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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Violence, Legitimacy, and Control: The Dynamics of Rebel Rule [1]

Stefan Malthaner
Hamburg Institute for Social Research

Siniša Malešević
University College Dublin

ABSTRACT: In this paper, we outline four key sociological processes that shape the character of rebel governance. Firstly, we review the complex relationships between rebel rule and state power and look at the ways social order is generated and maintained in the context of rebel governance. Secondly, we explore relational mechanisms of control and the capacity of rebel governance to penetrate the micro social world under its rule. Thirdly, we analyze the social mechanisms through which legitimacy is attained and maintained in a rebelocracy. Finally, we examine the organizational, ideological, and micro-interactional similarities between state- and rebel governance in order to understand how and why some forms of rebel rule transform into the established governmental structures while others fragment or collapse. We argue that in order to further develop our understanding of power relations in civil wars, we need to look at the details of concrete interactions and patterns of relationships at the local level, in which orders of violence, legitimacy and control manifest themselves in everyday life, the lived experiences of those who rule and are ruled, the practices and institutions that emerge from them, and the processes in which they are negotiated.

KEYWORDS: civil war, political violence, rebel governance, power, legitimacy

CORRESPONDING AUTHORS: Stefan.Malthaner@his-online.de / sinisa.malesevic@ucd.ie

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1. Introduction:

All forms of rule entail a fine balance between coercion and legitimacy. Systems of domination are hard to sustain without a minimum level of acceptance among their subjects, and too much coercion usually undermines legitimacy. The history of governance is filled with numerous examples where once popular rulers deployed coercive means to halt declining legitimacy in order to preserve their power – from Cornelius Sulla and Napoleon to Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. By relying on excessive violence, these rulers would usually destroy the last vestiges of popular legitimacy. On the other hand, without maintaining coercive capacity, even political orders experiencing high levels of legitimacy may become unstable or vulnerable to foreign invasion (Malešević 2017, 75).[2] This balance between legitimacy and coercion is particularly pronounced in the context of civil wars. As wars generate unpredictable and life-threatening social conditions, rulers have to find ways to successfully conduct military operations while also maintaining a degree of popular support. The excessive use of violence must be justified internally as well as to the international audience. This problem affects all participants in civil wars – the state as well as non-state actors.

The traditional civil war and insurgency scholarship tended to treat states and rebel armed forces as being mutually exclusive phenomena that have very little, if anything, in common. While the state was conceptualized as the only legal entity that possesses a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence over its territory, organized forms of armed resistance were largely associated with illegitimate attacks on the state. In this understanding, the rebel armed groups were often depoliticized or simply portrayed as criminal organizations. However, this simplified dichotomy has recently been challenged by scholarship that indicates a more complex relationships between the state, armed rebellious organizations, and their wider social surroundings. This special issue builds on these well-founded critiques and especially focuses on the social dynamics of rebel governance. It comprises a range of case-studies that explore forms of political order and governance that are shaped by complex interactions between a diverse and fluid field of actors, including armed groups, state-agents, and various groups within their local social environment, in the context of an evolving civil war or other forms of organized violence. Some papers also analyze the role of transnational constituencies, international organizations, and other reference groups and how they impact on the dynamics of rebel rule.

The focal point of our analysis, thereby, is the relationship between violence, legitimacy, and control in armed groups in the context of civil wars and other violent conflicts, the practices of governance and emergent orders that form at this intersection, and their perception and acceptance by the people affected by them. Our aim, thereby, is not only to take up some of the questions raised by the recent literature on rebel governance, but to point out the heuristic potential of analyzing these relations within a broader political sociology of violent conflict, as part of emerging social orders and patterns of power and domination. Understood in this way, the phenomenon of rebel governance can offer new insights into the relationship of violence, legitimacy, and control, which all too often remains at the margins of academic debates that discuss governance and order mainly with reference to political control exerted by modern states and based on forms of legal-rational legitimacy.

[2] One could even argue that, although there are fewer examples of social orders experiencing excessive legitimacy, historical cases show how social organizations can collapse or be conquered by others when they inadvertently undercut their own coercive capacities, such as, for example, the utopian, anarchist and socialist communities that sprung in in 19th century – the Brook-Farm Association (1841-6), New Harmony (1825-29) The Hopedale Community (1841) Oneida Community (1848-81), Strandzha Commune (1903); Morelos Commune (1913-17) or Guangzhou City Commune (1921-27). See Malešević (2017, 75).

2. The Character of Rebel Rule

The power relations between non-state armed groups and parts of the civilian population in conflict areas have for some years now been a prominent concern in the literature on civil wars. Much of the recent scholarship has categorized these power relationships with labels such as "rebel rule" (Mampilly 2011),"rebel governance" (Arjona, Kasfir, and Mampilly 2015; Péclard and Mechoulan 2015; Kasfir, Frerks, and Terpstra 2017), or "rebelocracy" (Arjona 2016), examining forms and practices of governance, conditions for popular support, as well as, more recently, the question of legitimacy (Schlichte and Schneckener 2015; Duyvensteyn 2017; Terpstra and Frerks 2017; Gutiérrez 2021). One reason for this interest[3] – and the point of departure for many of these studies – is the observation that, in many cases, armed groups not only effectively control entire areas, but also assume administrative and governmental functions, ranging from garbage disposal, education, and healthcare, to fighting crime. Perhaps most prominently, the rule, albeit short-lived, of the "Islamic State in Iraq and Syria" (ISIS) seemed to highlight the relevance of rebel governance as a phenomenon present in conflict zones across the globe.

The notion of rebel governance entailed a certain shift in perspective – on civil wars as well as non-state armed groups – because violent conflicts were no longer only equated with the collapse or destruction of political orders. As these studies made clear, civil war and political violence may be accompanied by the emergence of new structures of rule and forms of social order (Arjona 2016, 2). Moreover, what came into focus were not only governance practices, but also the everyday and the "normality" of social life during civil war. Although wars impact profoundly on social life and change the dynamics of daily activities people continue to create and maintain ordinary routines of everyday life. As sociologists of everyday life emphasize human beings are malleable creatures that can adjust to ever changing social contexts and can also impose their own meanings on these new social realities (Scott 2013; Bennett and Watson 2003). Hence civil wars and other violent conflict bring about dramatic change in everyday life, but they do not eliminate human tendency to maintain a sense of 'normality' (Koloma Beck 2012; Malešević 2010). It became clear that, in order to understand the dynamics of civil war, we must not focus solely on acts and experiences of violence, but that we need to turn our attention to a broader spectrum of interactions between armed groups and their social environment, at social institutions and practices of governance forming at the local level, and the conflictive, negotiated social processes in which they are embedded (Arjona 2016; Mampilly 2011; Gutiérrez 2021).

Thus, rebel governance as a research paradigm can also be understood, at least in part, as an alternative to a de-politicized understanding of armed groups as predatory "warlords" or violent entrepreneurs seeking to profit from civil wars.[4] Instead of corresponding to the assumptions of conventional rational choice and other economistic approaches, which reduce political and military power, ideology, and micro-interactional dynamics in violent conflicts to self-interested behavior of rational agents, the complexity of rebel rule indicates that human motivations are variable and shaped by diverse processes, many of which are distinctly non-utilitarian. From this perspective, many armed groups, even if destructive in their violent campaigns, appear, in contrast, to be political creatures who, despite all secondary economic interests, first of all seek to gain and institutionalize political power and thereby, if inadvertently, often contribute to creating new forms of social order. Studies on rebel governance, as Péclard and Mechoulan argue, thus offer a "'re-politicized' narrative of state-society relations in rebel-held territories. They also offer new interrogations on the

[3] Other reasons include the fact that armed groups, as research on civil wars as well as theorists of guerrilla warfare have pointed out – depend on assistance from the civilian population, which, if indirectly, leads to the questions of power and domination in this relationship (see Arjona, Kasfir, and Mampilly 2015, 3).

[4] On this debate see Péclard and Mechouland (2015); Kaldor (1999); Collier and Hoeffler (2004); Jean and Rufin (1996).

continuities between war and peace (…) and thereby contribute to a better understanding of state-building in post-conflict contexts" (Péclard and Mechoulan 2015, 12).

In this introductory article we briefly outline four key sociological processes that shape the character of rebel governance in the context of civil wars and other violent contexts. Firstly, we review the complex relationships between rebel rule and the state power and look at the ways social order is generated and maintained in the context of rebel governance. Secondly, we explore relational mechanisms of control and the capacity of rebel governance to penetrate the micro social world under its rule. Thirdly, we analyze the social mechanisms through which legitimacy is attained and maintained in a rebelocracy. Finally, we examine the organizational, ideological, and micro-interactional similarities between the state and the rebel governance in order to understand how and why some forms of rebel rule transform into established governmental structures while others fragment or collapse.

3. Order and Rebel Governance in Civil War Research

According to one reading of the research literature, it was only after the end of the Cold War – during which civil wars were primarily understood as proxy wars in the East-West conflict –, that the focus of academic interest shifted towards the internal causes and dynamics of civil wars (Siegelberg and Hensell 2006, 10). This reading, of course, ignores a large number of earlier studies on precisely these internal causes, from Ted Gurr's "Why men rebel" (1970) and Harry Eckstein's anthology "Internal War" (1964) to, for example, the works of Eric Wolf (1969), James C. Scott (1985), or Joel Migdal (1975), who examined the willingness or ability of peasant populations to resist or rebel, and their relationship with revolutionary groups. In addition, the support armed groups received from the civilian population – a condition for successful insurgencies emphasized by theoreticians of guerrilla warfare ("like a fish in the water") – already had played a prominent role in the earlier literature on civil wars and revolutions, though less as a concrete relationship or part of a political order, but rather as a kind of abstract resource that armed groups need to mobilize (see Malthaner 2011).[5] What is true, however, is that in the 1990s, following more than two decades during which research emphasized geo-strategic and socio-structural explanations, the armed groups themselves, their organization, objectives, and motives, as well as the internal dynamics of violent conflicts became increasingly central concerns of research on civil wars. Initially, this included a focus on the ethnic or religious dimension of violent conflicts which – in academia as well as in mass media – became part of the narrative that was used to explain what were perceived as particularly irrational or excessive violent campaigns in wars such as those in Yugoslavia or Algeria, or the genocide in Rwanda. In addition, from the mid-1990s onward, economic approaches began to emerge that examined the economic functions of violence in civil wars and the structure of specific economies of war (or "markets of violence") (Elwert 1999; Jean and Rufin 1996; Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Keen 2000), which was partly linked to the debate on "failed states" and ungoverned spaces. In the figure of the "warlord", as an entrepreneur of violence interested only in personal enrichment, a simplified version of this type of economic perspective finally found its way into the literature on the "New Wars", where it became linked to notions of disorder and failed states, excessive violence, and the depoliticization of violent actors (Kaldor 1999; Münkler 2003; see critically: Malešević 2008). Yet, it is important to emphasize that Georg Elwert's notion of a "market of violence" (1997/1999), as well as the notion of an "economy of war", for example in the works of Francois Jean and Jean-Christophe or David Keen, describe a particular kind of *order* in violent

[5] In this context it is interesting to analyze the manuals and handbooks for conducting guerrilla warfare written by the professional revolutionaries such as Mao Zedong (1937) or Che Guevara (1961). These manuals combine practical advice on combat with the ideological messages that offer rationale for the revolutionary action.

conflicts (Jean and Rufin 1996; Keen 2000). In a situation where there is no state monopoly on the use of force, and violence is a generally available resource, a self-stabilizing economic system for the use and production of violence emerges, as Elwert explains, as a result of the patterned interactions of interdependent, rational actors (Elwert 1997, 88, 92–95). Jean and Rufin as well as Keen also see economic orders as closely intertwined with political power structures, which result in the institutionalization of "systems of profit and power" (Keen 2000, 14; Jean and Rufin 1996) in prolonged civil wars. Economic approaches thus contributed to the emergence of a new perspective on civil wars because they understood war "not only as chaos and collapse of the social order, but also as a source of new, violence-based forms of social order" (Siegelberg and Hensell 2006, 15). Building on these works, as well as drawing on other, parallel lines of research, such as a growing interest in statehood and domination in civil war-research on African conflicts (e.g. Reno 1998, Clapham 1998, or Marchal and Hassner 2003), a line of research emerged among parts of continental European political sociology and anthropology during the first half of the 2000s that explicitly examined armed groups in the context of violent orders and war economies, and studied the emergence of power structures and forms of domination beyond the state as well as, for example, the "normality" and social processes of daily life during war (Bakonyi and Stuvoy 2005; Schlichte 2009; Koloma Beck 2009). This literature argued that violence can be analyzed, as Jutta Bakonyi and Kirsti Stuvoy put it, "as a social process in which violent actions generate new structures and new patterns of behavior, and thus new forms of social organization" (2005, 363).

The more recent rebel governance literature, however, emerged from a different development. Here, the lines of research laid out in the 1990s – perspectives that focused on the actors and internal dynamics of war and the economic dimensions of violent conflict – were taken up and continued by authors such as, for example, Jeremy Weinstein, who, from a broadly political-economic perspective, examined the behavior of armed groups toward the civilian population as a result of their resource endowment (Weinstein 2007). Or, even more prominently, by Stathis Kalyvas, whose theory explained the micro-dynamics of violence in civil wars as a function of the extent of territorial control exercised by the warring parties and the patterns of collaboration they generate (Kalyvas 2006/2012). According to Kalyvas, armed groups in areas under their control gain easier access to local information, which in turn helps them to use violence selectively (and thus effectively) to prevent betrayal and resistance. In addition to some earlier work on support relations between armed groups and sections of the population, Kalvas' control-collaboration model has been an important reference point for research on rebel governance in a twofold sense. For one thing, many of the early works in this field took the idea of territorial control by armed groups over certain areas, as described by Kalyvas, as a point of departure for the study of rebel governance, adding the complementary question of how the armed groups, once in control, then govern the population. Moreover, and often implicitly, they adopted elements of a utilitarian theory of action, and a focus on how rebel groups "chose" – in cost-benefit calculations based on military power balances, available resources, and the population's expected reactions – a certain form of government, which may be violent or less violent and may involve different degrees of participation on the part of the population. Particularly at the beginning, the rebel governance literature was therefore, for all the merits mentioned at the beginning, also characterized by a somewhat narrow perspective. More recently, however, the picture has become much more diversified and has been enlivened by new theoretical debates. In addition to an increasing emphasis on dynamic interactions, which was already evident in Mampilly's work, the question of legitimacy has brought ideational and interpretative processes more to the fore, and researchers became aware of the complexity of the field of armed actors and the resulting political orders. This new scholarship recognizes the importance of ideological power in war contexts. However, in contrast to the 1990s debates which overemphasized the role of religious, ethnic, and cultural values and identities in civil war, the focus has now shifted to the relational impact of ideological power (Tokdemir et al. 2021; Leader Maynard 2019; Malešević 2017; Gutiérrez Sanín and Wood 2014). Hence some scholars explore how successful rebel

groups develop elaborate ideological narratives to delegitimize rival rebel forces. By setting themselves apart ideologically and by articulating distinct narratives of liberation, they place themselves in a better position to attract wider support base and new recruits (Tokdemir et al. 2021). Other researchers emphasize that ideology is important in civil wars as a mechanism of socialization and homogenization of heterogeneous combatants, but also, and even more so, as a source of diverse normative commitments (Gutiérrez Sanín and Wood 2014). These different normative obligations generate diverse patterns of violence use in civil war, where some groups follow these ideological precepts and engage in restraint when it would be profitable to use violence, while others deploy indiscriminate violence when this is not beneficial or is even economically counterproductive.[6]

4. Complex orders: Rule against, beyond and in the shadow of the state

Drawing on this innovative and dynamic literature, we want to briefly outline four social processes that shape political orders in civil wars – or four lines of thinking that we might pursue to further enhance our understanding of rebel governance. The first concerns the relationship between non-state armed actors and states in configurations of power.

Rebel governance is often defined by the idea that once armed groups gain territorial control over an area, which they have “conquered” militarily and wrung from the hands of the state, they face the challenge of governing the population that they de facto rule. Yet, as Paul Staniland has pointed out some years ago (2012), and as Nelson Kasfir, Georg Frerks and Niels Terpstra, for example, have emphasized in a more recent article (2017), the notion of civil war as a struggle between the state and its challengers for control of territory, understood as a zero-sum game between coherent, delimitable opposing actors, is misleading.[7] Instead, what can be observed in many civil wars are often remarkably complex political systems in which state actors and non-state armed groups, while regularly fighting each other, at the same time often cooperate in different ways, openly or covertly colluding or tolerating the other’s presence, sharing spheres of influence and territories of domination in constantly renegotiated arrangements. According to Staniland, states are "not engaged in an all-consuming quest for territorial authority” (Staniland 2012, 244), but rather maximize political influence and control over relevant resources in complex, conflictive and cooperative, relationships with other social and political actors. The result are heterogeneous socio-spatial networks of domination and sovereignty in the context of armed conflicts, in which different state, para-state and non-state violent actors are involved. Rebel rule therefore does not necessarily seem to be linked – at least in many cases – with disintegrating statehood or failed states, as Janosch Prinz and Conrad Schetter note: "It can be argued almost to the contrary, that phenomena considered illegitimate, such as warlordship, patronage, and corruption, occur most prominently in zones of competing governance (...), where informal logics are transferred to state structures – in other words: where statehood exists – and not in areas far from state penetration” (2015, 60; our translation).

What does this mean for the study of rebel governance? Above all, it means that the relationship between non-state armed groups and state actors can take very different forms: from bitter antagonism and violent conflict to collusion to co-optation as parastate-militias, with sometimes fluid boundaries. The same applies to the orders of violence, authority, control that emerge in the process. Rebel rule can be established in a conquered territory that is completely beyond the reach of the state or other competing armed actors. Far more

[6] Leader Maynard (2019) also shows how ideological motivations often overlap with other drivers of conflict behavior. Hence to track down these complex processes he analyzes the micro-foundations of ideological action including the key four mechanisms that make ideological power significant - commitment, adoption, conformity, and instrumentalization.

[7] The contrasting view can be found, for example, in Arjona, Kasfir, and Mampilly’s introduction to their edited volume, where they state that: “[A]ll civil wars are a battle for control between a government and its competitors over civilians and the territory upon which they reside.” (2015, 1).

common, however, are more complex, sometimes overlapping, complementary, or conflicting zones of control and hybrid forms of domination over parts of a population. Violent groups sometimes "rule" in the shadow of the state and in collusion with the state, in neglected areas on the periphery of the large cities, and by mobilizing state resources and controlling their distribution through various economic and political networks. In other cases, as O'Dochartaigh shows for the PIRA in Northern Ireland, armed groups dominate certain parts of a city in a semi-clandestine manner, in a situation where the state has military superiority but is unable to exercise effective control over the population – and thus, to some extent, over the territory (O'Dochartaigh 2013). Rebel rule is also a complex phenomenon in terms of patterns of relationships and actors of governance vis-à-vis the population.

5. Power relations and relational mechanisms of control

Another reason why we might benefit from developing a more complex understanding of the configurations and processes of violence, power, and control in areas of "rebel governance" is that a perspective on rebel governance as based on military territorial control neglects the often close – but always ambivalent – social ties between armed groups and the local population, as well as the extent to which territorial control relies on – and is intertwined with – mechanisms of social control. In many cases, armed groups do not come "from the outside", but emerge from local political organizations and social networks and are thus integrated, from the beginning, into relationships with their social environment and thus into local power structures and moral orders. These connections with clan and kinship networks, local institutions, and notables legitimized by tradition, as well as networks of political mobilization and forms of communal solidarity, can generate powerful forms of influence and support and can activate mechanisms of social control, but they can, at the same time, produce various forms of mutual dependence and constraints on the actions of the armed group (Malthaner 2011).

This perspective on rebel rule as a social relationship, and as embedded in local social networks and moral orders, highlights that rebel rule has social preconditions, and that even territorial control that is primarily based on military means relies on mechanisms of social control to produce effective domination – an insight that has hardly been addressed in the rebel governance literature, but which is of central importance for an understanding of political order in civil war within a sociology of power and domination.

Cases like the PIRA in Northern Ireland show that particular types of support-relationships can facilitate surprisingly effective forms of (underground) rule, even in situations of overwhelming military superiority on the part of a state within a certain area. The case of Northern Ireland also shows that support and legitimacy at the same time enable and constrain the use of coercion to control the population and are a central precondition of, and a factor shaping, the insurgent violent campaign (O'Dochartaigh 2013). It is precisely in asymmetrical civil wars without clear fronts that the relevance of this question – of how social and coercive mechanisms of control are intertwined – becomes most apparent.

Violence is an intrinsic element of relationships of domination in cases of rebel governance: because superior means of violence establish local supremacy; because violence is often deemed necessary to enforce order; and in the form of ongoing civil wars, that form the background to, and interfere with, rebel governance; each of which brings with it its own problems of legitimacy (see next section). What is crucial, then, is that the violent elements of mechanisms producing and securing power – coercion and control –, are not based on "mere" violence. As Popitz shows, to expand and stabilize its behavioral effects, violence is dependent on various social mechanisms, including social ties such as property- or family ties, and mechanisms of restricting the mobility of those subject to power (Popitz 1992, 237-240). Similarly, Kalyvas has pointed out the central importance of surveillance and information – which presupposes a minimum of collaboration on the part of

the population – for the effective use of violence (Kalyvas 2006, 111). In other words, even the ability to exert mere *coercive control* over a larger number of people on a permanent basis (or within a wider area) is not a simple function of "brute force" or the technical means of violence of an armed group, but is produced by complex social processes. For this reason, too, it is important to examine violence and control as an integral part of dynamic power relations (rather than, for example, separating the military logic of "territorial control" from the political logic of governance).

One important aspect of this relational dynamic and embeddedness of rebel governance is that it is often rooted in existing micro-level ties on both the elite and the non-elite levels. Rebel rule augments its legitimacy and consequently increases its coercive capacities by tapping into the emotional and moral bonds of micro-level groups. It is no accident that nearly all rebel organizations deploy the language of kinship and comradeship to frame their political struggle as a fight for the survival of one's family and close friends. For example, many Islamist movements including Boko Haram, Al Qaeda and ISIS invoke the notion of universal brotherhood and sisterhood of Muslims (ummah), while the nationalist rebel organizations such as PKK, PIRA or ETA would often describe their members who lost lives in the violent actions as our 'fallen comrades' or 'our' Kurdish/Irish/Basque 'sons and daughters'. Rebel governance in the context of civil wars and other conflicts is likely to rely on these discourses of intense small group attachments, as they allow the movement to project the enemy state as the hostile and bureaucratic external force that attacks 'our family and friends'. As Gutiérrez (2020) shows, FARC was particularly successful in utilizing the existing institutions of the Colombian state to tap into the micro-level networks of kinships and used these institutions to subvert the counterinsurgency run by the Colombian government. Similarly, PIRA could rely on the existing micro-solidarity of local neighborhoods in Derry and Belfast and frame them as a part of the wider ideological narrative of Irish nationalism. In this way, the established micro-level bonds were effectively integrated into the movement's legitimacy which in turn have contributed to strengthening their coercive-organizational capacity (Malešević and O'Dochartaigh 2018).

At the elite-level, the political and military leadership is often composed of individuals who have known each other for years and would have fought together either as members of clandestine cells or as a vanguard of various social movements (Brenner 2017; Miller 2006). As such, leaders often develop strong personalized networks of attachment and solidarity. A very similar pattern was also identified among the rank-and-file members of rebel movements, where strong micro-level bonds have regularly proved to be an important source of motivation to fight (della Porta 2013; Malešević and O'Dochartaigh 2018; Sageman 2011). These studies also indicate how central emotions are for political action. In della Porta's words: 'Affective focusing is particularly intense in high-risk political activism. Throughout the networks of friends-comrades, friendship reinforces the relevance of political commitment, while political commitment strengthens some friendship ties, and the groups of political friends become closed units' (2013, 243). In addition, new recruits rarely become members of rebel organizations as individuals but are more likely to join with their close friends and family members. Hence pre-existing social ties are often integrated into the rebel social organization while the constant exposure to violence and life-threatening situations tends further to reinforce these existing emotional and moral bonds among the members of rebel movements (Malešević 2017; Sageman 2011).

6. Legitimacy as experience and mechanism of social control

Political violence in general, and rebel rule in particular, is closely linked to the question of legitimacy. According to David Apter (1997, 3-5), political violence is always – albeit to varying degrees – embedded in interpretative and discursive processes which revolve around the assertion, questioning, and re-establishment of legitimate orders and claims to power. At the same time, violence itself is always in need of legitimation

and has de-legitimizing effects that overshadow relations between armed groups and the local population (Schlichte 2009, 57-60; Mampilly 2011, 13, 50). In order to secure the support of the population and to transform the ever-fragile power of weapons into more lasting and stable forms of rule, rebels, as Klaus Schlichte, has pointed out, are dependent on justifying their violence in the context of moral orders and institutionalized positions of political authority; in other words, they must be linked to forms of legitimate rule described by Weber (Schlichte 2009, 65-72; see also Schlichte and Schneckener 2017, 415-417). Legitimacy thus becomes a central condition for the success of armed groups in civil wars.

The rebel governance literature has dealt with the question of legitimacy from quite early on, albeit sometimes rather implicitly or indirectly. Yet, more recently, a number of studies have brought the issue more to the center of the debate. What emerges from this literature is an understanding of legitimacy as an interactive process, within a perspective of what Schlichte called the "dynamics of legitimacy" of armed groups in civil wars (Schlichte 2009, 20; see also Duyvensteyn 2017, 674). The study of phenomena of rebel rule, thereby, can be made fruitful to examine not only the ambivalent effects of violence, its legitimizing as well as de-legitimizing effects, but also the emergence of legitimacy and its relation to power-process and the complex relationships between armed groups, their state opponents, and parts of a population. The analysis of local processes of rebel governance can show how legitimacy arises from the overlapping of different forms of acceptance, loyalty, and moral orders, but also from interdependencies and opportunities, while at the same time generating symbolic resources and mutual influence. Thereby, an important function of legitimacy is that it activates mechanisms of social control to monitor and sanction betrayal and other rule violations. In other words, legitimacy is also a condition of effective control.

Rebel rule is a form of what the recent literature has called "political rule beyond the state"; however, it is a special form. It is domination in the context of violent conflicts – in the shadow of ongoing violence. It can be a form of rule and domination “against the state”, where armed groups challenge a central government and have carved out autonomous zones of control. In other cases – and sometimes simultaneously – it arises from complex networks of non-state, para-state, and state violent actors, with overlapping spheres of control. Rebel rule, therefore, is not necessarily about non-state political orders, and only to a limited extent (or in certain cases) about rule in "spaces of limited statehood”. Which is also why rebel rule should not necessarily be regarded as part of state-building processes, as the seedling of future states. It is, rather, part of particular, internationalized orders of power in civil wars, in which state and non-state actors (or state-challengers) are closely intertwined. Nonetheless, the phenomenon of rebel rule allows special insights into the emergence of rule and forms of political order, especially in its relationship to violence, but also into mechanisms of control and forms of legitimacy. It allows us to trace processes of the consolidation of power, in which power (and violence) becomes part of social orders. And it points to the fact that the emergence of rule is an always unstable process. In particular – and the following case studies make this clear – we argue that a more precise understanding of rebel governance can be developed by conceiving of it as a relationship of violence, control, and legitimacy, as a relational process that manifests itself in concrete interactions.

7. Between Rebelocracy and State Power

We have emphasized that the conventional understandings of the relationship between the state and the rebel rule are built on two untenable assumptions: 1) that the state and rebel organizations are mutually exclusive social and political forms, and 2) that most rebel forms of governance aspire to transform into ‘proper’ state structure and as such are involved in the state building projects. In contrast to these widely held views much of recent research indicates that rebel rule is characterized by enormous political, social, cultural, and historical variability (Provost 2021; Abrahms 2018; Lidow 2016; Mampilly 2011). It is this sheer diversity of rebel

governance that mitigates against any simplified conclusions about the universal features of all rebelocracies. Nevertheless, this is not to say that the rebel governance structures have nothing in common. On the contrary, by recognizing and specifying the variability of different cases one can focus on the sociological commonalities across all forms of governance. In other words, instead of separating sharply between the state and the non-state structures of rule and lumping together all forms of rebel rule as being the same, it is important to explore differences and similarities across all forms of governance (state-, non-state, para-state). Both the state and non-state forms of rule possess many similar organizational, ideological, and micro-interactional features. To use Lawson's (2019, 249) term they are all 'entities in motion', meaning that 'they are confluences of events that are embedded within fields of action that are, in turn, derived from historically specific conditions'. Hence to understand the long-term dynamics of rebel rule it is necessary to track down the complex and contradictory relationships between the state and non-state organizations. These relationships are best captured by zooming in on the three historical processes that shape the dynamics of social and political rule: the scale of coercive-organizational capacity, the degree of ideological penetration and the ability of social organizations to envelop the networks of micro-solidarity (Malešević 2019, 2017).

Firstly, all social organizations maintain their dominance by increasing their coercive organizational capacities. Hence the states can focus on enlarging their civil service, military, police, and court systems. They can also increase revenue collection to fund large scale projects in order to enhance their transport, communication and infrastructure all of which contribute to the augmented coercive organizational capacities (Mann 2012; Tilly 1992). Despite popular perception that these activities are the sole prerogative of the state, rebel governance is usually involved in similar actions. For example, from GAM in Ache/Indonesia to Mai-Mai in DRC and FARC in Colombia, rebel organizations have enhanced their territorial control through continuous increase of their coercive-organizational capacities. This was often achieved through increasing the number of combatants, developing the systems of civilian control, introducing the rebel run courts, creating elements of civil service throughout the territories under their control, and by institutionalizing systems of regular collection of revenue (Barter 2015; Gutiérrez Sanín 2008; Hoffmann 2015). Relying on substantially enlarged coercive capacities, some rebel organizations were able to defeat state militaries and, in some instances, take over the state structure (from Cuban's Movimiento 26 de Julio to ISIS), while in many other cases the rebel organizations have established a parallel structure of governance (from FARC to LTTE). Hence there is a great deal of similarity between established states and rebelocracy in the context of coercive-organizational power.

Secondly, rebel rule resembles the state power in its aspiration to ideologically penetrate the society under its control. Rebel organizations can not only rely on delegitimization of their state opponents, but they also have to devise coherent ideological projects that would appeal to the population they control or aspire to control. Moreover, the rebels' ideas have to be institutionalized in the existing social structure to have a long-term impact on the population. Hence rebel governance can ideologically penetrate social order by controlling the mass media, the educational systems, the public sphere, and some sectors of cultural and social life. Just as established states can use education to socialize and ideologically mold young members of society into loyal citizens, rebel governance can generate a long term support base through the systematic control of media, education, and the public sphere. By controlling these structural apparatuses, rebel governance can systematically disseminate specific ideological discourses, including nationalism, socialism, anarchism, Islamism and so on. The fact that rebel rule often operates in the context of civil wars and is ideologically challenged by established state structures can foster a state of permanent ideological mobilization. For example, both LTTE and ISIS were highly successful in the ideological penetration of wider society. One of the first acts that ISIS undertook upon its conquest of vast territories in Iraq and Syria was to institute its own educational system throughout the territories under its control. The new teaching programs imbued all aspects

of education with the ISIS ideological doctrine that combines Salafi jihadism and Wahabism (Arvisaisa and Guidère 2020). Similarly, in the areas of Sri Lanka controlled by LTTE the educational system, mass media and the public sphere were ideologically infused by Tamil nationalism and LTTE doctrine that celebrated martyrdom for the Tamil nation (Terpstra and Frerks 2017). In both cases legitimacy was attained through the continuous delegitimization of the enemy while also articulating distinct ideological vistas of the new social order. The control over the key cultural and educational institutions allowed for the pervasive ideological penetration within society. Yet, as several of the papers in this special issue show, there is substantial variation in the extent to which armed groups make ideological penetration of society a priority of their armed campaign or, conversely, interact pragmatically with all kinds of societal groups – a variability that not always corresponds to the cliché of Jihadist groups as ideological hardliners (see Donker's article in this special issue).

Finally, rebel governance structures attain both their coercive power and their legitimacy through successful grounding in the micro-universe of everyday life. In this respect they resemble the apparatuses of the established states, which also enhance their coercive-organizational capacity and ideological power through the envelopment of micro-solidarity (Malešević 2019; 2017). Since legitimacy of rebelocracy is externally contested, their very survival is often dependent on their ability to tap into existing networks of micro-level solidarity – the clan and kinship ties, communal and village-based bonds, and the friendship and comradeship links mentioned above.

Hence states and rebel governance often rely on similar social mechanisms of control, including legitimacy, coercion, and group solidarity. This indicates that all forms of rule are relational, interdependent, and historically dynamic. The power relationships of the state and non-state organizations are often shaped by similar micro level dynamics. Hence the normative categories that define different forms of governance including the rebel rule, such as legal/illegal, or legitimate/illegitimate, are situationally and historically grounded and as such are prone to change, negotiation, and ideological framing.

8. The Case Studies

This special issue combines theoretical analysis with in-depth empirical research. Some of the papers provide comparative and historical analysis while others focus on individual cases studies that range from Northern Ireland, Colombia, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, El Salvador, Somalia, Syria, Turkey, Senegal, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, Palestine, Nigeria to the civil war Spain and France during World War II. What unites these contributions is the conviction that, in order to further develop our understanding of power relations in civil wars, we need to look at the details of concrete interactions and patterns of relationships at the local level, in which orders of violence, legitimacy and control manifest themselves in everyday life; the lived experiences of those who rule and are ruled, the practices and institutions that emerge from them, and the processes in which they are negotiated.

Two papers explore the dynamics of rebel governance in Columbia. José A. Gutiérrez analyses FARC-EP's governance practices in Southern Colombia while Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín zooms in on the Magdalena Medio region of Northern Colombia. Gutiérrez argues that rebel governance should not be conflated with state-building as many rebel movements show no ambition towards state formation. Using the example of FARC-EP rule in the six areas of Colombia's south, he demonstrates how the rebels show no intention of replacing the state. Instead, they often develop hybrid or symbiotic forms of territorial control that ultimately reinforce the existing state structures. The focal point of Gutiérrez Sanín's article is violence against civilians in the areas of northern Colombia controlled by paramilitary organizations. He analyses practices of kidnappings and killings of civilians that are often referred to as disappearances. Gutiérrez Sanín argues that conventional rational choice models cannot explain the social dynamics of disappearances. He demonstrates that rather than

being a practice associated solely with the criminal world of the paramilitaries, the disappearances are in fact a form of armed brokerage where some sectors of state apparatus collaborate with the paramilitaries.

Christian Olsson's article focuses on transnational relations of non-state armed organizations. The paper explores the complex and contradictory relationships between pre-existing micro level solidarities of recruits and the wider organizational dynamics of armed groups. Drawing on the experience of Hezbollah in Lebanon, Olsson aims to show how existing transnational clerical networks have been successfully deployed to bring together local micro-level solidarities into an effective organizational machine. Hence successful rebel governance entails a fine balance between the micro group dynamics, the organizational logic of non-state armed forces, and the wider transnational contexts.

José Luis Ledesma and Danilo Mandić provide comparative studies of governance processes during war. Ledesma contrasts the experiences of Spanish Civil War (1936-39) and the Liberation of France from 1944-45, with the spotlight being placed on the interdependence between the legal administration of violence and the use of extra-judiciary violence. He argues that the use of extra-judiciary violence was not a simple consequence of the weakened state apparatus, but instead it reflected the character of complex governance in times of war. The central focus of Mandić's paper is the relationship between organized crime and separatist politics. More specifically, he aims to answer the following question: Why are some separatist rebellions sanctioned for their criminal activity, such as smuggling of arms and fuel, while others are tolerated? The article compares six cases (Turkey, Senegal, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, and Palestine) and explains that the likelihood of stigmatization of criminality is shaped by two different processes – symmetrical smuggling, which is matched and shared by the existing state institutions, and the asymmetrical smuggling that is unrelated and unmatched by the existing state.

Neill O'Dochartaigh examines the complex relations between the PIRA and the Catholic population in those parts of Northern Ireland that were considered mini-statelets (O'Dochartaigh). In a detailed analysis of micro-interactions in situations in which militants stopped cars to hijack them for armed attacks, he is able to identify a pattern of threats, resistance, and negotiations, that revolved around an underlying notion of solidarity with the struggle as well as shared understandings of "red lines". These "rules of hijackings" allow him to explore the complex interrelation of legitimacy and control, as they make visible the forms of influence but also constraints that arise from support relationships between the IRA and parts of the Catholic population. Thus, these instances also point to the ways how the armed group was able to dominate certain parts of a city (the IRA "statelets") in a semi-clandestine manner, in a situation where the state had military superiority, but was unable to exercise effective control over the population.

In her work on the Somali civil war, Jutta Bakonyi examines how people experienced violence and the successive rule of different armed groups in Somalia, and on what notions of legitimacy their perception and acceptance was based. Despite the Weberian emphasis on domination as relationship constituted by the belief in the legitimacy of that relationship on the part of those subject to power, research on rebel governance has tended to view the population as an abstract entity and to assume support and legitimacy rather than empirically examining how it is formed in concrete processes of perception and evaluation. Bakonyi fills this gap, demonstrating that legitimacy is not an abstract category of political-ideological preferences, but refers to moral economies anchored in people's everyday lives, and is linked to specific experiences, the felt effects of social order, and the ways violence penetrates everyday realities.

That rebel rule is a complex phenomenon, which comprises of a variety of patterns of relations between armed groups and the local population, also becomes clear from Teije Hidde Donker's comparative study of the provision of public services by jihadist groups in several areas and cities in northern Syria. He shows that jihadist groups differed substantially in how they approached and practiced the administration of local affairs, from pragmatic day-to-day management to an emphasis on ideological penetration of society. Thereby, not

only the armed organizations, but also a large number of different local actors, networks, and intermediaries were involved in supplying and governing the population, cooperating with the violent groups and negotiating balances of power, which formed the basis of dynamic local orders that could change rapidly during wartime.

Larissa Daria Meier examines support relations in another, multifaceted case study of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka. Distinguishing between civilians whose experiences of the LTTE were shaped by violent escalation and the realities of living in government-controlled areas differed starkly from those of people living in militarily contested zones, or those residing in areas under LTTE control. Meier thus demonstrates the contextual, complex dynamic of these relationships, which can produce varying patterns of rebel-civilian relationships and government-practices, based on different ways in which violence is experienced and used – and how it is intertwined with notions of legitimacy and mechanisms of control.

Whereas most other contributions in this special issue examine relations with, or governance-practices vis-à-vis the civilian population, Alberto Martín Álvarez focuses on the role of social movements as a supportive environment for armed groups. In a comparative study of two armed organizations in El Salvador, the Farabundo Martí Popular Liberation Forces (FPL) and the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP), he traces the distinct historical sequences in which the armed groups and social movements formed. He finds that whether supportive social environments emerge in a pattern of co-constitution or as secondary milieus makes a difference with respect to organizational conflicts and cohesion, but is also associated with different degrees of territorial control.

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Authors' Information

Stefan Malthaner is visiting professor at Leuphana University, Lüneburg, and research fellow at the Hamburg Institute for Social Research (HIS). His work focuses on social movements, political violence, and civil wars, with a particular focus on the relationship between armed groups and their social environment, processes of radicalization and escalation, and trajectories of micro-mobilization.

Siniša Malešević is a Professor and Chair of Sociology at the University College, Dublin and is also Senior Fellow at CNAM, Paris. His main areas of research include the sociology of war and violence, nation-states and nationalisms, empires, sociological theory and the comparative historical sociology.