PSC 86207: Causes of War

Zachary Shirkey Class Room:

5206 Class Time:

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Course Description

The course will familiarize students with many of the theories about the causes of war and war duration prevalent in the field of political science, especially rationalist and psychological causes. One theme that will run throughout the course is that causes of war and peace are intrinsically linked. Students should be advised that this is an upper-level course and that a familiarity with the basic concepts in international relations is assumed. Students should also note this is not a course on foreign policy or current events, but will rather focus on theoretical concepts which underlie the behavior of states and rebel groups regarding war and peace. Both interstate and civil wars will be examined.

Course Requirements

Students will be expected to complete all the readings and to attend classes. The class format will be a mix of that of a seminar. **Class discussion of the readings will be the only method of instruction**. Students **must** complete the readings for each class **prior to class**.

The graded assignments are a research paper, two summaries, and active participation.

Research Paper: 50%

Summaries: 30% (15% each)

Active Participation 20%

Academic Integrity:

The definition of plagiarism in the Graduate Center Policy on Academic Honesty is as follows. Each member of the academic community is expected to give full, fair, and formal credit to any and all sources that have contributed to the formulation of ideas, methods, interpretations, and findings. The absence of such formal credit is an affirmation representing that the work is fully the writer's. The term “sources” includes, but is not limited to, published or unpublished materials, lectures and lecture notes, computer programs, mathematical and other symbolic formulations, course papers, examinations, theses, dissertations, and comments offered in class or informal discussions, and includes electronic media. The representation that such work of another person is the writer's own is plagiarism.

Care must be taken to document the source of any ideas or arguments. If the actual words of a source are used, they must appear within quotation marks. In cases that are unclear, it is the responsibility of the writer to take due care to avoid plagiarism.

The source should be cited whenever:

(a) a text is quoted verbatim

(b) data gathered by another are presented in diagrams or tables

(c) the results of a study done by another are used

(d) the work or intellectual effort of another is paraphrased by the writer

Because the intent to deceive is not a necessary element in plagiarism, careful note taking

and record keeping are essential in order to avoid unintentional plagiarism.

Student found engaging in plagiarism risk not only failing the assignment in question, but also the entire course, as well as potentially facing further academic sanctions from the Graduate Center included expulsion. Please see the Graduate Center’s guide on Avoiding and Detecting Plagiarism for more information:

<https://www.gc.cuny.edu/CUNY_GC/media/CUNY-Graduate-Center/PDF/Publications/AvoidingPlagiarism.pdf?ext=.pdf>

Students with Disabilities:

In compliance with the American Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, The Graduate Center offers assistance and accommodations for all students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions. It is recommended that all students with documented disabilities consult the Vice President for Student Affairs who is the 504/ADA Coordinator (Room 7301; 212-817-7400). For more information (with confidentiality) contact Sharon Lerner or Elise Perram at the above number or via email at [disabilityservices@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@gc.cuny.edu) and consult the Graduate Center Student Handbook.

Course Materials:

There are 3 required books, plus articles available on Blackboard. They are:

Christia, Fotini. 2012. *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)

Wagner, R. Harrison. 2007. *War and the State: The Theory of International Relations*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Weisiger, Alex. 2013. *Logics of War: Explanations for Limited and Unlimited Conflicts* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), Intro and Chapter 1: 1–53.

The Christia and Weisiger are assigned in only one place and are referred to by their full citation. The Wagner book has chapters assigned in several different weeks and is referred to below as **W**. All three can be purchased online. The Wagner is also available on electronically through the library (see Blackboard for a link) and a hard copy of the Christia is on reserve in the library. Readings indicated by a **B** are available on Blackboard.

**Course Schedule**

Week 1:

*Security Dilemma, Offense/Defense, and Alliances*

* **B**: Jervis, Robert. 1978. “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma,” *World Politics* 30(2): 167–214.
* **B**: Biddle, Stephen. 2001. “Rebuilding the Foundations of Offense-Defense Theory,” *Journal of Politics* 63(3): 741–74.
* **W**: Chapter 1 & 2: 2–105.
* **B**: Huth, Paul K. 1999. “Deterrence and International Conflict: Empirical Findings and Theoretical Debates,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 2: 25–48.
* **B**: Fang, Songying, Jesse C. Johnson, and Brett Ashley Leeds. 2014. “To Concede or to Resist? The Restraining Effect of Military Alliances,” *International Organization* 68(4): 775–809.

Week 2:

*Threats, Reputation, Rivalry, and Power Transitions*

* **B**: Crescenzi, Mark, Jacob Kathman, and Stephen Long. 2007. “Reputation, History, and War,” *Journal of Peace Research* 44(6): 651–67.
* **B**: Weisiger, Alex and Keren Yarhi-Milo. 2015. “Revisiting Reputation: How Past Actions Matter in International Politics,” *International Organization* 69(2): 473–95.
* **B**: Debs, Alexandre and Jessica Chen Weiss. 2016. “Circumstances, Domestic Audiences, and Reputational Incentives in International Crisis Bargaining,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 60(3): 403–33.
* **B**: Kydd, Andrew H. and Roseanne W. McManus. 2017. “Threats and Assurances in Crisis Bargaining,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61(2): 325–48.
* **B**: Dreyer, David. 2010. “Issue Conflict Accumulation and the Dynamics of Strategic Rivalry,” *International Studies Quarterly* 54(3): 779–95.
* **B**: Lebow, Richard Ned and Benjamin Valentino. 2009. “Lost in Transition: A Critical Analysis of Power Transition Theory,” *International Relations* 23(3): 389–410.

Week 3:

*Rationalist Explanations (I)*

* **W**: Chapter 3 & 4: “Violence, Organization, and War” and “Bargaining and War,” 105–70.
* **B**: Fearon, James D. 1995. “Rationalist Explanations for War,” *International Organization* 49(3): 379–414.
* **B**: Slantchev, Branislav. 2003. “The Principle of Convergence in Wartime Negotiations,” *American Political Science Review* 97(4): 621–32.
* **B**: Slantchev, Branislav and Ahmer Tarar. 2011. “Mutual Optimism as a Rationalist Explanation of War,” *American Journal of Political Science* 55(1): 135–48.
* **B**: Leventoglu, Bahar and Ahmer Tarar. 2008. “Does Private Information Lead to Delay or War in Crisis Bargaining?,” *International Studies Quarterly* 52(3): 533–53.

Week 4:

*Rationalist Explanations (II) and Mixed Explanations*

* **B**: Powell, Robert. 2006. “War as a Commitment Problem,” *International Organization* 60(1): 169–203.
* **B**: Wolford, Scott, Dan Reiter, and Clifford J. Carrubba, 2011. “Information, Commitment, and War,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 55(4): 556–79.
* **B**: Bell, Sam R. and Jesse C. Johnson. 2015. “Shifting Power, Commitment Problems, and Preventive War,” *International Studies Quarterly* 59(1): 124–32.
* **B**: Smith, Alastair and Allan C. Stam. 2004. “Bargaining and the Nature of War,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48(6): 783–813.
* **B**: Holmes, Marcus and David Traven. 2015. “Acting Rationally Without Really Thinking: The Logic of Rational Intuitionism for International Relations Theory,” *International Studies Review* 17(3): 414–40.
* **B**: Streich, Philip and Jack S. Levy. 2016. “Information, Commitment, and the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905,” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 12(4): 489–511.

Week 5:

*Psychological Explanations*

* **B**: Rathbun, Brian C., Joshua D. Ketzer, and Mark Paradis. 2017. “*Homo Diplomaticus:* Mixed-Method Evidence of Variation in Strategic Rationality,” *International Organization* 71(S1): S33–S60.
* **B**: Offer, Avner. 1995. “Going to War in 1914: A Matter of Honor?,” *Politics & Society* 23(2): 213–41.
* **B**: Shelef, Nadav G. 2016. “Unequal Ground: Homelands and Conflict,” *International Organization* 70(1): 33–64.
* **B**: Mitzen, Jennifer and Randall L. Schweller. 2011. “Knowing the Unknown Unknowns: Misplaced Certainty and the Onset of War,” *Security Studies* 20(1): 2–35.
* **B**: Krebs, Ronald R. and Aaron Rapport. 2012. “International Relations and the Psychology of Time Horizons,” *International Studies Quarterly* 56(3): 530–543.
* **B**: Johnson, Dominic D. P. and Dominic Tierney. 2011. “The Rubicon Theory of War: How the Path to Conflict Reaches the Point of No Return,” *International Security* 36(1): 7–40.

Week 6:

*Domestic Politics (I)*

* **B**: Goemans, Hein. 2000. “Fighting for Survival: The Fate of Leaders and the Duration of War,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 44(5): 555–570.
* **B**: Croco, Sarah. 2011. “The Decider’s Dilemma: Leader Culpability, War Outcomes, and Domestic Punishment”, *American Political Science Review* 105(3): 457–77.
* **B**: Colgan, Jeff. D. and Jessica L. P. Weeks. 2015. “Revolution, Personalist Dictatorships, and International Conflict,” *International Organization* 69(1): 163–94.
* **B**: Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce, James D. Morrow, Randolph M. Siverson, and Alastair Smith. 2004. “Testing Novel Implications from the Selectorate Theory of War,” *World Politics* 56(3): 363–88.
* **B**: Horowitz, Michael, Rose McDermott, and Allan Stam. 2005. “Leader Age, Regime Type, and Violent International Relations,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49(5): 661–85.
* **B**: Sechser, Todd. 2004. “Are Soldiers Less War Prone than Statesmen?,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48(5): 746–74.

Week 7:

*Domestic Politics (II)*

* **B**: Lektzian, David and Mark Souva. 2009. “A Comparative Test of Democratic Peace Arguments, 1946–2000,” *Journal of Peace Research* 46(1): 17–38.
* **B**: Cederman, Lars-Erik. 2001. “Back to Kant: Reinterpreting the Democratic Peace as a Macrohistorical Learning Process,” *American Political Science Review* 95(1): 15–31.
* **B**: Van Evera, Stephen. 1984. “Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War,” *International Security* 9(1): 58–107.
* **B**: Snyder, Jack. 1984. “Civil-Military Relations and the Cult of the Offensive, 1914 and 1984,” *International Security* 9(1): 108–46.
* **B**: Levy, Jack. 1986. “Organizational Routines and the Causes of War,” *International Studies Quarterly* 30(2): 193–222.
* **B**: Piplani, Varun and Caitlin Talmadge. 2016. “When War Helps Civil-Military Relations: Prolonged Interstate Conflict and the Reduced Risk of Coups,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 60(8): 1368–94.

Week 8:

*Civil Wars*

* **B**: Fearon, James D. and David D. Laitin. 2003. “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War,” *American Political Science Review* 97(1): 75–90.
* **B**: Ross, Michael L. 2004. “What Do We Know about Natural Resources and Civil Wars?,” *Journal of Peace Research* 41(5): 337–56.
* **B**: Cederman, Lars-Erik, Nils B. Weidmann, and Kristian Gleditsch. 2011. “Horizontal Inequalities and Ethnonationalist Civil War: A Global Comparison,” *American Political Science Review* 105(3): 478–95.
* Christia, Fotini. 2012. *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), Intro, Chapter 1, and Chapter 2: 1–56.
* **B**: Prorok, Alyssa. 2016. “Leader Incentives and Civil War Outcomes,” *American Journal of Political Science* 60(1): 70–84.

Week 9:

*War Severity*

* **B**: Cederman, Lars-Erik, T. Camber Warren, and Didier Sornette. 2011. “Testing Clausewitz: Nationalism, Mass Mobilization, and the Severity of War,” *International Organization* 65(4): 605–38.
* **B**: Melander, Erik, Magnus Oberg, and Jonathan Hall. 2009. “Are ‘New Wars’ More Atrocious? Battle Severity, Civilians Killed and Forced Migration Before and After the End of the Cold War,” *European Journal of International Relations* 15(3): 505–36.
* **B**: DeMeritt, Jacqueline H. R. 2015. “Delegating Death: Military Intervention and Government Killing,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59(3): 428–54.
* **B**: Stanton, Jessica A. 2015. “Regulating Militias: Governments, Militias, and Civilian Targeting in Civil War,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59(5): 899–923.
* **B**: Prorok, Alyssa and Benjamin J. Appel. 2014. “Compliance with International Humanitarian Law: Democratic Third Parties and Civilian Targeting in Interstate War,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 58(4): 713–40.
* **B**: Vasquez, John A. and Ashlea Rundlett. 2016. “Alliances as a Necessary Condition of Multiparty Wars,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 60(8): 1395–1418.

Week 10:

*Military Intervention in Interstate Wars*

* **B**: Altfeld, Michael F. and Bruce Bueno de Mesquita. 1979. “Choosing Sides in War,” *International Studies Quarterly* 23(1): 87–112.
* **B**: Siverson, Randolph M. and Harvey Starr. 1990. “Opportunity, Willingness, and the Diffusion of War,” *American Political Science* Review 84(1): 47–67.
* **B**: Werner, Suzanne. 2000. “Deterring Intervention: The Stakes of War and Third-Party Involvement,” *American Journal of Political Science* 44(4): 720–32.
* **B**: Joyce, Kyle A., Faten Ghosen, and Resat Bayer. 2014. “When and Whom to Join: The Expansion of Ongoing Violent Interstate Conflicts,” *British Journal of Political Science* 44(1): 205–38.
* **B**: Crawford, Timothy W. 2014. “The Alliance Politics of Concerted Accommodation: Entente Bargaining and Italian and Ottoman Interventions in the First World War,” *Security Studies* 23(1): 113–47.
* **B**: Shirkey, Zachary C. Forthcoming. “Which Wars Spread? Commitment Problems and Military Intervention,” *Conflict Management and Peace Science*.

Week 11:

*Military Intervention in Civil Wars*

* **B**: Findley, Michael G. and Tze Kwang Teo. 2006. “Rethinking Third-Party Interventions into Civil Wars: An Actor-Centric Approach,” *Journal of Politics* 68(4): 828–37.
* **B**: Aydin, Aysegul, and Patrick M. Regan. 2011. “Networks of Interveners and Civil War Duration,” *European Journal of International Relations* 18(3): 573–97.
* **B**: Salehyan, Idean and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch. 2006. “Refugees and the Spread of Civil War,” *International Organization* 60(2): 335–66.
* **B**: Cunningham, David E. 2010. “Blocking Resolution: How external states can prolong civil wars,” *Journal of Peace Research* 47(2): 115–27.
* **B**: Kathman, Jacob D. 2010. “Civil War Contagion and Neighboring Interventions,” *International Studies Quarterly* 54(4): 989–1012.
* **B**: Shirkey, Zachary C. 2017. “Joining by Number: Military Intervention in Civil Wars,” *Civil Wars* 18(4): 417–38.

Week 12:

*War Duration and Termination (I)*

* **B**: Bennett, D. Scott and Allan C. Stam. 1996. “The Duration of Interstate Wars, 1816-1985,” *American Political Science Review* 90(2): 239–57.
* **W**: Chapter 5: “Enforcing Agreements,” 173–96.
* Weisiger, Alex. 2013. *Logics of War: Explanations for Limited and Unlimited Conflicts* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), Intro and Chapter 1: 1–53.
* **B**: Dolan, Thomas, Dan Reiter, Elizabeth Stanley, Zachary C. Shirkey, and Alex Weisiger. 2018 “Symposium on War Duration,” 2018. *Polity* 50(2):.

Week 13:

*War Duration and Termination (II)*

* **B**: Cunningham, David E. 2006. “Veto Players and Civil War Duration,” *American Journal of Political Science* 50(4): 875–92.
* **B**: Wolford, Scott. 2017. “The Problem of Shared Victory: War-Winning Coalitions and Postwar Peace,” *Journal of Politics* 79(2): 702–16.
* **B**: Stanley, Elizabeth A. and John P. Sawyer. 2009. “The Equifinality of War Termination: Multiple Paths to Ending War,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53(5): 651–76.
* **B**: Shirkey, Zachary C. 2016. “Uncertainty and War Duration,” *International Studies Review* 18(2): 244–67.
* **B**: Weisiger, Alex. 2016. “Learning from the Battlefield: Information, Domestic Politics, and Interstate War Duration,” *International Organization* 70(2): 347–75.
* **B**: Nilsson, Marco. Forthcoming. “Causal beliefs and war termination: Religion and rational choice in the Iran-Iraq War,” *Journal of Peace Research*.

Week 14:

*Roles of Treaties, Peacekeeping, and Mediation in War Termination*

* **B**: Fortna, Virginia Page. 2003. “Scraps of Paper? Agreements and the Durability of Peace,” *International Organization* 57(2): 337–72.
* **B**: Fazal, Tanisha M. 2013. “The Demise of Peace Treaties in Interstate War,” *International Organization* 67(4): 695–724.
* **B**: Huth, Paul K., Sarah E. Croco, and Benjamin J. Appel. 2011. “Does International Law Promote the Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes? Evidence from the Study of Territorial Conflicts since 1945,” *American Political Science Review* 105(2): 415–36.
* **B**: Fortna, Page. 2004. “Interstate Peacekeeping: Causal Mechanisms and Empirical Effects,” *World Politics* 56(4): 481–519.
* **B**: Hultman, Lisa, Jacob Kathman, and Megan Shannon. 2014. “Beyond Keeping Peace: United Nations Effectiveness in the Midst of Fighting,” *American Political Science Review* 108(4): 737–53.
* **B**: Isak Svensson. 2007. “Fighting with Faith: Religion and Conflict Resolution in Civil Wars,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51(6): 930–49.