

Workshop Invitation

Former armed groups and the politics of statebuilding after war

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Call for papers

Understanding how former armed groups, including their leaders and members influence politics is crucial to understanding how and if societies transition from violence and war. In recent years, the political transformation of armed groups into political parties has become a central feature of war-to-peace transitions. While the total number of successful transformations, to say nothing of the failed attempts is difficult to estimate, about one third (35.5%) of armed groups entering negotiated peace between 1975 and 2011 transformed into political parties.¹ Yet, the outcome is by no means uniform. In several contexts such as Ethiopia, Rwanda and Eritrea, rebel groups that have won civil wars, have emerged as strong authoritarian parties and governments. In other contexts, such as Lebanon and Palestine, armed groups participate in electoral politics without relinquishing their weapons. In a third type of context, as in Kosovo, East Timor and South Sudan, former liberation movements have garnered international support to achieve recognition, but have adapted differently to the circumstances of post-conflict state building. Furthermore, not all rebel groups survived as political parties. Groups such as the M-19 in Colombia and the RUF in Sierra Leone have disintegrated, but individual leaders and members continue to make their mark on political development in those countries.

While it is generally agreed upon that the transformation of rebel groups into political parties potentially provides important channels for both interest articulation and process engagement for former rebels contributing to sustainable peace, stability and democratization, there has been little attention to the actual politics that these actors practice after war. The central question that will guide the discussions at the workshop is the following: **Given that many armed groups were formed on the basis of projecting radical ideas about state transformation, how do their ideological and ideational foundations influence the ways in which they continue to govern or engage in politics after conflict? In other words, how do they practice politics in peace times?**

In this one-day workshop we wish to explore the diverse strategies and outcomes of political participation and mobilization by former armed groups and their leaders focusing on how they continue to influence, implement and articulate *ideas and practices of state building after the conflict has ended*. Bringing together scholars of diverse disciplinary backgrounds, we invite papers that could address, but are not limited to:

¹ Söderberg Kovacs, M and Hatz, S (2016) Rebel-to-party transformations in civil war peace processes 1975–2011. *Democratization*, 1–23. doi:10.1080/13510347.2016.1159558.

- Why ideas of state transformation were or were not implemented after conflict by former armed group leaders.
- What is the relevance of ideology for practices of statebuilding and governance after conflict?
- How do conflict endings (for instance military victory vs negotiated settlements) influence statebuilding practices and possibilities?

We aim to begin a conversation about former armed movements and the practices of statebuilding. We will explore the idea of publishing the contributions as a special issue of a journal, depending on the coherence of the submissions.

Time, location and funding

The one-day workshop will take place at Emmanuel College in Cambridge on Monday January 9, 2017, 10 am – 6 pm followed by dinner at Emmanuel at 7 pm. Partially funded by the Centre for Governance and Human Rights (CGHR), the workshop will cover all meals. Partial travel assistance and accommodation might be possible upon request for those arriving from outside the UK or the Cambridge/London area.

Submission of abstract

We invite junior and senior researchers with diverse backgrounds to address this issue in historical or contemporary contexts of war-to-peace transitions. Both single and comparative studies are welcomed.

To participate, please submit a short abstract (200 words) to the organizers Devon Curtis (dc403@cam.ac.uk) and Gyda Sindre (gms50@cam.ac.uk) by November 11, 2016.