

Instructor: Nicholas Grossman
ngrossman@gvpt.umd.edu
TA: Tara Innes
tinnes@gvpt.umd.edu

GVPT 409C: Terrorism, Insurgency, and the War on Terror (Winter 2009)

General Description:

This course is about asymmetric conflicts: political and military competitions where one side is considerably stronger. The dynamics of material asymmetry characterize wars involving the United States since World War II, from Vietnam to Iraq, and offer a framework for understanding the struggle against al Qaeda and the future of the War on Terrorism. Overall, the course aims to explore the strategies of both sides of an asymmetric conflict, especially the weaker actor. How do terrorists, insurgents, guerrillas and freedom fighters design strategies to achieve their goals against powerful states? More specifically, how does al Qaeda hope to challenge the American-led international order? Knowing they're outgunned, how do they try to win?

Course Goals:

- Introduce students to academic, military, and theoretical scholarship on terrorism, insurgency, guerrilla warfare, and asymmetric conflict.
- Improve students' understanding of the loosely defined "War on Terrorism," which is a fundamentally asymmetric conflict, and will likely continue to be a prominent framework for American foreign policy and international security in the 21st century.
- Cultivate integration of scholarly and current events research, especially by making use of a variety of sources via the internet.

Note:

- Due to limited time, the discussions and assigned readings focus on modern, larger-scale, international terrorism, and leave aside most writings on civil wars and internally focused domestic terrorism.
- All readings will be available online, either through the course page, links to websites, or academic journals.

Requirements and Evaluation:

- A minimum of one message board post per class day reacting to the readings or questions posted by instructor.
- Additional response posts or participation in discussion threads.
 - Students are strongly encouraged to respond to each other and to bring up relevant outside material or current events.
- Grades will be divided as follows:
 - Participation (25%)
 - Short Paper due at the end of Part I (25%)
 - Long Paper due at the end of Part II (50%)

PART I: Terrorism, Insurgency, and Guerrilla Warfare

The first half of the course aims to introduce students to general theories terrorism and the strategic considerations of modern terrorists, partially by drawing upon studies of insurgency and guerrilla warfare.

Class 1 (January 5, 2009): Introduction

-Discussion of War on Terror, 9/11, Afghanistan, Iraq and related issues. This will likely be a surface level discussion in which students can air their preconceived understandings and personal politics, and ideally will stand in contrast to a similar discussion on the last class. What, exactly, is terrorism? Why did al Qaeda attack the U.S. on 9/11? Why did the U.S. invade Afghanistan and Iraq? How dire is the terrorist threat, and what is the proper international response to it?

-No reading assigned

Class 2 (Jan. 6): What is Terrorism?

-Though the terms “terror,” “terrorism,” and “terrorist” regularly appear in the media, scholarship, and political speeches, their meanings are ambiguous.

-Assigned reading: Hoffman, Bruce, “Defining Terrorism,” chapter 1 of *Inside Terrorism* (2003), pp. 1-43.

Class 3 (Jan. 7): Guerrilla Tactics Part I: Maoist Insurgency

-The strategy and tactics of modern insurgent and terrorist groups arguably begins with Mao Zedong and Chinese resistance against Japan. Mao’s writings heavily influenced the strategies of groups perpetrating war against materially superior foes, from the Vietcong to al Qaeda.

-Assigned reading: “On Problems of Strategy in the Guerrilla War against Japan” and “On Protracted War” by Mao Zedong.

http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_08.htm

http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_09.htm

Class 4 (Jan. 8): Guerrilla Tactics Part II: Che Guevara

-Leading revolutions and communist insurgencies in Latin America, Che Guevara adopted and advanced Maoist tactics to fit more appropriately to a small group of individuals challenging a government.

-Assigned reading: Guevara, Che, “General Principles of Guerrilla Warfare,” and “The Guerrilla Band,” in *Guerrilla Warfare* (1960).

Class 5 (Jan. 9): Insurgency and Asymmetric Conflict

-As Mao and Che emphasized, winning wars against considerably stronger opponents requires considerable political efforts. Mack applied these theories to create a scholarly analysis of wars between insurgencies and powerful, invading countries.

-Assigned reading: Mack, Andrew, “Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict.” *World Politics*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Jan., 1975), pp. 175-200

Class 6 (Jan. 12): Terrorism, Media, and Political Communication

-As Mack recognized, terrorist and insurgent campaigns against stronger opponents inherently include significant political aspects. To rally supporters, signal resolve, spread propaganda, and convince opponents to quit, modern terrorists utilize advancements in media and information technology.

-Assigned reading: Nacos, Brigitte, "Mass-Mediated Terrorism in the New World (Dis)Order," chapter 1 of *Mass-Mediated Terrorism*

-Recommended additional reading: Bueno de Mesquita, Ethan, and Eric S. Dickson, "The Propaganda of the Deed: Terrorism, Counterterrorism, and Mobilization," *AJPS*, Vol. 51, Issue 2, pp. 364-381.

Class 7 (Jan. 13): Suicide Tactics

-Unlike Mao and Che's communist guerrillas, or others such as the Vietcong, many modern terrorist organizations, such as Hamas, the LTTE (Tamil Tigers), and al Qaeda employ suicide attacks. According to Pape, suicide attacks operate as part of deliberate, rational strategies for achieving goals against more powerful opponents.

-Assigned reading: Pape, Robert, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism." *APSR* vol. 97, 2003, pp. 343-361.

-Assigned reading: Atran, Scott "The Moral Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *The Washington Quarterly*, 29, 2, 2006, pp. 127-147.

-End of Part I Written Assignment (5-7 pages, due January 17, 11:59 PM): Select a 21st century terrorist attack (other than 9/11) that killed many people and was covered by the international media. Drawing on the readings, analyze the tactics used by the organization. What might they have hoped to accomplish? How successful were the attacks in meeting these goals? Site news sources from at least two countries, at least one of which is non-Western.

Part II: The War on Terrorism

The second half of the course builds upon the abstract lessons and strategic discussions of the first half to address issues associated with the "War on Terrorism" that began in response to the attacks of September 11, 2001.

Class 8 (Jan 14): Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda

-The central conflict in the War on Terrorism is the war between al Qaeda and the United States. Strategies are a function of goals and incentives, and to get a better understanding of al Qaeda's aims, this class focuses on al Qaeda's founding leader, Osama bin Laden, through his words and a former CIA analyst's assessment.

-Assigned reading: Bin Laden, Osama, "Declaration of War against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places," Originally published in Arabic in *Al Quds Al Arabi*, London, August, 1996. PBS News:

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa_1996.html

-Assigned reading: Scheuer, Michael, "The World's View of bin Laden" and "Bin Laden Views the World," from *Imperial Hubris*, 2004.

Class 9 (Jan 15): Al Qaeda and Global Insurgency

-Al Qaeda is both an organization run by bin Laden and a broader movement, loosely linked by ideology. The larger al Qaeda movement can therefore be conceptualized as a global insurgency, engaged in asymmetric resistance to the American-led globalizing international order.

-Assigned reading: Fishel, Kimbra L., "Challenging the Hegemon: Al Qaeda's Elevation of Asymmetric Insurgent Warfare onto the Global Arena," in Bunker, Robert J. ed., *Networks, Terrorism, and Global Insurgency*, 2005.

-Assigned reading: Habeck, Mary, "Jihadist Strategies in the War on Terrorism," 2004. <http://www.heritage.org/research/nationalsecurity/hl855.cfm>

Class 10 (Jan. 16): 9/11 and the American Response

-The attacks on September 11th caused the greatest physical damage to the continental United States since the Civil War, and were the largest terrorist attack in history. They fundamentally changed Americans' perceptions of the world, and ushered in a new era in which the United States considers international networks as national security threats in addition to states.

-Assigned reading: Clarke, Richard, *Against All Enemies*, New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004. (Specific pages TBD).

-Assigned reading: Bush, George W., "Freedom at War with Fear," 9/20/2001, www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html (will add a few more short addresses by President Bush or other members of the executive branch)

-Assigned reading: *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, September 2002, www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf (Specific pages TBD)

Class 11 (Jan. 20): The Iraq War and the Iraqi Insurgency

-The occupation of Iraq represents a new stage of the War on Terrorism, as the United States found itself fighting against an Iraqi insurgency in which only some elements have any link to al Qaeda. The conflict is reshaping theories of counterinsurgency and modern asymmetric conflict.

-Assigned reading: Chehab, Zaki, *Inside the Resistance*, Nation Books, 2005. (Specific pages TBD)

Class 12 (Jan. 21): The Iraq War and Counterinsurgency

-America's difficulties in Iraq have led to a rethinking of counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine, and a rewriting of the COIN field manual that places greater emphasis on the contest for popular support and local allegiances.

-Assigned reading: Forwards, Prefaces, and Introductions to *U.S. Army & Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual*

Class 13 (Jan. 22): The Israel-Hezbollah War of 2006

-The war between in Israel and Hezbollah in the summer of 2006 offers an alternative, non-American case of modern asymmetric conflict. Like the U.S.-al Qaeda conflict, the Israel-Hezbollah War is a struggle between materially asymmetric adversaries. However, given the proximity of the two and the international opinion of Israel, there are some

strategic incentives that differ from the American War on Terrorism, primarily involving media and public opinion.

-Assigned reading: Cordesman, Anthony, "The Lessons of the Israeli-Lebanon War," Center for Strategic and International Studies, 3/11/2008,

http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/080311_lessonleb-iswar.pdf

-Assigned reading: "Nasrallah Wins the War," *The Economist*, 8/17/2006, http://www.economist.com/opinion/displaystory.cfm?story_id=7796790

Class 14 (January 23, 2009): Wrap up and final discussion: What is the War on Terror?

-Return to the discussion of the first class.

-Apply course lessons to an analysis of recent events, such as the attacks in Mumbai (Nov, 2008), Israeli-Hamas fighting in Gaza (Dec, 2008), or

-No reading assigned

-Final Assignment (10-15 pages, due January 25, 11:59 PM): What is the best way to conceive of and address the problem of terrorism in the 21st century?