

# From Bombs to Ballots: When Militant Organizations Transition to Political Parties

**Benjamin Acosta** Claremont Graduate University

*When do militant organizations transition to political parties? Once reaching the productive limits of political violence, militant organizations sometimes seek to adopt party politics in order to continue pursuing their political ends or “outcome” goals. However, most militant organizations remain incapable of transitioning due to two common constraints: the base constituency’s preference for violence and credibility deficiencies vis-à-vis the adversary. Analyzing an original dataset of 406 organizations, I find evidence that partial outcome-goal achievement and state supporters help militant organizations overcome the obstacles preventing transition. Crucially, whereas the complete achievement of militant outcome goals absorbs the chief organizational incentive to transition, partial achievement of outcome goals fosters transition to the party format more than any other factor.*

Militant organizations, just as nonviolent political parties, endure in order to achieve the goals that justify their existence.<sup>1</sup> “Outcome” goals like national self-determination, regime change, and social revolution signify the purpose and generating spark of most militant organizations. When formal political institutions and nonviolent means provide few opportunities to achieve such goals, collectives often resort to violent alternatives (Aksoy and Carter 2014; Wucherpfennig et al. 2012). Consequently, organizations employ violence to gain and mobilize supporters for a collective cause (Bloom 2005; Crenshaw 1981; Hoffman and McCormick 2004) and establish a credible threat against adversaries as bargaining currency (Abraham 2013; Crenshaw 1990; Kydd and Walter 2006; Schelling 1960, 1966). In the late 1960s, Palestinians *en masse* began looking to militant organizations to advance collective political goals (Sayigh 1997). As Clausewitz asserted long ago: “war is [simply a] continuation of [politics] with other means” ([1832] 1984, 77).

Yet over time, rebel, insurgent, terrorist, and other types of militant organizations sometimes change their organizational make-up and in a number

of cases even transition to a party format.<sup>2</sup> By the mid-2000s, the two leading Palestinian militant organizations had adopted party politics. Why—after periods of devotion solely to armed conflict—do some militant organizations transition to political parties? Inverting the Clausewitzian maxim, the Leninist notion that “politics is the continuation of war under another guise” (Chernov 1924, 366) reminds us that under different circumstances politics and war can each mark effective ways to achieve the same outcome goal. Dissatisfied with the limits of political violence, many militant organizations change course and take nonviolent political routes. Greater participation and external support boost the likelihood of organizations reaching their outcome goals (Acosta 2014; Chenoweth and Stephan 2011; DeNardo 1985), and transitioning *warfare* from the battlefield to the political arena potentially expands an organization’s constituency as well as increases its international legitimacy. Moreover, by adopting party politics, organizations stand to mobilize additional followers who otherwise refused to support violent efforts but who also refrained from mobilizing prior to the militant campaign. In this sense, transition lights an

<sup>1</sup>An online appendix with supplemental material and additional empirical results is available at both <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0022381614000188> and [www.benjaminacosta.com](http://www.benjaminacosta.com). Replication materials are available at [www.benjaminacosta.com](http://www.benjaminacosta.com).

<sup>2</sup>The inverse, which lies beyond the scope of this study, also occurs where nonviolent political parties take up arms (Weinberg, Pedahzur, and Perliger 2009).

alternative pathway for pursuing and achieving outcome goals.

However, most militant organizations remain incapable of forgoing violence. Indeed, base constituent preferences for violence and credibility deficiencies vis-à-vis adversaries tend to preclude militants from adopting nonviolent strategies from the onset of their campaigns. Until Palestinian organizations conducted numerous large-scale terror and guerrilla attacks against Israeli interests in the 1960s and 1970s, Israel paid little attention to Palestinian national demands (Hoffman 2006). As the Palestinian case demonstrates, militancy may offer a collective a voice that otherwise goes ignored, generating a preference and base of support for organizations willing to use violence. Yet, the very organizational threat that made Palestinian militants credible and “worthy” adversaries of Israel degraded the credibility of those same organizations to commit to negotiations, agreements, and other developments that lead to participation in party politics (Abrahms 2013). As such, any militant trajectory that includes transition to the party framework first involves overcoming the external credibility problem and the internal preference for violence.

To transition to party politics, many militant organizations necessarily convince adversaries (or the powers that oversee a given electoral system) of their credibility to commit to transition and any related agreements. With the support and brokerage of the United States and others, Yasser Arafat’s *Harakat al-Tahrir al-Watani al-Filistini* (Fatah)—the leading faction within the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)—assured Israel of its sincerity to transition. Operating from pertinent positions of legitimacy and power, state supporters can “vouch” for militants and assure target states that the organization in question will credibly commit to transition (Bapat 2006)—though usually in exchange for the target making concessions to the militant organization. In the case of Fatah, in exchange for transitioning, the United States persuaded Israel to agree to the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA), granting Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza a degree of autonomy and providing Fatah with partial achievement of its outcome goal (Morris 2001).

Importantly, constituents stand at the center of organizational survival, and a militant organization therefore requires constituent support to transition to a political party. By transitioning, organizations can attract new supporters and increase international legitimacy. But, the greatest downside may come in the form of a loss of base support, as constituents might view transition as a betrayal. As losing its base

could result in rapidly going defunct (Cronin 2009) or performing poorly once taking part in elections (de Zeeuw 2008), it serves an organization to transition only if it can preserve the support of its base. Convincing core constituents to relinquish the preference for violence and back transition normally entails the organization achieving some success and substantiating that the level of achievement attained marks the productive limits of political violence.

Success, then, arguably drives the transition of militant organizations to political parties (Cronin 2009). After using militancy to accomplish their shared outcome goal of founding a Jewish state in Mandatory Palestine, the Haganah and Irgun *Zvai Leumi* (IZL) both transitioned to political parties—exemplifying militant transition. On the other hand, upon successfully expelling the French from Algeria, the *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN) avoided instituting party politics. Further, militants regularly enter the arena of party politics following a negotiated cessation of violence (de Zeeuw 2008; Weinberg, Pedahzur, and Perliger 2009). *Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca* (URNG), Fatah, Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA), and *Movimiento 19 de Abril* (M-19), to list just a few, all transitioned after making agreements with their adversaries to end armed conflict. Still, organizations like Hezbollah and *Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya* ( Hamas) neither fully achieved their outcome goals nor negotiated settlement but transitioned to parties regardless.

The phenomenon of militant transition carries a fairly opaque paradox: the chief incentive for an organization to transition rests in achieving its outcome goal, yet outcome goal achievement remains an essential facilitator of transition as it helps organizations persuade their constituents to trade violence for party politics. Parties represent a “means to achieve [goals]” (Aldrich 2011, 299), and accordingly, a major incentive for party formation centers on goal achievement. Militant organizations that achieve their outcome goals in total lose the primary incentive to transition. Thus, partial rather than complete outcome-goal achievement likely precipitates militant transition. In the face of military stalemate or a related condition that exposes the beneficial limits of political violence, many militant organizations seek alternative means to existing ends (Shugart 1992).<sup>3</sup> As a result, militants sometimes turn

<sup>3</sup>Likewise, target states unable to eliminate militant organizations through military force begin to search for different ways to end the threat.

to party politics to expand their constituency and power base in order to accomplish outcome goals or complete partially met goals. However, understanding the possible utility of transition does not equate the ability to transition.

Levels of organizational achievement and state support shape the potential of militant organizations to transition. After or amid partially achieving outcome goals, militants are better situated to convince base constituents to abandon their preference for violence. In contrast, without a degree of achievement, militants commonly lack the capital to overcome the constituent preference for violence, and reaching outcome goals completely notably detracts from the likelihood of transition as militants lose the primary organizational incentive to adopt the party format. With a higher level of accountability, militant organizations under state sponsorship attain greater credibility—increasing the odds of adversaries granting concessions in exchange for a commitment to transition to nonviolent political means.

In the following sections, I review the relevant literature and frame a general theory on the transition of militant organizations to political parties. Next, I outline the research design, followed by empirical models that reveal that partial achievement and state sponsors foster militant transition. Presenting further support for the theory, I then assess three alternative explanations and illustrate a case example of Palestinian militant organizations. I conclude by discussing the study's implications.

## Getting to Party Politics

Large-*n* empirical studies show that militant organizations achieve their outcome goals in a small minority of cases (Abrahms 2012; Acosta 2014; Cronin 2009; DeRouen and Sobek 2004; Jones and Libicki 2008). Some even posit that nonviolent resistance campaigns are more effective than militant efforts in achieving outcome goals (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011). Why then do many nonstate actors choose violence over pursuing their aims through party politics or other forms of nonviolent political action in the first place? Many opposition organizations confront one if not two main problems that initially prevent them from adopting a nonviolent approach.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Prior existence of an electoral system is unnecessary for an organization to adopt party politics, as militant transition frequently coincides with the establishment of an electoral system.

*Problem One: Violence as a Necessity for Mobilization.* When nonviolent means offer little promise to advance collective goals, constituencies may come to prefer violence to nonviolence (Bloom 2005; Crenshaw 1981; Gurr 1990). As a consequence of lasting and/or brutal conflicts and due to the use of violence empowering collectives that otherwise command marginal political attention, over time constituencies might develop a preference for violent means (Acosta 2010). In such contexts, employing violence equips organizations with a dependable means to produce a “self-sustaining rate of [political mobilization]” (Hoffman and McCormick 2004, 246) and to varying degrees institutionalizes support for violence within the collective (Acosta 2010; Bloom 2005).

*Problem Two: Credibility.* In attempts to get their adversaries to “take them seriously,” organizations rely on violent tactics for coercive political strategies. Many adversaries remain impervious to contentious nonviolent efforts, as oppositional organizations lack the credibility to impose a meaningful cost on their adversaries if they fail to meet organizational demands. In this sense, the allure of gaining the “credible threat” instigates oppositions to use violence (Abrahms 2013; Crenshaw 1990; Kydd and Walter 2006). In various settings, oppositions necessarily establish a credible threat to generate changes that ultimately make formal political institutions a viable option to move forward collective aims. However—as Abrahms describes “the credibility paradox”—when oppositions employ violence, they create a new challenge as “the very escalatory acts that add credibility to a [militant organization’s] threat can subtract credibility from [its pledge to end the threatening act if the target makes institutional changes or grants concessions]” (2013, 660). As such, credibility problems tend to prolong most armed conflicts involving nonstate actors (Walter 1997).

## Militant Achievement and Overcoming the Preference for Violence

To transition, militant organizations usually depend on the consent of corresponding constituencies. Whether facing stalemate or a comparable circumstance, the organizational decision to transition often begins with organizations realizing that they have reached the productive limits of political violence (Manning 2008; Shugart 1992). Nevertheless, acknowledging the potential benefits of transition is quite different from being able to transition. To survive, an organization builds and maintains support from the constituency on whose

behalf it fights (Tilly 1978; Wucherpfennig et al. 2012). Moreover, constituent support for transition is vital since organizations will need the support of a significant voting bloc to progress their outcome goals through elections (Allison 2006; de Zeeuw 2008). Yet, militant organizations that join the institutions of government and elections run the risk of alienating their constituency, a fraction of which may view such institutions as illegitimate or nonviolent means as ineffective (Irvin 1999). Therefore, in transitioning, a militant organization first requires backing from a large portion of its constituency (De Zeeuw 2008).

For constituents that deem party politics “corrupt,” “foreign,” or against the interests of an ongoing military campaign, militant organizations utilize a persuasive instrument to show that adopting party politics marks the right move to advance collective goals. Achieving parts of their outcome goals and substantiating that the level of success achieved represents the productive limits of political violence can equip militants with the necessary domestic leverage to initiate organizational change. To incentivize constituents to support a move to nonviolence, organizations time transition to capitalize on recent or concurrent success.

For example, after expelling Western forces from Lebanon, Hezbollah stepped out of the shadows in 1985 and within a decade began to participate in Lebanese politics directly—but not without careful maneuvering.<sup>5</sup> Hezbollah’s leadership conducted extensive debates over the prospects of adopting party politics (Azani 2013; Rabil 2012). Considering the organization spent prior years deploring Lebanon’s confessional political system (Norton 2007), many in Hezbollah questioned if its “revolutionary” Shi’a support base would now approve of the organization joining the political “game” (Rabil 2012). Yet, with the conclusion of Lebanon’s civil war in 1990 and by the end of its clashes with rival Afwaj al-Muqawama al-Lubnaniye (Amal) a year later, Hezbollah had effectively set up a de facto government in al-Dahiye al-Janubiye (the southern suburb of Beirut) and sections of South Lebanon. This provided Hezbollah with partial achievement of its stated outcome goal to overthrow Lebanon’s ruling “political Maronitism” and replace it with an Iranian-modeled Islamic republic (Hamzeh 1993,

334; Rabil 2012). Taking to its constituency the argument that it achieved most of its military objectives, Hezbollah presented a “Lebanonization” program, aiming to “electorally legitimize itself” and diffuse its ideology by opening it up to all Lebanese (Rabil 2012, 55). As Aldrich notes: “It is in part the need to win vast and diverse support that has led politicians to create political parties” (2011, 23). Operating from within the Lebanese political system, Hezbollah envisaged expanding its constituency and eventually its control beyond South Lebanon. Moreover, Hezbollah used its Lebanonization program to demonstrate to its base that it had reached the beneficial limits of political violence and any effort to complete the goal of establishing an Islamic republic over *all* of Lebanon necessitated transitioning the organization’s “military jihad” to a “political jihad” (Hamzeh 1993, 321). Hezbollah also framed transition as a continuation of success that aligned with the changing collective identity and expectations of the Shi’a population, which in just over a decade had gone from viewing itself as the “dispossessed” to the rightful leading sect in Lebanon (Childs 2011; Hamzeh 1993). With its transition, “there is little doubt that Hezbollah has proved responsive to the attitudes and aspirations of its domestic constituency” (Norton 2007, 45). Accordingly, Hezbollah began “engaging in precisely the game of confessional Lebanese politics that [it denounced throughout the 1980s]” (Norton 2007, 45). In 1992, following careful preparation, Hezbollah announced its platform for upcoming elections. Hezbollah’s conclusion that party politics and expanding its constituency marked the only way to further progress its cause uncovers another key facet of the relation between militant achievement levels and transition.

Complete outcome-goal achievement appears less likely to promote militant transition to party politics than partial success—possibly even reducing the odds of transition. Long-standing political actors establish parties as a new means to achieve an existing political end (Aldrich 2011). When organizations accomplish their goals outright—like organizations that achieve military victories that topple adversarial regimes—much of the organizational incentive to transition evaporates. In contrast, achieving some success, though remaining outmatched or at parity with their adversaries or rivals, might direct organizations to transition in efforts to accomplish the remainder of their outcome goals. As militant organizations that seek transition can use their limited success to convince their constituencies to support a new direction, partial goal achievement may foster transition.

<sup>5</sup>Despite its name, which means the “Party of God,” Hezbollah openly avoided Lebanon’s confessional politics during its first decade in existence. From its inception in 1982 until 1985, Hezbollah operated as the Islamic Jihad Organization, among a variety of other names.

*H1A:* Militant organizations transition to political parties as a nonviolent way to continue pursuing outcome goals.

*H1B:* Militant organizations that achieve partial outcome-goal success are more likely to transition to political parties than militant organizations that achieve complete outcome-goal success.

### State Supporters and Overcoming Credibility Deficiencies

The second barrier a militant organization often faces prior to transitioning involves its standing with the adversary or the state that oversees the electoral system to which the organization aims to integrate. Centrally, overcoming the constituent preference for violence usually entails achieving a degree of success, which itself tends to require overcoming credibility deficiencies that inhibit the adversary from granting favorable concessions. To negotiate agreements that facilitate transition, militant organizations regularly rely on external supporters.

The relationship between state sponsors and militant organizations offers a potential remedy to credibility deficiencies as it relates to organizational promises to remove the threat of violence. Militant organizations initially enlist external support to boost their capacity and gain diplomatic cover (Byman 2005). When states sponsor militant organizations, the political capital of each actor links to an extent within the international community. Particularly if a relationship has widespread exposure, sponsors might fear reprisal from target states (Bapat 2006). Therefore, in exchange for support, state sponsors exact some control over militant organizations (Findley, Piazza, and Young 2012; Salehyan 2010; Salehyan, Gleditsch, and Cunningham 2011), and as a result organizations commonly alter their activities so they align with the sponsor's interests (Byman 2005). Serving its own objectives, a state sponsor may vouch for a militant organization during a negotiation process or actively work to broker negotiations. If persuasive, state supporters assure the target state of the militant organization's sincerity to commit to agreements (Bapat 2006; Salehyan 2010),<sup>6</sup> such as those that get militants to transition. Once an organization establishes a threat credible and draws the adversary into a stalemate or related circumstance, then a sponsor's imparted credibility (to end the threat) can assist the organization in trading its use of violence for concessions from the target. Notably, the more state supporters an organization maintains, the higher the

chances that at least one has the stature and access with the target to successfully vouch for the organization.

The Islamic Republic of Iran acting as the middleman between al-Tayyar al-Sadri and the Republic of Iraq makes for a fitting example. In 2008, Jaish al-Mahdi (JaM), the armed force of al-Tayyar al-Sadri, and the Iraqi government battled in the streets of Amarah, Baghdad, and Basra. Approaching an apparent standoff, JaM hunkered down in its stronghold of "Sadr City"—a Shi'a area of Baghdad loyal to al-Tayyar al-Sadri's leader Muqtada al-Sadr. Opening up a back channel with Iran (i.e., Sadr's benefactor), Iraq's government led by Nouri al-Maliki aimed to bring Sadr's force solely into Iraq's participatory fold. Ultimately, Iran brokered a deal that allowed Sadr to retain political control over parts of Shi'a Baghdad in return for disarming JaM/al-Tayyar al-Sadri and transitioning the organization fully into Iraq's system of participatory government and party politics (Kubaisi 2013).<sup>7</sup> For its part, Iran sought greater influence with Iraq, and al-Tayyar al-Sadri represented a vehicle into the Iraqi political arena. In subsequent years, al-Tayyar al-Sadri went on to excel in Iraqi governorate and parliamentary elections (Kubaisi 2013)<sup>8</sup>—even aligning with al-Maliki's governing coalition in 2010.

*H2:* The more state supporters a militant organization maintains, the more likely it is to transition to a political party.

### Research Design

To test the hypotheses, I analyze an original dataset that documents the attributes, alliances, and adversaries of 406 militant organizations active sometime between the years 1980 and 2012. In compiling the dataset, I conducted extensive research on each organization referring to a variety of source materials.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Waleed Ibrahim, "Iran Involved in Sadr City Truce, Says Iraqi MP," *Reuters*, 12 May 2008.

<sup>8</sup>Anthony Shadid and John Leland, "Anti-U.S. Cleric Returns to Iraq, and to Power," *New York Times*, 5 January 2011.

<sup>9</sup>I cross-referenced data entries with two or more sources, including the National Counterterrorism Center's "Terrorist Groups" and "Terrorist Profiles," both accessible at [www.nctc.gov/site](http://www.nctc.gov/site); the Institute for the Study of Violent Groups' "Violent Extremism Knowledge Base," accessible at [www.isvg.org](http://www.isvg.org); the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism's "Global Terrorism Database"; and the Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism's "Terrorist Organization Profiles"; both accessible at [www.start.umd.edu](http://www.start.umd.edu) and Acosta (2014). For details on the coding and sourcing of individual variables, see Table A in the online appendix.

<sup>6</sup>Walter (1997) and Manning (2008) put forth similar arguments regarding "third-party guarantors."

Special care was taken to prevent the inclusion of duplicate organizations, considering many militant organizations use numerous names or claim attacks under aliases.

### Coding Transition

The dependent variable is whether a militant organization *Transitions* to a political party. I classify an organization as a *political party* when it participates in competitive electoral politics (Aldrich 2011; Sartori 1976). In the dataset, 46 of the 406 organizations adopted party politics.

Under the definition, an entity can simultaneously operate as a militant organization and political party.<sup>10</sup> Hezbollah's participation in elections throughout the 1990s and early 2000s did not preclude future militant actions (as exemplified by the 2006 Hezbollah-Israel War), nor did its return to violence hinder further electoral participation (as evidenced in Lebanon's 2009 elections). Hezbollah and Amal in Lebanon, Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN) in Nicaragua, Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (RENAMO) in Mozambique, União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA) in Angola, and the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) in Namibia are a few organizations whose militant origins remain essential to their identities and platforms as political parties. Resistance and rebellion take various forms including nonviolent modes (Scott 1985), and these methods often exist within the "legitimate" institutions of government and elections. As such, in many contexts, armed resistance complements developing political functions (Blattman 2009; Clausewitz [1832] 1984; Dudouet 2013; Dunning 2011). In this respect, Weinberg, Pedahzur, and Perliger (2009, 132) highlight PIRA and Sinn Féin's measured move from bombs to the "ballot bomb" and eventually to just the ballot.

### Standard Independent Variables

Building on insights from studies on militant outcomes (Abrahms 2012; Acosta 2014; Cronin 2009; Jones and Libicki 2008), I incorporate numerous

<sup>10</sup>De Zeeuw (2008) views "demilitarization" as a prerequisite for transition. However, this is an arbitrary requirement for classification as a political party. If mere participation in violence puts an organization's classification as a political party into question, then numerous parties including those that head democratic governments that engage in wars or other military actions would necessarily be disqualified from the "party" title.

standard explanatory variables in the empirical analysis. These are a militant organization's *Age*, the number of *Attacks* an organization has carried out, the number of *Ties* an organization has established with fellow militant organizations, the binary variables of whether a political party *Initially Formed* the organization, and the organizational-size variables of *1,000-Plus Members* and *10,000-Plus Members*. I also include development variables of the primary enemy: *Enemy Polity* and *Enemy GDP Per Capita*.

### Coding State Supporters

In coding state supporters, I employ Byman's definition of sponsorship. His criterion focuses on "a government's *intentional assistance* to a [militant] organization to help it use violence, bolster its political activities, or sustain the organization" (2005, 10). As the definition suggests, I code states as sponsors even if they only provide a militant organization with diplomatic support.

### Outcome Goals and Coding Militant Achievement

Following previous studies (Abrahms 2012; Acosta 2014; Chenoweth and Stephan 2011), I treat the accomplishment of an organization's "outcome" goal as the measure of achievement.<sup>11</sup> Thus, an organization achieves success when its opponent makes a concession that fulfills the outcome goal or when an organization outlasts or eliminates its opponent outright resulting in outcome-goal achievement. Over their life spans, militant organizations achieve outcome goals partially, completely, or, as in most cases, not at all.

An outcome goal represents a militant organization's *raison d'être*. It signifies the purpose of an organization's genesis and persistence and reflects the desired outcome of an organization's constituency. Abrahms notes: "outcome goals" are the "stated political ends" of militant organizations, "such as the realization of a Kurdish homeland, the removal of foreign bases from Greece, or the establishment of Islamism in India" (2012, 367). Other examples are the Haqqani Network's goal of overthrowing Afghanistan's Karzai government, the Tupamaros' aim of replacing the Uruguayan state, and al-Qaeda's goal of reestablishing the Caliphate.

<sup>11</sup>Focusing on outcome-goal achievement emphasizes variation in the ability of organizations to utilize capacity in the cause of accomplishing the goals that justify and make their existence possible.

TABLE 1 Militant Achievement and Transition

Point of Transition	Number of Organizations
Transitioned prior to any success	15
Transitioned after/amid partial success	26
Transitioned after complete success	5
Total	46

To assess the effects of degrees of militant achievement, I code four variables that capture different facets of success—beginning with the two binary variables *Partial Outcome Goal Achievement* and *Complete Outcome Goal Achievement*. Complete achievement occurs when an organization reaches the entirety or near entirety of its publically stated outcome goal. The distinctions between complete and partial achievement and failure are evident in the amount or absence of change in relation to militant statements of intended change. Examples of the line between complete and partial achievement include sharing political power with other organizations rather than having total control, gaining autonomy instead of full self-determination, or capturing a fraction but not all of a coveted territory. Similarly, the absence of any gained autonomy, political power sharing, or territorial seizure characterizes the difference between partial success and failure.<sup>12</sup> I also analyze two binary variables that shed light on how the circumstance in which an organization achieves success affects its odds of transition: whether an organization achieved an outright *Military Victory* (e.g., eliminating the adversary) and whether an organization achieved a *Political Victory* (e.g., reaching a gainful agreement with the adversary).

### Descriptive Statistics: The Relationship between Militant Achievement and Transition

As Table 1 exhibits, of the 46 militant organizations that adopted a party format, most transitioned after or amid achieving partial success, many prior to achieving any success, and few after achieving complete success. These descriptive statistics provide preliminary support for Hypothesis 1A and Hypothesis 1B that militant organizations transition to

<sup>12</sup>Table B in the online appendix lays out examples of the achievement coding, illustrating the divergences between complete and partial success, as well as partial and no success.

achieve or complete their outcome goals. To advance the analysis, I turn to empirical tests.

## Empirical Results

Table 2 reports the results of logit models testing militant transition. Supporting Hypothesis 2, Model 1 shows that state sponsors are significantly associated with militant organizations transitioning to political parties.<sup>13</sup> Organizational size at 1,000-plus members has a positive and significant effect as well. Organizational age, attacks, ties to fellow militant organizations, whether initially founded by a political party, and enemy development indicators do not affect militant transition.

Models 2 and 3 indicate a strong correlation between militant achievement and transition. Nevertheless, Models 4 through 7 support Hypothesis 1B, demonstrating that militant organizations that *partially* achieve their outcome goals increase their likelihood of transitioning, as opposed to organizations that *completely* achieve their outcome goals.<sup>14</sup> Producing comparable results as Model 4, Models 5 and 6 heighten the dependent variable's coding standard to only classify organizations as "transitioned" if they have participated in two-plus and three-plus consecutive elections at the national level.<sup>15</sup> Model 7 reflects the different effects of partial and complete achievement in terms of negotiated political achievement versus outright military victory.<sup>16</sup>

The distinction between partial and complete achievement paints a telling picture, as the former can mark a key decision point for militant organizations. Once achieving partial success and realizing they have reached the productive limits of political violence, some organizations hedge their bets on the continuing efficacy of militancy. These organizations add or solely adopt a party approach in pursuing the remainder of their aims. For example, after persuading the Salvadoran government to crackdown on

<sup>13</sup>Models in the online appendix test the robustness of the *State Sponsor* variable's significance.

<sup>14</sup>In Models 4 through 6, *No Outcome Goal Achievement* is the excluded category for the success variables, and in Model 7, *No Victory* is the excluded category.

<sup>15</sup>Once organizations start participating in elections, they generally do not abandon the practice.

<sup>16</sup>Negotiated success tends to correspond with partial outcome-goal achievement, while military victory usually leads to complete outcome-goal achievement (Cronin 2009).

TABLE 2 Militant Transition to Party Politics (logistic regression results)

<i>y</i> = Transition to Political Party	Model 1: Standard Measures	Model 2: Degree of Success	Model 3: Degree of Success	Model 4: Degree of Success	Model 5: Two-Plus Elections	Model 6: Three-Plus Elections	Model 7: Victory Type
Age	0.001 (0.009)	-0.001 (0.011)	0.003 (0.012)	0.004 (0.012)	0.016 (0.012)	0.018 (0.012)	-0.001 (0.011)
1,000-plus members	1.002* (0.516)	1.000* (0.517)	0.633 (0.539)	0.609 (0.538)	0.682 (0.555)	1.170** (0.572)	1.055** (0.514)
10,000-plus members	0.366 (0.555)	0.148 (0.579)	-0.285 (0.601)	-0.289 (0.601)	-0.317 (0.652)	-0.626 (0.669)	0.108 (0.583)
Initially formed by political party	1.082 (0.758)	0.939 (0.711)	0.549 (0.585)	0.561 (0.579)	0.277 (0.897)	0.635 (0.852)	1.103 (0.696)
Number of attacks	-0.0002 (0.0004)	-0.0002 (0.0004)	0.0001 (0.0004)	0.0001 (0.0004)	-0.000004 (0.0004)	0.0001 (0.0004)	-0.0003 (0.001)
Number of state sponsors	0.805*** (0.164)	0.695*** (0.173)	0.620*** (0.174)	0.638*** (0.182)	0.564*** (0.209)	0.399** (0.182)	0.777*** (0.170)
Number of ties	-0.017 (0.037)	-0.006 (0.038)	0.0001 (0.039)	-0.001 (0.040)	0.011 (0.040)	0.033 (0.039)	-0.017 (0.042)
Primary enemy polity	0.017 (0.031)	0.039 (0.032)	0.047 (0.033)	0.042 (0.034)	0.055 (0.038)	0.037 (0.039)	0.024 (0.032)
Primary enemy GDP per capita	-0.00001 (0.00001)	-0.00001 (0.00001)	-0.000002 (0.00002)	-0.000002 (0.00002)	-0.000003 (0.00002)	0.000003 (0.00002)	-0.000003 (0.00001)
Complete outcome-goal achievement		1.452** (0.567)		-0.344 (0.632)	-0.519 (0.661)	-0.168 (0.638)	
Partial outcome-goal achievement			2.508*** (0.495)	2.672*** (0.535)	2.707*** (0.583)	2.606*** (0.674)	
Political victory							1.961*** (0.690)
Military victory							0.570 (1.083)
Constant	-3.653*** (0.508)	-4.022*** (0.518)	-4.578*** (0.553)	-4.520*** (0.544)	-5.378*** (0.695)	-5.682*** (0.790)	-3.842*** (0.523)
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.26	0.29	0.37	0.37	0.39	0.38	0.30
Wald chi <sup>2</sup>	(9) 64.85***	(10) 65.12***	(10) 89.47***	(11) 93.68***	(11) 66.44***	(11) 70.02***	(11) 60.16***
Log pseudolikelihood	-105.752	-101.618	-90.343	-90.182	-74.553	-67.427	-100.955
Correctly classified	90.15%	90.15%	91.13%	91.63%	94.09%	94.83%	90.39%

Note: n = 406. Coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses.

\* $p < 0.1$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .



adversarial right-wing organizations, the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) agreed to a ceasefire and transitioned into a political party (Wade 2008). But, as Jones and Libicki note, “the Salvadoran civil war was a stalemate. Neither the [government nor the FMLN] had achieved a military victory under the prevailing political conditions, and it was unclear whether either side *could* achieve a victory in the foreseeable future” (2008, 70). Recognizing that it had reached the potential of political violence, the FMLN transitioned and abandoned militancy and went on to achieve most of its objectives electorally (Allison 2006).

### Alternative Explanations and Robustness Checks

The empirical results show that partial outcome-goal achievement and state supporters help militants overcome obstacles that hinder the adoption of party politics. Yet, do motivations unrelated to goal achievement or constraints like specific goal or adversary type shape prospects for militant transition? Next, I run robustness checks and test alternative explanations.

#### Transitioning to Survive?

Militant organizations share two common aims: to survive and to achieve outcome goals (Acosta 2014). This study has focused on the relationship between militant outcome-goal achievement and transition. However, militant organizations might transition to political parties simply to live longer—especially if facing “no better” option. Cronin (2009) contends that militant organizations that participate in negotiations extend their life spans by doing so. One can form a similar logic around transition, which frequently follows negotiations between militants and state adversaries.

To test this argument, I conduct a survival analysis of militant organizations utilizing *Transition* as an explanatory variable. With the *Duration* of a militant organization’s life span as the dependent variable, Table 3 displays the results of a Cox proportional hazards regression.<sup>17</sup> Model 8 shows that

<sup>17</sup>I present hazard ratios instead of coefficients. Regarding organizational survival, a hazard ratio below the baseline of one demonstrates that a variable decreases the odds of organizations going defunct, whereas a hazard ratio above one signifies an increase in the odds of going defunct.

TABLE 3 Militant Survival (Cox proportional hazards regression results)

<i>y</i> = Organization Duration	Model 8: Transition Effects
Transition to political party	0.864 (0.277)
1,000-plus members	0.274*** (0.075)
10,000-plus members	1.220 (0.461)
Initially formed by political party	0.417* (0.202)
Number of attacks	1.000*** (0.0001)
Number of state sponsors	0.871 (0.075)
Number of ties	0.832*** (0.029)
Primary enemy polity	1.000 (0.011)
Primary enemy GDP per capita	1.000 (0.00001)
Complete outcome-goal achievement	0.581 (0.241)
Partial outcome-goal achievement	0.996 (0.292)
Number of failures	194
Times at Risk	7864.7
Wald chi <sup>2</sup>	(11) 78.74***
Log pseudolikelihood	−999.700

Note: *n* = 406. Hazard ratios with robust standard errors in parentheses.

\**p* < 0.1, \*\**p* < 0.05, \*\*\**p* < 0.01.

transition has no significant effect on the duration of militant organizations,<sup>18</sup> reiterating that militant organizations choose to transition to the party format based on incentives related directly to outcome goal achievement rather than survivability.<sup>19</sup>

#### Do Outcome-Goal Types and Ideologies Shape the Likelihood of Transition?

Organizational ideologies and outcome-goal types affect the strategic and tactical decisions of militants (Moghadam 2009; Piazza 2008). As such, particular goals or ideologies could make transition more or less likely. Aksoy and Carter comment: “whether

<sup>18</sup>Various tests confirm that the proportional hazards assumption holds.

<sup>19</sup>Interestingly, state sponsors do not significantly contribute to militant longevity.

[militants] have anti-system or within-system goals should... affect both their willingness to strike bargains to join peaceful politics and their target government's willingness to bargain with them" (2014, 204). Whereas "anti-system" organizations aim to collapse, overthrow, or replace political systems, "within-system" organizations pursue outcome goals that do not fundamentally conflict with the target's political system. This divide implies that organizations with "anti-system" goals are less likely to transition, as they have little to gain by working within a given political system. Accordingly, I add the binary variable of *Anti-System* to the logit analysis. Further, to test the possibility that certain ideologies predict transition, I assess the following binary variables: whether an organization subscribes to a variant of *Political Islam*, a *Leftist* ideology like Marxism-Leninism or Maoism, and whether an organization seeks secession, autonomy, or liberation in pursuit of a *Nationalist* agenda. Lastly, I include variables for specific outcome goals, such as the aim to *Overthrow* or eliminate the target, the aspiration to *Separate* or secede from the target, the objective of erecting an *Empire* that stretches across multiple states, the pursuit of *Social/Economic Reforms* that imply changing the target's policies but not its system, and *Counter-Revolutionary* efforts that attempt to stymie an entity from establishing or expanding political or territorial control.

In Table 4, Models 9 through 13 reveal that particular outcome goals and ideologies tend not to alter the likelihood of militant transition.<sup>20</sup> As highlighted by Model 14, only the specific goal of overthrowing the adversary has a significant effect. Yet, counterintuitively, the variable is positively associated with transition.

Consistent with the overall theory, target states try to meddle in the development of militant organizations, especially if one threatens the state's existence. When military options fail, targets sometimes look to defang militants, and party politics marks one such way to co-opt organizations seeking to overthrow the state. Supporting the finding that transition relies on achieving some success, if a target state's political system cannot address an organization's agenda, the target state may come to support instituting an independent political system that embodies the organization's aims or brings the organization into the target system as part of a negotiated agreement. For example, Israel did not integrate

Palestinian militants into the Israeli system. Rather, Israel facilitated the emergence of an autonomous Palestinian political system—albeit one that hardly completes the outcome goal of any Palestinian militant organization. The case of the URNG reflects a different angle of the same maneuver in which the Guatemalan government adjusted its own political system to incorporate adversarial organizations but used that system of party politics to institutionally prevent the URNG and other far-left organizations from continuing to pursue the government's toppling. In moments of rapprochement, many militant organizations agree to join the very political system they tried to overthrow in exchange for partially reaching their outcome goals. As a result of transitioning, they relinquish their revolutionary ambitions (at least overtly).

### Adversary Types Shape the Likelihood of Transition?

The political violence literature suggests that the nature of adversaries might frame the potential of militants to transition. In adopting party politics, an organization either integrates into an existing political system (usually that of its adversary) or establishes a new political system once it achieves autonomy. Perhaps only target states that view participatory institutions as a solution to the status quo and conducive to their own ends—i.e., most likely democratic and semi-participatory states—recognize militant proposals to transition as constructive. Differences in levels of political inclusion and participatory institutions within target states explain variation in the emergence of militant organizations, the magnitude of their violent campaigns, and ability of states to manage conflict between identity groups (Aksoy, Carter, and Wright 2012; Aksoy and Carter 2014; Cohen 1997; Krain 1998; Li 2005; Wucherpfennig et al. 2012). And, while a majority of militants fight democracies (Acosta 2014; Chenoweth 2010; Eubank and Weinberg 2001),<sup>21</sup> some argue that militant involvement in party politics naturally develops in democratic contexts (Weinberg, Pedahzur, and Perliger 2009). One could therefore expect the degree of electoral/participatory institutions within target states to affect the likelihood of militant transition.

Evaluating this contention, I add measures of democratic and autocratic institutions to the logit analysis. To analyze the effects of "representative

<sup>20</sup>In Models 10 and 11, *Within-System* is the excluded category. In Models 12 and 13, *System Collapse*, which represents the goal of ending a way of life, is the excluded category.

<sup>21</sup>For important qualifications, see Aksoy, Carter, and Wright (2012) and Chenoweth (2013).

TABLE 4 Militant Transition to Party Politics (logistic regression results continued)

y = Transition to Political Party	Model 9: Ideologies	Model 10: Anti-System Goal	Model 11: Ideologies and Anti-System	Model 12: Goal Types	Model 13: Ideologies and Goal Types	Model 14: Overthrow Target	Model 15: Electoral System Type	Model 16: Autocratic Institutions
Age	0.002 (0.014)	0.004 (0.012)	0.003 (0.014)	0.004 (0.013)	0.004 (0.016)	0.006 (0.013)	0.003 (0.011)	0.008 (0.011)
1,000-plus members	0.701 (0.574)	0.584 (0.545)	0.667 (0.581)	0.612 (0.527)	0.716 (0.599)	0.633 (0.540)	0.811 (0.548)	0.658 (0.536)
10,000-plus members	-0.231 (0.617)	-0.338 (0.628)	-0.302 (0.641)	-0.551 (0.664)	-0.583 (0.668)	-0.543 (0.622)	-0.441 (0.587)	-0.357 (0.621)
Initially formed by political party	0.512 (0.581)	0.556 (0.572)	0.495 (0.573)	0.082 (0.562)	0.039 (0.566)	0.088 (0.565)	0.621 (0.607)	0.597 (0.593)
Number of attacks	0.0001 (0.0004)	0.0001 (0.0004)	0.0001 (0.0004)	0.00003 (0.0004)	-0.00002 (0.001)	0.0001 (0.0004)	0.00003 (0.0004)	0.0001 (0.0004)
Number of state sponsors	0.644*** (0.183)	0.623*** (0.186)	0.626*** (0.188)	0.627*** (0.181)	0.656*** (0.187)	0.643*** (0.170)	0.642*** (0.173)	0.713*** (0.184)
Number of ties	0.005 (0.040)	-0.0001 (0.040)	0.007 (0.039)	0.005 (0.046)	0.012 (0.045)	-0.007 (0.044)	-0.004 (0.039)	-0.013 (0.041)
Primary enemy polity	0.047 (0.036)	0.036 (0.034)	0.040 (0.037)	0.028 (0.038)	0.027 (0.039)	0.027 (0.035)		
Proportional representation							0.386 (0.597)	
Mixed system							0.050 (1.207)	
Majoritarian							-0.272 (0.623)	
Legislature and opposition parties								0.596 (0.612)
Legislature								0.456 (1.194)
Single state party								-0.878 (0.649)
Primary enemy GDP per capita	0.000001 (0.00002)	0.0000001 (0.00002)	0.000004 (0.00002)	-0.000002 (0.00002)	0.00001 (0.00002)	-0.000002 (0.00002)	0.00001 (0.00002)	0.00001 (0.00001)
Complete outcome-goal achievement	-0.355 (0.636)	-0.368 (0.620)	-0.399 (0.620)	-0.355 (0.638)	-0.327 (0.674)	-0.361 (0.637)	-0.466 (0.604)	-0.822 (0.619)

TABLE 4 (Continued)

y = Transition to Political Party	Model 9: Ideologies	Model 10: Anti-System Goal	Model 11: Ideologies and Anti-System	Model 12: Goal Types	Model 13: Ideologies and Goal Types	Model 14: Overthrow Target	Model 15: Electoral System Type	Model 16: Autocratic Institutions
Partial outcome-goal achievement	2.624*** (0.555)	2.774*** (0.603)	2.795*** (0.609)	2.843*** (0.581)	2.867*** (0.588)	2.817*** (0.550)	2.594*** (0.521)	2.828*** (0.561)
Political Islam	-0.582 (0.590)		-0.675 (0.594)		-1.034 (0.736)			
Leftist	-0.264 (0.528)		-0.372 (0.535)		-0.800 (0.584)			
Nationalist	-0.368 (0.460)		-0.444 (0.472)		-0.516 (0.510)			
Anti-system		0.283 (0.535)	0.474 (0.564)					
Overthrow/replace target				1.633* (0.848)	2.088** (1.062)	1.265*** (0.465)		
Separate from target				0.485 (0.941)	0.975 (1.087)			
Empire				-0.192 (1.174)	0.212 (1.552)			
Social/economic reformation				0.794 (1.304)	0.983 (1.411)			
Counter-revolution				0.503 (1.125)	0.262 (1.144)			
Constant	-4.216*** (0.562)	-4.680*** (0.651)	-4.425*** (0.663)	-5.293*** (1.047)	-4.948*** (1.035)	-4.913*** (0.645)	-4.082*** (0.459)	-4.212*** (0.469)
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.38	0.37	0.38	0.40	0.42	0.40	0.37	0.38
Wald chi <sup>2</sup>	(14) 105.35***	(12) 92.50***	(15) 101.72***	(16) 81.16***	(19) 84.08***	(12) 71.27***	(13) 90.49***	(13) 87.38***
Log pseudolikelihood	-89.357	-90.021	-88.956	-85.447	-83.738	-85.831	-90.463	-89.391
Correctly classified	91.87%	91.38%	91.38%	92.36%	92.12%	92.61%	91.63%	91.87%

Note: n = 406. Coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses.

\* $p < 0.1$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

permissiveness” of democratic electoral systems, the binary variables of *Proportional Representation*, *Mixed System*, and *Majoritarian* are included.<sup>22</sup> To test the effects of autocratic participatory institutions, I add three binary variables: *Legislature*, which signifies regimes that allow for political representatives to assemble in a formal body, *Legislature and Opposition Parties*, which refers to regimes that officially permit the formation of opposition parties in the legislature, and *Single State Party*, which identifies regimes that govern with a sole party that represents the ruling executive’s views.<sup>23</sup> As Models 15 and 16 in Table 4 show, neither the high end of representative permissiveness (e.g., a proportional representation system) nor the high end of participatory autocratic institutions (e.g., a legislature and opposition parties) predict militant transition.<sup>24</sup> To advance their interests, even autocratic regimes establish party systems and electoral politics (Gandhi 2008), and in some cases it appears autocrats do so in efforts to co-opt or placate militant organizations.

## Marginal Effects and the Example of Palestinian Organizations

To assess the substantive impact of the main explanatory variables, I utilize marginal effects to complement a case example of three Palestinian organizations. The political development of Palestinian party politics stems from the partial achievement of Fatah and Hamas. Heading the PLO since 1969, Fatah entered into a peace process with Israel in 1993 and in 1996 adopted party politics. Emerging as Islamist alternatives to Fatah, Hamas and al-Jihad al-Islami fi Filastin (Palestinian Islamic Jihad or PIJ) came to represent the primary opposition to Fatah’s engagement with Israel. Although Hamas and PIJ share numerous attributes and each used violence to build constituencies within the Palestinian population, only Hamas—after partially achieving its outcome goal of territorial control—entered party politics alongside Fatah.

<sup>22</sup>The data on representative permissiveness derives from the “Democratic Electoral Systems around the World 1946-2011” dataset (Bormann and Golder 2013).

<sup>23</sup>The variables on autocratic institutions were coded by referring to the “Democracy and Dictatorship Revisited” dataset (Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland 2010).

<sup>24</sup>In Model 15, *Nondemocracy* is the excluded category. In Model 16, *Democracy* is the excluded category.

Hamas and PIJ have similar ideological roots and developed roughly during the same time period and for the same purpose. Both organizations set out with the maximalist outcome goal of replacing the Jewish state with an Islamic-Palestinian state. Founded in 1973, al-Mujamm’a al-Islami operated as an administrative base for the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in Gaza and marks the first iteration of the organization that later became Hamas. Inspired by the Iranian Revolution, Fathi Shaqaqi and other disenchanted members of the MB formed PIJ in 1979 as a violent resistance movement. With an alluring activist-jihadi platform, PIJ began drawing members from the ranks of the MB/al-Mujamma al-Islami (Mishal and Sela 2000). Seeing its popularity stagnate due to a refusal to take part in armed resistance, the MB in Gaza slowly began to change course, culminating with its role in the first Palestinian *intifada* (uprising) (Abu-Amr 1993). In December 1987, the MB in Gaza, under Sheikh Ahmad Yassin’s leadership, spurred the intifada, and a month later announced Hamas as its official armed-wing (Abu-Amr 1993). Ultimately, Hamas, as well as PIJ, used the intifada to put themselves on the Palestinian political map (Morris 2001).

In 1993, under Fatah’s direction, the PLO signed the *Declaration of Principles* (DOP) with Israel and took the helm of the newly instituted PA—setting in motion a peace process that dominated Israeli-Palestinian relations throughout the decade. As part of the U.S.-sponsored peace process, Fatah agreed to end its armed struggle, give up its maximalist goal of destroying the Jewish state, and participate in electoral politics. Fatah signed the DOP at a point when its political power seemed on the verge of collapse, as Hamas and PIJ steadily increased popular support. Reviving Fatah, the United States persuaded Israel to recognize Arafat and his organization as the “legitimate” representative of the Palestinian people (Morris 2001).<sup>25</sup> In 1996, reempowered by Fatah’s victory at the negotiating table, Arafat won a landslide victory in PA presidential elections. Yet, engaging Israel and adopting the party format still left Fatah vulnerable to Hamas and PIJ. The signing of the DOP, Oslo peace process, and U.S. support served to trim the official goals of Fatah and as a result intensified its competition with the two

<sup>25</sup>U.S. sponsorship of Fatah developed gradually over a number of decades. Between 1975 and 1993, the United States provided Palestinians with “approximately” \$170 million dollars in assistance. In 1993, the Clinton administration began funding Fatah’s effort to form PA institutions. Since the mid-1990s, the United States has transferred \$4 billion dollars to Fatah’s control (Zanotti 2013).

TABLE 5 Marginal Effects (from Models 4 and 14)

	Likelihood of Fatah to Transition in 1996			Likelihood of Hamas to Transition in 2006			Likelihood of Palestinian Islamic Jihad to Transition in 2006		
	0.93%	0.96%	x	0.87%	0.86%	x	0.27%	0.39%	x
Age	0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)	38	0.000 (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)	18	0.001 (0.002)	0.001 (0.003)	27
1,000-plus members	0.051 (0.069)	0.035 (0.050)	1	0.086 (0.095)	0.093 (0.100)	1	0.103 (0.098)	0.137 (0.121)	1
10,000-plus members	-0.016 (0.035)	-0.018 (0.023)	1	-0.030 (0.060)	-0.053 (0.061)	1	-0.053 (0.112)	-0.119 (0.138)	0
Initially formed by political party	0.028 (0.030)	0.004 (0.022)	0	0.078 (0.077)	0.011 (0.069)	1	0.124 (0.135)	0.021 (0.136)	0
Number of attacks	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	128	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	975	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	1250
Number of state sponsors	0.041** (0.020)	0.027 (0.017)	5	0.073* (0.039)	0.076* (0.040)	3	0.126** (0.062)	0.153*** (0.054)	3
Number of ties	-0.000 (0.003)	-0.000 (0.002)	13	-0.000 (0.005)	-0.001 (0.005)	11	-0.000 (0.008)	-0.002 (0.011)	9
Primary enemy polity	0.003 (0.003)	0.001 (0.002)	20	0.005 (0.005)	0.003 (0.005)	20	0.008 (0.007)	0.006 (0.008)	20
Primary enemy GDP per capita	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	18465	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	20625	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	20625
Complete outcome- goal achievement	-0.026 (0.050)	-0.018 (0.035)	0	-0.044 (0.086)	-0.049 (0.090)	0	-0.063 (0.109)	-0.082 (0.137)	0
Partial outcome- goal achievement	0.449** (0.177)	0.387** (0.183)	1	0.554*** (0.121)	0.590*** (0.104)	1	0.572*** (0.088)	0.525*** (0.117)	0
Overthrow		0.095 (0.064)	1		0.224* (0.128)	1		0.237** (0.106)	1

Note: x reflects the setting of the independent variables.

\* $p < 0.1$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

Islamist organizations. The peace process infused Hamas and PIJ with a renewed *raison d'être*: steadfast armed resistance in pursuit of “all of Palestine” and in direct retort to Fatah publicly abandoning violence (Mishal and Sela 2000).

During the 1990s, Hamas and PIJ employed suicide attacks to distinguish themselves from Fatah, disrupt the Israeli-PA peace process (Hoffman 2006), and reshape the national consciousness (Acosta 2010). With many Palestinians preferring violence to the peace process, the widespread use of suicide attacks enabled Hamas and PIJ to bolster their constituencies (Bloom 2005)—accumulating followers who maintained maximalist aims against Israel. By the early 2000s, and amid a second intifada, together Hamas and PIJ had swelled their combatant ranks to match that of Fatah. In an attempt to keep its place atop the Palestinian political hierarchy, Fatah returned to violence and began launching its own suicide bombers (Hoffman and McCormick 2004).

As the dust settled from the second intifada by late 2005, Hamas had gained control of Gaza—reaching its outcome goal in a limited manner. Hamas had successfully employed violence to induce Israel's withdrawal from Gaza, in which Israel evacuated and destroyed 21 Jewish settlements. While far from completely achieving its defining goal, Hamas attained a level of success that bought it leeway with its constituency—allowing the organization to soften earlier stances on political engagement. The next year, Hamas adopted a party platform, participated in PA elections, and defeated Fatah at the polls. In contrast, PIJ continued refusing to stand for elections.

What were the respective likelihoods that Fatah, Hamas, and PIJ would transition to party politics? Table 5 presents the marginal effects of administered baselines, exhibiting the odds of the organizations transitioning at certain instances in their development. The specifications predict a 93% likelihood of Fatah transitioning in 1996 (as it did), an 87% likelihood of Hamas transitioning in 2006 (as it did), and a 27% likelihood of PIJ transitioning in 2006 (which it refrained from doing). The marginal effects demonstrate that, by far, partial outcome goal achievement had the greatest impact in both Fatah and Hamas' transition, as well as in PIJ's failure to transition when its Islamist-counterpart did. State supporters assisted Fatah's transition but played no major part in Hamas' transition, as it did not have to make an agreement with Israel to enter PA elections. Rather, after Israel evacuated Gaza in 2005, Hamas filled the void, claimed victory, and set out to expand

its political power. Less than a year later, electoral politics made Hamas' expansion possible, as the organization roundly defeated Fatah in PA elections. Hamas' “battlefield” success brought it flexibility with its base constituency to jump into the electoral game—something that many Hamas supporters had long rejected.<sup>26</sup> Without a comparable victory, PIJ lacked the capital necessary to convince its constituents to follow Fatah and Hamas into the electoral arena.

## Conclusion

One primary incentive and two chief constraints shape the potential of militant organizations to transition to political parties. Dissatisfied with the limits of political violence, militants seek new opportunities in efforts to reach ideal outcomes. Adopting party politics offers one such opportunity, as it works to legitimize an organization internationally and when timed properly to expand its constituency. Thus, militant organizations transition to more effectively pursue outcome goals or complete partially met goals. However, before transitioning, militants overcome one if not two common obstacles: (1) the base constituency's preference for violence and (2) credibility deficiencies vis-à-vis the adversary. To get its base to support transition, an organization usually needs to achieve a partial degree of its outcome goal preceding or coinciding with transition. Base supporters require assurance that their representative has not surrendered the cause and that a new direction in organizational means does not represent an abdication of collective ends. In cases where transition hinges on reaching an agreement with the adversary, organizations often rely on state supporters to overcome the credibility problem. As organizations regularly give up some autonomy in return for sponsorship, state supporters can make militants accountable and more credible to commit to agreements. For their own interests, sponsors might encourage or broker initiatives that involve transition, channeling militants to pursue (shared) goals through alternative means.

This study redefines our understanding of the effects of state sponsorship on political violence. Previous analyses suggest that sponsorship prolongs

<sup>26</sup>Indeed, alongside PIJ, Hamas boycotted elections a year earlier—prior to Israel's withdrawal from Gaza (Bhasin and Hallward 2013).

militancy and facilitates organizations using violence against civilians indiscriminately (Byman 2005; Weinstein 2007). Yet, as this study finds, sponsors may help redirect the trajectories of militant organizations to nonviolent politics. When assessed alongside the finding that state supporters do not boost the life spans of militant organizations,<sup>27</sup> it becomes clear that sponsorship increases the likelihood of militant transition without an explicit trade-off. Together, these results call into question arguments that frame state sponsorship—as opposed to its absence—as the greater threat to international and domestic security.

This study has interesting implications for the literature linking political violence and democratization as well. Building from the contention that “[participation] is the lifeblood of democracy” (Franklin 2002, 216), the reformation of typically *undemocratic* political organizations, like those that favor violence, into political parties in and of itself functions as a form of democratization (Bhasin and Hallward 2013). With “anti-system” organizations such as Lebanese Hezbollah, Palestinian Fatah and Hamas, and the Salvadoran FMLN having transitioned, it shows that after achieving partial success, almost any militant organization, no matter how “maximalist” its outcome goal, carries the potential to adopt party politics. Further, once militant organizations begin running in elections, they generally do not abandon the practice. In many cases, militant transition also initiates the democratization process for a given society, as transitions frequently coincide with the establishment of an electoral system and various formal political institutions.

A militant organization’s level of success remains essential to its likelihood of transitioning to a political party. Whereas complete outcome goal achievement like that reached through outright military victory does not foster transition, partial outcome-goal achievement stands as the strongest force driving transition. This finding illustrates a guideline for bringing militants into the party fold. When militants achieve partial success, it tends to enable a new flexibility with constituents, allowing organizations to take new avenues in efforts to accomplish the remainder of collective aims. In asymmetric contexts, adversaries normally hold the power to grant militants partial victories in the first place, and they can generate such events as a way to inhibit or isolate violent elements of a contentious movement. If it

suits their own objectives, state supporters may add credibility to organizational commitments and encourage or broker a transition to nonviolent means in exchange for the adversary making concessions. In the end, militant transition to party politics comes down to the limits of political violence as well as outside forces—whether supportive or adversarial—demonstrating to militants and their constituents that continued violence will not and cannot advance their collective goals beyond that already achieved.

## Acknowledgments

I thank Steve Childs, Mark Clark, and three anonymous reviewers for helpful comments.

## References

- Abrahms, Max. 2012. “The Political Effectiveness of Terrorism Revisited.” *Comparative Political Studies* 45 (3): 366–93.
- Abrahms, Max. 2013. “The Credibility Paradox: Violence as a Doubled-Edged Sword in International Politics.” *International Studies Quarterly* 57 (4): 660–71.
- Abu-Amr, Ziad. 1993. “Hamas: A Historical and Political Background.” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 22 (4): 5–19.
- Acosta, Benjamin. 2010. “Palestinian Precedents: The Origins of Al-Qaeda’s Use of Suicide Terrorism and *Istishhad*.” In *Political Islam from Muhammad to Ahmadinejad: Defenders, Detractors, and Definitions*, ed. Joseph M. Skelly. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Security International, 193–206.
- Acosta, Benjamin. 2014. “Live to Win Another Day: Why Many Militant Organizations Survive Yet Few Succeed.” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 37 (2): 135–61.
- Aksoy, Deniz, and David Carter. 2014. “Electoral Institutions and the Emergence of Terrorist Groups.” *British Journal of Political Science* 44 (1): 181–204.
- Aksoy, Deniz, David Carter, and Joseph Wright. 2012. “Terrorism in Dictatorships.” *Journal of Politics* 74 (3): 810–26.
- Aldrich, John H. 2011. *Why Parties? A Second Look*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Allison, Michael E. 2006. “The Transition from Armed Opposition to Electoral Opposition in Central America.” *Latin American Politics and Society* 48 (4): 137–62.
- Azani, Eitan. 2013. “The Hybrid Terrorist Organization: Hezbollah as a Case Study.” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 36 (11): 899–916.
- Bapat, Navin A. 2006. “State Bargaining with Transnational Terrorist Groups.” *International Studies Quarterly* 50 (1): 213–29.
- Bhasin, Tavishi, and Maia Carter Hallward. 2013. “Hamas as a Political Party: Democratization in the Palestinian Territories.” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 25 (1) 75–93.
- Blattman, Christopher. 2009. “From Violence to Voting: War and Political Participation in Uganda.” *American Political Science Review* 103 (2): 231–47.
- Bloom, Mia. 2005. *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror*. New York: Columbia University Press.

<sup>27</sup>See Model 8 and Acosta (2014); also, as Carter (2012) shows, when state sponsors provide militants with safe havens, it decreases organizational longevity.



- Bormann, Nils-Christian, and Matt Golder. 2013. "Democratic Electoral Systems around the World, 1946–2011." *Electoral Studies* 32: 360–69.
- Byman, Daniel. 2005. *Deadly Connections: States That Sponsor Terrorism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Carter, David B. 2012. "A Blessing or a Curse? State Support for Terrorist Groups." *International Organization* 66 (1): 129–51.
- Cheibub, José Antonio, Jennifer Gandhi, and James Raymond Vreeland. 2010. "Democracy and Dictatorship Revisited." *Public Choice* 143: 67–101.
- Chenoweth, Erica. 2010. "Democratic Competition and Terrorist Activity." *Journal of Politics* 72 (1): 16–30.
- Chenoweth, Erica. 2013. "Terrorism and Democracy." *Annual Review of Political Science* 16: 355–78.
- Chenoweth, Erica, and Maria J. Stephan. 2011. *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Chernov, Victor. 1924. "Lenin." *Foreign Affairs* 2: 366–72.
- Childs, Steven. 2011. "From Identity to Militancy: The Shi'a of Hezbollah." *Comparative Strategy* 30 (4): 363–72.
- Clausewitz, Carl von. [1832] 1984. *On War*. Trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Cohen, Frank S. 1997. "Proportional versus Majoritarian Ethnic Conflict Management in Democracies." *Comparative Political Studies* 30 (5): 607–30.
- Crenshaw, Martha. 1981. "The Causes of Terrorism." *Comparative Politics* 13 (4): 379–99.
- Crenshaw, Martha. 1990. "The Logic of Terrorism: Terrorist Behavior as a Product of Strategic Choice." In *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind*, ed. Walter Reich. Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 7–24.
- Cronin, Audrey Kurth. 2009. *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- De Zeeuw, Jeroen. 2008. "Understanding the Political Transformation of Rebel Movements." In *From Soldiers to Politicians: Transforming Rebel Movements after Civil War*, ed. Jeroen De Zeeuw. Boulder, CO: Reiner, 1–32.
- DeNardo, James. 1985. *Power in Numbers: The Political Strategy of Protest and Rebellion*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- DeRouen, Karl R., and David Sobek. 2004. "The Dynamics of Civil War Duration and Outcome." *Journal of Peace Research* 41 (3): 303–20.
- Dudouet, Véronique. 2013. "Dynamics and Factors of Transition from Armed Struggle to Nonviolent Resistance." *Journal of Peace Research* 50 (3): 401–13.
- Dunning, Thad. 2011. "Fighting and Voting: Violent Conflict and Electoral Politics." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 55 (3): 327–39.
- Eubank, William, and Leonard Weinberg. 2001. "Terrorism and Democracy: Perpetrators and Victims." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 13 (1): 155–64.
- Findley, Michael G., James A. Piazza, and Joseph K. Young. 2012. "Games Rivals Play: Terrorism in International Rivalries." *Journal of Politics* 74 (1): 235–48.
- Franklin, Mark N. 1996. "Electoral Participation." In *Comparing Democracies: Elections and Voting in Global Perspectives*, eds. Lawrence LeDuc, Richard Niemi, and Pippa Norris. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 216–35.
- Gandhi, Jennifer. 2008. *Political Institutions under Dictatorship*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Gurr, Ted Robert. 1990. "Terrorism in Democracies: Its Social and Political Bases." In *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind*, ed. Walter Reich. Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 86–102.
- Hamzeh, A. Nizar. 1993. "Lebanon's Hizbullah: From Islamic Revolution to Parliamentary Accommodation." *Third World Quarterly* 14 (2): 321–37.
- Hoffman, Bruce. 2006. *Inside Terrorism*. Rev. ed. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Hoffman, Bruce, and Gordon H. McCormick. 2004. "Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 27 (4): 243–81.
- Irvin, Cynthia. 1999. *Militant Nationalism: Between Movement and Party in Ireland and Basque Country*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Jones, Seth G., and Martin C. Libicki. 2008. *How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering al-Qa'ida*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.
- Krain, Matthew. 1998. "Contemporary Democracies Revisited: Democracy, Political Violence, and Event Count Models." *Comparative Political Studies* 31 (2): 139–64.
- Kubaisi, Yahya. 2013. "The Double Game: The Sadr Strategy in Iraq." Al Jazeera Center for Studies. [www.studies.aljazeera.net/en/](http://www.studies.aljazeera.net/en/) (accessed January 15, 2014).
- Kydd, Andrew, and Barbara F. Walter. 2006. "The Strategies of Terrorism." *International Security* 31 (1): 49–80.
- Li, Quan. 2005. "Does Democracy Promote or Reduce Transnational Terrorist Incidents." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49 (20): 278–97.
- Manning, Carrie. 2008. "Mozambique: RENAMO's Electoral Success." In *From Soldiers to Politicians: Transforming Rebel Movements after Civil War*, ed. Jeroen De Zeeuw. Boulder, CO: Reiner, 55–80.
- Mishal, Shaul, and Avraham Sela. 2000. *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Moghadam, Assaf. 2009. "Motives for Martyrdom: Al Qaida, Salafi Jihad, and the Spread of Suicide Attacks." *International Security* 33 (3): 46–78.
- Morris, Benny. 2001. *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881–2001*. New York: First Vintage Books.
- Norton, Augustus Richard. 2007. *Hezbollah: A Short History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Piazza, James A. 2008. "A Supply-Side View of Suicide Terrorism: A Cross-National Study." *Journal of Politics* 70 (1): 28–39.
- Rabil, Robert. G. 2012. "Hezbollah, the Islamic Association and Lebanon's Confessional System." *Levantine Review* 1 (1): 49–67.
- Salehyan, Idean. 2010. "The Delegation of War to Rebel Organizations." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 54 (3): 493–515.
- Salehyan, Idean, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and David E. Cunningham. 2011. "Explaining External Support for Insurgent Groups." *International Organization* 65 (4): 709–44.
- Sartori, Giovanni. 1976. *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis*. Vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sayigh, Yezid. 1997. *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949–1993*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Schelling, Thomas C. 1960. *The Strategy of Conflict*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Schelling, Thomas C. 1966. *Arms and Influence*. Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Scott, James C. 1985. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Shugart, Matthew. 1992. "Guerrillas and Elections: An Institutional Perspective on the Costs of Conflict and Competition." *International Studies Quarterly* 36 (2): 121–51.
- Tilly, Charles. 1978. *From Mobilization to Revolution*. Menlo Park, CA: Addison-Wesley.
- Wade, Christine. 2008. "El Salvador: The Success of the FMLN." In *From Soldiers to Politicians: Transforming Rebel Movements after Civil War*, ed. Jeroen De Zeeuw. Boulder, CO: Reiner, 33–54.
- Walter, Barbara F. 1997. "The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement." *International Organization* 51 (3): 335–64.
- Weinberg, Leonard, Ami Pedahzur, and Arie Perliger. 2009. *Political Parties and Terrorist Groups*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Routledge.
- Weinstein, Jeremy M. 2007. *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Wucherpennig, Julian, Nils W. Metternich, Lars-Erik Cederman, and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch. 2012. "Ethnicity, the State, and the Duration of Civil War." *World Politics* 64 (1): 79–115.
- Zanotti, Jim. 2013. "U.S. Foreign Aid to the Palestinians." Washington DC: Congressional Research Service.

Benjamin Acosta is a Ph.D. Candidate in Political Science at Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, CA 91711.