in the sense that they are illegal, whether this is smuggling drugs to fund themselves or brandishing automatic weapons to defend themselves.
9 See Vinci 2006c.
10 For more on PMCs see Singer 2003.
11 Johnson 2003.
12 Rich 1999.
13 See Hoffman 2006.
14 See Joes 2004, Nagl 2005, National Commission on Terrorist Attacks 2004, Scheuer 2003.
15 Berdal and Malone 2000, Keen 1998, Collier 2000.
16 Woodward 1995, Kaplan 1994.
17 See for instance, Morgenthau 1993, Mearsheimer 1995, Waltz 1979 and Thucydides 1954.
18 See for instance Morgenthau 1993 and Gilpin 1986.
19 Some of the aspects of armed groups make IR theories other than the Realist school less ideal. For instance, armed groups do not generally have formal recognition in the international system. While this lack of formal recognition by the international community does not preclude them from analysis by many of the variants of the Liberal school of international theory, it does limit the effectiveness of the use of such theories. This branch of theory includes both the classical and the more recent Neoliberal varieties (see Dickenson 1920, Baldwin 1993 and Keohane and Martin 1995). These theories tend to focus on the ways in which states have developed peaceful means of interaction based on incorporation into governing institutions. Since armed groups are essentially illegitimate they cannot directly take part in these institutions. Therefore any analysis of armed groups from the Neoliberal perspective will be more likely to treat armed groups as actors *acted upon* or obstacles to policy implementation rather than as units which actively and independently relate with other units.

Furthermore, though Neoliberalism is more accepting of non-state actors, it tends to focus on international organizations, NGOs, MNCs, and others that are more concerned with interdependence than with conflict.

Also, armed groups are fundamentally concerned with war. Other interactions are secondary to this fact and any theory which is to analyze armed groups must account for warfare. Armed groups are involved in significant economic interactions, however, these interactions, as will be demonstrated, tend to be means not ends. Moreover, states tend to interact with armed groups in terms of political and military interactions. For this reason, International Political Economy (IPE) theory is of limited help in the analysis of armed groups (for instance see Strange 1998 and Friedman and Lake 2000). Although armed groups do take part in economic relations, they do not take part in the sort of formal, macro-level economic issues, institutions, and organizations like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) which IPE is tends to focus on.

20 Some, such as those who count themselves as 'Neoclassical Realists', have since turned back from systemic level thinking to look inside of the state. See for instance Schweller 2004 and Wohlforth 1993.

21 There are other systemic level, or 'structural', theories of Realism. For instance, John Mearsheimer has developed what he calls 'Offensive Realism', which is in many ways similar to Waltz's version of structural realism, but places stress on the notion that all states have innate offensive capability and that these states can never be sure that another state will not use its offensive capability (Mearsheimer 1995). However, by making the case that Waltz's Neorealism can analyze armed groups, the case is implicitly made that other forms of structural realism could also likely analyze it. In other words, if it works in this case it will likely work in others. As with states, after making the initial argument for the value of the balance of power approach, the intricacies could be reevaluated. In addition, Waltzian Neorealism is the most widely accepted form of structural realism, which means that there is more debate to draw from.

22 Gilpin 1986.

23 Along with providing a framework to understand the international relations of armed groups, this book also combines two sets of literatures that have traditionally been separated – thereby providing value to both sets of literature. The first is the traditional American Neorealist school of thought on IR. The second is the loosely bound collection of literature on armed groups, failed states and new wars. In combing such literatures, there is bound to be some review for each side that may seem simplistic or obvious. In particular, Chapters 2 and 3 will discuss various topics such as the greed-grievance debate and nature of failed states, while Chapter 3 will provide an overview of Neorealism. These discussions will necessarily be introductory and provide a baseline for the various theories. Where possible, I've provided footnotes with references to further reading. The purpose is not to have the last word on any particular debate but rather to provide an avenue to integrate armed groups into the balance of power as understood by Neorealism and vice versa, to allow those studying failed states or new wars to use Neorealism as a tool to better understand their fields. From this baseline, it will be possible to build on those subtleties and complexities of the theories that truly make them interesting. The value in bridging these literatures is that the insights from one can be applied to the other and from there future theory can be built.

24 This approach to explanation takes the same American pragmatic view of knowledge that Waltz applied in 1979. That is, the purpose of a theory is to explain. Specifically, to explain 'regularities of behavior and [these regularities should lead] one to expect that the outcomes produced by interacting units will fall within specified ranges' (Waltz 1979: 68). By 'explain', Waltz means 'to say why the range of expected outcomes falls within certain limits; to say why events repeat themselves, including

events that none or few of the actors may like' (ibid. 69). Thus, we can call a theory valid if it describes and explains the regularities of behavior of interacting units. Moreover, in order to determine if a theory really is explaining the regularities, it must be tested.

## 2 Armed groups

1 See Rotberg 2003 and 2004 for more on failed states.
2 Weber 1958.
3 Reno 1998, 2000.
4 Herbst 2000.
5 Mackinlay 2002.
6 Also see Huntington 1973 and Keohane and Nye 1971.
7 Waltz 1979.
8 Such a feature is common to other structural versions of Realism as well. For instance, Barry Buzan, Charles Jones, and Richard Little also make this point in their description of 'similar units' which are defined as 'the highest authority in all matters of government over their specified territory and people, including the right to wield power independently' (Buzan *et al.* 1993: 38).
9 Herbst 2000.
10 Duyvesteyn (2005) notes this in regard to the Somali and Liberian wars.
11 This is a strongly developed 'group' distinction, as opposed to a 'grid' distinction to use Mary Douglas' term. Douglas 1970, based on Soeters 2005.
12 To use the terminology from Simmel's classic work, *Conflict* (Simmel 1955).
13 Schmitt 1996.
14 Of course there may be dual citizens in a state and, similarly, in an armed group people may be part of multiple political communities. However, on the whole, most people will have a single membership.
15 Waltz 1979.
16 Thus, the actors analyzed by Neorealism must not only have similar external traits, i.e. sovereignty, they must also be like each other internally. This seems to be a strange requirement coming from Waltz who goes through great pains to clarify that he is talking about systemic level relations and does not want to discuss the internal structures of states. It appears if the actors are not internally structured in a particular way, they will not act externally in the same ways as expected.
17 In a sense, this is the complete combination of people, government, and army. (Clausewitz 1989).
18 Weber 1958, 1978.
19 This point is made more generally in regard to armed groups by Duyvesteyn (2005).
20 Reno 1998.
21 Ibid.
22 Lasswell 1936.
23 Interview with SPLA Commander, Gulu, 22 January 2005.
24 Ibid.
25 Based on field observation, Rumbek, April 2005.
26 Interview with SPLA Commander, Gulu, 22 January 2005.
27 Interview with SRRC representative, Rumbek, 5 April 2005.
28 Discussions with various SPLA and NGO personnel, Rumbek, Gulu, January and April 2005.
29 See Guevara 1961 and Behrand 1999.
30 See for instance deWaal 1997 and Vinci 2005.
31 See for instance Duyvesteyn 2005.
32 Clapham 1985, Reno 2000.
33 We can refer to these minimum requirements for self-perpetuation as the 'problems of

mobilization' (see Vinci 2006d). They are problems in the sense that there are obstacles that must be overcome in order to perpetuate the organization.

34 See Henriksen and Vinci 2007 for a more detailed discussion of how individuals are motivated for combat by non-state armed groups.
35 Collier 2000.
36 Interview with SPLA commander, Gulu, 17 January 2005.
37 Field observation, Rumbek, April 2005.
38 See for instance Keen 2000.
39 See HRW 1997 and Refugee Law Project 2004.
40 See for instance, Berdal and Malone 2000.
41 See for instance, Farah and Braun 2006.
42 Olson 1993.
43 LeRichie 2004.
44 HRW 1995.
45 Apparently both were from the same Sa'ad subclan (Habar Gidir clan).
46 UNDOS 1998.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 See Vinci 2006c.
50 Stephen Krasner's (1999) formulation of the definitions of authority and control are useful here. 'Authority involves a mutually recognized right for an actor to engage in specific kinds of activities' (Krasner, 1999: 10); whereas control 'can be achieved simply through the use of brute force with in no mutual recognition of authority at all' (Krasner, 1999: 10).
51 Technicals are pick-up trucks or other civilian vehicles modified to have mounted crew served weapons such as .50 caliber machine guns.
52 This definition is an amalgam of typical definitions of asymmetric warfare. See for instance, Hammes 2004 and Joes 2004. The precise definition of asymmetric warfare is not central to this argument.
53 See for instance the works of Mao Zedong (1961) and Che Guevara (1961).
54 See for instance Vinci 2007a.
55 De Waal 1997.
56 Vinci 2005.
57 See for instance Hoffman 1999.
58 Clapham hinted at the sovereignty of some armed groups when he noted that '[m]ilitarily effective movements meet the most basic criterion for statehood, which is physical control over territory and population' (Clapham 1998: 150). In particular, Clapham points to the EPLF, UNITA, and the NPFL. Clapham also notes that these militant groups also 'act like states in important respects' (ibid.). These actions include licit and illicit economic interactions and 'important and sometimes formal, diplomatic relations with external states' (ibid. 152). However, Clapham never makes the strong argument that armed groups can be sovereign. This study can make this stronger argument.
59 Bull 1997, Jackson 1993, Krasner 1999.
60 See Bodin, Franklin trans. 1992.
61 Though, the state's government may be split, as for instance, the United States' government is, into different branches, and in this sense it may differ from Bodin's original formulation. Nonetheless, for the purposes of international relations, sovereignty exists as a single authority, and thereby the basis was set for a system of states which had exclusive authority.
62 Herbst 2000, Bull 1997, Ruggie 1986.
63 This means that the armed group does not necessarily possess what Robert Jackson calls 'positive sovereignty', which is a reflection of legitimacy by both the international community and the people (Jackson 1993). For Jackson positive sovereignty

'presupposes capabilities which enable governments to be their own masters: it is a substantive rather than a formal condition' (ibid.: 29). This feature of positive sovereignty we have separated out into empirical sovereignty, for, it is possible to have one without the other. Jackson goes on to note that states with positive sovereignty '[possess] the wherewithal to provide political goods for its citizens' (ibid.: 29). While armed groups do not generally provide public goods, they do have a private political community to which they provide goods. The concept of positive sovereignty refers to a separate situation of the provision of public goods to those outside of the direct hierarchical system of the governance structure and we should not confuse the two. Thus, in the sense of providing public goods in exchange for legitimacy, the armed group is not always legitimized by a society and therefore is usually not sovereign in this sense.

64 Jackson 1993.

65 The armed group's lack of juridical legitimization is more parallel to taking with force in war, where the unit who controls a piece of territory is its owner no matter who used to own it, at least until another unit is able to take it.

66 Weiss 1995.

67 Intervention may, for example, be legitimate for humanitarian reasons if decided so by the UN Security Council.

68 Though, of course, such laws and norms are not absolute and can be broken if the logic of self-help demands it.

69 Interview with SPLM representative, Addis Ababa, 24 March 2005.

70 Ibid.

71 Clapham (1996) makes a similar distinction, though, as noted above, he does not make the strong case about armed groups being sovereign.

72 Clapham (1996) refers to armed groups as sometimes being 'non-juridical states' although without reference to sovereignty as depicted here.

73 UNDOS, 1998.

74 Ibid.

75 This view was exemplified by Robert Kaplan (1994b).

76 This is to take an instrumentalist or constructivist approach to identity. The instrumentalist approach takes identity, usually in the form of religion, ethnicity, or nationalism, as a tool that can be used and manipulated for political reasons (see for instance Horowitz 1985). A slightly less strong version is maintained by constructivists who take a middle ground and argue that identity can be changed, but only to a limited extent (see for instance Lake and Rothchild 1998). The instrumental (and to a lesser extent the constructivist) approach is opposed to primordialists who see ethnic identity as a permanent element of an individual's identity (see for instance Stack 1986).

77 Duyvesteyn 2005.

78 Collier 2000.

79 A notable example was Hitler's attempted drive to the Caspian region in order to attain the oil reserves necessary to fuel his army and continue his other political pursuits.

80 See for instance Reno 1998.

81 See Reno 1999 concerning Taylor; see Moore 2003 concerning the war in Afghanistan and warlord relations with US Special Forces.

82 Morgenthau 1993.

83 Defining power is notoriously difficult. See Baldwin 1993 for a discussion of the various issues that must be addressed. This study uses Morgenthau's definition with the assumption that debates which apply to state power would also apply to armed groups, what is important is not so much the exact definition of power but that it applies to both armed groups and states equally.

84 To translate this into IR theory, the attempt to accumulate external resources in order

to achieve domestic objectives is referred to by Neoclassical Realists as external extraction. (Mastanduno *et al.* 1989).

85 Morgenthau 1993.

86 To this we might add that the pursuit of power by armed groups as a whole is reinforced by the tendency for individuals to pursue personal power. As Raymond Aron observed '[b]y participating in collective power men find satisfactions which sweep aside economic calculations and make sacrifices meaningful. The desire for power and pride in surpassing other men, are no less profound impulses than the desire for worldly goods' (Aron 1958: 53, noted in Berdal 2003). Berdal remarks on the individual motivation for power in such warlords as Jonas Savimbi and Jokahr Dudayev, the leader of the self-declared republic of Chechnya. (Berdal 2003) Although it has already been noted that individual drives do not necessarily translate into group-level motivation, it is worth noting that there is an individual-level root to the group drive for power, and therefore that the pursuit of power is no different in form than wealth accumulation or the redressing of grievances.

87 Waltz 1979.

88 Gilpin 1986.

89 This motive to survive is a natural outgrowth of any protracted conflict, no matter what the initial cause. As Martin Van Creveld notes: 'over time any war will tend to turn into a struggle for existence, provided only hostilities are sufficiently intensive and casualties sufficiently heavy' (Van Creveld 1991: 145).

90 This may be considered a political goal of armed groups. The political focus of armed groups has been noted by other authors. Probably the most explicit argument for this has been made by Duyvesteyn (2005) in her Clausewitzian analysis of the conflicts in Liberia and Somalia.

91 Ralph Peters implicitly makes this argument in several pieces, see for instance Peters 1999.

## 3 The international system

1 See Zartman 1995 for more on collapsed states.

2 Kasfir (2002) does point out that we need to examine the internal structures of groups in domestic anarchy in order to understand their cohesiveness. However, he does not refer to the concept of sovereignty.

3 A critique of using the concept of domestic anarchy is that it is not explanatory because most internal wars take place in states that still have a central government continuing to exert authority. However, this critique makes the assumption that anarchy needs to be universal within a state but as illustrated, anarchy may be less than universal in a state.

4 Another, related critique is given by Stephen David, who argues that rather than the weakening of central authority causing civil wars, in some cases the strengthening of the central government is the root of conflict and sees it as a factor that disproves the 'realness' of domestic anarchy (David 1995). However, the situation he points out is expected if we assume that the 'state', by which we mean the internationally recognized government and the areas under its own authority, is in an anarchic system with other armed groups in the same anarchic system. War breaks out between these actors because, as we would expect, when two sovereign actors interact, we are left with a classic security dilemma situation. The state begins to look more aggressive, so the armed group does the same. In return, conflict breaks out.

5 David is right in saying that 'anarchy cannot simply be assumed … rather, most states most of the time can ensure compliance' (David 1995: 559).

6 Robinson remarks that organized criminals

> are not likely to gain greatly where no regulation or control exists because enforced

> laws are needed to differentiate the products and services they offer. It is the perverse contradiction of the gangster existence that, although he undermines the state or states in which he operates, he depends on their basic stability for his commercial success.
>
> (Robinson 2001: 27)

7 See for instance, Jervis and Snyder 1999, David 1995, 1997 and Kasfir 2004.
8 That is, it is not 'chaotic' in the sense that Robert Kaplan has referred to it (Kaplan 1994).
9 Menkhaus and Prendergast 1995.
10 For this reason, we regularly see states admit that they cannot control drug dealing or other international actions emanating from armed groups within their defined territory.
11 See, for instance, Menkhaus 2004 and BBC News 9 January 2007.
12 BBC News 3 March 2008.
13 Sudanese People's Liberation Movement 1996.
14 Author's field observation, Nairobi, Kenya and Rumbek, Sudan, April 2005.
15 I.e. there is no overlapping sovereignty as for instance Ruggie (1986) or Philip Cerny (1998) might call for.
16 In sub-Saharan Africa the process of securing authority, i.e. building cohesion, has often occurred through 'elite accommodation' (See Jorgenson 2004 and Bayart *et al.* 1996).
17 Waltz offers an operational definition of power, worded as: the 'old and simple notion that an agent is powerful to the extent that he affects others more than they affect him' (Waltz 1979: 192).
18 Though they may appear different to those who are accustomed to the better defined – i.e. quantifiable – power capabilities of the state.
19 Related to the issue of relative gains is Mearsheimer's theory of Offensive Realism. Mearsheimer predicts that states will attempt to maximize their relative power in order to maintain a margin of security. (Mearsheimer 2001) The ideal situation for states in the Offensive Realist's view is that they become the hegemon of a region, or even the world, and thereby have no enemies that can possibly threaten them.
20 This observation is also central to Jeffrey Pfeffer and Gerald Salancik's work. (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978).
21 Paul *et al.* 2004.
22 Mearsheimer (2001) argues that states will try harder to attain hegemony because they see it as bringing the most security. Due to armed groups relative weakness, it is doubtful that they would ever try to attain true hegemony but on a smaller scale, it is conceivable that they would try to attain hegemony within the borders of a state.
23 For more on the security dilemma, see Jervis 1978 and Posen 1993.
24 Other authors have also applied the security dilemma to the relations of actors within the bounds of the state. Barry Posen notes that the collapse of imperial regimes can be viewed as a problem of 'emerging anarchy' (Posen 1993: 104). However, he applies it to loose affiliations of groups and the threat they feel from other ethnic groups. The armed group security dilemma more closely resembles the traditional international security dilemma than it does Posen's domestic formulation. This is because armed groups are unitary actors that are separated out from society and formed into an enclosed community, unlike Posen's formulation of dispersed groups. As was discussed in previous sections of this book, armed groups are unitary actors in that they are made up of individuals and these individuals are cohesively bonded enough to have an effective leadership. While they may not necessarily be connected with a single territorial area, they will be separated from the external population, possibly literally separated into a roving band or base-camp of some sort. Therefore the dynamics of these actors will differ from more amorphous ethnic, religious, or cultural

groupings. We can expect that armed groups will more closely follow the ideal security dilemma than the types of non-state groups that Posen is referring to. The cohesiveness of the armed group unit makes them more purposeful, and therefore, potentially, more predictable in the security dilemma. Like states, armed groups can have a defined foreign policy and automatic reactions to perceived threats. This is unlike more amorphous ethnic groups which may react to a threatening stimulus, but do so in a more divided manner, with for instance, some subgroups or individuals being more aggressive than others. Also, Jervis and Snyder (1999) apply the security dilemma to armed groups inside of states but do not link this with the external international system – as discussed above – and do not discuss armed groups having a security dilemma with states.

25 One alternate possible explanation is that conflict might 'spill over' and 'infect' neighboring states – and this is how it is often popularly understood. However, this does not fully explain interventions by non-neighboring states since it only begs the question of what 'spills over' or 'infects' mean. This infection is in reality the actions of specific armed groups.

26 Gilpin (1983) provides a much more thorough understanding of how change comes about. However, for the purposes of this study, this more limited understanding is enough.

27 Sheehan 1996.

28 See for instance, Duyvesteyn, 2005 and Reno 1998.

29 Hutchful and Aning 2004.

30 A clear example is Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Independent inquiry committee into the UN oil-for-food program (IIC) 2005.

31 For example, see Woodward 1995, Ellis 1999 and Richards 1996.

32 Waltz 1979.

33 See for instance Institute for Security Studies 2004.

34 See Brooks and Wohlforth 2005 on soft balancing.

35 Interestingly, the Operation Lifeline Sudan agreement with the UN which the SPLA signed specifically noted that the group would abide by the Geneva Conventions. Here we see an example of an armed group accepting some of the responsibilities of formal recognition by states in order to gain some of the benefits of recognition.

36 There is a threshold at which crime becomes anarchic war. With crime the government continues to have the monopoly over the legitimate use of violence and is organized to counter the criminal's use of violence. However, when the criminal becomes powerful enough, the government is no longer able to live behind the illusion of countering criminals. Rather, the criminal group comes to gain autonomy from the state – sovereignty – and the nature of conflict becomes an existential fight for survival. In order for this to happen, the criminal group(s) must come to develop the ability for sustained and systematic military action.

37 In most instances, however, war will not be a prescribed course of action because of the distinct possibility that it will weaken the aggressor as well, and since units are more concerned with security than with power, it will in general be more advisable to balance power through alliances or other means. In this way, war can be deterred.

38 Even if the state were to give up its attempt at monopolizing authority, the logic of the security dilemma would still likely lead to conflict.

## 4 Somali warlords and militias

1 An overlaid social unit is the diya-paying unit, composed of close relatives who contract to pay (or receive) blood money, or diya, if one of the members of the group kills an individual from or raids the resources of another group (Lewis 1988). The diya process is used as a method conflict resolution, short of revenge killings, and requires clan elders to negotiate a payment in return for the crime (Menkhaus 2000).

Clans can also interact in peaceful ways through xeer, a set of customary laws. The laws are precedent based and passed down through oral transmission, within and between units (ibid.) Like international regimes, xeer establishes norms and obligations, but does not represent enforceable laws.

2 These clans are the Darod, Isaaq, Dir, Hawiye, Rahanwein, and Digil.

3 Referred to as *gashaanbur* in pastoral society, in which small lineages ally against a large lineage (Compagnon 1998).

4 Copagnon 1998.

5 In general, Barre used patronage as his central ruling strategy. His ability to control access to economic opportunity, especially from foreign assistance, allowed him to keep clan elders and other potential elites beholden to him (Reno 2003). Beyond patrimonial linkages, Barre also used manipulation of clan competition through his 'MOD' regime – Marehan, his clan, Ogaden, his wife's, and Dulbahante, that of his son-in-law, cum head of national security.

6 Compagnon 1998.

7 Lewis 1994.

8 Aidid would go on to form alliances with other southern factions and this militia would become known as the Somali National Alliance (SNA).

9 The immense destruction of the years of fighting combined with the starvation of the Somali people led to a UN intervention in Somalia to protect the humanitarian aid workers attempting to feed the population in 1992. The intervention will be covered in more detail below.

10 Issa-Salwe 1994.

11 BBC 28 May 2002.

12 BBC 11 July 2006 and *New York Times* 13 May 2006.

13 This following typology is loosely based on WSP 2004. Also see Vinci 2006c.

14 Compagnon 1998.

15 Interview, UN Source, Nairobi, 30 March 2005.

16 In many ways it resembles the tripartite structure of the army, government and people detailed by Clausewitz (1989).

17 Hussein Adam (1992) may have been the first analyst to describe the emerging political-military actors in Somalia as 'warlords'. He did this based on a comparison with the analysis of warlords in Chad, put forth by Charlton and May (Charlton and May 1989).

18 Reno 2003.

19 See Marchal 1997 for a more detailed discussion of mooryaan.

20 Not all freelance militiamen might be considered mooryaan, but the mooryaan make up the bulk.

21 Reno 2003.

22 Another notable effect of mooryaanism is that the Somali traditional respect for the safety of non-combatants in conflict, known a *birimageydo* ('to be spared from the iron') has broken down (WSP 2004).

23 This process of 'warlord formation' may be generalizeable to other instances of warlord formation. For example, a similar process seems to have happened in Afghanistan and to a degree in Tajikistan. However, as noted in the introduction, this study is only focused on relations, and therefore will not pursue this point. A next step in research might be to apply this logic of warlord formation (armed group formation in general) more systematically and integrate it into the theoretical approach presented in this study.

24 For instance, livestock trading is a lucrative profession in Somalia. In order to move livestock to the border for export it is necessary to 'negotiate multiple agreements with communities and militias to insure safe passage across vast expanses of territory' (Little 2003: 152).

25 ICG 2002.

26 The effects of these coalitions were to make cross-regional and cross-border travel easier, thereby stimulating the economy via trade with Ethiopia and Kenya. This process served as reinforcement, adding to the businessmen's wealth and the power of their militias.
27 Menkhaus 2003.
28 UNDP 2001.
29 See for instance Le Sage 2001.
30 Menkhaus 2002.
31 Ibid.
32 This is not to say that the UN is a singular actor. What it is to say is that as an alliance of security orientated actors, the UN represents – in perception – a single actor to the armed groups.
33 See UN 1997 for more details on the UN intervention.
34 In general, these separate involvements are sometimes referred to collectively as UNOSOM and this study will continue that practice.
35 The intervention was called unique in order to appease the Chinese who did not want to create a precedent for non-consensual intervention.
36 Clarke and Gosende 2003.
37 The plan was and is still considered controversial because, as Laitin notes,

> due to Oakley's initial decision to accommodate the warlords, and with the full expectation on the part of all combatants that there would be no significant outside force in the country after May 1994, the warlords had an incentive to resist international attempts to construct a civil society.
>
> (Laitin 1999: 162)

38 Interview with UN Source, Nairobi, 29 March 2005.
39 Various interviews with UN and NGO personnel, Nairobi, May 2005.
40 UNOSOM II Mandate, based on UN Security Council Resolution 814 (1993), 26 March 1993.
41 Ibid.
42 UN Security Council Resolution 897 (1994), 4 February 1994.
43 See UN Peacekeeping 1995 for more background.
44 The SNA preferred that regional powers, i.e. Ethiopia, should help facilitate the reduction in conflict in Somalia (UN Peace Keeping 1995).
45 After the 5 June attack, the UN instituted an investigation which came to this conclusion (UN 1997).
46 See for instance, Bowden 1999.
47 Binney 2003.
48 Ibid.
49 This goes against other authors, for instance Le Sage (2001), who might argue that the alliances and wars were based on grievances, such as a difference in views on radical Islamic beliefs.
50 OLF 2005.
51 There is also competition over the eventual shape of the Somali state. Ethiopia tends to want a weaker state, taking a federal form. Egypt and Libya back a stronger, more centralized state. This makes sense, as Ethiopia wants to weaken a potential enemy while Egypt and Libya want to strengthen a potential ally.
52 See Menkhaus 2002 for more on Al Ittihad.
53 UNDOS points to

> some anecdotal evidence that the al Ittihad movement in Gedo region did not want any association with terrorist activities inside Ethiopia, and was angry over an Islamist assassination attempt in Addis Ababa, for obvious reasons – the Luuq al

> Ittihad was the only fixed Islamic target in the region, and stood to pay a heavy price for terrorism and adventurism by Islamist cells elsewhere.
>
> (UNDOS 1998: 146)

54 UNDOS 1998.
55 Ibid.
56 Also noted by Le Sage 2001.
57 Reuters 1996, UNHCR 1996 and Le Sage 2001.
58 UNDOS 1998.
59 Ibid.

## 5 The Lord's Resistance Army

1 For a detailed analysis of the LRA as an organization and its survival-orientated motivations, see Vinci 2007.
2 Van Acker 2004.
3 (Behrend 1999) The Holy spirit Tactics involved initiation, purification, and ritual through which members of HSM were led to believe that they were invulnerable and that other magical benefits were theirs to use, including the ability to turn stones into grenades and bees into allies. These spiritual tactics were combined with conventional tactics and an organizational structure modeled on the British colonial format (ibid. 110). While Alice was able to win a major battle in 1986, she and the HSM were ultimately defeated in November 1987.
4 Doom and Vlassenroot 1999.
5 Cline 2003.
6 Behrend 1999.
7 The evolution of the LRA can be seen in its name changes. The initial movement was called the Holy Spirit Movement II – a blatant attempt at following the HSM. Then it became the Lord's Salvation Army, presumably to distance itself from the HSM. When many former UPDA fighters joined and the army became more of a guerilla force and held less emphasis on the spiritual side, it became the United Democratic Christian Force. Finally, with the death of Latek and return to a more spiritual basis, Kony's army became the Lord's Resistance Army in 1992.
8 Doom and Vlassenroot 1999.
9 Ibid.
10 Interview with member of peace negotiations team, Gulu, 14 January 2005.
11 The LRA may have also felt that the traditional districts of Gulu, Kitgum, and Pader could no longer support them because they had been fully looted.
12 ICG 2004.
13 IRIN 2002.
14 Noted in multiple interviews, Gulu, January 2005.
15 Interview with UN Access Advisor, Gulu, 14 January 2005. Confirmed in other interviews.
16 IRIN 12 April 2005.
17 BBC News 7 October 2005.
18 IRIN 28 August 2006.
19 ICG 2005.
20 Voice of America 2006.
21 BBC News 13 February 2008.
22 See Vinci 2007b for a more extensive discussion.
23 Reported in BBC News 15 April 2004. Although the interview does give a rare glance into the organization, it should be taken with a grain of salt, as it was conducted by a former Kony bodyguard who has remained anonymous.
24 The Monitor 15 April 2004.

25 BBC News 28 June 2006.
26 Jackson 2002.
27 Vinci 2005.
28 Various interviews, Gulu, Kampala, January 2005.
29 Interview, WFP head, Gulu, 19 January 2005.
30 Gathered from various interviews in northern Uganda during January 2005.
31 Interview with NGO Country Director, Gulu, January 13, 2005.
32 Collier 2000.
33 Interview with member of peace negotiations team, Gulu, 14 January 2005.
34 Of which Kony reportedly has between 30 and 100.
35 The view that the LRA is thought of as a vocation conforms to recent analyses of the LRA's demands in any negotiated peace. For instance, the International Crisis Group notes that it is necessary to '[put] on the table a comprehensive settlement that focuses on security and livelihood guarantees for both LRA commanders and rank and file' (ICG 2005: 8). They refer to one person close to the peace process who underscores this recommendation, remaking that '[a]lmost everything boils down to these two things. Fear for their safety and their economic future are the two things wearing on the LRA' (ICG 2005: 7).
36 Interview with Walter Ochora, Chairman of Gulu local district council, Gulu, quoted in IRIN 2003.
37 Noted in interviews with local residents in Gulu, January 2005.
38 The exact number of such children is unknown.
39 Human Rights Watch 1997.
40 See Vinci 2006b.
41 ICG interview with Ugandan official, Kampala, December 2003, reported in ICG 2004.
42 Normally, they do not carry weapons heavier than RPGs and bring only the food necessary for survival. If the unit loots a lot of food or other goods, it will temporarily abduct adults or children to carry it.
43 The LRA reportedly stole radios from the Catholic Church, which still is able to track their transmissions (though they are encoded). Often the units will have to walk to known areas of the bush where they can receive cell phone service and occasionally must send someone to buy phone credit from a town. There are numerous stories of dirty, ragged men walking out of the bush and buying a million shillings worth of phone credit. (Gathered from various interviews conducted in Gulu and surrounding IDP camps, January 2005).
44 Though they are not in constant communication, as illustrated by attacks occurring after Kony called cease fires, the units are able to coordinate their movements enough to assure that there is little unwarranted overlap.
45 Vinci 2005.
46 There are some qualifications to make, in particular, there are rumors of profiteering by high-ranking UPDF officers abound in the north. In particular, there is talk of officers making land purchases and otherwise gaining from the insecurity in the region. There is undoubtedly significant corruption involved in the conflict, but the lack of hard evidence makes these issues difficult to theorize about and, moreover, they do not seem to have consequences for the broader counterinsurgent strategies.
47 IRIN News 15 September 2005.
48 IRIN News 20 April 2004.
49 IRIN 11 October 2005.
50 HRW 1998b.
51 New Vision 2005.
52 Although this characterization of the current relationship between the SPLA and GoS is not fully explanatory, it is suitable for the discussion in question – that being the impact on the relationship with the LRA. Clearly this is an area for further study.

53 Interview with James Mugame. Reported in IRIN 2003.
54 *Kenya Times*, reported in IRIN 2002.
55 O'Ballance 2000.
56 Uganda even attempted to make its alliance with the SPLA official. In 1997, President Museveni went so far as to ask the Organization of African Unity to declare the war a colonial conflict, which would have allowed African states to overtly supply the SPLA with material support (O'Ballance 2000).
57 This civilizational border may really exist within the Sudanese state, specifically in the separation of the 'Arab' north from the 'African' south.
58 There is an ethnic group, the Acholi people, who inhabit this land border and are present in both states – an issue that has led to conflict in other states.
59 Although it is not clear when the Ugandan government aligned with the SPLA; nevertheless, if it did so after Sudan aligned with the LRA, the point would still hold.
60 BBC News 2008.

**6 Al Qaeda**

1 For more on Al Qaeda's history, see Wright 2006 and Bergen 2001.
2 Other attacks previous to these may have been the work of Al Qaeda, including an attack on hotels in Aden Yemen in 1992 and the 1993 World Trade Center bombing.
3 AP 2007 and Hoffman 2004.
4 Schweitzer 2003.
5 See for instance Hoffman 2004.
6 IISS 2003/4.
7 Wright 2006.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 For instance, Rafiq Sabir was recorded by the FBI taking such an oath (DOJ 2007).
11 Stern 2003.
12 Gunaratna 2002.
13 There is some debate as to the degree to which Al Qaeda has a centralized organization. However, even those on the more decentralized wing of the debate admit to some centralization by the organization. See for instance Hoffman 2004.
14 Hoffman 2004.
15 IISS 2003/4.
16 Comras 2005.
17 At least with Al Qaeda in Iraq – an affiliated sub-group of Al Qaeda – coercion has been used to maintain loyalty. In one well-reported instance, the group executed those whom it considered to be disloyal to the cause (CNN 18 February 2008).
18 National Commission on Terrorist Attacks 2004.
19 See for instance National Commission on Terrorist Attacks 2004.
20 Bergen 2004.
21 See for instance Wright 2006.
22 Wright 2006.
23 AP 11 July 2007.
24 National Commission on Terrorist Attacks 2004.
25 See for instance Scheuer 2003.
26 See for instance, Bin Laden speech reprinted in the *Guardian* 24 November 2002. Also see Scheuer 2003.
27 See Vinci 2008 for a longer exposition on the subject of Al Qaeda's use of instrumental and symbolic attacks.
28 CNN 2 November 2004.
29 Zawahiri 2001.
30 Al Jazeera 2004.

31 This may be seen as a fundamental strategy in the Islamic way of war that Al Qaeda has taken on. See Coker 2002 and Vinci 2008.
32 Al Jazeera 18 October 2003.
33 Lia and Hegghammer 2004.
34 NBC News 15 April 2004.
35 Wright 2006.
36 See for instance Tilghman 2007.
37 CNN 2004 and Associated Press 28 December 2004.
38 Associated Press 28 December 2004.
39 Stern 2003: 31.
40 ICG 2003.
41 Ibid.
42 Gunaratna 2004.
43 AP 11 July 2007.
44 Ibid.
45 See for instance Stern 2003 and Gunaratna 2004.
46 BBC news 26 October 2001.
47 See Davis and Jenkins 2002.
48 CNN 7 March 2008.

## 7 Conclusion

1 It may also be possible to apply Realist, rather than Neorealist concepts to the analysis of armed groups at a unit level. While this book has focused on Neorealism, the application of Realist requirements is likely very similar as those for Neorealism, i.e. anarchy, unitary actors and survival orientated. Thus, many of the insights which Realism brings to the analysis of state actors may also be used to analyze armed groups. For instance, it may be a useful theory for understanding the psychology of armed group leadership.
2 See for instance Layne 2004.
3 For more on de facto states see Kingston and Spears 2004.
4 Bull 1977, Jackson 1993
5 Sudanese People's Liberation Movement 1996
6 See for instance Arquilla and Ronfeldt 2001.
7 An even further place to take this line of thinking would be to treat all domestic environments as anarchic systems and then to apply balance of power thinking to internal relations as well.
8 This is a separate critique of the nature of anarchy from that made by Constructivists like Wendt. Wendt (1999) theorizes about the construction of anarchy. This study does not question the reality of anarchy, nor its nature. Indeed, the anarchy that is argued for is identical in nature to that described by Waltz.
9 Cerny 1998, Cerny develops his theory from Bull's (1977) earlier work.
10 Duffield 2001
11 Earlier, Ruggie (1986) made a more general argument that the medieval system had a different balance of anarchy and hierarchy than is present now and that Neorealism was not equipped to understand such a system.
12 See Vinci 2008 for more justification to target terrorist alliances.

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