Course manual
Joint Master's Programme in
International Humanitarian Action

University of Warsaw

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International Relations in
Humanitarian Action
Semester 2
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Credits awarded: 4 ECTS
Period: Second semester, block 1.
Venue & hours: Room 3.6, CI II, Lipowa 4, Tuesday, 9.45-11.15

1. Introduction

The aim of this course is to offer the students possibility to learn and understand the specificity and main characteristics of contemporary armed conflicts. During the course main theories concerning the sources for military conflicts, their geographical distribution and factors decisive for conflicts’ characteristics will be discussed. The students will familiarize themselves also with the main evolutionary trends in contemporary armed conflicts, like the Revolution in Military affairs and its implications, privatisation of violence (incl. growth in private security/military services), the role and impact of the media on conflicts’ conduct and forms. They will also have an opportunity to discuss the (near) future trends in warfare, particularly those related to technological progress (advancement in robotics, cybernetics and biotechnologies).

2. Learning outcomes

At the end of the course, the student:

Knowledge:
- Has highly specialised knowledge and a critical understanding of theoretical concepts and theories concerning contemporary armed conflict.
- Has a critical understanding of personal security risks in humanitarian fieldwork, as well as opportunities and threats of current trends within organised violence.
- Has highly specialised knowledge of the diversity of actors and stakeholders, their interaction and competition in contemporary armed conflicts.
- Has a thorough knowledge of the operational processes and changes in the political and military structures in the international dimension and a critical understanding of the social, legal and security environment in conflict situations.

Skills
- Has specialised skills to conceptualise, interpret and critically analyse contemporary armed conflicts, including humanitarian interventions.
- Has the ability to interpret and critically analyse data, information and experience concerning a certain armed conflict or military intervention in order to develop a contextual understanding of the geographical workfield, the community, perspectives, policies, issues and possible solutions.
- Has the ability to formulate independent views, support them with elaborate arguments, using a broad range of approaches and theoretical perspectives, formulate coherent conclusions and make a synthetic summary of these conclusions, using a specialized language of conflict and conflict resolution studies, on topics related to contemporary armed conflicts and their humanitarian aspects.

Competences:
- Has demonstrated the ability to position one's own research findings in the broader context of conflict studies. Has developed an open attitude towards acquiring new knowledge and understanding about professional and academic developments in conflict studies.
- Learns from past experiences, identifies opportunities to overcome humanitarian dilemmas and proposes new work methods for increased efficiency, effectiveness and stakeholder accountability in complex and unpredictable humanitarian environments during armed conflicts.

3. Course material
Recommended readings:

14. SIPRI, SIPRI Yearbooks (various editions),
15. HIK, Conflict barometer (various editions),

4. Teaching and learning methodology
Lecture in classroom, discussion, powerpoint presentations. Optionally (if case of students' interest and request) students' public presentations as well as written short analyses on selected topics

5. Programme and training activities

Week 1
Armed conflicts - main definitions, typologies and classifications (incl. factors constituting armed conflict, question of "level of intensity of violence", inter- vs. intra vs. intra-national internationalised conflicts, issue of one-sided violence, conflicts and interventions).

Week 2
Traditional (Clausewitzian) vision of armed conflicts. XX century wars – “the Old wars” - geopolitics, totality of wars, Cold War and its implications
Suggested readings:
- M. Kaldor, New and Old wars. Organised violence in a global era (third edition, Stanford: 2012), ch. 2 (Old Wars)
**Week 3**

Contemporary armed conflicts - statistical overview, geographical distribution, intensity
- SIPRI Yearbook (newest edition available) – chapter on Armed conflicts, including annexes
- Conflict Barometer (CB - newest edition available) – Parts: methodology, global conflict panorama, global conflict developments (CB 2014, pp. 7-20)

**Week 4**

Theories on evolution of conflicts in macro scale (methods and means used, strategies adopted): A. and H. Toffler’ "war generations" and derivative concepts (i.e. fourth generation wars, etc.), M. van Creveld concept of "transformation of war"
- A.Toffler, H. Toffler, War and Anti-War (various editions), ch. 5, 6, 9.

**Week 5**

Theories on sources and reasons for armed conflicts (based on structural factors - R. Cooper; cultural factors - S. Huntington)
- S. Huntington, The Clash of Civilisations?, "Foreign Affairs", Summer 1993

**Week 6**

Economic and ecological factors - P. Collier, T. Homer-Dixon – relevance and limitations of these theories
- P. Collier, Economic Causes of Civil Conflict and their Implications for Policy, Oxford University, April 2006 (users.ox.ac.uk/~econpco/research/pdfs/EconomicCausesofCivilConflict-ImplicationsforPolicy.pdf)

**Week 7**

Theoretical reflection on the conduct and forms of contemporary armed conflicts - "new war" theories (M. Kaldor, H. Muenkler) – sources of conflicts, main characteristics, limitations and strengths of the concept

**Week 8**

Theoretical reflection on the conduct and forms of risk-transfer war (M. Shaw), "war amongst the people" (R. Smith)

**Week 9**

Technology and war – RMA and its implications (impact on strategies and methods of conflict) - the idea of RMA, the sources of its current forms
- E. Cohen, Technology and Warfare [in:] J. Baylis (et.al), Strategy in the contemporary world OUP: 2007, pp. 141-161

**Week 10**

Problem of asymmetry in contemporary conflicts. Issue of hybrid warfare
- F Hoffman, Hybrid warfare and Challenges, “Joint Forces Quarterly”, Issue 52, 1st quarter 2009

Week 11
Privatisation of violence (participation of PMC in conflicts)

Week 12
New means of destruction and warfare – cyberwarfare.

Week 13
New means of destruction and warfare - robots (UAVs etc.), biotechnologies
- S. J. Barela (ed.), Legitimacy and drones. Investigating legality, morality and efficacy of UCAVs, Ashgate:2015, ch. 10, 11 (M. Madej, Tactical efficacy: 'notorious' UCAVs and lawfare, S. Barela, Strategic efficacy: the opinion of security and a dearth of data)

Week 14
Mass media and conflicts (evolution of their role, CNN effect, parachute journalism and other innovations within media practices; media and conflict resolution)

Week 15
Future of war and warfare – a discussion

6. Workload
30h of seminars (15x1,5H)
On average 3,5 h per week of reading – c/a 55 h. of readings
15 h – revision for the exam and other forms of preparations to the lectures
Total: 100 h.

7. Assessment methods
Written exam (mixed form: multiple answers-type question, semi-open question – one-sentence answers; open question – one of the three to be chosen by student ) 80%.
Activeness during classess 20%.

8. Assessment criteria
85% of points - grade 5
75% of points - grade 4,5
65% of points – grade 4
55% of points – grade 3,5
Over 45% of points – grade 3

9. Appendices