GOVT 490-003
Synthesis Seminar:
21st Century Conflict

Time: W 4:30 pm
Room: Robinson B 108
Professor: Colin Dueck
Office: Robinson A 219
Office hours: W 1-4 pm by appt
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Course description

This class examines the nature of international armed conflict in the 21st century. To what extent is such conflict different from past centuries? To what extent is it the same? We start by clarifying long-term historical trends and directions. Then we zero in on patterns of civil conflict – by far the most common form of warfare in our time. We look at the role of ethnic and religious identity, warlords, and resource competition as key elements in recent civil wars. Next we analyze transnational organized crime, terrorism, hybrid warfare, and nuclear proliferation as 21st century trends. Case studies include Bosnia, Iraq, African diamond conflicts, Latin American drug cartels, counter-insurgency in Afghanistan, Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal, and the possible shape of a future Middle East war. Finally, we spend the last month of class looking at contemporary geopolitics and great power competition, focusing on India, Japan, China, Russia, the European Union, and the United States. We discuss authoritarian challenges to international order, and national responses from leading democracies.

Course requirements

1) Contribution to class discussion (20%)
   This includes coming to class on time.

2) Weekly memos (15%)
Each week of class, starting September 6th, you will be expected to write up a brief memo based upon a given chapter reading for that day. Students who do not, will receive an “F” on the memo assignment for that week. The assignment is pass/fail. Your task in these memos will be to summarize and analyze, in no more than a page, at least one required chapter for that week.

3) Oral presentations (10%)
   Summarize and critique a chosen reading for the day, once during the semester.

4) Mid-term exam, October 18th (15%)

5) Research paper, due December 13th (20%)
   Write an essay of at least 3500 words on one aspect of 21st century conflict. Detailed instructions will be given in class September 27th.

6) Final exam, December 13th (20%)

   This course fulfills all or in part the Writing Intensive requirement in the Government major. It does so through a 3500-word research paper project, divided into stages. The final paper will be completed through a feedback process that includes an optional research paper proposal. This optional proposal is due October 18th for those who choose to do it. I will provide commentary on the proposal, and the final paper will be due at the final exam on December 13th.

   Late appearance to class is unwelcome.

   The only make-up exams, for the mid-term or the final, will be in documented cases of medical or family emergencies, or religious holidays recognized by George Mason University.

   Laptops and other electronic devices may not be switched on during class.

Course readings

The following books will be available at the GMU bookstore:

Andrew Krepinevich, *7 Deadly Scenarios* (Bantam, 2010)

Also recommended:

**Course schedule**

**August 30**
Introduction: from old wars to new
Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars*, chapter 2
Kimberly Marten, *Warlords*, chapter 2

**September 6**
Civil wars
Case studies: Bosnia; Iraq
Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars*, chapters 3, 4, and Afterword
Kimberly Marten, *Warlords*, chapter 6 and Conclusion

Recommended:
Kimberly Marten, *Warlords*, chapters 1, 3, 4, and 5

**September 13**
Resource conflict
Case studies: sub-Saharan Africa
Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars*, chapter 5
Philippe Le Billon, *Wars of Plunder*, chapters 2 and 4

Recommended:
Philippe Le Billon, *Wars of Plunder*, chapters 1, 3, 5, 6, and Conclusion
September 20  Transnational crime
Case study: Latin America
Jay Albanese, editor, *Transnational Organized Crime*, chapters 1 and 3

Recommended:
Jay Albanese, editor, *Transnational Organized Crime*, chapter 2, 4, and 6

September 27  Terrorism and counter-insurgency
Case study: Afghanistan
Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars*, chapter 7
Andrew Krepinevich, *7 Deadly Scenarios*, chapter 8

Recommended:
Jay Albanese, editor, *Transnational Organized Crime*, chapter 8

October 4  Guest lecture: hybrid warfare
Frank Hoffman, National Defense University, “Exploring a Continuum of Contemporary Conflict.”

October 11  Nuclear proliferation
Case study: Pakistan
Andrew Krepinevich, *7 Deadly Scenarios*, chapter 1

Recommended:
Andrew Krepinevich, *7 Deadly Scenarios*, chapter 2

October 18  Mid-term exam
October 25  
Geopolitics and great power competition  
Case studies: India and Japan  
Gideon Rachman, *Easternization*, Introduction, chapters 1, 5, and 7

November 1  
The rise of China  
Gideon Rachman, *Easternization*, chapter 3  
Andrew Krepinevich, *7 Deadly Scenarios*, chapter 5  
Larry Diamond, editor, *Authoritarianism Goes Global*, chapter 1

Recommended:  
Gideon Rachman, *Easternization*, chapters 2, 6, 12, and 13  
Larry Diamond, editor, *Authoritarianism Goes Global*, chapter 12

November 8  
Resurgent authoritarianism  
Case study: Russia  
Larry Diamond, editor, *Authoritarianism Goes Global*, Introduction, chapter 11  
Gideon Rachman, *Easternization*, chapter 11

Recommended:  
Larry Diamond, editor, *Authoritarianism Goes Global*, chapters 2, 5, 7, 9, and 13

November 15  
Conflict in the Middle East  
Gideon Rachman, *Easternization*, chapter 9  
Larry Diamond, editor, *Authoritarianism Goes Global*, chapter 4  
Andrew Krepinevich, *7 Deadly Scenarios*, chapter 4

Recommended:  
Larry Diamond, editor, *Authoritarianism Goes Global*, chapters 3 and 6
November 22  
Thanksgiving holiday

November 29  
Liberal order and the Western response
Gideon Rachman, *Easternization*, chapters 4, 8, 10, 14, and Conclusion

Recommended:
Larry Diamond, editor, *Authoritarianism Goes Global*, chapter 14
Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars*, chapters 6 and 8
Philippe Le Billon, *Wars of Plunder*, chapter 7
Andrew Krepinevich, *7 Deadly Scenarios*, chapter 6

December 6  
Conclusion and review
Andrew Krepinevich, *7 Deadly Scenarios*, Conclusion

December 13  
Final exam; research papers due in person