

Dynamics of Armed Conflict

A doctoral course within the [Research School on Peace & Conflict](#)

Overview: This seminar provides an overview and critical assessment of contemporary research on armed conflict. It will be in equal measure backward looking, assessing the state of the art and what have we learned; and future oriented, exploring cutting-edge issues and challenges. The first part of the course (sessions I - III) assesses what we now know about civil wars and armed conflicts – why they break out, how they are sustained, how do they end – and how to think – conceptually, theoretically and methodologically - about dynamics and process. The second part (sessions IV, VI - VIII) builds on the first to explore the cutting edge and where next questions; our focus here will be work seeking to capture the *dynamics* of conflict. Among other issues, we will consider the roles of transnationalism; of bureaucracies, groups and organizations; of social processes; and insurgency-counterinsurgency dynamics in driving forward or constraining the evolution of civil wars and other armed conflicts.

Reflecting the research interests of the instructors, the course will be plural in meta-theoretical (positivist, post-positivist), theoretical (political economy, political ethnography, sociological, constructivist, political psychology) and methodological terms (game theory, agent-based modelling, process tracing, case studies, interpretive approaches).

Credits: 10 ECTS.

Requirements

Active Participation in Class Discussions: The course will be run as a seminar, where debate and discussion are the norm; for each session, written discussion questions will serve as our starting point. For this format to be successful, students need to read the seminar readings prior to our first meeting on 3 May.

Preparation of Discussion Points: For each class session, students are required to prepare a brief list of discussion questions and comments (3-5 in number); these should be based on the readings. Your questions/comments should reflect a critical assessment of those readings. What are their strong and weak points? Their meta-theoretical, theoretical, methodological, empirical contributions? How do they relate to or build upon other readings or discussions?

Prior to our first class on 3 May, please upload your discussion questions for all sessions to the seminar Dropbox.

Completion of an Analytic Essay: Students have two options. (I) Prepare an analytic review on a topic that is of special interest and is consistent with the course's purpose and theme. Or (II) Prepare a draft research design for a PhD project on armed conflict where dynamics play some role. In either case, essays should be 6000-10000 words

and are due by 10 August 2021. By the end of the first day of class – 3 May - students should e-mail to Checkel and Gates a 2-3 page introduction to their proposed essay. These overviews will then be discussed at one-on-one Teams meetings on the morning of Wednesday, 5 May, 0900 - 1200, when there will be no formal class sessions.

Readings: The following three books – available in paperback - should be purchased.

- Axelrod, Robert. *The Evolution of Cooperation: Revised Edition* (New York: Basic Books, 2006).
- Cederman, Lars-Erik, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and Halvard Buhaug. *Inequality, Grievances, and Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
- Checkel, Jeffrey T., Editor, *Transnational Dynamics of Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

Most other readings are available via the seminar Dropbox. Any literature not in Dropbox should be accessed through your local campus libraries.

Syllabus and Class Schedule

Day #1: Monday, 3 May

Session I (0900 – 1130): Civil War Research – State of the Art & Where Next

Tarrow, Sidney, “Inside Insurgencies: Politics and Violence in an Age of Civil War (Book Review Essay),” *Perspectives on Politics* 5/3 (2007): 587-600.

Blattman, Christopher and Edward Miguel, “Civil War,” *Journal of Economic Literature* 48/1 (2010): 3-57.

Blattman, Christopher, “Children and War: How ‘Soft’ Research Can Answer the Hard Questions in Political Science,” *Perspectives on Politics* 10/2 (2012): 403-413.

Cederman, Lars-Erik, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch and Halvard Buhaug, *Inequality, Grievances and Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), Chapters 1, 3, 4, 9.

Session II (1400 - 1600): Capturing Dynamics and Process – Causal Mechanisms

Johnson, James, “Consequences of Positivism: A Pragmatist Assessment,” *Comparative Political Studies* 39/2 (2006): 224-52.

Gerring, John, “Review Article: The Mechanismic Worldview – Thinking Inside the Box,” *British Journal of Political Science* 38/1 (2007): 161-79.

Bennett, Andrew and Jeffrey T. Checkel, Editors, *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), Chapters 1, 7, 10.

Day #2: Tuesday, 4 May

Session III (0900 - 1130): Capturing Dynamics and Process – Game Theory & Agent-Based Modelling

Smith, J. Maynard, “Evolution and the Theory of Games: In Situations Characterized by Conflict of Interest, the Best Strategy to Adopt Depends on What Others Are Doing,” *American Scientist* 64/1 (1976): 41-45.

Axelrod, Robert, *The Evolution of Cooperation: Revised Edition* (NY: Basic Books, 2006), Chapters 1-4, 6, 7, 9.

Crooks, Andrew, Nick Malleson, Ed Manley, and Alison Heppenstall. 2019. *Agent-Based Modelling & Geographical Information Systems. A Practical Primer*. London: Sage. (Chapter 2)

Epstein, Joshua M., “Modeling Civil Violence: An Agent-Based Computational Approach,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 99/10 Supplement 3 (2002): 7243-7250.

Bhavnani, Ravi and Dan Miodownik, “Ethnic Polarization, Ethnic Salience, and Civil War,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53/1 (2009): 30-49.

Session IV (1400 - 1600): Transnationalism and Civil War

The Baseline

Gleditsch, Kristian Skrede and Idean Salehyan, “Refugees and the Spread of Civil War,” *International Organization* 60/2 (2006): 335-66.

Cederman, Lars-Erik, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch and Halvard Buhaug, *Inequality, Grievances and Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), Chapter 6.

Adding Dynamics and Process

Checkel, Jeffrey T., Editor, *Transnational Dynamics of Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), chapters 1-2, 6-9.

Day #3: Wednesday, 5 May

Session V (0900 - 1200): Individual Meetings via Teams on Course Essays

Session VI (1400 - 1600): The Organizational Basis of Rebellion

The Baseline

Humphreys, Macartan and Jeremy M. Weinstein, “Who Fights? The Determinants of Participation in Civil War,” *American Journal of Political Science* 52/2 (2008): 436-455.

Andvig, Jens Christopher and Scott Gates, "Recruiting Children for Armed Conflict," in Scott Gates and Simon Reich, Editors, *Child Soldiers in the Age of Fractured States* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), pp.77-92.

Beber, Bernd and Christopher Blattman, "The Logic of Child Soldiering and Coercion," *International Organization* 67/1 (2013): 65-104.

Adding Dynamics and Process

Weierstall, Roland, Roos Haer, Lilli Banholzer, and Thomas Elbert, "Becoming Cruel: Appetitive Aggression Released by Detrimental Socialisation in Former Congolese Soldiers," *International Journal of Behavioral Development* 37/6 (2013): 505-513.

Gates, Scott, "Membership Matters: Coerced Recruits and Rebel Allegiance," *Journal of Peace Research* 54/5 (2017): 674–686.

Manekin, Devorah, "The Limits of Socialization and the Underproduction of Military Violence: Evidence from the IDF," *Journal of Peace Research* 54/5 (2017): 606–619.

Day #4: Thursday, 6 May

Session VII (0900 - 1100): Insurgency-Counterinsurgency Dynamics

The Baseline

Buhaug, Halvard, Scott Gates and Päivi Lujala, "Geography, Rebel Capability, and the Duration of Civil Conflict," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53/4 (2009): 544-569.

Kalyvas, Stathis and Laia Balcells, "International System and Technologies of Rebellion: How the End of the Cold War Shaped Internal Conflict," *American Political Science Review* 104/3 (2010): 415-429.

Adding Dynamics and Process

Bennett, D. Scott, "Governments, Civilians, and the Evolution of Insurgency: Modeling the Early Dynamics of Insurgencies," *Journal of Artificial Societies and Social Simulation* 11/4 (2008): 7. (<http://jasss.soc.surrey.ac.uk/11/4/7.html>)

Findley, Michael and Peter Rudloff, "Combatant Fragmentation and the Dynamics of Civil Wars," *British Journal of Political Science* 42/4 (2012): 879-901.

Schwartz, Rachel and Scott Straus, "What Drives Violence against Civilians in Civil War? Evidence from Guatemala's Conflict Archives," *Journal of Peace Research* 55/2 (2018): 222–235.

Session VIII (1400 - 1600): Social Context of Civil War

The Baseline

Kalyvas, Stathis, "Ethnic Defection in Civil War," *Comparative Political Studies* 41/8 (2008): 1043-1068.

Østby, Gudrun, "Inequality and Political Violence: A Review of the Literature," *International Area Studies Review* 16/2 (2013): 206-231.

Adding Dynamics and Process

Wood, Elisabeth Jean, "The Social Processes of Civil War: The Wartime Transformation of Social Networks," *Annual Review of Political Science* 11 (2008): 539–61.

Checkel, Jeffrey T., "Socialization and Violence: Introduction and Framework," *Journal of Peace Research* 54/5 (2017): 592–605.

Bateson, Regina, "The Socialization of Civilians and Militia Members: Evidence from Guatemala," *Journal of Peace Research* 54/5 (2017): 634–647.

Fujii, Lee Ann, "'Talk of the Town': Explaining Pathways to Participation in Violent Display," *Journal of Peace Research* 54/5 (2017): 661–673.