

# WAR AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

Political Science 490, Spring 2010  
Thursdays, 2pm to 4:50pm in Scott 212

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**Overview:** The subject of this course is conflict since the end of the Second World War that has occurred primarily *within* states [“civil wars”] rather than between states. This subject is interesting for several reasons. First, there are a lot of wars of this type and understanding their dynamics strikes one as a worthwhile pursuit. Second, those interested in policy should be intrigued, as the United States military fights in two major civil wars (Iraq and Afghanistan) and has been engaged indirectly in others (i.e., Somalia and Philippines). Third, these wars present scholars with an intellectual quandary: Students of the historical development of institutions consider warfare to be a central element of state-building. Students of contemporary civil wars associate these with state collapse. Has the nature of the war – state relationship undergone a fundamental shift? Ultimately, studying war and political development offers wider intellectual payoffs in terms of conceptualizing the roles of violence, militia recruitment, and ideology in political relationships and formal institutions.

Events of the past two decades in particular have highlighted the roles of state failure, ethnic strife, enterprising commanders, elements of international politics and geography in civil wars. Are ethnic tensions, great power strategies, religious extremism, colonialism, class warfare, resource competition, ideology or state failure to blame for these conflicts? Why and how do civil wars end? What is the impact of international efforts to mediate these conflicts? This course will provide students with the analytical tools for understanding and evaluating different explanations of the causes of these conflicts. This course will be especially useful for those who are interested in the politics of ethnic conflict, civil wars and the international system, causes of civil wars, civil wars and state-building, and the organization and behavior of armed groups.

This course is divided into five sections.

- The first section is called Section Zero because this class assumes no prior specialized knowledge of its subject. This section examines the magnitude of the contemporary phenomenon of civil wars. It considers the role of these wars in state building in history in Europe and asks whether contemporary civil wars can play such a role, and if not, why not. Some argue that these wars are “new wars” and are different in terms of their internal dynamics and impacts, while others doubt that this is so.
- Section I focuses on individual and group-level explanations of causes of civil wars. Do greedy individuals cause these wars? Are contemporary armed groups akin to bandits or criminal syndicates? What is the role of ethnic identity in these

conflicts? Is ethnicity simply an instrumental response to the uncertainties of warfare? How do material resource endowments shape how and whether people fight? Is there a place for ideology and grievances in a field of study that focuses on materialist rational choice perspectives? What role does violence play in civil wars? Is it a cause of fighting or is it endogenous to a process of shaping the strategies of combatants?

- Section II looks at elite politics and state-level explanations of civil wars. How do the defensive or ambitious strategies of elite groups influence these wars? Are contemporary studies of elite strategy smuggling in class analysis? What is the relationship of politics of elite survival and some of the micro-politics that we will study later?
- Section III shifts the focus to structural-level considerations of the impact of changes in the international system of states on the evolution of civil wars. Has a special kind of “war-prone” state regime developed in the twentieth century that (alongside economic globalization) has created a basis for “new wars”? It also considers the impact of geography and environmental degradation. Are some states simply badly configured? Is the problem of environmental collapse a present or likely future cause of civil wars?
- The final [imagined] section would have been next if we operated on a semester system. We would have considered international intervention and other elements of conflict management. What is the impact of international justice, either as a palliative or a deterrent to violence? How do pressures and evolving norms in the international community to promote democracy shape the behavior of armed groups? We will not be able to consider the vast topic of counterinsurgency and the impact of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars on civil wars, though these considerations are relevant to the topics that we will study.

This is not a course about international law or global norms and warfare, though these issues appear in many readings. It is not about conflict management and post-conflict reconstruction, although those with interests in these issues will find much of value in the material here. Finally, this is not a course about counterinsurgency, although those with such interests will find much of value in this seminar.

A matter that often arises among students of civil wars is the battle between “ivory tower eggheads” and “people of action”. The latter often split between the NGO – international organization world (humanitarian workers, human rights lawyers, etc) and the military. They can disagree amongst themselves, while finding common ground that eggheads have little to say that is useful. Some eggheads are cloistered, but this instructor tries to strike a balance. The practitioners actually can benefit from the big frameworks and the logics and questions that scholars pose. How does the instructor know? He has lived in and visited quite a few conflicts, including Sierra Leone, Liberia, Congo, Somalia, Sudan, the Caucasus and a few others. Reality is a good filter. He also has had to deal with “people of action”, and some of those folks have a thing or two to learn from [some] scholars.

**Course requirements:** There are two primary requirements for this class. The first is a paper due at the end of the term and the second consists of several opportunities to provide critical commentary on course material and fellow students’ analyses. This component of the course will contribute 60 % to the calculation of the final grade.

**The Paper:** This paper will be about 20 or so double spaced pages. A rough draft is due in class on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May. The final version of the paper is due on Monday, the 7<sup>th</sup> of June (first day of exams). First year graduate students may use this paper as a vehicle to try out ideas for their second year papers or explore topics that might be relevant to eventual dissertations. They also may use this paper as a basis for a review essay or an article for eventual submission to a scholarly journal for publication. Second year and other advanced students may want to use the paper as a way to develop a dissertation proposal, a grant proposal, or a chapter of a dissertation. Undergraduates will have the chance to develop a substantial writing sample for job or school applications.

“What should I write about?” The list below provides suggestions and is not exhaustive.

1. An analytical paper will identify a significant problem related to the politics of civil wars. This can take either a comparative politics perspective, focusing on the dynamics among groups directly engaged in one or several conflicts, or it can consider the international dimension of civil wars or a combination of these approaches. The emphasis of this type of paper will be on constructing a model or a theory to explain a problem. It will not test the model or theory against a particular set of data. To do so would be to write:
2. An empirical paper will identify a significant problem related to civil wars, evaluate an existing set of policies designed to address this problem, propose a new way of approaching the problem that takes the reader beyond existing research, and use data to demonstrate the plausibility of this new argument. This type of paper can focus on a single case or it can examine a set of cases. Historical texts, ethnographic information, and statistical analyses of cross-national data are appropriate sources of data. The author should justify the choice of data and evaluate its reliability.
3. A review essay would survey a body of work related to one aspect of civil wars. An essay of this type focuses on a coherent debate (or identifies one that ought to take place) and identifies avenues for future research. Several of the readings in this syllabus provide good examples of review essays.
4. A research proposal for a grant application or dissertation proposal would identify a significant problem related to civil wars. It would evaluate current approaches to addressing this problem and justify the need for additional research. It then develops a research design to address this absence.

**Critical commentary** consists of two response papers (20 % of total grade—10 % each), a commentary of a fellow student’s rough draft of the class paper assignment (10 % of the total grade), and class participation (10 % of the total grade).

**Response papers** should be about three pages. These papers will help students formulate an interpretation of the readings, and will give a sense of how to approach prelim exam preparation. The week’s readings should be summarized, but not at the expense of interpretation. The emphasis here is on the response. What do you consider to be unanswered questions in the reading? Draw connections between readings; their methods, data and conclusions. These essays may include all of the readings for one week or a subset of them. They do not need to include footnotes or a bibliography (except for references to

works that are not included on the syllabus). Students will choose the weeks for their responses after the first class. **Essays should be sent to me by 5pm on the day before the class.**

The **commentary on student papers** will provide fellow students with constructive criticism and suggestions for their papers. Paper writers will provide a copy of their rough draft to fellow student commentators when submitting the rough drafts of papers to me on the 18<sup>th</sup> of May. Commentaries will be due to me after Reading Week (Monday the 7<sup>th</sup> of June). By then commentators will have provided their commentaries to their paper writer. These commentaries can be long or short as one prefers, so long as they are constructive.

**Class participation** (10 % of the total grade) requires one to read assignments prior to class in preparation to arrive at seminars with the ability to discuss them.

**Readings:** Articles and chapters will be posted on a Blackboard site. The following books should be purchased.

Mary Kaldor (2001) *New & Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*. Stanford University Press.

Stuart Kaufman (2001) *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War*, Cornell University Press.

Stathis Kalyvas (2006) *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, Cambridge University Press.

V.P. Gagnon, Jr (2004) *The Myth of Ethnic War*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press)

Jeremy Weinstein (2007) *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence*, (Cambridge University Press).

Claire Metelits (2010) *Inside Insurgency: Violence, Civilians, and Revolutionary Group Behavior*, (NYU Press).

My manuscript, *Evolution of Warfare in Independent Africa*, (I will provide this)

I will hand out primary source materials. These are materials that I have collected from among armed groups in Africa and the former Soviet Union.

## CLASS CALENDAR

### Section Zero: Overview & Empirical Evidence

**1 April:** Why have civil wars historically been associated with state-building, yet contemporary civil wars are associated with state collapse? How has the nature of the warfare – state construction relationship changed? Do civil wars of the 1990s and later really mark the advent of “new” wars? How has the development of “globalization” influenced the behavior of armed groups? Are wars in the global periphery “post-state” these days, or do they reflect the nature of political authority in existing states (and are these propositions mutually exclusive)?

Charles Tilly (1985) “War Making and State making as Organized Crime,” in Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer & Theda Skocpol, eds., *Bringing the State Back In*, (New York: Cambridge), 169-91.

Charles Tilly (1992) “Soldiers and States in 1992,” in his *Coercion, Capital and European States, AD 990-1992*, (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell), 192-227.

Mary Kaldor (2001) *New & Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press). [**Book that you purchased**]

Stathis Kalyvas (2001) “‘New’ and ‘Old’ Civil Wars: A Valid Distinction?” *World Politics*, 54:1, 99-118.

Sinisa Malesvic (2008) “The Sociology of New Wars? Assessing the Causes and Objectives of Contemporary Violent Conflicts,” *International Political Sociology*, 2:2 (June), 97-112.

### Section I: Individual and Group-Level Explanations of Internal Wars

**8 April:** Individual and group-level theories and approaches, I: The responses of rational actors to the incentives around them and the responses of others to the emergence of associated threats. Security dilemmas, both individual and group, and other ideas from International relations can be applied to civil wars. Are ethnic wars really “ethnic?”

Russell Hardin (1995) “Self Interest, Group Identity,” Albert Breton, et al., *Nationalism and Rationality*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 14-42.

James Fearon & David Laitin (2003) “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil Wars,” *American Political Science Review*, 97:1 (Feb), 75-90.

Jack Snyder & Robert Jervis (1999) "Civil War and the Security Dilemma," Barbara Walter & Jack Snyder, eds., *Civil Wars, Insurgency, and Intervention*, Columbia, 15-37.

Donald Horowitz (2000) "Conflict Theory and Conflict Motives," *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* [2<sup>nd</sup> edition], Berkeley: University of California Press, 95-140.

Rui de Figueiredo, Jr. & Barry Weingast (1999) "The Rationality of Fear: Political Opportunism and Ethnic Conflict," Barbara Walter & Jack Snyder, eds., *Civil Wars, Insurgency, and Intervention*, Columbia, 261-302.

Charles King (2001) "the Benefits of Ethnic War: Understanding Eurasia's Unrecognized States," *World Politics*, 53 (July), 524-52.

**15 April:** Individual and group-level theories and approaches, II: The role of resources ['greed'] in creating war economies. The rewards of conflict: The calculations of leaders and followers, the organization of recruitment, and the impact of incentive structures on the organization and behavior of armed groups.

Jeremy Weinstein (2007) *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence*, (Cambridge University Press). **[Book to purchase]** Readers may be interested in Stathis Kalyvas's review of this book in *Comparative Political Studies*, 40:9 (Sept 2007), 1146-51.

Classics (not required but useful):

Paul Collier (2000), "Rebellion as a Quasi-criminal Activity," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 44:6, 839-53.

Michael Ross (2004) "What Do We Know about Natural Resources and Civil Wars?" *Journal of Peace Research*, 41:3 (Summer), 337-56.

Stephen Stedman & Fred Tanner (2003) "Refugees as Resources in War," in their edited volume, *Refugee Manipulation: War, Politics, and the Abuse of Human Suffering*, Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1-16.

Stuart Kaufman (2006) "Symbolic Politics or Rational Choice? Testing Theories of Extreme Ethnic Violence," *International Security*, 30:4 (Spring), 45-86. (Kaufman earlier wrote (2001) *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press) [Presents a contrasting view])

**22 April:** Individual and Group-level theories and approaches, III: The role of 'grievance' in generating conflict. Do theories of ethnic conflict properly consider the place of emotion to answer the question of individual motivation?

Stuart Kaufman (2001) *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War*, Cornell University Press. **[Book to purchase]**

You may wish to consult Arman Grigorian & Stuart Kaufman (2007) "Correspondence: Hate Narratives and Ethnic Conflict," *International Security*, 31:4 (Spring), 180-91. .

**29 April:** Individual and group-level theories and approaches III: The questionable role of allegiances and ideology and the importance of 'intimate violence'. Do grievances matter? The task of separating causes of civil wars from the processes of civil wars.

Stathis Kalyvas (2006) *The Logic of Violence in Civil Wars*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). **[Book to purchase]**

## **Section II: Elite Politics and State-Level Explanations of Internal Wars**

**6 May:** State-Level I: Elite competition and the maneuvers of defensive elite groups, the preservation of privilege and the manufacture of conflict. What are the implications of elite intransigence in the formulation of international responses to civil wars? Can democratization provoke civil wars?

V.P. Gagnon, Jr. (2004) *The Myth of Ethnic War*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press) **[book to purchase]**

**13 May:** State-level II: The relationship of state power to 'thugs' and other micro-level aspects of civil wars studied earlier in this course. State power and informal political authority – which is the most important variable?

Scott Strauss (2007) "Second Generation Comparative Research on Genocide," *World Politics*, 59:3 (April 2007), 476-501.

Klaus Schlichte, "With the State against the State? The Formation of Armed Groups," *Contemporary Security Policy*, 30:2 (Aug 2009), 246-64.

Tom Coghlin (2009) "The Taliban in Helmand Province: An Oral History" in Antonio Guistozzi, ed., *Decoding the New Taliban: Insights from the Afghan Field*, New York: Columbia U. Press, 119-53.

Kent Eaton (2006) "The Downside of Decentralization: Armed Clientelism in Colombia," *Security Studies*, 15: 4 (Oct-Dec), 533-62.

Johan de Smedt, "No Raila, No Peace! Big Man Politics and Election Violence at the Kibera Grassroots," *African Affairs*, 108: 433 (Oct 2009), 581-98.

Review Symposium, "State Failure and Challenges to Democratization in Africa," *Perspectives on Politics*, 7: 2 (June 2009), 359-64. [Jeffrey Herbst, James Fearon & Michael Bratton review Robert Bates (2008) *When Things Fall Apart: State Failure in Late-Century Africa*, (Cambridge).]

**20 May:** State-level III: The issue of rebel administration: Tying together state and local politics. The threat of competition and the rebel choice to govern or to terrorize civilians. When are rebels "states in waiting" and when are they something else? In what way is competition to govern (or the decision to refrain from governing) different from Kalyvas's understanding of why rebels treat non-combatants in particular ways?

Claire Metelits (2010) *Inside Insurgency: Violence, Civilians, and Revolutionary Group Behavior*, (NYU Press).

### **Section III: Macro-Level Explanations of Internal Wars**

**27 May:** Macro-level I: The international system of states, or legacies of colonialism and decolonization? Returning to the question of the impact of the end of the Cold War and the collapse of a bi-polar international system

Robert Rotberg (2003) "Failed States, Collapsed States, Weak States: Causes and Indicators," In Rotberg, ed., *State Failures and State Weakness in a Time of Terror*, Brookings Institution Press, 1-25.

Robert Jackson & Carl Rosberg (1982) "Why Africa's Weak States Persist: The Empirical and the Juridical in Statehood," *World Politics*, (Oct), 1-24.

Mark Beissinger & Crawford Young (2002) "Governance to Crisis: Pre-Independence State Legacies and Post-Independence State Breakdown in Africa and Eurasia," in their ed. *Beyond State Crisis? Postcolonial Africa and Post-Soviet Eurasia in Comparative Perspective*, (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press), 19-50.

William Reno (2003) "The Changing Nature of Warfare and the Absence of State-Building in West Africa," in Diane Davis & Anthony Pereira, eds., *Irregular Armed Forces and Their Role in Politics and State Formation*, (New York: Cambridge University Press), 322-45.

Kalevi Holsti (2004) "War," in his *Taming the Sovereigns: Institutional Change in International Politics*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 275-99.

**3 June:** Macro-level II (Maybe): Are civil wars particular to certain kinds of state regimes? Is warfare in 'collapsed states' a different or distinctive phenomenon from wars in other places? Do these wars cause state collapse or does state collapse cause these wars?

My *Evolution of Warfare in Independent Africa*, Cambridge University Press.

#### **Section IV: Here Are Some Major Topics That Were Left Out**

The term system leaves us with tragically short seminars. If we had more time, we might have considered the issue of international intervention in civil wars. What is the record of intervention? Is it an effective antidote to civil wars? What about international justice? Does the threat of prosecution for crimes against humanity deter or otherwise shape the behavior of combatants in internal wars? Can counterinsurgency work? What is the impact of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan on the study of civil wars and political development? One could devote an entire seminar to each of these and other topics.