Civil War Dynamics

Warfare and Violence in Intra-State Conflict

Class: TuTh 2-5:10
Instructor’s Office Hours: TBD

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Course Overview
This course is an overview of the recent political science literature on the deeply intertwined subjects of warfare and violence in civil wars. Warfare refers to the strategies and tactics that civil war belligerents adopt against each other, while violence refers to their treatment of civilians in the war zone. 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, conflicts and over time? Is the targeting of civilians ever a sensible military strategy? What do we know about the effectiveness of different approaches to the conduct of civil wars, and counterinsurgency in particular?

The course is organized in terms of broad theoretical questions concerning the conduct of civil wars, but the readings are also meant to familiarize the students with important empirical cases, in particular the ongoing war in Afghanistan. The syllabus is organized in six thematic sections; the reading list is divided by class meeting.

Goals
The course’s goal is 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 three years). In addition, the course will familiarize students with several important historical and contemporary cases of civil war, thus bridging the gap between theoretical notions and ongoing policy-debate.
Requirements
This course will be run as a seminar; students are expected to do all the required readings (including those assigned for the first meeting of the class) and thoughtfully participate in class discussion. (Recommended readings are simply meant as bibliographical references for students especially interested in a given topic.) The instructor will lead class discussion, aiming at stimulating students’ critical thinking on the theories covered in the readings and the relationships between them as well as their application to actual cases.

In addition, students will attend the screening of two movies (“Platoon”, 1986 and “No Man’s Land”, 2002) and participate in a field trip to the Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at the United State Military Academy, West Point (dates TBD). Students are required to write 3 short response papers (2-4 pp. max), presenting a critique of the assigned readings. A final take-home exam will be handed out on Thursday July 2nd, due the following Monday.

Grading
Grading for the course will be as follows:
Class participation: 30%
Response papers: 30% (i.e., 10% each)
Final take-home: 40%.

Prerequisites
There is no formal pre-requisite for the class, but having taken an undergraduate intro to international relations, comparative politics or a class on international security/civil war is strongly recommended.

I. Different “Technologies” of Rebellion (classes 1 and 2)

*Do civil wars differ in the way they are fought?*

*Guerrilla vs. “conventional” civil wars*

*“Primitive” warfare and warlordism*

*Cases: Vietnam and Bosnia*

**Class 1**
**Required** [69 pp.]


II. Determinants of the Type of Warfare

Why are some civil wars fought along guerrilla lines while others take more symmetric forms?

Ethnicity

Terrain
III. What are the Causes of Violence against Civilians? (classes 4-8)

Targeted and indiscriminate killing

Barbarism vs. strategic rationality

Norms and regime type

Organizational factors and resources endowments

Emotions

Sexual violence

Cases: Spanish civil war, Iraq, Mozambique and Uganda

Class 4
Required [124 pp.]

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


**Recommended**


**Class 5**

**Required** [163 pp.]


**Class 6**

**Required** [111 pp.]


**Recommended**

Class 7
Required [117 pp.]


Recommended


Class 8
Required [127 pp.]


Recommended


IV. Consequences of Civilian Targeting

Under what circumstances does civilian victimization “pay”?

Targeted vs. indiscriminate violence

Ethnicity and geography

Class 9
Required [152 pp.]


Recommended


V. Competing Approaches to Counterinsurgency (classes 10 and 11)

Hearts and minds vs. coercion approach
Troop density
International support and rebel sanctuaries
Mechanization and intelligence collection
Technology
Local and co-ethnic counterinsurgents
Decapitation of insurgent organizations
Regime type and public opinion

Class 10
Required [160 pp.]


Recommended


Class II

Required [153 pp.]


**Recommended**


**VI. The War in Afghanistan**

**Class 12**

*Required* [143 pp.]


**Recommended**