
THE POLITICS OF
ARMED GROUPS:

REBELS, STATE &
SOCIETY

DR DAVID BRENNER



OVERVIEW

- This module takes non-state armed groups as an entry point for understanding the dynamics of contemporary violent conflict and ways to address it. Instead of working with grand and often abstract theorisations about 'wars' in general, it looks at the main protagonists of violent conflict, the ways they mobilise, organise, fight and govern in situations of protracted armed conflict and fragmented statehood.
- Structured in three parts, the module introduces students to (i) theories about the root causes and drivers of contemporary violent conflict; ii) concepts for understanding the politics of non-state armed groups and their multifarious relations to state and society, and iii) a range of policy processes and interventions that aim at ending and transforming violent conflict by engaging with armed groups.
- In doing so, the module draws on interdisciplinary debates and case studies from around the world. Importantly, students are encouraged to choose an armed group of their interest to explore how theories, concepts and policy recommendations through their own empirical research.

SYLLABUS

Part I: Contemporary Armed Conflict

Week 1: Non-State Armed Groups

Week 2: Why (Wo)Men Rebel?

Week 3: War Economies



SYLLABUS

Part 2: The Politics of Armed Groups

Week 4: (Counter)Insurgency

Week 5: Rebel Governance

-- Week 6: Reading Week --

Week 7: Female Combatants



SYLLABUS

Part 3: Engaging Armed Groups

Week 8: Humanitarian Disasters and Dilemmas

Week 9: Peace Negotiations and Power Sharing

Week 10: Security and Justice at War's End

Week 11: Assessment Workshop



TEACHING & LEARNING

Teaching and learning spaces:

- Classes consist of one 3 hour workshop per week
- Workshops include a lecture and a wide range of participatory work, including group work and discussions on empirical material gathered from film/documentary excerpts and other non-traditional data

Students should expect to:

- Participate actively in class
- Contribute a presentation associated with the topic for any one week
- Prepare for the workshops including by reading and watching weekly preparation material

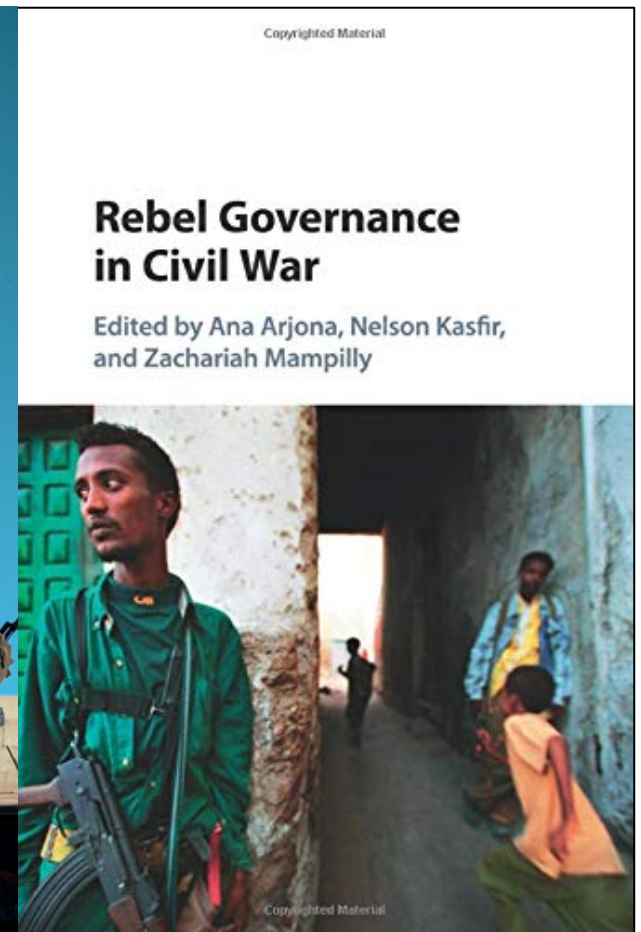
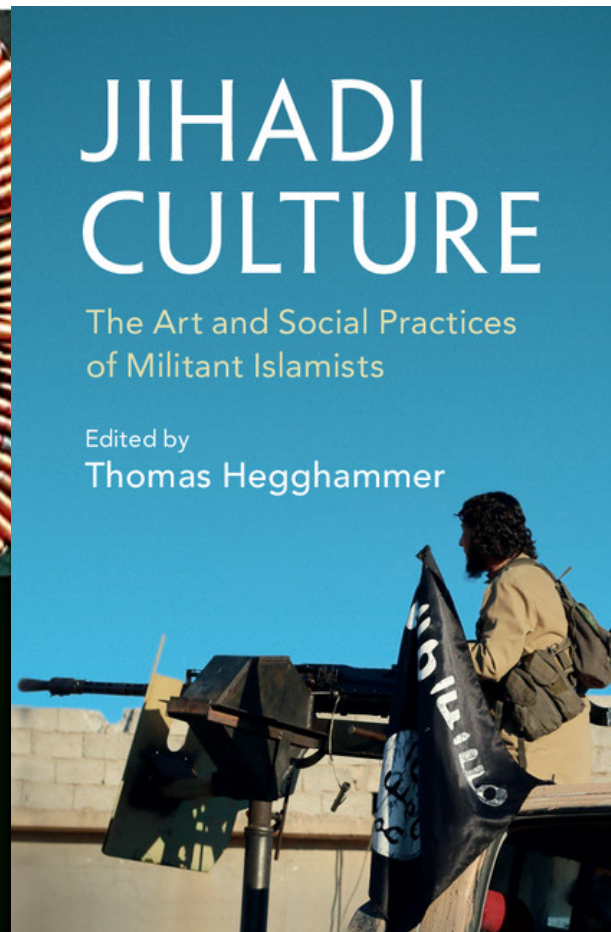
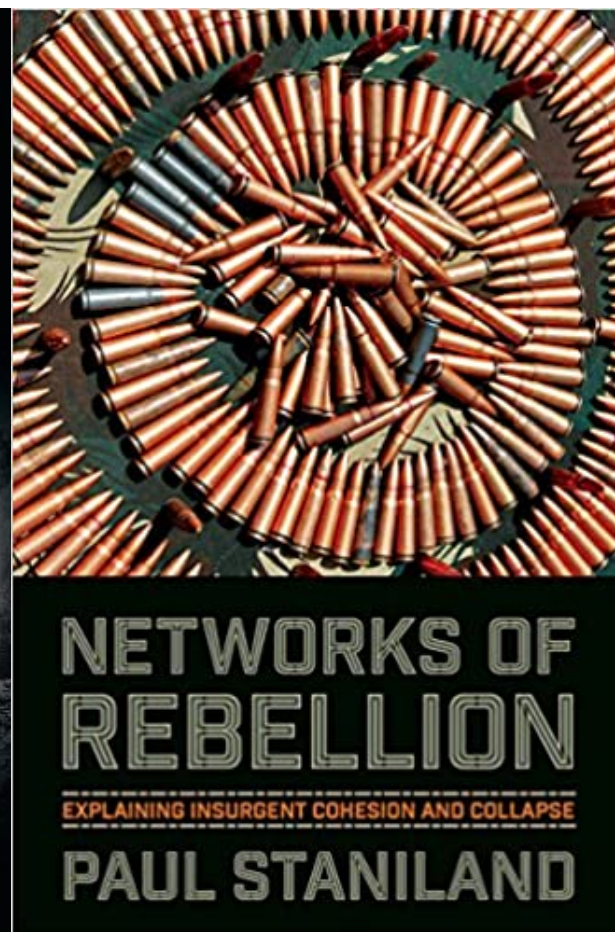
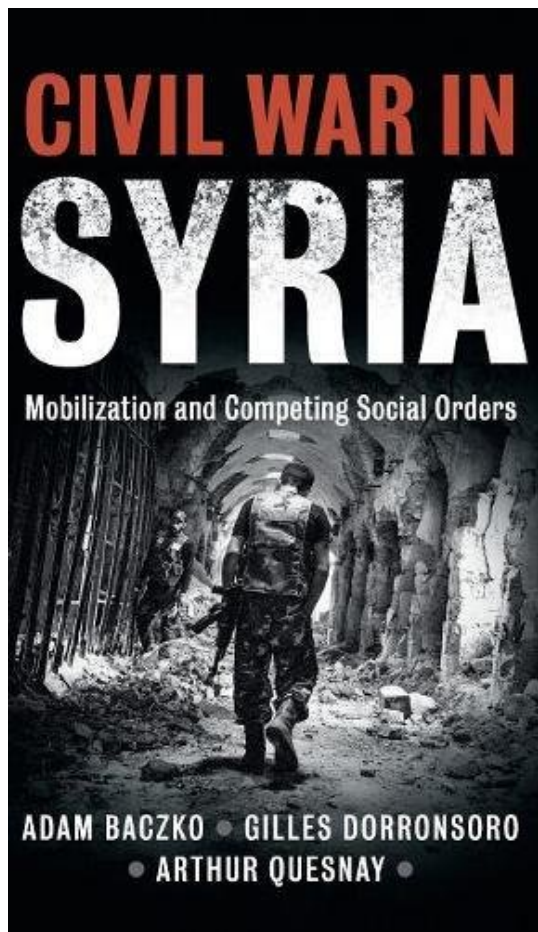


ASSESSMENT

1. 15 min group presentation (10%)
2. 1,000 word policy brief (20%)
3. 3,500 word research essay (70%)
 - You will receive guidance for your assignments but you are essentially free to research an armed group and armed conflict of your interest
 - Students in previous years have chosen to write about a wide range of groups, including Kata'ib Hezbollah in Iraq, the FARC in Colombia, Boko Haram in Nigeria or the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka
 - For the policy brief students in previous years have for instance chosen to brief
 - ... a conflict mediation organisation that pushes for/supports peace negotiations.
 - ... a humanitarian agency that seeks access to civilians in areas under the armed group's control.



INDICATIVE READINGS



MODULE CONVENOR



- My name is David Brenner. I have been researching the politics of armed groups and armed conflict for more than ten years, including for my PhD at the LSE. I published widely on the subject including on issues of political economy, internal organisation, mobilisation and rebel governance.
- While I am interested in a wide range of contexts, my own field research has mostly been in one of the world's longest ongoing but least researched civil wars: the ethnic armed conflict in Myanmar. As part of extensive fieldwork in the country's war-torn border areas, I lived with two of the country's strongest rebel groups, an experience which informed my book [Rebel Politics](#).
- My commitment to conflict transformation extends beyond academic debates. I remain actively engaged with the policy world and conflict-affected communities. In this capacity I have for instance trained staff from United Nations in engaging with armed groups and peace negotiators from armed groups in Myanmar in the politics of power sharing.
- If you have questions about the module please get in touch: d.brenner@sussex.ac.uk