

Political and Security Integration of VCAs: Lessons for the Taliban

SMA Speaker Series 2019

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Overview

The Economist

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Khyber possibility

America and the Taliban are edging towards a deal

But is it a cover for cutting and running?



Print edition | Asia >
Jan 3rd 2015 | ISLAMABAD

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Overview

U.S. and Taliban negotiation for possible integration. Now what?

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- **Goals:**
 - Short term: ensure smooth transition to peace
 - Long term: generate a stable state
- **Risk factors:**
 - Civil war renewal
 - Retributive violence
 - Authoritarianism

Structure of Presentation

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- **VCA**s:
 - Victorious, Complementary, Agents

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- **VCAs:**
 - Victorious, Complementary, Agents
- **(Re)Integrating VCAs (e.g., militias)**
 - Pro: Short term military, long term political integration
 - Con: Political feasibility, implications unclear

Approach

A combination of descriptive cross-national evidence

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 - Successful integration of Lechi group
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- Ongoing research
 - Kosovo (UCK and FARK) using interviews and surveys
 - Tajikistan using secondary sources

Main Takeaways

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 - Monitor "tribal" territories against security threats
- ③ Political (re)legitimization should be achieved over time
 - Earn is as security forces, illustrate ability to work for the state
 - Help to ensure political, democratic stability
 - Eventually party might come to rule, ideally legitimately

Rebel Group Perspective

Recent research links political integration of rebels and stability

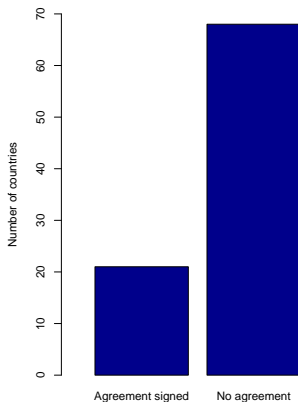
Rebel Group Perspective

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- Emphasis is on electoral participation provisions
- I.e., *ensuring* former rebel group runs as a political party
- Presumably to facilitate political equality, amnesty
- E.g. Matanock 2016

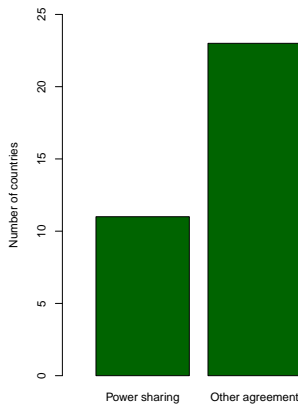
Power Sharing: A Look at the Numbers

Agreements Signed during Civil War (Global, 1975-2005)



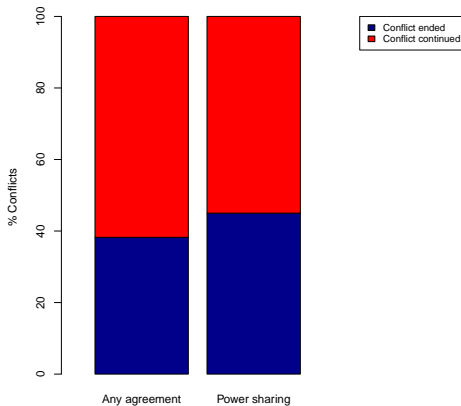
Power Sharing: A Look at the Numbers

Portion of Agreements that were Power Sharing



Power Sharing: A Look at the Numbers

Effect of Agreements on Conflict Termination



The VCA Alternative

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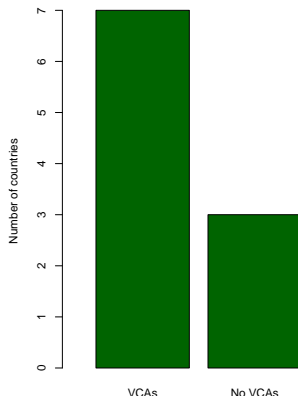
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③ *Agent*

- Taliban are not part of the official state apparatus
- A militia/set of militias

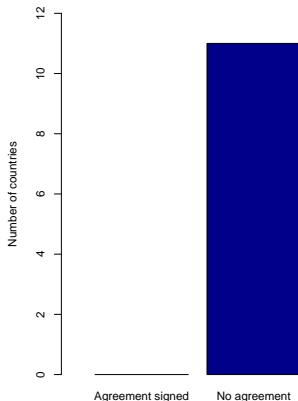
VCAs: Evidence from (Limited) Data

Number of Conflicts with and without VCAs Europe and the Caucasus, 1989-2014



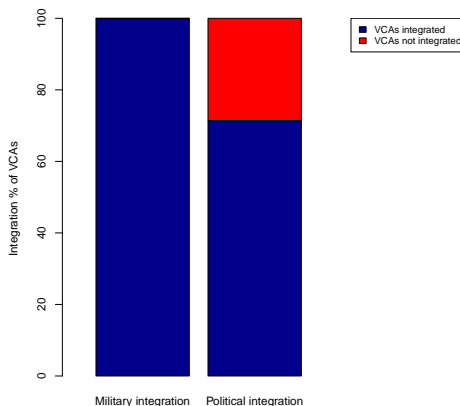
Compare to Power Sharing Agreements in Same Regions

Number of Peace and Power Sharing Agreements Europe and the Caucasus



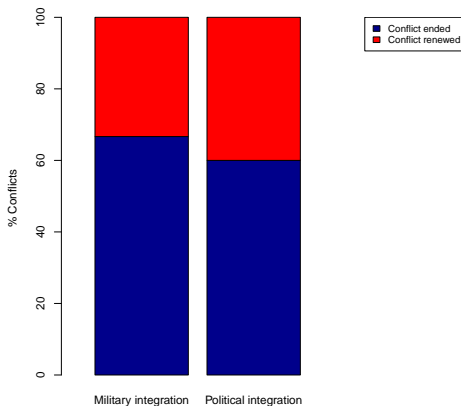
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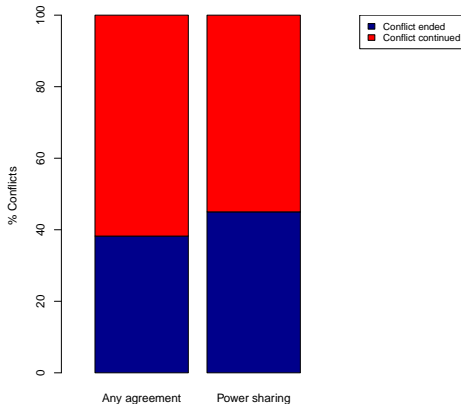
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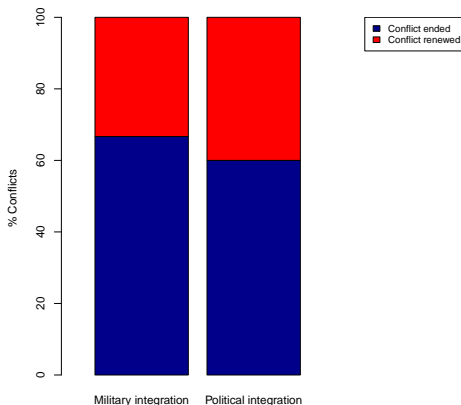
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Evidence from Israel



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- Lechi outlawed not only by British, but Israeli Government
 - Amnesty in 1949 by President Weizman

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- Tactics: civilian cloths, small arms, small-scale operations

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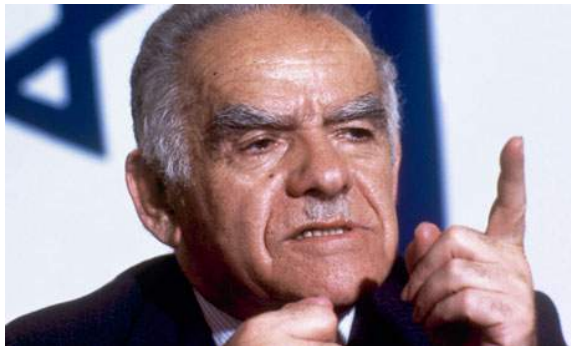
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- Despite small size, Lechi members shape political, social spaces

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- How can we explain Lechi's move to the mainstream?
- Considering social stigma, political atmosphere in 1948?
- E.g., in January 1949 elections, Lothamim party gets ~1% of vote
- Short answer: Lechi members were politically “laundered”
 - Via alternative-to-mainstream pathways
 - Both civilian, but also (especially) external-security related

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- Replaces Menachem Begin as PM in 1983
 - Serves until 1992 (rotation with Peres in 1985)

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- Arrested after assassination of Bernadotte (1949)
 - Escapes prison, hides until amnesty is provided
 - Never joins the IDF

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- (Ironically) heads Brinks Israel LLC, 1975-1989
- Involved with the right-wing Moledet party for a brief period

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- ① Alternative pathways to legitimacy
- ② Illustration of utility to the state
- ③ A sense of usefulness, social contribution

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- No political limits on promotion, no discrimination
- Unlike most state institutions, e.g. the army, political system
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③ A sense of usefulness, social contribution

- The group helped winning the war, yet was vilified
- Helps to feel efforts were important, contribution appreciated
- Paves the way for legitimate political influence

Other Cases

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 - Two groups (UCK, FARK)
 - FARK less well integrated
 - Variations are more at the village rather than group level
- Tajikistan
 - Militias not integrated
 - Mass killing followed

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 - E.g., the Altalena affair (June 1948)
- Lechi never held clear territories, no rebel phase
 - But it did attack “collaborators”, violence without much aim
 - Potential for conflict (especially without amnesty)

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Similarities with the Taliban from a VCA-centric perspective:

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 - Israel is majority Jewish, as are the VCAs
 - In both cases intra-state ethnic variations

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② Rigid ideology, internal targeting

- Although the Taliban is much more extreme
- Both groups have strong ideology that justified violence
- *Internal* (against same-group members)
- As well as external terrorism

Lessons to Taliban Integration

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① Alternative pathways to legitimacy

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- Incorporating Taliban into a complementary security org.
- Gendarmerie (e.g., the Carabinieri)
- Border Guards (again, a Lechi member pathway)

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- E.g., using the Taliban to tackle *external* threats (e.g., Iran)
- Or counter other anti-state elements (e.g., ISIL)
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③ Social contribution

- Assist rather than terrorize population
- Pave the way for legitimate political influence

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 - E.g., the *Basij* in Iran
 - Trying to emphasize external security, anti-ISIL
- ③ Allow for legitimacy to be obtained *over time*
 - Party would not only be accepted, but also part of the system
 - Not a transplant into a foreign, hated democratic system

Thank You

A Case of Power Sharing Success: FARC



Source: cnn.com

A Case of Power Sharing Success: FARC

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- Transitions into a political party
 - Guaranteed 10 unelected seats in legislature
 - Amnesty to generals, including war crime perpetrators
 - Allowed to keep much of illegal gain
 - Thousands of dissidents still continue illicit activities

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Area Under FARC Control



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- ⑤ Peace deal was rejected in 2016 referendum

Area Under Taliban Control (2018)



Source: [aljazeera.com](https://www.aljazeera.com)