Terrorism and Asymmetric Warfare

Course Syllabus
The course “Terrorism and Asymmetric Warfare” is designed in accordance with the MGIMO Educational Standard for Bachelor’s Program in International Affairs (program track “Government and International Affairs”).

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Director, MGIMO Library ________________________ Marina Reshetnikova
The program is approved by the Department of World Politics on _________________

Head of Department ________________________________ Prof. Marina Lebedeva
PART 1. COURSE DESCRIPTION AND TEACHING METHODS

1.1 General Information
Full course title: Terrorism and Asymmetric Warfare
Type of Course: Compulsory
Level of Course: Bachelor of Arts
Year of Study: 4th
Number of ECTS credits allocated: 2,0
Name of lecturer and office hours:
   Associate Professor Sergey Veselovskiy, Ph.D.
   Department of World Politics
   Office hours: Tuesday 15.30-19.30 by appointment
   E-mail: veselovskiy.mgimo@gmail.com

1.2 Course aims and Learning outcomes:
The events of the last two decades led to renewed interest in the changing face of warfare, and especially in the unique and challenging characteristics of asymmetric warfare defined as conflict between two adversaries with significant differences in relative military resources and capabilities. Under these conditions belligerents seek to offset disadvantages in brute strength by focusing on their opponent’s weaknesses or constraints. In the field of international relations this research, however, is still in its early stages. Even its core concepts are often contested and ill defined: limited wars, low-intensity conflicts, asymmetric warfare, insurgency, small wars, etc. Furthermore, asymmetric warfare, which often involves non-state actors, offers an additional challenge for existing theories of international security which tend to be state-centric.

One of the most prominent asymmetric tactic used by non-state actors in recent years has been terrorism, which has evolved dramatically in the course of the last quarter of the century and is now a lead feature of contemporary international relations. Hardly a state in the international system has not been affected by it in some way. This course will address the questions of definition of terrorism, history of the concept, perspectives on causes, structure and organization of terrorist groups, relationship to the debate on the changing face of warfare, and the consequences of terrorism.
The course’s main aim is to enhance student’s critical ability to understand and analyze the issue of asymmetrical conflicts in general and terrorism in particular, as well as their implication for foreign policy.

Course objectives are the following:
• define various forms of asymmetric warfare in terms of both strategy and tactics;
explain how tactics of asymmetric warfare seek to capitalize on various factors that makes them successful;
- define terrorism and explain what constitutes a terrorist act;
- examine the historical foundations of terrorism domestically and globally;
- discuss the targets, tactics, and strategies typically used by individuals and groups engaging in terrorist acts;
- familiarize with different modern terrorist groups and their motivation for committing terrorist acts;
- access, use, synthesize, and derive meaningful conclusions from the data on terrorism and political violence.

**Learning outcomes.**
Students will acquire the following intellectual skills:
- familiarize with key academic literature on problems of contemporary international terrorism and asymmetric warfare;
- know key data and most up to date information on contemporary international terrorism and asymmetric warfare;
- learn to understand the main development trends of modern terrorism;
Students will also acquire the following practical (professional) skill:
- learn to formulate their own proposals for the use of the appropriate measures in the fight against terrorism.

**1.3. Course requirements:**
Students will be required to attend at least 90% of classes (7 out of 8) and be prepared for in-class discussion of the week’s topic. Conscientious reading of the assigned materials is also mandatory.

Students will also be required to:
A. *Take an in-class mid-term exam* based on lectures, class discussions and readings of the first four topics (see 2.4 for details).
B. *Write a Final paper* (12-15 pages, Times New Roman 14 pt., 1,15 interval) on a particular contemporary terrorism related issue (see 2.4 for details).

**1.4. Grading plan:**
The final grade is calculated taking into account midterm test’s results, activities at discussion classes and final paper.
PART 2. COURSE CONTENTS

2.1. Types of Work

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<td><strong>Total workload</strong></td>
<td>72</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total for lectures and seminars</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lectures</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seminars</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homework, preparation of final written paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation for lectures, seminars and tests</td>
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<td>Midterm evaluation</td>
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<td>Final evaluation</td>
<td>Final paper</td>
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2.2. Course outline

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lectures</td>
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<td>1. Course Introduction. The rise of asymmetric warfare</td>
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<td>2. Asymmetric strategies in modern conflict</td>
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<td>3. Defining Terrorism. Is the use of terrorism ever justified?</td>
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<td>4. Causes and roots of terrorism</td>
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<td>5. Terrorism beyond borders</td>
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<td>6. The new Islamist terrorism. The rise and fall of Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda</td>
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<td>7. The rise of the Islamic State</td>
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<td>8. Does Terrorism End? Future of Terrorism.</td>
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2.3. COURSE CONTENTS

**Topic 1. Course Introduction. The rise of asymmetric warfare.**

What is asymmetrical action? Asymmetric conflicts at the end of the XX – beginning of the XXI century and their main features. Difference between asymmetrical, unconventional, hybrid and nonlinear.

Main research trends in asymmetrical conflict studies.

**Required readings:**

**Additional reading:**

**Topic 2. Asymmetric strategies in modern conflict.**

Contemporary asymmetric international conflicts involving state and non-state actors: states against representatives of transnational Islamist terrorism, insurgent and separatist movements, pirates, etc.

The future of asymmetric conflicts and their impact on the formation of a new system of international and national security.

**Required readings:**
3. Razvan Munteanu. Hybrid Warfare – the New Form of Conflict at the
Beginning of the Century // Strategic Impact – Iss.3. – 2015.

**Topic 3. Defining Terrorism. Is the use of terrorism ever justified?**

Persistent difficulties and dilemmas in defining terrorism. Distinctions as a path to working out a definition of terrorism. Definitions of terrorism within the UN. The most commonly used definitions of terrorism and their relation to diverse violent political behaviors.

Changing meaning of terrorism: from regime de le terreur in France to Islamist terrorism.

Terrorism as means to an end. Can it’s use ever be justified?

**Required readings:**

**Additional reading:**

**Topic 4. Causes and roots of terrorism.**

Major theories regarding psychological, economic, societal, and political factors that lead individuals to join terror groups and use terror violence to achieve political goals.

The rationale behind terrorist activity. Exploring the possible link between poverty, level of education and terrorism.

**Required readings:**

**Additional readings:**

2. Post, Jerrold; Sprinzak, Ehud; Denny, Laurita. The Terrorists in Their Own Words: Interviews with 35 Incarcerated Middle Eastern terrorists // Terrorism and Political Violence – 2003. – Vol.15. – Iss.1.

**Topic 5. Terrorism beyond borders.**


How globalization shaped modern terrorism with global reach and without borders.

**Required readings:**


**Additional reading:**


**6. The new Islamist terrorism. The rise and fall of Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda.**

The role of Al-Qaeda as an Islamist’s foreign fighters base during the war in Afghanistan in the 1980-ies. The evolution of Al-Qaeda in the 1990-ies: from Sudan to Afghanistan. Main Osama bin Laden fatwas and his views of a just world.

The linkage of terrorism to Islam. Jihad: definitions, descriptions and discussions, theory and practice.


What Al-Qaeda did wrong and why its modus operandi eventually failed.
7. The rise of the Islamic State.


Required readings:


Do terrorist campaigns come to an end and if so how? What future trends of terrorism can be discerned? What can be done to mitigate the lasting impact of terrorism?

Required reading:
2.4. PRESENTATION TOPICS / QUESTIONS FOR TESTS

Mid-term Test

On the fifth week of the course there will be an in-class written test on the first four topics.

The test will have two versions with an equally distributed types of questions. It will contain 10 theoretical and practical questions on reading material, lectures and class discussions. Fully correct answers to a question will be awarded 10 points. For partially correct answers, the number of points may vary from 1 to 9. Incorrect answers will receive 0 points. The overall result of the midterm test consists of the total score for all the 10 questions summed up.

The test will include:

A. Open questions (Example: Define the notion of «international conflict»);
B. Question on the knowledge of a specific historical date or figure (Example: Who was the pioneer in researching asymmetrical conflicts within the international relations? Which terrorist group is responsible for the highest number of terrorist attacks in 2016?).

Final Paper

The final course assignment is an individual research paper 12-15 pages long (14 point font, double-spaced) with proper citations and a bibliography.

The paper should put forth cogently an argument and examine analytically an issue, rather than summarize the literature. The research paper may discuss any particular aspect of the course themes. The topic of the research paper should be thematic. If the student opts for a case-study, the paper must nonetheless cast the analysis against thematic questions and comparatively in relation to other instances. Students are invited to select a topic and submit an outline no later than by the fourth class.

Paper outline:
1) A cover sheet with course details and title of your paper (not included in page count);
2) Abstract of no more than 200 words (about 1 page) summarizing the main argument;
3) Main text (divided in sections if necessary);
4) Conclusions (no more than 300 words; about 1.5 pages);
5) References to the literature and sources used (not included in page count);
6) Appendixes (if needed; not included in the page count but no more than 5 pages).
Sample Examination questions
1. The defining characteristics of an asymmetric strategy in a conflict.
2. Asymmetrical strategies: the cases for unconventional, hybrid and nonlinear conflicts.
3. Analysis of a contemporary asymmetric conflict.
4. Future of asymmetric conflicts and their impact on warfare.
5. The main problems of defining terrorism. The progress so far.
6. The evolution of meaning of terrorism through the ages.
7. Can terrorism ever be justified.
8. Possible causes of terrorism.
9. The rationale behind terrorism.
10. Internationalization of terrorism in the 1970-ies. The case of the People Liberation Army.
11. Main terrorist movements in the second half of the XX century.
12. The genesis of Al-Qaeda from the 1980-ies to today.
13. The link between Islam and terrorism. The misused concept of jihad.
14. Context of the formation of the Islamic State
17. The future of terrorism in the XXI century: a war without end?

2.5. TYPES OF EXCUTACURRICULUM WORK
1. Reading the assigned material;
2. Studying for the midterm test;
3. Preparing the Final paper.

2.6. TEST TIMING
The 5th week of the Fall Semester (Middle of March).

2.7. READING LIST
Required reading:

Books:

Articles:

Additional readings:
5. Post, Jerrold; Sprinzak, Ehud; Denny, Laurita. The Terrorists in Their Own Words: Interviews with 35 Incarcerated Middle Eastern terrorists // Terrorism and Political Violence – 2003. – Vol.15. – Iss.1.