Gov’t 403: Sources of and Remedies for Conflict in Eurasia

Fall 2014
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Office hours: Wed. 11-12, Th. 9-11, & by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This research seminar examines sources of communal violence in Eurasia and evaluates efforts to repair states that have suffered in the region. We explore the multi-faceted dynamics within the Western states of former Soviet Union (Ukraine & Moldova), the Southern Caucasus, and Central Asia that may affect these outbreaks. Do culture and history predispose the diverse peoples of the former Soviet Union to perpetual violence, regional instability, and non-democratic regimes? What role do politicians, institutions, natural resources, and economic factors play in contributing to conflict? How can we explain periods of violence and peace that have occurred in different places and at different times in Eurasia? Do regional and international actors’ efforts to reconstruct these deeply divided states address sources of conflict? Finally, what factors explain the effectiveness of projects for post-conflict state-building in promoting reconciliation, economic development, political openness, and regional stability?

EVALUATION:

- **Informed class participation (40% of your grade):** Students are expected to attend and to participate actively in *every* class discussion. As a small and upper-level course, this senior seminar’s success will substantially depend on students’ informed participation and ability to engage in lively and constructive exchanges of ideas grounded in theory and evidence. This means that students should come to every class having completed, having thought critically about, and taken key notes on the required readings. Specifically, students should be prepared in each class to discuss and ask questions about: the authors’ arguments, specific evidence, how well the authors’ arguments hold up against alternative or complementary readings from the class, and what kind of further research could be conducted to improve authors’ contribution to our understanding of the sources of and remedies for conflict in Eurasia. As a result, students must bring readings to class.

- **Final research paper process (60%):** The capstone assignment for senior seminars in government is an approximately 25 paged original research paper, which for this class will involve the conduct research that evaluates a hypothesis about the sources of or remedies for Conflict in Eurasia. As all social scientific papers, your paper will be grounded in a theoretical orientation from which you will generate hypotheses and systematically interpret empirical evidence. There is substantial evidence that high quality social scientific research is best viewed as a process. Along those lines, you will be required to submit a prospectus, which will then inform your research design and final paper. Your 2-3 paged *prospectus* (due 9/26: 7%) will specify: your specific research question and explain why it is important; the theoretical framework you will use to analyze your research question, the specific hypothesis or hypotheses suggested by your theory. Your 4-5 paged *research design* will build off of your prospectus to describe the methods you will use to gather and interpret data and the sources and types of data you will use to test your hypotheses (due 10/24: 13%). At each stage of the process, you will receive feedback that will help improve your *final research paper*, which is due on 12/17 at 5 p.m. (40%).

- I encourage students to visit me during office hours to discuss material, request sources for research topics, alert me to special learning needs, or pose any questions about readings, lectures, or the research paper and process. Proactive use of office hours is particularly important to help with the research paper process. I strongly suggest students stay informed about current developments in Eurasia. Some good English-language sources of news in the region include: *Eurasianet.org*: http://www.eurasianet.org/, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*: http://www.rferl.org/section/Russia/161.html; *The Jamestown Foundation’s Eurasia Daily Monitor*,

Other Policies:
No student may pass this class without satisfying each and every segment of the above requirements. Please re-read and follow the Honor Code: http://www.wm.edu/offices/deanofstudents/services/studentconduct/honorcodeandstudentconduct/honorcode/. To ensure fairness and prepare students for the “real world,” I will not accept late papers. During class, computers must be used only for class purposes; at times, I may ask that computers be put away. Cell phones/PDAs must be turned completely off.

Required texts:
- *Blackboard
- Articles in academic journals are available through Swem library’s electronic database collections

CLASS SCHEDULE (subject to minor adjustments designed to accommodate speakers &/or improve the course):

Wed., 8/27, Introduction to the course

SOURCES OF CONFLICT
Mon., 9/1, Empires’ approaches to managing conflict & building nations in Eurasia

- King, “The Micropolitics of Social Violence, Ch. 4, Extreme Politics, pp. 55-76.

Mon., 9/8, Social science methods: What social science methods can help unravel the puzzle of who is responsible for and what contributed to inter-ethnic riots?

Wed., 9/10 Accurately understanding ethnic conflict in the former Soviet Union

Mon., 9/15, The “curse” of ethnic diversity for post-socialist states

The Cases of the Western former Soviet Union
Wed., 9/17, Moldova & Ukraine
- Lynch, Dov, pp. 31-3.
Mon., 9/22, **The role of diaspora in conflicts**

**The Cases of the Caucasus**

Wed., 9/24, **Resources**
- King, Charles, Ch. 6, “The Benefits of Ethnic War,” pp. 103-132

Mon., 9/29, **Factors contributing to succession**

**The Cases of Central Asia**

Wed., 10/1, **Explaining War in Tajikistan**

Mon., 10/6, **The Political Impact of Intra-Ethnic divisions**

Wed., 10/8, **Resources, culture, and ideology**

**Fall Break**

Wed., 10/15, **The Varying Strength of Islamist Movements in Eurasia**

**AFTER CONFLICT: STRATEGIES FOR REMEDYING (or EXACERBATING) CONFLICT:**

Mon., 10/20, **Intervention can harm, as well as help, peace**

Wed., 10/22 **The promise and challenges of externally led statebuilding.**

**Central Asia**

Mon. 10/27, **Regional Approaches to Peacebuilding: Russia’s role in Peacebuilding in Tajikistan**

Wed., 10/29, **Role of Islam in Central Asian Society and Post-Conflict Tajikistan**

Mon., 11/3, **Regional efforts to manage water**

**Caucasus**
Wed., 11/5, *Engaging separatists*
• Lynch, Dov, “Ways Out” and Conclusions in Engaging Eurasia’s Separatist States, pp. 103-143

Mon., 11/10, *Defrosting the Frozen Conflict in Georgia,*

Wed., 11/12, *What do de-facto peoples think?*

Mon., 11/17, *The strengths and weaknesses of NGOs’ contribution to postwar statebuilding*

Wed., 11/19, *A Grass-roots approach to peacebuilding*

The Western former Soviet Union
Mon., 11/24, *Evaluating Efforts by the EU/US vs. Russia to exert influence over Western FSU*

**Thanksgiving**
Mon., 12/1, *Geopolitical battles over Ukraine and Moldova:*

Wed., 12/3, *Update on Ukraine & final thoughts*
• TBD to reflect latest developments.
• *Mufson, Steven, “Ukraine will need billions of dollars in new aid this year,” Washington Post, July 22, 2014.*