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MODELS OF POLITICAL CONFLICT IN
WEAKLY INSTITUTIONALIZED POLITIES
PS239

In weakly institutionalized environments like the international system or countries where the rule of law is weak, political actors – be they opposing states or factions – can often use force or the threat of it to further their interests. Recent years have seen an explosion of work in political science and in economics on the causes of both interstate and civil war and civil conflict more generally. The scope of this work is rapidly expanding to encompass a wide range of issues in the politics and political economy of weakly institutionalized environments.

This course begins with a survey of the formal work in political science on the causes and conduct of war and then branches out to include selected topics in the political economy of weakly institutionalized environments.

PS232A or comparable training in game theory is a prerequisite.

Students are expected to keep up with the readings and participate in discussions of the material. Grades will be based on this as well as a final paper.

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Meetings and Readings:

Aug 28-
Sept 4: Introduction of the course and a review of bargaining models

Readings:

Muthoo, Abhinay. 1999. *Bargaining Theory with Applications*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 22-25, 30-33, 37-8.

Fudenberg, Drew and Jean Tirole. 1991. *Game Theory*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 113-17.

Muthoo, Abhinay. 1999. *Bargaining Theory with Applications*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 99-105.

Fudenberg, Drew and Jean Tirole. 1991. *Game Theory*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 397-405.

Gul, Faruk and Hugo Sonnenschein. 1988. "On Delay in Bargaining with One-Sided Uncertainty," *Econometrica*, 56(3), pp. 601-604.

Sept 11: Rationalizing Conflict: The Inefficiency Puzzle.

Readings:

James Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations of War."

Robert Powell, *States and Strategies*, pp. 81-110.

William Reed, David Clark, Timothy Nordstrom, and Wonjae Hwang. 2008. "War, Power, and Bargaining," *Journal of Politics*, 70(4): 1203-16.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381608081152>

^RSanchez-Pages, Santiago. 2009. Bargaining and Conflict with Incomplete Information." In Michelle Garfinkle and Stergios Skaperdas, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Economics of Peace and Conflict* (New York: Oxford University Press): 59-90.

Sept 18: Information revelation during conflict.

Readings:

Branislav Slantchev, "The Principle of Convergence in Wartime Negotiations," *American Political Science Review*, 47(4): 621-32.

James Fearon and Xin Jin. 2019. "Armed Conflict Bargaining." Manuscript, Department of Political Science, Stanford.

^RRobert Powell, "Bargaining and Learning While Fighting," *American Journal of Political Science* (April 2004).

^R Readings with an "R" are recommended.

Sept 25: Commitment Problems: Acemoglu and Robinson's model of political (democratic) transitions.

Readings:

- Fearon, James D. 1998. "Commitment Problems and the Spread of Ethnic Conflict." In David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, eds., *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Acemoglu, Daron and James Robinson. 2001. "A Theory of Political Transitions," *American Economic Review* 91 (September):938-963.
- Robert Powell. 2006. "War as a Commitment Problem," *International Organization*, pp. 169-181.
- ^RAcemoglu, Daron and James Robinson. 2006. *The Economic Origins of Democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press, ch 1-7.
- ^RAcemoglu, Daron, and James Robinson. 2000. "Why Did the West Extend the Franchise? Democracy, Inequality and Growth in Historical Perspective," *QJE* 115(4):1167-99.
- ^RPowell, Robert. 2012. "Commitment Problems and Shifting Power as a Cause of Conflict." In Stergios Skaperdis and Michele Garfinkel (eds.), *Oxford Handbook on Defense Economics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).
- ^RLizzeri, Alesandro and Nicola Persico. 2004. "Why Did the Elites Extend the Suffrage?" *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 119, 707-65.

Oct 2: Commitment Problems more generally:

Readings:

- Fearon, James D. 2004. "Why Do Some Civil Wars Last So Long?" *Journal of Peace Research*, 41(May): 275-302.
- Powell, Robert. 2004. "The Inefficient Use of Power," *American Political Science Review* 98(May):231-41.
- Kranin, Colin. 2015. "Preventive War as a Result of Long-Term Shifts in Power," *Political Science Research and Methods*, 5(1): 103-21.
- ^RRobert Powell. 2006. "War as a Commitment Problem," *International Organization*, pp. 169-176.
- ^RPowell, Robert. 2012. "Commitment Problems and Shifting Power as a Cause of Conflict." In Stergios Skaperdis and Michele Garfinkel (eds.), *Oxford Handbook on Defense Economics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Oct 9: Discussion of A&R mechanism.

Readings:

- Acemoglu, Daron and James Robinson. 2006. *The Economic Origins of Democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 179-81.
- Acemoglu, Daron and Robinson, James A. (2008). "Persistence of Power, Elites and Institutions," *American Economic Review* 98(1), 267-291.

- Aidt, Toke and Raphael Franck. 2015. "Democratization Under the Threat of Revolution: Evidence for the Great Reform Act of 1832," *Econometrica*, 83(2): 505-47.
- Ziblatt, Daniel. 2006. "How Did Europe Democratize?" *World Politics*, 58:311-38.
- Haggard, Stephan and Stuart Kaufman. 2012. "Inequality and Regime Change," *American Political Science Review*, 106(3): 495-516.

Oct 16: More on power-sharing and political transitions.

Readings:

- Fearon, James and David Laitin. 2008. "Civil War Termination." Manuscript, Department of Political Science, Stanford University.
(<https://web.stanford.edu/group/fearon-research/cgi-bin/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/civil-war-termination.pdf>)
- Fearon, James and Patrick Francois. 2019. "A Theory of Elite-Initiated Democratization." Manuscript, Department of Political Science, Stanford University.
- Albertus, Michael and Victor Menaldo. 2018. *Authoritarianism and the Elite Origins of Democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- ^RBesley, Timothy, Torsten Persson, Marta Yeynal-Querol. 2013. "Political Instability and Institutional Reform: Theory and Evidence." Manuscript, Department of Economics, LSE.
- ^RMazucca, Sebastián and James A. Robinson. 2009. "Political Conflict and Power Sharing in the Origins of Modern Colombia," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 89(2): 285-322. (doi 10.1215/00182168-2008-085).
- ^RGeddes, Barbara, Joseph Wright, Erica Frantz. 2014. "Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions: A New Data Set," *Perspectives on Politics*, 12(2): 313-31. : <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592714000851>
- ^RGeddes, Barbara, Joseph Wright, Erica Frantz. 2018. *How Dictatorships Work*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- ^RGehlbach, Scott, Konstantin Sonin, and Milan Svolik. 2016. "Formal Models of Nondemocratic Politics," *Annual Reviews of Political Science*, 19:565-84.

Oct 23: More on power-sharing: coups and revolutions.

Readings:

- Quinlivan, James T. 1999. "Coup-Proofing: Its Practice and Consequences in the Middle East." *International Security* 24(2):131-165.
- Francois, Patrick, Ilia Rainer, and Francesco Trebbi. 2015. "How Is Power Shared in Africa?" *Econometrica*, 83 (2):465-503.
- Jack Paine. 2019. "The Dictator's Power-Sharing Dilemma: Counter Elite and External Threats." Manuscript, Department of Political Science, University of Rochester.
(<http://nebula.wsimg.com/96720427703683ab80a782700424aea4?AccessKeyId=FD7670AEAE23BB8C3DAE&disposition=0&alloworigin=1>)

Roessler, Philip and David Ohls. 2018. "Power Sharing in Weak States,"
International Organization. doi:10.1017/S0020818318000073

Oct 30: Indirect Political Control and Agency Problems.

Readings:

Padro-i-Miquel, Gerard and Pierre Yared. 2012. "The Political Economy of Indirect Control," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 127:947–1015.

Powell, Robert. 2019. "Why Some Persistent Problems Persist," *American Political Science Review*.

^REli Berman, David A. Lake, Gerard Padró i Miquel, and Pierre Yared. (2019). "Principals, Agents, and Indirect Foreign Policies." In Eli Berman and David Lake, eds., *Proxy Wars: Suppressing Violence through Local Agents*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Nov 6: State Capacity.

Readings:

Besley, Timothy and Torsten Persson, 2010. "[State Capacity, Conflict and Development](#)," *Econometrica*, 78, 1-34.

Gennaioli, Nicola and Hans-Joachim Voth. 2015. "State Capacity and Military Conflict," *The Review of Economic Studies*, 82(4): 1409-48.

Acemoglu, Daron and James Robinson. 2018. "The Emergence of Weak, Despotic and Inclusive States." Manuscript, Department of Economics, MIT. (<https://economics.mit.edu/files/15098>)

Acemoglu, Daron and James Robinson. 2016. "Paths to Inclusive Political Institutions." Manuscript, Department of Economics, MIT. (<https://economics.mit.edu/files/11338>).

^RBesley, Timothy and Torsten Persson. 2009. "[The Origins of State Capacity: Property Rights, Taxation and Politics](#)," *American Economic Review*, 99(4): 1218-44.

Nov 13: Values, Culture, Institutions, and Democratic Transitions

Readings:

Ticchi, Davide, Thierry Verdier, and Andrea Vindigni. 2013. "Democracy, Dictatorship and the Cultural Transmission." IZA Discussion Paper 7441. (<http://ftp.iza.org/dp7441.pdf>)

Besley, Timothy and Torsten Persson. 2019. "Democratic Values and Institutions," *American Economic Review: Insights* 1(1):1-18. (<https://doi.org/10.1257/aeri.20180248>)

Nov 20: Class presentations

Nov 27: No Class – Thanks Giving

Dec 4: Class presentations