

The Institutional Legacies of Rebel Governance

Understanding the Political Stability of Post-Insurgent States

Toon Dirkx, PhD Candidate at the University of Basel and the swisspeace Statehood & Conflict program

Introduction

The Puzzle of Post-Insurgent States: Rebel victory has far-reaching consequences for post-war political order. Some governments consisting of former rebels show a quick relapse into civil war, whereas in other cases they dominate post-war politics for decades.

Research Question

How do the institutional legacies of rebel governance affect the political stability of post-insurgent states?

Comparative Case Study

I. Eritrean War for Independence (1961-1991)

- Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF)
- Eritrea independence 1993

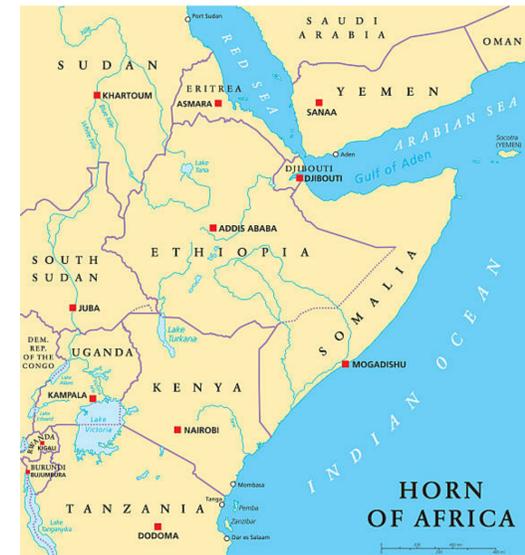
II. Second Sudanese Civil War (1983-2005)

- Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A)
- South Sudan independence 2011

Methods

Fieldwork in the Horn of Africa

- 80 Interviews with former rebels, government officials, thematic experts, international donors, traditional authorities, and religious leaders.
- Archival research incl. the collection of documents from respondents.



Findings

I. Eritrea

- Sophisticated system of rebel governance in Sahel base area (security, justice, education, healthcare, land reform)
- Full military victory in 1991, and internationally recognized statehood in 1993
- Clear legacy of rebel governance after independence, but democratic promise remained unfulfilled

II. South Sudan

- Rebel governance established relatively late in the war with great differences between regions
- Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005 merged SPLM/A's modes of rule with the central government in an increasingly clientelist political project, flooded by a high influx of oil money and foreign resources.
- Post-independence, South Sudan's government further decayed and fragmented as the remnants of the SPLM/A's wartime institutions proved unable to channel competing interests under the new dispensation

Conclusions

The institutional legacies of rebel governance shape the political stability of post-insurgent states.

- Post-insurgent political stability is likely to prevail under the condition that rebel organizations manage to overcome the condition of multiple sovereignty by effectively defeating or co-opting rival armed actors, controlling the state's territory, establishing an integrated organizational structure, and presiding over pre-existing institutions.
- Post-insurgent political instability is likely when rival armed actors persist, when the rebels' organizational structure is fragmented, when they have limited territorial control, and when they do not manage to preside over pre-existing institutions. These conditions pave the way for instable post-insurgent state trajectories that are more vulnerable to civil war recurrence and forced regime change.

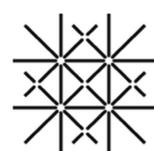
Wartime modes of governance do not continue in linear fashion when rebels get recognized as rulers of a sovereign state.

- Independent statehood significantly changes the structure of opportunity for post-insurgent rulers. The increased availability of external resources and rising expectations from international organizations, former fighters, and citizens create new constraints and opportunities. It tests the resilience of wartime modes of governance.
- Movements that consolidated their rebel modes of governance prior to becoming rulers of a state have a greater chance of managing this transition peacefully.

Policy Implications

Governments consisting of former rebels do not start governing from scratch: How do external interventions affect the legacies of rebel modes of governance in post-insurgent states?

Acknowledgements: "From Fragility to Resilience: Accounting for the Diversity of State-making Trajectories in Africa", Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) | Research Fund for Excellent Junior Researchers of the University of Basel | Field Grant of the French Centre for Ethiopian Studies | Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS) at Addis Ababa University & the Institute for Peace, Development and Security Studies (IPDSS) at the University of Juba



University
of Basel

swiss
peace