HSPS and H&P TRIPOS
PART IIB 2020-21
Pol 16 The Politics of Conflict and Peacebuilding

Course Organiser
Devon Curtis (dc403@cam.ac.uk)
Virtual office hours: arrange by email

Lecturers and Supervisors
Elodie Convergne (ebc31@cam.ac.uk)
Devon Curtis (dc403@cam.ac.uk)- For thematic lectures and for DR Congo case
Graham Denyer Willis (gdw27@cam.ac.uk)- For Latin America case
Lyn Kouadio (ljvk2@cam.ac.uk)
Sigrid Lupieri (sml48@cam.ac.uk)
Ola Osman (oo273@cam.ac.uk)
Burcu Ozcelik (bo244@cam.ac.uk) For Kurdish case

Outline of the Course

This paper explores issues of conflict and peacebuilding in contemporary international politics, with a particular focus on conflict and peace in the global south. It considers competing theories and claims about the causes of conflict and the relationship between the state, conflict, development and other international processes. It analyses the range of responses to conflict and how they are justified, and focuses on contests over the meanings and practices of peacebuilding. The possibilities and limitations of international institutions, including the United Nations, in ending conflict and maintaining peace are highlighted throughout the paper.

The paper pays particular attention to the connection between local, national, regional and international politics, economy and society. It looks at the ways in which regional and international dynamics may have a bearing on conflict and peace. What is the relationship between seemingly ‘local’ conflicts and the wider political structures in which they are embedded? Do institutions and programmes responding to conflict reproduce and reflect a state-centric system? What are the benefits and limits to existing approaches to peace and conflict? Is the state the primary actor in conflict and in its resolution? How can we best understand the multiple layers of conflict and how they interact? How is political agency exercised?

In Michaelmas, the lectures explore the origins and nature of contemporary conflict, and the relationship between conflict, the state, and the global system. We begin by discussing the contested meanings of concepts of security, war, and conflict, and how these are measured. We then turn to the relationship between globalization, the state and conflict. Next, we will focus on a number of competing theories and claims about the causes and dynamics of conflict, looking at the state, economies, identities, gender, and refugees and population displacement. In Michaelmas we will also have lectures on three regional case studies to illustrate ideas, approaches, and practices of
conflict and peace in diverse settings around the world: the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the African Great Lakes region; Kurdish movements in Syria and Iraq; and war by other means in Latin America. Students should attend all the lectures, but they are expected to become highly familiar with one of these case study regions.

In Lent, the lectures will focus on peace and peacebuilding. We will start by questioning the concept of peace, and we will critically assess the institutions, ideas and practices underlying peacebuilding efforts. The lectures focus on different international and regional actors and their strategies and normative agendas. Topics include the politics of humanitarian assistance, governance and democratisation, security reform, justice and reconciliation, and post-war economies. The final lecture discusses the possibilities and limits of peacebuilding and transnational advocacy.

Throughout Michaelmas and Lent we will have seminar classes to discuss some of the key overarching readings. In Michaelmas there will be one seminar on questions of concepts, measurement and indicators, and one seminar on local (ie Cambridge’s) connections to global conflict(s). In Lent there will be a seminar class on ‘alternative’ ideas and practices of peacebuilding and statebuilding.

In Easter term there will be one revision lecture, one revision seminar, and one revision supervision

Aims and Objectives

- to explore a range of ways of understanding possible connections between conflict and peace
- to provide a framework for thinking about the causes of conflict and the connections between local, regional and international processes
- to gain detailed knowledge of conflict and peace in at least one region
- to encourage critical reflection of theoretical assumptions regarding conflict, and peacebuilding, and available models and policy packages
- to teach students how to read closely primary texts such as international treaties, resolutions and official reports

Teaching and Assessment

In Michaelmas, students will have 2 thematic supervisions and 2 seminars. Students will be allocated a supervisor at the beginning of Michaelmas term. For each supervision, students should prepare a 2000-2500 word essay. For the first seminar, students should submit two questions sparked by the readings. For the second seminar, students will be asked to prepare an essay of no more than 2000 words. Details are in the relevant section of this paper guide.

There will also be one supervision on the case study material. Students can choose whether they will do this at the end of Michaelmas term, or beginning of Lent term.
In **Lent**, students will have **2 thematic supervisions and 1 seminar** (as well as the case study supervision if they did not do this in Michaelmas). For each supervision, students should write a 2000-2500 word essay. For the seminar, students will be asked to prepare an essay of less than 2000 words.

**Please note:** Students are scheduled to hand in 7 essays throughout the year (4 thematic supervision questions, 1 case study question, 2 shorter seminar essays). For one of these, student may choose to hand in a plan instead, or may come without submitting work. In other words, students should aim to submit at least **6 pieces of work** over the year.

In **Easter** term, we will have one revision lecture, one revision seminar, and one revision supervision

This paper is assessed by an **undivided** three-hour examination paper, from which students should answer three questions. **At the end of the paper guide, there are some past examination papers and an examiners’ report.** Students can also find other previous examination papers and examiners’ reports on moodle.

**Movie nights**

There are many movies and documentaries that are relevant to the themes we cover in POL 16. We will keep a list of suggestions on moodle (and please feel free to suggest others for the list). If there is enough interest, we will organise a few movie club nights to discuss a movie from the list. It will be on zoom, popcorn is permitted…
# Michaelmas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict: Causes, dynamics, consequences</th>
<th>Case studies</th>
<th>Seminars</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(D Curtis, B Ozcelik, G Denyer Willis)</td>
<td>Seminar 1 (week 2)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Online (see below for info)</td>
<td>Concepts, measurement and indicators</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online- zoom live 11am-noon</td>
<td>DR Congo in the African Great Lakes</td>
<td>Group 1</td>
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<td>(pre-recorded on moodle by 26 Oct)</td>
<td>Mon 19 Oct, 3-5pm</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(D Curtis)</td>
<td>Group 2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.Background: violence and state formation</td>
<td>Tues 20 Oct, 1:30-3:30</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.Post-colonial politics and conflict</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3.Intervention and peacebuilding</td>
<td>Tues 20 Oct, 4-6pm</td>
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<td>1. Introduction: conflict and peacebuilding 12 Oct</td>
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<td>Seminar 2 (week 8)</td>
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<td>2. Defining and measuring conflict, war and security 13 Oct</td>
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<td>Cambridge in conflict</td>
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<td>3. Globalisation, economies and contemporary conflict 20 Oct</td>
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<td>4. The state and conflict 27 Oct</td>
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<td>Mon 30 Nov, 3-5pm</td>
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<td>5. Social factors: health, environment, poverty and inequality 3 Nov</td>
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<td>6. Identities: Ethnicity, religion and conflict 10 Nov</td>
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<td>Tues 1 Dec, 1:30-3:30</td>
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<td>7. Gender: Masculinities, patriarchy and conflict 17 Nov</td>
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<td>Group 3</td>
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<td>8. Refugees and population displacement 24 Nov</td>
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<td>Tues 1 Dec, 4-6pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kurds: Syria and Iraq</td>
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<td>Latin America: War by Other Means</td>
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<td>(B Ozcelik, at 11am)</td>
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<td>(pre-recorded on moodle by 23 Nov)</td>
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<td>(zoom live- dates below)</td>
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<td>(G Denyer Willis)</td>
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<td>1.Transnational, state and local histories 2 Nov</td>
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<td>2. Prospects for autonomy, federalism and statehood in Iraq, Syria, Turkey 9 Nov</td>
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<td>3. The role of the US, Turkey and Russia over the settlement of Kurdish claims 16 Nov</td>
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Note: In Michaelmas, students will have 2 thematic supervisions and 2 seminars. They may also have 1 case study supervision (but they may do this early in Lent instead).
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<tr>
<th>Lent lectures: Peacebuilding (D Curtis)</th>
<th>Lent Seminars (on zoom or in person, to be confirmed)</th>
<th>Easter term (online or in person- to be confirmed)</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Introduction: peace studies</td>
<td>2. What is peacebuilding?</td>
<td>3. Seminar 3 (week 7) Alternatives to PB and Statebuilding</td>
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<td>2. What is peacebuilding?</td>
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<td>Group 1 Mon 8 Mar, 3-5pm</td>
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<td>3. Who keeps the peace and why?</td>
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<td>Group 2 Tues 9 Mar, 10-noon</td>
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<td>4. The politics of humanitarian</td>
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<td>Group 3 Tues 9 Mar, 3-5pm</td>
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<td>assistance</td>
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<td>5. Negotiations, mediation and peace</td>
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<td>agreements</td>
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<td>6. Governance: Democratisation and the</td>
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<td>governance of divided societies</td>
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<td>7. Security: Ex-combatants, security</td>
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<td>and stabilisation</td>
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<td>8. Society: Justice and post-war</td>
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<td>reconciliation</td>
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<td>9. Economy: Post-conflict economic</td>
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<td>policies and development</td>
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<td>10. Opportunities and limits of</td>
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<td>peacebuilding and transnational</td>
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**Note:** In Lent, students will have 2 supervisions (and a third supervision on a case study if they did not do this in Michaelmas) and 1 seminar. In Easter students will have one revision supervision and one revision seminar.
Supervision Questions

Michaelmas Term (choose 2)
1. Who profits from war?
2. Are fragile states the cause or the consequence of conflict?
3. When does a socio-economic crisis become perceived as a security threat? Answer with reference to health, environment, or poverty.
4. Is ‘ethnic conflict’ a myth?
5. In what ways does patriarchy shape violent conflict?
6. In what ways do refugees challenge the status quo in both sending and receiving states?

Case study supervision (either MT or LT) (choose 1)
1. Is the state always central to conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo?
2. What are the limitations of international peacebuilding initiatives in the Democratic Republic of the Congo?
3. To what extent has the goal of statehood helped to either unite or divide the Kurds in Iraq and Syria? Respond with reference to specific examples or experiences of local autonomy or bids for independence in either or both Iraq and Syria.
4. Is the main obstacle to Kurdish self-governance or independence the failure of Kurdish groups to demonstrate a viable commitment to democratization in either or both Iraq and Syria?
5. Why does ‘everyday violence’ matter for an understanding of politics in Latin America?

Lent supervisions (choose 2)
1. Would peace operations/humanitarian relief operations benefit from greater local involvement? (Answer for either peace operations or humanitarian relief)
2. Do more inclusive peace negotiations lead to a more sustainable peace?
3. Is it possible for institutional design to minimize the likelihood of a recurrence of conflict in divided societies?
4. Do disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes constitute the best approach for ex-combatants to reconcile and reintegrate into their communities?
5. Are there elements of post-conflict justice that are essential to the durability of peace?
6. Is economic development the most important form of peacebuilding?

Seminars (see sections in the paper guide for readings and seminar assignments):
Seminar 1: How do debates over definitions and measurement affect the study of comparative political violence and peace?

Seminar 2: How is Cambridge implicated in global conflict?

Seminar 3: Are there alternatives to peacebuilding and statebuilding?

READINGS and COURSE MATERIALS

Both the University Library and the Seeley library hold most of the items listed here. Much of the literature also exists in college libraries. Most of the material is available on-line. Students should make sure that they know how to access journal material through the University Library ejournals portal. Many items that are not available in online journals or as e-books are on the library moodle site (ie- some book chapters).

Books and articles that are strongly recommended are indicated with an asterisk (*). Please note that although this paper guide is very long, students are not expected to do ALL the readings. The list of further readings (items without an asterisk) in each section is for students who wish to go into more depth on a particular topic. Several lecture topics also include a ‘case’ section to highlight the lecture theme in one or two cases. If you are doing a supervision essay on a topic, I would suggest that you read at least one case study reading. Also, many of the same readings are relevant for different sections of the paper, so they will turn up in multiple sections of the paper guide.

Lecture recordings and powerpoints will be placed on the POL 16 Moodle website.

General Readings

These are general readings that deal with the main themes in this paper. I would encourage you to read all of them at some point in the year.

David Keen, Complex Emergencies (London: Polity, 2007)


MICHAELMAS TERM

Conflict: Causes and Dynamics
Lecture 1: Introduction: Conflict and Peacebuilding
What are the key themes of the course? How can we think about these different levels of analysis in thinking about conflict and peace, and what are the interactions between these levels? What is the role of the state? What is the role of ‘outside’ actors in war and peacebuilding?


*David Keen, *Complex Emergencies* (London: Polity 2008), [Ch. 1 on War: M]


Lecture 2: Defining and Measuring Conflict, War and Security
What are the differences between ‘conflict’, ‘war’, ‘violence’, peace? Who uses them, and for what purposes? How, if at all, should these phenomena be measured and compared? Should scholars prioritise one of them for research? Why did the term ‘human security’ emerge and to what extent does it represent an alternative to state security or international security?

Please also see Seminar 1 box below for assignment and discussion


*Sally Engle Merry, The Seductions of Quantification: Measuring Human Rights, Gender Violence and Sex Trafficking*, University of Chicago Press, 2016. [M: Ch 1: A World of Quantification]


*Pamina Firchow, Reclaiming Everyday Peace: Local Voices in Measurement and Evaluation after War*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018
*Suda Perera, Bermuda triangulation: embracing the messiness of researching in conflict, *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 11 (1), 2017


*Report on Global Peace 2020:*


http://search.lib.cam.ac.uk/?itemid=|eresources|218247


http://search.lib.cam.ac.uk/?itemid=|eresources|218247


**Human Security (and debates):**


**Seminar 1: Concepts, Definitions and Measurement**
**Seminar readings**

*1) Chris Cramer, *Civil War is not a Stupid Thing: Accounting for Violence in Developing Countries*, Hurst Publishers, 2006. [Read: Ch. 2: *Categories, Trends and Evidence of Violent Conflict*]

*2) Sally Engle Merry, *The Seductions of Quantification: Measuring Human Rights, Gender Violence and Sex Trafficking*, University of Chicago Press, 2016. [Read: Ch 1: *A World of Quantification*]


You also may want to glance through this report:

2020 Global Peace Index:

**Seminar assignment:**
After you have done the four readings, please write two questions or observations that have been sparked by one or more of the readings. Please email these to your seminar leader at least 12 hours before your seminar.

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**Lecture 3: Globalisation, economies and contemporary conflict**

Do the wars of the last three decades represent change from or continuity with historical patterns? How has ‘globalisation’ affected the nature and conduct of political violence, and in what dimensions? Who are the beneficiaries of conflict? What are the broader structures of production and profit in which violent conflicts are embedded? What are the implications of global war industries for our understanding of the dynamics of conflict?

**Essay question: Who profits from war?**


Paul Collier (2000) ‘Doing Well out of War: an Economic Perspective’ in Mats Berdal and David Malone, Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars. (Lynne Rienner, Boulder). This a readable, non-technical exposition of Collier’s thinking. See also the various articles by Collier and Hoeffler that give a more detailed account of their quantitative methodology, for example:


David Wearing, ‘Britain is behind the slaughter in Yemen. Here’s how you could help end it’. The Guardian, 6 September 2019
https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/sep/06/britain-slaughter-yemen-planes-bombs-politicians-media?

Campaign Against Arms Trade www.caat.org.uk : some useful research and arguments on their website.


**Cases**


-David Keen *Conflict and Collusion in Sierra Leone*. James Currey, 2005.


**Lecture 4. The State and Conflict**

What does it mean to say a state is ‘failed’ or ‘collapsed’? What are the political implications of the term? Is the state ever a marginal actor in conflict?

**Essay question: Are fragile states the cause or the consequence of conflict?**


Christopher Cramer *Civil War is not a Stupid Thing*, chapter 6, ‘Passionate interests’.


Reports:
*Fund for Peace, The Fragile States Index 2020, particularly section on ‘Indicators’ https://fragilestatesindex.org/


Cases


Tiitmamer, Nhial "The flaws in Kate Almquist Knopf’s call for trusteeship in South Sudan”. The Sudd Institute Policy Brief, 18 October 2016.
At: https://www.suddinstitute.org/assets/Publications/5809bbc36cf6b_TheFlawsInKateAlmquistKnopfsCall_Full.pdf


**Lecture 5: Social factors: Health, environment, poverty, inequality**

Do poverty, inequality and economic marginalisation lead to rebellion? How do socio-economic issues become politicised? Do particular kinds of economic endowment or scarcity lead to particular patterns of violence? Is there a relationship between health and conflict? How do development processes interact with conflict?

**Essay question:** When does a socio-economic crisis become perceived as a security threat? Answer with reference to health, environment, or poverty

**Health:**


*Clare Wenham, The oversecuritization of global health: changing the terms of debate, International Affairs, Volume 95, Issue 5, September 2019, Pages 1093–1110, [https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiz170](https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiz170)


Kathryn Bouskill and Elta Smith, Global Health and Security: Threats and Opportunities, Rand Corporation: December 2019


Reports and other media


Poverty/inequality:

Wayne Nafziger, Frances Stewart and Raimo Vayrynen (eds), *War, Hunger and Displacement: The Origins of Humanitarian Emergencies* (Oxford University Press, 2000),


**Environment/Resources:**


(Also browse other articles in this edition of The Journal of Conflict Resolution.)


Marc Levy, Testimony on House Committee on Homeland Security, 8 July 2015 (on climate change and security)


**Cases:**


**Lecture 6: Identities: Religion, ethnicity, nation and conflict**
What is the role of identity in conflict? Which particular interactions produce ‘ethnic’ or ‘religious’ violence? Is ‘ethnic conflict’ a misleading term? What is the role of national identity in driving conflicts today? How do armed groups seek legitimacy for their struggles?

**Essay question:** Is ‘ethnic conflict’ a myth?


-Ashutosh Varshney ‘Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict’ in Carles Boix and Susan Stokes (eds), The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics, 2009.


Vigdis Broch-Due (ed) (2005), Violence and Belonging: The Quest for Identity in Postcolonial Africa. (Routledge, Abingdon) (Intro)


Cases:


Fotini Christia, ‘Following the Money: Muslim versus Muslim in Bosnia’s Civil War’. *Comparative Politics*, Volume 40, Number 4, July 2008, pp. 461-480(20)

Kamala Visweswaran (ed), (2013) Everyday Occupations: Experiencing Militarism in South Asia and the Middle East, De Gruyter Online (eBook). (on politics of identity under military occupation in different conflict areas)


**Lecture 7: Gender: Masculinities, Patriarchy and Conflict**

*How is the production of conflict and violence gendered? Does war subvert or reinforce peacetime gender dynamics? Should sexual violence in war be treated differently to other forms of violence? To what extent is ‘patriarchy’ relevant to understanding political violence and conflict?*

**Essay question:** In what ways does patriarchy shape violent conflict?


*C Carol Cohn (ed) *Women and Wars*. Polity Press 2013. [ch. 1 on M]*


Carlo Koos, ‘What do we know about sexual violence in armed conflicts? Recent empirical progress and remaining gaps in peace and conflict research’ GIGA working paper No. 275, June 2015. [H]


Esther Luigi, 1325 and Beyond: Ways forward for the United Nations, 


**Cases:**

Dara Cohen, ‘Female Combatants and the Perpetration of Violence: Wartime Rape in the Sierra Leone Civil War’, *World Politics*, 65(3), 2013, 383-415


**Lecture 8: Refugees and Population Displacement as a Cause and Consequence of Conflict**

Do refugees and displaced populations cause inter-state conflict? What are the political, security, economic and social determinants of refugee and migration flows? Are international regimes and donor agencies adequately equipped to deal with migrants and refugees? Is it possible to reconcile state sovereignty with the ‘rights of others’?
Essay question: In what ways do refugees challenge the status quo in both sending and receiving states?


*Salehyan, Idean and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, “Refugees and the spread of civil war,” International Organization, 2006, 60 (2)


Alex Betts and Gil Loescher (eds), Refugees in International Relations, Oxford University Press, 2011.


**Cases**


Seminar 2: Cambridge in Conflict: The Global-local Dimensions of Conflict

Seminar readings
Glance through the following articles for ideas about the ways in which the local and global connect, then do your own research for the assignment below
Stephanie Stacey, Jesus College to return Benin bronze Okukor to Nigeria, Varsity, 27 November 2019.

Seminar assignment:
This seminar will consist of student presentations, so please be prepared to present your work (you can use powerpoint, or just present). You will conduct research into one way in which Cambridge connects to global conflict. Examples include: conflict resources in your mobiles such as coltan, the arms trade, the illegal drugs trade, war memorial sites in Cambridge, war objects and statues. You can also write a brief (no more than 2000 words) essay on your topic, explaining the mechanisms linking Cambridge to the ‘global’. Please send your paper to your seminar leader 24 hours before the seminar. You may do the presentation on your own, or in a group of 2 or 3.

CASES:

Case study: The Democratic Republic of the Congo in the African Great Lakes region (D Curtis)

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is often represented as a site of brutal violence, and it is known for its experiences of conflict, high levels of sexual violence, ‘resource wars’ and other forms of atrocities. The DRC has suffered from repeated cycles of violence, and, at times, has been labelled a ‘failed state’. This option will allow students to better understand the violence in the DRC and the surrounding region, and the ways in which local, regional and international drivers of conflict interact. It will question whether the media and policy depictions of conflict in the DRC adequately capture the complexity of politics in the region and the reasons for violence and peace. The module will explore the historical underpinnings of violence in the DRC and how these are connected to wider international processes. The last lecture focuses on responses to conflict in the DRC. It will explore the impact of
different peacebuilding initiatives along with the assumptions guiding these peacebuilding activities and transnational activist campaigns. All lectures will also offer some comparison to other countries in the region.

**Lecture 1: A brief history of the region**

I would suggest starting with Hochschild’s book. It is an excellent introduction to international involvement in the Congo, and provides a gripping account of the colonial period.

It will be useful for you to read at least one of the books outlining the history of the broader Great Lakes region – perhaps Prunier, Lemarchand, or Reyntjens. These are fairly detailed books - you are not expected to know all these details, but it will be useful to you to have a broad understanding of background history.

On Congolese history, Young and Turner’s book is a classic, which deals with the colonial underpinnings of conflict in the Congo. Dunn specifically addresses the representation of Congo’s past and present. Nzongola-Ntalaja’s book is good on the end of the Mobutu period and attempts at democratisation. Deibert is a journalist and his book offers an introduction to Congo. Williams addresses the period of the immediate post-independence period in Congo, and the UN peacekeeping mission from 1960-64. The Stearns book is very good on the more recent Congo wars and Berwouts examines conflict in Congo since the 2000s.

**Regional Histories (skim through one of these in order to understand regional background)-you do not need to know all the detail**


**History of Congo**


*Kevin Dunn, *Imagining the Congo: The International Relations of Identity*, (Palgrave 2003). [http://search.lib.cam.ac.uk/?itemid=%7Ceresources%7C0190](http://search.lib.cam.ac.uk/?itemid=%7Ceresources%7C0190)


Lecture 2: Conflict and international relations
There are contrasting arguments accounting for violence in the DRC. Clark’s edited volume provides a good overview of the regional political dynamics in the 1990s. Explanations for conflict in the DRC tend to focus on economic factors (Nest et al., Kabamba, Samset), local political issues (Vlassenroot, Jackson, Autesserre), politics and regional connections (Stearns, Reyntjens). Some authors also focus on the interaction of these factors (Raeymaekers). There is an excellent blog that students will find interesting for an analysis of current events: http://congoresearchgroup.org/

Essay: Is the state always central to conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo?

*John F. Clark (ed), The African Stakes of the Congo War (Palgrave, 2004). http://search.lib.cam.ac.uk/?itemid=%7Ceresources%7C83632


*All the President’s Wealth: The Kabila Family Business, Congo Research Group, July 2017, https://allthewealth.congoresearchgroup.org/dist/assets/all-the-presidents-wealth-ENG.pdf
Lecture 3: Peacebuilding and transnational advocacy

The DRC has been the focus of a number of international peacebuilding initiatives and advocacy campaigns. International campaigns have targeted conflict minerals, sexual violence, and environmental conservation. Seay and Baaz/Stern discuss the limitations of these campaigns. A number of authors provide more general critiques
of peacebuilding strategies in the DRC. For instance, Autesserre has written extensively on this topic.

**Essay: What are the limitations of international peacebuilding initiatives in the Democratic Republic of the Congo?**


Jeffrey Herbst and Greg Mills, “There is No Congo” *Foreign Policy*, 18 March 2009; See reply by Timothy Raeymaekers, “Who Calls the Congo”


The ‘Silent Voices’ Bukavu Series blog posts are an excellent collection of reflections on conducting research in the DRC, especially by Congolese researchers: https://www.gicnetwork.be/silent-voices-blog-bukavu-series-eng/
See, for instance, articles by Emery Mudinga, Précieux Mwaka, Anuarite Bashizi, Stanislas Baganda

Case study: The Kurds in Syria and Iraq (B Ozcelik)

The Kurds are the largest ethnic group without a state, a product of the post-World War I peace settlement that followed the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Entangled in one of the most protracted conflicts in the Middle East, the future of the Kurdish peoples is deeply intertwined with questions of identity politics, international recognition, political representation and self-determination. Precipitated by the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the ongoing multi-sided war in Syria, the rights struggle of the Kurds reverberates across a transnational geography through evolving political, social and economic relations. Empowered by their role in the fight against so-called Islamic State (IS), the Kurds in Syria garnered recognition as the Middle East’s new democratisers. However, more recent events have turned the tide of history yet again for the Kurds. Kurdish claims for autonomy and independence continue to pose a challenge to state resilience in Turkey, Iraq and Syria (as well as wider regional stability), meriting analyses at the state, transnational, and sub-state levels.

While this case study option provides a general background on contemporary Kurdish trans-border politics, the specific focus is on how sub-state movements struggle to redefine dominant conceptions of nationalism, belonging, local governance and state sovereignty, while introducing new debates to the task of democracy. The three lectures offer a glimpse at the many voices that speak out at competing and overlapping sites of power and resistance in the Kurdish political and armed movements in Syria and Iraq (and to an extent, Turkey). In a region in flux, the Kurds have become a key determinant in equations over the future of the state system in the region and possibly its borders. Rather than look at each country on an individual basis, this option explores tensions, key themes and debates within and among Kurdish territories, armed groups, political parties and ideologies.

It would be useful to browse a number of the general readings below on the genesis and evolution of Kurdish nationalism. Given the fast pace of political and military developments in the region against the backdrop of the war in Syria, it is advisable to keep up to date on current events.

Supervision Essay Questions (choose one):

1. To what extent has the goal of statehood helped to either unite or divide the Kurds in Iraq and Syria? Respond with reference to specific examples or experiences of local autonomy or bids for independence in either or both Iraq and Syria.
2. Is the main obstacle to Kurdish self-governance or independence the failure of Kurdish groups to demonstrate a viable commitment to democratization in either or both Iraq and Syria?


The role of political Islam among the Kurds is generally understudied, however, religion (mainly Sunni Islam) plays a significant role in Kurdish politics and society. For a useful historical overview see Michiel Leezenberg, ‘Political Islam among the Kurds’, in Faleh Jabbar and Hosham Dawod (eds), *The Kurds: Nationalism and Politics* (London: Saqi Books, 2006): 203-30. [A version of this chapter appears here http://home.hum.uva.nl/oz/leezenberg/PoliIslamKurds.pdf]

**Lecture 1: Transnational, state and local histories**

This lecture explores the crystallization of the Kurdish national question at the end of World War I and traces key moments in the evolution of regional Kurdish politics in conjunction with state-building exercises in Turkey, Iraq and Syria. Over the past decade, and hastened by the war against so-called Islamic State, the Kurds in Iraq and Syria, especially, have been described as sitting at the cusp of their golden moment and ‘surprise winners’. The focus here is on macro-level processes taking place across borders to reimagine the ‘State’ as the desired (and contested) form of political organization, forms of governance and identity in the Middle East as experienced by Kurdish groups. Attention will also be given to the heterogeneity in the state-building projects defended by rival Kurdish liberation-nationalist movements, including tensions between secular and Islamist ideologies among the Kurds. By looking at trans-border solidarity that challenges norms of situatedness, from Diyarbakir to Erbil to Kobane, the broad aim is explore how millions of Kurds live simultaneously ‘there’ and ‘here’, both within and beyond borders, and across multiple identities at once.


**Lecture 2: State-determination or Self-determination? Prospects for autonomy, federalism and statehood in Iraq, Syria, Turkey**

In this lecture the focus shifts to the state of intra-Kurdish rivalries within and between competing Kurdish liberationist-nationalist movements in Syria and Iraq. Specifically, this entails an analysis of the agendas for self-rule and federalisation advanced by dominant actors and the corresponding opportunities and challenges for democratisation and peace-making. The lecture looks at how each of these models can be considered effective power-sharing schemes that aim to both share and consolidate authority over contested territories and diverse societies that include Arabs, Turkoman and ethnic minorities. Core themes and questions that are addressed are: What are the dynamics between the Kurdistan Region in Iraq and the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK)-dominated groups that are active in Turkey and Syria? What are the main features of the project of democratic autonomy/confederalism in Syria versus the standard state-building model in Iraqi Kurdistan? Is territorial autonomy a necessary pre-condition for peace? What were the goals of Kurdish armed violence and what has been achieved by political violence, if anything? How are citizenship rights, political pluralism and questions around ‘who are we, and what do we want to achieve together’ treated by the authors of these autonomy projects?

There is a rich literature on the emergence of a Kurdish de facto or quasi state in Iraq. Much of this scholarly work deals with local histories and KDP-PUK rivalry for rule over Iraqi Kurdistan. A portion of this body of work is situated within conceptual and empirical approaches to non-state recognition in international law and diplomacy. On this, see Nina Caspersen and Gareth Stansfield, eds. *Unrecognized States in the International System* (London: Routledge, 2011).


On the democratic autonomy/confederalism ideological model attempted in northern Syria, see:


On the PKK and nationalist mobilization, see Aliza Marcus for what is still considered the authoritative history of the militant group: *Blood and Belief: The PKK and the Kurdish fight for independence* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2007).


On the Kurds of Syria:


On gender, nationalism and conflict:

Ahmet Serdar Aktürk (2016) Female Cousins and Wounded Masculinity: Kurdish Nationalist Discourse in the Post-Ottoman Middle East, Middle Eastern Studies, 52:1, 46-59, DOI: 10.1080/00263206.2015.1078793

Andrea Fischer-Tahir, ‘Gendered Memories and Masculinities: Kurdish Peshmerga on the Anfal Campaign in Iraq’ Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies, Vol. 8, No. 1, (Winter 2012), pp. 92-114

Lecture 3: The role of external actors: Kingmakers or spoilers?

This lecture takes up the role of external actors—new allies and former enemies—as drivers of Kurdish regional politics in Iraq and Syria, including the US and Russia. The foreign relation strategies of the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq and the Kurdish-controlled local administration in northern Syria is also scrutinized, particularly in light of the battle against IS as a source of external recognition and international legitimization for Kurdish actors. Additionally, Turkey’s foreign policy toward the KRG and northern Syria is explored to highlight the complex and multifaceted relationship between domestic and foreign policy.


Case study: Latin America: War by other Means? (G. Denyer-Willis)
Why is Latin America, a continent not at war, more deadly than many war zones? This set of lectures and supervision material examines how violence works, and why it matters, in Latin America. Using the lens of ‘war by other means’ we will examine how violence is an everyday problem that operates through various facets - informality, criminal governance, exterminatory policing, and bureaucracies that do more to harm than to help. Drawing in particular on ethnographic work, which is exceptionally effective at capturing the banality of violence, inequality and fractured democracy, these case studies shed light on whether the state and a ‘monopoly of violence’ actually means security and peace.

**Supervision essay question:** Why does ‘everyday violence’ matter for an understanding of politics in Latin America?

**Readings:**


LENT TERM

Peacebuilding

**Lecture 1. Introduction: peace studies**

*How did peace studies evolve as a distinct area of study? What are the key methodological and theoretic commitments in the field of peace studies, and how have these changed over the past sixty years? How does peace studies relate to the study of international relations?*


http://search.lib.cam.ac.uk/?itemid=%7Ceresources%7C83625


**Lecture 2. What is peace? What is peacebuilding?**

*What is peace? Who are ‘peacebuilders’? Can you measure peace? What kinds of goals, interests and assumptions are held by different peacebuilding organisations, and what happens when their visions clash? Is peacebuilding intervention a form of domination? Is there an international peacebuilding ‘culture’?*


Michael Banks, ‘Four conceptions of peace’ in Dennis Sandole and Ingrid Sandole-Staroste (eds), *Conflict Management and Problem-Solving* (Pinter, 1987) [M]


Short video on ‘Everyday peace indicators’ (Roger MacGinty and Pamina Firchow)

Cases:

Lecture 3: Who keeps the peace and why?
Is the use of force necessary to bring about peace/stability? How has UN peacekeeping evolved? On what basis do the United Nations and regional organisations involved in peace operations derive their legitimacy? Are multilateral organisations equipped to deal with the transnational nature of conflict?

Essay: Would peace operations/ humanitarian relief operations benefit from greater local involvement? (Answer for either peace operations or humanitarian relief)


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**Regional organisations:**


Lecture 4: The politics of humanitarian assistance

Is the work of humanitarian aid agencies based on altruism? Is it possible for humanitarian relief to be neutral? What are the politics of humanitarianism and how has this changed over the last fifty years? What are the consequences of framing populations as ‘victims’?

Essay: Would peace operations/humanitarian relief operations benefit from greater local involvement? (Answer for either peace operations or humanitarian relief)


See also related blog posts including:


*Degan Ali and Marie-Rose Romain Murphy, ‘Black Lives Matter is also a reckoning for foreign aid and international NGOs’ blogpost Open Democracy, 19 July 2020.


*Mary Anderson, Do No Harm: How Aid can Support Peace or War. (Lynne Rienner, 1999). [M: ch. 4]


*Bernard Hours, “NGOs and the victim industry”, Monde Diplomatique, November
2008.


-Alex de Waal, Democratizing the Aid Encounter in Africa*’ *International Affairs*, Vol 73, No. 4, October 1997.


-Mark Duffield, ‘Risk management and the fortified aid compound: Everyday life in post-interventionary society’ *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, vol 4, 2010: 453-


**Lecture 5: Negotiations, mediation and peace agreements**

*Are peace negotiations best understood as an exercise in bargaining between belligerents? On what basis are participants in peace negotiations chosen? Why do peace agreements so often break down? Is it possible for outsiders to ‘manage spoilers’ in peace processes?*

**Essay: Do more inclusive peace negotiations lead to a more sustainable peace?**


*Alex de Waal, ‘Inclusion in Peacemaking: From Moral Claim to Political Fact’, In


Introductory/general readings on mediation:
Jacob Bercovitch, Mediation and Conflict Resolution, The SAGE Handbook of Conflict Resolution, Bercovitch, Kremenyuk, Zartman (eds), 2009


Sean William Kane, Making Peace When the Whole World Has Come to Fight: The Mediation of Internationalized Civil Wars, International Peacekeeping, 2020

On specific aspects of mediation


Julia Palmiano Federer, Julia Pickhardt et al., Beyond the Tracks? Reflections on Multitrack Approaches to Peace Processes, HD/CSS/Swisspeace/FBA, 2019

Dekha Ibrahim Abdi, Simon Mason, Mediation and Governance in Fragile Contexts: Small Steps to Peace, Boulder CO: Kumarian Press, 2019

Other aspects of peace agreements and peace processes


Cases

Also: podcasts:
The Mediator’s Studio (from Humanitarian Dialogue Centre),
https://www.hdcentre.org/osloforum/podcasts/
There are a number of excellent interviews with mediators on this site.

IPI youtube video on ‘Women mediators: Connecting Local and Global Peacebuilders’ (with Sanam Naraghi-Anderlini and Theresa Whitfield).


**Lecture 6 The Politics of Governance:**
*Democratisation and the governance of divided societies*
Is there an immediate trade-off between democracy and order in highly divided countries emerging from civil war? Is it possible for outsiders to ‘institutionally engineer’ states and societies in order to reach desired outcomes? When, if ever, is partition necessary? Are certain kinds of institutions more conducive to peace?

**Essay: Is it possible for institutional design to minimize the likelihood of a recurrence of conflict in divided societies?**

*Anna Jarstad and Timothy Sisk (eds), From War to Democracy: Dilemmas of Peacebuilding* (Cambridge University Press, 2008). (see chapter 4)


-Phil Roeder and Donald Rothchild, eds., *Sustainable Peace: Power and Democracy After Civil Wars* (Cornell University Press 2005). [Chapter 1 on M]


**Lecture 7: Security: Ex-Combatants, Security and Stabilisation**

Is security and stability the first priority for peacebuilding? Are there tensions between stabilization operations and sovereignty and if so, can these be resolved? Do disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes achieve their objectives?

**Essay**: Do disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes constitute the best approach for ex-combatants to reconcile and reintegrate into their communities?


Paul Jackson, Shivit Bakrania, Is the Future of SSR non-linear? *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 2018


Lilli Banholzer, When do disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes succeed? German Development Institute, Bonn, 2014.

Claire Duncanson, Gender and Peacebuilding. Polity Press, 2016. (see pp 116-123)


Cases:


-Christopher Blattman and Jeannie Annan, ‘Child Combatants in northern Uganda: Reintegration Myths and Realities’ in Robert Muggah (ed), Security and Post-Conflict Reconstruction, (London: Routledge, 2008). (also see other chapters for other cases).


**Official documents and reports:**


**Lecture 8: Society: Justice and post-war reconciliation**

*Can there be anything more than a victor’s justice after conflict? Who benefits from international courts? Is there a trade-off between reconciliation and justice? Do truth commissions succeed in uncovering the truth? How can the transnational dimensions of conflict be addressed in post-war justice and reconciliation initiatives?*

**Essay: Are there elements of post-conflict justice that are essential to the durability of peace?**


Cases


And response: Alex de Waal, Writing Human Rights and Getting it Wrong, 
http://bostonreview.net/world/alex-de-waal-writing-human-rights


Lecture 9: Economy: Post-Conflict Economic Policies and Development

To what extent are the governments of countries emerging from conflict constrained in their economic choices? When is post-conflict reconstruction assistance helpful? Which development models are chosen and why?

Essay: Is economic development the most important form of peacebuilding?


*Oliver P. Richmond, Audra Mitchell (eds), Hybrid forms of peace: from everyday agency to post-liberalism, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, esp ch. 1 and 2, [M: ch 1]


Mary Anderson, *Do No Harm: How Aid can Support Peace or War.* (Lynne Rienner, 1999).


**Official documents:**


**Lecture 10: The Possibilities and Limits of Peacebuilding, Statebuilding and Transnational Advocacy**

What accounts for the success and failure of advocacy campaigns? Is there a trade-off between integrity and influence? Do international campaigns buttress or marginalize local political agency? Are there alternatives to peacebuilding and statebuilding?

*Alex de Waal (ed), *Advocacy in Conflict: Critical Perspectives on Transnational Activism,* Zed Books, 2015. [see especially ch. 2: M]*
*Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics, Cornell University Press, 1998 [Intro on M]

Limits:


Tania Murray Li, The Will to Improve: Governmentality, Development and the Practice of Politics, Duke University Press, 2007. (online)


Alternatives?


**Cases**


http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/the_next_20/2016/09/kony_2012_quickly_became_a_punch_line_but_what_if_it_did_more_good_than.html
Seminar 3: Are there alternatives to international peacebuilding and statebuilding?

Seminar readings:

Seminar assignment: Write a brief summary essay (less than 2000 words) of the limits to international peacebuilding, and whether you think that there are viable alternatives. You can draw on the seminar readings but you may also want to look at one or two of the readings on the lecture list. Please send your assignment to the seminar leader 24 hours before the seminar.

Revision- there will be a revision lecture and seminar in Easter term.
More details will follow.


Short video on ‘Everyday peace indicators’ (Roger MacGinty and Pamina Firchow)

Past POL16 Examination 2020
Conflict and Peacebuilding

Candidates should answer three questions.

1. Why is it so difficult to measure conflict and peace?

2. Do current peacebuilding practices take adequate account of the relationship between economic globalisation and conflict?

3. Can the identity dimensions of conflict be resolved through institutional reform?
   Answer with reference to EITHER ethnicity OR religion OR gender.
4. In what ways, if any, is Cambridge linked to global conflict?

5. Is population displacement the result of state failure?

6. What are the limits to the ability of peacekeeping operations to respond to different types of security threats?

7. What are the consequences of attempts to ensure that the delivery of humanitarian assistance is compatible with conflict resolution objectives?

8. Does international peacebuilding disrupt or reinforce existing political order(s)? Answer with reference to EITHER peace negotiations OR disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes.

9. Is post-war justice possible without democracy?

10. To what extent is an understanding of sub-national politics essential for our understanding of EITHER conflict OR peacebuilding in the Great Lakes region of Africa?

11. Do the experiences of Kurdish national movements show that the state remains the central actor in conflict?

12. To what extent can violence in Latin America be understood through a focus on the state?

Past examiners’ report
Pol. 16 2019-2020

Twenty candidates wrote the exam for this paper. Four candidates received first class marks. Two candidates received first class marks from one examiner and 2.1 from the other examiner. One candidate received a 2.1 from one examiner and a 2.2 from the other examiner. One candidate received a 2.2 from both examiners. The remaining 12 candidates received 2.1 marks.

We were pleased that many candidates answered the questions directly, rather than veering towards prepared supervision essays on slightly different questions. Most candidates developed clear arguments, which they supported through effective examples and evidence. Many of the stronger scripts showed a good understanding of the conceptual debates, and illustrated their points using appropriate empirical examples. A few candidates intelligently assessed relevant policy literature, and primary documents. Answers at the lower 2.1/2.2 end tended not to present a clear argument or failed to engage with relevant literature. In a couple of cases, candidates did not focus on the specific question or made factual errors.

All of the questions were attempted by at least two candidates. Q4 was only attempted by two candidates, but the answers were thoughtful and well considered.
Q8 was the most popular question, answered by 9 candidates. There was a very big spread of marks on this question. The weaker answers did not explain what was meant by political order(s) and instead offered a blanket overall assessment of either peace negotiations or disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programmes. The strongest answers discussed different kinds of political orders and presented thoughtful analyses. Several candidates struggled with Q1, sometimes presenting a laundry list of problems rather than a coherent argument. Other answers suffered from repetition. The range of marks for Q2 was also quite wide, with some underdeveloped answers, but other excellent answers that used relevant case examples and successfully connected ideas from different parts of the course. For Q3, several candidates did not specify which kinds of institutions they were interested in, whereas there were other exceptional answers, particularly the ones dealing with gender. Several candidates had difficulty with Q5 and Q6. On both Q5 and Q6, there was a tendency to answer a slightly different question, with several candidates explaining general limitations of peacekeeping rather than engaging with the part of the question asking about different security threats. However, there was a superb answer for Q5 and another excellent answer for Q6. Q7 tended to be answered well, providing clear, persuasive arguments. The best scripts on Q9 brought in relevant readings and examples, whereas the slightly weaker ones struggled with the part of the question about democracy.

The three case study questions (Q10-11-12) were very well done and we were impressed by the candidates’ knowledge on the cases. Several of the answers on the Latin American case study were particularly well done, with high levels of conceptual sophistication.

Overall, we were very pleased with the candidates’ ability to make interesting connections between the different topics in the paper, and to present logical persuasive answers.

Other past examinations and examiners’ reports can be found on Moodle.