Professor Philip Roessler’s research explores the strategic logic of war and peace in weak states, with a focus on sub-Saharan Africa. He proposes that rulers of weak states face a coup-civil war trade-off: while striking alliances with elites embedded in rival ethnic groups is necessary to secure societal peace, sharing real power with ethnic rivals can be dangerous if it opens the door for them to usurp power in a future coup d’état. He argues that this strategic dilemma has been at the heart of some of Africa’s most devastating conflicts.

Professor Roessler is an assistant professor in the Department of Government at the College of William and Mary as well as the Director of the Center for African Development (CAD) at the Institute for the Theory and Practice of International Relations (ITPIR).

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