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## Violent Non-State Actors and How to Counter Them

Lecturers: Marco N. Binetti, Daniel Mittermaier  
Seminar: Politische Systeme und auswärtige Beziehungen  
16:45 – 18:15, Room 2116 (033)  
Wintersemester 2023

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### Course Description

Since the end of World War II, interstate conflicts have become a relatively rare phenomenon. In turn, the number of episodes of intrastate conflict rose both in developing and fragile countries as well as in more stable economies. For example, the rise of insurgent groups in the Middle East, Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa has been – and in many countries still is – a significant danger to central and regional governments. At the same time, organized crime and criminal cartels developed their capacity to run their operations challenging the states' monopoly of violence both in Latin America as well as in Europe. Moreover, states rely more and more on militias, paramilitaries and private security companies to achieve specific goals, as Wagner group operations in Sahel and Northern Africa show.

In this module, we take a closer look at these Violent Non-State Actors (VNSAs). We will examine why they are so challenging to the modern states, what their objectives are, which mobilization strategies they resort to, how access to resources shapes their tactics, and how they create and maintain their support base. At the same time, we investigate when and to what extent they can be a useful tool for state rulers and, finally, different approaches for states to counter them and how effective these are.

This module aims to make students familiar with current literature on VNSAs, understand and master the main definitions currently used to describe VNSAs and develop the capacity to critically explain regional VNSAs-related dynamics. While knowledge of quantitative methods can be helpful, it is not a prerequisite for attending the module.

Students are expected to prepare a short group presentation (max. 10 min) on a real-world case. Each group of students is expected to select one country over a specific timeframe and discuss:

- Which are the main VNSAs operating in the country
- What are their goals?
- How do they affect the local economy and local population?
- Did they succeed in reaching their goals? / Could they reach their goals in the next 10 years? How/why?

The final mark depends on the assessment of an essay (4000 - 6000 words not including bibliography) to be delivered by the end of the trimester. Students can write the essay in German, but they are encouraged to write it in English. We suggest students to base their essay on one of the actors discussed during their presentations but do not share specific actors within each case.

After having selected a specific VNSA and having briefly discussed its evolution over time, students should address the following questions:

- What was/is the objective of the VNSA? Did it change over time?
- What where/are its main strategies to gain resources? Did they evolve over time? Why and how?

- What tactics did/does the VNSA employ to achieve its goal? Did they change over time? Why?
  - How would you define the chosen VNSA depending on their tactics, resources, strategies and objectives?
  - Which countering strategies did state actors use to counter the VNSA? Did they work? Why? If not, which strategies should be used instead?
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## Readings

**Bold** readings are mandatory for each session; other readings should be used as a starting point towards your presentations and essays.

Readings and slides will be uploaded to Ilias, every student is required to join the course folder, as we will send group-emails through Ilias!

The Book Global Politics and Violent Non-state Actors is available within the university network at <https://sk.sagepub.com/books/global-politics-and-violent-non-state-actors>.

### **Week 1 (10.01.2023): Outline of the module and (the importance of) main definitions**

**Natasha Ezrow: Global Politics and Violent Non-state Actors, Sage publications, 2017 (chap.2)**

Staniland, Paul. "Armed politics and the study of intrastate conflict." *Journal of Peace Research* 54.4 (2017): 459-467.

### **Week 2 (17.01.2023): Insurgency**

**Natasha Ezrow: Global Politics and Violent Non-state Actors, Sage publications, 2017 (chap.6)**

Collier, Paul, Anke Hoeffler, and Dominic Rohner. "Beyond greed and grievance: feasibility and civil war." *Oxford Economic Papers* 61.1 (2009): 1-27.

Fjelde, Hanne, and Desirée Nilsson. "Rebels against rebels: Explaining violence between rebel groups." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56.4 (2012): 604-628.

Kalyvas, Stathis N., and Laia Balcells. "International system and technologies of rebellion: How the end of the Cold War shaped internal conflict." *American Political Science Review* 104.3 (2010): 415-429.

### **Week 3 (24.01.2023): Warlords, militias and vigilantes pt. I**

**Natasha Ezrow: Global Politics and Violent Non-state Actors, Sage publications, 2017 (chap.8)**

Jackson, Paul. "Warlords as alternative forms of Governance." *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 14, no. 2 (2003): 131-150.

Mackinlay, John. "Defining warlords." *International Peacekeeping* 7.1 (2000): 48-62.

McCormick, Gordon H., and Lindsay Fritz. "The logic of warlord politics." *Third World Quarterly* 30.1 (2009): 81-112.

### **Week 4 (31.01.2023): Warlords, militias and vigilantes pt. II**

Ahram, Ariel I. "Pro-government militias and the repertoires of illicit state violence." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 39.3 (2016): 207-226.

**Jentzsch, Corinna, Stathis N. Kalyvas and Livia I. Schubiger. *Militias in Civil Wars*. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59: 5 (2015):755 769.**

Phillips, Brian J. "Inequality and the emergence of vigilante organizations: the case of Mexican autodefensas." *Comparative Political Studies* 50.10 (2017): 1358- 1389.

#### **Week 5 (07.02.2023): Private security companies**

**Natasha Ezrow: *Global Politics and Violent Non-state Actors*, Sage publications, 2017 (chap.10)**

Leander, Anna. "The market for force and public security: The destabilizing consequences of private military companies." *Journal of Peace Research* 42.5 (2005): 605-622.

Avant, Deborah. "The privatization of security and change in the control of force." *International Studies Perspectives* 5, no. 2 (2004): 153-157.

Percy, S. (2009). Private security companies and civil wars. *Civil Wars*, 11(1), 57-74.

#### **Week 6 (14.02.2023): Terrorist organizations**

**Natasha Ezrow: *Global Politics and Violent Non-state Actors*, Sage publications, 2017 (chap.7)**

Phillips, Brian J. "Enemies with benefits? Violent rivalry and terrorist group longevity." *Journal of Peace Research* 52.1 (2015): 62-75.

Conrad, Justin, and Kevin Greene. "Competition, differentiation, and the severity of terrorist attacks." *The Journal of Politics* 77.2 (2015): 546-561.

Bacon, Tricia. "Is the Enemy of My Enemy My Friend? How Terrorist Groups Select Partners." *Security Studies* 27.3 (2018): 345-378.

#### **Week 7 (21.02.2023): Organized crime, VNSA and crime**

**Natasha Ezrow: *Global Politics and Violent Non-state Actors*, Sage publications, 2017 (chap.9)**

Varese, Federico. "What is Organized Crime? Chapter 1 in *Organized Crime*. London: Routledge, 2010.

Holland, Bradley E., and Viridiana Rios. "Informally governing information: How criminal rivalry leads to violence against the press in Mexico." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61.5 (2017): 1095-1119.

Ríos, Viridiana. "Why did Mexico become so violent? A self-reinforcing violent equilibrium caused by competition and enforcement." *Trends in organized crime* 16.2 (2013): 138-155.

Makarenko, Tamara. "The crime-terror continuum: tracing the interplay between transnational organised crime and terrorism." *Global crime* 6.1 (2004): 129- 145

Longmire Sylvia M. & John P. Longmire. "Redefining Terrorism: Why Mexican Drug Trafficking is More Than Just Organized Crime," *Journal of Strategic Security* 1:1 (2008): 35-52.

Felbab-Brown, Vanda. "Kicking the opium habit?: Afghanistan's drug economy and politics since the 1980s: Analysis." *Conflict, Security & Development* 6.2 (2006): 127-149.

Flanigan, Shawn Teresa. "Terrorists next door? A comparison of Mexican drug cartels and middle eastern terrorist organizations." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24.2 (2012): 279-294.

### **Week 8 (28.02.2023): Counter-Strategies I**

**Natasha Ezrow: *Global Politics and Violent Non-state Actors*, Sage publications, 2017 (chap. 12)**

Patrick B. Johnston. "Does Decapitation Work? Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Targeting in Counterinsurgency Campaigns." *International Security* 2012; 36 (4): 47–79.

Lehrke, Jesse Paul & Rahel Schomaker (2016) Kill, Capture, or Defend? The Effectiveness of Specific and General Counterterrorism Tactics Against the Global Threats of the Post-9/11 Era. *Security Studies* 25(4): 729–762.

Grieco, Kelly A. & J. Wesley Hutto (2021) Can drones coerce? The effects of remote aerial coercion in counterterrorism. *International Politics*: 1–25.

### **Week 9 (07.03.2023): Counter-Strategies II**

**Condra, L.N. and Shapiro, J.N. (2012), *Who Takes the Blame? The Strategic Effects of Collateral Damage*. *American Journal of Political Science*, 56: 167-187.**

Howard, Lise Morjé & Alexandra Stark (2018) How Civil Wars End: The International System, Norms, and the Role of External Actors. *International Security* 42(3): 127–171.

Hoeffler A. Can international interventions secure the peace? *International Area Studies Review*. 2014;17(1):75-94.

Zürcher, Christoph (2017) What Do We (Not) Know About Development Aid and Violence? A Systematic Review. *World Development* 98: 506–522.

### **Week 10 (14.03.2023): student presentations and general recap QA**

### **Week 11 (21.03.2023): student presentations**