

# H-Net Reviews

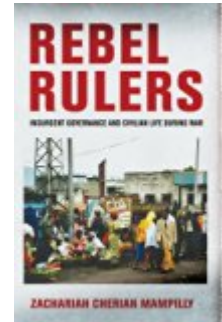
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Zachariah Cherian Mampilly. *Rebel Rulers: Insurgent Governance and Civilian Life during War*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011. 320 pp. \$45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8014-4913-0.

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The dominant presentation of rebel movements, generally seen as led by warlords and as a somehow pathological deviation from the ideal of the state holding the monopoly of functions of sovereignty, relies on the erroneous assumption that territories outside the control of a state are necessarily anarchic, and therefore pose a unique threat to the global order. In contrast to this view, Zachariah Cherian Mampilly's book builds on the empirical observation that many contemporary insurgencies control large territories for extended periods of time, establishing extensive governmental structures and practices through which they rule the civilian population. The author tries to understand what insurgent governance is and why it tends to be so different from one case to another.

Mampilly rightly observes that, on the one hand, empirical abilities to manage a space and those who live in it are not preconditions for juridical recognition, as shown, for example, by the weak and even failed states that continue to be parties in international relations. On the other hand, nonstate entities, even when they display more empirical abilities, are denied recognition. The author suggests a reconnection of juridical recognition with empirical abilities. Contrary to what the author states, this does sometimes happen: while there is no general juridical recognition, rebel movements do participate in international transactions (the signing of the Lusaka Peace Accord by the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie [RCD] is an example). Nevertheless, the author's focus on empirical sovereignty by directly comparing the parameters of state sovereignty with the political and social order constructed by insurgencies is useful. This leads Mampilly to identify factors in the development of civilian governance by insurgents, factors

that emerge at three levels: civilian demands from below, internal dynamics from within, and transnational actors from above. Each of these levels gives rise to the formulation of hypotheses on the ability or not to provide governance.

The author then checks his hypotheses through three case studies that draw heavily on field research: the Liberation Tigers of Tamil (LTTE) in Sri Lanka, the RCD in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) in Sudan. These cases represent three points in a continuum of civilian governance by insurgents—a highly effective system in Sri Lanka, a partially effective one in Sudan, and an ineffective one in the DRC. As I am familiar only with the third case, I will offer some comments on Mampilly's analysis of the RCD's failed civilian governance project.

Mampilly identifies three main factors to explain the RCD's failure: its inability to address concerns about the ethnic and national affiliation of the rebellion, to resolve internal tensions, and to develop local expertise required to achieve hegemony. However, two other factors played an even more prominent role. On the one hand, its dependency from Rwanda was a major handicap from the beginning. Contrary to what the author writes on page 182, the RCD was not founded in Goma but in Kigali, and Mampilly later acknowledges this problem of the RCD's reliance on external relationships. On the other hand, the rebels were unable—and probably unwilling—to break with practices of the failed Congolese state. In reality, they replicated the characteristics of that state, such as neo-patrimonial practices of revenue extraction, patron-client relations, and the co-optation of societal actors.

Again, this is later acknowledged and well analyzed by the author, for example, when he notes that “residents of North Kivu came to view the organization as a revenue-generating device for the insurgent government and its Rwandan patron” (p. 199). The lack of a social contract between the RCD and the population is clearly shown in the section on the poor provision of services in the fields of security, health, and education.

While the text contains a number of minor factual errors, these do not diminish the overall validity and usefulness of this novel governance-based perspective on the RCD. Along with other broader factors, it helps readers to understand why the RCD was doomed to fail. The movement never developed a viable political agenda, but rather displayed a remarkable continuity with the Mobutu regime model, coupled with a stifling reliance on external patrons. Its failure showed during the 2006 pres-

idential elections, when RCD leader Azarias Ruberwa scored a paltry 2 percent of the vote.

The three case studies offer support for Mampilly’s conclusion that four broad dimensions shape the political environment in which insurgents develop or fail to develop governance systems: the history of state penetration in the region they control; the internal structure of the organization; the broader conflict dynamics; and the relationship between the insurgency and other actors. Finally, the empirical reality of (good or bad) governance in rebel-held territories makes the author conclude, rightly I believe, that there remains considerable scope for improvement in current international practice regarding recognition of nonstate groups. While they are no states, they are relevant players that often exercise sovereign functions, an empirical reality that needs to be acknowledged.

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