Adapting to peacetime politics? Rebranding and ideological change in former rebel parties

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How do rebel groups turned political parties adapt their ideological profiles after war? Do they continue to mobilize along the main conflict cleavage or do they adopt new issues that are conducive to peace? This article develops an analytical framework that captures the extent to which parties adapt along two dimensions, conflict cleavage issues and peacebuilding issues. It conducts a qualitative content analysis of party manifestos and related discourse of three former rebel parties with backgrounds as secessionist rebel groups, the Aceh Party, the Serb Democratic Party (BiH), and the Tamil National Alliance. It finds that while some parties adopt the language of peace settlements to legitimize themselves and actively downplay wartime divisions, others continue to seek support based on ethnic differentiation. It is argued that the programmatic message that former rebel groups mobilize around has implications for how they contribute to forging more peaceful inter-ethnic relations after war.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, a growing number of studies have examined the process with which armed groups have transformed into political parties (hereafter 'former rebel parties') and joined electoral politics. While important advances have also been made with regard to whether the shift from 'bullets to ballots' has installed in parties more democratic – or 'moderate' – attitudes (Berti 2013, Manning 2008, Whiting 2016), substantially less attention has been given to party branding and ideological change.[1] As highlighted by Curtis and Sindre (this issue), many armed groups' ideological visions were founded upon exclusive, often ethnically defined, forms of statehood. What happens to these ideologies when the armed struggle is over and they become multi-party contenders? A pressing question is whether former rebel parties adopt more inclusive and less divisive ideologies and profiles. How, if at all, do they relate to the broader discourse of peacebuilding that permeates the political context in which they mobilize after war has ended?

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[1] For an exception see Ishiyama and Marshall (2017).

This article addresses this question through a qualitative analysis of changes in expressed ideologies in a subset of former rebel parties, namely secessionist rebel groups turned regionalist political parties. Three such parties have been selected for the purpose of this study: the Aceh Party in Indonesia's Aceh province, the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) in Sri Lanka, and the Serb Democratic Party (SDS) in Bosnia Herzegovina.

These parties provide an interesting lens through which to assess the extent that **former rebel** parties adopt more inclusive ideological profiles. Their emphasis on ethno-territorial identities as the basis for their struggle is a core feature of their ideology suggesting reliance on exclusionary ideals and a restrictive interpretation of the ethnic community. However, as most conflicts over self-determination rarely end with the manifestation of new states, most former secessionist movements continue to mobilise as political parties in regional or national level politics or both after war has ended. While some movements, such as the Sinn Fein in Northern Ireland have retained their goal of seeking secession, the majority of such parties have formally abandoned their goal of independence, as exemplified by the multiple wartime contenders in the civil war in the former Yugoslavia and most secessionist conflicts in South and Southeast Asia.[2] As has been suggested elsewhere, the shift from propagating a secessionist ideology to endorsing regionalism suggests a weakening in the saliency of the main conflict cleavages, namely the relationship between the region and the state and between the ethnic minority and majority communities (Massetti and Schakel 2016, 60; Sindre 2018). But to what extent is this shift in the overarching goal of the movements accompanied by a transition towards more inclusive ideologies?

Through a qualitative content analysis of party manifestos and related documents collected during fieldwork in the three contexts, this article develops and presents an analytical framework for assessing the extent to which parties have adapted their ideological profiles. It proposes two dimensions that capture the saliency of the main conflict cleavage and new issues that have come about as a result of transitions to peace. First, to what extent have the parties adapted on core conflict cleavage issues? Second, how do they relate to broader peacebuilding issues? The

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[2] In Asia, these include the Aceh Party (Indonesia), UPDF (Bangladesh), the TNA (Sri Lanka) and the MILF (Philippines) and in the Balkans the HDZ, HDZ 1990, SDS in Bosnia Herzegovina and HDZ in Croatia (numbers from Manning and Smith forthcoming).

framework serves two purposes. First, by moving beyond the conventional dichotomy of assessing whether parties have abandoned their radical goals, this framework proposes a more fine-grained understanding of party ideology that takes into account how they incorporate new perspectives brought about by their experience as wartime contenders *and* as stakeholders to peace. Offering a disaggregated, context sensitive framework, the study provides a new theoretical tool that captures the extent to which the parties have moderated along core dimensions to be able to assess whether these parties contribute to breaking down or upholding conflict cleavages. A typology such as this provides a useful point of departure for a comparative analysis of parties' ideological adaptation across contexts. Second, the study also contributes to our understanding of how these parties act as mobilizers, policy makers and rulers. While the parties discussed here have abandoned their goal of secession, they differ in how they relate to conflict cleavage issues and which new issues they chose to include. One underlying rationale here is that it is reasonable to expect that the extent to which former rebel parties adopt more inclusive policy stands, discourse and behaviour is essential for how parties relate to, and thereby impact on, the broader processes of peacebuilding.

The article proceeds as follows. First, it develops and explains the new analytical framework and typology that serves the purpose of capturing relevant ideological change. It then briefly discusses the methodology including logic of case selection before turning to each case. The conclusion draws out some comparative findings and identifies future avenues for research.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK: DISAGGREGATING ETHNO-NATIONALIST IDEOLOGIES IN THE POST-WAR CONTEXT

This section specifies the two dimensions, the conflict cleavage dimension and peacebuilding dimension with corresponding issues. Drawing mainly on insights form literature on ethnic parties and party change, the framework serves an analytical purpose of disaggregating the issue dimensions that capture issues of concern to ethno-nationalist rebel groups and parties.

Conflict cleavage dimension

3

Conflict scholars have long highlighted the potential detrimental effect that ethnic parties may have on political stability in divided societies (Reilly and Nordlund 2008, Horowitz 1985, Rabushka and Shepsle 1972), while the consociational school found that in divided societies, inclusion of ethnic parties may decrease conflicts by way enhancing representation thus curbing radicalization of demands (Lijphart 1977). The potential stabilising effect of inclusion has been reiterated in recent contributions that demonstrate that rebel group inclusion impacts positively on political stability (Marshall and Ishiyama 2016) with more nuance added by Ishiyama and Breuning (2011) who demonstrate that conflict occurrence in ethnically divided society is dependent on the type of ethnic parties involved highlighting variation in the degree of ethnic radicalism.

To date, most studies that assess radicalism within secessionist parties have focused on their stated goal as the degree of self-government (e.g. De Winter 1998). Agreeing with Ishiyama and Breuning (2011, 226) and Massetti and Schakel (2016, 60-1), this study suggests that this reliance on binary typologies is problematic as they render the parties' ideology positions static, while in reality ethnic parties, as any other party, will adapt their positions over time in response to a number of external and internal factors (Harmel and Janda 1994, Panebianco 1988). The conflict cleavage dimension therefore includes two sets of issues that are the most distinctive features of the ideological foundations of armed secessionist movements (Massetti 2009): Territorial autonomy and ethnic differentiation.

These issues will feature prominently as part of the ideology of ethno-nationalist parties anywhere, but in post-war contexts the saliency of these issues in the parties' discourse and profile potentially give an indication as to the extent to which the parties have reinvented themselves and adopted less hostile issue profiles.

Importantly, the aspiration for secessionism and regionalism indicate**s** quite different parameters for political citizenship. Secessionist movements tend to aspire to establish exclusive citizenship based on mono-ethnic identity, while regionalist parties will accept, as a minimum**,** the multi-ethnic parameters of the state. As demands for territorial sovereignty and commitments to electoral democracy are not mutually exclusive, it is not a prerequisite that secessionist groups abandon their radical secessionism as a goal for a peace settlement to come into effect or, indeed, for groups to be considered 'moderate' (Whiting: 2016). That said, as has been

suggested elsewhere (Whiting 2016; Sindre 2018), it is reasonable to assume that a peace settlement in which armed groups opt to settle without the core issues of the conflict being 'resolved', may prove less stable than in contexts where former rebel groups shifted their position on this dimension towards accepting – or endorsing – a form of autonomy. For instance, to groups such as Sinn Fein, the transition 'from bullets to ballots' reflects the decision to shift the struggle from armed to non-armed mobilization and push for reunification via democratic means at a time when it had become evident that continued armed engagement 'threatened the group's popularity within its constituency and access to political dialogue and, ultimately, political power' (Berti 2013,175). The saliency with which secessionist parties remain relevant across Europe suggests that established democracies may have the institutional leverage, at least for the time being, to handle the potentially destabilising trend of secessionist parties. However, given that most armed secessionist conflicts have taken place in less stable settings outside Western Europe, it is reasonable to assume that peace ultimately depends on the armed groups' commitment to formally abandon their secessionist goals.

Therefore a minimalist shift is the formal endorsement of regionalism, while a maximalist shift would entail the recognition that the region is a territorial entity within the larger state. Such a maximalist shift could be reflected in how the party approaches core policy issues and in particular development and reconstruction that naturally dominate the national political agenda in the aftermath of war. Do the former rebel parties see development as a joint national project or as a regional/local project? While ethnic parties are expected to promote economic development for their region and ethnic group, recent research has also found that rebel groups in transitional contexts have adopted pluralist attitudes towards how reconstruction funds should be administered and distributed (Mampilly 2009; Sindre 2014; Walsh 2014). Attention to such specific policy issues can help clarify whether or not they offer a vision for the state in its entirety in parallel to their regionalist ambitions.

The second conflict cleavage issue, ethnic differentiation, concerns whether the party continues to mobilize in opposition to the ethnic majority community associated with the central state. It is a common feature of secessionist groups to justify their existence on the basis of a combination of a remedial right to independent statehood on the basis of a history of oppression, human rights abuse and exclusion

from the state resulting in the need for collective mobilization (Caspersen 2008, 241).
The discourse during ethnic conflicts often justifies the struggle with reference to the collective desire to restore past grandeur or fulfil the dreams of their ancestors with additional emphasis on episodes of oppression such as pogroms and ethnic riots and policies of exclusion (Caspersen 2011). While an emphasis on the historical distinctiveness of the 'region' and an image of oppression, forms part of the ethos of most ethno-nationalist movements and parties, that these aspects are toned down in the aftermath of war is important for long-term reconciliation. The minimal shift on this issue signifying moderation would therefore be abandoning xenophobic language directed at the 'other' and especially the dominant ethnic group while a maximalist shift would be the full endorsement of a multi-ethnic state.

Peacebuilding dimension

In addition to being armed contenders during war, many rebel groups invest significant resources into the ending of conflicts and transitioning to electoral democracy.[3] The challenge is to substantiate what constitute change in how former rebel parties' adapt their profiles to the context of peace. Attention to the qualitative differentiation of post-war issues sheds light on both processes of ideological adaptation within these parties as well as their relative agency in long-term peacebuilding. Two sets of issues stand out to be of importance: Attitudes towards conflict resolution mechanisms and the extent to which they promote democratic pluralism.

The first set of issues concern how the parties relate to conflict resolution mechanisms. In the literature, the focus has often been on whether former rebels represent constant spoilers or not (de Zeeuw 2008). While spoiler behaviour may be a rational strategy ahead of the first post-war election when the group is still organized and structured as a militant group, it is a less likely electoral strategy after the demobilization phase is over simply because the party has adapted and invested significant resources into becoming a viable political party (Manning 2008, Manning and Smith 2016). If the rebel groups failed to achieve their original goal of secession,

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[3] While many former rebel parties learn to compete within authoritarian contexts, this study focuses on hose that operate in democratic settings, while also recognizing that the quality of democracy may be weak. According to Manning and Smith's dataset (this issue) 29 such parties (n=50) are categorized as operating in democratic contexts, while 21 are in authoritarian settings.

as political parties they may strategize to recast their goal in order to justify their struggle. If the war ended with a settlement, the parties may also emphasise their contribution to the peace settlement and present themselves as peace victors and defenders of the peace. One might expect the parties to defend the peace settlement as an achievement in itself or, in the event of no settlement, their political process engagement to continue towards building peace. The flipside would be that the peace settlement itself becomes a source of contestation, a red tape in which any attempts at political reform that would require change in the original settlement, may be met with opposition and result in parliamentary stalemate. The issue of trust in government or other political actors may also have implications for the extent to which they moderate their stands. For this reason, the second issue on this dimension, democratic pluralism, is important as an additional measure for assessing how the parties adopt compromise-oriented attitudes.

Democratic pluralism therefore concerns whether parties seek to build alliances and tolerate, or actively promote, pluralism. While this issue is difficult to measure in quantitative terms, the adopted language give**s** plausible insights into whether they take an active stance on promoting pluralism. The scholarly debate about parties' willingness to moderate in order to be included into formal politics has tended to focus on whether radical parties become democrats or not (e.g. Schwedler 2011, Tezcür 2010).[4] Manning (2008, 141) notes that there is an inherent risk of conflating two separate issues, namely, that of 'creating democratic actors' versus the idea that inclusion leads to changes in the identity of the armed movement. Dudouet and Lundström (2016) consider the degree to which policies remain 'exclusionist' or 'illiberal' while Berti (2013, 7) views 'moderation' as a process of *normative* adjustment toward demilitarization and acceptance of principles such as plurality, negotiation and bargaining. Importantly, as highlighted by Whiting (2016) and Caspersen (2011), the linking of sovereignty and democracy in the ideological profile of secessionist movements may suggest that as parties, they should also find consistent ideological sustenance in the supply of a pro-democracy agenda after war. However, whether this extends to other democratic values such as acceptance of pluralism and compromise may vary across contexts. For instance, whether or not the

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[4] See Manning (2008), Berti (2013), Whiting (2018), and Sindre (2018) for discussions of the inclusion-moderation thesis in relation to former rebel parties.

parties put emphasis on improving inter-ethnic collaboration or indeed explicitly state their desire and intent to collaborate across ethnic boundaries and with national, non-ethnic parties would indicate increased attention to pluralism. Therefore, whether or not the parties strategize to recast themselves in a more compromise-oriented and pluralist light is an indication of the extent to which they actively seek to engage in peacebuilding and conflict resolution activities. In this regard, a minimalist change would be adherence to the rules of democracy, which is a given for the type of cases discussed here. A maximalist change would be explicit effort to adopt pluralist attitudes aimed at compromise and collaboration.

Table 1 about here

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Case selection

While the ideological profiles of the selected political parties are of considerable interest in themselves to assess ideological change and peace-adaptation by ethno-nationalist movements after war, a comparison allows for the illustration of the strengths of the theoretical framework across different contexts in order to demonstrate variation in the extent to which parties contribute to upholding or breaking down wartime divisions. The TNA, the SDS and the Aceh Party are selected on the basis that they are all regionalist political parties with backgrounds as armed secessionist movements, having abandoned their goal of separate statehood. The case analysis will show they differ with regard to the extent to which they have moderated along the two dimensions over time, giving support to the usefulness of this framework for capturing nuances in their ideological profiles and explaining why these parties may play different roles as peacebuilders.

There are a number of structural differences between the contexts and parties. First, the parties differ with regard to organizational legacies, each conducive to potentially different pathways of transformations (Kitschelt, Mansfeldova et al. 1999). The Free Aceh Movement (GAM), the forerunner to the Aceh Party was an armed guerrilla movement from its inception in the mid 1970s. The Aceh Party was only formally established in 2007, two years after the peace settlement with the Indonesian government had been signed. The SDS in Bosnia Herzegovina, in contrast, was

formally established as a political party *prior* to militarization and the onset of war in 1989 representing the Bosnian Serbs with the stated aim to unite Serbs in Bosnia and Croatia. The SDS had also participated in the 1990 founding election in Bosnia Herzegovina (Bieber 2014). Under the leadership of Radovan Karadzic, from 1991 onwards the SDS engaged in armed struggle to establish Serb autonomous regions throughout Bosnia including the Republika Srpska, which has remained a Serb autonomous area after the war. The 1995 General Framework Agreement on Peace, i.e. the Dayton Agreement, created the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina out of the existing Federation of BiH and the Republika Srpska.

In Sri Lanka, the TNA was established in 2001 to unite the Tamil nationalist movement, which consisted of multiple armed groups and political parties. At that time, the LTTE, the dominant rebel group, opted to remain outside the formal party apparatus and instead used the TNA as a political proxy to navigate the political field and individual members of the LTTE's political wing were on the governing board of the TNA. Ethnic radicalization had taken place in the context of political rupture and constitutional changes. In addition to the inter-ethnic conflict between Tamil minority and Sinhala majority state, the civil war in Sri Lanka was characterised by high levels of intra-ethnic conflict between different branches of the Tamil nationalist movement (Bush 2003).[5]

The second difference concerns how the conflicts ended. The conflicts in Aceh and Bosnia Herzegovina ended in peace settlements with backing from the international community that awarded secessionist groups regional autonomy. In Sri Lanka, the Fifth Peace Process, which had produced a relatively stable ceasefire in the period from 2001-2006 and enabled Tamil participation in politics, did not produce a settlement. Instead, after a series of failed talks between the government and the LTTE from 2006, the armed conflict re-escalated and eventually led to the military defeat of the LTTE in 2009.

The third difference concerns the institutional context within which the parties operate from highly centralised in Sri Lanka, partial autonomy in Aceh/Indonesia to a federal mixed system in Bosnia Herzegovina. In Aceh the peace settlement awarded increased autonomy to the province and a strengthened local parliament. The most

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[5] The TNA is here categorized as a former rebel party because it represents the organisational continuities of the armed struggle and multiple armed groups beside the LTTE.

important provision awarded to GAM in the settlement was, as the only province in Indonesia, the opportunity to establish local political parties. In a similar fashion, in BiH, due to the specific framework of power sharing across the three dominant ethnic groups, the SDS also only seeks a vote share from amongst Serbs living on the Republika Srpska. In Sri Lanka, as the TNA has taken the position as the dominant front for the Tamil nationalist movement, the party continues to work from within the formal political arena. Very **few** powers have been awarded to the newly established Regional Councils in the Northern and Eastern provinces and hence the party seeks representation at both national and regional levels.

However, despite these structural differences – organizational legacies, conflict ending and institutional context – the logic of mobilization remains fairly similar across the three contexts. Moreover, the parties have undergone similar processes of transformation from demobilizing their armed wings, entering the electoral game, and reorganizing into political parties. Leaders of all parties, including the TNA, were engaged in internationally supported peace talks.

Data

This article deploys qualitative content analysis of party manifestos and related documents to identify the saliency of the issues and issue change along the two dimensions. The study thus follows others in defining the party by how it presents itself publically, as opposed to by whom its supporters are (Chandra and Metz 2002; Ishiyama and Breuning 2011; Ishiyama and Marshall 2017).

Party programmes reflect the broader lines of the party directions and the 'policy collectively adopted by the party' (Borg 1966, 97). Qualitative content analysis – as opposed to a quantitative approach – is particularly useful for the present purpose as it allows for consideration of nuances in text with constant attention to the context under study. As party programmes vary in form and length, a qualitative assessment also allows for measuring saliency of one issue relative to other issues within that same text.

Even so, there are some additional methodological challenges that concern the manifestos themselves that merit consideration. One general weakness of this approach is the unspoken aspects of a party's ideology (Pirro 2014). Former rebel parties may face legal limitations that require attention to specific parameters. Parties

may also restrain themselves in order to attract more international support in the form of party assistance or reintegration funds. That said, as Sindre (2014) has argued, party assistance may also lead to more moderate leaders gaining more power within the movement sidelining radical forces. Despite these problems, party manifestos give the most complete picture of how parties seek to represent themselves to the surroundings.

For the purpose of maximising data for each party, this study makes use of all available manifestos. The manifestos do not, however, cover the same period and number of post-war elections. For the TNA, there are three manifestos (2001; 2004; 2015) with only one post-war manifesto (2015). The remaining two were written during the period when the Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement was in place and thus serve the purpose to identify change within the parties over time. For the Aceh Party, only two manifestos exist (2008; 2014). In addition, the party printed and distributed the peace settlement, the MoU (MoU 2005) and presented this as their formal programme. The Aceh Party's manifestos are very short and include a thirteen-point programme (2014) alongside a list depicting the party's political profile (2008). For the SDS, three manifestos were available (2006; 2010; 2014), all corresponding to the post-war period. The study also includes the pre-war 'programme' that depict the goals of the SDS at its founding in 1990. Although the data and lengths of the documents vary considerably, it was found that careful analysis of all available manifestos give better indications of the issue profiles and any changes than would a limited selection.

The following analysis does two things: It discusses the presence and saliency of each issue dimension in the three parties and traces any change in the emphasis and content of these issues over time. When an issue is included in the party programme and receives ample space *relative to other issues*, it is considered a salient issue (see Pirro 2014, 611-12). Table 2, which is further discussed in the conclusion, specifies the strength of the issues within the three parties. Before proceeding it is important to stress that the four issue categories that constitute the two dimensions are theoretical constructs. Hence the boundary between the issues may not be clear-cut. Second, there are contextual variations within each case that impact on how parties adapt over time and why. The typology does not capture this.

ISSUE PROFILES OF FORMER SECESSIONIST REBEL GROUPS TURNED POLITICAL PARTIES

The Aceh Party: Abandoning ethno-centrism

The Aceh Party's ideological profile signifies a party that has abandoned the goals of secession by propagating a clearly regionalist political agenda. While this may not be a static position, after two election cycles for regional parliament, in 2009 and 2014, GAM's successor party remains staunchly anchored in regional-level politics having developed cross-party alliances to bolster its power in the regional parliament and amplify its voice in national-level politics. Following the MoU, the Aceh Party was not formally established as a regional political party until 2008, three years after the signing of the MoU. However, as former rebel commanders won positions as mayors, regents and the governorship in the first post-war direct elections (*pilkada*) in 2006 in which GAM candidates could run as independents, GAM secured its position as a dominant force in Aceh. The process of formally establishing a rebel successor party was initially halted due to an internal conflict over leadership and growing factionalism (see Sindre 2016b). While some of these divisions occurred between individual leaders scrambling to secure top positions within the party, they also reflected divisions over ideology. The party program alongside other documents give an indication of how the party leadership wishes to present itself to the electorate and its members, but also to other political parties and potential allies.

When it comes to the saliency of conflict cleavage issues, the Aceh Party has adopted a maximalist position. The party makes active references to its past as an armed movement mobilising around the notions of heroism and sacrifice by the leadership and its combatants (Sindre 2016a). During the struggle GAM propagated a coherent ideology anchored in nationalist myths of past sovereignty and a prescriptive programme for how that state would be governed according to an Acehnese *state code* led by a Sultan, a *Wali Nanggroe* recounted in a series of texts compiled and written by the founding leader, Hasan di Tiro (Kingsbury 2007). This discourse was further supported by the claim of a second colonization by the Javanese, which served to reinforce the idea that the Indonesian state was an artificial construct that ensured Javanese dominance at the expense of other regions in the archipelago.

During what is often described as the final phase of the armed conflict, from 1998-2004, this discourse of ethnic differentiation became less dominant and was replaced with an increased emphasis on pluralism and democracy, which in part came about as the result of the strengthening of the political wing and alliance with civil society.[6] Hence, the GAM case illustrates a shift in discourse away from focusing on ethnic differentiation from the 'Javanese dominated Indonesian state' towards emphasising democracy, ethnic pluralism and human rights as a basis of their claim to self-determination already before the signing of the MoU and thereby also before taking part in elections.[7] The emergence of a moderate wing within the movement and the organizational evolution of GAM into a social political movement with a strong civilian base had led to an internal shift in the balance of power towards moderates that pushed for increased regionalism rather than secession. The formal endorsement of 'self-government' and autonomy that also awarded the rebel group with provisions to transform into a political party to ensure its continued political involvement in Aceh's internal affairs was a determinant factor for more radical segments to agree to a compromise solution.[8]

Across two election cycles the Aceh Party has presented an outward profile as a regionalist political party that no longer seeks secession. The manifestos and election documents all put emphasis on the region and its relative autonomy vis-à-vis Jakarta. In contrast to the wartime discourse that highlighted the historical myths of past grandeur to undergird the claim to independence, the post-war discourse has shifted towards presenting autonomy and regionalism as an opportunity for ensuring democratisation at the regional level and across Indonesia.

The distinctiveness of Aceh is prevalent part of its regionalist agenda. In the immediate post-conflict period and especially ahead of the 2009 election, the emphasis was clearly on economic development, democracy, and good governance seeking to present a clear break with the past of corrupt rule and authoritarianism. The Aceh Party and supporters of Irwandi Yusuf, a former GAM negotiator and representative to the Aceh Monitoring mission who was elected Governor in 2006, mobilised support for a local development plan for Aceh that stressed, amongst other things, the need to attract foreign direct investments and development of the local

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[6] Author (withheld for peer review)
[7] Ibid;
[8] ibid

tourist industry. Amongst the most radical of these policy propositions was the establishment of an international airport in Aceh that would strengthen ties between Aceh and the rest of Asia without needing to travel via Jakarta. In parliament, however, the Aceh Party did not push for these reforms and soon abandoned any goals of radical transformation of the economy and radical development policies. Instead, ahead of the 2014 elections, the party increasingly aligned with national parties and abandoned any radical local solutions that deviated from the mainstream emphasis on business propositions in their programmes. Instead, they sought integration into the general Indonesian development programmes drawing closer to national parties and the state.

In abandoning its radical development goals and policies, the party has to some extent reverted to emphasising identity politics as part of its public profile. In contrast to earlier periods, however, identity politics is detached from seeking any form of institutional change or structural transformation, such as demanding increased autonomy. Instead, the emphasis is on cultural norms and regional distinctiveness. This is first and foremost exemplified by the use of identity markers such as Acehnese clothing, the use of titles and rituals that continue to feature prominently at election rallies and party meetings as well as in parliament. To respond to some early criticisms and fears that a GAM party represented only the ethnic Acehnese, excluding other minorities such as Alas and Lues, the party seeks to cast itself as a distinctly regional party representing 'the people of Aceh' (Aceh Party 2014).

The peacebuilding dimension has therefore replaced the focus on the territory and region and is the most prevalent feature of the official party programs and in the discourse. Across the two election cycles, the Aceh Party has capitalised extensively on a discourse as peacemakers and enablers of democracy. The most striking feature has been the framing of the peace settlement as a victorious outcome and the Aceh Party as defenders of peace. Ahead of the 2009 election, the MoU agreement was printed in pocket size and distributed at election rallies. The MoU was often referred to as the official party program with the goal being to oversee its full implementation and to ensure Jakarta's continued commitment to peace and self-government. In that regard, the MoU and the Law on the Governing of Aceh (LoGA), which is the official law that ensures the implementation of the MoU, serve as the main legitimising and mobilising tool for the party.

14

In 2014, a thirteen point list summarising why vote for the Aceh Party (Aceh Party 2014), states that 'the Aceh Party needs the support of the people of Aceh to achieve to goal of peace' (Aceh Party 2014, 5) and '… one of the key issues that GAM asked for in the Helsinki negotiations was the formation of local parties. The Indonesian government agreed after tough negotiations. Therefore, as a party directly involved in peace, the victory of the Aceh Party, is [also] a legal issue that maintains a continued commitment to peace' (Aceh Party 2014, 6).

As others have highlighted (Avonius 2014; Törnquist 2011), the 'moderates' defined as the pro-democracy wing that had envisioned establishing a broad-based mass party that professed inclusion and internal party democracy had lost out in the early years and formed new parties or exited from party politics altogether. Yet, despite the continued strength of so-called hard-liners among the leadership and in contrast to some expectations (e.g. Avonius 2014, 7), the Aceh Party has not returned to wartime ideological radicalism of ethnic differentiation, anti-state mobilization parties profile has shifted from ethno-nationalist goals that require state restructuring and constitutional reform towards emphasising regionalism in accordance with the status quo, i.e. the post-war institutional context. In that regard, the party has adopted a maximalist position along both dimensions to which the peacebuilding dimension has become the most salient feature of the party as it continues to seek legitimacy as peace enablers, peace promoters and peacebuilders.

The Serb Democratic Party (SDS): Re-radicalization on conflict cleavage
In the decades since the Dayton agreement paved the way for democratic inclusion of the war contenders in the Bosnian civil war, the SDS has retained its profile as a party anchored in its role to secure 'full emancipation of the Serb people and Republika Srpska' (SDS 2010,1). With a short pre-war history as a political party, the SDS was established to participate in the founding elections for Bosnia Herzegovina following the dissolution of former Yugoslavia. Pre-war ethnic radicalization corresponded to the active steps taken towards securing Serb territories inside Bosnia Herzegovina; first by establishing SDS-dominated municipalities, followed by a Serb Assembly and a Serb Autonomous Region, to finally proclaiming the formation of Republika Srpska declared by Radovan Karadzic and his supporters at the beginning of the war (Caspersen 2010, 47). The SDS' wartime ideological profile and strategy is

15

summarised in the 'Six Strategic Goals of the Serbian Nation', which was adopted by the Serb Assembly in 1992 to secure Serb-dominated territories.[9] A product of wartime territorial acquisition, Republika Srpska was legally and officially recognized in the Dayton Agreement, which ensured a high level of decentralized politics and ethnic self-determination to the Serbs in Bosnia. The constitutional formula outlined in the peace agreement aimed to balance wartime territorial gains and ethnic self-determination with 'the ambition to create an integrated multi-ethnic state that could ultimately conform to European standards on the treatment of nationalities, among other things, and remain at peace' (Manning 2008, 103).

Against this backdrop, conflict cleavages remain salient in the SDS' ideological profiles. The SDS presents a uniform story of armed mobilization that ensured Serbian survival and territorial integrity of the Serbs in BiH. Across the three party programmes the Dayton agreement is presented as a confirmation of its military achievement to secure the Serb territory and hence the settlement is cast as the most important insurance for the survival of Serbs in Bosnia. In the 2010 party programme this is specified as follows:

'The war in BiH ended with the Dayton Peace Agreement, giving far-reaching concessions to the Serb side, and the Serbian Democratic Party accepted it as a document of peace and solutions to the state order of BiH as a complex state of three peoples, consisting of two entities: the Republika Srpska and the Federation' (SDS 2010).

Accordingly, the party's purpose is strongly anchored in the Dayton agreement itself and the Constitutions for Bosnia Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska. For this reason, there is an apparent contradiction between the SDS' stated aims of continued fight for ethnic self-determination and the overarching ambition engrained in the constitution for BiH to ensure a multi-ethnic state. In fact, when carefully tracing changes in the post-war party programmes over time, there are clearly subtle changes in the programmatic discourse that indicate a radicalization on the issue of ethnic federalism and an increased opposition to the very idea of a multi-

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[9] The six strategic goals of the Serbian Nation: 1) State delineation from the other two national communities; 2) The establishment of a corridor between Semeria and Kajina; 3) The establishment of a corridor in the valley of the Drina River; 4) the Establishment of a border on the rivers of the Una and Neretva; 5) The division of the city of Sarajevo into Serb and Muslim parts and the establishment of a state authority in each part; 6) Creation of an outlet for Republika Srpska to the sea.

ethnic BiH. There are two concrete themes that reflect this tendency, namely the relationship between Serbs and Bosniaks and internal governance dynamics of Republika Srpska.

Regarding the first conflict cleavage issue, the degree of territorial autonomy, the SDS' ideological position on the rights of the Serb nation has been framed in defensive rather than offensive terms arguing that the existence of Republika Srpska is under constant threat. In the 2006 manifesto, this is framed in terms of defending and supporting the constitutional framework as outlined in the Dayton agreement thus explicitly supporting the status quo and the peace framework. The Dayton agreement is hailed as a defining document that determines the structural interaction between ethnic groups and territorial self-determination. The emphasis on the Dayton accord is similar in 2010, but there is clearly an increased focus on sovereignty rights for Republika Srpskpa as the party reacts to suggestions of constitutional reform:

'The response of the Serb Democratic Party to the pressure on the centralization of BiH institutions will be to strengthen the position of the Republika Srpska, based on the Dayton Peace Agreement and the existing entity borders within BiH with two entity units: the Republika Srpska and the Federation of BiH' (SDS 2010, 10).

In the 2014 White Papers, the conflict cleavages resurface in explicit terms as is illustrated by making references to ethnic differences and increased emphasis on sovereignty and a policy of difference:

'Bearing in mind that the unilateral and unconstitutional standpoints of Bosniak and pro-Bosnian representatives, which are directed against the RS, are not individual and isolated cases, but part of a broader strategy that de facto represents a continuation of war policy on a diplomatic plane, the SDS will insist on taking effective responses for the suppression of [such] illegal and illegitimate activities' (SDS 2014, 31).

The evolution can be traced in a shift in tone and emphasis in the programs from (1) defending the existing of the entity (Republika Srpska) and the constitution, which ensures it (SDS 2006); (2) emphasis on sovereignty as being under threat (SDS 2010); and (3) expression of explicit fear of disintegration with emphasis on local self

government *within* the entity itself and increased weight on ethnic differentiation between Serbs and Bosniaks (SDS 2014).[10]

This process of re-radicalization on the core conflict cleavage partially corresponds to the party's move into opposition in 2006. However, re-radicalization must also be understood as taking place in the context of intensified inter-party competition amongst Serb parties in Republika Srpska and a crisis of governance in BiH as a whole (ICG 2012). The rise of the Alliance for Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) and its leader Milorad Dodik, by most described as a hard-line Serb ultra-nationalist, has led to intensified debate over the identity and future direction of the entity and to some extent also increased radicalization and outbidding between the Serbian parties.

Consequently, the peacebuilding dimension, and especially democratic pluralism, has a much less prevalent position place in the contemporary ideological profile of the SDS. While the SDS remains a federalist party that seeks to present an image of fostering democracy, good governance, rule of law and stability *inside* the Serbian entity, the party has adopted an increasingly ambiguous position in its approach to how to solve the mounting political crisis at the national level. This is in part reflected in the increased focus on internal politics of the entity as it devotes ever more space to criticising the ruling parties and the Serbian presidency. In that regard, the SDS clearly seeks to project an image of the true defenders of stability, progress and democratic accountability for the Serbs in BiH. Therefore, peacebuilding issues remain a salient part of the party's profile, but have decreased in importance vis-à-vis conflict cleavage issues – such as the degree the degree of autonomy awarded to the Republika Srpska and ethnic differentiation vis-à-vis other ethnic groups, especially over the last election cycle.

The Tamil National Alliance (TNA): Strategic moderation and radical ethno-nationalism
The ideological profile of the TNA consists of three election manifestos and the so-called Thimpu principles, which are often understood as the foundational principles for the Tamil nationalist movement first presented at the India-facilitated peace-talks

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[10] This is also supported by the coding done by the Manifesto Program, which identifies an increase in 'Federalism' entries from 22 in 2006 to 40 and 37 in 2010 and 2014.

in Thimpu, Bhutan in 1985 ahead of the 1987 Indo-Lanka Accord. The Thimpu principles include demands for recognition and sovereignty of the 'Tamil nation' and have been used both in support of independence and in support of greater autonomy and 'internal self-determination' (Uyangoda 2010, 253). In signing the Indo-Lanka Accord, the armed groups that later formed the TNA had supported the establishment of Provincial Councils and devolution of powers.[11] As a unifying nationalist declaration, the Thimpu principles have paved the way for a shift in the nationalist discourse away from secession towards propagating devolution and constitutional reform, respecting the 'territorial integrity of Sri Lanka'[12]

The three party manifestos of the TNA produced over a course of fifteen years reflect this inconsistency in the Tamil nationalist approach to the main conflict cleavage issue that concern the degree of self-determination for a Tamil homeland. There is a clear shift from propagating independence in 2001 to defending regionalism and ethnic federalism in 2015. The two manifestos produced in the context of the Fifth peace process that lasted from 2001-2006 (TNA 2001; 2004) read as a combination of direct responses to the contemporary political climate of ceasefire period and as political statements in demand of a Tamil homeland. The 2001 founding manifesto was written before the negotiated Cease Fire Agreement (CFA) came into effect, but in a context in which the Tamil parties wanted to demonstrate willingness to compromise in a situation in which there was political will on both sides to negotiate towards a settlement. Given the previous years' lack of trust between the protagonists until the early 2000s, it is clear that the TNA wanted to communicate a moderate stance by framing the Tamil demands in relation to the broader national question and as a question of national interest in peace and stability. In the 2001 manifesto, listing the Thimpu principles, the TNA expressed willingness to explore alternatives to independence:

'Different countries have fashioned different systems of governments to ensure these principles [i.e. the Thimpu principles]. *We* have demanded and struggled for an independent Tamil state as the answer to this problem arising out of the denial

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[11] The Indo-Lanka Accord of 1987 stipulated the merger of the Northern and Eastern provinces, with a referendum in the Eastern Province to decide whether the merger would be permanent. The referendum was postponed. On 1 March 1990,the Chief Minister of the North Eastern Province declared independence, which led President Premadasa to dissolve the provincial council and impose direct rule over the province, which lasted until 2006 (Indo-Lanka Accord 1987).
[12] §1.5 Indo-Lanka Accord 1987

of these basic rights of our people...In view of our earnest desire for peace, we are prepared to give consideration to any set of proposals in keeping with the above principles that the Sri Lanka government might place before us' (TNA 2001, 3).

At this point in time, the TNA-leadership had convinced segments of the LTTE political wing that electoral participation was important to reclaim popular legitimacy for the Tamil nationalist movement and to position itself as the main representatives of the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka. As a new party in the 2001 parliamentary elections, a vote share of 51 and 31 per cent in the Northern and Eastern Provinces respectively, and 15 seats in the national assembly was an indicator of Tamil support for the peace talks as well as their political process engagement. The 2001 manifesto therefore reads very much like a peace strategy and peacebuilding manifesto addressing the core conflict cleavage issues of self-determination and polarization. In contrast, the 2004 manifesto (TNA 2004), which reverts to a separatist stand reflect a context of protracted peacebuilding, intra-ethnic fragmentation (mainly between the LTTE and the TNA) and ultimately intensified inter-ethnic competition and militarization of the state (Stokke 2006).

However, when analysing the contemporary political discourse in the most recent TNA manifesto (TNA 2015), the party has reverted to its original position on the self-determination issue formally abandoning the goal of secession, and instead proposing a high degree of autonomy under the rubric of 'popular sovereignty' (TNA 2015, 2): '...the TNA considers to be paramount to the resolution of the national question mainly to the sharing of the powers of governance though a shared sovereignty amongst the People's who inhabit this island' (TNA 2015, 3). Ultimately the party pays less attention to changing its language in terms of ethnic pluralisation, following a similar logic as the SDS in seeing territory as a necessity to defend the ethnic nation. Parallel to the continued emphasis on wartime cleavages, issues of reconciliation, reintegration, resettlement and economic development to war-affected regions are salient in the TNA's post-war profile. Calling for the 'fulfilment of the resolutions adopted by the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)' (TNA 2015, 3), the party also moves responsibility to the government for fulfilling the demands of the UNHRC in Sri Lanka.

When it comes to the peacebuilding issues and especially commitment to democratic pluralism, the Tamil nationalist discourse propagated by the TNA stresses

the links between self-determination and democratic pluralism. The collapse of the LTTE enabled the TNA to take control of the discourse over what constitutes sovereignty, which previously has been narrowly defined as an independence project and a state-building project. From this, there are several elements in the contemporary political discourse that indicate strategic moderation and acceptance of more pluralistic attitudes when it comes to intra-ethnic collaboration and strategic alliance building across the main ethnic divides that speaks directly to reaffirming peacebuilding issues as a salient feature of the party's ideological profile. First, there has been a significant shift in the formal party discourse with regard to minority rights and political inclusion, especially in its approach to the country's Tamil speaking Muslim minority. The Muslim question has become a thorn in the side of the Tamil nationalist movement, as Tamil speaking Muslims have mobilised separately, viewing Tamil nationalist project as excluding Muslim interests as indicted by relatively low vote share in the Eastern province compared to the Northern province. Historically, the Tamil project has held that the merging of the Northern and Eastern provinces was a non-negotiable principle. The 2015 manifesto calls for a re-merger of the two provinces, after they had been de-merged in 2006, stressing that 'Tamil speaking Northern and Eastern provinces is the historical habitation of the Tamil People and the *Tamil Speaking Peoples'* (italics added) (TNA 2015, 3). In an attempt to address mounting critique from the Muslim political parties, the manifesto stresses that 'the Tamil speaking Muslim historical inhabitants shall be entitled to the beneficiaries of all power-sharing arrangements in the North-East' (TNA 2015, 3).

Second, the TNA is strategically selective when it comes to alliance building and seeking coalitions. Ahead of the 2015 presidential elections, the TNA formally supported opposition candidate Sirisena's peace platform. As Sirisena formed a national unity government, the TNA opted out on the premise that although they supported Sirisena's policies for political reform, they would remain in opposition until a political solution had been found that addresses Tamil grievances: 'We will first have to reach an agreement on various issues, including the human rights concerns. Only if the government can reach a solution to the Tamil issue, will we consider joining the proposed national government.'[13] Despite the low number of

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[13] TNA Spokesperson, Suresh Premachandran, Global Times, Xinhua News Agency 16 February 2015 http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/907995.shtml

seats (16 out of 225), the TNA has emerged as the dominant opposition party with the TNA leader, Sampanthan chosen as the Leader of the opposition. As part of the programmatic commitment to strengthening regional councils, the TNA opted to join an all-party provincial government district council in the Eastern Province, upon invitation form the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) and Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) in 2015 presenting this as an illustration of its prospective plan for inter-ethnic power sharing.[14]

Within a highly polarized context, the TNA seeks to build a united political front emphasising a degree of internal pluralism. Although ethnic differentiation remains a feature of the TNA's ideological profile, the content of that radicalism has become more inclusive and there is a clearer focus on pluralism and alliance-building rather than ethnic polarization. At the same time, the continued emphasis on Tamil distinctiveness vis-à-vis the majority ethnic group in all party manifestos illustrate that there is a clear internal tension between an ethnic and a multi-ethnic perception of the state.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This article's primary motivation has been to systematically analyse by use of qualitative case study comparison, how former rebel parties adapt their ideological profiles to peacetime politics. While most studies of rebel transformation have focused on changes in goals or adaptation to democracy, this study argues that attention to party issue profiles give better and more precise insights into whether and how parties adapt after war and that this is important for assessing how parties contribute positively or negatively to forging peace. The article thus proposes an analytical framework to capture decrease in the saliency of conflict cleavage issues and increase in saliency of peacebuilding issues that is context sensitive and serves to capture internal variation in how these parties adapt and rebrand their profiles over multiple election cycles.

As summarised in Table 2, the empirical analysis of the Aceh Party, the SDS and the TNA give important indications of the ideological profiles of post-war political parties. While the literature on ethnic parties has generally focused on their role as conflict catalysts or the institutional context that curbs their behaviour, the

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[14] New Indian Express 17 February 2015: http://www.newindianexpress.com/world/2015/feb/17/For-The-First-Time-in-History-TNA-Will-Be-in-Eastern-Province'-Board-of-Ministers-718549.html

comparison of the Aceh Party, the SDS and the TNA offer nuance to some of these underlying assumptions. For all three parties, conflict cleavage issues have decreased in saliency, but more so for the Aceh Party and the TNA than the SDS. While all three parties use the language of being the 'defenders' of their respective groups, in both Sri Lanka and Bosnia Herzegovina, ethnic differentiation remains a salient part of the programmatic profiles of the parties. Some plausible explanations can be found in level of intra-ethnic competition in Republika Srpska and Sri Lanka or the sense that the parties are balancing between backward looking and forward looking strategies.

When it comes to peacebuilding issues, peace agreements become defining features of former rebel parties: the documents are central to their ideology. The agreements are presented as achievements and the parties themselves wish to be viewed as peace defenders and protectors. The SDS and the Aceh Party, in particular, have adopted the language of the peace settlements to further legitimize themselves vis-à-vis other ethnic and regional political parties. Similarly, the TNA has reverted to the Indo-Lanka Accord, of which several TNA members were signatories. All parties seek legitimacy in their engagement in peace talks, referring back to negotiations that demonstrate their willingness to compromise. This may also suggest that conflict ending, i.e. whether conflict ended with a final settlement or defeat of the rebel group, is not determinant for how they mobilize as parties after war. This is further reflected in the issue of democratic pluralism. While all three parties recast the nationalist discourse in more civic terms emphasising inclusiveness, pluralism and tolerance within and between the ethnic blocs, the extent to which we can trace change across the three parties differs. The SDS calls for cooperation within the Republika Srpska, but reverts to a divisive language when referring to the Bosnian state. The TNA calls for cooperation and seeks to build coalitions at the regional level, but this is also combined with the continued use of a language of ethnic differentiation. These contradictions further illustrate that on the one hand, the former rebel parties balance on a tight rope between seeking legitimacy based on wartime cleavages highlighting sacrifice and oppression, while on the other hand presenting themselves as protectors of peace in support of pluralism and inter-ethnic cooperation.

Although ethno-nationalist parties in post-war contexts share many traits with other ethno-nationalist parties in non-civil war affected contexts, the experience of armed mobilization, peacebuilding and recovery, creates a particular context to which

23

these parties adapt. As a first systematic study of ideological change in former rebel parties over multiple election cycles, this study has shown that although these parties do not undergo fundamental identity change as such, they adapt and moderate their ideologies and programmatic profiles, but to different degrees. The study opens up further avenues for research into how former rebel parties impact on peacebuilding and democratization in post-civil war states. Due to its flexibility the typology also provides a framework for comparative analysis across different types of rebel groups beyond the ethno-regionalist context discussed here.

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Table 1

Overview of issue dimensions

Issue dimensions	Issues (*degree of*)
Conflict cleavage issues	Territorial Autonomy
	Ethnic differentiation
Peacebuilding issues	Conflict resolution mechanisms
	Democratic pluralism

Table 2
Summary of Findings

Issue dimensions	Issues	Aceh Party	TNA	SDS
Conflict Cleavage Issues	Territorial Autonomy	**	**	*
	Ethnic differentiation	**	*	*
Peacebuilding issues	Conflict resolution mechanisms	**	**	*
	Democratic pluralism	**	*	-

Note: – = Little change, * some change, ** Substantial change
*Change is here understood in context of positive impact on peace – i.e. decrease in saliency of conflict cleavage issues and increase in saliency of peacebuilding issues.