

# THE POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY OF POWER AND CONFLICT

HU Berlin — Winter 2017

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<b>Instructor:</b> Dr. Sebastian Schutte	<b>Time:</b> Tue. 14:00 – 16:00
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## Course Page:

- Basic information can be found on [AGNES](#).

## Class overview:

The role of geography in power projection has been recognized since ancient times. With the advent of mechanized transportation, industrialized nations were able to significantly extend their reach, to create colonies, and to engage in intercontinental warfare. Today, the “tyranny of distance” still limits power projection and contributes to state fragmentation and civil conflict.

Geography offers an encompassing but fuzzy framework for conceptualizing the historical origins of international power, economic inequality, and the limitations of power projection. Empirically, the recent dissemination of spatial data and methodological innovation pave the way for novel research designs. In this seminar, students will become acquainted with both classic and contemporary literature on political geography with an emphasis on peace and conflict studies.

The syllabus is composed of three thematic areas: studies on geography, power, and conflict in historical times serve as a starting point until week seven. Research on the role of geography in civil wars is discussed until week 9. Contemporary research areas are introduced until week 14. The last two sessions of the semester are devoted to discussing and presenting proposals for term papers.

## Weekly readings:

- **Week 1: Overview and introduction**

- No assigned readings

- **Week 2: The earth and the state**

- Diamond, Jared M. *Guns, germs and steel: a short history of everybody for the last 13,000 years*. Random House, 1998. Introduction, chapters 4, and 5.
- Whittlesey, Derwent Stainthorpe. *The earth and the state*. Henry Holt for the United States Armed Forces Institute, 1943. Chapters 1 and 6.
- **Presentation:** Montesquieu on climate and mentality.

- **Week 3: State formation in Europe**

- Norbert, Elias. *The Civilizing Process, Vol. II. State Formation and Civilization*. Chapters 1,2,3 and 4.
- Turchin, P., Currie, T. E., Turner, E. A., and Gavrilets, S. (2013). War, space, and the evolution of Old World complex societies. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 110(41), 16384-16389. [[www](#)]
- **Presentation:** The reign of Charlemagne.

- **Week 4: A place in the sun**

- Herbst, Jeffrey. States and power in Africa: Comparative lessons in authority and control. Princeton University Press, 2014. Chapters 1, 6 and 8.
- Fanon, Frantz. The wretched of the earth. Grove/Atlantic, 2007. Pages 52-62
- **Presentation:** The Berlin Conference of 1884.

- **Week 5: Dominance and defiance**

- Schmitt, Carl. The Nomos of the earth. New York: Telos Press, 2003. Pages 67-80;140-150;185-210.
- Kohr, Leopold. The breakdown of nations. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957. Introduction, chapters 1 and 3.
- **Presentation:** Carl Schmitt read by Hannah Ahrend.

- **Week 6: The art of not being governed**

- Scott, James. The art of not being governed: an anarchist history of upland southeast asia, Yale University Press, 2009. Preface, chapters 1, 2 and 5.
- Scott, James. Weapons of the weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance. Yale University Press, 2008. Chapters 2 and 3.
- **Presentation:** The cultural legacies of “Pocahontas” and “Heart of Darkness”.

- **Week 7: The tyranny of distance**

- Boulding, Kenneth E. Conflict and defense: A general theory. Harper & Row, 1962. Chapters 12 and 13.
- Lemke, Douglas. The tyranny of distance: Redefining relevant dyads. International Interactions 21.1 (1995): 23-38. [[www](#)]
- Biddle, Stephen. Military power: Explaining victory and defeat in modern battle. Princeton University Press, 2010. Chapter 3.
- **Presentation:** The Congress of Vienna of 1814.

- **Week 8: Power balance and projection in International Relations**

- Markowitz, Jonathan N., and Christopher J. Fariss. Going the distance: the price of projecting power. International Interactions 39.2 (2013): 119-143. [[www](#)]
- Goldgeier, James M., and Michael McFaul. A tale of two worlds: core and periphery in the post-cold war era. International Organization 46.2 (1992): 467-491. [[www](#)]
- **Presentation:** Napoleon in Egypt and Russia.

- **Week 9: The fatal knot**

- Tone, John Lawrence. The Fatal Knot. The Guerrilla War in Navarre and the Defeat of Napoleon in Spain, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina (1994). Pages 1-25.
- Galula, David. Counterinsurgency warfare: theory and practice. Greenwood Publishing Group, [1964] 2006. Chapter 2.
- McColl, Robert W. The insurgent state: territorial bases of revolution. Annals of the association of American geographers 59.4 (1969): 613-631. [[www](#)]
- **Presentation:** John Paul Vann’s decade in Vietnam.

- **Week 10: Geography and civil war**

- Buhaug, Halvard, and Scott Gates. The geography of civil war. *Journal of Peace Research* 39.4 (2002): 417-433. [[www](#)]
- Salehyan, Idean. *Rebels without borders: Transnational insurgencies in world politics*. Cornell University Press, 2009. Chapter 1.
- Buhaug, Halvard. Dude, where's my conflict? LSG, relative strength, and the location of civil war. *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 27.2 (2010): 107-128. [[www](#)]
- **Presentation:** Africa's World War.

- **Week 11: Territorial control and violence**

- Kalyvas, Stathis N. *The logic of violence in civil war*. Cambridge University, 2006. Chapters 4 and 5.
- Greiner, Bernd. *War without fronts: the USA in Vietnam*. Random House, 2010. Press, 2006. Chapter 5.
- Schmitt, Carl. *The Theory of the Partisan*. [1962] 2007. Pages 68-88.
- **Presentation:** Kalyvas' theory applied to My Lai und Halabja.

- **Week 12: Groups in space**

- Buhaug, Halvard, Lars-Erik Cederman, and Jan Ketil Rød. Disaggregating ethno-nationalist civil wars: A dyadic test of exclusion theory. *International Organization* 62.3 (2008): 531-551. [[www](#)]
- Cederman, Lars-Erik. Articulating the geo-cultural logic of nationalist insurgency. *Order, conflict, and violence* (2008): 242-270. [[www](#)]
- **Presentation:** A brief history of the Kurds.

- **Week 13: Land, scarcity, and conflict**

- Magnus Theisen, Ole. Blood and soil? Resource scarcity and internal armed conflict revisited. *Journal of Peace Research* 45.6 (2008): 801-818. [[www](#)]
- Buhaug, Halvard. Climate not to blame for African civil wars. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 107.38 (2010): 16477-16482. [[www](#)]
- Hsiang, Solomon M., Marshall Burke, and Edward Miguel. Quantifying the influence of climate on human conflict. *Science* 341.6151 (2013): 1235367. [[www](#)]
- **Presentation:** Cattle raiding in Kenya and South Sudan.

- **Week 14: Disasters and demographics**

- Nel, Philip, and Marjolein Righarts. Natural disasters and the risk of violent civil conflict. *International Studies Quarterly* 52.1 (2008): 159-185. [[www](#)]
- Goldstone, Jack A. Population and security: how demographic change can lead to violent conflict. *Journal of international affairs* (2002): 3-21. [[www](#)]
- Urdal, Henrik. A clash of generations? Youth bulges and political violence. *International studies quarterly* 50.3 (2006): 607-629. [[www](#)]
- **Presentation:** The driving forces of the Arab Spring.

- **Week 15:**

- Term paper proposals 1

- **Week 16:**

- Term paper proposals 2

**Objectives:** This course is designed for Masters students who wish to deepen their knowledge of political geography. This is a theory-centric class, meaning in-depth knowledge of the assigned readings is expected. In return, students will get a broad overview of both historical and contemporary applications of political geography in conflict studies.

**Prerequisites:**

- The class will be taught in English and corresponding language skills in speech and writing are essential.
- Previous knowledge of IR theory is helpful, but not mandatory.
- Students are encouraged to include empirical analyses to their term papers. For those who wish to do so, prior methodological knowledge is essential, as the class will not focus on the nuts and bolts of (spatial) data analysis.
- Discussion of the readings will be done close to the texts. A minimum of four to five hours of reading time per week needs to be allocated.

**Deliverables:**

- Each student needs to participate in a presentation of background information. Good presentations last only ten to fifteen minutes, provide biographical or historical background information, and thereby kick-start the discussion of the readings.
- Each student needs to present a term paper proposal in one of the last two sessions. Students are requested to briefly sketch out their ideas for term papers. A round of critical and constructive feedback is intended to streamline ideas and point presenters to helpful theoretical and empirical resources. Students that miss out on their chance to present their term paper ideas are required to circulate them in writing (two pages max.). The deadline for written research proposals is February 17, 2018
- Each student needs to submit a term paper of no less than 8,000 and no more than 12,000 characters including everything. The deadline for paper submissions is March 17, 2018.

**Grading Policy:** Students who present in one of the sessions, deliver a term paper proposal, and hand in a term paper on time are eligible for receiving five LP. Final grades are determined based on three criteria: the grade for the term paper (50%); participation in the discussions in class (20%); quality of the presentation of background material (20%), and quality of the presentation of the research proposal (10%).

**Class Policy:**

- If you want to sign up for the class, sign up on AGNES or send an email with subject line containing “Political geography class” to [sebastian.schutte@sowi.hu-berlin.de](mailto:sebastian.schutte@sowi.hu-berlin.de). Should the number of applicants exceed the capacity of the seminar, 25 of them will be randomly selected into the class.
- Deadlines are to be taken seriously. There are three things that can happen to a deadline. You can meet them and all will be good. You can realize that you are not going to meet them, in which case you will have to reach out to me *before* the deadline and explain what’s going on. I will extend the deadline if the delay occurs for reasons outside of your control. You can also miss the deadline without getting in touch. In this last case, you will fail the assignment with no room for debate.
- Any questions? Send me an email!

**Office Hours:** Mondays 6 to 6.30pm. Please contact [cordula.wesemann@sowi.hu-berlin.de](mailto:cordula.wesemann@sowi.hu-berlin.de) to get an appointment.