

THE NEW NEW CIVIL WARS

INT 190
Winter 2020, Room 3203
Tuesday – Thursdays 2:00-3:20

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Themes:

We are living in the world's greatest era of civil wars. After declining in the 1990s, the number of civil wars has almost tripled and is now higher than at any previous time. These 21st century civil wars are different from those of the past. They are smaller and kill fewer people, but they tend to last longer than previous civil wars and are more difficult to resolve in negotiated settlements. They also tend to be more decentralized, fought by a greater number of factions, and involve greater intervention from outside states. All of this suggests that we have entered a new age of civil wars that we don't yet fully understand.

This class has a real-world purpose. On June 1, 2020, I am scheduled to deliver a book to Random House that addresses these issues. In addition, the editors would like the book to analyze whether a second civil war could happen in the United States and, if so, what can be done to prevent it. They believe that Americans need a book that analyzes this phenomenon in order to help our country avoid going down the path to war.

This class will serve as a workshop for four big ideas explored in the book. They are:

1. Why have civil wars increased over the last 17 years?
2. What effect, if any, has the internet had on this rise in civil wars, and what can we expect in the future?
3. Do Americans have to worry about a second civil war?
4. If they do, what are the best strategies to try to prevent war?

This class has three goals plus a bonus. The first goal is to teach students how to analyze big and difficult problems. This will require reading and understanding the scholarly literature as well as applying the theories and findings from these studies to current cases. The second goal is to train students how to communicate their analyses in writing to a wider policy audience. This will be done via ten 500 word essays. The third goal is to challenge the ideas that are currently included in the book in order to ensure that the final analysis is sound. As my publisher has said, "we are trying to change the world."

There is a bonus. The discussions we will have in this class, and the memos you write, will be enormously helpful to me as I think about what is happening in the world today. I will owe this class a debt of gratitude at the end of ten weeks. In fact, it is quite possible that some of you will offer novel ideas and critiques that significantly improve the book. If that happens, I will

gratefully acknowledge you by name in the book. In addition, if you write an exceptionally good short paper, you will be given the opportunity to publish it on the blog *Political Violence @ a Glance*, which I run with Professor Erica Chenoweth at Harvard. This blog has become required reading for policymakers and practitioners working on political violence in D.C. and would offer significant visibility for students who publish there.

Organization of the Course: This is a discussion course that is organized around 9 topics. Each topic will take up approximately two classes. In general, the first class will introduce the theoretical framework for understanding the topic at hand. The second class will apply this framework to a current case in the news. At the end of each case, I will offer approximately 10 minutes of reflection on the specific class discussion and how it relates to the broader themes of the course.

Requirements: The grade for this course will be based on:

Ten, 500 word short papers. The first paper will be a freebee – it will not be graded so as to allow your creative juices to flow. Have fun with it. The remaining nine papers will comprise 100% of your grade and be weighted equally.

Each paper must be submitted to turnitin.com no later than the beginning of the class in which it is due.

Short Papers: Students are required to write ten papers, no longer than 500 words, in a style that would be suitable to be published as a blog post or an opinion piece in a newspaper. Papers should be 12 pt. type, with one inch margins, and double-spaced. The objective of the short papers is to answer the question or questions posed in the most convincing way. This means it should include a theoretical argument supported by as much empirical evidence as you can find.

You are free to use whatever outside sources are available to write your paper. Note, there are good and bad sources of information on the internet. Some of the best sources for current international reporting are the major newspapers: the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Financial Times*, and the *Guardian*. In addition, the *Economist* has excellent coverage on most countries and most international events. For more in-depth analyses see *Foreign Affairs*, *Foreign Policy*, the *New Yorker*, and the *Atlantic*.

Papers must follow all conventions of attribution and notation. Quotes and paraphrasing must include a hyperlink to the original source. Papers found to include plagiarized material will be given an automatic “zero” and no make-up paper will be allowed. The plagiarized paper will then be reported to UCSD’s Committee on Academic Integrity for whatever additional punishment the University would like to add.

ELECTRONIC-FREE CLASSROOM: This course is taught in a computer and phone-free classroom. Yes, we are going old-school. This rule will be strictly enforced, so please do not make me take your electronics away during class.

Readings: Required readings are listed below, most of which can be accessed via the hyperlink in the text. The remaining readings can be obtained on TED.

Prerequisites: GPCO 410, International Politics & Security

Course Outline and Readings

Tuesday January 7: Introduction and Current Trends in Civil War

Topics for discussion: Overview of the course and the current trends we are seeing.

Thursday, January 9: Base line Case: Could Civil War Happen Again in the US?

This class is somewhat unusual in that you will be writing a short paper with very little background. The purpose of this paper is to free-associate; to see how you would answer the prompt given your knowledge to date. Think of this as your “baseline” case. We will revisit it toward the end of the quarter to determine how much we have learned in ten weeks. Enjoy.

Theme: What the academic literature says about the causes of civil war.

- James D. Fearon, “[Governance and Civil War Onset](#),” [World Development Report 2011](#). August 31, 2010.
- Jack A. Goldstone and seven other authors, “[A Global Model for Forecasting Political Instability](#),” *American Journal of Political Science*, 2010.

Topic for short essay:

Some people have argued that the United States is headed to a second civil war. Others argue that this is hyperbolic: the US is far too stable, too rich, and too democratic for its citizens to fight again. In 500 words, analyze whether you think the US is headed toward a second civil war. Please explain why or why not you think this is the case and support your argument with as much evidence as possible.

Tuesday January 14: The Danger of Democratic Transitions

Topics for discussion: One of the best predictors of whether a country experiences civil war is whether it is transitioning to or from democracy. Autocracies are surprisingly stable, as are full democracies. It's the countries that are neither fully autocratic nor fully democratic that are most likely to experience civil war. Please be prepared to discuss why this is the case.

- Patrick M. Regan and Sam R. Bell, [“Changing Lanes or Stuck in the Middle: Why Are Anocracies More Prone to Civil Wars?”](#) *Political Research Quarterly*, 2010.
- Kristian Skrede Gleditsch & Andrea Ruggeri, [“Political opportunity structure, democracy, and civil war,”](#) *Journal of Peace Research*, 2010.

Thursday, January 16: The Danger of Democratic Transitions, Continued

Case: Iraq

Topic for short paper:

The United States invaded Iraq in 2003 with the goal of deposing Saddam Hussein and installing a democratic government. Within three years, a civil war had broken out. What role did the change in regime - from an authoritarian to a more democratic government – play in the outbreak of civil war? Make sure you walk the reader through the specific reasons why regime change might have encouraged the Sunnis to rebel. What could the US have done differently to avoid war?

Tuesday, January 21: Factionalism

Topics for discussion: James Madison and Alexander Hamilton both argued that the greatest threat to the survival of the United States was the emergence of “zealous” factions. They were right. It turns out the very best predictor of whether a country experiences a civil war is whether a partial democracy is factionalized along ethnic, religious, or racial lines. Please come prepared to discuss what factionalism is, and how and why it increases the risk that citizens go to war.

- James Madison, [“Federalist No. 10”](#), *The Federalist Papers*, 1787.
- Benjamin R. Cole, [“Democratization and the Mischief of Faction”](#) Chapter 1. 2018.
- Jennifer McCoy, Tahmina Rahman, Murat Somer, [“Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy: Common Patterns, Dynamics, and Pernicious Consequences for Democratic Polities,”](#) *American Behavioral Scientist*, 2018.

Thursday, January 23. Factionalism, continued

Case: The former Yugoslavia. In particular the war between the Serbs and Croats in Croatia.

Topic for short paper:

Serbs and Croats are ethnically indistinguishable from each other. In addition, they had lived peacefully together for decades, had high intermarriage rates, and stood to lose a lot by going to war. When war broke out between the two groups in 1990, Croatia had just transitioned from full autocracy to a pseudo democratic government. Why did Serbs and Croats break down into factions post-1990? Who was driving this extreme form of ethnic polarization, and what was their motive? Why did average citizens allow it to happen?

Tuesday, January 28. Political Exclusion

Topics for discussion: Most people think that the group most likely to start a war is the poorest in society, especially in countries with deep income inequality. The evidence does not support this. Instead, the group most likely to go to war is the one that is politically excluded from power or fears being excluded from power. Please come prepared to discuss why this is the case.

In class viewing of: Mehdi Hasan, “Reality Check: The Myth of a Sunni-Shia War,” Al Jazeera, UpFront, November 21, 2015.

- Lars-Erik Cederman, Andreas Wimmer and Min, “[Why do ethnic groups rebel? New data and analysis](#)”. *World Politics*, 2010.
- Manuel Vogt, Bormann, & Cederman, “[Democracy, Ethnic Exclusion, and Civil Conflict: The Arab Spring Revolutions from a Global Comparative Perspective](#),” *Peace & Conflict*, 2016.

Thursday, January 30. Political Exclusion, continued

Case: Syria.

Topic for short paper:

Who started the war in Syria? What did they hope to accomplish by going to war? Why did they believe that war was the only (or best way) to achieve their goal? Why was the country not able to avoid civil war?

Tuesday, February 4. Triggers

Topics for discussion: Grievances and opportunity are not sufficient for citizens to go to war. They also require a government unwilling to compromise in the face of the threat of war. Please come prepared to discuss why some governments would prefer to go to war rather than compromise.

- Barbara F. Walter, “[Bargaining Failures and Civil War](#),” Annual Review of Political Science, 2009.
- Stefan Lindemann & Andreas Wimmer, “[Repression and refuge: Why only some politically excluded ethnic groups rebel](#),” Journal of Peace Research, 2018.

Thursday, February 6. Triggers, Continued

Case: The Arab Spring

Topic for short paper:

Almost every country in North Africa and the Middle East experienced mass demonstrations in 2011, yet only a few of these protests escalated to civil war. Why did protests escalate to civil war in Syria, but not in Tunisia and Egypt? In particular, why did President Ben Ali of Tunisia and President Mubarak of Egypt make concessions to protesters, while President Assad of Syria did not?

Tuesday, February 11: The Internet is Making Things Worse

Topics for discussion: In what ways is the internet affecting the risk factors associated with civil war (democratic decline, increased factionalization, the rise of right-wing nationalism)? Ultimately, do you think the internet will create a world with more civil war, less civil war, or have no effect at all? Please come prepared to discuss.

- Nathaniel Persily, “The 2016 Election: Can Democracy Survive the Internet?” [Journal of Democracy](#), April 2017.
- Zack Beauchamp, “[Social media is rotting democracy from within](#),” *Vox.com*, January 22, 2019.
- Peter Pomerantsev, “[Inside the Kremlin’s Hall of Mirrors](#),” *The Guardian*, April 9, 2015.
- Jonathan Haidt & Tobias Rose-Stockwell, “[The Dark Psychology of Social Networks](#),” *The Atlantic*. December 2019.
- Killian Clarke & Korhan Kocak, “[Eight years after Egypt’s revolution, here’s what we’ve learned about social media and protest](#),” *The Washington Post*. January 25, 2019.

- The Conversation, “[How artificial intelligence systems could threaten democracy](#),” April 22, 2019.

Thursday, February 13: The Internet is Making Things Worse, continued

Case: *Russia*

Topic for short paper: If you were Vladimir Putin and wanted to destabilize the United States using social media, what strategy would you pursue and why?

Tuesday February 18: The Internet and the New New Civil Wars

Topics for discussion: 21st century civil wars are different from past civil wars in a number of important ways. They are more numerous, include more factions, and are increasingly internationalized. They also appear to be lasting longer. Please come prepared to discuss the following questions: In what ways might the internet be responsible for these changes? What role is the internet likely to play in civil wars in the future?

- Walter, Barbara F. “[The New New Civil Wars](#),” Annual Review of Political Science. 2017.
- Sebastian von Einsiedel, “[Major Recent Trends in Violent Conflict](#),” UNU-CPR, November 2014.

Thursday, February 20: Is the US Entering the Danger Zone?

Case: *United States*.

- Jeffrey Rosen, “[America is Living James Madison’s Nightmare](#),” *The Atlantic*. October 2018.
- Lee Drutman, “[American politics has reached peak polarization](#),” *Vox.com*. March 24, 2016.
- Marisa Abrajano & Zoltan L. Hajnal, *White Backlash: Immigration, Race, and American Politics*. Chapter 1: Theory of Immigration Backlash Politics. On TED.
- Alexander Hurst, “[The Vigilante President: Trump’s hard-core supporters are poised to unleash a wave of violence against their enemies](#),” *The New Republic*. November 6, 2019.

Topic for short paper:

Over the last few years, the United States has seen a dramatic rise in domestic terror attacks. What types of groups are primarily perpetuating these attacks? Who are they primarily

targeting with attacks? What do they hope to accomplish with these attacks? Why do they believe that violence is the best way to achieve this goal/these goals?

Tuesday, February 25. Do you really think a second civil war could happen here?

Film: PBS Frontline: Documenting Hate: New American Nazis.

Thursday, February 27: How Civil War Would Emerge.

Topics for discussion: My editor in the UK – Daniel Crewe at Penguin – said the following to me in a phone conversation in April: “We don’t find the United States a particularly interesting case because the US has never stopped fighting the first Civil War.” Do you agree or disagree that the US has never stopped fighting the first civil war? If a second civil war breaks out in this country will it be similar or different? If different, how do you believe it is likely to differ? What has changed in the United States since 1865 in terms of race relations and geographic divides?

- Douglas Egerton, *Year of Meteors: Stephen Douglas, Abraham Lincoln, and the Election That Brought on the Civil War*, Bloomsbury Press, 2010. Chapter 6: “Lincoln is the Next President. I Will Go South.” Available on TED. (Use in chapter: “It could happen here”)

Topic for short paper:

Are the same factors that drove the US to war in 1865 driving the US to war today? If so, what are they and why do they remain so powerful? If they are not the same, why not, and what do you argue are the new powerful factors and why?

Tuesday, March 3: Class Cancelled

Thursday, March 5: How Civil War Might Emerge, scenarios.

Topics for discussion: No one really knows how a 2nd civil war would break out again in the U.S. What are some theories for how it might emerge? Please discuss.

- James B. Kelleher & Ed Stoddard, “[Special Report: Rapid growth of militias feeds off politics.](#)” *Reuters*. April 28, 2010.
- “[How Trump Could Lose the Election and Remain President.](#)” *Washington Monthly*. April/May/June 2019.
- Dahlia Lithwick, “[What Happens if Trump Won’t Step Down?](#)” *Slate*. September 13, 2019.
- Mary B. McCord. “[Armed Militias are Taking Trump’s Civil War Tweets Seriously.](#)” *Lawfare*. October 2, 2019.

- Dara Lind. “[Waco and Ruby Ridge: The 1990s standoffs haunting the Oregon standoff, explained](#),” *Vox.com*. January 5, 2016.
- Josh Levin. “[How’s America Going to End? Who is Most Likely to Secede?](#)” *Slate*. August 5, 2009.

Topic for short paper:

If civil war were to emerge in the U.S., what is the most plausible scenario in which it would emerge? Please explain the logic behind your argument and provide any available evidence to support it.

Tuesday, March 10: How to Prevent Civil War

Topics for Discussion: An emerging literature on non-violent protest has found that civil resistance is surprisingly effective at gaining government concessions. The most recent research, however, has discovered that while protests are increasing around the world, government concessions are decreasing. Why are governments willing to compromise in the face of protests, and why do you think this pattern has declined over time?

- Maria J. Stephan and Erica Chenoweth, “[Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict](#),” *International Security*, Summer 2008.
- Max Fisher and Amanda Taub, “[The Global Protest Wave, Explained](#),” *The New York Times*, October 25, 2019.

Thursday, March 12: How to Prevent Civil War, continued

Topic for short paper:

The Political Instability Task Forces’ (PITF) strongest predictor of political instability and civil war is transitional democracies with factionalization. The predictive accuracy of this model, however, has fallen since 2000. That means that there are now more countries that are false positives (they were predicted to have civil war but did not) than before.

Members of the task force believe this decline is due to what’s called “learning”: state leaders are learning that democratic transitions filled with factions are dangerous, and are taking measures to prevent wars when these features emerge in their countries. What are some measures they might take during these times to deter or prevent the emergence of civil war?