ICIR 224 Security and Conflict in a Global Perspective

Course Description & Aims

This course analyzes a number of contemporary global security challenges in relation to violent conflict and regional conflict geographies: How and why do international conflicts appear and develop? The focus of discussions is on a number of common security challenges, from arms proliferation to environmental and resource-related risks. Different mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of violent conflicts are explored and discussed. After an introduction into the concept of human security and global security challenges, students will work on group projects discussing selected case studies. Conflicts that could be covered include civil wars, international wars and domestic and international terrorism. Through examining these case studies, students will acquire an understanding of explicit and implicit conceptualizations as to why conflicts happen as well as why some methods of conflict prevention and resolution are more effective than others.

Recent developments of warfare with particular reference to the contemporary world; the development of armed forces and innovations in weaponry, tactics and strategy; social and economic costs of warfare; combat and combatants; provisioning and planning; the use of reporting and propaganda in support of warfare; the industrialization of war and the rise of "New Wars"; types of warfare and security challenges in the contemporary world. Students will understand; analyze; examine security challenges; armed conflict in a global perspective.

Lecturer: Christian Oesterheld
Email: christian.oes@mahidol.ac.th / christianoesterheld@ymail.com
Office: Room 2115, Office hours: TBA

Assessment

Active Class Participation	10%
Midterm Exam	30%
Group Project: (a) Presentation	30%
(b) Report	30%

Course Learning Outcomes

At the completion of the course the student will be able to:

1. Comprehend and analyze the key practical and theoretical concepts of preventing, managing and resolving conflicts in relation to human (in)security.
2. Explain and interpret contemporary security challenges in comparative global perspective.
3. Apply a range of theoretical perspectives to contemporary security challenges.
4. Explain, interrelate and interpret conflict and security in regional and international perspective.

Topic No.	Topic
1	Introduction and Course Organization
	Concepts and Definitions
2	Conflict and Security in the Contemporary World
	Regional Dimensions and Conflict Geographies
3	Global Security and Human Security
	"Freedom from want" and "freedom from fear"
4	Small Arms Trade and Gang Violence
	Arms Proliferation and Civil Wars
5	Terrorism
	Cyber-threats and Drone Violence
6	Environmental and Resource Related Risks
	Climate Change, Environmental Scarcity and Violent Conflict
7	Midterm Review
	Midterm Exam
8	Conflict Geographies I: The Middle East
	Group Presentation(s) I
9	Conflict Geographies II: Africa
	Group Presentation(s) II
10	Conflict Geographies III: The Asia-Pacific Region
	Group Presentation(s) III
11	Conflict Geographies IV: Latin America
	Group Presentation(s) IV
12	Conflict Geographies V: Europe and North America
	Group Presentation(s) V and Final Discussion

Assessment Methods and Criteria

1. Active Class Participation [10 %]. – Students are expected to actively and regularly take part in class discussions. It is important to keep up with the reading materials in order to be able do so. Core readings are clearly indicated (in **bold** letters) in the detailed lecture schedule at the end of this syllabus, all others are further reading suggestions. Relevant readings will be made available to students electronically and/or in form of a study pack.

2. Midterm exam [30 %]. – In Week 7, students will take an in-class exam that is divided into two parts. The first part [20 points] consists of ten short-answer questions that ask students to briefly explain some of the terms and concepts discussed in the first half of term. Answers can be concise, but must be precise and attend to all aspects of the question (read the questions carefully!). The second part of the exam [10 points] consists of three essay topics to choose from. Students are asked to write a structured argumentative essay with relevant reference to topics, issues and associated theoretical frameworks that have been discussed in class.

3. Case Study Project [30 + 30 %]. – A large portion of marks will be awarded to students' group projects, which consists of a presentation (in Week 8-12) and a final case study report (of 3000 words, due at the end of Week 13). In their final projects, students will have to discuss selected security challenges of a particular region of the world. Both the presentation and the final case study report must include the following aspects: (1) a brief introduction of the chosen topic, including a more descriptive section regarding background and context of the case study, (2) an analysis and discussion of relevant aspects of the case study in relation to theories and debates introduced in class, and (3) a critical reflection of security challenges and ways to overcome these. Presentations and essays need to be clearly structured and argumentative.

Part I: CONCEPTUAL ISSUES IN HUMAN SECURITY AND CONFLICT

The first part of this course (week 1-6) introduces selected conceptual issues in human security and conflict in a contemporary global perspective, followed by the midterm examination (in Week 7).

Introduction

Topic description: What are useful definitions of 'security' and 'conflict'? After a general introduction into course contents, the weekly schedule and the course requirements, we will discuss foundational aspects of security risks and conflict transformation.

Expected learning outcomes:
- Students will develop an awareness regarding foundational terms in relation to conflict and security.
- Students will begin to interrogate general assumptions about the global system, security challenges and impending risks in comparative interdisciplinary perspective.

Activity:
- Students assemble in small groups to develop questions regarding security challenges and conflict risks in the contemporary world. What are major threats to the international system and to human security? Which regions of the world are moist vulnerable to these challenges and risks?

Conflict and Security in Comparative Global Perspective

Topic description: Adjoining to the brainstorming exercise from the previous week, we are going to identify global security challenges in regional perspective, exploring contemporary conflict geographies, trends and types of violent conflicts as well as major concerns in the field of security and conflict prevention.

Expected learning outcomes:
- Students will explore and understand foundational concepts in the field of security challenges and violent conflict.
- Students will develop awareness for the complexities of contemporary security challenges and risks in comparative regional perspective.

Activity:
- A plenary discussion of conflict trends based on graphs and statistics.

Readings:
- **Vivienne Jabri: *War and the Transformation of Global Politics*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.**
  - **Chapter 2: "The Politics of Global War" (pp. 32-66)**
- **Kendra Dupuy and Siri Aas Rustad: *Trends in Armed Conflict, 1946-2017*. Oslo: Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), 2018.**
- R. Brian Ferguson: "Introduction: Violent Conflict and Control of the State", in: R. Brian Ferguson (ed*.), The State, Identity and Violence: Political Disintegration in the post-Cold War World*, London and New York: Routledge, 2003, pp. 1-58.
- Michael T. Klare: "The New Geography of Conflict", Foreign Affairs 80(3) [2001]: 49-61.

Global Security and Human Security

Topic description: Based on the United Nations' *Human Development Report* of 1994 we are exploring and discussing the concept of "human security" in relation to global concerns. The different aspects of human security – a people-centred and multi-disciplinary perception – will be introduced and compared to other security-related conceptualizations. In understanding global vulnerabilities, traditional notions of national security have been challenged and it has been suggested that the most adequate referent for security should be at the human rather than national level.

Activities:
- Students assemble in small groups to discuss selected passages of the UN Human Development Report in order to prepare a plenary discussion of the document.
- Students will be divided into two groups to develop opposing perspectives and arguments in relation to the notion of "security". One group is supposed to explore and defend arguments in favor of a system-centered approach to the issue of security, whereas the other group should focus on individual-centered aspects of "human security". During the preparation for the debate (in groups), as well as during the plenary discussion, students will engage with discourses on the conceptualization of security that provide a basis for an active understanding of the topical issues discussed in the following weeks.

Expected learning outcomes:
- Students will explore and understand the concept of human security in its relation to global security concerns.
- Students will be able to explain and relate different aspects of the multi-disciplinary concept of human security.

Readings:
- **United Nations: *Human Development Report*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.**
- **Steve Smith: "The Concept of Security in a Globalizing World' in: Robert G. Patman, *Globalization and Conflict: National Security in a 'New' Strategic Era*, London and New York: Routledge, 2006, pp. 33-55.**
- Lael Brainard, Derek Chollet and Vinca La: "The Tangled Web: The Poverty-Insecurity Nexus", in: Lael Brainard and Derek Chollet (eds.), *Too Poor for Peace? Global Poverty, Conflict, and Security in the 21st Century*, Washington, DC: Brookings Institution's Press, 2007, pp. 1-30.
- Stathis N. Kalyvas: "Fear, Preemption, Retaliation: An Empirical Test of the Security Dilemma", in: Stephen M. Saideman and Marie-Joëlle Zahar (eds.), *Intra-State Conflict, Governments and Security: Dilemmas of Deterrence and Assurance*, London and New York: Routledge, 2008, pp. 20-32.

Arms Trade and Violence

Topic description: One of the most common contemporary security threats has long been the proliferation of the global arms trade. We discuss its effects both for selected conflict-prone regions, as well as for the national level of countries where, alongside the trade in small arms, gang violence has sharply risen. After a consideration for the impact of the global arms trade for civil wars in Africa and the Middle East, the issue of arms control and export bans will be explored and discussed.

Activity:
- Students assemble in small groups and use a basic online search to develop case-study briefs regarding the arms trade in selected conflict regions. In the following plenary debate regional differences and similarities will be discussed and the impact of the global arms trade for the selected regions will be assessed.

Expected learning outcomes:
- Students will understand and explain the impact and effects of the international trade in arms.
- Students will explore and discuss the effects of the global proliferation of arms trade in relation to selected conflict regions.
- Students will continue to explain and relate selected aspects of the multi-disciplinary concept of human security.

Readings:
- **Todd Sandler: "Arms Trade, Arms Control and Security: Collective Action Issues", in: Paul Levine and Ron Smith (eds.), *Arms Trade, Security and Conflict*, London and New York: Routledge, 2003, pp. 209-220.**
- **Indra De Soysa, Thomas Jackson and Christin Ormhaug: "Does Globalization Profit the Small Arms Bazaar?", *International Interactions* 35(1) [2009]: 86-105.**
- Mike Bourne: *Arming Conflict: The Proliferation of Small Arms*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- María del Carmen García-Alonso and Keith Hartley: "Export Controls, Market Structure and International Coordination", in: Paul Levine and Ron Smith (eds.), *Arms Trade, Security and Conflict*, London and New York: Routledge, 2003, pp. 37-54.

Terrorism, Cyber-threats and Drone Wars

Topic description: This week, we shift our attention to new and prospective security threats. The history and concept of terrorism will be briefly introduced to then explore its changing dynamics in the post-9/11 world. Discussions this week also include 'new' security challenges based on advances in information technology, such as cyber-attacks and wars waged with the assistance of unmanned drones.

Expected learning outcomes:
- Students will explore and understand the changing nature of terrorism.
- Students will explore, compare and contrast the changing landscape of security risks associated with advances in information technology.
- Students will reflect about possible future challenges towards human security and begin to assess associated risks.

Readings:
- **Charles Tilly: "Terror, Terrorism, Terrorists", *Sociological Theory* 22(1) [2004]: 5-13.**
- **Athina Karatzogianni: *The Politics of Cyberconflict*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.**
  - **Chapter 5: "Ethnoreligious Cyberconflict" (pp. 154-173)**
- **John Villasenor: "Cyber-Physical Attacks and Drone Strikes: The Next Homeland Security Threat". Brookings Institution's Online Report, 2011. Accessible at: https://www.brookings.edu/research/cyber-physical-attacks-and-drone-strikes-the-next-homeland-security-threat/**
- Domenico Tosini: "Sociology of Terrorism and Counterterrorism: A Social Science Understanding of Terrorist Threat", *Sociology Compass* 1/2 [2007]: 664-681.

- Nicholas Grossman: *Drones and Terrorism: Asymmetric Warfare and the Threat to Global Security*. London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2018.
- Barry Buzan, "Will the 'Global War On Terrorism' Be the New Cold War?", *International Affairs* 82(6) [2006]: 1101-1118.

Environmental and Resource Related Risks

Topic description: It has been suggested that climate change (and resulting floods, droughts or other natural disasters) poses one of the most substantial future challenges for human security. Connected to this are issues of food security, poverty and migration leading to conflicts over scarcer resources, both within nation states and on a regional, if not global, level. We are exploring these security risks by departing with some of the classical literature on the environmental degradation-violent conflict nexus, particularly the work of Thomas Homer-Dixon. We explore the relationship between environmental degradation, conflict, and refugee crises and consider the significance of "environmental security" for the avoidance of violence and war.

Expected learning outcomes:
- Students will explore and explain the impact of environmental degradation towards violent conflict.
- Students will develop a critical and differentiated understanding of food insecurity and related risks for violent conflict.
- Students will critically discuss prospective security challenges posed by climate change.

Readings:
- **Thomas F. Homer-Dixon: "Environmental Scarcities and Violent Conflict: Evidence from Cases", *International Security* 19(1) [1994]: 5-40.**
- **Amber Wutich and Alexandra Slade: "Food, Water, and Scarcity: Toward a Broader Anthropology of Resource Insecurity", *Current Anthropology* 55(4) [2014]: 444-468.**
- Thomas F. Homer-Dixon: *Environment, Scarcity and Violence*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999.
- Anthony Nyong: "Resource and Environmental Security", in: Lael Brainard and Derek Chollet (eds.), *Too Poor for Peace? Global Poverty, Conflict, and Security in the 21st Century*, Washington, DC: Brookings Institution's Press, 2007, pp. 73-89.

Midterm Review and Exam

Topic description: A review of the materials of the first half of the course, in order to prepare students for the midterm examination. – The format and expectations of the midterm exam will be introduced in detail and students are then given the opportunity to ask questions about any of the topics covered during week 1-6. A review sheet will be provided prior to the review session as a basis for preparation.

Activity:
- After the midterm exam, anonymized copies of exam booklets will be distributed to students alongside with the assessment rubrics used by the instructor. Each student is asked to peer evaluate one exam based on the official rubris as a mechanism to ensure impartiality and to develop an awareness for assessment methods used in the IRGA program. Student and lecturer scores of the midterm exams will later (in Week 8) be compared and discussed.

Part II: REGIONAL CASE STUDIES

Beginning with Week 8, regional issues of security and conflict will be discussed alongside selected case studies based on students' interests. During the last five weeks of the course, each session will include a foundational introduction into specific conflict regions, followed by presentations of students' group projects.

Conflict Geographies I: The Middle East

Topic description: Foundational aspects of security issues and violent conflict in the Middle East will be briefly introduced to prepare the ground for the presentation of related group projects that are presented in the second part of the week.

Activity:
- Presentations of students' group projects followed by plenary discussions.

Expected learning outcomes:
- Students will understand and explain the history and contemporary dynamics of regional conflict in the Middle East.
- Students will explore regional security challenges in the Middle East and relate them to the theoretical and conceptual issues discussed earlier in class.
- Some students will engage in teamwork to explore, analyze and critically discuss selected aspects of security challenges and violent conflict in the Middle East.

Readings:
In preparation for their group projects, students are expected to take initiative in allocating relevant readings on their own (3-5 articles or book chapters, in addition to a selection of 2-3 relevant core readings from the materials provided earlier in the term). Assistance and suggestions will be provided by the course instructor if necessary and upon request. During the week preceding their presentations, each presenting group of students is expected to stipulated and distribute 1-2 readings for others in class as a core reading.

Conflict Geographies II: Africa

Topic description: Foundational aspects of security issues and violent conflict in Africa will be briefly introduced to prepare the ground for the presentation of related group projects that are presented in the second part of the week.

Expected learning outcomes:
- Students will understand and explain the history and contemporary dynamics of regional conflict in Africa.
- Students will explore regional security challenges in Africa and relate them to the theoretical and conceptual issues discussed earlier in class.
- Some students will engage in teamwork to explore, analyze and critically discuss selected aspects of security challenges and violent conflict in Africa.

Activity:
- Presentations of students' group projects followed by plenary discussions.

Readings:
In preparation for their group projects, students are expected to take initiative in allocating relevant readings on their own (3-5 articles or book chapters, in addition to a selection of 2-3 relevant core readings from the materials provided earlier in the term). Assistance and

suggestions will be provided by the course instructor if necessary and upon request. During the week preceding their presentations, each presenting group of students is expected to stipulated and distribute 1-2 readings for others in class as a core reading.

Conflict Geographies III: The Asia-Pacific Region

Topic description: Foundational aspects of security issues and violent conflict in the Asia-Pacific Region will be briefly introduced to prepare the ground for the presentation of related group projects that are presented in the second part of the week.

Activity:
- Presentations of students' group projects followed by plenary discussions.

Expected learning outcomes:
- Students will understand and explain the history and contemporary dynamics of regional conflict in the Asia-Pacific region.
- Students will explore regional security challenges in the Asia-Pacific region and relate them to the theoretical and conceptual issues discussed earlier in class.
- Some students will engage in teamwork to explore, analyze and critically discuss selected aspects of security challenges and violent conflict in the Asia-Pacific region.

Readings:
In preparation for their group projects, students are expected to take initiative in allocating relevant readings on their own (3-5 articles or book chapters, in addition to a selection of 2-3 relevant core readings from the materials provided earlier in the term). Assistance and suggestions will be provided by the course instructor if necessary and upon request. During the week preceding their presentations, each presenting group of students is expected to stipulated and distribute 1-2 readings for others in class as a core reading.

Conflict Geographies IV: Latin America

Topic description: Foundational aspects of security issues and violent conflict in Latin America will be briefly introduced to prepare the ground for the presentation of related group projects that are presented in the second part of the week.

Activity:
- Presentations of students' group projects followed by plenary discussions.

Expected learning outcomes:
- Students will understand and explain the history and contemporary dynamics of regional conflict in Latin America.
- Students will explore regional security challenges in Latin America and relate them to the theoretical and conceptual issues discussed earlier in class.
- Some students will engage in teamwork to explore, analyze and critically discuss selected aspects of security challenges and violent conflict in Latin America.

Readings:
In preparation for their group projects, students are expected to take initiative in allocating relevant readings on their own (3-5 articles or book chapters, in addition to a selection of 2-3 relevant core readings from the materials provided earlier in the term). Assistance and suggestions will be provided by the course instructor if necessary and upon request. During the week preceding their presentations, each presenting group of students is expected to stipulated and distribute 1-2 readings for others in class as a core reading.

Conflict Geographies V: Europe and North America / Final Discussion

Topic description: Foundational aspects of security issues and violent conflict in Europe and North America will be briefly introduced to prepare the ground for the presentation of related group projects that are presented in the second part of the week, followed by a final discussion to review and conclude class discussions regarding contemporary and prospective security challenges.

Activity:
- Presentations of students' group projects followed by plenary discussions.

Expected learning outcomes:
- Students will understand and explain the history and contemporary dynamics of regional conflict in Europe and North America.
- Students will explore regional security challenges in Europe and North America and relate them to the theoretical and conceptual issues discussed earlier in class.
- Some students will engage in teamwork to explore, analyze and critically discuss selected aspects of security challenges and violent conflict in Europe and North America.

Readings:
In preparation for their group projects, students are expected to take initiative in allocating relevant readings on their own (3-5 articles or book chapters, in addition to a selection of 2-3 relevant core readings from the materials provided earlier in the term). Assistance and suggestions will be provided by the course instructor if necessary and upon request. During the week preceding their presentations, each presenting group of students is expected to stipulated and distribute 1-2 readings for others in class as a core reading.