Course Summary and Goals

The primary purpose of this seminar is to examine military intervention (and non-intervention) into civil wars/sub-state conflicts from the 1990s to the present. These civil wars have been high on the policy agenda of Western states, yet these interventions were usually not motivated by obvious classical vital interests. Many of these interventions required the employment of significant military power. The interventions were controversial and required considerable attention from policy makers. They were, in short, not “cheap.”

As a result, this course examines the reasons why interventions occur and the challenges faced in stabilization and reconstruction. A fundamental part of addressing the latter issue comes from engaging with research into the origins, dynamics, and termination of civil wars. We will examine why insurgents and rebels resort to violence, how they organize themselves, what means and tactics they use to fight and negotiate, how they recruit and maintain a support base, and how the sets of strategies they use may shift throughout the conflict, particularly in response to the strategies employed by counterinsurgents.

In the first part of the course, we will examine theoretical and policy research into the origins of intervention and the internal conflict dynamics that make these interventions so challenging. In the second part of the course we will employ this foundation to examine a number of interventions and non-interventions. The interventions to be examined are the 1993 effort to ameliorate famine in Somalia; the 1995 effort to end the conflict in Bosnia Herzegovina, the 1999 NATO war to end Serbia’s control of Kosovo, and the 2003 intervention into Iraq. By way of comparison, we will examine the weak efforts made to slow or stop the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and the non-intervention into Syria. The seminar approaches these interventions with a range of questions:

1. What were the broad policy arguments in favor of or opposed to these interventions?
2. What is known, or believed, about the basic nature of these civil wars: their causes, dynamics, and implications?
3. What military strategies have outside powers tried to employ to achieve specific results in these civil wars, and which ones have proven most effective?
4. What strategies have been recommended for the post-conflict reconstruction of these states?
5. In each case, do we judge the intervention a success or failure, and how do we explain the success or failure?
Course Requirements

- Regular attendance and class participation (30%). Class meetings will be on Wednesday from 9:15-11:45am in Room 1101 Van Munching Hall. This is a seminar so all who show up for class are expected to participate, whether they are taking the course for credit or not. All should do the reading, or the seminar format will not work. While I will lead the discussion, as a part of your participation grade, one or more students per week will make a ten-minute presentation outlining the key issues raised in the reading.

- Policy Memo, 2 pages (20%): This memo, due in Week 8, will complement our in-class discussion by asking students to prepare a policy memo briefing National Security decision makers as they evaluate options for potential intervention into a civil war in the country selected by the student for their final policy briefing. The memo is meant to help to shape the intervention discussion by identifying critical factors at play in the given conflict environment and the concomitant intelligence/planning assessments needed to address those factors. The memo should end with a summary of what success/failure might look like or what the key dynamics in an intervention might be. This memo should serve as an initial outline as you plan your final policy briefing.

- Final policy briefing, 20-30 pages (40%): Students will either: (1) pick a past conflict (e.g. Libya, Vietnam, Northern Iraq) and set up a framework to analyze the success/failure of the intervention or, (2) they will select a non-intervention (e.g. Georgia or Syria) or potential future intervention (e.g. in Yemen, Pakistan, or another “surge” in Afghanistan) and construct a framework to make an informed choice of how the conflict might play out. There are three deadlines built into the preparation of final paper assignment:
  1. In Week 4, students will turn in three topic ideas.
  2. In Week 6, students will select their intervention and meet with me to discuss.
  3. In Week 8, students will turn in their 2-page policy memo.

Students are encouraged to meet with me often throughout planning the research. A good paper will be planned and researched throughout the semester, rather than in the last days or weeks of the term.

- Presentation (10%): Students will prepare a presentation summarizing the main argument in their final paper. It will clearly state the question to be answered, describe the context of events, and succinctly state the analytic approach. Presentations should not be longer than 10-15 minutes as we will have 5-10 minutes of questions and discussion after the presentation.

Required Books

The majority of readings will be available through ELMS or the UMD library system. However, students are required to purchase the following books:


• Mark Bowden, Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War (New York, N.Y: New American Library, 2001)

• Dexter Filkins, The Forever War (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008)

Laptops and Electronics

Laptops are permitted for note-taking purposes only. Students should refrain from using mobile devices or laptops for internet browsing, emailing, text messaging, etc. These activities will no doubt distract from course involvement and thus negatively affect participation marks.

Campus Policies

It is our shared responsibility to know and abide by the University of Maryland's policies that relate to all courses, which include topics like:

• Academic integrity
• Student and instructor conduct
• Accessibility and accommodations
• Attendance and excused absences
• Grades and appeals
• Copyright and intellectual property

For the policies and procedures set by the Graduate Council and the Graduate School, please visit http://apps.gradschool.umd.edu/Catalog/policy.php?the-academic-record. Follow up with me if you have questions.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Background, Military Intervention

Martha Finnemore, The Purpose of Intervention: Changing Beliefs about the Use of Force (Cornell University Press, 2004)

Jacob Heilbrunn, “Samantha and Her Subjects,” The National Interest May/June, no. 113 (2011): 6–15

Week 2: Background, Civil Conflict


**Week 3: The Intervenor**

Stewart Patrick, “Weak States and Global Threats: Fact or Fiction?,” *The Washington Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (March 2006): 27–53


Steven Livingston, *Clarifying the CNN Effect: An Examination of Media Effects According to Type of Military Intervention*, Research Paper R-18 (Harvard Kennedy School, June 1997)

**Week 4: Intervenor Strategies**


Richard K. Betts, “The Delusion of Impartial Intervention,” *Foreign Affairs* 73, no. 6 (1994): 20–33


Week 5: The Non-State Actors: Organizations, Networks, Religious Groups


Week 6: Strategies and Dynamics of Non-State Actors


Week 7: Negotiation and Peace Agreements


Week 8: Rwanda


Week 9: Spring Break

Week 10: Somalia


Week 11: Balkans


Week 12: Iraq


Week 13: The civil war and the surge


Week 14: Withdrawal, ISIS, and Syria


Kenneth M. Pollack, “Fight or Flight,” *Foreign Affairs*, April 2016, [https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2016-02-16/fight-or-flight](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2016-02-16/fight-or-flight)


*Skim*: [https://pomeps.org/2013/12/18/political-science-and-syrias-war-memos/](https://pomeps.org/2013/12/18/political-science-and-syrias-war-memos/)

**Week 15**: Student Presentations I

**Week 16**: Student Presentations II