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# POLS 494: International Security

## University of San Diego, Spring 2023

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**Instructor:** Wendy Wagner  
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**Office Hours:** KIPJ 292, TH 2:00-3:30pm

**Course Information:**  
TTH 4:00-5:20pm  
TTH 5:30-6:50pm  
Serra Hall 318

### Course Summary

This course reviews theories of political violence, interstate war and civil conflict. Students will reflect on different research areas in international security that today's academics and policy makers are concerned with. We will answer whether the world has become a more peaceful place since the end of WWII. And we will evaluate conflict drivers, dynamics and challenges to inferences as we seek to make sense of security threats around the world. We will answer questions such as: Why do states fight wars? What accelerates or ameliorates the threat of conflict? Why do civil wars occur, who fights them and when do they end? How do civil wars become protracted? And finally, how do states mingle in the affairs of other states and seek to resolve conflicts?

### Objectives

In this class, we will **review** the academic literature in political science as it pertains to the above mentioned questions. We will gain a deeper **understanding** of the role and patterns of political violence for political process and for national and international actors. Students will **understand** and **define** key actors, concepts, and issue areas of international relations. And we will **apply** existing theories and proposed explanations to case studies. The goal of the course is also to provide students with the analytical and practical skills necessary to **independently address research questions** of interest and **draft** a research idea.

### Course Requirements

	<b>Points</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Participation		20 %
Mock Exam		ungraded
Final Exam		40 %
Research Proposal		40 %
Extra Credit	Up to 3	
		<b>100 %</b>

### Grading Scale

A = 90-100%    B = 80-89%    C = 70-79%    D = 60-69%    F = 59%-below

## **Engagement and Asynchronous Participation**

This is a class that depends on your participation in exercises and discussions. You are expected to come to class fully prepared, having read all of the assigned readings. And your colleagues and I depend on your active and meaningful participation in class. Meaningful participation is both useful and respectful. Comments and questions should be well thought out and critiques of others' points should be considerate.

*Remote Learning:* Given the changing conditions for teaching and learning in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, I reserve the right to adapt the course to fit a hybrid or fully remote format should it become necessary. Should classes become remote during our term, classes will continue to occur as scheduled via Zoom. Regardless, materials will be available online and class participation either in-person or remotely is key to your learning in this class.

## **Note on Weekly Readings**

The readings are essential for your understanding of the key ideas as well as for your ability to actively contribute in this class. It is paramount that you come prepared to class, ready to engage in a discussion that rests on your knowledge of the readings. I selected a minimum amount of assigned reading material. Therefore, I expect everyone to have ample time to engage with the material. Should you be further interested in a specific topic, or want to write a paper about a specific subject, you should engage with the recommended readings for that day. Please come to class with one question per assigned reading.

You will find the readings marked with (A) or (B). (A) indicates that these readings are required for our Tuesday class meeting. (B) indicates that the reading is required for our Thursday class meeting. Each week, we will engage with theoretical scholarly works on a topic on Tuesday and apply our knowledge to better understand a case on Thursday.

*While reading ask yourself:* What main question is the author addressing? What is the answer the author provides? What has previous literature done and how is the author speaking to it (criticizing it, confirming it etc.)? Are there any debates/disagreements in the literature? Does the article focus on explanations for the onset of conflict, its conduct or resolution? How does the article further our understanding? Does the author make a convincing argument or what evidence is weak and unconvincing? What are open questions for future debate?

## **Exams**

We will hold two in-person exams at the times scheduled for our class. We will hold a mid-term exam which will not be graded. The mid-term is intended for you to practice the exam format used in this class and to test your own knowledge. It serves as a mock exam for the final at the end of the semester. The mid-term will test course content covered up until that moment. Please take the mid-term seriously, even though it is ungraded, as it will help you prepare for the final. Students who take the mid-term seriously consistently achieve higher grades on the final exam.

The final exam will be cumulative. Questions can refer to any of the topics discussed over the course of the semester. The final exam will be graded on a 0-100 scale and account for 40 percent of your overall course grade.

Exams include three types of questions:

- Short answer questions that are answerable with a few words/terms without the need to write full sentences.
- Brief questions about basic theories and concepts that can be answered in 2-5 sentences.
- Essay questions that test your ability to apply the learned theories, that you can integrate the knowledge gained in discussions, and reflect your analytical and critical thinking skills.

The exams are closed book. Any collaboration among students, use of outside sources, notes or electronic devices during the exam will be considered an academic integrity violation. Any violations will be reported and result in an automatic zero grade for the exam - other sanctions are possible and subject to university policy.

### **Research Proposal Paper**

To encourage your own analytical thinking and critical engagement with the scholarly texts we read, you are expected to write a brief research proposal for a possible academic article on a question of interest to you. The research question should be broadly related to the themes discussed in class. I want you to step into the shoes of a researcher, you can imagine yourself as a PhD student or an analyst in a think-tank for example, and begin developing your own unique research project. You will not write a complete research paper as part of this class. But I have seen students develop the beginnings made here turn into fully-fledged papers for other classes or honor theses later on.

Let yourself be inspired by the academic articles we read for class. Many of these articles refer to open debates in the literature or even raise questions for further, future investigation. A research question to start with can emerge in different ways:

- Expand an existing theory by proposing a conditional effect
- Challenge existing knowledge or conventional wisdom
- Apply an existing theory to a new context
- Propose a new factor driving an existing phenomenon
- Propose a new phenomenon we have not yet studied

Your final proposal should include an **introduction**, a **brief literature review**, a **proposed answer** to your research question (a.k.a theory), and thoughts on **how you would test** your argument (a.k.a research design). Your proposal will be judged based on the relevance and framing of the question, how you tie it in with existing literature, soundness of argument (not whether it is correct or incorrect), and creativity as well as feasibility of the idea (the research should not take 10 years of 100,000 dollars to complete). Format: Times New Roman, 12pt, 1.5 spaced, max 5 pages.

Due dates (no later than midnight, Friday):

- **Discuss your research question and tentative idea with instructor (Due: Week 8, Mar 24th)**
- **Submission (Due: Week 15, May 12th)**

## Extra Credits

To engage further with the topics discussed in class, you can choose to watch one of the following movies. To receive up to 3 bonus points, write a maximum 1-page discussion of the movie and its relation to the theories we discussed in class (*Times New Roman, 12pt, single-spaced*). To receive credit, the discussion papers are due no later than last day of class. While you can watch and discuss any of the movies throughout the quarter, the syllabus indicates where each movie best fits in with our discussion. All movies may not be suitable for some individuals and do include representation of violence. Please watch at your own risk.

- Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb (1964)
- Charlie Wilson's War (2007)
- Lone Survivor (2013)
- Zero Dark Thirty (2012)
- The Last King of Scotland (2006)
- Hotel Rwanda (2004)
- Beasts of No Nation (2015)
- Even the Rain (2010)

Week	Dates	Topic
Week 1	Jan 26th	Introduction
Week 2	Jan 31st, Feb 2nd	Anarchy and Security Dilemma
Week 3	Feb 7th, Feb 9th	Causes of War I
Week 4	Feb 14th, Feb 16th	Causes of War II
Week 5	Feb 21st, Feb 23rd	Leaders and War
Week 6	Feb 28th, Mar 2nd	Domestic Institutions
	<b>Spring Break</b>	
Week 7	Mar 14th, Mar 16th	Terrorism
Week 8	Mar 21st, Mar 23rd	Institutions and Alliances
Week 9	Mar 28th, Mar 30th	Migration
Week 10	Apr 4th, <b>Easter break</b>	Nuclear Deterrence & Arms Control
Week 11	Apr 11th, Apr 13th	Causes of Civil War
Week 12	Apr 18th, Apr 20th	Violence in Civil War
Week 13	Apr 25th, Apr 27th	Rebel Rivalry and Alliances
Week 14	May 2nd, May 4th	Pro-government Militias
Week 15	May 9th, May 11th	Military Intervention

## Schedule of Classes

### Week 1 Introduction

**Objectives:** The introductory session will lay out the structure of the course, the course rules, and assignments. We will discuss what war is and why we care to study it.

**Readings:**

No required readings for this meeting.

## Part 1 Understanding Interstate Conflict

### Week 2 International Politics: Anarchy & Security Dilemma

**Objectives:** We will discuss the nature of international politics, the meaning of anarchy and how it shapes the interactions among nations and the challenges it creates. We will learn about a possible way to think about actors, preferences, and strategies.

#### Required Readings:

- Wagner, R.H., 2010. "Chapter 1: The Theory of International Politics." In: *War and the state: The theory of international politics*. University of Michigan Press. (A)
- Schelling, T.C., 1966. "Chapter 1: The Diplomacy of Violence." In: *Arms and Influence*. Yale University Press. (A)
- Drezner, Daniel. July/August 2022. "The Perils of Pessimism: Why Anxious Nations Are Dangerous Nations." *Foreign Affairs*. Link (B)

### Week 3 Causes of War I

**Objectives:** We will discuss why states go to war with each other and if war is ever rational. Particularly, we will discuss whether a bipolar world is more stable and how to avoid war between great powers.

#### Required Readings:

- James D. Fearon. "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization*. 49, No. 3 (1995): pp. 379-414. (A)
- Allison, Graham. 2015. "The Thucydides Trap: Are the U.S. and China Headed for War?" *The Atlantic*. Link (A)
- Kendall-Taylor, Andrea and Michael Kofman. Nov/Dec 2022. "Russia's Dangerous Decline: The Kremlin Won't Go Down Without a Fight." *Foreign Affairs*. Link (B)

### Week 4 Causes of War II

**Objectives:** We continue our exploration of causes of war. We will discuss how states might want to maintain peace but fail to avoid war or go to war because of false assumptions.

#### Required Readings:

- Robert Powell, "War as a Commitment Problem," *International Organization*. (Winter 2006) pp. 169-204.
- Bas and Schub. 2016. "Mutual Optimism as a Cause of Conflict: Secret Alliances and Conflict Onset." *International Studies Quarterly*, 60(3).
- Richard L. Russell, *The 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis: The United States and China at the Precipice of War?* Link (B)

## Week 5 Leaders and War

**Objectives:** Some scholars argue for the importance of political leaders for foreign policy. We will discuss when and how leaders matter in the decision to go to war.

### Required Readings:

- Giacomo Chiozza and H.E. Goemans. 2004. "International Conflict and the Tenure of Leaders: Is War Still Ex Post Inefficient?" *American Journal of Political Science* 48(3): 604-619. (A)
- Horowitz, Michael C., and Allan C. Stam. 2014 "How Prior Military Experience Influences the Future Militarized Behavior of Leaders," *International Organization*, 68(3): 527-59 (A)
- Hill, Fiona. Sep/Oct 2022. "The World Putin Wants: How Distortions About the Past Feed Delusions About the Future." *Foreign Affairs*. Link (B)

## Week 6 Domestic Institutions and War

**Objectives:** We will discuss how domestic characteristics of states such as regime type affect their decision to go to war and their conduct during war.

### Required Readings:

- Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce, et al. 1999. "An Institutionalist Explanation for the Democratic Peace," *American Political Science Review*, 93(4): 791-807. (A)
- Weeks, Jessica. 2012. "Strongmen and Straw Men: Authoritarian Regimes and the Initiation of International Conflict," *American Political Science Review*, 106(2): 326-47. (A)
- Sauer, F., Schörnig, N. (2012). "Killer drones: The 'silver bullet' of democratic warfare?" *Security Dialogue*, 43(4), 363-380. (B)

## Week 7 Terrorism and the Post-9/11 World

**Objectives:** We will discuss why this particular form of violence emerged and how is it designed to work. (This is a great time to watch "Zero Dark Thirty".)

### Required Readings:

- Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter, "The Strategies of Terrorism," *International Security* (Summer 2006) pp. 49-80. (A)
- Abrams, Max. 2008. "What Terrorists Really Want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism Strategy." *International Security*, 32 (4): 78-105. (A)
- The Guardian. 2002. "Full text: bin Laden's 'letter to America'" Link (B)

## Week 8 International Institutions and Military Alliances

**Objectives:** We will discuss how international institutions constrain state behavior and why honoring them matters. We will discuss the role of military alliances in preventing war or creating motivation to go to war.

### Required Readings:

- Morrow, James D. 2000. "Alliances: Why Write Them Down?" *Annual Review of Political Science*, 3, 63-83. (A)
- von Borzyskowski, Inken and Felicity Vabulas. 2019. "Hello, goodbye: When do states withdraw from international organizations?" *Review of International Organizations*, 14:335-366. (A)
- Harshaw, Tobin. November 26, 2022. "If China Invades Taiwan, Who Will Stand With the US?" Bloomberg. Link (B)

## Week 9 Migration as Security Concern

**Objectives:** The lesson addresses the importance of migration in international relations, with a particular importance as international security concerns. We will discuss how the international refugee system has been securitized by governments, leading to changes in foreign policies and perceptions over refugee and asylum seekers. Additionally, we will explore how governments create and react to migration crises.

(Guest Lecturer: Jesus Rojas Venzor, UCSD)

### Required Readings:

- "When Migrants Become Weapons: The Long History and Worrying Future of a Coercive Tactic". Kelly Greenhill. *Foreign Affairs*. March 2022. Link (A)
- "The Securitization of Forced Migration". Anne Hammerstadt. *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies*. August 2014. Link (A)
- "Securitisation of Migration in Africa: The Case of Agadez in Niger". Tsion Tadesse Abebe. *Institute for Security Studies*. December 2019. Link (B)

## Week 10 Nuclear Deterrence

**Objectives:** We will discuss why states seek nuclear weapons and whether states can cooperate to contain the spread of nuclear weapons. (This is a great time to watch "Dr Strangelove".)

### Required Readings:

- Sechser, T.S. and Fuhrmann, M., 2017. "Nuclear Blackmail in International Politics." *Nuclear weapons and coercive diplomacy*. Cambridge University Press.(A)
- Kyle Beardsley and Victor Asal, 2009. "Winning with the Bomb". *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. Vol. 53, no. 2 pp. 278-301. (A)

- Kaye, Dalia Dass. 2018. "The Strategic Fallout of U.S. Withdrawal from the Iran Deal." The Rand Corporation. Link (B) OR: Evan Osnos, "The Risk of Nuclear War with North Korea," The New Yorker, September 18, 2017. Link (B)

## **Part 2 Understanding Intrastate Conflict:**

### **Week 11 Causes of Civil War and Ethnic Conflict**

**Objectives:** We will discuss various explanatory factors for the outbreak of civil war and what motivates regular people to take up arms against their government or their neighbors. (This is a great time to watch "Hotel Rwanda" or "Even the Rain".)

#### **Required Readings:**

- Lars-Erik Cederman and Manuel Vogt. Dynamics and logics of civil war. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 61(9):1992-2016, 2017. (A)
- James D Fearon and David D Laitin. Ethnicity, insurgency, and civil war. *American political science review*, 97(1):75-90, 2003. (A)
- Watch the movie "Hotel Rwanda" (available on HBOMax or via the library). (B)

### **Week 12 Violence in Civil War (Civilian Victimization)**

**Objectives:** We will discuss the logic of civilian victimization in civil war, when armed groups target civilians versus collaborating with them. (This is a great time to watch "Beasts of No Nation".)

#### **Required Readings:**

- Stanton, Jessica. 2017. "Chapter 3: Quantitative Analysis of Government and Rebel Group Violence and Restraint." *Violence and Restraint in Civil War*. Cambridge University Press. (A)
- Holtermann, Helge. "Diversionary rebel violence in territorial civil war." *International Studies Quarterly* 63.2 (2019): 215-230. (A)
- Cohen, D. K. (2013). Explaining rape during civil war: Cross-national evidence." *American Political Science Review*, 107(3), 461-477. (A)
- Al Jazeera. Aug, 2022. "Fear and anxiety for civilians as Yemen truce set to expire." Link AND: al-Sakani, Ali. Jun, 2022. "Yemen truce extended for two months, but warring sides far apart." Link (B)

### **Week 13 Rebel Rivalry and Alliances**

**Objectives:** Today's conflicts are multiparty conflicts involving a wide range of actors, different rebel groups, community-based armed groups, and self-defense forces. We will discuss how competition between rebels shapes violence and strategic behavior during conflict.

#### **Required Readings:**



- Popovic, M., 2018. Inter-Rebel alliances in the shadow of foreign sponsors. *International Interactions*, 44(4), pp.749-776.
- Hanne Fjelde and Desiree Nilsson. Rebels against rebels explaining violence between rebel groups. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 56(4):604-628, 2012.
- Laub, Z. March 2021. "Syria's Civil War: The Descent Into Horror." *Council on Foreign Relations*. Link (B)

## Week 14 Pro-Government Militias and Proxy Warfare

**Objectives:** States also cooperate with armed groups and use them for their own purposes. We will discuss when and how states strategically employ nonstate groups as proxies and agents.

### Required Readings:

- Carey, S.C. and Mitchell, N.J., 2017. "Pro-government militias." *Annual Review of Political Science*, 20, pp.127-147. (A)
- Abbas Farasoo. 2021. "Rethinking Proxy War Theory in IR: A Critical Analysis of Principal-Agent Theory." *International Studies Review*, Volume 23, Issue 4. (A)
- Robinson, Kali and Will Merrow. March 2021. "Iran's Regional Armed Network." *Council on Foreign Relations*. Link (B)

## Week 15 Military Intervention and UN Peacekeeping

**Objectives:** Countries have tools to intervene in civil wars in other countries. We will discuss when countries decide to do so, when interventions can be effective, and what consequences military interventions and peacekeeping can have. (A great time to watch "Charlie Wilson's War" or "Lone Survivor".)

### Required Readings:

- Page V. Fortna, (2004). "Does Peacekeeping Keep Peace? International Intervention and the Duration of Peace After Civil War," *International Studies Quarterly* 48. (A)
- Koch, M.T. and Sullivan, P., 2010. "Should I stay or should I go now? Partisanship, approval, and the duration of major power democratic military interventions." *The Journal of Politics*, 72(3), pp.616-629. (A)
- Madiha Afzal and Adrianna Pita. 2022. "What's happening in Afghanistan one year after the U.S. withdrawal?" *Brookings*. Link (B)

## Policies

### Class Contract

To foster the best possible working and learning environment, we want to engage with one another in upholding key values such as honesty, transparency, respect, and integrity. Both students and instructor agree to:

- Uphold honesty as academic and personal value and to participate in this class with an honest interest, and to commit to do the work expected of you and to receive honest feedback and evaluation from the instructor
- As instructor to communicate expectations and criteria for evaluation, and as student to be transparent about individual areas of struggle and discontent
- Be mutually respectful, both between students and instructor in recognition of the dynamic imposed by the context, and for students to engage with each other in a respectful discourse even in face of disagreement
- To fulfill the class requirements with integrity and uphold the values for engagement in this class, even in face of struggle or adversity

We affirm each individual's right to dignity and strive to maintain a climate of justice marked by mutual respect for each other, value the cultural diversity of USD because it enriches our lives and the University, and we reject acts of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, and political beliefs, and, we will confront and appropriately respond to such acts.

We acknowledge that our society carries historical and divisive biases based on race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, and political beliefs. Therefore, we seek to foster understanding and tolerance among individuals and groups, and we promote awareness through education and constructive strategies for resolving conflict.

In this class, we are committed to the highest standards of civility and decency toward all. We are committed to promoting and supporting a community where all people can work and learn together in an atmosphere free of abusive or demeaning treatment.

### **Inclusive Classroom Statement**

I am fully committed to creating a learning environment that supports diversity of thought, perspectives, experiences, and identities. I urge each of you to contribute your unique perspectives to discussions of course questions, themes, and materials so that we can learn from them, and from each other. If you should ever feel excluded, or unable to fully participate in class for any reason, please let me know, or you may also submit anonymous written feedback to your Undergraduate Advisor.

I respect that each and everyone of us may face individual challenges while pursuing an education. Please, do not hesitate to contact me with individual concerns that might affect your performance in this class and your ability to learn. Here are some additional resources:

- Writing Center: <https://www.sandiego.edu/cas/centers/writing-center/index.php>
- Center for Student Success: <https://www.sandiego.edu/center-student-success/index.php>
- Counseling Center: <https://www.sandiego.edu/counseling-center/index.php>

## **Academic Integrity**

Having integrity means doing the right thing, even when it is difficult. We live in times in which the temptation to rely on online resources, use artificial intelligence tools to make your life easier, and copy information from the wealth of material at your finger tips is large. Please do not give in to it. Even more than that, by cheating you will rob yourself of the opportunity to learn and grow. It is through things we find difficult or unpleasant that we learn the most. Be true to yourself and complete all requirements in good faith.

All University policies regarding academic integrity apply to this course. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating of information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. For any material or ideas obtained from other sources, a reference must be given. Direct quotes from any source must be identified as such. Students who are found to be dishonest will receive academic sanctions and will be reported to the Dean. All course work by students is to be done on an individual basis unless the professor states unambiguously that an alternative is acceptable. Any reference materials used in the preparation of any assignment must be explicitly cited.

Students are expected to conduct with accordance of the University of San Diego Honor Code which can be found here.