

CIVIL WARS AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Political Science 490, Fall 2016
Tuesdays, 2pm to 4:50pm
Scott Hall 212, 601 University Place

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Overview: This course is about post-World War II conflict primarily *within* states rather than between states. Why this focus? Incidences of interstate wars, at least of the symmetrical regular warfare sort, are rare. The few recent interstate wars, such as US military actions in Iraq and Afghanistan led to engagements in civil wars. Civil wars also present interesting intellectual challenges: Students of the historical development of institutions identify warfare as a central element of state-building, while many who study contemporary civil wars associate warfare with state collapse. Has the nature of the war – state relationship undergone a fundamental shift? Studying civil wars also offers opportunities to conceptualize the roles of violence, recruitment, mobilization and ideology in political relationships and formal institutions; which is useful for thinking about how to mitigate conflicts.

Events of the past two decades highlight the roles of state failure, ethnic strife, enterprising commanders, and elements of international politics in civil wars. Are ethnic tensions, great power strategies, religious extremism, colonialism, class warfare, resource competition, ideology or state failure causes of these conflicts or consequences of civil wars? Why and how do civil wars end? What is the impact of international efforts to mediate conflicts? This course will provide students with analytical tools to understand and evaluate different explanations of the causes of civil wars. This course will be useful for those who are interested in the politics of ethnic conflict, the relationship between the character of civil wars and changes in the international system, the (potentially diverse) causes of civil wars, civil wars and state-building, and the causes for variations in the organization and behavior of armed groups.

This course is divided into four sections.

- The first section is called Section Zero because this class assumes no prior specialized knowledge of its subject and thus starts at the beginning. This section examines the magnitude of civil war occurrence and looks critically at how scholars collect and code data about civil wars. It considers the historical role of civil wars in state building in Europe and asks whether contemporary civil wars can play such a role, and if not, why not. Are these “new wars”, new in terms of internal dynamics and impacts, or just differing in degrees from wars past?
- Section I focuses on individual and group-level explanations of causes of civil wars. Do greedy individuals cause civil wars? Are contemporary armed groups comparable to bandits or criminal syndicates? What role does ethnic identity play

in these conflicts? How do natural 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? Does it cause fighting or is it endogenous to a process of shaping the strategies of combatants?

- Section II looks at elite politics and the state in various causal explanations of civil wars and the behavior of actors. 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?
- A final section would have followed if we had more time. We might have considered other variables such as international intervention and its impact on civil wars. 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 also would have been able to consider counterinsurgency's impact on civil war politics and its role in the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars.

This course is not 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 such interests will find much of value in the material here. Finally, this is not a course about counterinsurgency, although much of the course content will be useful for addressing this issue.

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, subject to negotiation for undergraduates. A rough draft is due in class on 22nd November. The final version of the paper is due on the first day of exams (Monday, Dec 5th). One option is to use this paper as a vehicle to try out ideas for a second year paper or explore topics that might be relevant to eventual dissertations. Another option is to write this paper as a review essay or an article for eventual submission to a scholarly journal for publication. More 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. I prefer that all papers be sent to me electronically.

"What should I write about?" This list 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 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, which is ...

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. This type of essay 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 are exercises in interpreting the readings, and will help to prepare for a prelim exam. The emphasis should be on one's response to the main points in the readings. What are the 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 by the second class meeting (Tuesday, 27th Sept). **Essays should be sent to me electronically by 5pm on the day before the class.**

The **commentaries on student papers** are opportunities to provide fellow students with constructive criticism and suggestions. Paper writers will provide a copy of rough drafts to fellow student commentators when submitting the rough drafts of papers to me on 22 November. Commentaries will be due to me after Reading Week (Monday, 5 December—same day that papers are due). By then class members will have provided commentaries to their colleagues. 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 Canvas and sent directly to you. The following books should be purchased.

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

Roger Peterson (2011) *Western Intervention in the Balkans: The Strategic Uses of Emotion in Conflict*, Cambridge University Press.

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

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

More Stuff: You will find that some readings are authored by current and past graduate students from our Department of Political Science, including articles by Chris Day ('13) and Patrick Johnston ('09).

Several very good sites highlight new research on political violence. They strive to connect this research to policy debates and weigh in on recent events:

[Political Violence at a Glance](#) – a team of academic experts who are a sort of quick reaction team to provide analysis to foreign policy-makers, scholars and practitioners

[Empirical Studies of Conflict Project](#) (ESOC) – data-driven analyses of insurgency, civil war, and other sources of politically motivated violence worldwide.

Some scholars post their research on their official sites or maintain blogs. Good ones include [Stathis Kalyvas](#), [Chris Blattman](#) (who writes about lots of other things too), and [Jacob Shapiro](#). Other faves include [Paul Staniland](#) and [Phil Roessler](#). [Romain Maljacq](#) ('13) tells me everything I need to know about Afghanistan.

[Angry Arab](#) and [Arabist](#) provide good information and analyses of conflict in a particular region. [Small Wars Journal](#) has a lot of material, as does [War on the Rocks](#). [Jihadica](#) addresses issues of strategy and ideology among a particular kind of rebels.

There are many blogs by soldiers, civilians and others with direct experience in civil wars. Better ones include [Free Range International](#) (retired Marine working in Afghanistan) a [Family in Baghdad](#) (as the title indicates) and their excellent [War Diaries](#) and a [soundtrack](#) for a more hopeful future and a film that [looks back](#) to an earlier Afghan war.

That's it for my recommendations. Now you kids get off my lawn!

CLASS CALENDAR

Section Zero: Overview, Empirical Evidence & Historical Context

20 Sept: What is “civil war?” How should one count them and why do they seem to be so hard to count? Are there more civil wars now than in the past?

Stathis Kalyvas (2007) “Civil Wars,” in Carles Boix & Susan Stokes, eds., *Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, (NY: Oxford University Press), 416-34.

Therése Pettersson & Peter Wallensteen (2015) “Armed Conflicts, 1946-2014,” *Journal of Peace Research* 52:4 (July), 536-50.

Nicholas Sambanis (2004) “What Is a Civil War? Conceptual and Empirical Complexities of an Operational Definition,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 48:6 (Dec), 814-58.

Paul Williams (2016) “Counting Conflicts in Africa (and Their Causalities) in his *War & Conflict in Africa* (Cambridge: Polity), 15-41

27 Sept: Civil Wars—big processes: Civil wars historically have been associated with state-building, yet contemporary civil wars are associated with state collapse. Has the nature of the warfare – state-building relationship changed? Are civil wars of the 1990s and later really “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**—not a long book so you can read these other items and still survive.]

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

Section I: Individual and Group-Level Explanations of Mobilization

4 Oct: Individual and group-level theories and approaches: How do rational actors respond to incentives and threats associated with conflict? How do these outcomes contribute to “causes” as we study them? Security dilemmas, both individual and group, and other ideas from International relations can be applied to civil wars. Ethnicity and violence: 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* [2nd 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: 4 (July), 524-52.

Nicholas Sambanis, (2001) “Do Ethnic and Nonethnic Civil Wars Have the Same Causes?” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 45: 3 (June), 259-282.

11 Oct: Throwing bouquets to the economists: The role of resources [‘greed’] in shaping recruitment and the organization of armed groups. The rewards of conflict: How do leaders and followers make strategic calculations with regard to resources, and how do these choices affect recruitment and organizational discipline?

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

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

18 Oct: Dynamics of armed force and patterns of violence: The spatial distribution of control and the behavior of rebel and state forces. What is the role of allegiances in the context of 'intimate violence'? Does ideology matter? 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 you purchased by now]**

Patrick Johnston (2008) "The Geography of Insurgent Organization and its Consequences for Civil Wars: Evidence from Liberia and Sierra Leone." *Security Studies*, 17: 1 (Jan), 107-37.

25 Oct: Framing violence: The role of 'grievance' in generating conflict and the limits of rational choice assumptions. Do theories of ethnic conflict properly consider the place of emotion to answer the question of individual motivation? Combining rigor & parsimony with a theory of emotions

Roger Peterson (2011) *Western Intervention in the Balkans: The Strategic Uses of Emotion in Conflict*, (Cambridge University Press). **[Book you purchased]**

You may wish to consult Arman Grigorian & Stuart Kaufman (2007) "Correspondence: Hate Narratives and Ethnic Conflict," *International Security*, 31: 4 (Spring), 180-91. And Stuart Kaufman's (2011) "Symbols, Frames and Violence: Studying Ethnic War in the Philippines," *International Studies Quarterly*, 55: 4 (Dec), 937-58.

Section II: Armed Group Organization

1 Nov: Armed Group Organization: Factional competition and the defensive maneuvers of groups, and the impact of hierarchies on the nature of rebel organization and behavior. What are the roles of social networks in the organization of armed groups? What are the implications of urbanization for rebel organization? Are rebels better able to organize in rural and "traditional" societies? What are some of the possible consequences of democratic reforms in terms of rebel organization?

Roger Gould (1991) "Multiple Networks and Mobilization in the Paris Commune, 1871," *American Sociological Review*, 56: 6 (Dec), 716-29.

Roger Gould (1999) "Collective Violence and Group Solidarity: Evidence from a Feuding Society," *American Sociological Review*, 64: 3 (June), 356-80.

Will Reno (2007) "Patronage Politics and the Behavior of Armed Groups," *Civil Wars*, 9: 4 (Dec), 324-42.

William Murphy (2003) "Military Patrimonialism and Child Soldier Clientelism in the Liberian and Sierra Leonean Civil Wars," *African Studies Review*, 46: 2 (Sept), 61-87

Paul Staniland (2012) "Organizing Insurgency: Networks, Resources and Rebellion in South Asia," *International Security*, 37: 1 (Summer), 142-77.

Abdulkader Sinno (2008) "An Organizational Theory of Group Conflict," in his *Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 23-97.

Aisha Ahmad (2015) "The Security Bazaar: Business Interests and Islamist Power in Civil War Somalia," *International Security*, 39:3 (Winter), 89-117.

Sarah E Parkinson (2013) "Organizing Rebellion: Rethinking High Risk Mobilization and Social Networks in War," *American Political Science Review*, 107:3 (Aug), 418-32.

8 Nov: States and Elite Actors: The relationship of state power to experts in violence and other ground-level aspects of civil wars studied earlier in this course. State power and informal political authority – how do the two interact and what does this mean for the nature of civil wars? Does the state-rebel relationship have to be theorized differently for Africa? Rebels within and rebels without: what is this battlespace?

Amelia Blom (2009) "A Patron-Client Perspective on Militia—State Relations: The Case of Hizb ul-Mujahidin of Kashmir," in Laurent Gayer & Christophe Jaffrelot, eds., *Armed Militias of South Asia: Fundamentalists, Maoists and Separatists*, (NY: Columbia University Press), 135-59.

Nicholas Krohley (2015) "The Sanctions Era: Shifts in Civil Society and the Rise of the Sadrist Movement," in his *Death of the Mehdi Army*, (NY: Oxford), 35-57.

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

Review Symposium, (2009) "State Failure and Challenges to Democratization in Africa," *Perspectives on Politics*, 7: 2 (June), 359-66. [Jeffrey Herbst, James Fearon & Michael Bratton review Robert Bates (2008) *When Things Fall Apart: State Failure in Late-Century Africa*, (Cambridge).]

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

Chris Day (2011) "The Fates of Rebels: Insurgencies in Uganda," *Comparative Politics*, 43: 4 (July), 439-58.

Not required is my own (2011) *Warfare in Independent Africa* (Cambridge University Press). You can read it if you want, though you're getting exposed to some of these ideas during our seminar discussions.

15 Nov: Political Networks and Global Change: What is the impact of the urbanization of populations on the organization of armed groups? The end of the Cold War affects everything – why not violence? Is urbanization a significant variable? What is the relationship between technology, social networks and violence?

Stathis Kalyvas & Laia Balcells (2010) "International System and Technologies of Rebellion: How the End of the Cold War Shaped Internal Conflict," *American Political Science Review* 104: 3 (Aug), 415-29.

David Kilcullen (2013) "Conflict in Connected Cities," in his *Out of the Mountains: The Coming Age of the Urban Guerrilla*, (NY: Oxford University Press), 169-231. [For an earlier perspective on urban guerrillas, one can consult Carlos Marighella (1969) [*Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla*](#).]

Jake Shapiro & Nils Wiedmann (2015) "Is the Phone Mightier than the Sword? Cell Phones and Insurgent Violence in Iraq," *International Organization* 69: 2 (March), 247-74

Paul Staniland (2010) "Cities on Fire: Social Mobilization, State Policy, and Urban Insurgency," *Comparative Political Studies*, 43: 12 (Dec), 1623-49.

22 Nov: Linking different kinds of violence to political orders: Are there convincing grand theories that link different kinds of violence? Are civil wars / insurgencies simply one end of a spectrum of violent political action? Goodbye to Mao: When are rebels "states in waiting" and when are they something else? Armed actors as instruments of regime survival strategies

Paul Staniland (2012) "States, Insurgents and Wartime Political Orders," *Perspectives on Politics*, 10:2 (June), 243-54.

Philip Roessler (2011) "The Enemy Within: Personal Rule, Coups and Civil Wars in Africa," *World Politics*, 63: 2 (April), 300-46. [Almost in time for the [book!](#)]

Henning Tamm (2016) "The Origins of Transnational Allegiances: Rulers, Rebels and Political Survival in the Congo Wars," *International Security*, 41: 1 (Summer), 147-81.

Laurent Gayer (2014) "A Contested City," in his *Karachi: Ordered Disorder and the Struggle for the City*, (NY Oxford), 17-52.

29 Nov: How do wars end? Let them fight it out, or jump in and save them from themselves? Has war termination changed over time? End of course debrief and lessons learned.

Barbara Walter (1999) "Designing Transitions from Civil War: Demobilization, Democratization, and Commitments to Peace" *International Security*, 24: 1 (Summer), 127-55.

Lisa Hultman, et al. (2014) "Beyond Keeping Peace: United Nations Effectiveness in the Midst of Fighting," *American Political Science Review*, 108:4 (Nov), 737-53.

James Fearon (2004) "Why Do Some Civil Wars Last So Much Longer Than Others?" *Journal of Peace Research*, 41:2 (May), 275-301.

Monica Duffy Toft (2010) "Ending Civil Wars: A Case for Rebel Victory?" *International Security* 34: 4 (Spring), 7-36.

Will Reno (2015) "Lost in Transitions: Civil War Termination in Sub-Saharan Africa," *American Historical Review*, 120: 5 (Dec), 1798-1810.

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

The term system essentially is a series of tragically short semesters. If we had more time, we might have looked more at 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? Does 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.

Please don't be shy about raising these issues in discussion. Other issues might include whether Mexico's current troubles should be classified as organized crime or a rebel war or some other kind of civil war. How does crime fit in the study of the politics of violence? Here is a popular culture view of individuals such as [El Chapo](#) and groups like [Los Zetas](#). Why always is there the [gold plated AK-47](#)? There is growing scholarly attention to rebel governance, and its impact on (or consequence of) rebel organization and behavior... material for another seminar!