

Political Violence, Terrorism, and Civil War

Danilo Freire

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E-mail: danilo_freire@brown.edu

Office Hours: TBD

Office: TBD

Web: danilofreire.com/teaching

Class Hours: TBD

Classroom: TBD

Course Description

This course explores the main debates on the causes and consequences of political violence. We will focus on three major topics: civil wars, state-sponsored violence, and terrorism. Since the end of World War II, domestic conflict has largely outpaced international wars as the dominant type of violence. But what makes civil wars so prevalent in recent years? What are the conditions under which a state decides to attack its own citizens? Why some groups resort to terrorism while others prefer nonviolent tactics?

The class has three goals. First, students will become familiar with the literature on political violence, its most important debates and recent findings. Second, students should be able to evaluate research methods and critically assess distinct theoretical approaches. Lastly, the course will develop the students' writing skills by asking them to review academic articles and present a paper of their own by the end of the semester.

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this class.

Special Needs

If you have any special needs, please contact me. I'm happy to make necessary arrangements so you can follow this course.

Grading

The writing assignments consist of three reviews essays and a final paper. The reviews should be about 5 pages long. Imagine you are a reviewer for a good academic journal and think

of how you could help the author improve the article. Are the arguments well-developed in the text? Is the research design plausible? What further examples could the author include to strengthen his/her arguments? Try to provide as much constructive criticism as possible. You don't need to summarise the paper, just critically engage with it. You should write one paper for each section of the course (civil wars, mass killings, and terrorism), but you're free to choose any reading you prefer. The essays are due at the beginning of the class and late assignments will not be eligible for an A. Each review will account for 20% of your grade.

The final paper should be somewhat longer, about 15 pages in length. The topic is of your own choice and should be based on one or more themes covered in the course. Please meet me to discuss the topic before you start writing. The final paper is worth 40% of your grade.

Schedule and Reading

All readings are available on [the course's GitHub repository](#). It is very important that you read the assigned readings before class. Students are encouraged to engage in critical discussions and are most welcome to express their views openly and freely. I would suggest you to bring some notes to the class so that we can discuss together the topics you find most interesting. Some of the texts make use of statistical models and game theory, but don't be intimidated by them. Feel free to skip the technical parts if they're too challenging and focus on the main ideas of the readings.

Week 1: Introduction

Overview of the course. Long-term trends in armed conflict. Why do groups fight even if wars are costly?

- Pinker, S. 2011. *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*. New York: Penguin Books. Introduction and chapter 6.
- Fearon, J. 1995. [Rationalist Explanations for War](#), *International Organization* 49(3):379-414.

Recommended:

- Rosner, M. 2018. [Our World in Data: War and Peace](#).
- Gohdes, A. & Price, M. 2012. [First Things First: Assessing Data Quality before Model Quality](#), *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 57(6):1090-1108.
- Lacina, B. & Gleditsch, N. 2012. [The Waning of War is Real: A Response to Gohdes and Price](#), *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 57(6):1109-1127.
- Gleditsch, N., Pinker, S., Thayer, B., Levy, J., Thompson, W. 2013. [The Forum: The Decline of War](#), *International Studies Review* 15(3):396-419.

Part I: Civil Wars

Week 2: Conceptual Definitions, Overview of the Recent Literature

- Sambanis, N. 2004. [What Is Civil War? Conceptual and Empirical Complexities of an Operational Definition](#), *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48(6):814-858.
- Kalyvas, S. 2006. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1.
- Kalyvas, S. 2001. [“New” and “Old” Civil Wars: A Valid Distinction?](#), *World Politics* 54(1):99-118.
- Walter, B. 2017. [The New New Civil Wars](#), *The Annual Review of Political Science* 20:469-486.

Recommended:

- Cederman, L-E. & Vogt, M. 2017. [Dynamics and Logics of Civil War](#), *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61(9):1-25.
- Blattman, C. & Miguel, E. 2010. [Civil Wars](#), *Journal of Economic Literature* 48(1):3-57.
- Eckstein, H. 1965. [On the Etiology of Internal Wars](#), *History and Theory* 4(2):133-163.
- Arjona, A. 2014. [Wartime Institutions: A Research Agenda](#), *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 58(8):1360-1389.
- Goodwin, J. & Skocpol, T. 1989. [Explaining Revolutions in the Contemporary Third World](#), *Politics and Society* 17(4):495-509.
- Price, J. 2001. *Thucydides and Internal War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Week 3: Causes of Civil War

- Collier, P. & Hoeffler, A. 2004. [Greed and Grievance in Civil War](#), *Oxford Economic Papers* 56(4):563-595.
- Fearon, J. & Laitin, D. 2003. [Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War](#), *American Political Science Review* 97(1):75-90.
- Cederman, L-E., Weidmann, N. & Gleditsch, K. 2011. [Horizontal Inequalities and Ethnonationalist Civil War: A Global Comparison](#), *American Political Science Review*, 105(3):478-495.
- Kalyvas, S. 2003. [The Ontology of “Political Violence”: Action and Identity in Civil Wars](#), *Perspectives on Politics* 1(3):475-494.

Recommended:

- Sambanis, N. 2004. [Using Case Studies to Expand Economic Models of Civil War](#), *Perspectives on Politics*, 2(2):259-279.
- Balcells, L. & Justino, P. 2014. [Bridging Micro and Macro Approaches on Civil Wars and Political Violence: Issues, Challenges, and the Way Forward](#), *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 58(8):1-17.

- Sambanis, N. & Havard H. 2006. [Sensitivity Analysis of Empirical Results on Civil War Onset](#), *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 50(4):508-535.
- Ward, M., Greenhill, B., & Bakke, K. 2010. [The Perils of Policy by P-Value: Predicting Civil Conflicts](#), *Journal of Peace Research* 47(4):363-375.
- Cederman, L-E., Gleditsch, K. & Buhaug, H. 2013. *Inequality, Grievances, and Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ross, M. 2004. [What Do We Know about Natural Resources and Civil War?](#), *Journal of Peace Research* 41(3):337-356.
- Elbadawi, I. & Sambanis, N. 2003. [Why are There so Many Civil Wars in Africa? Understanding and Preventing Violent Conflict](#), *Journal of African Economies* 9(3):244-269.

Week 4: Violence against Civilians

- Lacina, Bethany. 2006. [Explaining the Severity of Civil Wars](#), *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50(2):276-289.
- Humphreys, M. & Weinstein, J. 2006. [Handling and Manhandling Civilians in Civil War](#), *American Political Science Review* 100(3):429-447.
- Kalyvas, S. 2006. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 4 to 7.

Recommended:

- Kalyvas, S. 1999. [Wanton And Senseless? The Logic of Massacres in Algeria](#), *Rationality and Society* 11(3):243-285.
- Melander, E., Magnus O. & Hall, J. 2009. [Are New Wars More Atrocious?](#), *European Journal of International Relations* 15(3):505-536.
- Cohen, D. 2013. [Explaining Rape During Civil War: Cross-National Evidence \(1980-2009\)](#), *American Political Science Review* 107(3):461-477.
- Wood, E. 2009. [Armed Groups and Sexual Violence: When Is Wartime Rape Rare?](#), *Politics & Society* 37(1):131-161.
- Balcells, L. 2010. [Rivalry and Revenge: Violence against Civilians in Conventional Civil Wars](#), *International Studies Quarterly* 54(2):291-313.

Week 5: Ending Civil Wars

- Walter, B. 1997. [The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement](#), *International Organization* 51(3):335-364.
- Howard, L. & Stark, A. 2018. [How Civil Wars End: The International System, Norms, and the Role of External Actors](#), *International Security* 42(3):127-171.
- Toft, M. 2010. [Ending Civil Wars: A Case for Rebel Victory?](#) *International Security* 34(4):7-36.
- Fortna, V. 2004. [Does Peacekeeping Keep Peace? International Intervention and the Duration of Peace After Civil War](#), *International Studies Quarterly* 48(2):269-292.

Recommended:

- Findley, M. & Young, J. 2015. [Terrorism, Spoiling, and the Resolution of Civil Wars](#), *Journal of Politics* 77(4):1115-1128.
- Balcells, L. & Kalyvas, S. 2014. [Does Warfare Matter? Severity, Duration, and Outcomes of Civil Wars](#), *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 58(8):1-29.
- Walter, B. 2002. *Committing to Peace: The Successful Settlement of Civil Wars*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Fearon, J. 2004. [Why Do Some Civil Wars Last So Much Longer Than Others?](#), *Journal of Peace Research* 41(3):275-301.
- Regan, P. 2010. [Interventions in Civil Wars: A Retrospective Survey with Prospective Ideas](#), *Civil Wars* 12(4):456-76.

Part II: State-Sponsored Violence

Week 6: What are Genocides and Politicides?

- Levene, M. 2000. [Why Is the Twentieth Century the Century of Genocide?](#), *Journal of World History* 11(2):305-336.
- Fein, H. 1993. [Accounting for Genocide after 1945: Theories and Some Findings](#), *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 1(2):79-106.
- Blatman, D. 2015. [Holocaust Scholarship: Towards a Post-Uniqueness Era](#), *Journal of Genocide Research* 17(1):21-43.

Recommended:

- Jones, A. 2006. *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*. New York: Routledge.
- United Nations. 2012. *Office of the Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide* (<http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/index.shtml>).
- Palmer, A. 1998. [Colonial and Modern Genocide: Explanations and Categories](#), *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21(1):89-115.
- Huttenbach, H. 1988. [Locating the Holocaust on the Genocide Spectrum: Towards a Methodology of Definition and Categorization](#), *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 3(3):289-303.
- Fein, H. 1993. [Discriminating Genocide from War Crimes: Vietnam and Afghanistan Reexamined](#), *Denver Journal of International Law and Policy* 22(1):29-62.

Week 7: Cross-National Determinants of Genocide

- Harff, B. 2003. [No Lessons Learned from the Holocaust? Assessing Risks of Genocide and Political Mass Murder since 1955](#), *American Political Science Review* 97(1):57-73.
- Uzonyi, G. 2014. [Domestic Unrest, Genocide and Politicide](#), *Political Studies* 64(2):1-20.
- Valentino, B., Huth, P. & Balch-Lindsay, D. 2004. [“Draining the Sea”: Mass Killing and Guerrilla Warfare](#), *International Organization* 58(2):375-407.

Recommended:

- Ulfelder, J. 2013. [A Multimodel Ensemble for Forecasting Onsets of State-Sponsored Mass Killing](#).
- Goldsmith, B., Butcher, C., Semenovitch, D. & Sowmya, A. 2013. [Forecasting the Onset of Genocide and Politicide: Annual Out-of-Sample Forecasts on a Global Dataset, 1988-2003](#), *Journal of Peace Research* 50(4):437-452.
- Ahram, A. 2014. [The Role of State-Sponsored Militias in Genocide, Terrorism and Political Violence](#) 26(3):488-503.
- Freire, D. & Uzonyi, G. 2018. [What Drives State-Sponsored Violence?: Evidence from Extreme Bounds Analysis and Ensemble Learning Models](#). Working paper.

Week 8: Preventing Genocides

- Bellamy, A. 2015. [When States Go Bad: The Termination of State Perpetrated Mass Killing](#), *Journal of Peace Research* 52(5):565-576.
- De Waal, A., Meierhenrich, J. & Conley-Zilkic, B. 2012. [How Mass Atrocities End: An Evidence-Based Counter-Narrative](#), *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 36(1):15-31.
- Melander, E. 2009. [Selected To Go Where Murderers Lurk? The Preventive Effect of Peacekeeping on Mass Killings of Civilians](#), *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 26(4):389-406.

Recommended:

- Stanton, G. 2004. [Could the Rwandan Genocide Have Been Prevented?](#), *Journal of Genocide Research* 6(2):211-228.
- Krain, M. 2005. [International Intervention and the Severity of Genocides and Politicides](#), *International Studies Quarterly* 49(3):363-387.
- Kuperman, A. 2008. [The Moral Hazard of Humanitarian Intervention: Lessons from the Balkans](#), *International Studies Quarterly* 52(1):49-80.
- Krain, M. 2017. [The Effect of Economic Sanctions on the Severity of Genocides or Politicides](#), *Journal of Genocide Research* 19(1):88-111.
- Cheadle, D. & Prendergast, J. 2007. *Not on Our Watch: The Mission to End Genocide in Darfur and Beyond*. New York: Hyperion Books.

Part III: Terrorism

Week 9: Concepts, Again: What is Terrorism?

- Jaggar, A. 2005. [What is Terrorism, Why Is It Wrong, and Could It Ever Be Morally Permissible?](#), *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 36(2):202-217.
- Hoffmann, B. 2006. *Inside Terrorism*. New York: Columbia University Press. Chapter 1.
- Merari, A. 1993. [Terrorism as a Strategy of Insurgency](#), *Terrorism and Political Violence* 5(4): 213-251.

- Weinberg, L., Pedahzur, A. & Hirsch-Hoeffler, S. 2004. [The Challenges of Conceptualizing Terrorism](#), *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 16(4):777-794.

Recommended:

- Tilly, C. 2004. [Terror, Terrorism, Terrorists](#), *Sociological Theory* 22(1):5-13.
- Shughart, W. 2006. [An Analytical History of Terrorism, 1945-2000](#), *Public Choice* 128(1-2):7-39.
- Schmid, A. 2004. [Terrorism: The Definitional Problem](#), *Case Western Journal of International Law*, 36(2):375-419.
- Sanchez-Cuenca, I. & De la Calle, L. 2009. [Domestic Terrorism: The Hidden Side of Political Violence](#), *Annual Review of Political Science* 12:31-49.
- Young, R. 2006. [Defining Terrorism: The Evolution of Terrorism as a Legal Concept in International Law and Its Influence on Definitions in Domestic Legislation](#), *Boston College International and Comparative Law Review* 26(1):23-101
- Young, J. 2014. [What is Terrorism?](#). Working Paper.

Week 10: The Rational Terrorist

- Pape, R. 2003. [The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism](#), *American Political Science Review* 97(3):343-361.
- Kydd, A. & Walter, B. 2006. [The Strategies of Terrorism](#), *International Security* 31(1):49-80.
- Horowitz, M. 2010. [Nonstate Actors and the Diffusion of Innovations: The Case of Suicide Terrorism](#), *International Organization* 64(1):33-64.

Recommended:

- Gambetta, D. & Hertog, S. 2009. [Why Are There So Many Engineers Among Islamic Radicals?](#), *European Journal of Sociology* 50(2):201-230.
- Horgan, J. 2008. [From Profiles and Pathways and Roots to Routes: Perspectives from Psychology on Radicalization into Terrorism](#), *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 618(1):80-94.
- Victoroff, J. 2005. [The Mind of the Terrorist: A Review and Critique of Psychological Approaches](#), *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49(1):3-42.
- Krueger, A. & Malečková, J. 2003. [Education, Poverty and Terrorism: Is There a Causal Connection?](#), *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 17(4):119-144

Week 11: Is Terrorism an Effective Strategy?

- Abrahms, M. 2006. [Why Terrorism Does Not Work](#), *International Security* 31(2):42-78.
- Gould, E. & Klor, E. 2010. [Does Terrorism Work?](#), *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 125(4):1459-1510.
- Stephan, M. & Chenoweth, E. 2008. [Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict](#), *International Security* 33(1):7-44.

Recommended

- Kalyvas, S. 2004. [The Paradox of Terrorism in Civil War](#), *The Journal of Ethics* 8(1):97-138.
- Sharp, G. 1989. [The Intifadah and Nonviolent Struggle](#), *Journal of Palestine Studies* 19(1):3-13.
- Asal, V. & Rethemeyer, R. 2008. [Dilettantes, Ideologues, and the Weak: Terrorists Who Don't Kill](#), *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 25(3):244-260.

Week 12: Counterterrorism

- Lyall, J. 2009. [Does Indiscriminate Violence Incite Insurgent Attacks?: Evidence from Chechnya](#), *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53(3):331–362.
- Lyall, J., Blair, G. & Imai, K. 2013. [Explaining Support for Combatants during Wartime: A Survey Experiment in Afghanistan](#), *American Political Science Review* 107(4):679-705.
- Bermann, E., Felter, J. & Shapiro, J. 2011. [Can Hearts and Minds be Bought?: The Economics of Counterinsurgency in Iraq](#), *Journal of Political Economy* 119(4):766-819.

Recommended:

- Kilcullen, D. 2005. [Countering Global Insurgency](#), *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 28(4):597-617
- Byman, D. 2006. Friends Like These: Counterinsurgency and the War on Terrorism, *International Security*, 31(2) 79-115
- Zussman, A. & Zussman, N. 2006. [Assassinations: Evaluating the Effectiveness of an Israeli Counterterrorism Policy Using Stock Market Data](#), *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 20(2):193–206.
- Jaeger, D., Klor, E., Miaari, S. & Paserman, M. 2012. [The Struggle for Palestinian Hearts and Minds: Violence and Public Opinion in the Second Intifada](#), *Journal of Public Economics* 96(3–4):354–368.
- O'Donnell, D. 2006. [International Treaties Against Terrorism and the Use of Terrorism During Armed Conflict and by Armed Forces](#), *International Review of the Red Cross* 88(864):853-880.