Rebel groups

Francisco Villamil

War, peace, and political violence

UC3M, Fall 2024

The universe of civil wars



Confederate Army in the US

The universe of civil wars



FLNC in Corsica, France

The universe of civil wars



Hamas in Gaza

The universe of civil wars



ELN in Colombia

Managing a Crisis: Hezbollah's Welfare Expansion

Giulia Dal Bello

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Raqqa Residents Describe Life Under Unmerciful ISIS Rule

By satellite phone and email, people living in ISIS-controlled Raqqa, Syria, say fighters have stolen their houses, killed family members and even forced them to pay rent on properties they already own.



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- Why?
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- A few questions:
  1. In what ways are rebel groups difference?
  2. Why?
  3. What consequences do these differences have? (their behavior)

The universe of rebel organizations

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  - → Not talking about violence here (only, at least)

Autonomous enclave amid violence of Syrian conflict

Experiment in self-rule in Rojava

The now autonomous (and multi-cultural) territory of Rojava is attempting localised, egalitarian government in Kurdish regions won back from ISIS in northern Syria.

by Mireille Court & Chris Den Hond



Rebel governance

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- **Rebels** make a **decision** on how to rule local civilians, and **civilians** also have some **influence** on how they are ruled
- This 'wartime social order' can be purely coercive and violent, but most groups engage in some form of governance:
  - → taxation, popular assemblies, courts, schools, etc

Sri Lankan civil war (1983–2009)



LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam)



LTTE & civilian governance







Understand governance

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- Rebel governance is developed to win over the support of the local population and disincentivize collaboration with the enemy
  - → Very dependent on territorial control (you can't obviously build banks or bureaucracies if you are a guerrilla group without firm territorial control)

But even without territorial control at all...

But even without territorial control at all...

Paramilitary finances in the Troubles

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From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

In order to finance their armed campaigns during the Troubles (1969–1998), both Irish republican and Ulster loyalist paramilitaries engaged in numerous fundraising activities within Ireland and the United Kingdom, such as bank robbery, extortion, drug trafficking, bootleg recording, racketeering, and legitimate businesses such as social clubs, taxi companies, and retail shops. They also received finances from overseas, with the Republican paramilitaries being given the most support.[1][2]

The overwhelming bulk of the revenue provided for the paramilitaries throughout the conflict came from criminal and legitimate activities across the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, and Great Britain.[1] These funds were used to purchase weapons overseas and parts to manufacture homemade firearms and explosives, pay their volunteers and families of imprisoned activists, and for political, public relations, and community activities.[3][4][5] While overseas donations were generally appreciated, they were mostly small and did not really impact any tactical or political decisions on the paramilitaries.[6][2][1]

ETA recauda «puerta a puerta» el impuesto revolucionario

Una «exacción fiscal» sólo aplicada a gente de su confianza

San Sebastián.

Los terroristas de ETA, apremiados por la necesidad de gastos cada vez más fuertes, han implantado ahora un nuevo estilo de extorsión, la «exacción puerta a puerta». Los cobradores del terror llaman en oficinas, despachos y viviendas y pasan la hoja de «liquidación». Este es, no obstante, un procedimiento sólo para «contribuyentes» fieles o de confianza que, amén de pagar puntualmente, no dan cuenta a la Policía. Los demás, los reacios a «aflojar» el bolsillo o, sencillamente, de poco fiar, han de viajar a Francia para efectuar el pago. Quienes no aceptan la extorsión saben que su vida tiene un precio y, normalmente, se ven obligados a abandonar el País Vasco. Las víctimas suelen estar bien elegidas. ETA tiene buena información y hacen muy difícil la acción policial.

Los terroristas acostumbran a entablar contacto con los empresarios por medio de una carta. Las misivas enviadas por ETA m son más extensas, y empiezan con un llamamiento a su destinatario para que haga efectiva la cantidad señalada. Después se indica el plazo, que oscila en torno a los quince días, así como el dinero que se exige y la persona con la que debe entrar en contacto. «Antes del 30 de enero —dice, por ejemplo, quienes acuden a la cita, sino liberados menos significativos que, eso sí, siguen estrictamente las consignas de sus superiores.

Hace cinco años un empresario de Irún denunció la hora y el lugar de la cita que debía mantener con la organización etarra en el sur de Francia. Su valor le costó la vida en un atentado que ETA se encargó de efectuar a los pocos días.

Rebel governance

- But why do groups differ on how their relate to civilians?

Greed perspective: Resources and control



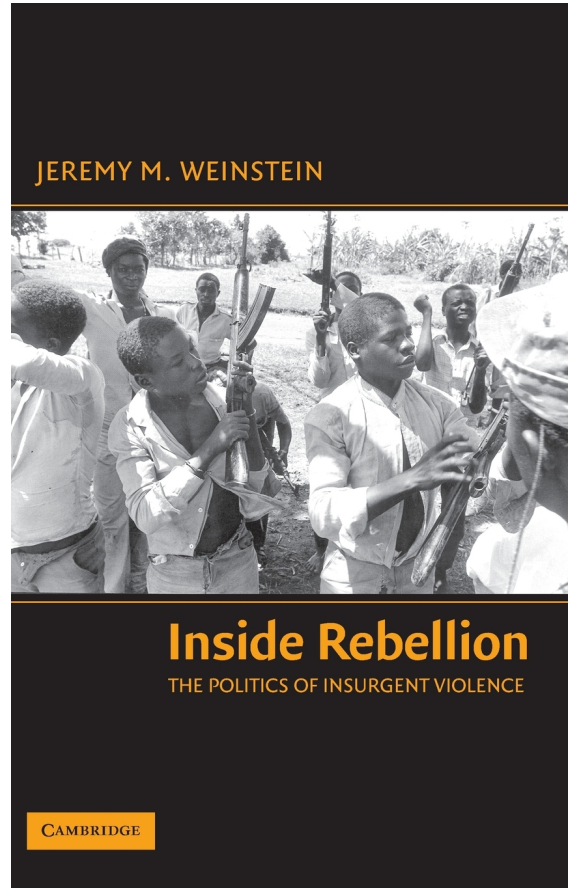
Charles Taylor's NPFL in Liberia



FNML in El Salvador

Greed perspective: Resources and control

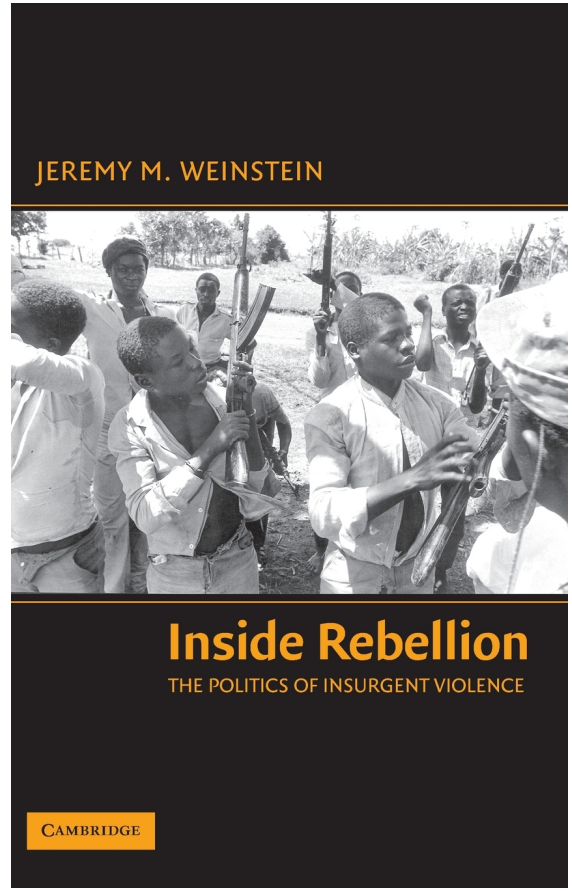
- Why do some groups use violence while other restrain themselves?



Jeremy Weinstein (2007)

Greed perspective: Resources and control

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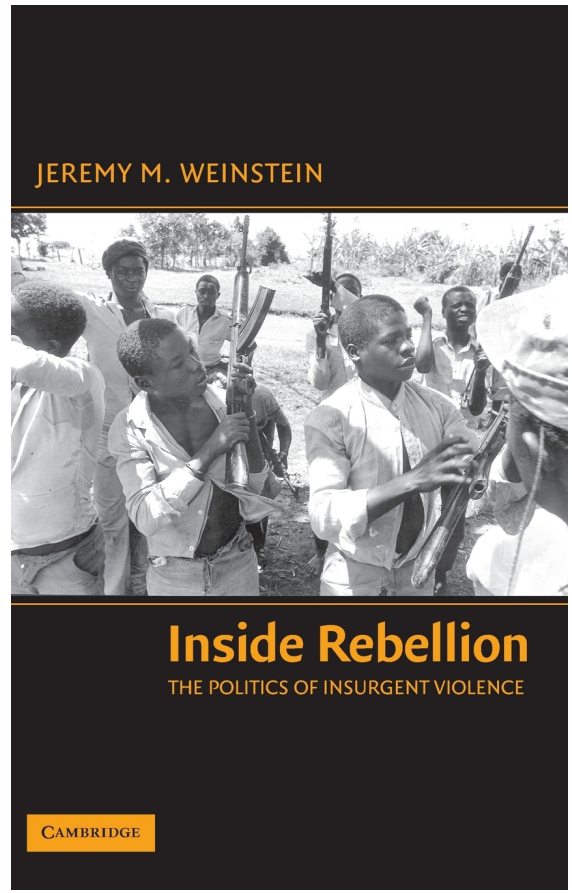


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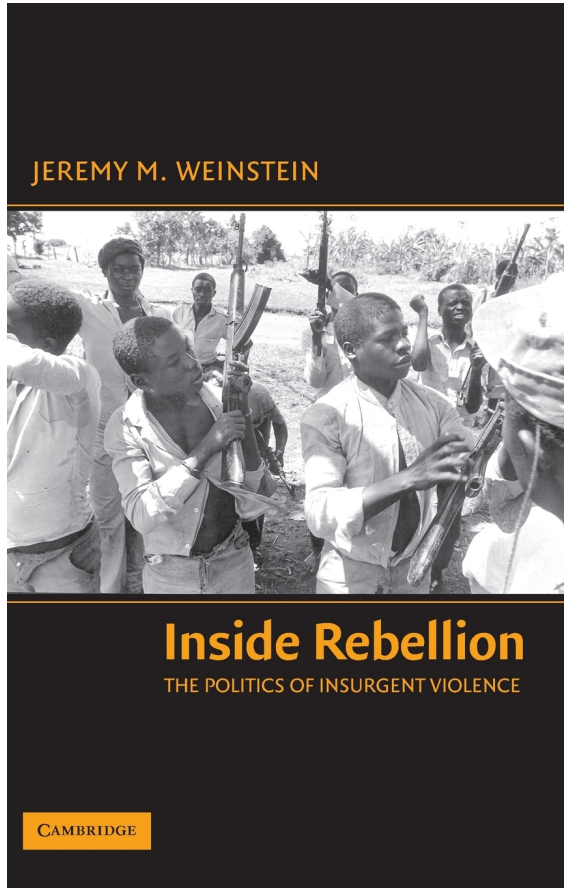


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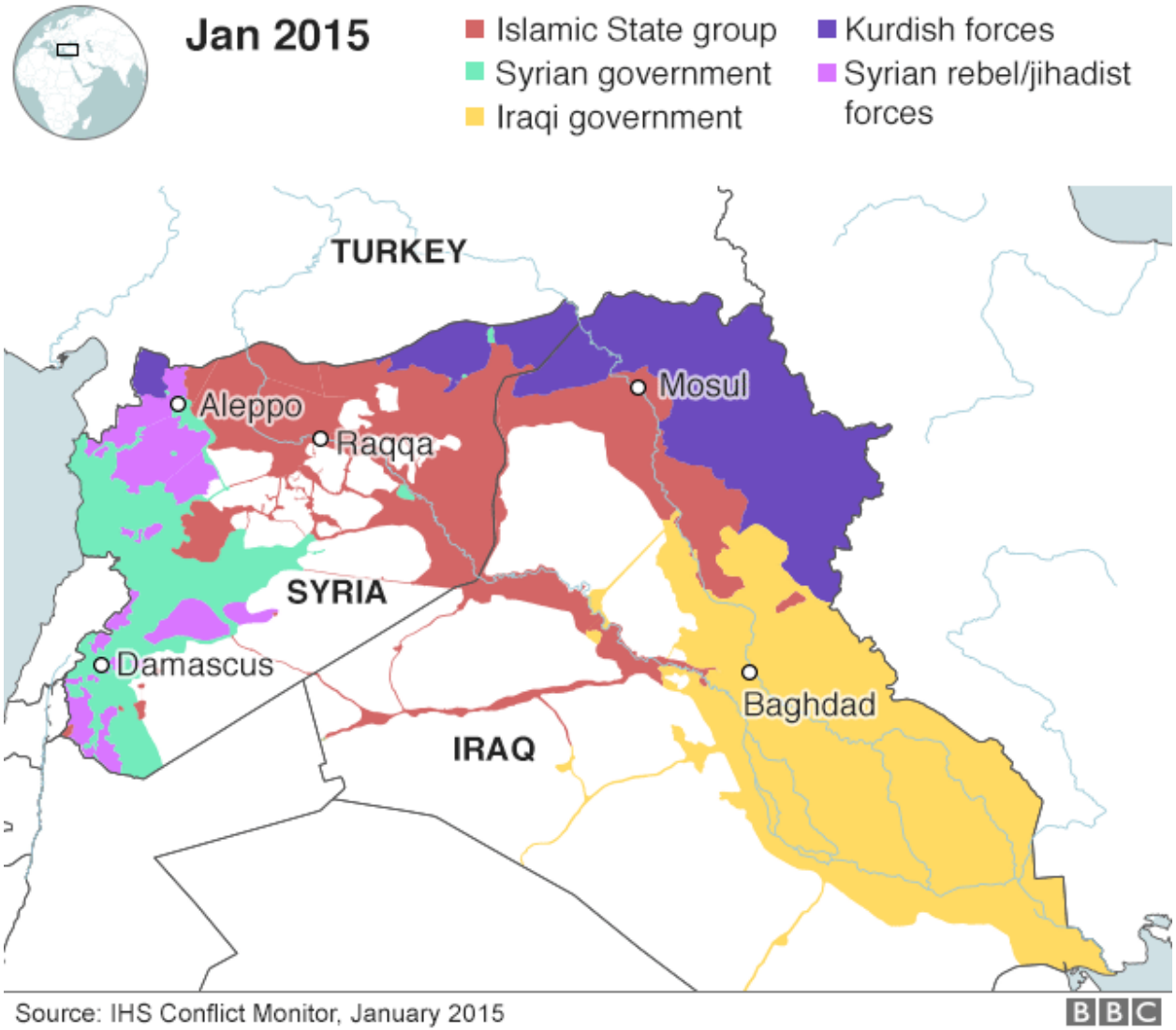


Jeremy Weinstein (2007)

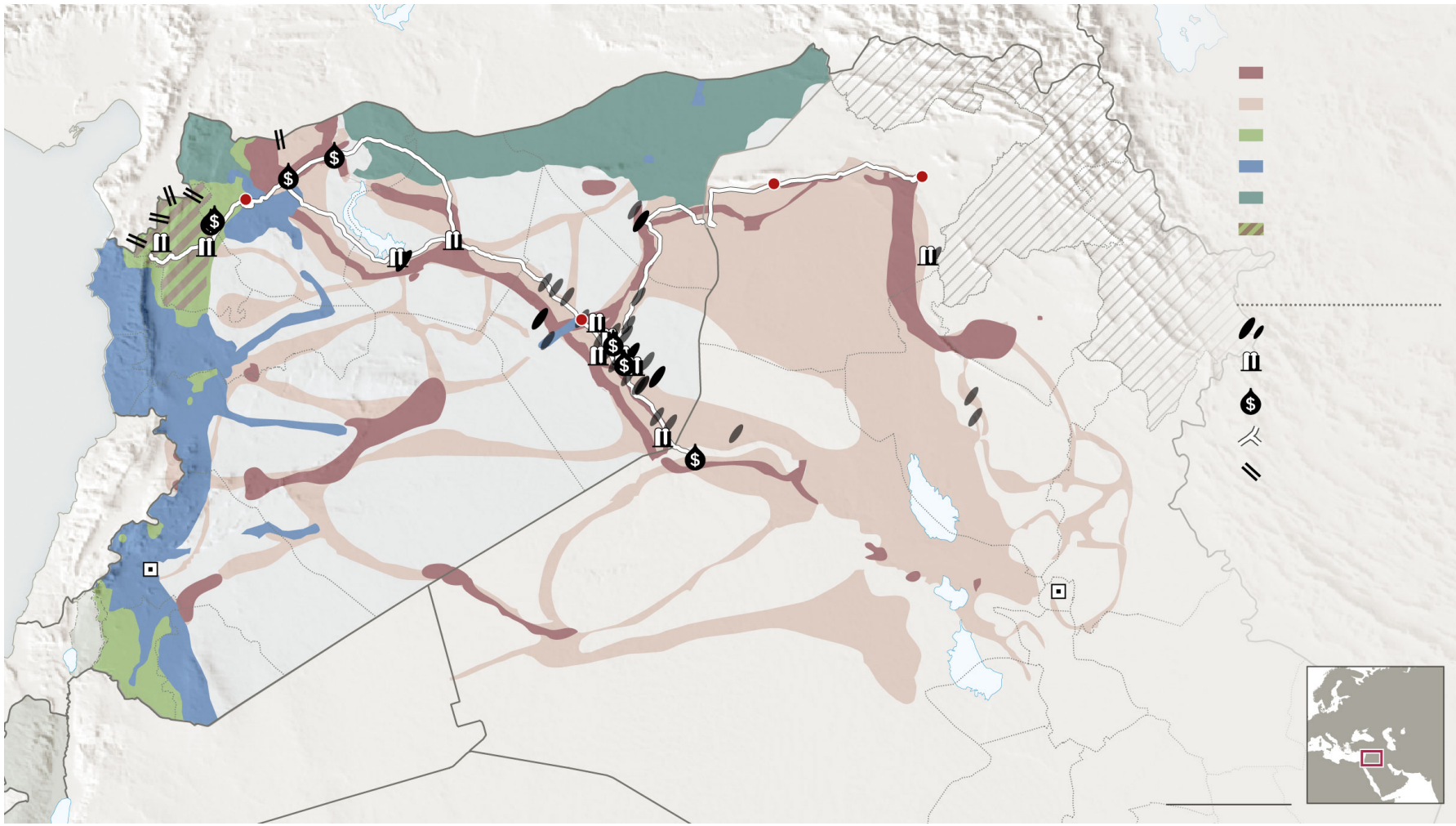
What about ISIS?



What about ISIS?



What about ISIS?



- What would you expect from ISIS?

Resources and control: ISIS?



ISIS public execution in Raqqa (Syrian Civil War)

Resources and control: ISIS?

HOME › MILITARY & DEFENSE

ISIS made millions from taxes that it then used to run garbage collections and even a DMV

Rosie Perper Apr 6, 2018, 7:41 AM



In this photo released on April 17, 2015 by a militant website, which has been verified and is consistent with other AP reporting, a member of the Islamic State group's vice police known as "Hisba," patrols a market in Raqqa City, Syria. Militant website / AP

Resources and control: ISIS?

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Resources and control: ISIS?

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- The role of ideology, not only material incentives
  - → Which also explains many other aspects of rebel governance
- War pressures
  - → Similar to Tilly's state formation idea

Understanding rebel governance

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- Some focus on economic production, health, education, some develop more participatory institutions, etc

Understanding rebel governance

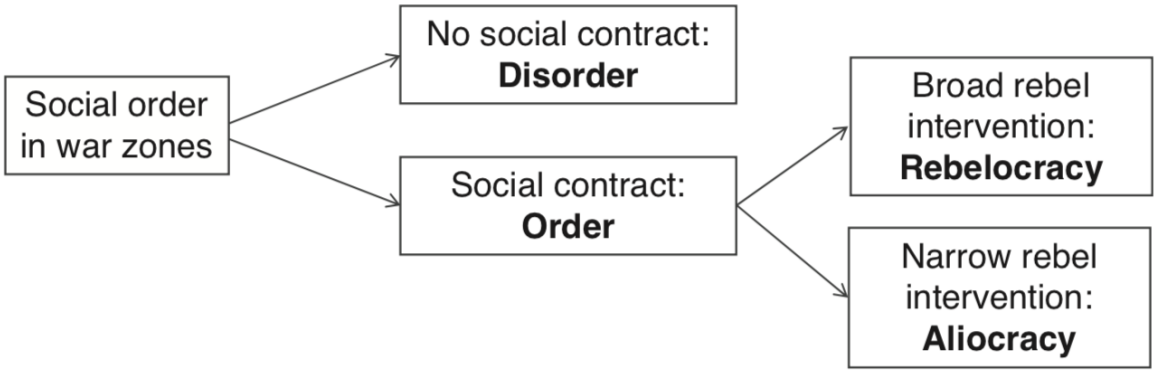
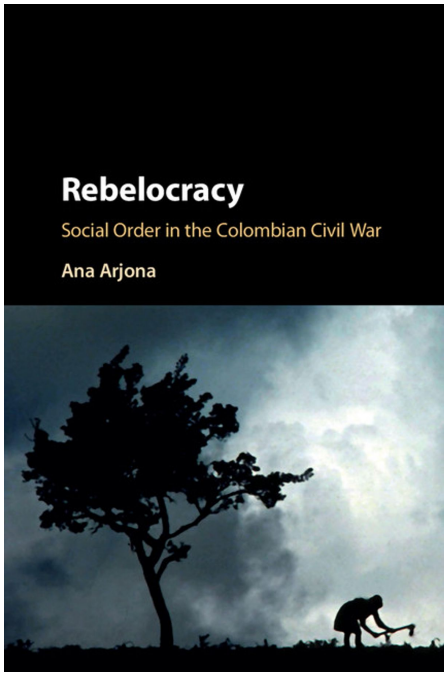


FIGURE 2.2 Typology of wartime social orders

(*Social contract* $\approx$ laws)



Ana Arjona (2017)

Understanding rebel governance

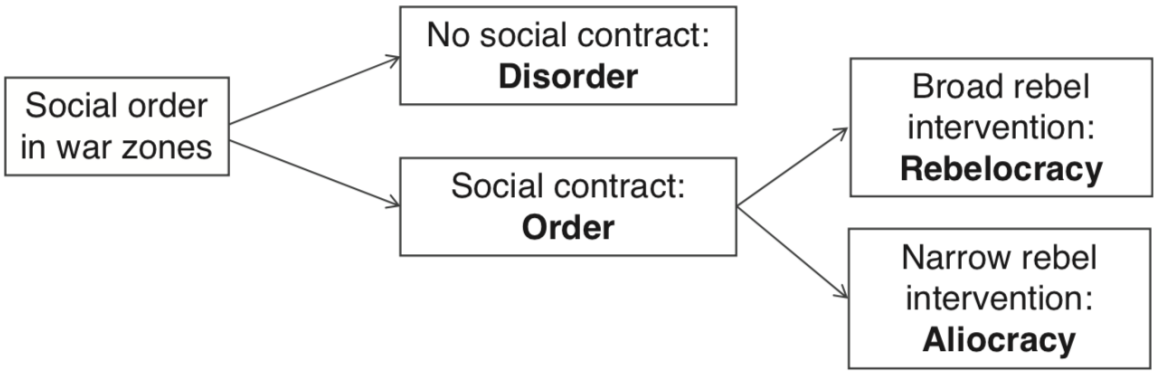
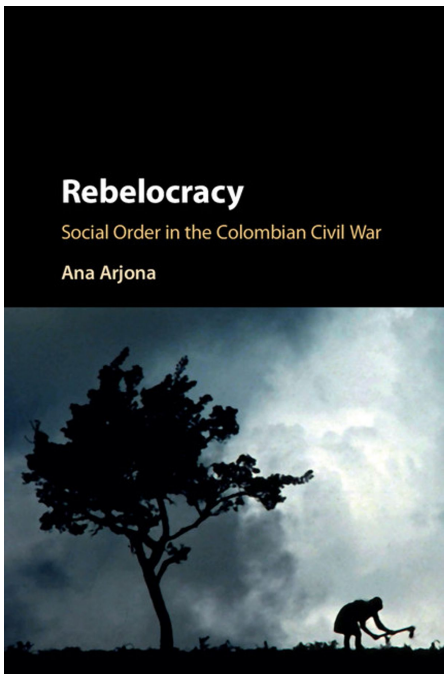


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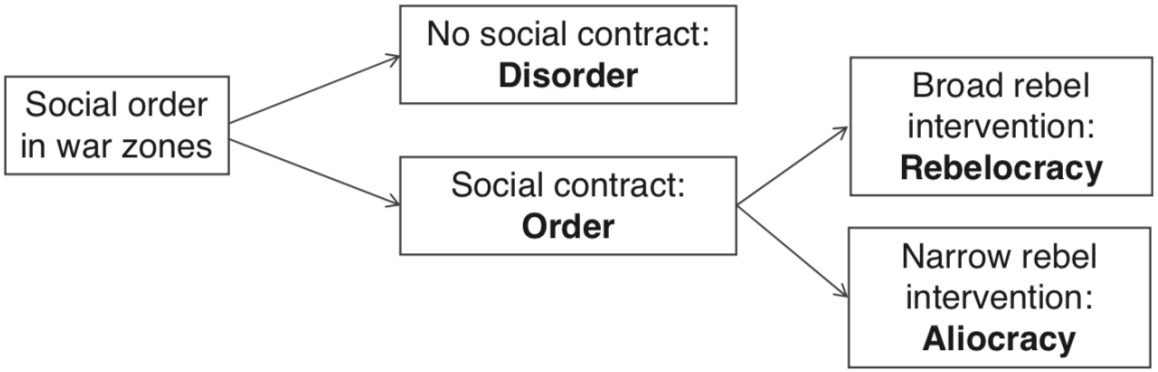
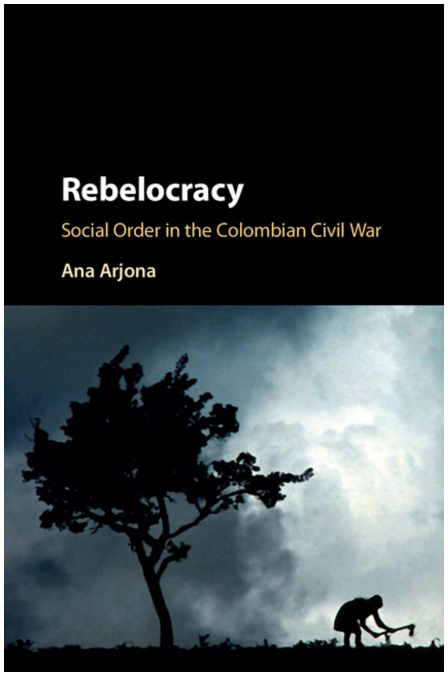


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(*Social contract* $\approx$ laws)

- Rebel groups try to mazimize territorial control and what they get out of it
- Therefore, they should prefer order to disorder, and more intervention (rebelocracy) than less (aliocracy)



Ana Arjona (2017)

Understanding rebel governance

- When does **order and rebelocracy** emerge? (i.e. when do rebel engage in extensive governance?)
- Depends on the rebels' time horizon and prewar local institutions

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3. This choice depends on the **expectation of civilian resistance**, which is shaped by preexisting institutions
4. Areas where civilians retain control, rebels establish indirect rule, controlling only the basics of security and taxation

Civilian influence and resistance

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- Alliance formation (rebels, social sectors/orgs)

Beyond governance

- Different experiences remembered by recruits for the Salvadorian army vs the FMLN
  - → Army: forced recruitment, beatings, humiliations...
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- 'Internal institutions':
  - → recruitment
  - → military training
  - → political education
  - → disciplinary measures
- Does it matter?



Beyond governance: killing civilians

The New York Times

MASSACRE OF HUNDREDS REPORTED IN SALVADOR VILLAGE

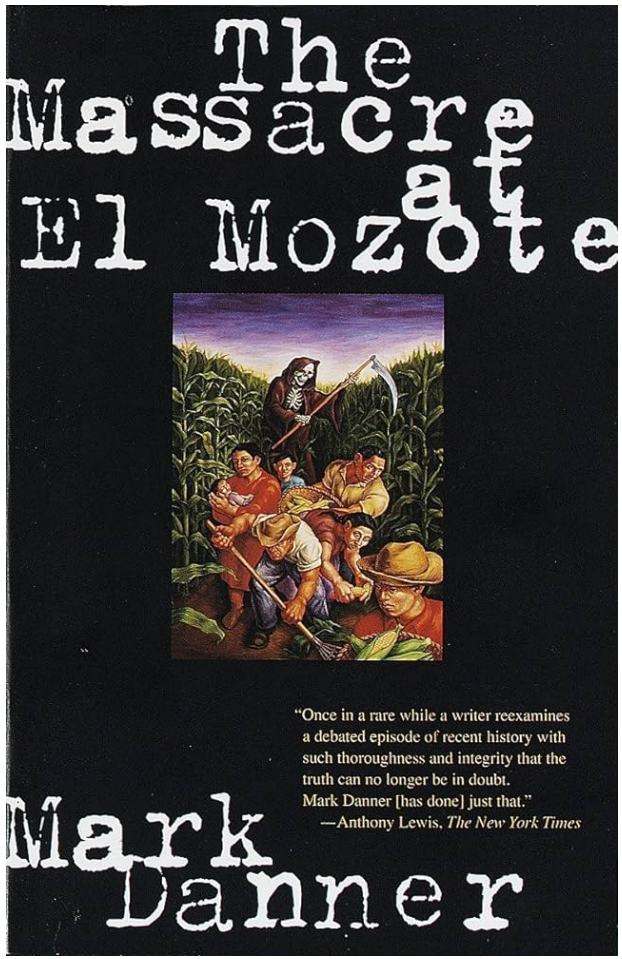
Share full article

By Raymond Bonner, Special To the New York Times
Jan. 27, 1982

From interviews with people who live in this small mountain village and surrounding hamlets, it is clear that a massacre of major proportions occurred here last month.

In some 20 mud brick huts here, this reporter saw the charred skulls and bones of dozens of bodies buried under burned-out roofs, beams and shattered tiles. There were more along the trail leading through the hills into the village, and at the edge of a nearby cornfield were the remains of 14 young men, women and children.

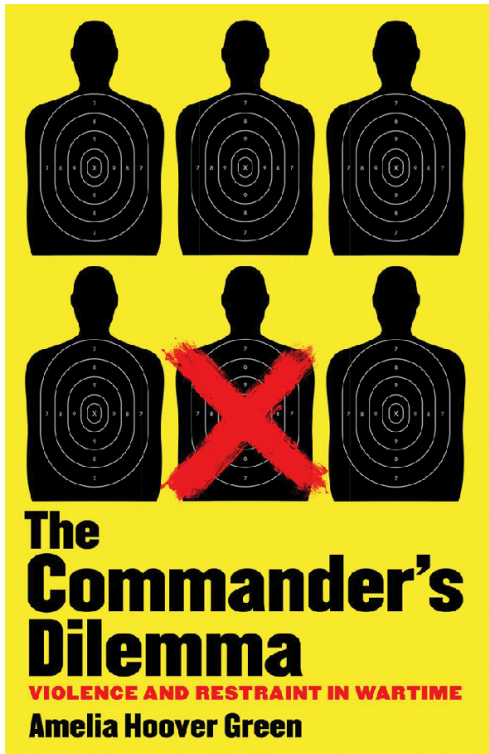
In separate interviews during a two-week period in the rebelcontrolled northern part of Morazan Province, 13 peasants said that all these, their relatives and friends, had been killed by Government soldiers of the Atlacatl Battalion in a sweep in December. 733 Victims Listed



Dec 1981, almost 1,000 civilians killed, many children & women

Beyond governance: killing civilians

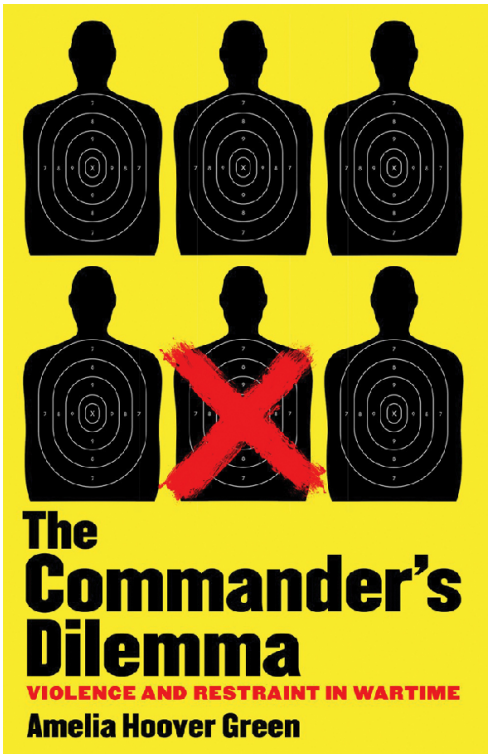
- Compare FMLN to Peru's Shinning Path



Hoover Green (2018)

Beyond governance: killing civilians

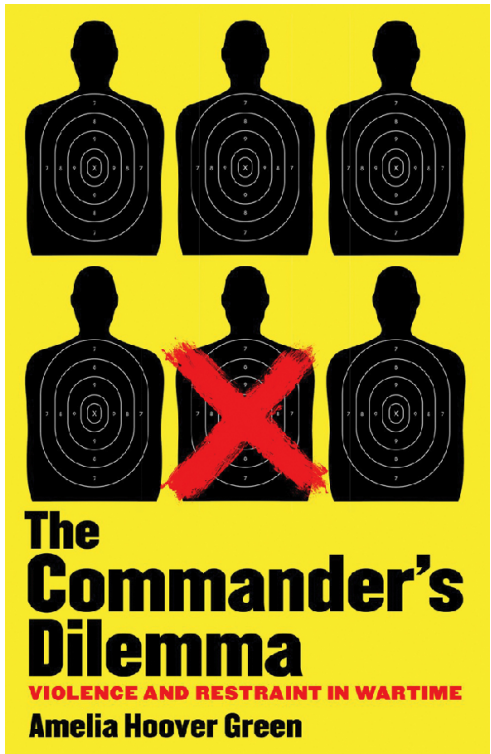
- Compare FMLN to Peru's Shinning Path
- The Commander's Dilemma: to win a war, you need to train and arm violent soldiers, but you also need to *control* how and when violence is employed
- When do we observe restraint?



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- When do we observe restraint?
- When commanders create institutions to discipline soldiers and socialize them politically



Hoover Green (2018)

Beyond governance: sexual violence

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Beyond governance: sexual violence



Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, 2014

Beyond governance: sexual violence

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1. Rape as *collateral* violence, opportunistic & private reasons
2. Rape as *strategic* violence
   → Sexual violence offers organizational advantages related to warfare
- Rape as **practice**
  → Socialization, organizational aspects, absence of restraint, etc

Beyond governance: sexual violence



US troops in Vietnam, My Lai massacre (1968)

Tomorrow: gangs



‘Combo’ members in Colombia