



Armed Social Movements and Insurgency The PKK and its Communities of Support

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Abstract

The supportive environments which sustain armed groups are arguably an understudied aspect of political violence; it is widely acknowledged that all armed groups necessitate a degree of popular support if they are to be successful but the relationship between armed movements and their supporters is often underdeveloped or considered self-explanatory. This project puts forth the argument that the relationship between armed groups and their supporters is of fundamental importance to how and where armed groups mobilise and the repertoire of contention they adopt. Making use of Malthaner's concept of "constituency" (2011a), the PKK's armed struggle from its foundation in the 1970s until 1999 will be analysed. The particular manner in which the PKK actively constructed and maintained extensive support networks across contrasting socio-spatial contexts ensured its ongoing legitimacy and the material resources necessary for its survival. Although a noted power disparity exists between armed and unarmed actors, the relationship between them is always characterised by degrees of reciprocal influence; influence that is often expressed in a variety of subtle and contextually specific fashions. The project will therefore examine the dialectic between the PKK and its communities of support and how this has evolved over time and space from rural Kurdistan to the urban centres of western Turkey, and consider how it has impacted on the nature of violence deployed by the PKK in the course of its insurgency.

Jury:



Olivier Roy (EUI/RSCAS), Jocelyn Viterna (Harvard University), Francis Patrick O'Connor (candidate), Donatella della Porta (EUI, supervisor), Joost Jongerden (Wageningen University)

Bio

Francis Patrick O'Connor studied Political Science and Italian at the National University of Ireland, Galway. He subsequently completed his Masters in Middle East Politics at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. He started his PhD under the supervision of Donatella della Porta at the Political and Social Sciences Department at the European University Institute in 2010. He is interested in political violence, social movements and broader contentious politics.