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The Study of Militias and Violence: Where To Go From Here?

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Introduction

Militias have captured worldwide attention through their involvement in violent episodes from election violence in Kenya to counterinsurgency in Iraq. Hailed as security force multipliers and intelligence agents that can improve security and civilian protection in some contexts (Peic 2014; Zech 2016), they have frequently been accused of severe human rights violations in others (Schuberth 2018; Mitchell et al. 2014). An important manner in which militias can make repression more (or less) severe and wars more (or less) lethal is what their activities mean for violence against civilians. Due to their civilian character, militias often have close ties to local populations, which may prevent them from harming those they seek to protect (Stanton 2015). On the other hand, militias are conflict actors who organize violence on their own, which makes them perpetrators of violence, and themselves and their constituencies targets of violence (Meagher 2007). What this means for civilian harm and suffering is at the core of this volume.

The crucial question, which this volume seeks to address, is under what conditions militias contribute to security and civilian protection, and what conditions facilitate their use of violence against civilians. The individual contributions to this volume provide a range of different answers to this important question, which this conclusion seeks to review and build on to sketch paths forward in this dynamic and growing field of militia studies. I

make two broad arguments to sketch how to move the research agenda forward: First, we need to disaggregate "militias" and types of violence against civilians they might engage in. This is important to analyze the full range of non-state armed groups with loose or strong connections to the state and political elites on the one hand, and the various consequences they might have for the protection of or violence against civilians on the other. Developing this fine-grained understanding allows us to better link the study of militias to existing work in conflict studies and comparative politics, and integrate findings into more general theories of war and peace.

Second, we should adopt a process perspective and pay closer attention to how militias, and their relationships to civilians and the state, evolve over time. In order to do so, we need to recognize that militias do not act in a vacuum, but that they are embedded within distinct political and social projects and institutions. With respect to their relation to the state, we need to know more about how militias are integrated into broader ideas and strategies of state-building and population control in times of instability and (armed) challenges to political leaders. With respect to their relationship to communities, we need to inquire into how militias are embedded in social norms and institutions, including those related to gender.

This concluding chapter develops these arguments about how to move the research agenda forward by reviewing the contributions in this volume and taking into account other current scholarship on the topic. I discuss my first argument on how to disaggregate the study of militias and violence in light of the concepts of militias and hypotheses about violence proposed in the contributions to this volume and other research. I then elaborate

on my second argument on the importance of analyzing the social and institutional embeddedness of militias to understand how they evolve over time.

Disaggregating militias and violence

The study of militias in peace- and wartime has come a long way. Early studies on state repression have mainly focused on state agents and targets of repression, such as protesters and dissidents (Earl 2011). Early conflict research has focused primarily on rebel groups and their interaction with the state (Weinstein 2007; Kalyvas 2006). More recent work, however, includes analyses of a range of different conflict actors, including what we call militias in this volume.

The systematic study of militias began with two key insights. First, states are not unitary actors when they confront (armed) challenges to their rule; the state security apparatus consists of a range of conflict actors that can engage opposing armed and unarmed forces (Carey et al. 2013; De Bruin 2020). In addition, civilians are agents themselves in conflict and can shape the political and military balance between states and opposing forces by organizing violent groups on their own, which seek to remain neutral or support the status quo (Blocq 2014; Jentzsch 2022). What results from this is a perspective that goes beyond the dyadic understanding of early datasets on civil war to analyze the full range of relationships that can emerge among conflict actors, including the state and its security forces, auxiliary security forces such as militias, challengers such as armed rebels or nonviolent opposition groups, and civilian communities.

But what are militias? The introduction to this volume defines militias by pointing to five core characteristics of militias: they need to be armed and organized, remain outside of the formal command structure of the state security forces, consist mainly of civilians, and pursue some political goal (Johnson and Wittels, this volume). The authors emphasize that they seek to provide a broader concept of militias to allow for richer theorizing about a wider range of manifestations of militias. The contributions to this volume adopt this broad understanding of militias but refine the concept by making distinctions appropriate for their own research goals. These distinctions are largely based on militias' relationships to political elites and local communities.

With respect to the first dimension, several contributors distinguish between militias with different links to states and state-affiliated elites. For example, Raleigh et al. (this volume) argue that it is necessary to add to the general concept of "pro-government militias" a category of "pro-regime militias" that better captures those armed groups who are affiliated with political elites rather than formal security institutions. While pro-government militias are linked in some way to the official state security forces, pro-regime militias enter (formal or informal) alliances with government-affiliated political elites who can make use of them to advance their political goals. De Bruin (this volume) adds the category of "official militias" to the categories of semi-official and informal militias (Carey et al. 2013) to capture those armed groups that are under the administrative control of the government. Official militias are common across all types of dictatorships in both war- and peacetime. De Bruin shows that disaggregating the general category of militias makes sense to better understand different types of violence and human rights violations.

With respect to the second dimension, other contributions further conceptualize militias with respect to their relation to civilian communities. Thomson (this volume), for example, focuses on community defense forces as a distinct type of pro-government militias that are active during civil war. They are, he argues, particularly local in character. Schuberth (this volume) further differentiates between types of what he calls community-based armed groups, analyzing how gangs, vigilantes and militias operate in non-civil war contexts. While all three types are linked to local communities, they differ in the tasks they fulfill; criminal gangs provide individual economic benefits for their members, vigilantes provide security for the community, and militias provide political advantages for political elites. In a certain way, the typology that Schuberth suggests encompasses an estrangement of community-based armed groups from local communities, being either coopted by criminal or political elites. Schuberth's militia category then is comparable with Raleigh et al.'s category of "pro-regime militias."

Fumerton et al.'s contribution to this volume tests the militia concept in an interesting way, as to the Syrian state, the Kurdish armed groups are rebels, but in their own zones of control, they are in power, govern, and make use of their security institutions such as the YPG and YPJ to maintain control, so that these armed groups function as militias that work in support of a local de-facto government. For some, this might stretch the militia concept too much, as the question arises of how militias are to be distinguished from rebels. Raleigh et al. (this volume) argue that militias have a more regional, time-specific role, as compared to a more national and center-seeking role of rebels. This is in line with

recent conceptual discussions in relation to militias on the African continent (Tapscott 2019).

Overall, disaggregating the study of militias according to the relationships between militias and communities, and between militias and the state, is important for understanding militia activity during war as well as in regular politics in unstable places. Militias can be distinguished based on their alignment (with the state, regime, political elites, or communities; De Bruin, Raleigh et al., this volume), on their function (political, economic, or security focus; Schuberth, this volume), or on primary membership (Thomson, this volume). What becomes clear is that a militia concept only makes sense in relation to a specific research agenda; defining militias to study their activity in civil wars might look different from a concept of militias to study their activity related to party politics and electoral contention and violence. In fact, Raleigh et al. (this volume) show that a concept of militias related to political elites is useful to study militia activity in (regular and irregular) political contention.

The contributions also show that it is useful to analyze different types of violence against civilians. Militias can engage in a variety of violent activities, ranging from human rights violations, including political imprisonment (De Bruin, this volume) to assassinations (Mazzei, this volume), strategic violence (Thomson, this volume), and even crime and communal violence (Schuberth, this volume). The chapters demonstrate that state-militia and militia-community relations can create different pathways to violence. One explanation, for example, concerns the purpose or goal of violence. Violence against civilians can be intended to spread terror and intimidation, as a consequence of the political calculus

of (regime-affiliated) elites (Wittels and Johnson; Raleigh et al.; Schuberth, this volume), as part of a state- and nation-building project in which violence is delegated to militias (Wittels and Johnson; De Bruin; Fumerton et al., this volume) or as a result of communal conflicts (Mazzei, this volume). But it can also be a byproduct of a certain type of counterinsurgency strategy, one that emphasizes the destruction of the enemy more than the protection of civilians (Thomson, this volume). Another explanation points to the opportunity for violence. Having access to information and social networks allows militias to target those civilians who collaborate with the enemy (Thomson). Accountability to the community and training can limit such violence (Wittels and Johnson; Schuberth). The volume, however, also reminds us to go beyond a theoretical framework that focuses on the motivation and opportunity to use violence to take into account a broader range of facilitating contextual factors (Mazzei).

An interesting challenge lies in the question of whether we should take the relation between militias, states and communities as a constitutive variable to distinguish among different types of militias, or as an explanatory variable that is related to the outcome of violence against civilians. In the introduction and contributions to this volume, the type of relationship to the state or community is often taken as explanatory. For example, militias closely tied to regimes are likely to be more involved in lethal violence than militias tied to the government or state security apparatus (De Bruin; Raleigh et al., this volume). Militias closely tied to the community are less likely to perpetrate violence than their state-aligned counterparts (Fumerton et al., Thomson, this volume). Researchers need to be explicit in the assumptions they make and how they conceive of these relationships.

In sum, by disaggregating the study of militias into different types of actors and violence, such research can make important contributions to our understanding of repression, conflict and human rights more generally. In particular, by highlighting the importance of both the macro and micro level in the analysis of political violence, the volume shows that analyzing militia violence can enhance and develop further established theories of violence against civilians in an important way (Balcells and Stanton 2021).

Embedding militias in existing social and political institutions

The volume's core contribution is to point to the importance of the relations between states and militias, and militias and civilians to explain core outcomes relevant for research on conflict and repression. In order to understand how these relationships shape outcomes of violence and non-violence, we need to analyze in what social and institutional contexts militias are embedded and how and why this context has an impact on how militias evolve over time.

States, regimes, and militias

Raleigh et al.'s contribution to this volume shows to what extent militias are embedded in an existing social and political context. They show that militias do not introduce and facilitate new forms of political contention; they rather repeat and perpetuate what is already there—street protests in the US, riots in India, and violent repression in the Philippines. In other words, they are socially and institutionally embedded in the societies in which they are active.

This also becomes apparent when looking at the relations between regime-affiliated political elites and militias more closely. Raleigh et al. (this volume) focus on militia activity in peacetime and argue that pro-regime militias are most active in states characterized by political instability and increasing autocratic forms of governance. This implies that regime-affiliated elites rely on militias to intimidate the opposition and provide security for the regime. From this perspective, militias are instrumentalized by those in power to better compete in a violent and unstable political marketplace. Militias provide a vehicle to secure such power because they are more independent, less accountable armed forces that can be deployed in more flexible, maybe even unpredictable, ways, which constitutes their terrorizing potential. As regime-protectors, militias primarily target civilians and to a lesser extent rebels and competing militias (Raleigh et al., this volume). Violence against civilians then is a function of political elites' strategic calculations for how to gain or maintain power.

The challenge in studying these state-militia relationships, however, is to recognize the social and institutional embeddedness, while also giving proper weight to the interaction of the different entities and granting agency to each. For example, in Raleigh et al.'s contribution to this volume, the question arises of how much agency militias have when the political content of their activities seems to be determined by the political elites they are affiliated with. This has implications for the theoretical approach with which to study these groups; to go beyond an instrumentalist approach, we need to take into account the agency of militia leaders as well as rank and file. A related issue is the precise relationship between the militia and the political elite—do the regime-affiliated elites need to be commanders or leaders of the militia, or does a loose expression of support by such elites

suffice to call the armed group a pro-regime militia? This question arises when discussing the case of the contemporary United States, where President Trump expressed his support for groups like the Proud Boys, but did not take on a direct leadership role for the militias.

Another important aspect linked to the social and political context is the way in which militias may be integrated into broader political projects of state formation and population control. Whether in its official form (De Bruin, this volume) or more community-based forms (Thomson, this volume), militias are important tools to build, facilitate and enhance population control in a state-building project. De Bruin's contribution to this volume focuses on "official militias"—those militias under the administrative control of the state (see above). She finds that, while informal militias are more responsible for "agent-centric" human rights violations such as torture, disappearances, and extra-judicial killings, official militias are more responsible for political imprisonments. The author explains this difference by referring to the type of relationship that official militias have to the state: they are more closely monitored, which prevents opportunistic violence, and at the same time their link to the state is visible, which prevents the state from using militias to plausibly deny responsibility for outsourced violence.

De Bruin's contribution to this volume encourages further research into the reasons for this strong association between official militias and political imprisonments. The author discusses official militias as tools in state-building. For example, they have an important role to play in providing information about and controlling the population. However, the

question arises why regimes pursue state-building projects more by relying on imprisonment rather than torture or killings. There might be a temporal factor that at the beginning of a new regime, regimes make use of intimidation through imprisonment, and only when they face an increased threat, for example, through an armed challenge, do they resort to torture and killings. In addition, depending on the ideological background of the regime, official militias might serve different purposes. They can, for example, serve as mass organizations to include the citizenry in the state-building project, as has been the case in socialist revolutionary movements that took over state power, but they can also serve as a force to intimidate and terrorize the population. A closer look at the ideological framework in which such militias are embedded would be useful to understand their purpose for states in peace- and wartime.

While the chapters discussed so far and much other work focuses on the relation between militias and the (domestic) state or regime, the historical record shows how important militias have been for colonizing and occupying powers to extend their power over the local population and impose their ideas of political rule (Branch 2009). Such transnational collaborations can have contradictory effects on the use of violence by domestic armed groups. Fumerton et al. (this volume), for example, show what impact international alliances can play in pressuring armed groups to commit to limiting violence against civilians. Such security partnerships between states and foreign armed groups may limit violence against civilians by incentivizing armed groups to, first, not put their source of income and support in danger, and second, preserve an international reputation (of restraint) useful to pursue political goals. Mazzei (this volume) provides a contrasting

perspective. She implicitly builds on this historical record of transnational alliances between foreign powers and militias to analyze the relationship between the United States' operation in Iraq and militia violence against academics. However, her focus is slightly different than the typical focus on the direct links between occupying powers and local auxiliaries. Mazzei's contribution to this volume illustrates the expansion of militia violence into various sectors and the fear and intimidation that militia violence can create among civilians, as well as the role an occupying power plays in facilitating (if not intentionally ordering) such violence.

What is important to understand in Mazzei's contribution to this volume is that a regime or occupying power can create the general context in which militia violence and intimidation can flourish, pointing to more indirect linkages, which is a nice addition to the usual focus on direct links of support between militias and their sponsors. In Iraq, this general context was characterized by a division of the population along sectarian lines, making sectarian differences particularly salient, which created vulnerability for those groups not considered for positions and jobs and generated competition among such groups. In the context of a sectarian conflict, militias provide protection for their own group and make use of tactics of intimidation for members of the other group. Instead of direct links with a government entity, they become tools in a communal conflict, often directed by community leaders.

How does this link back to political projects of state-building? Mazzei's contribution to this volume is an example of how an occupying power attempts to "read" the population by collecting information about it and sorting it into (ethnic or sectarian) groups (Scott

1998). Militias can assist in this process, as De Bruin (this volume) shows, as crucial implementers of state power to extend government control beyond the capital. The particular approach adopted in Iraq allowed for the reinforcement of group boundaries. By creating a social and political environment in which group protection mechanisms appear crucial, regimes or occupying forces can have a facilitating role in communal conflict. In that sense, state-building projects do not only generate political violence by state builders and their delegates, but can also facilitate communal forms of violence through reinforcing social divisions.

Overall, it is promising to integrate the study of militias into analyses of state formation processes to understand the state not as a "black box" but as a multitude of armed and unarmed institutions wielding power over communities and trying to impose their ideas of political rule. Though militias are often portrayed as non-political, security-related forces, we should not forget that their sponsors often pursue political projects or they themselves may develop political goals. An important avenue for further research is therefore the guiding political ideas and ideological orientations of militias and their sponsors. In particular in social revolutionary projects, militias have played an important role in organizing and educating the masses (Perry 2006). Ideology can shape violence in different ways, for example by providing a justification for violence or restraint (Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2014). This questions the usual contemporary view on militias as non-political forces and builds better on the historical role militias have played (Üngör 2020).

Communities and militias

Core explanations of violence against civilians in conflict studies point to the ways in which militias are embedded in local communities. In a civil war context, explanations for why militias perpetrate violence against civilians relate to their relationship with the communities that they target, suggesting that a militia would not target the community it recruits from (Stanton 2015). But such research often focuses on a static explanation of such relationships and structural variables that point to distinct demographic patterns that do not change much over time. Thomson (this volume) provides an interesting and ambitious addition to this field of research, as he addresses the puzzle of why militias would target the people they are supposed to protect—their own communities–implicitly pointing to important temporal changes worthy of analysis. The author proposes a theory that accounts for why militias target civilians selectively and indiscriminately. The former explanation is related to social networks and information flows. The latter explanation is related to the type of counterinsurgency strategy governments pursue—whether it is focused on the enemy (which generates indiscriminate violence) or on the population (which generates selective violence). Militias can play either a more coercing or more incentivizing role towards civilians, depending on the counterinsurgency strategy a state or occupying force adopts to defeat armed challengers–which might change over time.

The first part of Thomson's argument shows how important it is to integrate militias into conventional theories of violence against civilians, as they are part of those security actors who implement government counterinsurgency strategies and/or may trigger retaliatory violence from insurgents. As militias have more access to local intelligence and networks, predating any improvement in territorial control, they have a better basis to be selective in their targeting. But this does not equal a low level of violence, as selective targeting can

make it difficult for insurgents to control and have access to information, which increases indiscriminate and retaliatory violence, and in turn, can spiral into a violent competition for people's allegiance. However, it is challenging to show (and observe) that social networks and information flows come before territorial control, as Thomson suggests. An alternative specification would be to understand control in different terms—as *population* control, and not territorial-based control, which often comes sequentially before territorial control (Jentzsch and Steele 2022). More research is needed, however, to show how this sequence can be observed and traced empirically.

The second part of Thomson's theory addresses the puzzle more directly and shifts the causal effect to different types of government sponsorship, which implicitly introduces a temporal dimension to the analysis that is useful to explore further. Government military support of militias (without much control of militia activity) limits militias' dependency on the community, which limits accountability to the community and selectivity of violence and contributes to opportunistic forms of violence. The integration of militias into an enemy-centric counterinsurgency strategy shifts the focus on the destruction of the insurgent groups, and neglects the protection of the community.

In sum, this work illustrates the importance of how militias relate to states, i.e. whether militias are initiated by communities or governments, *and* whether government or militaries co-opt militias at later stages for their own political project (Jentzsch 2022). Thus, the temporal dimension of these relationships, how militias and their relationships to states and communities evolve is key to understanding the use and effects of violence. This can also be seen in Schuberth's contribution to this volume, as it demonstrates how

militias have to consider the effects of their violence and might evolve from one type of community-based armed group to another. Schuberth shifts the focus from wartime to peacetime and focuses on activities of community-based armed groups, a category that includes militias, vigilantes and gangs, in regular politics, in particular during periods of electoral competition. The core concern of his contribution to this volume is how such groups can maintain the community support and legitimacy they depend on, even though they may make use of violence to pursue their tasks or goals.

Schuberth (this volume) suggests that community-based armed groups can build legitimacy in two main ways. First, the illegitimacy of the state and state security actors can enhance the legitimacy of groups that take over tasks usually assigned to state security forces. Second, if such armed groups fulfill these tasks successfully, meaning that they protect their communities and do not pursue individual self-interests even if they use violence to fulfill these tasks, they should be considered legitimate by the community. In analyzing the relationships between communities and gangs, vigilantes and militias in Haiti and Kenya, Schuberth shows how communities consider those groups that abuse their (newfound) power illegitimate.

Looking at how militias evolve, it becomes important to consider militias' impact not only on security provision, but public service provision more generally, and the effects of militias assuming such crucial functions within a community. Schuberth's (this volume) cases of Kenya and Haiti demonstrate the challenges that arise when militias get involved in providing public services, as such service provision can be easily abused by levying unfair taxes and fees. What would be interesting to see further is in how far such abuses generate

civilian resistance to such groups. In other words, in how far does the fact that communities consider armed groups active in their midst illegitimate open up space and power for such communities to contest the activities of such groups?

Militias engaging in public service provision and governance more generally does not automatically need to lead to abuse, however, it can also constitute a basis for restraint. Fumerton et al. (this volume) argue that the restraint to use violence against civilians by the female Kurdish armed group YPJ (and by extension also its all-male counterpart YPG) stems from the PYD's control over the groups, the social revolutionary content of its ideology, and the close military partnership with the United States. The first two factors point to the importance of political control of security forces and the combatants' socialization into a revolutionary ideology that empowers individuals, including women, and teaches respect for the community that the group fights for. The international alliance gave the group, according to Fumerton et al. (this volume), support that was conditional on proper conduct in battle and international visibility that the group used to cultivate a reputation of a proper political force in contrast to the image of a terrorist group painted by the Turkish government. Thus, being integrated into a governance project can restrain militias and armed groups in a way that limits violence against civilians.

We need to consider, however, the precise pathways to restraint. In Fumerton et al.'s (this volume) case study, governance matters to explain restraint, but governance is embedded in a broader political ideology that socializes all fighters and teaches them how to behave vis-à-vis civilians. We know, however, that not all political ideas teach respect for civilians, and the same ideas not at all times. For those groups that rely on a democratic and

social revolutionary ideology, violence against those civilians they are supposed to protect might be a taboo (Thaler 2012). However, pursuing political projects as a revolutionary group can also justify disciplinary violence, particularly when the movement in power experiences setbacks to its revolutionary project (Macamo 2016; Machava 2019). Thus it would be interesting to trace armed groups over time to see in what ways and for how long their ideology shapes violent restraint.

In sum, approaching the question of militia violence from an analysis of community-militia relations opens up interesting avenues for further research. First, it demonstrates that militias are embedded in social and political institutions, which shape their activities and relations to other actors. An underexplored question in this regard is how militias can be understood in light of gender dynamics dominant in the society they are active in. Fumerton et al. (this volume) point to the fact that gender dynamics of militias impact the use of violence, but analyze in not too much detail. The authors argue that they see organizational factors as more explanatory of restraint than gender per se, but the impact of gender is difficult to restrict to one direct causal pathway and could play into how such groups are organized. In particular, not targeting women and children has a gendered logic which is worthwhile analyzing more deeply. In fact, a feminist approach is included in Fumerton et al.'s analysis of the Kurdish movement's ideology, but a closer analysis of female experience in these groups would be interesting to further analyze these dimensions. More generally, gender aspects are not very prominent in the analysis of militias, maybe due to the (implicit) assumption that militia members are oftentimes male. But even then, analyses rarely touch upon the significance of masculinity in militias' violent performances (but see Myrttinen 2005). As forms of civil protection, there is much to

analyze in terms of how militias understand their own tasks of protection of a specific community, and how this relates to gender relations.

Second, while much research has emphasized how militias are used and abused by political (and economic) elites, we should not forget that militias can have or develop their own agency over time (or lose such agency for that matter by being co-opted by political elites). Often, militias emerge from community initiatives to protect particular communities (Jentzsch 2022). How militias evolve after that remains an under-researched question. Schuberth's contribution to this volume points to the relevance of changing sponsors, tasks and levels of legitimacy of community-based armed groups for understanding levels and types of violence against civilians and other consequences of militia activity. An interesting question is whether and how precisely vigilantes evolve into gangs or militias, and whether they can "return" to their prior form of organization and tasks. More generally, while the contributions point to various relationships that militias can build with the state and its representatives, as well as with local communities, we still know little about why and how such relationships change over time, and what the implications are of such changes for contentious politics and civil war.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the volume demonstrates the importance and relevance of studying militia violence and restraint, with important implications for counterinsurgency, repression and human rights. It highlights the ways in which analyzing the relations between mili-

tias, states and political elites, and local communities in peace- and wartime is key to understanding militias' consequences for repression, intimidation, and violence against civilians in and outside of civil war (Mitchell et al. 2014; Aliyev 2020). Only when taking militias into account can we fully understand these important outcomes.

I made two main arguments. First, in order to strengthen the research agenda on militias, we need to disaggregate different types of militias and different types of violence, as this will allow us to link the study of militias better to established theories of repression, contentious politics, and civil war violence. This is important as the study of militias can improve our understanding of repression and violence more generally. Second, to fully understand the impact of militias on civilians' lives, we need to inquire into the ways in which militias are embedded in existing social and political norms and institutions. This entails that, as the way they are embedded in these structures may change, militias can take on different forms of manifestation and different tasks. Future research needs to recognize that social relations between militias, states and communities are dynamic and can change over time, which has an impact on how militias and their activities evolve.

These arguments imply that, from a methodological perspective, a promising research agenda would integrate a larger variety of methodological strands, from quantitative analyses to qualitative, and in particular ethnographic studies. If we want to study relations between militias and the community, we need to analyze more how communities actually experience militias. In addition, a more historical approach might also be promising to understand how militias form and evolve. For example, Schuberth's contribution to this volume shows how many professional political militias started out as political party youth

wings. In a similar vein, to understand state formation processes and the role of militias in them, a historical and more comparative lens might give us a better understanding of how militias came to adopt the tasks and roles they play in responding to contentious episodes and armed challenges.

In terms of counterinsurgency, repression and human rights, the volume shows that state sponsors can control militias and hold them accountable, but they can also direct militias towards specific tasks that entail violence against civilians, such as in Thomson's (this volume) case of enemy-centric or population-centric counterinsurgency. This has implications for international organizations and states trying to limit human rights abuses, in the sense that states with militias need to be held accountable for what they themselves *and* the militias do to counter political challengers.

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