Chair of European and Global Governance
Hochschule für Politik München
Technical University of Munich

TUM

Digitalization of Civil Conflicts and Peace Operations

Module: (SOT86705) Disruptions in Governance and Technology - Seminar 1
Lecturer: Dr. Burak Giray

Summer 2024

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Day and Time: W 3:00–4:30 PM
Course Format: *Onsite*

Seminar Description

This seminar explores the intersection of digital technologies and civil conflicts, focusing on the transformative effects of digitalization on conflict dynamics, tactics, and peacekeeping operations. Through a multidisciplinary approach, students will analyze the role of various digital tools, platforms, and strategies in shaping contemporary conflicts and peacekeeping efforts.

Seminar Style

Every session relies on a required reading, which participants are required to review prior to the session. Consequently, it is anticipated that all attendees will be capable of grasping the fundamental message conveyed in the required reading and contribute comments or critiques for group discussion. Supplementary readings are utilized as foundations for the presentations.

Examination of the module

The module grade is based on a written examination in the form of a seminar paper (13 – 15 pages). Through their seminar paper, students will document to which extent they have gained a foundational understanding in the area of digital transformations in civil conflicts and peace operations. The seminar paper is accompanied by a presentation (10-15 min) to test the communicative competence of presenting scientific topics to an audience. The presentation must be supplemented by a short-written handout.

- **Presentation (20%):** Each session contains a presentation part of 12-15 minutes per student. For each presentation, a handout of max. two pages is prepared. The presentation (1) summarizes the core statements of the supplementary texts briefly, (2) clarifies theoretical connections using empirical examples chosen by the students themselves, and (3) places the

topic in the larger seminar context. In addition, (4) media supporting the content are used (e.g. blackboard, presentation slides, etc.) The presentation serves as content preparation for the seminar paper.

- **Seminar Paper (80%):** Written paper of 13-15 pages (without bibliography and title page) based on a theoretical question in the context of the seminar topic. The seminar paper explores the compulsory texts and the supplementary reading for a session in more depth. In addition, further secondary and primary sources should be consulted to answer the chosen question. Topic, question and approach can be discussed and determined together with the lecturers during the lecture period. If you would like to take advantage of this, please prepare a draft of your seminar paper (topic/session, possible question, theory, case selection) of no more than one page and send it by e-mail to the lecturer at least three days before the office hours. The seminar paper must be submitted via Moodle by **September 15, 2024** (midnight) at the latest.

Session Overview

Session	Session Date	Session Title
1	08.05.2024	Course Overview & Introduction
2	15.05.2024	Technology and Conflict Dynamics
3	22.05.2024	Online Extremism and Its Implications on Civil Conflicts
4	29.05.2024	Social Media Tactics in Civil Conflicts
5	05.06.2024	The Digital Battlefield
6	19.06.2024	Digital Tools for Repression
7	26.06.2024	The Impact of Network Disruptions on Civil Conflicts
8	03.07.2024	Challenges and Innovations in UN Peacekeeping Operations
9	10.07.2024	Emerging Technologies and Future Trends
10	17.07.2024	Final Presentations

Course Sessions and Readings

Session 1: Course Overview & Introduction	
Required Readings	Course Syllabus
	Walter, B.F., 2017. The new new civil wars. Annual Review of Political Science, 20, pp.469-486.

Session 2: Technology and Conflict Dynamics	
Required Reading	Zeitzoff, T., 2017. How social media is changing conflict. Journal of Conflict Resolution, 61(9), pp.1970-1991.
Presentation	Shapiro, J.N. and Weidmann, N.B., 2015. Is the phone mightier than the sword? Cellphones and insurgent violence in Iraq. International Organization, 69(2), pp.247-274.

Session 3: Online Extremism and Its Implications on Civil Conflicts	
Required Reading	Winter, C., Neumann, P., Meleagrou-Hitchens, A., Ranstorp, M., Vidino, L. and Fürst, J., 2020. Online extremism: research trends in internet activism, radicalization, and counter-strategies. International Journal of Conflict and Violence (IJCV), 14, pp.1-20.
Presentation	Al-Rawi, A., 2018. Video games, terrorism, and ISIS's Jihad 3.0. Terrorism and Political Violence, 30(4), pp.740-760.

Session 4: Social Media Tactics in Civil Conflicts	
Required Reading	Tønnesson, S., Zaw Oo, M. and Aung, N.L., 2022. Pretending to be states: The use of Facebook by armed groups in Myanmar. Journal of Contemporary Asia, 52(2), pp.200-225.
Presentation	Bestvater, S.E. and Loyle, C.E., 2023. Messaging and mobilization: Rebel groups, social media communication, and audience engagement. Journal of Peace Research, p.00223433231201448.

Session 5: The Digital Battlefield	
Required Reading	Kostyuk, N. and Zhukov, Y.M., 2019. Invisible digital front: can cyber attacks shape battlefield events?. Journal of Conflict Resolution, 63(2), pp.317-347.
Presentation	Asmolov, G., 2021. From sofa to frontline: the digital mediation and domestication of warfare. Media, War & Conflict, 14(3), pp.342-365.

Session 6: Digital Tools for Repression	
Required Reading	Frantz, E., Kendall-Taylor, A. and Wright, J., 2020. Digital repression in autocracies. V-Dem Institute at the University of Gothenburg.
Presentation	Gohdes, A.R., 2020. Repression technology: Internet accessibility and state violence. American Journal of Political Science, 64(3), pp.488-503.

Session 7: The Impact of Network Disruptions on Civil Conflicts	
Required Reading	Earl, J., Maher, T.V. and Pan, J., 2022. The digital repression of social movements, protest, and activism: A synthetic review. Science Advances, 8(10), p.eabl8198.
Presentation	Gohdes, A.R., 2015. Pulling the plug: Network disruptions and violence in civil conflict. Journal of Peace Research, 52(3), pp.352-367.

Session 8: Challenges and Innovations in UN Peacekeeping Operations	
Required Reading	Duursma, A., 2018. Information processing challenges in peacekeeping operations: A case study on peacekeeping information collection efforts in Mali. International Peacekeeping, 25(3), pp.446-468.
Presentation	Sharland, L., 2015. Counter-IED Technology in UN Peacekeeping: Expanding Capability and Mitigating Risks. International Peacekeeping, 22(5), pp.587-602.
Presentation	Duursma, A. and Karlsrud, J., 2019. Predictive peacekeeping: Strengthening predictive analysis in UN peace operations.

Session 9: Emerging Technologies and Future Trends	
Required Reading	Hirblinger, A.T., Wählisch, M., Keator, K., McNaboe, C., Duursma, A., Karlsrud, J., Sticher, V., Verjee, A., Kyselova, T., Kwaja, C.M. and Perera, S., 2023. Making peace with un-certainty: Reflections on the role of digital technology in peace processes beyond the data hype. **(Introduction and Conclusion Sections)**
Presentation	**Sections:** • How to Tame Uncertainty for Peace: New Approaches to Predictive Analytics and Foresight • How Digital Platforms Shape Conflict and Un-Certainty: Insights from Syria • Narrowing the Warning–Response Gap: Technology, Coordination, and the Protection of Civilians in UN Peace Operations
Presentation	**Sections:** • Addressing Uncertainty through Cease-Fire Monitoring: Can Technology Lift the Fog of War? • Online Technologies in Facilitated Dialogue: Challenges of Navigating Un-Certainty in Ukraine • Peacebuilding from Below: How Social Media Shapes Un-Certainty and Influences Peace and Conflict in Nigeria

Session 10: Final Presentations	
Structure	10-minute presentation, supplemented by a short-written handout that outlines the research question, theoretical expectations, and the methodology.

Research Paper Guidelines

Formal

Length	13-15 pages, excluding references and title page
Font-size	Standard (Times New Roman 12)
Line spacing	1.5
Submission	Upload via Moodle in the following format LAST-NAME_ModuleNumber.pdf
Citation style	Any common social science citation style is accepted, e.g. Harvard in-text citation – Author (Year: pages). Important is that the used citation style is uniform and consistent throughout the paper. (Hint: Use a reference management program, e.g. EndNote)

Structure

Title page (1 page)	• Title of the paper (as precise and pertinent as possible, indicating the topic and approach, not be the same as the research question) • Name, student number, degree/program, email for contact, date, seminar name and reference, lecturer
Introduction (2-3 pages)	• Clear and precise presentation of the research problem and question, as well as its relevance • Development of a research question (formulated as a direct question that is answerable)
Main part (10-12 pages)	• Presentation of the selected methods and scientific approach • Concise presentation of the current literature on the topic • Argumentation for the selection of your theoretical approach • Justification for case selection and empirical focus • Formulation of theoretical propositions, eventually hypotheses • Empirical research and evidence of one or more cases that can support (or falsify) the theoretical propositions • Evaluation, analysis and interpretation of the empirical results/evidence collected on the basis of the theoretical propositions
Conclusion (2-3 pages)	• Clear answer to the research question • Summary of results and conclusions from the theoretical analysis
References	Complete list of sources used (primary and secondary literature)
Appendix	Signed declaration of independence