The Politics of Conflict & Conflict Resolution in Africa
(First Year Seminar)
Political Science 101
Fall Quarter 2015

Mondays & Wednesdays, 5:00pm to 6:20pm
The Burdick Room (Scott Hall 107)

Taught by Will Reno
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Overview

This class focuses on the politics of recent and on-going large-scale political violence (i.e., lethal contention among social groups and political factions, governmental repression, insurgencies, etc.) in the African context. Civil wars constitute a major category of political violence in Africa. Some of these civil wars actually are violent struggles for position within incumbent elite networks, while others feature rebels whose agendas include revolutionary programs to change how people are governed. Both types of conflict include violence that can be thought of as "crime," but which may also be associated with the political strategies of some of the key actors in these conflicts. "Criminal gangs" also appear in many of these conflicts, occupying dual positions as self-aggrandizing predators and as political muscle for contending political groups.

One of the key objectives of this class is to provide students with analytical frameworks for thinking about these different actors and dimensions of conflict, and to train students to formulate and present their own analyses of conflicts. This requires that students grapple with very complex situations. The theories and frameworks presented in class are intended to help students to make sense of this information and to structure the writing assignments.

The first part of this class defines the nature of political violence in Africa and how some African and non-African observers react to it. The second section explores in more depth the relationship between how regimes exercise authority and the political violence that appears in these political systems. This section will focus on the role that the politics of patronage and personal rule play in shaping political violence. The third section considers the prospects for reform; whether reform mitigates or exacerbates political violence in the short and long-term. Some of the reading in his section argues that democratic competition and administrative reform in these contexts may exacerbate political violence and increase political instability, at least in the short-term. The fourth section considers contemporary strategies for conflict management. This section explores the rationales and aims of external (multilateral and unilateral) intervention in conflicts. This section will include consideration of the ideas and effects of African and non-African

governments to promote regional peacekeeping forces. This section also will consider local conflict management strategies.

Information and analyses of specific conflicts and incidences of large-scale political violence will appear in course material across these sections. Students will have an opportunity to explore some of these cases in greater depth in the assignments detailed below.

Course Requirements

Your final grade will be based upon the following course components:

Students are required to complete all required assignments to be eligible for a passing grade in this course. The relative weight of each assignment is as follows:

Participation   10%
Three essays (~ 5-6 pages)   20%   each, due on
A final paper (~ 8-10 pages)   30%   Due by class on 25 Nov

Participation means showing up for class and exhibiting evidence of having read assignments. Failure to show up for class, particularly one that meets in the middle of the workday, will have a negative impact on evaluation.

The essays will be due in class on 7 Oct, 21 Oct, and 9 Nov. These should be about 5-6 pages in length. Students will be provided with a memo a week prior to each essay's due date. The three essay assignments will be structured around the following tasks:

First Essay: The student will be asked to analyze disparate information about a conflict encountered in class readings and discussion. The student will need to (a) identify key assumptions about the causes and nature of the conflict, (b) advance a judgement about the quality of the information, and (c) identify indicators or signposts of change in the nature of the conflict.

Second Essay: The student will revise and refine the first essay on the basis of suggestions and critiques of the instructor and other students. The student also has the option of writing an essay about a conflict different from the First Essay, with the benefit of prior critiques and new information.

Third Essay: The student will assume a Devil's Advocate position. In doing so, the student will advance a competing explanation for a conflict. This can be done either as a contrarian exercise to challenge one's own prior analysis in the first two essays or to challenge the analysis in a classmate's essay.

The final paper will be an exercise in Outside-In thinking that explores what the student thinks are the larger issues that, over time, will affect the course of a conflict (most likely a conflict already familiar to the student through the earlier writing assignments). Again, guidance will be

provided well in advance of the 25 November due date. This paper is due at the last class on the 25th November. This paper should be 8-10 pages in length

Evaluation of the essays and final paper will be based upon the coherence of argument and presentation of supporting evidence against at least one other reasonable alternative. Readings from class may be used to provide data and other information to be incorporated into this argument. Students are welcome to consult work outside of the assigned readings, but the focus really should be on course material and this writing assignment ought not evolve into a major research project.

Required Textbooks

The following textbooks are available for purchase at Beck's Bookstore at 716 Clark St..

> Mats Utas, ed. 2012. *African Conflicts and Informal Power: Big Men and Networks*. London: Zed.
>
> Paul Williams. 2011. *War & Conflict in Africa.* Cambridge: Polity.
>
> Robert Bates. 2008. *When Things Fell Apart: State Failure in Late-Century Africa.* New York: Cambridge.
> .

Additional readings are available on Canvas.

Class Calendar

I. The Contours of Violence

Monday, 21 September: Framing violence in Africa and previewing key issues related to this course. Students will be given an opportunity to explore various online resources related to the study of conflicts in Africa.

> One conflict, different perspectives: Kony 2012 video and reactions from Ugandan citizens and more Ugandan reactions and a look at US military coordination with the Uganda People's Defense Force
>
> Some resources: IRIN's Forgotten Conflicts, Council on Foreign Relations, Conflict Tracker, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, American Security Project's Africa conflict trends, International Crisis Group, Africa, and more.

Wednesday, 23 September: Framing Violence in Africa, II. How does framing influence local and international interpretations of causes and possible responses to violence? The "Coming Anarchy," twenty years on.

> Robert Kaplan. 1994. "The Coming Anarchy: How Scarcity, Crime, Overpopulation, and Disease Are Rapidly Destroying the Social Fabric of Our Planet." *Atlantic Monthly*. (Feb), 44-76.

> Séverine Autesserre. 2012. "Dangerous Tales: Dominant Narratives on the Congo and their Unintended Consequences." *African Affairs*, 111:442, (Spring), 202-22.

Monday, 28 September: The Extent of Conflict: Do African wars ending sooner and with less carnage than in the past? What global and local factors are responsible for changing characters of conflict in Africa? Are causes of conflict becoming less salient, or are local and global political actors getting better at managing conflicts (or both)?

> Williams. 2011. "Counting Africa's Conflicts." And "The Terrain of Struggle," 15-52.

> Scott Straus. 2012. "Wars Do End! Changing Patterns of Violence in sub-Saharan Africa," *African Affairs*, 111: 443 (April) 179-201.

II. The Relationship Between Political Development and Violence

Wednesday, 30 September: The deep politics of the state, its political establishment, and the relationship between violence, accumulation and the exercise of authority.

> Williams. 2011. "Neopatrimonialism," 55-71.

> Bates. 2008. "Introduction", "From Fable to Fact" and "Political Legacies," 3-53.

Monday, 5 October: The politics of resources and violence. Do particular kinds of resources increase probabilities of violence? How do the specific political contexts in some African states make some resources a more salient feature in the development of violent politics?

> Williams. 2011. "Resources," 72-93.

> Bates. 2008. "Policy Choices" and "Subnational Tensions," 55-93.

Wednesday, 7 October: Exploring the relationship between regime insecurity, coups, and protracted conflict. Why do some coup attempts end quickly while others lead to protracted

conflict? Has the later outcome become more prominent? Is recent political violence in South Sudan and the Central Africa Republic a result of "coups d'états" or something else?

> Bates. 2008. "Things Fall Apart" and "Conclusion," 97-139.

> Phil Roessler. 2011. "The Enemy Within: Personal Rule, Coups and Civil War in Africa," *World Politics*, 63: 2 (April), 300-46

> **First Essay due in class**

Monday, 12 October: International structural dimensions: Is Africa's place in international society a contributor to violent politics? Are states in Africa inherently weak and prone to breakdown and conflict? How do leaders try to remedy such problems?

> Williams. 2011. "Sovereignty," 94-112.

> Jeffrey Herbst. 2004. "Let Them Fail: State Failure in Theory and Practice," Robert Rotberg, ed., *When States Fail,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 302-18.

> (Visit the Fund for Peace's Fragile States Index)

Wednesday, 14 October: International and regional influences on conflict from the illicit and criminal realms. What is "criminal" versus legitimate gain or provision of opportunities to one's community from various political contexts?

> Henrik Vigh in Utas, ed. 2012. "Critical States and Cocaine Connections," 137-57.

> Koen Vlassenroot & Sandine Perrot in Utas, ed. 2012. "Ugandan Military Entrepreneurialism on the Congo Border," 35-59.

> West Africa Commission on Drugs, *Not Just in Transit: Drugs, the State and Society in West Africa,* June, 2014.

III. Violence and the Politics of Reform

Monday, 19 October: Democratization and the politics of (violent?) competition, I: Why do elections seem to bring out the worst in some politicians? Why are elections in Africa more likely to be violent than elections in other parts of the world?

> Paul Collier. 2009. "Votes and Violence," in his *War, Guns, and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places,* (NY: HarperCollins), 15-50.

Dorina Bekoe, *Trends in Electoral Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa,* Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace, 2010.

Morten Bøås in Utas, ed. 2012. "Castles in the Sand: Informal Networks and Power Brokers in the Northern Mali Periphery," 119-34.

Wednesday, 21 October: Democratization and the politics of (violent?) competition, II. What are the specific mechanisms that lead to violence during election campaigns? Deeper issues related to intra-elite struggles: Would targeting particular actors bring violence to a halt?

Johan de Smedt. 2009. "'No Raila, No Peace!' Big Man Politics and Election Violence at the Kibera Grassroots," *African Affairs*, 108: 443 (July), 581-98.

Øystein Rolandsen 2015. "Another Civil War in South Sudan: The Failure of Guerrilla Government?" *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 9:1, 163-74.

Monday, 26 October: Local-level (political) violence and the multiple dimensions of conflict: A focus on the ethnic, religious, criminal, resource allocation and geo-political dimensions of violence in Eastern & the Horn of Africa.

David Anderson 2015. "Understanding al-Shabaab: Clan, Islam, and Insurgency in Kenya," *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 9:3, (forthcoming)

Human Rights Watch 2014. "Kenya: Killings, Disappearances by Anti-Terror Police."

Wednesday, 28 October: Fixing conflicts, I: Are externally generated efforts to promote peace futile? How do peace-builders enable or inhibit their success?

Maa Mynster Christensen (in Utas, ed.). 2012. "Big Man Business in the Borderland of Sierra Leone," 60-77.

Ken Menkhaus 2014. State Collapse and Local Response in Somalia," in Ingo Trauschweizer & Steven Miner, eds. *Failed States and Fragile Societies*, (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press), 142-50.

Monday, 2 November: Self-fixing (?) conflicts, II: What happens to fighters after the fighting ends? What do business, crime, and political activism have to do with demobilization?

Mariam Persson (in Utas, ed.). 2012. "Demobilized or Remobilized? Lingering Rebel Structures in Post-war Liberia," 101-18.

Anders Thermnér (in Utas, ed.). 2012. "Former Mid-level Commanders in Big Man Networks," 205-23.

IV. The Politics of Conflict Management

Wednesday, 4 November: International Peacekeeping

Williams. 2011. "Organization-Building," "Peacemaking," and "Peacekeeping," 149-204.

Pierre Englebert & Denis Tull. 2008. "Postconflict Reconstruction in Africa: Flawed Ideas about Failed States," *International Security,* 32:4 (Spring), 106-39.

Monday, 9 November: International Justice

Gerhard Anders (in Utas, ed.). 2012. "Bigmanity and International Criminal Justice in Sierra Leone," 158-80.

Special Court for Sierra Leone. 2003. *The Prosecutor Against Charles Ghankay Taylor, also known as Charles MacArthur Dapkpana Taylor,* Case SCSL—03—1.

United Nations Security Council. 2000. *Resolution 1315*, 14 August.

Third Essay due in class

Wednesday, 11 November: The politics of aid

Williams. 2011. "Aid," 205-228.

Sarah K Lischer. 2003. "Collateral Damage: Humanitarian Assistance as a Cause of Conflict." *International Security*, 28:1, 79-109.

Marc Le Pape. 2011. "In the Name of Emergency: How MSF Adapts and Justifies Its Choices," in Claire Magione, Michael Neuman and Fabrice Weissman, eds. *Humanitarian Negotiations Revealed: The MSF Experience.* New York: Columbia University Press, 237-49.

Monday, 16 November: New categories of intervention in the post-911 strategic context. Are new strategies for intervention really about state-building, and if so, in whose interests?

Will Reno. 2013. "The International Factor in African Warfare," in John Harbeson & Donald Rothchild, eds. *Africa in World Politics: Engaging a Changing Global Order*. NY: Westview, 150-72.

William F.S. Miles. 2012. "Deploying Development to Counter Terrorism: Post-9/11 Transformation of U.S. Foreign Aid to Africa," *African Studies Review*, 55: 3 (Dec), 27-60.

Wednesday, 18 November: The multiple dimensions of African issues in the contemporary security policies of the US and other states.

The White House. 2012. *U.S. Strategy toward Sub-Saharan Africa.* Washington, DC (12 pages)

Mary Moran. 2015. "Surviving Ebola: The Epidemic and Political Legitimacy in Liberia," *Current History,* 114: 772 (May), 177-82.

We will investigate other material related to US security assistance to Africa as this becomes available.

Monday, 23 November: The debate about the changing nature of political violence in Africa. Are the character, intensity and incidence of political violence changing?

Will Reno. 2011. "Conclusion: The Past and Future of Warfare in Africa, in my *Warfare in Independent Africa*. NY: Cambridge University Press, 242-55.

David Kilcullen. 2013. "Future Cities, Future Threats," in his *Out of the Mountains: The Coming Age of the Urban Guerrilla.* NY: Oxford University Press, 52-115.

Wednesday, 25 November

Final Paper due in class

WCAS Reading Period begins on Monday, 30 November