MGIMO University
School of Government and International Affairs

ARMED CONFLICTS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Undergraduate Course Syllabus

Instructor
Ekaterina Stepanova

This syllabus is designed in accordance with the MGIMO Educational Standard
for the Bachelor Program in International Affairs.
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Class dates and time:

Lectures: **5 September – 21 November 2022:** Mondays, 10:35 – 11:55

Seminars:

- ■ In-class presentations:

  - Group 1: **November and December** (dates/time tba)
  - Group 2: **December** (dates/time tba).

- ■ Simulation game:
  - Groups 1-2: date tbc

Final Exam: **January 2023** (date tbc)

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION AND REQUIREMENTS

AIMS AND OBJETIVES

The first main goal of the course is to provide insight into – and enhance the students' understanding of – the drivers, trends, and patterns of contemporary armed conflicts and other forms of violence linked to conflicts or carried out in conflict areas. The second goal is to identify functional and legitimate ways of conflict management, violence control, peacemaking, peacebuilding, and conflict prevention.

The objectives of the course are:
- ■ To familiarize the students with the definition(s) and the main types and characteristics of contemporary armed conflicts (across the domestic and international/transnational divide, by motivational typology etc.)
- ■ To introduce the students to the main methods and data sources in Peace, Conflict and Security Studies and to encourage them to work with empirical sources and databases;
- ■ To explore the main structural causes, facilitating conditions and motivational drivers of armed conflicts at different levels of social structure: from individual and social group levels to national (system) and international levels;
- ■ To introduce the students into power, status, ideological and organization asymmetry in the majority of state-based conflicts in the 21st century and ways to undermine ideological and organizational systems as the key strategic assets of violent non-state actors;
- ■ To identify short-term, mid-term and long-term conflict management and peacemaking strategies and measures, with an emphasis on functional and legitimate ways by state and society to reduce and control armed violence at different levels of social structure;
- ■ To highlight the specifics, commonalities, and main types of context of conflict management policies at national and international levels and to identify the main forms, problems and prospects of international cooperation on armed conflict management, peacemaking and peacebuilding;
- ■ To develop and strengthen the ability to think originally, inquisitive comprehension, alternate interpretation and discussion skills that do not exclude, but are given preference over memorization, conceptual fluency or abstract theorizing.

SUBJECT AND STRUCTURE

The course focuses on trends in and origins of armed conflicts and other forms of organized violence linked to or widespread in conflict and post-conflict areas (terrorism, one-sided violence against civilians, communal violence, criminal violence) and their implications for human security at levels from local to global. The geographical scope of the course is global and includes all regions. The course employs multidisciplinary analytical framework centered on the human security approach.

Structurally, the course consists of **12 lectures** followed by a series of **seminars** organized by group.

Lectures are divided in 3 thematic blocs.

Part I provides an overview of theoretical background, empirical base, research methods and datasets in present Conflict, Peace and Security Studies. It explores the main definitional

issues, typologies of conflicts and conflict actors, addressing the role of both non-state and state actors in armed violence. It provides an overview and discussion of the main global and key regional trends in the dynamics of state-based conflicts, non-state armed conflicts, one-sided violence against civilians, and terrorism.

It explores such cross-cutting positive trends in armed conflicts and political violence in the 21st century such as decline in inter-state conflicts, major conventional wars, and battle-related deaths. It also identifies the main ambiguous trends, especially in external interventions into internal conflicts, one-sided violence against civilians, and non-state conflicts. It shows and explains the key negative trends, such as dialectically interlinked processes of transnationalization and fragmentation of organized political violence, the rise of violent non-state actors, high recurrence rates of armed conflicts, prevalence of unclear conflict terminations, implications of conflicts in failed or weak states, sharp increase in conflict-related terrorism.

The main humanitarian consequences of evolving patterns of violence in conflict and types of damage to civilian population are identified – from direct human losses and destruction of basic infrastructure to forced displacement and indirect damage from hunger, diseases. The human security approach as the primary conceptual background for the course is introduced.

Part II examines structural causes, facilitating conditions and motivational drivers of conflicts and political violence, as well as explanations at the individual, social group, national and international levels. It discusses the ambiguous links between armed conflicts and organized political violence, more broadly, on the one hand, and issues of poverty and modernization, on the other; the non-linear correlation between participation in armed conflicts with the type of state and governance system; and the relationship between armed conflicts and problem of state functionality and legitimacy.

It follows by addressing ideological and structural (organization) asymmetry in armed conflicts and provides an overview of radical ideologies and organizational systems of asymmetrical violence. The links between ideological extremism (of radical (ethno)nationalist, religious, socio-political, single-issue types) and organized armed violence are explored. Organizational asymmetry is analyzed through the focus on the rise of networks, organizational and social network theories, advantages and drawback of networks for violent and peace actors, prevalence of hybrid organizational forms, and forms and potential for post-network structures in armed conflicts.

Finally, the political economy of conflicts is addressed, with specific focus on the limits of the greed and grievance theoretical debate, the functions of the informal, shadow economy at the time of conflicts and of the "war economy", resource conflicts, differences, similarities and various types and levels of links between political violence and organized crime, and respective actors, and specifics of financial systems of certain types of militant actor.

Part III explores the a range of conflict management, violence control, peacebuilding and conflict prevention strategies, ranging from military/security tools to peace processes, and discusses functional and legitimate ways of managing armed conflicts and building peace at national and international level, including by regional and broader international security organizations. More specifically, it addresses peace processes, including key requirement for a negotiation to qualify as a peace process, stages and dynamics, substance and effectiveness of peace processes and the dynamic interplay between force and talks. A range of peace support strategies and tools are addressed (with a focus on civil and military aspects of peace-keeping and peace enforcement operations) and the concept and practice of peacebuilding, both in post-conflict and in conflict prevention sense, are analyzed. Humanitarian support and

human protection issues during and after conflict are also discussed, with special attention to both life-saving impact and multiple controversies of emergency humanitarian aid delivery, humanitarian interventions as a concept and practice, and challenges for and implications of human protection in armed conflicts in line – and beyond – the "Responsibility to Protect" framework.

Lectures are a followed by a series **seminars** that prioritize the students' work, with an emphasis on collective engagement – in-class discussions of students' presentations and a 5-6 hour simulation game, and leaves space for course feedback and concluding remarks.

COURSE ORGANIZATION AND ASSIGNMENTS

■ Every 80-minute lecture class involves a lecture, sometimes followed by a discussion session on the lecture theme and of relevant reading materials, or a short test;

■ Lectures and readings are complementary, but do not substitute for one another;

■ The students are expected to attend lectures, complete the readings assigned for each theme, participate in discussions in class and in seminars, including in the form of short presentations, perform course assignments, and take an active part in the simulation game (crisis management exercise).

■ During the course, students are required to write a short mid-term paper (book review) and a final paper on a course-related topic, to be agreed upon with the course instructor in advance.

■ The seminars are mainly students' presentations on the topics of their course papers and related in-class discussion.

■ Assignments are to be handed in on the due date. Late submissions will not be accepted.

■ Students are asked to keep a copy of all work submitted for evaluation.

■ The final assessment of the students' course performance includes evaluation of final papers and in-class written exam.

IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

(a) Single/multiple answer choice tests.

(b) Student presentations (on the topic of the final paper, upon instructor's request).

(c) Simulation game. 5/6-hour-long exercise, scheduled for **December** (date tbc).

In this course, the simulation game exercise always builds upon or reflects some real-life crisis management situations and refers to actual political/ geographical context (in any region of the world). The game profile is written and prepared a-new by the course instructor/lecturer on the annual basis.

Sample game thematic contexts may include, but are not limited to:

■ Managing an ongoing complex, multi-party, internationally mediated peace process (at any stage: negotiations, agreement, implementation), including at the stage of acute crisis;

■ Managing a violent crisis with the risk of further escalation to a full-scale armed conflict and transnationalization.

The game is played independently by students in-class, with the professor's role confined to suggesting background reading on the context, assigning roles, offering basic specification of the role profile and providing game background.

HOME ASSIGNMENTS

(a) Database assignment (<u>deadline to be announced</u>).

(b) Mid-term book review, due **24 October 2022**. A book of student's choice – selection of title to be agreed with the Professor in advance. In case a student cannot choose a book for review him/herself, a choice of books is offered by the professor. Review should be 3-5 pages, 12-point font, 1.5-spaced. Reviews of articles and short reports are not accepted.

(c) Final paper:
■ The paper topic is of student's own choice, but is to be agreed upon with the instructor;
■ Final paper is due **25 December 2022** for SGIA students, **15 December** for exchange students, prior to the final exam; students who fail to submit a course paper will not be admitted to pass an exam;
■ Before the final paper is submitted, SGIA students make 10-min in-class presentation on the paper's topic (separate seminar classes for Groups 1 and 2; dates to be confirmed).

The course (term) paper must meet ***the following criteria***:

<u>Relevance</u> of the paper to the course theme and the program and <u>importance of the topic/issues</u> addressed in the paper.

<u>Clarity of the objectives</u> of the paper, as stated in the research question and introduction

<u>Conceptual Rigor</u>: Evidence of reading, understanding, and using relevant literature and key concepts in support of the paper's argument.

<u>Methodological Rigor</u>: Quality of research design, selection of relevant sources, data collection and analysis; clear structure: introduction, body (including sections), conclusions and list of references.

<u>Strength of argument</u>: To what extent has the student used their data sources and research to construct a clear, logical, and robust argument?

<u>Critical analysis</u>: to what extent has the student analyzed their data sources? To what extent have they *explained* the phenomena examined in the course papers, rather than simply *described* it?

<u>Clarity of conclusions</u>: has the student clearly answered their stated research question? To what extent has the student drawn broader conclusions from their research?

<u>Writing style</u>: Clarity of argument and readability of the paper**.**

<u>Formatting and referencing</u>: the essay should be typed, edited and proof-read carefully, showing appropriate division into paragraphs, grammar, spelling and referencing. Appropriate referencing and a full bibliography at the end are essential. The essay should be printed with each line 1.5-spaced and should use a 12-point font.

<u>Antiplagiarism</u>: final paper should be a student's independent work, with all quotes properly referenced and used as supporting evidence, rather than as a substitute for original argument. Unreferenced quotes will be treated as plagiarism.

GRADING

Your final grade <u>aggregates three main parts</u>:

a) Your work during the seminar:
   - Tests 1 (<u>pass</u>) and 2 (<u>grade</u>);
   - Database assignment (<u>grade</u>);
   - Mid-term paper: book review (<u>grade</u>)
   - In-class presentation on your final paper's topic at the seminar (<u>grade</u>);
   - Simulation game (<u>grade</u>).

b) Final essay (homework; grade);

c) Final exam (written, in-class; grade).

II. COURSE CONTENTS

PART I: ARMED CONFLICTS AND ORGANIZED POLITICAL VIOLENCE:
definitions, trends, impact

Theme 1. Armed conflicts: definitions, methods, types, trends

<u>REQUIRED</u>:

- Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) datasets:
  definitions; charts, graphs and maps on state-based and non-state conflicts
  (Version 2021);

- Kaldor, "Peacemaking in an era of new wars," chapter 3 in De Waal (ed.), *Think Peace: Essays for an Age of Disorde*r (2019), pp. 21–26;

- Davies, Pettersson, et al., "Organized violence, 1989–2021, and drone warfare", *Journal of Peace Research* (2022), pp. 593–610.

<u>RECOMMENDED</u>:

- *Global Peace Index 2022: Measuring Peace in a Complex World* (2022),
  - chapter 1: Results (pp. 7–26);
  - chapter 2: Trends (pp. 27–40);

- *The Decline in Global Violence: Evidence, Explanation and Contestation* (2013),
  - chapter 1: The decline of violence and its critics (pp. 17–48).

Theme 2. ONE-SIDED VIOLENCE AGAINST CIVILIANS. HUMANITARIAN CONSEQUENCES OF CONFLICTS. HUMAN SECURITY

<u>REQUIRED</u>:

- Uppsala Conflict Data Program Datasets (Version 2021):
  graphs, data and definitions on battle-related deaths, deaths from non-state conflicts, one-sided violence against civilians;

- *The Decline in Global Violence: Evidence, Explanation and Contestation* (2013),
  - chapter 6: Deadly assaults on civilians (pp. 105–113);

- Roberts, Lives and Statistics: are 90% of war victims civilian? *Survival* (2010), pp. 115–136.

- *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2021* (2022):
Trends at a glance, pp. 2–4;
chapter 1: Global forces displacement (pp. 5–11);
chapter 2: Refugees (pp. 12–21);
chapter 3: Internally Displaced People (IDPs) (pp. 21–27);

- De Waal, Armed conflict and the challenge of hunger: is an end in sight? In: *Global Hunger Index 2015* (2015), pp. 23–29.

Theme 3. TERRORISM

REQUIRED:

- Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (2006), chapter 1, pp. 2–40;

- Stepanova, *Terrorism in Asymmetrical Conflict: Ideological and Structural Aspects* (2008), pp. 1–27.

DATASETS:

- *Global Terrorism Index 2022: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism* (2022),
  - chapter 1: Results (pp. 8–28);
  - chapter 2: Trends in terrorism (pp. 29–44);
  - chapter 4: Terrorism and conflict (pp. 60–70);

- *Global Terrorism Database*, National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism. University of Maryland.

RECOMMENDED:

- Boyle (ed.), *Non-Western Responses to Terrorism* (2019).

- Schmid (ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research* (2011).

PART II: MAIN DRIVERS, CONDITIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF ARMED CONFLICTS

Theme 4. Causes, conditions and drivers of armed conflicts and political violence

<u>REQUIRED</u>:

- *Conflict, Security and Development* (2011),
  Part I, chapter 2: Vulnerability to violence, pp. 73–89:

- Lia and Skjolberg, *Causes of Terrorism: An Expanded and Updated Review of Literature* (2004).

<u>RECOMMENDED</u>:

- Bjorgo (ed.), *Root Causes of Terrorism: Myths, Reality and Ways Forward* (2005).

Theme 5. The role of ideology in armed violence

<u>REQUIRED</u>

- Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (2002), chapter 2, pp. 26–70.

- Stepanova, *Terrorism in Asymmetrical Conflict: Ideological and Structural Aspects* (2008):
  - chapter 2: Ideological patterns of terrorism: radical nationalism (pp. 28–40);
  - chapter 3: Ideological patterns of terrorism: religious and quasi-religious extremism (pp. 54–99).

<u>RECOMMENDED</u>:

- Stepanova, "Regionalization of violent jihadism and beyond: the case of Daesh," *Interdisciplinary Journal for Religion…* (2016), pp. 30–55.

Theme 6. Organizational systems of conflict actors: networks and beyond

<u>REQUIRED</u>:

- Arquilla and Ronfeldt, *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime, and Militancy* (2001);

- Stepanova E. *Terrorism in Asymmetrical Conflict: Ideological and Structural Aspects* (2008):
  - chapter 4: Organisational forms of terrorism at the local and regional levels (pp. 100–112);
  - chapter 5: Organisational forms of the violent Islamist movement at the transnational level (pp. 127–150)

<u>RECOMMENDED</u>:

- Morozov, *The Net Delusion: How Not to Liberate the World* (2011).

- Perliger, "Terrorist networks' productivity and durability," *Perspectives on Terrorism* (2014), pp. 36–52;

- Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century* (2008).

Theme 7. Political economy of conflicts; conflicts, organized crime and criminal violence

<u>REQUIRED</u>:

- Global Study of Homicide: Executive Summary (2019);

- Collier and Hoeffler, *Greed and Grievance in Civil Wars* (2000).

<u>RECOMMENDED</u>:

- Stepanova, "Armed conflict, crime and criminal violence", in *SIPRI Yearbook* (2010), pp. 37–60;

- Naylor, *Wages of Crime: Black Markets, Illegal Finance, and the Underworld Economy* (2002).

PART III: CONFLICT MANAGEMENT, PEACEMAKING AND PEACEBUILDING

Theme 8. Peace processes and violence

<u>REQUIRED:</u>

- Darby and MacGinty, *Contemporary Peacemaking, Conflict, Violence and Peace Processes* (2003):
  - Introduction: What peace? What process? (pp. 1–6);
  - Chapter 9: Stedman, Peace processes and the challenges of violence (pp. 103–113);
  - Conclusions (pp. 256–276);

- Höglund and Nilsson, Violence and peace processes. In: *Contemporary Peacemaking: Peace Processes, Peacebuilding and Conflict* (2022), pp. 289–293;

- Petersson, Hogbladh and Oberg, "Organized violence, 1989–2018, and peace agreements," *Journal of Peace Research* (2019), pp. 589–603.

Theme 9. Peace support, human protection and peace-building

<u>REQUIRED:</u>

- Kjeksrud, Beadle and Lindqvist, *Protecting Civilians From Violence: A Threat-based Approach to Protection of Civilians in UN Peace Operations* (2016);

- Section on "peace-building" in: Wallenstein et al., "Violence, peace, and security," chapter 10 in *Rethinking Society for the 21st Century, Vol. 2: Political Regulation, Governance and Societal Transformations* (2018), pp. 411–456.

<u>RECOMMENDED:</u>

- Seybolt, *Humanitarian Military Intervention* (2008):
  - chapters 1–2 (pp. 1–45);
  - chapters 4–6 (pp. 96–221);

- Bellamy and Dunne, "R2P in theory and practice," chapter 1 in *The Oxford Handbook of the Responsibility to Protect* (2016), pp. 3–16.

III. COURSE READING LIST AND RESOURCES

Datasets, indexes and data collections

Global Peace Index 2022: Measuring Peace in a Complex World (Sydney: Institute for Economics and Peace, 2022).

Global Study of Homicide: Executive Summary (Vienna: UN Office on Drugs and Crime, 2019).

Global Terrorism Database, National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), University of Maryland.

Global Terrorism Index 2022: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism (Sydney: Institute for Economics and Peace, 2022).

Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2021 (Geneva: UN High Commissioner on Refugees, 2022).

Uppsala Conflict Data Program Datasets, Uppsala University, Sweden.

Literature

Arquilla, John and Ronfeldt, Daniel. *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime, and Militancy* (Santa Monica, Calif., 2001).

Bellamy, Alex and Dunne, Tim, "R2P in theory and practice," *The Oxford Handbook of the Responsibility to Protect* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 3–16.

Berdal, Mats and Malone, David (eds.), *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars* (London; Boulder (Col.): Lynne Rienner, 2000).

Bjorgo, Tore (ed.), *Root Causes of Terrorism: Myths, Reality and Ways Forward* (London; New York: Routledge, 2005).

Boyle, Michael (ed.), *Non-Western Responses to Terrorism* (Manchester University Press, 2019).

Collier, Paul and Hoeffler, Anke, *Greed and Grievance in Civil Wars*. World Bank Policy Research Paper, 2000.

Conflict, Security and Development, World Development Report (Washington D.C.: The World Bank, 2011).

Darby, John and Mac Ginty, Roger, *Contemporary Peacemaking, Conflict, Violence and Peace Processes* (Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

Davies, Shawn, Pettersson, Therese, and Oberg, Magnus, "Organized violence, 1989–2021, and drone warfare," *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 59, no. 4 (2022), pp. 593–610.

The Decline in Global Violence: Evidence, Explanation and Contestation. Human Security Report Project, Simon Fraser University (Vancouver: Human Security Press, 2013).

Esposito, John, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

Hoffman, Bruce, *Inside Terrorism*, revised and exp. edn (New York: Columbia University Press,

2006), pp. 2–40.

Höglund, Kristine and Nilsson, Desiree. Violence and peace processes. In: *Contemporary Peacemaking: Peace Processes, Peacebuilding and Conflict* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), pp. 289–306

Kaldor, Mary, "Peacemaking in an era of new wars," in Thomas De Waal (ed.), *Think Peace: Essays for an Age of Disorde*r (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2019), pp. 21–26.

Kjeksrud, Stian, Beadle, Alexander and Lindqvist, Petter, *Protecting Civilians From Violence: A Threat-based Approach to Protection of Civilians in UN Peace Operations* (Kjeller; Oslo, 2016).

Lia, Brynjar and Skjolberg, Katja. *Causes of Terrorism: An Expanded and Updated Review of Literature* (Kjeller, 2004).

Morozov, Yevgeni, *The Net Delusion: How Not to Liberate the World* (London: Allen Lane, 2011).

Naylor, Robin T., *Wages of Crime: Black Markets, Illegal Finance, and the Underworld Economy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2002).

Perliger, Arie, "Terrorist networks' productivity and durability: A comparative multi-level analysis", *Perspectives on Terrorism*, vol. 8, no. 4 (2014), pp. 36–52.

Petersson, Therese, Hogbladh, Stina and Oberg, Magnus, "Organized violence, 1989–2018, and peace agreements", *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 56, no. 4. (2019), pp. 589–603.

Roberts, Adam, "Lives and statistics: are 90% of war victims civilian?" *Survival*, vol. 52, no. 3 (2010), pp. 115–136:

Sageman, Marc, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

Schmid, Alex P. (ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research* (London; New York: Routledge, 2011).

Seybolt, Taylor, *Humanitarian Military Intervention* (Oxford: SIPRI/Oxford University Press, 2008).

Stepanova, Ekaterina, "Armed conflict, crime and criminal violence", *SIPRI Yearbook 2010: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 37–60.

Stepanova, Ekaterina, "Regionalization of violent jihadism and beyond: the case of Daesh," in *Interdisciplinary Journal for Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society*, vol. 2, no. 2: Religious Fundamentalism (2016), pp. 30–55.

Stepanova, Ekaterina. *Terrorism in Asymmetrical Conflict: Ideological and Structural Aspects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

De Waal, Alex, Armed conflict and the challenge of hunger: is an end in sight? In: *Global Hunger Index Global Hunger Index 2015: Armed Conflict and the Challenge of Hunger* (International Food Policy Research Institute, 2015), pp. 23–29.

Wallenstein, Peter et al., "Violence, peace, and security," chapter 10 in *Rethinking Society for the 21st Century, Vol. 2: Political Regulation, Governance and Societal Transformations* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 411–456.