Civil War Dynamics
Warfare and Violence in Intra-State Conflict

Class: TBD
Instructor’s Office Hours: TBD

Instructor: Costantino Pischedda
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Course Overview
This is a graduate seminar covering recent political science literature on the deeply intertwined subjects of warfare and violence in civil wars. Warfare refers to the strategies that civil war belligerents adopt against each other, while violence refers to their (mis)treatment of civilians in the war zone. The course explores the causes and consequences of different approaches to the conduct of civil wars and of civilian victimization, including closely related theoretical and policy questions about counterinsurgency effectiveness. Thus, unlike other classes on civil war, the main focus here is not on the causes of war or conflict termination, but rather on what happens in between.

Questions animating this course include: What accounts for the different strategies adopted by civil war belligerents? Why are some civil wars fought quasi-conventionally, while others are characterized by irregular and/or asymmetric warfare? What explains the enormous variation in the treatment of civilians across civil war belligerents, areas within war zones, and over time? Is the targeting of civilians ever a “sensible” (albeit unpalatable) military choice? What do we know about the effectiveness of different approaches to the conduct of civil wars, and counterinsurgency in particular?

The syllabus is organized in six thematic sections; the reading list is divided by class meeting.

“Why” and “how” questions about causes and consequences of the phenomena under study are dominant in the course. This empirical focus is not meant to underplay the importance of normative concerns about civil war. The first section provides a brief introduction to legal and moral principles relevant to the study of war, which students should keep in mind throughout the semester.

Goals
The course has two main goals. First, it intends to expose students to the main theoretical debates and empirical findings of the cutting-edge literature on the dynamics of civil war (the bulk of the assigned readings was written in the past 5 years). Second, the course aims to further students’ critical and creative thinking on theoretical and policy questions related to civil wars and political violence more generally, through class discussion and a research paper.

Requirements
This course will be run as a seminar. Students are expected to do all the readings (including those assigned for the first meeting of the class) and thoughtfully participate in class discussion.

Students will write a research paper (about 25 pages) on a topic related to warfare and violence in civil war. The normal format for the paper will be to use case studies or statistical data to test a theoretically grounded hypothesis. A paper proposal (stating your research question and empirical strategy) is due before the 5th meeting of the class.
Students will present rough drafts of their papers in the last two class meetings. The final draft is due one week after the last day of class. Late papers will be penalized.

**Grading**
Grading for the course will be as follows:
Class participation: 40%
Presentation: 10%
Research paper: 50%

**Prerequisites**
- A graduate-level Introduction to International Relations or
- A graduate-level Introduction to Comparative politics or
- A graduate-level course on international security/civil war.

**I. Introduction: Definitions and Moral-legal Dimensions** (class 1)

*What is a civil war?*
*Just War theory vs. utilitarianism*
*The law of war*

**Class 1** [120 pp.]


International Committee of the Red Cross. “Customary International Humanitarian Law. Ch. 1 - rule 1, ch. 4 - rule 14 ([http://www.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1](http://www.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/v1)).
II. Different “Technologies” of Rebellion

Do civil wars differ in the way they are fought?
Guerrilla vs. “conventional” civil wars
“Primitive” warfare and warlordism

Class 2 [205 pp.]


II. Determinants of Type of Warfare

Why are some civil wars fought along guerrilla lines while others take more symmetric forms?
Ethnicity
Terrain
Technology and balance of power
Rebel military strategy

Class 3 [236 pp.]


IV. What are the Causes of Violence against Civilians? (classes 4-7)

Targeted and indiscriminate killing
Barbarism vs. strategic rationality
Rebel capabilities
Norms and regime type
Desperation
Provoking retaliation
External intervention
Organizational factors and resources endowments
Emotions and symbolism of violence
Sexual violence

Class 4 [195 pp.]

Thomas C. Schelling. Arms and Influence. Yale University Press. Ch. 1 [35 pp.].

Stathis N. Kalyvas. 2006. The Logic of Violence in Civil War. Cambridge University Press. Ch. 6-8 and pp. 278-90 [79 pp.].


**Class 5** [196 pp.] Paper proposal due in class


**Class 6** [176 pp.]


**Class 7** [156 pp.]


V. Consequences of Civilian Targeting

Does civilian victimization ever “pay”?
Targeted vs. indiscriminate violence
Punishment vs. denial vs. brute force
Ethnicity and geography
Inferring intentions of perpetrators and re-assurance

Class 8 [221 pp.]


Jason Lyall 2014. “Bombing to Lose? Airpower and the Dynamics of Coercion in Counterinsurgency Wars” (manuscript) [approx. 30 pp.].

Page V. Fortna. “Do Terrorists Win?” International Organization (forthcoming) [approx.. 30 pp.].


VI. Competing Approaches to Counterinsurgency

Hearts and minds vs. coercion
International support and rebel sanctuaries
Troop density
Mechanization and intelligence collection
Regime type and public opinion
Decapitation of insurgent organizations
Insurgent flipping
Co-ethnic counterinsurgents
Development aid
**Class 9** [183 pp.]


**Class 10** [214 pp.]


*Recommended*


**Class 11** [219 pp.]

Fact sheet on US targeted killing: 


Anna Getmansky. 2012. “You Can't Win If You Don't Fight: The Role of Regime Type in Counterinsurgency Outbreaks and Outcomes.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 57, no. 4: 709-734 [26 pp.]


**Class 12** [202 pp.]


Jason Lyall, Kosuke Imai, and Yuki Shiraito. 2014. “Coethnic Bias and Wartime Informing” (manuscript) [approx. 30 pp.]


Jacob N. Shapiro and Nils B. Weidmann. "Is the Phone Mightier than the Sword? Cell Phones and Insurgent Violence in Iraq." *International Organization* (forthcoming) [approx.. 30 pp.].


**In-class presentations of paper drafts** (classes 13-14)