Welcome back to another episode of Bush School Uncorked. We are recording live, once again, from Downtown Uncorked, who, despite our antics, continue to host us.

In historic downtown Bryan.

In historic downtown Bryan, which you remind me every time, I seem to keep forgetting.

Last time we were here, about a week ago, we were with Dr. Elizabeth Cobbs, talking about some AI and future of work. You may have noticed that I couldn't keep my mouth shut, I think I talked as much as the guest last time.

It was very noticeable.

Multiple people said something to me, so I think I've gotta have a better filter tonight.

And this will be our final live recording at Downtown Uncorked for the spring. For those of you that've been following along, we have two more episodes, actually, we're gonna bring to you. One is from an event that was held at the Bush School on volunteerism, so we'll bring you that in probably the next week or two. And Dr. Valerie Hudson will be joining us for a conversation, next week, we'll be publishing it next Friday as well. So we have a couple more episodes coming for you down the pipe, but this is the last time we get to hang with the audience until the fall.

And for those of you that have been following along, we have a pretty packed schedule that we'll be sharing with you in the fall, we'll be pushing out on the Bush School website and on our social media, probably late summer.

But we are academics, so don't expect anything over the summer.

Yeah, over the summer, we're just gonna be lounging around the pool, kicking our feet up, and reading, 'cause we don't do any work.

So, as usual, Greg's here with me, I'm Justin Bullock, the co-host and today we have another Bush School faculty who is our guest, Dr. Reyko Huang. She is an assistant professor in the international affairs department, Greg is her boss. I'm so sorry, Reyko.

Soon to be an associate professor.

Soon to be an associate professor, which is super exciting. I hope we say that about me this time next year.

Uh-huh (affirmative).

I'm submitting my packet this year. And we're gonna talk with Reyko about some of her work on rebel governance and rebel diplomacy. She has a book on this topic that was published by Cambridge University Press in 2016, which was called The Wartime Origins of Democratization: Civil War, Rebel Governance, and Political Regimes, and is doing a number of projects on this.

Thanks for joining us today.

Thank you so much for having me.

So as I warned you, before we started, I like to start with the guest by asking them how they think of themselves as a researcher, so you get to pick your topics in this field and I was wondering, how you view your work and the questions you're interested in?

Sure, well thank you. I am clearly a scholar of political violence and violent conflict in particular. And in that vein, I have been particularly interested in studying rebel groups, who are they, where do they come from, why would they ever want to fight against the entire government of an established state, why do they take these risks, how do they organize themselves, and how do they actually fight and what do they get out of it, and so this whole broad spectrum of questions about who these opposition fighters are and what they do in war.

How did I get there? I've been interested in conflict for probably, I don't know, since probably my undergrad years, but I've been more broadly interested in international politics for probably much longer. I come from a multinational family and multilingual family, where linguistic tensions, cultural tensions, misunderstandings were just the norm, so taking comparative perspective on everything, including political questions, just sort of comes naturally to me and so I'm just naturally interested in international politics, how states deal with each other, how they align, not-align with each other, how they fight, not-fight, those sorts of questions.

I would say a particularly formative experience that I had was when I was a Masters student myself at a public public policy school, I went to the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton, and I had the opportunity to spend three months in East Timor. This was back in 2003, East Timor was the world's newest country at the time, it just really gained independence, and there was a very large UN peacekeeping operation on the ground there. And so I was working with the UNDP as part of the UN peacekeeping mission and so three months of that experience just got me really into trying to understand conflict and especially the peace process the follows, and post-conflict democratization, post-conflict governance, etc.

So one of the first questions, which you sent in one of your pieces to look at today, and I had fun familiarizing myself with at least some of your work, and, as a side note, one of my favorite things about us doing this, is I get to learn. You used to pass people in the hallways, and "Hi, how are you?" And I've been seeing you now for multiple years and didn't have a good idea, like the details, of the work you're doing, so it's fun for me to learn what all my colleagues are doing and read some of their work.

So you use the term "rebels." What is that? Is this terrorists? Is this people starting a civil war? Is this anyone who's ... doesn't like their government and is finding ways to overthrow? How do you think about rebels?

Yeah, that's a great question. So the way I think about them, and this is sort of the conventional understanding of rebel groups and civil wars within my field of research, is you have a civil war when some group of people, with arms, want to fight against the government, their own government, for whatever reason. And not just that, but they have to fight and there has to be fatalities on both sides, otherwise if it's just fatalities on one side, then it's a massacre, by one side, right? If there are no fatalities and it's just a peaceful kind of tension, maybe it's a peaceful demonstration or a rally, so they have to be fighting-

Some level of actual violence has to occur.

There has to be violence and-

Okay.

If there's no blood, it's not interesting.

It's ... Well, I do study peaceful social movements-

Oh, okay.

... too, so I'm generally interested in social mobilization, why people-

It's not just violent conflict, you like other things.

I'm primarily focused on violent conflict-

But the-

It's not the violence that causes me to-

But the whiff of blood does make it more interesting.

Yeah, certainly very important, consequential.

Right, so within that context of civil wars, rebel groups are the groups of people who decide to oppose the government for political reasons and take up arms to do so.

And my guess is that they go about doing this in lots of different ways. They maybe choose different governance styles, they choose different ways to interact with international actors, whether they're trying to win over favor from the larger international community, so what types of strategies, in general, do they take, when you're, say, a rebel group that doesn't have the same power and resources as the major state power? How do they go about ... You know, the most recent example that I'm aware of, is the ISIS caliphate, and some stuff's coming out now about how they worked their bureaucracy, and what it looked like, and how brutal it was. So what are the different strategies that rebel groups take in trying to create their own governments?

Yeah, and that question is precisely what got me into this area of research, which is when you look at conflicts and you think, well, there's a lot of blood, and there's a lot of violence, but it's not chaos all around. That's one of the first things you notice when you start studying civil wars across various settings, that it isn't all anarchy and disaster, although there's a lot of that, there's a lot of destruction and loss of lives, but there's also a lot of new institutions being created. There's a lot of a certain type of order, even, and this is particularly notable in territories where the government has completely lost control or has withdrawn and where the rebel groups are now in control of the people and the territories.

And what you notice is when the rebel groups take over, they're not just fighting any more, what they'll tend to do is go into these territories and start setting up their own institutions and this is what I call rebel governance. They have incentives to govern people and to actually start behaving a little bit like a state, right, and so-

What are those incentives?

Number one, if they are fighting the state to actually become the state themselves, they want to overthrow their existing regime or they want to secede and create their own government, create their own new independent state, then they have every incentive to actually act like they could be viable, authoritative, competent governors. So they want to demonstrate that to, not just the local populations, certainly, but also to the international community that is paying attention.

So it's like a competition of legitimacy, at some point?

It is a competition of legitimacy and in particular, if you are trying to secede and trying to gain international recognition as a new government, you definitely need that international legitimacy coming your way. And how do you get that? Well, you try to please the great powers and we are really at a point in our history where the great powers will expect that you demonstrate the ability to govern the population.

You come to the [maranacks 00:09:38], you pay your price to win over their favor and-

You have to win their favor. That's right. That's right.

And so I started looking at these kinds of institutions that the rebel groups tend to build, so first, when the rebel groups go into a territory, they might impose a taxation system. They need funding, right? They need popular support, and so that's literally some times the rebel group will just go around knocking on people's doors and saying, "We are the new authorities in town. You hand over your taxes to us."

But that doesn't make you popular, right?

That doesn't make you popular, that's right. So you want their money and you want maybe their crops or whatever in-kind taxation, right, and this is often called liberation taxes, right, a euphemism, right-

I like that, yeah.

But as you just said, Greg, they need to entice popular support, because it's much cheaper for them to actually win their loyalty and then win their taxes than to coerce the taxation every single time.

And so they then might turn to, let's say, fixing the water well or building roads in that community. They will often go onto build rebel schools for the kids, even create mass literacy presses for the adults, if there's low literacy rates in those areas. They might build rudimentary forms of hospitals or health clinics. Why? Because of course, if they're going to govern people, they want their own people to be healthy and, of course, they need fighters and recruits and they need their recruits to be healthy and well looked after.

And so they have all these incentives to start building up these kinds of institutions, not only so that they can get the taxes and the popular support, but so they can please various audiences that are watching. And so what you then begin to see is this creation of almost a mutual exchange system, or an implicit social contract, right? Which has democratic undertones, right, and some people will argue that it is sort of like an incipient democracy forming in war-torn areas, others will say, "Well, how can you call it an implicit social contract when one party is the armed group, the other party, they're civilians who have really no choice but to comply with rebels' rule?"

And so I think that there's always a really ... there must be a very tense mix of both popular support and coercion going on in these kinds of governance systems.

Yeah, so a lot of this is outside of my realm of expertise, so I'll continue to defer to you and Greg as we move on, but I remember just paying attention in the news, and some examples of this was, for example, ISIS had a press secretary. I was watching, I think episodes of Vice News, and it was like, this is who you interacted with, they had such an administration in place that this was the person that spoke to the press and had these propaganda videos that were very polished and so that was another bureaucrat working on those strategies.

And then another thing you see, in some of these war-torn areas, that, I guess, just growing up in a peaceful America, or relatively peaceful America, reporters would go and talk with the people in these areas, it's like, "Okay, who do you prefer? Do you prefer the national government or do you prefer the ISIS rebels that have come in? Which one?"

And it was really fascinating to me. It wasn't as much ideological, at least to the people who they were talking to, it's like, "Well this entity helped us have water and electricity and we want those things. And so when this other entity showed up and started doing it ..." You know, and so it was just interesting to me the way in which they had to compete for the civilians' preferences. And that they would back the rebels as opposed to some other government, which makes complete rational sense when you think about it, but just not something that had entered into my head before.

And then there were the beheadings.

And then there were the actual beheadings-

Yeah.

... which I guess that is one way of providing law enforcement. That's one tool for policing, maybe not the one we would prefer a Western liberals here, but that's one way of implementing justice.

Yeah, so there's the extreme coercion of ISIS and then there are the ever day practicalities that civilians face, which is survival, and if the Islamic State is the one that is providing these services that they desperately need, then why not go along with their rule and then stay quiet so that you and your family can survive? I think that is really the calculus of many civilians in these territories.

Which kind of makes sense.

Which kind of makes sense.

So ISIS is the one I keep coming to, but maybe it'll be fun to hear an example of one that you've looked at a little bit more carefully in your research, to illustrate what path to governance a rebel group might take and one that the listeners might picture. Is there one in particular that you've thought a lot about or a case that you've looked into that you could share some more of the details with?

Sure, so this might sound like a really random case, but I did some field research in Nepal, where there was a civil war between 1996 and 2006. And of course, I have my own theoretical and empirical reasons for looking at the Nepalese Maoists, so it's a Maoist insurgency in Nepal fighting against a-

A monarchy.

... democratic elected government, backed by a monarchy. And the Maoists, in the beginning, were a very insignificant, unknown group in 1996 when they rose up and took up arms, relatively unknown, not entirely unknown. And of course, by that time, Maoism had really been discredited all over the world, but here they were.

I think the Chinese had given it up by then.

The Chinese had ... they did not want anything to do with the Maoists in their neighboring country. Yeah, they said, "We're not going to support them at all," right?

And so there they were. They had no international backing, they were really on their own, trying to fight against the Nepalese government. So what did they do? Well, they did what makes complete sense to me. They went into the countryside of Nepal, and of course, Nepal being an extremely mountainous area, the government had very limited reach in the peripheries of Nepal, in the mountainous areas, in the rural areas.

So they actually went into these territories ... of course, many of the fighters were from there, so that made sense as well, and then they began to talk to the people and say, "We are going to demolish the current system. We are going to fight for your rights. We're going to fight for your equal representation. We are going to fight for women's rights." All these, sort of the standard communist rhetoric of, "We are going to fight for equality and representation for all."

And that meant a lot to the Nepalese in the countryside, who had never heard of this rhetoric before. "We have never been represented. Women, they are going to be in the government. Quotas for women." These ideas have never been offered to these rural residents and so they immediately got interested in the Maoist insurgency, and not just the propaganda and the rhetoric and the ideology, but at the same time, the Maoists started building these institutions. And so-

And so the government wasn't present here. It's not that the Maoists had to fight their way in, or they just-

They-

Was it kind of ungoverned territory that they?

It was not ungoverned, it's just very minimally governed.

Minimally governed.

So there might have been a provincial governor, but really not much law enforcement. So when the insurgents went in, basically, the state authorities just packed up and fled.

And so there wasn't a whole lot of fighting in these early years of the conflict, believe it or not. The Maoists just penetrated these areas-

Went in and took over.

... and started establishing their institutions, they built their health clinics, they built their schools, they did a lot of mass education programs and the people began to say, "Look, these are the people who are actually speaking up for our rights and our interests and this has never happened to us." And so they got a lot of support and they were also militarily successful. They fought a classic guerrilla insurgency against the government.

It took the Nepalese government a long time, probably four to five years, until they actually started marshaling the army to go to fight against them. Before that, it was just all law enforcement work. They just didn't take the Maoists very seriously.

And in the end, this small group of fighters grew into a formidable group. Of course, there were a lot of female fighters in the ranks, because, hey, Maoists, right? And they never took over the capital, they never got there, but they got sufficient support and, in particular, their ideas got so much support, if not the rebel group itself, that people really mobilized. And in the end, what happened was that there was a massive protest in the capital city asking for regime change, asking for a new government, asking for the king to step down, and be done with.

And the king capitulated to popular demands, the war ended in a peace treaty between the government and the Maoists, and now the Maoists have been pretty much mainstreamed. They are a mainstream political party, they contest in elections, and so that's the way the war ended. And what's useful to me about knowing about these seemingly minor insurgencies, and having studied these cases, is that when the Islamic State did arise and the popular media was going crazy, right, and of course there were reasons to go crazy with them and have this really-

Beheadings will do that, to Greg's point.

Yep, yep.

Yeah.

Yeah. I mean, we were all shocked and ... However, I, knowing these other cases, to me, what they were actually doing, not the beheadings, but their attempts to control territory and to govern them and provide these services and ... there was a minister of this, a minister of that, right, and their really sophisticated level of organization.

Not just that, but how quickly they put themselves together, how quickly they were organized and providing these services and institutions, was not at all surprising to me. And so it's helpful, from a scholarly sense, to have that comparative perspective when you see these new groups arising.

So the Maoists were relatively successful in their rebellion. ISIS, at different points, was relatively successful, controlled some territory, had a pretty strong force come against them, which has disrupted that. Do you have an example of a rebel group that doesn't do these things so well? They're less organized and they're not able to get this rebel governance and diplomacy thing, and are just crushed. Is there maybe an example, just one of those, that you could share as well?

There are a lot of examples of those kinds of groups. So there is a-

Rebel groups that got crushed? Yeah, plenty of examples there.

There's a good variation on that score.

Let's see, so going back a little bit further in time, Sierra Leone had a huge and very nasty and bloody and atrocious civil war in the 1990s and the rebel group there, the RUF, was just ... apparently, just really interested in brutality and not so much interested in the political work that you see in other kinds of cases.

And observers concur that this was sort of a special case, because they had access to all of the profits from the diamond mining and diamond trafficking and all of that-

The original blood diamonds.

... the original blood diamonds. And so when you are sufficiently funded with these kinds of resources, why bother with knocking on people's doors, because that takes a lot of time and effort.

Why bother with democracy if the money's coming in anyway?

Why bother with democracy? Why bother with education for the children in your territories?

So it's really interesting, the different ways in which it plays out. Do you have, I guess, my final question, thinking about, or just broadly about your research, and maybe this will be a silly question, but there are certain wrought situations that give rise to rebel groups? I can imagine that there are, but maybe not, maybe there's nothing that kind of systematically leads to people rebelling, but that would be one question I was interested in.

And two, if we were trying to tell rebels, or states, how either to be successful as a rebel group, or how to successfully squash a rebel group, given your research, do you have any ideas about that?

Sure, so the first question is really about the causes of civil wars. There's pretty good cross-national research on this and it will pinpoint to very intuitive factors, right? So civil wars tend not to occur in advanced industrialized democracies, although, there was the Northern Ireland conflict within the United Kingdom recently, very recent past-

And there was that unpleasantness here in America between 1861 and 1865.

Unpleasantness.

Sure.

Yep.

Although, I suppose you could question, whether the United States was a democracy-

Was a democracy then.

... at that time-

Right, right.

... etc., etc., but in general, wealthy countries, countries of high GDP, and then well-established democracies tend not to have civil wars. Why? Because, well, the people can use the legitimate institutional channels for expressing their grievances. And so they tend to occur in the developing world, where institutions are weaker, they tend to occur in times of political transition. And so if it appears that well-established autocratic regimes are somehow weakening or crumbling, then people might take that as an opportunity to arm themselves and rise up.

I think we could point to the cases rising from the Arab uprisings of 2011, for those kinds of examples. And they tend to occur where conflict has occurred in the past, which is actually important for thinking about the future of Afghanistan, the future of Syria, the future of Yemen, these ongoing conflicts that we're seeing right now. Definitely the future of Iraq.

So once a society gets used to the violence, at some point in their history, it is more likely that it'll happen again?

Maybe there's that, maybe it's sort of skills-based, but there's also, of course, the fact that conflicts destroy institutions and they destroy the social fabric of the society and they aggravate any preexisting tensions between groups, particularly ethnic groups, they'll deepen ethnic divides.

And of course, the insurgents and the government will both instrumentally use identities to deepen grievances, like the US Civil War, and so that exacerbates ethnic tensions and so these societies tend to have a very difficult time recovering.

Of course, what's really interesting though, is that if your goal, your interest is long-term peace, then negotiate a settlement in the civil war. When the two parties, two or more parties, come together to negotiate a peace treaty, you would think that this is a good ending to a civil war, right? This is what the United States is trying to do in Afghanistan right now, it's trying to do that, I think, in Yemen, the international community, although I don't know the extent to which the Houthis will be involved in the post-war government-

Libya though, very directly.

Libya, that's right, exactly. So you would think this is a nice ending to a civil war, if there's such a thing as a nice ending to a civil war. Why? Because this looks democratic, it looks inclusive, it looks representatives, what better way to end a civil war than to have all parties sit around a table and agree on the country's future?

It's a good Photoshop ... or photo bomb.

It's a photo op.

Photo op, that's right.

That's right, but in, in terms of peace, you could imagine that this is actually one of the worst outcomes, right? Why? Well, once you've signed the document, the peace treaty, you actually have to work with each other and there is-

After you'd been killing each other for-

... after you've been killing each other and after your family has been affected and your friends have been affected, so there is no trust between the parties, and some times, groups don't want to disarm at all, right?

God, this sounds so much like the US Civil War ...

I think it does, yeah.

Yeah, growing up in Georgia, I mean, there was still people who would now be in their 80s, family members or family friends who are that age, and they come and talk about the Civil War still, even that generation, in that way, and I think it plays out politically in the South where, "We wanna hold onto our guns. We don't trust Washington," some of the racial elements holding over from the Civil War, I mean it's ... Anyways, just as you're listening, I'm like, "Oh, these things sound familiar."

Yeah, yeah, absolutely, and the legacy of that war is still lingering and playing out in our current day politics, which is just really interesting to me.

Even after a signed peace treaty, right? I mean, that was what was making me think of about, you know-

Well, no, there was no peace treaty. The rebels were put down by the government, that's what happened in 1865. There was no peace treaty. There was a surrender.

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Mm-hmm (affirmative).

And then there's been peace. And that was my other point-

After a fashion, yeah.

... when you have clear victory, by one side, if what you care about is peace, that country tends to be much more stable than if the war had ended in a negotiated settlement between multiple parties.

Why? That party has the preponderance of power, the other party has been discredited-

And disarmed.

... they can do whatever they want, the party that has lost really has not a whole lot of incentives to rise up again in the immediate future, at least. They might regroup in a few years, but if they have been defeated, they're done, and the government, of course, will take steps to make sure that they're completely gone, eliminated, disarmed, disbanded, that they don't show up anywhere.

And so, think about Syria, this is not the ending that probably most of us, in this part of the world, had anticipated, or had hoped for, but you could imagine that at least the conflict may not begin again if it ends up in a clear Assad victory, because who would, given the tremendous risks and the incredible bloodshed that's already been taken place. And so, this is not a pleasant peace, but it may be a kind of peace, or, at the least, the conflict may end in that way.

Afghanistan, I am not sure that the peace, any peace, if the parties will agree to its terms, will hold.

So the Afghanistan case is really interesting and I interviewed a couple of our former students who work in the current Afghan government as the peace treaty is being negotiated, mostly with the Taliban, and not with the current Afghan government. And if you listen to that, you can hear it, sort of in their voices, that this doesn't seem like the ... it doesn't feel like this is a route to peace, mostly because this group feels left out of the negotiations, and so I could certainly see this playing out, where you still have two relatively powerful groups in the country, the Taliban and the Afghanistan elected government, that peace there might be challenging.

Oh, I could imagine that the Afghan citizens will be feeling left out of that process-

Of what?

... because they have been left out of the process, and-

You said powerful. Question is, does the elected Afghan government, is it able to mobilize any kind of support and any kind of military power if the United States leaves it? Its military power has been the United States and while there's been an effort to build the Afghan government's forces, they're untested without the American backstop, so ...

In addition, according to my reading, the Taliban is stronger than it has ever been since 2001, and this is after 17 years of fighting against the United States, so I don't that this is going to be an easy path, peace treaty or no peace treaty.

Goodness.

So-

Sorry-

So let's get back to the democracy question, because you talked in the Nepalese case, and some of the other cases, about an implicit social contract, about the provision of services, but I think in your work, you also talk about actual democratic institutions established under rebel governance.

Could you talk about the importance of that, versus cases where, say, on an extreme side, the ISIS caliphate, there was provision of some amount of services, there were schools if you wanted to send your kids to the schools, there was some amount of law and order, but there were no democratic institutions developed under rebel governance?

Sure. So this is an instance in which a scholar has a hypothesis, tests it, and then has a null finding and then the null finding gets into a book. My initial hypothesis was, well, people are calling this an implicit social contract, and at least in some cases, it looks like the civilians are just voluntarily giving to the rebel groups their taxes and their crops, and then the rebels are taking care of the civilians, protecting them from the government forces, and protecting them, giving them intelligence, so that they can protect themselves, and providing these infrastructures and institutions.

And so, hypothesis: rebel groups that build these kinds of institutions and govern civilians in this way, if they prevail in the war, whether through an outright victory or through a negotiated settlement, that country will have the institutional basis to create a democratic society.

It turns out not to be the case, probably for the reasons that you just mentioned, Greg. The fact is that there is a whole variety of rebel governance systems, even among the ones that do a full governance. The other thing is institutions are institutions. They're not democratic institutions per se, and what I mean by this is if you are in a post-conflict country and you want to state build, make sure that the government and the state have infrastructures and political institutions in place, institutions are helpful for both democracies and autocracies, and other have said this, scholars of authoritarianism in particular.

And so the fact that you have roads, the fact that you have built electricity in a particular village or villages, the fact that you built schools and hospitals, that's going to benefit both people who want to pursue democracy and people who want to pursue authoritarianism. Institutional structures are helpful to all governors and so I think that is a reason for why there aren't clear links between rebel governance during war and post-conflict democratization.

Governance, but in the Nepalese case, if I recall correctly from the book, they did try to establish some institutions, we're throwing that word around a lot, but they tried to establish some elements of self-governance, right, where people would actually choose local councils? I'm forgetting the details, because, of course, I read the book back in the fall, when I had to write up your tenure case, but is there something different about these rebel groups who actually seem committed to popular choice, to voting, versus those who are only providing services?

So in the Nepalese case, again, I expected that the rebel institutions, given that they did this full-blown rebel governance in vast stretches of the rural areas of Nepal, that these institutions would be helpful in the aftermath of the civil war. What I find is that, in this case, there was, clearly, post-conflict democratization, right?

This was a new government that was installed, there were new elections, there was a new constitution, the constitution guaranteed all these rights, there were representations on the part of women in the government, ethnic minorities who have never been represented, even the untouchable caste now had representation in the government, so it was much more democratic, much more inclusive, and much more diverse, and so, clearly, I think, on all these measures, you can say that, clearly, post-conflict Nepal saw significant democratization, compared to before the war.

But it had nothing to do with the rebel governance stuff that happened during the civil war. Number one, because the peace treaty that ended the civil war said that the Maoists had to dismantle all of their institutions as part of the peace agreement, and as part of the agreement that they would political party. And so if they had done any good work in terms of governance, they had to be wiped away.

And the reason for democratization, I argue, both in the Nepal case and, I think, more generally, is not that rebel groups build institutions, but through rebel governance, the rebel groups actually mobilize the people to rise up and ask for a change of the government. And that's critically what led to the Maoists and the government agreeing to post-conflict democratization.

So does the ideological stance of the rebel group have any effect on this? So I assume that the good Maoist, when they come in, aren't exactly looking to build parliamentary democracy, but it does seem like the Maoists in the Nepalese case were willing to accept these notions of bourgeois democracy, maybe because of changes in China, maybe because of something else.

Whereas if you get Al Qaeda or ISIS, these people are ideologically opposed to the notion of popular sovereignty, right? It's the sovereignty of God, it's not the sovereignty of the people that should determine governance. So why does a Maoist group sign onto bourgeois democracy?

That's a great question. So the Maoists, as you said, I don't think that they thought that were going to be agreeing to this new democratic system when they first entered into the civil war. But because of the way things turned out, and because, by nature, this peace treaty was a democratic exercise in the sense that two opposing parties agreed to share power in a new government, and almost by nature and by definition, that was a more democratic system than what came before it, and so I do think that the ideological component is there.

The Maoists spoke to under-represented people and the government was much more inclusive as a result, in the aftermath of the war. But if you, let's say, have a peace agreement between the current government of Afghanistan and the Taliban, again, almost by definition, because you are agreeing to share power with a new group, the post-conflict government, regardless of whether the Taliban believes in a democracy, I think will be more representative and more inclusive than what came ... perhaps not what is currently in place, which was basically designed and engineered by the United States and its coalition partners, but at the least, because you are agreeing to work with a party that you had not worked with before, in that sense, there is representation and ...

But-

... of something reflecting sort of a democratic compromise.

But not elections, right? I mean, the interesting thing in the Nepalese case, and it's interesting because Afghanistan, although much larger than Nepal, is mountainous, it doesn't have a long tradition of effective centralized government, it's always been a very decentralized political system, which, my understanding from your book, Nepal is also. That way, the reach of the state didn't go very far.

It just seemed like when they got together and did the deal in Nepal, you had people who, maybe with the collapse of the monarchy, collapse of support for the monarchy, you had people who basically were saying, on the government side, "Yeah, we gotta loosen up. We gotta let these people in." And people on the Maoist side saying, "Yeah, we gotta make a deal with these bourgeois capitalist pigs and so, yeah, we're gonna have elections, and we'll win." And the people in the government said, "Well, but, we'll still have some representation."

It's so hard for me to see the Taliban playing that game, right? It's so hard for me to see the Taliban saying, "Well, we'll compromise a little bit here, we'll compromise a little bit there, and we'll have seats in the government and we'll be able to run in parliament." It's not what these guys were fighting for.

And a lot of times, the outcome is not what these guys were ever fighting-

Right.

... for, and that is the question for Afghanistan. How much is the Taliban going to agree to, given that they're sort of in a position of power right now, they could keep on fighting, but they're actually agreeing to talk, so-

Right, they're agreeing to talk to the United States-

United States right now-

... they're not necessarily agreeing to talk to the Afghan government-

That's right. That's right.

... because if they can get us out, they think that the Afghan government will just be washed away, you know.

That's right.

Much as after an interesting interim period, the Soviet-supported government in Kabul was washed out after the Soviet Union left in the '80s.

Yeah.

So I wanna talk a little bit about ... kind of abstracting back out to this tension between the different types of tools that rebels can use to get legitimacy.

And if, from the research, it seems to me they have, like we were talking about earlier, these carrots and sticks, essentially, right? And in my mind, carrots is winning this ideological battle, getting people to agree to be governed by the rebel group, whereas sticks are beheadings, lots of violence. Is there any coherence or any patterns that you're aware of in the literature, that suggests which one of those tools is more effective? Or is it just really contextually dependent on the situation of the conflict?

I think it is contextually dependent, but sort of a rationalist perspective, if you are trying to govern a territory and the population within that territory, isn't it much more efficient and cost-effective, if you could actually win the popular support, right? So that you don't have to coerce your way through everything and I think that is the logic behind rebel governance systems where you see this kind of mutual dependence, where the rebels need the civilians and the civilians need the rebels.

I think that's sort of the logic and if they have to coerce their way through everything, I don't know how sustainable that kind of a system is, because, at the end of the day, this is a civil war. You do want to be saving most of your resources, and your time, for the military front. This is all sort of political work that is oriented towards ultimately winning the war, and so if you really have to put all of that work into governing people through coercion and you're not getting natural compliance and loyalty, that is probably going to be much more difficult.

So I have a limited set of resources and if you have to devote particularly military resources, and if you're having to devote more of those towards the people that you're trying to govern, that takes away resources from the battle front, for example.

That's right. That's right. That's right. Which is actually one of the puzzles of rebel governance itself. Why do they even bother with this, when they could actually be putting everything, all your fighters and resources, to the front lines? Why would you do diplomacy, where you send rebel diplomats abroad and open political offices abroad? Well, as we said earlier, it's all of the legitimacy work that needs to go in, while you're fighting as well.

So that brings me to another question, which is how important is the diplomacy piece, relative to keeping the actual people that you're trying to govern accepting your ... I guess, what is the relative important role of the international community endorsing you, as compared to having the people on the ground like you?

Ah, the next project.

Oh.

The next ... It is getting there. But I think-

Oh, I stumbled onto this, alright.

Yeah, I think it goes hand-in-hand. For example, in the 1980s, the United States was a staunch supporter of UNITA, an Angolan rebel group in the Angolan civil war and UNITA did some rebel governance stuff. They had rebel schools and hospitals, they had an airport, apparently, in their rebel headquarters, they had internationally-recognized stamps, I don't really know how they achieved that-

Jonas Savimbi.

Jonas Savimbi was the leader.

I'm old enough to remember Jonas Savimbi.

And-

Not I. Who is this person, just out of curiosity?

He was the head of UNITA.

... head of UNITA.

Okay, okay.

And the reason I say that the diplomacy and the governance stuff go hand-in-hand is that UNITA would bring in American officials, fly them into ... nobody really knew where Jamba, in Angola was, but that was the rebel capital. They would bring American visitors, high-level officials to their headquarters and-

Congressmen and-

... congressmen, senators, yeah, and give them a tour-

This was all part of the Cold War.

... give them a tour of their rebel capital and showcase their governance achievements and so the diplomacy was bolstered by their achievements back home. And the congressmen would go back home, report it to Washington, "Hey, these groups are doing great work for the people of Angola and they want democracy," right? "And they're anti-communist," most importantly.

So I think that it went hand-in-hand. Of course, if you're a secessionist group, and you want to found a new state, I think the diplomacy part becomes really, really important and that's what my research shows as well.

Excellent.

Yeah and-

So secession versus fighting for-

Regime overthrow.

... control over an established state, do you see significant differences in the way rebel groups act?

Not in terms of rebel governance, actually. So both secessionists and non-secessionists do rebel governance, so you might think, Hezbollah, for example, is well-known for all of the governance work that it's done in Lebanon, it's not trying to secede from any country. And then you have, say, the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka, which the LTTE was trying to found its own independent country and it did a lot of diplomacy, did a lot of rebel governance and so there is some-

Also did a lot of suicide bombings.

They did a lot of suicide bombings.

Yeah.

That's right, especially in Colombo. So not so much a ... not a stark difference, but I do think that the secessionists do really have to focus on the diplomacy work, because-

They have to play the diplomacy side more.

... at the end of the day, there's no formal political recognition by the international community-

Right.

... and by that, I mean the P5, then you're doomed. You will forever be an unrecognized non-state actor, so that diplomacy work becomes really important for them.

So we're at the 45-minute mark, so here in a moment, audience, be ready with your questions if you have any. But before we do that, is there anything that we haven't touched on, on this topic of rebel governance and rebel diplomacy, that, for a general listener, that you would wanna make sure that you get to highlight for them?

Well, probably talked enough, but just briefly to get to the ongoing research that Greg referenced. So all of this research on diplomacy got me thinking about actual individuals who conduct this type of work. Like who are they? Who are these rebel leaders who lead these organizations? How do they actually come to a place where they say, "I'm gonna drop everything that I've been doing right now and I'm gonna become a rebel leader."

So if you think about John Garang, for example, he led the secessionist movement in South Sudan and he has a PhD in economics from the University of Iowa, he was offered a post-doc at UC Berkeley, right, that's like us, right? So and then he said, "Forget the post-doc, I'm going back to Sudan to really start up this-"

If only it had been a tenure-track position.

All of history could be different.

Maybe that was the [crosstalk 00:46:54]

Yeah, history in Sudan could be very different.

So now, looking at these rebel leaders, and with a couple of colleagues of mine in political science in other universities, we're compiling a big data set of rebel leader biographies. And we haven't quite analyzed the data yet, the data set is almost completed, but one of the really interesting things, coming out of this research, just descriptively, is that rebel leaders are actually overwhelmingly well-educated. And so in our list of about 350 leaders, for whom we have education data, there's a list of about 500 leaders who had fought between 1980 and 2011, within this list, we find that over 70 percent have degrees in higher education, Bachelors, Masters, or PhD, and a good chunk of them have a Masters or a PhD.

Common areas of study, in their degrees of higher education, political science, economics, law, and religious studies, and, mostly, this is Islamic studies. So these are well-informed, very well-educated elites-

We're training rebel leaders.

Not that we encourage, in any way-

Quiet.

This is job market season for the students, I realize, right? Try alternative careers before you get into violence, but-

All kinds, alternative ...

... these are people who have lives and normal careers before they get into rebellion, for the most part.

That's really interesting.

It is really interesting, and so if we're thinking about rebel leaders as these dispossessed, poor, uneducated, illiterate people, maybe some of them are that, but for the most part, they are not that. They are actually sort of part of the global elite, global political elite. If you look at the list of universities from which these people graduated, they could compete with probably such a roster of any elite club.

And so you could study at the Sorbonne in Paris in the 1950s and either become part of the foreign policy establishment when you go home, or you could go home and become part of the rebel organization, depending sort of, on your political leanings and your sort of personal inclinations-

And luck and happenstance.

... and luck and happenstance.

Goodness. Well, thank you so much, this was really interesting for me, so-

Thank you.

Thank you. And we have a few audience members, and I think two hands went out quickly. And so we'll take a couple questions if that ...

What do we know about the sources of armament of rebel groups? How they military empower themselves to enter into civil war?

So the question, just in case you couldn't hear, was how are these rebel groups armed? Where do they get their guns, where do they get their weaponry to fight their battles?

Great question. Well, first of all, they might already have guns in their garages or back yards or wherever. A lot of these countries are just flooded with arms to begin with, so I think-

Yemen is the most armed country in the world, before-

The United States.

... before the fighting started, everybody had about seven guns.

I think it's-

And you could buy RPGs in tribal markets. I mean, lots of guns.

They even show up to popular peaceful protests armed. I think it's part of what they do, and so ... you know. So Yemen, perhaps present day Iraq, so arms tend to be easily available in these kinds of countries, but if not, what they'll do is to somehow start the fight with the arms that are available and then every time they win little battles, they'll try to seize the battles that the government forces either leave behind or cannot collect and leave, so battlefield victories are really important for amassing arms.

If the rebel groups continue to do well, they might get external sponsors who will send in the weapons. Of course, the US has been great at doing that throughout ... especially the Cold War decades, but until the present day, in various parts of the world. Think Syria, I think Iraq.

Think Afghanistan, where we armed-

Think Afghanistan, absolutely.

... armed the government.

Absolutely.

We armed the rebels in the '80s and we arm the government now.

And probably the same guns are still sticking around. As long as you have the ammunition, these guns can last a long time, which, actually, of course, has implications for the possibilities of peace going forward, as well.

Thank you. Thanks for the question. Yes, sir?

Also, I'm very interested in state building, so it was really interesting to me to understand the rebel, how they actually [inaudible 00:51:48] and how actually they can work with or communicate or having some relationships with surrounding powers. Could be really good sources from the standing that the safety of the-

So I think the question that I heard is do they go about state-building capacity different than non-rebel groups? So is there a regular path to increasing government capacity as opposed to a state actor that didn't come into power via being a rebel group? Is there significant differences for how they go about providing services or go about providing basic governing ...

Historically, I'm not sure that I'm familiar enough with historical cases to talk about them, but historically, the way states developed, at least according to the sociological literature on state formation, is through lots and lots and lots of warfare and bloodshed.

And so, Charles Tilly, probably being the most well-known theorist on this, that European states, early modern European states, where there wasn't this state system as we know it, before that had been established, rulers or governors or power-holders wanted to conquer territory because they wanted to expand their area of control, they would just fight each other and fighting would necessitate that they have large armies. Large armies would necessitate that they would have bureaucracies and having a bureaucracy would enable you to start taxing the populations and so you have this organic state formation trajectory that he describes.

And so there's still a lot of war fighting within this historical state formation stage. If you think about present day pockets where there's an absence of formally-recognized state, so you might think about Somaliland, where the Somali government certainly does not have control over it, does not govern it, and then non-state actors have sort of organized themselves, and now they are reportedly ruling Somaliland sort of in a peaceful and orderly way, and apparently Somaliland is much more peaceful and more developed than anything around Mogadishu. It's just that they don't have international recognition, it's probably not coming their way any time soon.

Thank you so much for the questions. Thanks for being here and thanks for bearing with us as we had a little bit louder than usual environment. We have some excited patrons here with us today.

It's good to see that there's folks patronizing Downtown Uncorked.

Yeah, in historical downtown Bryan. Oh, look, I got to it that time.

There we go.

Well, thanks so much to everyone for having me here.

Thank you so much for being here.

Thanks for the opportunity.

Yeah, it was a treat to talk about your research and for those listening, thanks again for following along. We'll have, as I mentioned earlier, two more episodes coming your way, and then we'll take a little bit of a break and be back with you in the fall. So thank you so much for listening, thanks again to everyone.