States in Disguise:
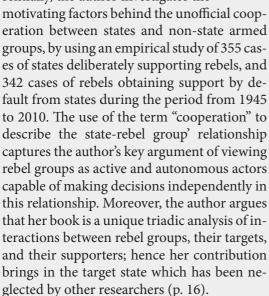## Causes of State Support for Rebel Groups

Reviewed by Matthew Ncube, Turkish National Police Academy

Non-state violence by rebel groups, including terrorists, has become a major headache for policy makers across the world. San-Akca's book comes at the right time to contribute to understanding "why and how non-state armed groups emerge, endure and disappear" (p. 10). Essentially, the author investigates the motivating factors behind the unofficial cooperation between states and non-state armed groups, by using an empirical study of 355 cases of states deliberately supporting rebels, and 342 cases of rebels obtaining support by default from states during the period from 1945 to 2010. The use of the term "cooperation" to describe the state-rebel group' relationship captures the author's key argument of viewing rebel groups as active and autonomous actors capable of making decisions independently in this relationship. Moreover, the author argues that her book is a unique triadic analysis of interactions between rebel groups, their targets, and their supporters; hence her contribution brings in the target state which has been neglected by other researchers (p. 16).

The central argument of the book is that, contrary to explanations provided by weak states theory or geographic proximity (convenience) thinking, the support of rebel groups is a product of a deliberate and systematic selection process involving both the state and rebel groups (p. 140). Besides using a statistical test, the author provides two brief case studies to help the reader understand the complex, fluid, and flexible nature of state-rebel interactions. The case studies are drawn from an analysis of external supporters of the Palestinian militant groups that have been fighting Israel since 1945 (p. 71) and how the rebel groups in Chad managed to get support (p. 109). Support of rebel groups by external states comes in two ways: intentional (states create channels of support) and *de facto* (unintentional). Accordingly, the author identifies three main motives behind state support for rebel groups: strategic interests, ideational affinity, and domestic incentives. Material or strategic interests refer to the foreign policy objectives of the state in question, while ideational affinity pertains to ethnic, religious, or ideological ties between a rebel group on one hand, and the supporting as well as the targeted state on the other. Domestic incentives refer to the (in) stability within the supporting state as it pertains to its ability to acquire resources to face external threats through legitimate means.

The main strength of the book involves the author's clearly-defined intention to identify the general patterns involved in the state-rebel interaction. This perhaps explains why she has applied a very general definition of 'rebels' or 'non-state armed groups' identified by the use of violence in the pursuit of political objectives (p. 7). Consequently, she has clus-

tered modern terrorists like Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) and revolutionary parties such as Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) and other African groups fighting colonialism, under the same umbrella. In this way, it seems she has avoided entering into debates regarding distinguishing terrorists from rebel groups. This allows San-Akca to use a neutral term which also accommodates her large-N study. She also provides suggestions on further research that can be conducted to build on her findings, especially by taking specific variables and testing them rigorously (p. 154). This indicates that the author realizes that her findings are preliminary and need to be tested further. However, in the pursuit of generalization, the author seems to have neglected defining other key terms she uses in her analysis.

The author's finding that weak or failed states are not the ideal place for rebel groups is not really as new as the author would like us to believe. The weak link between failed states and the sponsorship of terrorists, together with the overall argument that few terrorists come from failed states has been established by other scholars too. Furthermore, these scholars criticize the 'failed state' logic for failing to recognize that even when a state faces instability or collapse, "not everything" collapses, as seen through examples of Lebanon in the 1980s, and Yugoslavia in the 1990s, or Somalia. In these states, despite a lack of central government and loss of control over territories, there were still informal arrangements that kept citizens safe, at least to a degree. On this aspect at least, the book strongly confirms by empirical evidence, rather than introduces, an existing hypothesis.

Related to the above observation, the author finds that democracies are favored by rebel groups for default support, whereby they manage to acquire certain types of support such as having offices or acquiring safe havens without the knowledge of, or deliberate support from the host state (p. 150). San-Akca attributes this conducive environment to the hurdles or limitations associated with democratic institutions, for example, bureaucracy, personal liberty and freedoms. Surely, the inadvertently supportive environment democracies provide for rebel groups is a very key issue which has raised debates in the United States about intrusion into people's privacy by law enforcement agencies, as technology companies insist on the encryption of information to protect their clients. Moreover, such an observation requires democracies to revise their approach to the threat posed by rebel groups. On the other hand, the assumption that democratic institutions increase the vulnerability of democratic states to rebel groups can be superficial, in the sense that democracies can effectively change their practices when their security is at stake. For instance, Britain sometimes suppresses civil freedoms in its counter terrorism practices, even though this has meant adopting 'undemocratic' practices that resemble authoritarian state behavior. The author has not satisfactorily captured this dilemma in her interpretation of the study results.

San-Akca also makes another controversial claim in her analysis of the results of her study. She seeks to link democratic peace theory with her finding that a democratic state is less likely to provide high-level support to a rebel group targeting another democratic state (p. 149). This claim can be questionable, especially considering that the term 'democracy' is a much contested concept. The author combines this assertion with her recommendation that states should form alliances in order to reduce the need for supporting rebels. However, one can observe the complexity of

this claim when looking at the crisis in Syria. The U.S. and Turkey, for example, as two democracies as well as fellow members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, have had a soured relationship for the last few years due to the U.S' support for rebel groups that target Turkey.

In sum, San-Akca's book is highly commendable as it provides a much needed, hard data-based study on an extremely pressing subject. The fundamental argument that states and rebel groups have a cooperative rather than a principal-agent relationship, where the former controls the latter, is a key addendum to the literature. As such, *States in Disguise* is highly recommended to scholars and practitioners seeking a deeper understanding of the dynamic factors behind the cooperation of states and rebel groups.

Stratejik İstihbarat ve Ulusal Güvenlik

By Merve Seren
Ankara: Orion Kitapevi, 2017, 560 pages, ₺45,00, ISBN: 9786059524056.

Reviewed by Murat Aslan, The Middle East Technical University

In *Stratejik İstihbarat ve Ulusal Güvenlik* (Strategic Intelligence and National Security), Merve Seren scrutinizes intelligence by its 'own' strategic relevance and displays the mutual interaction of 'strategy' and 'intelligence.' The subject matter is the construction of strategic intelligence and its role in the course of history, with a clear focus on its ideational evolvement. The main design of the study is to highlight the *sine qua non* feature of 'strong' and 'realistic' strategic intelligence for national security strategies and the policies of state actors.

The author successfully fills the literature gap of intelligence studies with a vast research into the roots of strategy and intelligence via discourse analysis. The foundation of the book rests upon the process of tracing how strategy and intelligence perceptions have emerged and evolved in differing parts of the globe. The author provides examples of strategy and intelligence culture in the depths of history alongside contemporary ones by a contextual analysis of events, spanning the breadth between modernity and post-modernity. In that way, she aims to increase the awareness of security and intelligence practitioners and theoreticians, as the target audience of the book, by reviewing conceptual and hypothetical notions of strategy and intelligence to conclude with a synergy of both. Members of epistemic circles of Security Studies, Intelligence and the International Relations discipline in particular will enjoy the high quality of the research, which Seren makes accessible to interested individuals wishing to explore the comprehensive intersection of both strategy and intelligence.

The book is based on a vast review of the literature on political history that contributed to the development of intelligence practices and security perceptions. In this sense, intel-