H-Net Reviews
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**Jennifer M. Hazen**. *What Rebels Want: Resources and Supply Networks in Wartime.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013. xiv + 194 pp. $45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8014-5166-9.

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Jennifer Hazen's *What Rebels Want: Resources and Supply Networks in Wartime* is an interesting work, worth reading in these very interesting times. Many policymakers and others are wondering what so many different rebel groups want and what to do with them. While focused on early twenty-first-century West African civil wars, the author has some telling insights that suggest reexamining some common foreign policy approaches to civil wars.

This book should appeal to readers interested in a number of different fields: conflict analysis, conflict resolution, foreign policy evaluation, and West African area studies. Its value varies for each of those fields, with the chief value being for those interested in West Africa. This book has a broader applicability for those seeking a deeper understanding of civil wars and how to deal with rebel groups. It proposes explanations of how rebel groups choose to continue fighting or seek to negotiate, constraints on rebel groups' options in obtaining their goals, the role of resources (primarily arms, ammunition, troops, other supplies, and how to fund those resources) and some cautions on the role and efficacy of negotiations in resolving (not just temporarily pausing) conflicts. It also presents an approach to predicting how rebel groups might respond in certain situations, especially regarding pausing fighting and negotiating.

The book's layout and progression is in line with a standard academic approach. In the first two chapters there is a thorough review of the literature on civil war-type conflict resolution and the linkages between resources and rebel success and/or failure. It discusses the role of support systems and challenges some common academic assumptions that civil wars are always (insupportably) costly, that continuing to fight is always an option, that resources are easily accessible, and that resources are fungible. The second chapter goes on to discuss how civil wars are "common, costly, and long" and deserving of attempts at resolution (p. 15). It states as a premise that rebel groups' options are based on their capacity to continue fighting and that the capacity is based on access to resources.

The final three chapters go on to describe, explain and validate that premise. The author does a good job of stating her argument, using the situations in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Côte d'Ivoire as detailed case studies. The case studies also provide interesting arguments that "blood diamonds" or seized natural resources are not as important as the popular press or many academics argue. The author also appropriately highlights the pillage and plunder aspect of resource seizing that occurs during civil wars. The author argues that her conclusions are relevant to other locations and times, but probably with less direct application.

The work has some shortcomings. In treating rebel groups as black boxes it underestimates the effects of military effectiveness and well-harnessed ideology. Throughout history some rebel leaders and troops have learned and adapted more effectively than others. Some rebel groups are better, or become better as troops and make more effective use of the weapons and experiences. They are better fighters, at least at times, than their counterparts. The fortunes and lessons of battle do matter and they can be well used or ignored. The work also underestimates the effect of ideology, if effectively harnessed. History again reveals many situations where ideology allowed some rebels to maintain cohesion and capability to the point where it made a difference on the battlefield, and at the negotiating table. This work ignores these lessons and therefore somewhat overestimates the impact of resources being available or not.

Readers should be warned that this is not an easy book to read. Repeatedly, the author states her premises and arguments by saying "the argument is" or "the book's premise is." Just as often she makes reasonable but numbingly obvious statements that knowledgeable readers already know. For example: "A group planning a coup will

require fewer resources than a group planning a liberation war, and these resources will be different from those needed by a group aiming to make an area difficult to govern" (p. 52).

These caveats aside, the book would be suitable for upper-level undergraduate political science classes. It would be of value to some West African area studies and foreign policy graduate classes. If they had the time, and the patience, to read it, country or regional area staffers in government and international organizations would benefit from the book's cautionary comments on the efficacy of imposed negotiations.

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