

Internal Wars and the State

Political Science 376 / African Studies 390

Fall 2012

Lectures by William Reno

TAs: Sean Lee & Romain Malejacq

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 11am to 12:20pm

University Hall 102

Overview

This course is about violent domestic political conflicts. By the 1970s wars within states, referred to in this class as civil wars, had become the world's dominant form of warfare. These conflicts are notable for their intensities and their durations. Elements of civil wars also appeared in inter-state wars, such as in the wake of the American-led attack on Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq in 2003 and against the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2001. These wars have involved armed struggles between state forces and rebels over the control of territory and the right to form the central government. But armed actors in civil wars reflect many agendas and include ethnic militias, vigilante groups, foreign mercenaries, and criminal gangs. A key observation in this course, however, is that these multiple agendas and complex dynamics—"wars within wars"—play more important roles in recent and ongoing civil wars. This development stands in contrast to civil wars through the mid-20th century. Though these wars also included complex arrays of armed groups and agenda, they tended to feature more clear-cut distinctions between state and rebel combatants. The causes and significance of this change will constitute one of the themes of this course.

The first segment of this course will consider several academic theories about the causes of civil wars. These theories range from the economist's analysis that an abundance of natural resources and other economic opportunities provide incentives for rebellion to enterprising individuals, to the idea derived from international relations that "security dilemmas" (mutual fears that one's neighbors are preparing to strike) cause civil wars, and to the investigation of how changes in the global structure of economies and politics are at the roots of many civil wars. The second segment of this course will focus on the processes of war fighting in civil wars. Students will find that the explanations of causes of civil wars, while of varying applicability from one case to the next, prove to be quite valuable in terms of generating questions and in turning attention to particular kinds of relationships. This section will focus on processes such as the rise of leaders, the formulation of ideologies and political programs (or their absence), and recruitment of fighters and supporters. In a third section we will consider the special role of violence in influencing the courses of these other processes and relationships.

Course Requirements

Students are required to complete all required assignments to be eligible for a passing grade in this course. The relative weight of each assignment is as follows:

Participation & research	10%	(See note below)
A midterm exam	25%	Administered Tuesday, 30 Oct in class
A final exam	30%	Administered Tuesday, 11 Dec, 12:00 to 14:00

A paper about 10 pages 30% Due in class on Thursday, 29 Nov

Participation & research means showing up for class and exhibiting evidence of having read assignments. Failure to show up for class, particularly one that meets in the middle of the workday, will have a negative impact on evaluation. The midterm exam will be an essay format exercise administered in class. Details will be provided before the exam day. The final exam will be comprehensive, with a bias toward material from the second half of the course. This will be administered during the two hour scheduled final exam period on Tuesday, 11 December.

Research Study Participation Requirement Students enrolled in this course are required to complete a research assignment that can include up to 4 hours of research study participation. These studies require that students set up an appointment to complete participation at a laboratory on campus (or via an on-line survey). Students will learn how studies are conducted and will receive a synopsis at the conclusion of the quarter describing the study's goal, result, and relevance to the class. Students who prefer not to participate in research as subject may opt for an alternative that entails reading any one chapter about political science research and writing a five page reaction paper. The typical chapter is about 20 pages and thus reading it and writing a five page paper should take approximately four hours.

During the first week of the quarter, students will receive an e-mail asking them whether they prefer study participation or the alternative assignment. The e-mail will also include details on how to complete either requirement. Failure to complete the requirement during the quarter will result in an incomplete. Failure to complete the requirement during the following quarter will result in a failing grade for the class. Note that if you are enrolled in multiple classes that require participation, you only need to satisfy the requirement one time. Also, if you already completed the requirement in another course in a previous quarter, you are excused from the requirement.

The paper is due at the last class on the 29 November. This paper should be 10-12 pages. The topic of the paper is negotiable and can accommodate specific interests and goals of individual students. More general topics are permitted, such as “[your name here]’s theory of violence in civil wars” or “globalization and civil wars—the real deal”. Third year students might want to use this paper to develop an undergraduate research grant proposal. Fourth year students may set sights on bigger fellowships and grants. These and other “synergies” are encouraged, provided that the topic of the paper rests squarely in the topics and analytical considerations associated with this class. In analytical terms, there is no “correct answer” that is required for this paper. Evaluation will be based upon the coherence of argument and presentation of supporting evidence against at least one other reasonable alternative. Readings from class may be used to provide data and other information to be incorporated into this argument. Students are welcome to consult work outside of the assigned readings. As length is limited, this particular writing assignment ought not evolve into a major research project.

Required Textbooks

The following three required textbooks are available at Beck's Books at 716 Clark St in Evanston (on the same block as Burger King and Einstein's Bagels).

J.B. Walker (2012) *Nightcap at Dawn: American Soldiers' Counterinsurgency in Iraq*. New York: Skyhorse Publishing.

Danny Hoffman (2011) *The War Machine: Young Men and Violence in Sierra Leone and Liberia*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Mary Kaldor (2006) *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era* [2nd edition]. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.

Class Schedule

Part I: Considering the Concept of Civil War in History and Efforts to Identify the Basic Causes of Civil Wars

September 27: Introduction to the general concept and approaches to the study of civil wars. What is a civil war and how many of them are currently underway? Are civil wars increasing or decreasing in frequency? How do we know?

Stathis Kalyvas (2007) "Civil Wars" in Carles Boix & Susan Stokes, eds., *Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 416-34. This short essay should be read early in the term and is available [here](#).

October 2: Consider how the nature of civil wars changed (or not changed) over time. Do all civil wars contain a 'new war' element? What do you think will be the nature of civil wars in the future?

Mary Kaldor (2007) *New and Old Wars* [textbook], chapters "Introduction" and "Old Wars", 1-32.

Robert Kaplan (1994) "The Coming Anarchy," *Atlantic Monthly*, (February),

Stathis Kalyvas (2001), "'New' and 'Old' Civil Wars: A Valid Distinction?" *World Politics*, 54 (Oct), 99-118, available [here](#).

October 4: A "new war" explained? An examination of the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina from the 1990s. How broadly applicable is the "new war" category? Is Mexico currently experiencing a "new war" type of civil war or just a really bad crime wave?

Mary Kaldor (2007) *New and Old Wars*, chapters "Bosnia-Herzegovina: A Case Study of a New War" and "The Politics of New Wars," 33-94.

William Finnegan (2012) "Letter from Mexico: The Kingpins, the Fight for Guadalajara," (2 July), available [here](#).

October 9: Economic explanations of civil war onset and continuation: Is greed and / or relatively easy opportunities to rebel responsible for civil war onset? Are civil wars of this sort a more recent phenomenon?

Mary Kaldor (2007) *New and Old Wars*, "The Globalized War Economy," 95-118.

Paul Collier (2000) "Rebellion as a Quasi-Criminal Activity," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 44 (Dec), 839-53.

Michael Ross (2004) "What Do We Know about Natural Resources and Civil Wars?" *Journal of Peace Research*, 41:3 (Summer), 337-56, available [here](#).

October 11: Ethnic mobilization and the role of reciprocal fears of attack responsible for the onset and continuation of civil wars? Can one attribute most civil wars to the manipulations of enterprising political actors or is there need to be an underlying societal narrative of grievance or aggression?

Charles King (2004) "The Micropolitics of Social Violence," *World Politics*, 56:3 (April), 431-55, available [here](#).

Jack Snyder & Robert Jervis (1999) "Civil War and the Security Dilemma," in Barbara Walter & Jack Snyder, eds., *Civil Wars, Insurgency, and Intervention*, Columbia, 15-37.

October 16: State weakness as a cause of civil wars. Are civil wars following state breakdown a new phenomenon? How does a rationalist explanation for state weakness as a cause of civil wars differ from Hoffman's culturally contextualized explanation? Are "civil wars of state weakness" an African phenomenon or are they more widely observable? Is Afghanistan a candidate for this kind of civil war?

Danny Hoffman (2011) *War Machines* [textbook], 1-87.

James Fearon & David Laitin (2003) "Ethnicity, Insurgency & Civil War," *American Political Science Review*, 97:1 (Feb), 75-90, available [here](#).

October 18: Continued Discussion of Hoffman's book: What is the relationship of state weakness to the ground-level processes during the Sierra Leone—Liberia conflict? Is this an example of the weakness of state capacity or alternative to state capacity? Note in particular the role of patronage politics and its influence in the organization of West African rebel groups. What is a "war machine" and how would you apply it in other cases that we've studied?

Danny Hoffman (2011) *War Machines*, 88-161.

October 23: Socio-economic pressures as a distinct cause of civil wars. Think more about the proposition that civil wars in Africa constitute a distinct category. To what extent do cultural

factors enhance or mitigate the probability that a civil war will occur and to what extent does culture shape the nature of conflict when it does occur? Also consider the role of international intervention in shaping civil wars.

Danny Hoffman (2011). *War Machines*, 162-260

October 25:

Midterm Exam—in class

Part II: Fighting during Iraq's Civil Wars: The Complexity of Armed Groups and their Behaviors

October 30: examine the relationships that exist between insurgents, counterinsurgents and the people. How do insurgents use people in tactical ways? What is the relationship between narrative / ideology and the reasons why people support insurgents?

J.B. Walker (2012) *Nightcap at Dawn*, 11-100.

November 1: This section also examines relationships between insurgents and civilian populations. How do people choose whom to support and to what intensity? What is "subversion"? Note the relationships between armed groups; how some piggyback on others. How do the jihadist insurgents build their organizations? This section of the reading also gives particular note to how control over flows of information about acts of violence—what information is propagated and what information is hidden—shapes the battlespace.

J.B. Walker (2012) *Nightcap at Dawn*, 103-210.

November 6: the limits of violence and the limits of control through fear. Why do the jihadists miscalculate in their enterprise? Note the distinctions between suicide fighters and suicide bombers and the different tactical and strategic uses of violence.

J.B. Walker (2012) *Nightcap at Dawn*, 211-96.

Robert Pape (2003) "The [Strategic Logic](#) of Suicide Terrorism," *American Political Science Review*, 97: 3 (August), 1-19.

Look over 18 USC § 2441 ([War Crimes Act](#))

In class: We will analyze recent suicide bombing trends in Afghanistan

November 8: Inside the Shia insurgency: How was this insurgency different from the war in Sunni provinces? How is conflict in an urban setting different from conflict in rural settings? Does this kind of urban warfare confirm / not confirm the 'new wars' thesis encountered earlier in this course? How do rules of engagement affect the character of warfare? Think about

asymmetrical warfare and the paradox of the strong [potentially] becoming weaker as a consequence of fighting the weak.

J.B Walker (2012) *Nightcap at Dawn*, 299-396.

November 13: Some general lessons: What is the nature of subversion when rebel forces are close to government institutions, versus subversion as a practice among political outsiders? How do the people figure into these different categories of conflict? Is subversion from inside particularly associated with civil wars in the context of state collapse? Is this becoming a more common kind of civil war dynamic?

J.B. Walker (2012) *Nightcap at Dawn*, the rest of the book.

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

Part III: More Perspectives on the Organization of Armed Groups and the Logic of Violence

November 15: A framework for analyzing the role of violence and information in the course of civil wars. Do civilians in civil wars act without regard to preferences for particular ideologies or political narratives?

Stathis Kalyvas (2006) "A Theory of Irregular War I" in his *Logic of Violence in Civil War*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 87-110.

Michael Semple (2012) "The Revival of the Taliban 2001-2011," *Orient II*, available [here](#)

TF-3-10 (2012) *The State of the Taliban*, Kabul, US Army, available [here](#).

November 20: Violence and territorial control: Is territorial control the ultimate aim of all armed groups in civil wars or is this an outdated concept from the Maoist civil wars of the mid-twentieth century? How would one apply this framework to civil wars in West Africa (Hoffman) or to other civil wars studied in this class?

Stathis Kalyvas (2006) "A Theory of Irregular War II" in his *Logic of Violence in Civil War*, New York: Cambridge U Press, 111-45.

Mao Tse-tung (1937) "[On Guerrilla Warfare](#)," *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Vol IX*, Peking: Foreign Languages Press.

Thanksgiving, 22 November

November 27: Violence as mode of communication: the variable tactics of communication through violence and their impacts on the course of conflicts.

Ernesto “Che” Guevara (1963) “[Guerrilla Warfare: A Method](#),” [15 pages]

Carlos Marighela (1969) [Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla](#) [about 40 pages]

November 29: Are civil wars just the remnants of what used to be inter-state wars? Has violent conflict simply been confined to the peripheries of global society, symptoms of the collapse of some of these states?

John Mueller (2004) *Remnants of War*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 161-81.

Andrew Bacevich (2005) “Debellicised,” *London Review of Books*, 27:5 (3 March), 25-26.

Mary Kaldor (2007) *New and Old Wars*, “Cosmopolitan Approach,” 119-49.

Final Papers due in class

December 10: [Final Exam](#), Tuesday, Dec, 11, 12:00 to 14:00 (in University Hall 102—your classroom)