Armed Conflicts in the 21st Century

The course program developed by Dr. Ekaterina Stepanova, 2018

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The course “Armed Conflicts in the 21st Century” is elaborated in accordance with the MGIMO Educational Standard for the Bachelor’s Program in International Affairs (program track “Government and International Affairs”).

Author: Dr., Prof. Ekaterina Stepanova

Director of the MGIMO library______________________ Marina Reshetnikova

The program is approved by Department of ___________ on

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Head of Department_________________________ Prof.

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PART 1: INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION, COURSE DESCRIPTION AND TEACHING METHODS

1.1 General information

Template

- Full course title: Armed Conflicts in the 21st Century
- Type of course: Compulsory
- Level of course B.A.
- Year of study: 4th
- Number of ECTS credits allocated: 3
- Name of lecturer(s) and office hours:
  Dr. Ekaterina Stepanova, Ph.D., Doctor of Political Science
  Lead researcher; Head, Peace and Conflict Studies Unit, Primakov National Research Institute of World Economy and International Relations;
  the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS) Professor;
  Office hours: TBA
  E-mail: stepanova.eka@gmail.com

1.2. Course aims, thematic structure and learning outcomes

Aims

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 main 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.

**Thematic/area coverage and structure**

The course focuses on the origins of and trends in 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 has four parts.

**Part I** provides an overview of theoretical background, empirical base, research methods and datasets in present Conflict, Peace and Security Studies. It also introduces the human security approach as the primary conceptual background for the course. 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 (Week 1). It follows by and discussing the main global and key regional trends in the dynamics of state-based and non-state armed conflicts (Week 2), with a specific focus on asymmetrical conflicts, as well as terrorism (Week 3) and one-sided violence against civilians (Week 4).

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. Finally, 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.

**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; the relationship between armed conflicts and problem of state functionality and legitimacy etc. (Week 5).

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 (Week 6). 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 (Week 7).

Finally, the political economy of conflicts is tackled, 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 (Week 8).

**Part III** explores the a range of conflict management, violence control, peacebuilding and conflict prevention strategies, ranging from military/security interventions 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. It first explores how contemporary conflicts end, offering a comparative analysis of the use, spread and sustainability (effectiveness) of military solutions and negotiated solutions (ceasefires and peace agreements), and explains why they are superseded by “no war, no peace”-style conflict terminations.
(Week 9). It then more specifically 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 (Week 10). It follows by discussing humanitarian and human protection issues during and after conflict, 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 (Week 11). Finally, the 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.

Part IV. The final part of the course prioritizes the students’ work, with an emphasis on collective engagement – in-class discussions of students’ presentations (Weeks 13 and 14) and a 5-6 hour simulation game, and leaves space for course feedback and concluding remarks.

Planned learning outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency contents</th>
<th>Planned learning outcomes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Know:</td>
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<tr>
<td>– the main conceptual approaches in Peace, Conflict and Security Studies to definitional, typological, ideological, organizational and political economy aspects of armed conflicts and other forms of violence linked to or widespread in areas of armed conflict (terrorism, one-sided violence against civilians, criminal violence); main global and regional trends in armed conflicts in the 21st century; the main causes and implications of armed conflicts; mechanisms of escalation and de-escalation and transnationalization of conflicts – asymmetrical conflict theory; power, status, ideological and structural asymmetry; main types and characteristics of ideological extremism and organizational systems of violent non-state actors; – the main conceptual approaches to efforts to prevent, control and resolve armed conflicts at the national and international levels.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manage:</td>
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<tr>
<td>– to apply critically and independently theoretical models and knowledge to the analysis of various forms and manifestations of conflicts; – to understand the complexities and non-linearities of causal connections in social sciences and employ multi-causal and systemic analytical approaches.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Master:</td>
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<tr>
<td>– critical and inquisitive analytical skills and the creative use of modern theory; – system approach; – policy analysis skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Possessing skills of applying key theories of motivation, leadership and power to solve strategic and operational tasks; strategic analysis, development and implementation of an organization’s strategy; ability to analyze relationships between organizations’ functional strategies to take balanced decisions; develop organizational models by their adaptation to particular problems and crises.</td>
<td>Know:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– national and international strategic decision-making on armed conflict management; – introduction into organizational network theory; – adequate national and international institutional solutions for armed conflict management.</td>
<td>Manage:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– to understand the need to balance functionality and legitimacy in strategies and measures to address, prevent and resolve conflicts at levels from national to global; – to be aware of key ideological and organizational assets of militant non-state actors; – to offer ideological (counternarrative) and...</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competency contents</td>
<td>Planned learning outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to solve standard professional tasks based on collected information and bibliography, using ICT and taking into account key requirements for information security</td>
<td>structural/organizational solutions for conflict management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know: – main datasets on armed conflicts and other forms of organized armed violence (terrorism, one-sided violence against civilians, criminal violence) – key methodological problems and sensitivities involved in research, analysis and decision-making on major security policy issues such as antiterrorism</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manage: – to work with Big-N and georeferenced data and familiarize oneself with methods and sensitivities of working with empirical and other primary sources (e.g., ideological documents)</td>
<td>– analysis of organizational networks and other organizational forms in armed conflicts (management)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Master: – skills of qualitative and quantitative data analysis, including the use of the world’s basic datasets in Peace, Conflict and Security Studies</td>
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1.3. Course methods, requirements and guidelines

Teaching Methodology

The main characteristic of the course’s learning process and teaching methods is that they are constructed:

– to balance lectures with students’ activities;
– to encourage students to work with empirical sources and data;
– to develop and explicitly support the ability to think originally, inquisitive comprehension, alternate interpretation and discussion.

A combination of these intellectual and practical skills does not exclude, but is given preference over memorization, conceptual fluency or abstract theorizing.

◼ Every 2-hour class involves a lecture, followed by a discussion session on the lecture theme and relevant reading materials, a workshop, test or student presentations;

◼ 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 workshop discussions, including in the form of short presentations, perform other in-class assignments and take an active part in the simulation game (crisis management exercise).

◼ For some of 2-hour classes, a short test/written assignment is envisaged, including those prepared as part of the simulation game.

◼ Students are required to write a short mid-term essay (book review) and a 15-page paper on a course-related topic (normally, a context-specific case-study), to be agreed upon with the course instructor in advance by 1 November; course papers due 15 December.

◼ 2 of 3 final sessions (Weeks 13 and 14) will be allocated to students’ presentations and in-class discussion of their course papers’ case studies; a question pertaining to their course paper case study may be included in the final oral exam.
The final assessment of the students’ course performance includes evaluation of their course papers and an in-class oral exam.

Assignments

In class:

(a) 4 single/multiple answer choice tests.

(b) Student presentations (of dataset assignment, course paper case study etc., upon instructor’s request).

(c) Simulation game (Week 15).
The specifics of the simulation game exercise for this course is that it always builds upon or reflects some real-life crisis management situation 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 an annual basis.

Sample game thematic contexts may include, but are not limited to managing a rapidly evolving crisis in a conflict area, or threatening to escalate into open fighting/armed conflict; an ongoing complex, multi-party, internationally mediated peace process (at any stage: negotiations, agreement, implementation) complicated, among other things, by actions by radical spoilers (off-shoot violent splinter group) specifically aimed at undermining the peace process etc.

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.

In/off-class:

Database work assignment.

Home assignments:

(a) Mid-term reflection paper – a book review (3-5 pages)

(b) Final course paper.

Course paper requirements:

The course paper should meet the following criteria:

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

Clarity of the objectives of the paper, as stated in the research question and introduction

Conceptual Rigor: Evidence of reading, understanding, and using relevant literature and key concepts in support of the paper’s argument.

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

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

Critical analysis: 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?

Clarity of conclusions: Has the student clearly answered their stated research question? To what extent has the student drawn broader conclusions from their research?
Writing style: Clarity of argument and readability of the paper.

Formatting and referencing: Has the student met the stated conventions? 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.

Antiplagiarism. The course paper should be the 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.

Guidelines for self-study

In addition to attending lectures, participating in workshop discussions, and performing in-class assignments, tests and exercises, the students are expected to engage in active self-study along the following suggested lines:

◼ To have completed the readings assigned for each lecture/seminar and formulate questions based on the readings;

◼ To perform a dataset-based search and analysis (home) assignment centered on a country case-study of their choice.

◼ To write a mid-term reflection paper – a 3-5-page book review. This should be a review of a research monograph, edited volume or popular scientific book on any of the course themes (3-5 pages), with the choice of book to be agreed with the instructor;

◼ To prepare for the in-class simulation game (crisis/conflict management exercise), including, if needed, in teams;

◼ To do research for and write the final course (term) paper, applying theoretical knowledge, concepts and methods learnt during the course to a specific case study. The paper topic (choice of case study) has to be discussed and agreed with the instructor. The individual guidelines on relevant literature and sources will be available upon the choice of the case study. Case studies focusing on the same region, country, armed conflict area, or type of antiterrorist activity may be discussed off-class in teams assigned by the instructor.

Assessment criteria for final exam:

Strength and clarity of argument: the exam answers should present an argument in an organized and coherent manner and follow it through. Summarizing someone else’s ideas or reiteration of primary material is insufficient. The answer must address the question asked.

Conceptual clarity: the exam answers should demonstrate a clear understanding of concepts used. The concepts should be used consistently throughout the answers. Alertness to conceptual issues is expected.

Relevance: the exam answers should only present material that is relevant to the question asked. Failure to answer the question will lead to a lower mark.

Critical analysis: The exam answers should be based on analysis, rather than reproduction of data sources and literature. The phenomena and processes outlined in the answers should be explained, rather than simply described.

1.4. Grading plan
The final grade will be calculated on the basis of seminar discussions, in-class tests and exercises, including the simulation game and home assignments (dataset, book review) (25%), lecture attendance (15%), final exam (25%), and the course (term) paper evaluation (35%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Weight in %</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>In class, individual</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in workshop discussions, in-class tests and exercises, dataset assignment, mid-term essay</td>
<td>Oral/written, in class/homework, individual and team-based</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course (term) paper</td>
<td>Written, individual, team discussions possible at the preparation/research stage for students working on closely related topics or the same regions (as assigned by instructor)</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>Oral, in class, individual</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
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</table>

PART 2:

WEEKLY SCHEDULE & READINGS

2.1 Types of work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of work</th>
<th>Academic hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total for lectures, seminars and written exam</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectures</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminars: incl.course paper presentations and simulation game</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written tests</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written home assignments</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for lectures, seminars</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation and passing of the Final exam</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.2. Course content and readings by topic

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS

PART I: INTRODUCTION INTO ARMED CONFLICTS

Week 1: Armed conflicts: definitions, types, actors, human security approach

REQUIRED READINGS

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Week 2. Global and regional trends in armed conflicts

REQUIRED READINGS

RECOMMENDED MATERIALS
- Uppsala Conflict Data Program Datasets: graphs on state-based and non-state conflicts: http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/charts_and_graphs

Week 3. Asymmetrical conflicts: terrorism and insurgency

REQUIRED READINGS
- Global Terrorism Index 2016: Measuring and Understanding the Impact of Terrorism

RECOMMENDED READINGS AND MATERIALS:
- Global Terrorism Database, National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism. University of Maryland. URL: http://www.start.umd.edu/data/gtd/

Week 4. Armed conflicts and one-sided violence against civilians

REQUIRED READINGS

RECOMMENDED MATERIALS
- Uppsala Conflict Data Program Datasets: graphs on one-sided violence against civilians: http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/charts_and_graphs

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

Week 5. Causes, conditions and drivers of armed conflicts and political violence

REQUIRED READINGS

RECOMMENDED READINGS
Week 6. The role of ideologies in armed conflicts

**REQUIRED READINGS**

**RECOMMENDED READINGS**

Week 7. Organizational systems of conflict actors: networks and beyond

**REQUIRED READINGS**

**RECOMMENDED READINGS**

Week 8. Political economy of conflicts; armed conflicts, organized crime and criminal violence

**REQUIRED READINGS**

**RECOMMENDED READINGS**
PART III: CONFLICT MANAGEMENT, PEACEMAKING AND PEACEBUILDING

Week 9. How and why conflicts end: military solutions; negotiated solutions; no war, no peace

REQUIRED READINGS

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Week 10. Peace processes and violence

REQUIRED READINGS
- Darby J., MacGinty R., Contemporary Peacemaking, Conflict, Violence and Peace Processes: Introduction (pp. 1–6) and Chapter 9 (pp. 103–113); Conclusions (pp. 256–276).

RECOMMENDED READINGS
- Peace Accords Matrix, Kroc Institute, University of Notre Dame, USA, https://peaceaccords.nd.edu

Week 11. Humanitarian support and human protection in armed conflicts

REQUIRED READINGS

RECOMMENDED READINGS
Week 12. Peace operations and peacebuilding

**ESSENTIAL READINGS**


**SUPPORTING READINGS**


**PART IV**

Week 13: Student presentations on course paper topics

Week 14: Student presentations on course paper topics (continued)

Week 15. Simulation game (6 hours)

**RECOMMENDED READINGS:**


**OTHER READINGS TO BE ASSIGNED DEPENDING ON THE GAME SCENARIO (CASE)**

**Disclaimer**

Instructor could modify schedule of the classes as necessary.

2.3. Exam timing

- Final exam – December 2017 (week 15?)
2.4. Consolidated reading list (in alphabetic order)

Datasets

Global Terrorism Database, National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism. University of Maryland. URL: http://www.start.umd.edu/data/gtd/

Peace Accords Matrix, Kroc Institute, University of Notre Dame, USA, https://peaceaccords.nd.edu

Uppsala Conflict Data Program Datasets, Uppsala University, Sweden. URL: http://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/; http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/datasets

Indexes


UN documents


Literature


Berdal, Mats, Building Peace after War (London: Routledge, 2009).


Hale, Henry E. *The Foundation of Ethnic Politics: Separatism of States and Nations in Eurasia and


Stepanova, Ekaterina. Terrorism in Asymmetrical Conflict: Ideological and Structural Aspects


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PART 3. FINAL REMARKS

- Plagiarism is considered a severe violation and an indication of incompetence in the course. Plagiarism is understood as making of one’s text using compilation method for other people’s publications, even connected with own phrases and sentences. Collective performance of individual tasks is unacceptable. Proven plagiarism will receive an F-mark regardless of the fulfillment of all other requirements.
- 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.