

41035: Politics of Conflict and Violence

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Second Semester, 2024/2025, Bocconi University

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Course Objectives After taking this course, you will be familiar with the theoretical and empirical tools used by political scientists to study political conflict and its consequences. Additionally, you will be able to apply these tools to your own research.

Research Project You will write a 20-page paper by the end of the semester. The purpose of the exercise is to provide you with an opportunity to start a bigger research project or pursue publication of a short article. Your paper should have an empirical (preferably quantitative) component. You are free to choose any topic as long as it touches on political conflict in some way.

I have designated the following milestones. These will help you make progress during the semester while receiving feedback from me and your colleagues.

By February 17: Email me two research questions and design ideas. The questions should be answerable with data that is already publicly available. For each idea, explain the following:

- What is the main question? Why does it matter? What is the relevant literature that you aim to contribute to? What is your research design (e.g. unit of analysis, time frame, methodological strategy)? What are your data sources?

By March 03: Email me a 5-page research proposal. It should include the following:

- Motivation, state of the literature, testable hypotheses, research design, descriptive statistics, initial regressions.

By March 17: Email me a first draft of the paper. It should include the following:

- Introduction, brief literature review, theoretical argument, research design, empirical findings, conclusion.

By May 19: Submit the final version of your paper.

TBD: We will meet at the end of the semester to present and discuss all three papers.

Readings All readings are required. We will discuss some readings in more depth than others because their theoretical framework or research design are broadly applicable. These readings should be read more carefully. Other readings should be skimmed. Although they are interesting and important, I do not plan to discuss them in as much detail. All readings will be provided by me.

Academic Integrity and Honesty You are required to comply with the university policy on academic integrity found in the Code of Academic Integrity for Bocconi Students found here: [Bocconi Honor Code](#).

You are allowed to use AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT) in their research. However, please be aware that you are responsible for the final product.

Accommodations for Diversity We are committed to maintaining an academic environment for all students that is free from all forms of discrimination (e.g. based on race, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability or sexual orientation). If you feel uncomfortable at any time during class, please feel free to get in touch with Prof Kavakli.

In addition, if you feel that you have been the subject of prohibited discrimination, harassment, or retaliation please contact the Student Ombudsman at garante.studenti@unibocconi.it.

Course Schedule

Meeting 1 (30/01/2025): Interstate War and Bargaining Theory

Read these papers carefully.

- James Fearon. 1995. "Rationalist Explanations for War." *International Organization*.
- Hohyun Yoon. 2024. "Anger expressions and coercive credibility in international crises." *American Journal of Political Science*.

Skim these papers.

- Robert Jervis. 1988 "War and Misperception." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*.
- Tiffany D. Barnes and Diana Z. O'Brien. 2018. "Defending the Realm: The Appointment of Female Defense Ministers Worldwide". *American Journal of Political Science*. 2018.
- Erik Gartzke. 2008. "The Capitalist Peace." *American Journal of Political Science*.
- Allan Dafoe. 2011. "Statistical Critiques of the Democratic Peace: Caveat Emptor." *American Journal of Political Science*.
 - This piece highlights some methodological problems that are prevalent in the study of international relations. Read this after skimming Gartzke 2008 because it illustrates the problems by focusing on the analysis in Gartzke 2008.

Meeting 2 (04/02/2025): Intrastate (Civil) Wars

Read these papers carefully.

- Paul Staniland. 2023. "The Evolution of civil wars research: From civil war to political violence." *Civil Wars*.
- James Fearon and David Laitin. 2003. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." *American Political Science Review*
- Cederman, Lars-Erik and Wimmer, Andreas and Min, Brian. 2024. "Why do ethnic groups rebel? New data and analysis." *World Politics*.
- Francisco Gutierrez-Sanin and Elisabeth Jean Wood. 2014. "Ideology in civil war: Instrumental adoption and beyond." *Journal of Peace Research*

Skim these papers.

- Thomas, Jakana. 2021 "Wolves in Sheep's Clothing: Assessing the Effect of Gender Norms on the Lethality of Female Suicide Terrorism." *International Organization*.

- Mitts, Tamar and Gregoire Phillips and Barbara F. Walter. 2022. "Studying the Impact of ISIS Propaganda Campaigns." *Journal of Politics*.
- Ralph Sundberg and Erik Melander. 2013. "Introducing the UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset." *Journal of Peace Research*.
- Kristine Eck. 2012. "In data we trust? A comparison of UCDP GED and ACLED conflict events datasets." *Cooperation and Conflict*.

Meeting 3 (25/02/2025): Civilian Victimization in Civil Wars

Do these readings carefully.

- **Read everyone's research ideas and prepare to discuss them in class.**
- Benjamin Valentino. 2014. "Why We Kill: The Political Science of Political Violence against Civilians." *Annual Review of Political Science*.
- Laia Balcells and Jessica Stanton. 2021. "Violence Against Civilians During Armed Conflict: Moving Beyond the Macro- and Micro-Level Divide." *Annual Review of Political Science*.
- Francisco Gutierrez-Sanin and Elisabeth Jean Wood. 2017. "What Should We Mean by "Pattern of Political Violence"? Repertoire, Targeting, Frequency, and Technique." *Perspectives on Politics*
- Stathis Kalyvas. 1999. "Wanton and Senseless? The Logic of Massacres in Algeria." *Rationality and Society*.
 - Alternatively, you can read Chapters 5 and 6 of Kalyvas's book *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. [7000 Google citations!]

Skim these papers.

- Elisabeth Jean Wood. 2006. "Variation in Sexual Violence during War." *Politics and Society*.
- Dara Kay Cohen. 2013. "Explaining Rape during Civil War: Cross-National Evidence (1980–2009)." *American Political Science Review*.
- Idean Salehyan et al. 2014. "External Rebel Sponsorship and Civilian Abuse: A Principal-Agent Analysis of Wartime Atrocities." *International Organization*.
- Jeremy Weinstein. 2008. "Introduction" and Chapter 1 ("The Industrial Organization of Rebellion") of his book *Inside Rebellion*.

Meeting 4 (06/03/2025): Legacies of Political Violence

Do these readings carefully.

- **Read everyone's 5-page proposal and prepare to discuss them in class.**
- Salma Mousa. 2020. "Building social cohesion between Christians and Muslims through soccer in post-ISIS Iraq."
- Scott Williamson et al. 2020. "Family Matters: How Immigrant Histories Can Promote Inclusion." *American Political Science Review*.
- Noam Lupu and Leonid Peisakhin. 2017. "The Legacy of Political Violence across Generations." *American Journal of Political Science*.
- Vasiliki Fouka and Hans-Joachim Voth. 2023. "Collective Remembrance and Private Choice: German–Greek Conflict and Behavior in Times of Crisis." *American Political Science Review*

Skim these papers.

- Guy Grossman et al. 2015. "The Political Legacies of Combat: Attitudes Toward War and Peace Among Israeli Ex-Combatants." *International Organization*.
- Resul Cesur and Arzu Kibris. 2024. "Subjecting the 'Average Joe' to war theatre triggers intimate partner violence." *R&R at Econometrica*.
- Risa Kitagawa and Jonathan Chu. 2021. "The impact of political apologies on public opinion." *World Politics*.
- Elias Dinas and Ksenia Northmore-Ball. 2020. "The Ideological Shadow of Authoritarianism." *Comparative Political Studies*.
- Han Il Chang and Leonid Peisakhin. "Building Cooperation among Groups in Conflict: An Experiment on Intersectarian Cooperation in Lebanon." *American Journal of Political Science*.

Week 5 (11/03/2025): Authoritarianism and Repression

Read these papers carefully.

- Christian Davenport. 2007. "State repression and political order." *Annual Review of Political Science*.
- Daniel W. Hill and Zachary M. Jones. 2014. "An Empirical Evaluation of Explanations for State Repression." *American Political Science Review*.
- Maria J. Stephan and Erica Chenoweth. "Why Civil Resistance Works." *International Security*.
- Jane Esberg and Alexandra Siegel. 2023. "How Exile Shapes Online Opposition: Evidence from Venezuela." *American Political Science Review*.

Skim these papers.

- Tamar Mitts. 2022. "Countering Violent Extremism and Radical Rhetoric." *International Organization*.
- Rory Truex. 2019. "Focal Points, Dissident Calendars, and Preemptive Repression." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*.
- Anita R Gohdes. 2015. "Pulling the plug: Network disruptions and violence in civil conflict." *Journal of Peace Research*.
- Adam Scharpf et al. 2023. "International Sports Events and Repression in Autocracies: Evidence from the 1978 FIFA World Cup." *American Political Science Review*.

Week 6 (13/03/2025): Ethnic Conflict and Refugees

Read these papers carefully.

- Idean Salehyan and Burcu Savun. "Strategic Humanitarianism: Host States and Refugee Policy." *Annual Review of Political Science*.
- Christopher Blair et al. 2022. "Liberal Displacement Policies Attract Forced Migrants in the Global South." *American Political Science Review*.
- Kerim Can Kavakli. 2025. "State Response and the Spread of Refugee-Native Clashes." *Working Paper*.
- Leonid Peisakhin et al. 2024. "Who Hosts? The Correlates of Hosting the Internally Displaced." *American Political Science Review*.

Skim these papers.

- Tobias Böhmelt et al. 2019. "Blame the victims? Refugees, state capacity, and non-state actor violence." *Journal of Peace Research*.
- Arun Frey. "'Cologne Changed Everything' —the effect of threatening events on the frequency and distribution of intergroup conflict in Germany." *European Sociological Review*.
- Cevat Giray Aksoy et al. 2024. "Hometown conflict and refugees' integration efforts." *Working Paper*.
- Vasiliki Fouka. 2024. "State Policy and Immigrant Integration." *Annual Reviews of Political Science*.
- Ellen Percy Kraly et al. 2023. "Social Consequences of Forced and Refugee Migration." *Annual Review of Sociology*.