Rebels in Civil Wars  
PLSC # 387

Ana Arjona  
Department of Political Science  
Yale University  
ana.arjona@yale.edu  
Spring 2009

Course description
This seminar explores the origins and behavior of non-state armed groups fighting in civil wars—insurgents and militias. The course addresses the following questions: What are the origins of rebel groups? How are they internally organized? How do they behave towards the civilian populations they interact with? How do they recruit new members? What do the characteristics of these groups tell us about the dynamics of armed conflict? We approach these questions through both theoretical and empirical pieces (including case studies, comparative analyses, and human rights reports). The readings describe and explain cases drawn from Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.

The course is structured as follows. In the first part, we will discuss four aspects of rebel organizations by looking at theoretical and empirical contributions. We start with alternative approaches to the question on the origins of rebel groups. We then turn to the study of the behaviors that these organizations display. In order to have an understanding of the context in which they operate, we devote one session to warfare. We then turn to the first type of behavior: recruitment. How do these organizations recruit their members? What are the motivations of those who join? How are children and women drawn to these groups? The second type of behavior is what can be called ‘rebel governance’. To what extent do armed groups rule over civilian affairs in areas under their control? How they do it? Why? What explains variation within and across armed groups in their display of governance structures in war zones? The third behavior is the use of violence against civilians. Why do armed groups rely on violence against noncombatants? What explains their decision to do so in some places, but not in others? Why are some conflicts more violent than others?

The second part of the seminar will be devoted to discussing specific armed groups in Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Middle East, as well as the conflicts in which they fight. We will critically examine the readings on the basis of our discussions throughout the course on the origins and behaviors of these organizations.

Eligibility for enrollment
Students must have prior coursework in Political Science.

Requirements
• Class attendance and participation in discussion on the basis of completed reading are mandatory (15%).
• Each student will present to the class a short assessment of the readings once in the semester. This presentation should include a brief summary of the mandatory readings,
and a few topics for discussion based on a critical assessment of the materials. A memo with the discussion should be sent by email to the class by 8 pm on Sunday (20%).

- Students will write a short essay (8-10 pages) on a specific rebel group. You may write about one of the cases discussed in class, or one of your own choosing with the instructor’s approval. Essay due on March 3rd. (25%).
- Students will write a final paper (15-20 pages). I will suggest a few topics, but students can propose a different one. The papers may discuss one or several aspects of a particular rebel group; a comparative analysis of a set of rebel groups; a theoretical or empirical puzzle; or present a critical literature review on a research question about rebel groups. All topics for the final papers must have been discussed with the instructor by March 27th (40%).

Readings
We will read book chapters, journal articles, and human rights reports.
Key:
(O) Available online at the class server
(R) Available in the reading package at Tyco.

Week 1: January 13
Organizational Meeting and Introduction to Course
No readings for this class. We will go over the syllabus and review key concepts.

Week 2: January 20
The origins of rebel groups (from literature on civil war onset)
- Fearon, James and David D. Laitin. 2003. Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War. APSR 97, 1:75-90 (O)
- Sambanis, Nicholas and Havard Hegre 2006. Sensitivity Analysis of Empirical Results on Civil War Onset. Journal of Conflict Resolution, Vol. 50, No. 4, 508-535. (O) (Note: skip the technical details, and focus on the results and implications for the literature).

Week 3: January 27
Warfare
- Kalyvas, Stathis 2006. The Logic of Violence in Civil War. Cambridge University Press. Chapters 4 and 5. (R)
Week 4: February 3
Rebel Recruitment I: Theory and patterns

Week 5: February 10
Rebel Recruitment II: Women and Children
- Bernd, Beber and Christopher Blattman, 2009. “The industrial organization of rebellion: the logic of forced labor and child soldiering”. Working Paper (O)—will be uploaded one week before the class

Week 6: February 17
Rebel Governance: Theoretical approaches
- Mampilly, Zachariah 2008. *Title TBA*. (O)

Week 7: February 24
Rebel Governance: Case studies
Week 8: March 3
Violence against noncombatants
FIRST ESSAY DUE TODAY IN CLASS

- Humphreys, Macartan and Jeremy Weinstein 2006. “Handling and Manhandling Civilians in Civil War”. APSR 100, 3 429-447. (O)

Week 9: March 24
Armed groups in Latin America


Week 10: March 31
Armed groups in Africa I
LAST WEEK TO HAVE TOPIC OF SECOND ESSAY APPROVED BY THE INSTRUCTOR.


Week 11: April 7
Armed groups in Africa II

Week 12: April 14
Armed groups in Asia and the Middle East.

Week 13: April 21
Against the rebels: peasant resistance, death squads, and paramilitaries
FINAL PAPER DUE TODAY IN CLASS