

**SCHOOL FOR CONFLICT ANALYSIS AND RESOLUTION (S-CAR)
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY**

Global Conflict Analysis and Resolution (CONF 340)

Semester: Spring 2016
Class Time: Mondays, 7:20 - 10:00 pm
Location: Fairfax Campus, Planetary Hall, Room 127
Instructor: Dr. Dennis J.D. Sandole
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines the causes and conditions of *complex violent conflicts* within and between states. The objective is to explore to what extent this knowledge is relevant to [a] better understanding and [b] more effectively responding to violent conflicts through **prevention, management, settlement, resolution** and/or **transformation**. Examples include conflicts that led to the genocidal implosion of former Yugoslavia (e.g., Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo); conflicts that challenged successor states of the former Soviet Union (e.g., Azerbaijan, Georgia, Russian Federation, and Ukraine); and conflicts that have escalated to post-9/11 terrorism (e.g., Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel/Palestine, Pakistan, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Prerequisites:** Acceptance into S-CAR's BA/BSc. program and successful completion of CONF 101, or permission of the instructor.
2. **Class Format:** Classes will follow an *interactive seminar format*. Hence, class attendance, participation, and the *completion of relevant readings prior to class* are required.
3. **Assessment:**

[a] A **midterm paper** in which students use the required course readings to identify and discuss the *major causes* of a specific intra- or interstate violent conflict. According to our readings, therefore, what are the major causes of violent conflicts involving, for example, Israel-Palestine, Syria, Russia-Ukraine, etc.)? 10-15 double-spaced pages [250-300 words per page]. (NOTE: This is a **pillar 2 analysis**.) 40% of final grade: Due 21 March 2016.

[b] A **final paper** in which students (1) incorporate the findings generated by their midterm papers and -- again, on the basis of the required course readings -- (2) design an international intervention into their select conflicts. So, how should each

student's select conflict be handled by the international community? 10-15 double-spaced pages [i.e., 250-300 words per page]). (NOTE: This is a ***pillar 1-2-3 analysis***.) 40% of final grade: Due 9 May 2016.

NOTE: Since these two (2) papers are meant, among other things, to demonstrate that students have been in the course, *the papers should contain appropriate references to course concepts and the corresponding readings.* For further clarification -- including about the GMU Honor Code (e.g., avoiding any hint of plagiarism at all costs) -- please feel free to consult the instructor.

[c] **Student presentations:** Students will be invited to lead discussions on one or more of the required course readings (see below) by Backer, et al.; Ramsbotham, et al.; and/or Sandole (1998, 1999, 2002, 2010). Students may elect to present on the entirety of any of the stand-alone articles or any of the chapters in the three required books.

During each presentation, the rest of the class will be expected to have read the same material to facilitate a rich discussion. Please consult with the instructor or course assistant about your preferences and the dates on which you want to make your presentations (which may be jointly given, involving more than one student per presentation).

Presentations should be aimed at distilling from the readings *their relevance to the themes of the midterm and final papers;* e.g., the causes of a particular violent foreign conflict, with implications for dealing with them, including those resulting in terrorism.

Students are also expected to participate in *scenario development exercises* [see below] (overall class participation will be worth 20% of final grade).

5. Office Hours: Following each class or by appointment.

6. Withdrawal: The last day to drop the course without incurring any tuition penalty is 26 January 2016.

REQUIRED READINGS

(1) Backer, David A., Jonathan Wilkenfeld, and Paul K. Huth (2014). *Peace and Conflict 2014*. Boulder and London: Paradigm Publishers.

(2) Ramsbotham, Oliver, Tom Woodhouse and Hugh Miall (2016). *Contemporary Conflict Resolution: The Prevention, Management and Transformation of Deadly Conflicts* (4th Edition). Cambridge (UK) and Malden (MA): Polity Press.

(3) Sandole, Dennis J.D. (1998). "A Comprehensive Mapping of Conflict and Conflict Resolution: A Three Pillar Approach." *Peace and Conflict Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 1-30. Available online at: www.gmu.edu/academic/pcs/sandole

(4) Sandole, Dennis J.D. (1999). Chapter 6 in *Capturing the Complexity of Conflict: Dealing with Violent Ethnic Conflict in the Post-Cold War Era*, London and New York: Pinter/Cassell [Continuum International]. (Provided by instructor.)

(5) Sandole, Dennis J.D. (2002). "Virulent Ethnocentrism: A Major Challenge for Transformational Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding in the Post-Cold War Era." *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, vol. 1, no. 4, June. www.ethnopolitics.org/archive/volume I/issue 4/sandole.pdf

(6) Sandole, Dennis J.D. (2010). *Peacebuilding: Preventing Violent Conflict in a Complex World*. Cambridge (UK) and Malden (MA): Polity Press.

COURSE SYLLABUS

25 Jan **I. Introduction: Course Overview.**

1 Feb **II. The Problem: Conflict, Violence, and War.**

- A. The Subject Matter.
 - 1. *Latent Conflict (LC)*.
 - 2. Conflict Processes.
 - a. *Manifest Conflict Process (MCP)*.
 - b. *Aggressive Manifest Conflict Process (AMCP)*.
 - (1) "New" vs. "Old Wars".
 - (2) Terrorism.
- B. Why is a Course on Violent Conflict Necessary?
 - 1. Violent Conflict Trends in the United States.
 - 2. Violent Conflict Trends Worldwide.
 - a. Domestic: The *spillover potential* of *intrastate* conflicts.
 - (1) *Functional Spillover*.
 - (2) *External Intervention*.
 - [a] Ethnic Kin Intervention.
 - [b] Humanitarian Intervention.
 - (3) *Multiplier-Effect Systemic Contagion*.

- b. *Interstate/Trans-societal (including post-9/11 terrorism and the "Clash of Civilizations")*.
- c. Need to Capture the *Complexity* of Conflict.

- C. Three Theoretical and Practical Questions:
 - 1. How Can **MCPs** be *Prevented* from Becoming **AMCPs**?
 - 2. What are the *Causes* of **AMCPs**?
 - 3. How Do We Conduct *Research* on **AMCPs**?

READ: Backer, et al., 2014. All.
Ramsbotham, et al. 2016, Chapters 1-3.

**8 Feb/
15 Feb** **III. An Enhanced Basis for Understanding and Dealing with the Problem.**

- A. Three levels of Conflict Reality.
 - 1. *Conflict-as-Symptoms* (Perceptible/Measurable Indicators of Underlying Causes and Conditions).
 - 2. *Conflict-as-Challenged Relationships*.
 - 3. *Conflict-as-Underlying Deep-Rooted Causes and Conditions of the Challenged Relationships*.
- B. A Comprehensive Mapping of Conflict and Conflict Resolution: *A 3-Pillar Approach (3PF)*.

READ: Sandole, 1998.
Sandole, 2010 Chapters 1-2.

- 1. **Pillar 1: Conflict** (*Dependent Variable*).
 - a. Parties.
 - b. Issues.
 - c. Objectives.
 - d. Means.
 - e. Preferred Conflict-handling Orientations.
 - f. Conflict Environments.

22 Feb 2. **Pillar 2: Conflict Causes and Conditions** (*Independent Variables*).

READ: Ramsbotham, et al. 2016, Chapter 4.
Sandole, 1999, Chapter 6.

- a. *Individual Level (Image I)*.

- [1] Biological Theories.
- [2] Physiological Theories.
- [3] Learning Theories.
- [4] Dissonance Theories.

29 Feb

- b. *Societal/National level (Image II)*.
 - [1] Domestic-Foreign Conflict Nexus.
 - [2] Crisis Decisionmaking.
 - [3] Action-Reaction Dynamics.
 - [4] Power Distance (e.g., China's rise).
 - [5] Imperialism (and "Lateral Pressures").
- c. *Trans-societal/International level (Image III)*.
 - [1] [Endogenous vs. Exogenous Systems.
 - [2] Bi- vs. Multipolar Systems.
 - [3] Tendencies toward the "Unit Veto" System.
 - [4] International Distribution of Wealth ("Marxist Delight"): Income Inequality.
- d. *Global/Ecological Level (Image IV)*.
 - [1] Environmental Degradation.
 - [2] Global Warming.
 - [3] The "Malthusian Nightmare" Revisited.

7 Mar

SPRING BREAK (no class)

14 Mar

3. ***Pillar 3: Conflict Intervention.***

READ: Ramsbotham, et al. 2016, Chapters 5-10.

- a. 3rd Party Objectives.
 - [1] Violent Conflict *Prevention*
[= **Preventive Diplomacy**].
 - [2] Conflict *Management*
[= **Peacekeeping**].
 - [3] Conflict *Settlement*
[= **Coercive Peacemaking**].
 - [4] Conflict *Resolution*
[= **Noncoercive or Collaborative Peacemaking**].
 - [5] Conflict *Transformation* [*Provention*]

[= **Peacebuilding**].

- b. 3rd Party Approaches for Achieving Goals.
- [1] *Confrontational* and/or *Collaborative* Processes.
 - [2] *Negative* and/or *Positive Peace* Orientations.
 - [3] *Track-1* or *Multi-Track* Actors and Techniques.

21 Mar MID-TERM PAPERS DUE

21 Mar/
28 Mar

IV. Application of Theory: Dealing with Complex Violent Conflict, War and Terrorism Globally.

READ: Ramsbotham, et al. 2016, Chapters 11-16.
Sandole, 2010, Chapters 3-5.

4 Apr/
11 Apr/
18 Apr/
25 Apr/

V. Putting it All Together "in Practice" - Capturing the Complexity of Violent Conflict through Scenarios Development Exercises.

- A. Identity a *Conflict* (Current, Developing or Potential) that Could Worsen or Improve during the Next 5-10 Years (**Pillar 1**).
- B. Explore *Conflict Trajectories*:
 - 1. Identify the Factors -- "*Drivers*" -- That Could Make the Conflict Worse or Better (**Pillar 2a**).
 - 2. Construct a *Scenario* Indicating How These Factors Could Combine to Make the Conflict Worse (**Worst-Case Scenario**=*Negative Trajectory*) or Better (**Best-Case Scenario**=*Positive Trajectory*) (**Pillar 2b**).
- C. Design a *Strategy* for Responding to these Factors ("*Drivers*") to Either *Undermine* their Potential Negative Impact or *Enhance* their Positive Impact on the Conflict over Time (**Pillar 3**).

2 May

Conclusion: Course Wrap-Up.

9 May

FINAL PAPERS DUE