

Insurgent Armies and State Formation after Victory

Description

Episode 136 of the Irregular Warfare Podcast examines the fate of victorious rebel groups after civil wars—and why some remain loyal to post-war governments while others fragment, defect, or even overthrow the regimes they helped create.

Our guests begin by exploring the core puzzle: conventional wisdom suggests that decisive victory produces stability, yet evidence shows that in more than half of cases, post-war militaries face crises within a decade. They then explain how wartime pressures shape the organizational choices of rebel groups—particularly the relationship between political leaders and field commanders—and how those choices carry forward into peacetime governance. Drawing on cases from Zimbabwe, Côte d'Ivoire, and across Africa, the discussion highlights why power-sharing arrangements often fail, why commitment problems undermine loyalty, and how the interests of commanders, rulers, and foreign partners diverge. Finally, the conversation turns to the limits of external security assistance, and what policymakers and practitioners should consider when working with post-conflict militaries.

[Dr. Philip A. Martin](#) is an assistant professor at George Mason University. His research specializes in political violence and civil wars, peacebuilding, and African politics. His article, [Insurgent Armies: Military Obedience and State Formation after Rebel Victory](#), serves as the anchor for today's conversation.

[Brigadier General Allen J. Pepper](#) is the commanding general of U.S. Army Security Assistance Command. A career foreign area officer with extensive experience across Africa, he has served in Mali, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Central African Republic.

[Ben Jebb](#) and [Matt Fiorelli](#) are the hosts for this episode. Please reach out to Ben and Matt with any questions about this episode or the Irregular Warfare Podcast.

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