

IR/PSC 265: Civil War and the International System

Prof. Bethany Lacina
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:40 - 10:55
Morey Room 504

Civil war is by far the most common form of armed conflict in the contemporary world. The class addresses the questions of when and where civil wars occur and what their effects are domestically and internationally. It focuses on foreign actors' role in civil war, such as financial support to governments or insurgents, armed interventions, and peacekeeping missions.

Instructor

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Office hours by appointment

Course Requirements

1. Students should attend every class. Lecture slides will be available on Blackboard.
2. Reading for the week must be completed by all students before class. All required materials are available through links in this syllabus.
3. Students will take 2 in-class midterms, each worth 30% of the final grade, and a cumulative final worth 40% of the final grade. There are no make-up exams, so please make any travel plans accordingly. Check the registrar's website or office for the most up-to-date information on the schedule for the final exam.
4. The in-class midterms will consist of two essays. The final will require three essays. All of the essays will be randomly chosen from a list of questions distributed in advance of the exam. There will not be a choice of questions.
5. A rubric for evaluation of the exam essays will be distributed with the questions in advance of the exam.
6. If you are entitled to examination accommodations, please coordinate these with the Office of Disability Resources in advance of the examinations (see <http://www.rochester.edu/college/disability/index.html>). Students will not be able to obtain accommodations directly from the professor.
7. The professor will not read over or evaluate answers or partial answers to the exam questions in advance of the test.
8. There will be a chance to earn extra credit during some class sessions. There are no other opportunities for extra credit work.

Regrading

If a student wishes to challenge the grade assigned to all or part of an essay, the following steps must be taken:

1. Students must email the professor a request for a re-grade within 72 hours of the exams being returned to the class.
2. A request for a re-grade must explain which aspect(s) of the grading rubric the student believes should have been assigned a higher score. For each disputed aspect, students must justify why they should be given a higher grade given the standards in the grading rubric and cite specific materials in the readings or lectures if applicable.
3. The professor will re-grade all aspects of the essay. The student's final score on the essay may go up or down or be unchanged.

Academic honesty

Students and faculty at the University must agree to adhere to high standards of academic honesty in all of the work that we do. The College Board on Academic Honesty provides further information on our policies and procedures: www.rochester.edu/college/honesty.

You are welcome to work with other students or to use AI tools when preparing for the exams. There will also be in-class review sessions. You may not bring any notes or other class materials to the exam. Any backpacks, computers, or phones that you bring to the classroom on examination day will need to be left at the front of the room.

Incomplete notations

In case of an emergency, students I will offer a short incomplete contract to take the final exam at a later date, provided the student has already completed both midterms and could pass the class with a sufficiently high score on the final. No other incomplete notations will be allowed. Incomplete notations must also be approved by the College Dean's Office. You can read more about the college's policy here: <https://www.rochester.edu/registrar/assets/pdf/incomplete-notation-policy.pdf>

Class schedule

Sept 1 Introduction to the course

Sept 3 No class

Sept 8 Class 1: Westphalian states and the nature of war

Reading to complete before class (21 pages):

Lake, David A. 2003. "The New Sovereignty in International Relations," *International Studies Review* (21 pages) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3186572>

Sept 10 Class 2: What civil wars are like: Regime collapse

Reading to complete before class (28 pages):

Gelvin, James. 2014. *The Arab Uprisings: What everyone needs to know*. Oxford University Press. Chapter 3: Uprisings in weak states: Yemen and Libya. (28 pages) https://rochester.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01ROCH_INST/1hkubbs/alma9978685475305216

Sept 15 Class 3: What civil wars are like: Insurgency

Reading to complete before class (26 pages):

Johnson, Chalmers. 1968. "The third generation of guerrilla warfare." *Asian Survey* (13 pages) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2642158>

Colgan, Jeff. 2012. "Revolutionary governments." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* (24 pages) <https://doi.org/10.1177/0738894212449093>

Sept 17 Class 4: All civil wars have domestic components

Reading to complete before class (31 pages):

Blair, Robert A., and Nicholas Sambanis. 2020. "Forecasting Civil Wars: Theory and Structure in an Age of 'Big Data' and Machine Learning." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (31 pages) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48589437>

Sept 22 Class 5: Almost all civil wars have international components

Reading to complete before class (28 pages):

Salehyan, Idean. 2009. *Rebels without Borders*. Cornell University Press. Chapter 1. (28 pages)
https://rochester.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01ROCH_INST/1hkubbs/alma9941705723405216

Sept 24 Class 6: Interstate rivalry and civil war

Reading to complete before class (76 pages):

Noel Andersen. 2025. *Wars Without End*. Oxford University Press. Pp. 28–52, 153–203. (76 pages) Available on Blackboard.

Sept 29 Class 7: How civil wars end

Reading to complete before class (59 pages):

Howard, Lise Morjé and Alexandra Stark. 2018. “How Civil Wars End: The International System, Norms, and the Role of External Actors.” *International Security* (45 pages) https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_a_00305

Richard Gowan and Stephen John Stedman. 2018. “The International Regime for Treating Civil War, 1988–2017.” *Daedalus*. (14 pages) https://doi.org/10.1162/DAED_a_00482

Oct 1 Class 8: Civil wars in the wake of WWII

Reading to complete before class (15 pages):

Millett, Alan R. 2001. “Introduction to the Korean War.” *The Journal of Military History* (15 pages) www.jstor.org/stable/2677623

Oct 6 Review session

Oct 8 Midterm I

Oct 13 No class

Oct 15 Class 9: Decolonization and civil war

Reading to complete before class (40 pages):

Ketchley, Neil and Gilad Wenig. 2023. “Purging to Transform the Post-Colonial State: Evidence From the 1952 Egyptian Revolution.” *Comparative Political Studies* (40 pages) <https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140231209966>

Oct 20 Class 10: The Cold War and civil war interventions

Reading to complete before class (22 pages):

Noel Andersen. 2025. *Wars Without End*. Oxford University Press. Pp. 59–80. Available on Blackboard.

Oct 22 Class 11: The end of the Cold War

Reading to complete before class (40 pages):

Human Security Report Project. 2005. *The Human Security Report 2005*. Oxford University Press. Pp. 15-39. (25 pages) Available on Blackboard.

Kalyvas, Stathis N. and Laia Balcells. 2010. “International system and technologies of rebellion: How the end of the Cold War shaped internal conflict.” *American Political Science Review*. (15 pages) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40863761>

Oct 27 Class 12: The UN and post-Cold War peacekeeping

Reading to complete before class (91 pages):

Howard, Lise M. 2008. *UN Peacekeeping in Civil Wars*. Cambridge University Press. Chapters 4 and 5. (91 pages) Available through library: https://rochester.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01ROCH_INST/1hkubbs/alma9937390543405216

Oct 29 Class 13: When does peacekeeping work?

Reading to complete before class (57 pages):

Walter, Barbara F. 1999. “Designing transitions from civil war: Demobilization, democratization, and commitments to peace.” *International Security* (29 pages) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2539350>

Fortna, Virginia Paige 2008. *Does Peacekeeping Work? Shaping Belligerents’ Choices after Civil War*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 4. (28 pages) Available on Blackboard.

Nov 3 Class 14: The East Asian peace

Reading to complete before class (30 pages):

Tønnesson, Stein, et al. 2015. “The East Asian Peace.” Selected articles. (30 pages) Available on

Blackboard.

Nov 5 Class 15: Latin America after the Cold War

Reading to complete before class (14 pages):

Kurtenbach, Sabine. 2019. "The limits of peace in Latin America." *Peacebuilding*. (14 pages) <https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2019.1618518>

Nov 10 Class 16: Trump's Latin America policy

Reading to complete before class (32 pages):

International Crisis Group. 2026. "From 'Total Peace' to Iron Fist: Colombia's Risky Turn to Hard Security." *Crisis Group Latin America Briefing*, 56. (32 pages) <https://www.crisisgroup.org/sites/default/files/2026-08/b056-colombia-risky-turn.pdf>

Nov 12 Class 17: Civil war and the international system after 9/11

Reading to complete before class (34 pages):

Mallaby, Sebastian. 2002. "The Reluctant Imperialist." *Foreign Affairs*. (4 pages) <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/reliant-imperialist-terrorism-failed-states-and-case-american-empire>

Mueller, John, and Mark G. Stewart. 2012. "The Terrorism Delusion: America's Overwrought Response to September 11." *International Security*. (30 pages) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23280405>

Nov 17 Class 18: The new Middle East

Reading to complete before class (42 pages):

Haass, Richard N. 2006. "The New Middle East." *Foreign Affairs*. (10 pages) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20032138>

Gelvin, James. 2020. *The New Middle East: What Everyone Needs to Know*. Oxford University Press. Chapter 3. (32 pages) https://rochester.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01ROCH_INST/1hkubbs/alma9978206742705216

Nov 19 Review session

Nov 24 Midterm II

Nov 26 No class

Dec 1 Class 19: What happened to the global war on terror?

Reading to complete before class (52 pages):

C. William Walldorf. 2022. "Narratives and War: Explaining the Length and End of U.S. Military Operations in Afghanistan." *International Security* (46 pages) https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00439

Daniel Forti and Richard Gowan. 2026. "Reading the Signals of China's U.N. Security Council Role in the Afghanistan Mission Renewal." *Just Security*. (6 pages) <https://www.justsecurity.org/150260/china-un-security-council-afghanistan/>

Dec 3 Class 20: Return to war in Sudan

Reading to complete before class (25 pages):

Verhoeven, Harry. 2023. "Surviving revolution and democratisation: the Sudan armed forces, state fragility and security competition." *The Journal of Modern African Studies*. (25 pages) <http://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X23000174>

Dec 8 Class 21: New world order

Reading to complete before class (59 pages):

Alexander Cooley and Daniel Nexon. 2020. *Exit from Hegemony: The Unravelling of American Global Order*. Oxford University Press. Chapter 4. (30 pages) https://rochester.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01ROCH_INST/1hkubbs/alma9978257651605216

James D. Fearon. 2017. "Civil War and the Current International System." *Daedalus*. (15 pages) https://doi.org/10.1162/DAED_a_00456

Dec 10 Final review session

Final exam at time and place determined by registrar