Pols 442: International Relations of Ethnic Conflict

While ethnic conflict is not a new problem, it became increasingly clear in the 1990s that it is an international one. Not only is ethnic conflict seen as being highly contagious, it has other impacts on neighboring and distant countries. Moreover, the rest of the world frequently gets involved, reluctantly in many cases, into the ethnic conflicts of individual states, such as Bosnia and Rwanda. Much more has been written about individual outbreaks of violence than about how countries react to them. Our goal will be to assess the various conventional wisdoms regarding different aspects of the international relations of ethnic conflict including contagion/diffusion, irredentism, kinds and impacts of intervention, and the impact of ethnic conflict on wider issues in international relations.

We will take a closer look at three of the most widely debated conflicts of the post-Cold War period: Yugoslavia, Darfur and Congo. The international community was heavily involved in all of these, before and after the outbreak of violence. We will examine why states and international organizations intervened when they did, how they intervened, and whether they could have done better or worse.

This course is designed to build upon previous work you have done in political science here at McGill. We will not spend much time at all on the purpose of theory or how to evaluate political science methods—your knowledge in these matters will largely be assumed. The course will focus on analytical questions—why things happen or do not happen—and not on normative questions about what should happen or not. The readings will range from journalistic, descriptive stuff to theoretically-oriented work to quantitative analyses. You will focus your attention on the arguments being made and whether you find them to be persuasive.

A. Course Requirements

The course requirements consist of reading, participation and writing. It is your responsibility to do the work. If you need some sort of accommodation, such as extension, or face some kind of challenge, please see the professor earlier, when there are more options available, rather than waiting to the last minute.

While it will be difficult to develop good discussions in a class of 80, you should feel free to ask questions and answer mine during lectures. However, your participation grade of 20% will ride largely on your attendance and involvement in the conferences, which will be scheduled at the beginning of the term. There will also be opportunities to participate via WebCT.
There may be a few short pop quizzes focused entirely on the readings—for 10% of the grade—if I feel that the students are not doing the readings. There will be no final exam. There will be one short paper which will count for 25% of the grade. There will be one paper (roughly 15 pages), focusing on a topic of your choosing. The paper will be due on November 29, and will count for 45%. More details will be forthcoming. Late work will be penalized: 1/3 of a letter grade per class session. There is a course webpage on WebCT. It will have a bulletin board, both for my announcements and for student discussion; a page where readings will be stored (most readings will come in a course packet, others will be downloaded from here); changes in the syllabus; assignments, and more.

B. McGill Policies

1. "McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).
2. “In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.”
3. Use of Text-matching software: "Instructors who may adopt the use of text-matching software to verify the originality of students' written course work must register for use of the software with Educational Technologies (Email) and must inform their students before the drop/add deadline, in writing, of the use of text-matching software in a course."
4. If you have a disability please contact the instructor to arrange a time to discuss your situation. It would be helpful if you contact the Office for Students with Disabilities at 514-398-6009 before you do this.
5. In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

Readings
Books:
David Lake and Donald Rothchild, The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict [LR]
Stephen Saideman and R. William Ayres, For Kin or Country, Columbia U Press
Peter Andreas, Blue Helmets and Black Markets, Cornell, 978-0-8014-4355-8
Severine Autesserre, The Trouble with the Congo, Cambridge 2010 9780521156011

Some articles, chapters, and working papers will be available in a reader (indicated by *) available at the bookstore, and the remaining ones will be online at the WebCT site.

Week 1: Introduction Sept 2, 7
Lake and Rothchild, “Spreading Fear” LR
Fearon, “Commitment Problems and the Spread of Ethnic Conflict,” LR
*Kalyvas, “New and Old civil wars” World Politics, 54.1 (2001) 99-118
Video: “Let That Be Your Last Battlefield”
Weeks 2-3: Identity, Ethnic Politics and Conflict  Sept 9, 12, 14, 16
* Horowitz, Donald. 1985. Ethnic Groups in Conflict. chap 4
* Stuart Kaufman, Symbolic Politics vs Ratcho on ethnic conflict, International Security, spring 2006 30,4
Video: “Geometry of Shadows”

Week 4a: Is Ethnic Conflict Contagious?  Sept 19, 21
Hill, Rothchild, Cameron “Tactical Information and Diffusion,” LR
Kuran, “Ethnic Dissimilation and its International Diffusion,” LR
Saideman, “Is Pandora’s Box Half Full or Half-Empty,” LR

Week 4b: Conflict Prevention: Conditionality and Socialization  Sept 23
* Linden, “Putting on Their Sunday Best,” International Studies Quarterly 44, 1 March 2000

Week 5-6: Irredentism  Sept 26, 28, Oct 3
Saideman and Ayres, For Kin or Country, all but Yugo chapter

Week 6-7: Diaspora  Oct 5, 12
* Koinova, “Diasporas and Secessionist Conflicts,” Ethnic and Racial Studies, 34, 2 July 2010

Short Paper  Oct 12th

Weeks 8: Getting Involved or Not  Oct 17, 19
* Saideman, “Vulnerability Vs. Ethnic Ties” International Organization, Fall 1997
* Salehyan, “Delegation of War to Rebel Organizations,” J of Conflict Resolution 2010

Week 9 Yugoslavia  Oct 24, 26
Andreas, Blue Helmets, chaps 1-3
Saideman and Ayres, chapter 2
**Week 10: Unappealing Solutions: Force or Division**

Oct 31, Nov 2

* Stigler, “A clear victory for airpower: Kosovo” International Security 27, 3, 2002/03

**Week 11: Impact of Intervention**

Nov 7, 9

Andreas book, remainder

* Jenne, A Bargaining Theory of Minority Demands, ISQ 48, 4: 729 - 754

**Week 12: Darfur**

Nov 14, 16

TBA

**Week 13-14: Congo and Africa’s World War**

Nov 21, 23, 28, 30

Autesserre, *The Trouble with the Congo*, all

**Research Paper Due**

Dec 5th

**Week 15: Ethnic Conflict Upon IR**

Dec 5, 6