

IAFF 6186.22
MILITARY POWER AND EFFECTIVENESS
Elliott School of International Affairs
The George Washington University

Spring 2019

Time: Wed., 5:10 – 7:00pm

Room: Bell 104

Office Hours: M, 10:00am – 12:00pm (or by appt.)

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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

In international relations theory, military power is often argued to be the primary determinant of international outcomes. But what is military power? Traditional realist theory treats it as an amalgam of several indicators of states' aggregate power, such as population size, industrial might, and number of troops and weapons. Newer realist theories add factors such as the offense-defense balance, determined by variables like military technology and geography. Yet there are many cases where the materially stronger or better armed side did not prevail. The reversal in the outcomes of insurgency wars over time—from the stronger side winning about 90 percent of the time in the mid-nineteenth century, to the stronger side failing to win 75 percent of the time since 1975—should be enough to convince skeptics that victory (to paraphrase Napoleon) does *not* always go to the big battalions.

This course explores what makes the militaries of some states highly proficient fighting machines, whereas others seemingly cannot execute the simplest tasks. Although the effectiveness of navies and air forces could also be examined, the focus of this class (following the bulk of the literature) is on ground forces. We begin by looking at the various ways military effectiveness has been defined in the existing literature, and the different levels of analysis that are used to examine effectiveness. The goal in this section of the course is to understand and criticize how scholars of military effectiveness measure the concept. Section II of the course assesses the theoretical literature, starting with realist theories of preponderance and technology, but proceeding quickly to non-material factors such as strategy, force employment, regime type, civil-military relations, military culture, and cohesion of units and societies. We also spend a class session trying to understand how militaries innovate and adapt in peacetime and on the battlefield. The goals of this section of the course are to evaluate how well different works explain effectiveness in general and in specific cases. In the third section of the course, we examine several case studies in depth: World War I; the Battle of France (1940); Iraq's military power over time; and the Vietnam War. The goals of Section III are first to understand several important historical cases, but more importantly to apply the theories from Section II to explain variation in the effectiveness of the belligerents.

Two words of clarification about the course are in order. First, this course is not primarily about military technology, technology assessment, weapons systems, the interaction of particular weapons systems on the battlefield, or military modeling. In fact, many of the variables we examine—such as regime type, institutional configurations, and organizational culture—are not particularly “military.” The approach in this class is to canvass the theoretical literature for explanations for relatively broad military outcomes and patterns. We will ask more questions like “what explains variation in Iraqi military performance during the Iran-Iraq War?” than “what were the relative rates of fire or hit probabilities of Iraqi versus Iranian tanks?” This is not to say we will ignore military technology, merely to state that it is not the central focus of the course. Students who are interested in the nitty-gritty details of military net assessment are encouraged to take courses such as Methods for Defense Analysis or Military Technology Assessment.

Second, the course is reading-intensive and some of the reading uses statistical methods. The instructor will provide guidance regarding any articles or chapters to which students should pay special attention. Students do not need background in statistics to take the course; the main findings of statistical analyses are always summarized in prose so that students can understand the results if not the method by which they were obtained. That said, students are encouraged to ask questions about anything they don't understand from the reading.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students will be able to critically evaluate social science theories, not only those about military effectiveness, but theories in general.
- Students will understand how the literature defines and measures military power and effectiveness.
- Students will understand the different levels of analysis at which effectiveness is assessed, and how effectiveness at different levels of analysis interacts.
- Students will possess a thorough grasp of theories of military effectiveness, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of each theory.
- Students will know the details of several important historical cases commonly used as evidence for and against different theories.
- Students will be able to use theories to make informed conjectures about the outcomes of battles, campaigns, and wars.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

IAFF 6186 meets for one hour and 50 minutes once per week. Over the course of the semester, students will spend roughly 25 hours in the classroom. Weekly assignments—reading and analytical papers—are expected to take up, on average, 7 to 10 hours per week. At a minimum, therefore, students will spend 87.5 hours over the course of the semester (but likely more) preparing for class. Grades will be based on the following criteria.

- **Class Attendance and Participation (25%):** Students are expected to attend every class session, do all of the required reading before class, and come prepared to discuss it. Missing more than one class session without an excuse will adversely affect the participation grade. Participation in discussion will be judged not only by the quantity of a student's remarks, but also by their quality.
- **Three Analytical Papers (25% each):** 7 double-spaced pages maximum, due in HARD COPY at the *beginning* of class on Week 5 (February 13), Week 10 (March 20), and Week 15 (April 24). Questions will be distributed in class (and on Blackboard) the week before the due date. You may be asked to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a theory discussed in class or in the readings, compare the explanatory power of two or more theories, apply theories to a case, or use theories to analyze a current policy problem and make policy recommendations based on your analysis. Outside reading is not required to complete these papers. Students who wish to explore the possibility of writing a research paper as an alternative to the analytical papers should consult with the instructor by the end of January.

BOOKS

The following books are required reading for the course. They are available through the GWU Bookstore and many online outlets; they are also on reserve at Gelman Library.

Stephen Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004).

Risa A. Brooks, *Shaping Strategy: The Civil-Military Politics of Strategic Assessment* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008).

Jasen J. Castillo, *Endurance and War: The National Sources of Military Cohesion* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2014).

Austin Long, *The Soul of Armies: Counterinsurgency Doctrine and Military Culture in the US and UK* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2016).

Allen R. Millett and Williamson Murray, *Military Effectiveness*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Caitlin Talmadge, *The Dictator's Army: Battlefield Effectiveness in Authoritarian Regimes* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2015).

Jessica L.P. Weeks, *Dictators at War and Peace* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2014).

ARTICLES AND BOOK CHAPTERS

All of the readings below (except the required books) are available online on the Blackboard site that has been established for the class. Click on "Blackboard" from the "My GW" page (<https://my.gwu.edu>), log in, go to the page for this class, and click on "E-Reserves." There are folders for each lecture; inside the folders, readings are listed by the author's last name.

CLASS POLICIES AND UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

- **Reading and Participation.** Students are expected to attend every class session, do all the reading before class, and come prepared to discuss it.
- **Papers.** All papers turned in for this class must be double-spaced, have one-inch margins on all sides, be printed in 12-point font, and stapled. Late papers will be accepted up to 24 hours after the deadline, but one letter grade will be deducted. Papers that are more than 24 hours late will not be accepted. Exceptions will be made only in cases of illness or personal/family emergency; if you find yourself in such a situation, please consult the instructor as soon as is feasible to make arrangements for an extension.
- **Electronic Devices.** Laptops are allowed in class for note-taking purposes, not for checking e-mail, Facebook, or surfing the web. The only cell phones allowed in class are those that have been turned off.
- **Plagiarism, Cheating, and Academic Integrity.** According to the university's Code of Academic Integrity, "Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information." For the rest of the code, see <https://studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity>. In general, I expect that you will not lie, cheat, steal, or otherwise conduct yourselves dishonorably, and will do something if you observe others engaging in such conduct. *All work you submit for this course must be your own.* In particular, do not collaborate on the analytical papers or research paper. I will not tolerate any form of academic dishonesty. If you are found to have cheated on any assignment, the likely minimum punishment is a failing grade for that assignment. The case may also be referred to the Academic Integrity Council at the instructor's discretion, depending on the severity of the offense. If you have questions about what constitutes proper use of published or unpublished sources, please ask the instructor.
- **Religious Holidays.** In accordance with University policy, students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance. For details on this policy and a list of religious holidays, see: <https://provost.gwu.edu/policies-procedures-and-guidelines>.
- **Disabilities.** Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in Rome Hall, Suite 102, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information see: disabilitysupport.gwu.edu/.
- **Mental Health.** The University's Counseling and Psychological Services (202-994-5300) supports "mental health and personal development by collaborating directly with students to overcome challenges and difficulties that may interfere with academic, emotional, and personal success." For additional information see: <https://healthcenter.gwu.edu/counseling-and-psychological-services>.

- **Security.** In the case of an emergency, if at all possible, the class should shelter in place. If the building where the class is located is affected, follow the evacuation procedures for the building. If we have to leave the classroom, we will meet in the parking lot across G St. NW in order to account for everyone and to make certain that everyone is safe. Please refer to Campus Advisories for the latest information on the University's operating status: <http://campusadvisories.gwu.edu/>.

COURSE CALENDAR

Part I. Introduction and Definitions

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|---------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. January 16 | Course Introduction |
| 2. January 23 | Defining Military Effectiveness |

Part II. Theories of Military Effectiveness

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|----------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 3. January 30 | Material Capability and Technology | |
| 4. February 6 | Strategy and Force Employment | Paper topic #1 distributed |
| 5. February 13 | Regime Type | Paper #1 due |
| 6. February 20 | Civil-Military Relations I | |
| 7. February 27 | Civil-Military Relations II | |
| 8. March 6 | Military Culture | Paper topic #2 distributed |
| 9. March 13 | No Class: Spring Break | |
| 10. March 20 | Small Unit Cohesion | Paper #2 due |
| 11. March 27 | Societal Cohesion | |
| 12. April 3 | Military Innovation and Adaptation | |

Part III. Case Studies

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|--------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| 13. April 10 | World War I | |
| 14. April 17 | The Battle of France | Paper topic #3 distributed |
| 15. April 24 | Iraq and/or Vietnam | Paper #3 due |

COURSE SCHEDULE

Part I. Introduction and Definitions

1. Course Introduction January 16
 - Jacob Weisberg, "Gulfballs: How the Experts Blew It, Big-Time," *New Republic* 204, no. 12 (March 25, 1991), pp. 17, 19.

Recommended:

 - E.D. Swinton, *The Defense of Duffer's Drift* (Fort Leavenworth, Kan.: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1991).
2. Defining Military Effectiveness January 23
 - Allen R. Millett and Williamson Murray, *Military Effectiveness*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), Chapter 1.
 - Risa A. Brooks, "Introduction," in Risa A. Brooks and Elizabeth A. Stanley, eds., *Creating Military Power: The Sources of Military Effectiveness* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 1-26.
 - Caitlin Talmadge, *The Dictator's Army: Battlefield Effectiveness in Authoritarian Regimes* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2015), 1-11.
 - Jasen J. Castillo, *Endurance and War: The National Sources of Military Cohesion* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2014), 17-22.
 - Stephen Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 5-9.
 - Jason Lyall, *Divided Armies: How Inequality Undermines Battlefield Performance in Modern War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, forthcoming), Chapter 2.

Part II. Theories of Military Effectiveness

3. Material Capability and Technology January 30
 - John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001), Chapter 3.
 - John J. Mearsheimer, "Assessing the Conventional Balance: The 3:1 Rule and Its Critics," *International Security* 13, no. 4 (Spring 1989): 54-89; **read 54-65 only**.
 - Barry R. Posen, "Measuring the European Conventional Balance: Coping with Complexity in Threat Assessment," *International Security* 9, no. 3 (Winter 1984/85): 47-88.
 - John W.R. Lepingwell, "The Laws of Combat? Lanchester Reexamined," *International Security* 12, no. 1 (Summer 1987): 89-134.
 - Charles L. Glaser and Chaim Kaufmann, "What Is the Offense-Defense Balance and How Can We Measure It?" *International Security* 22, no. 4 (Spring 1998): 44-82.
 - Keir Lieber, "Grasping the Technological Peace: The Offense-Defense Balance and International Security," *International Security* 25, no. 1 (Summer 2000): 71-104.
4. Strategy and Force Employment Regime Type February 6
Paper Topic #1 distributed
 - John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983), Chapter 2.
 - Biddle, *Military Power*, all.

Recommended:

 - Ryan Grauer and Michael C. Horowitz, "What Determines Military Victory? Testing the Modern System," *Security Studies* 21, no. 1 (February 2012): 83-112.

5. Regime Type
 Paper #1 due

February 13

- Dan Reiter and Allan C. Stam, *Democracies at War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002), Chapters 2-3.
- Risa A. Brooks, "Making Military Might: Why Do States Fail and Succeed: A Review Essay," *International Security* 28, no. 2 (Fall 2003): 149-191. Focus on the sections of the article that critique *Democracies at War*, not *Arabs at War*.
- Alexander B. Downes, "How Smart and Tough Are Democracies? Reassessing Theories of Democratic Victory," *International Security* 33, no. 4 (Spring 2009): 7-51; and the Correspondence between Reiter and Stam and Downes in *International Security* 34, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 194-204.
- Jonathan D. Caverley, "The Myth of Military Myopia: Democracy, Small Wars, and Vietnam," *International Security* 34, no. 3 (Winter 2009/10): 119-57.
- Jessica L.P. Weeks, *Dictators at War and Peace* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2014), Chapters 1-3.

Recommended:

- Michael C. Desch, "Democracy and Victory: Why Regime Type Hardly Matters," *International Security* 27, no. 2 (Fall 2002): 5-47.
- Stephen Biddle and Stephen Long, "Democracy and Military Effectiveness: A Deeper Look," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48, no. 4 (August 2004): 525-546.
- Michael C. Desch, *Power and Military Effectiveness: The Fallacy of Democratic Triumphalism* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).
- Michael Beckley, "Economic Development and Military Effectiveness," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 33, no. 1 (February 2010): 43-79.
- John M. Schuessler, "The Deception Dividend: FDR's Undeclared War," *International Security* 34, no. 4 (Spring 2010): 133-165; and the Correspondence between Reiter and Schuessler in *International Security* 35, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 176-185.
- Dan Reiter, Michael C. Desch, and Alexander B. Downes, "H-Diplo/ISSF Exchange on Democracy and Victory," *H-Diplo | ISSF Roundtable* 2, no. 11 (2011).

6. Civil-Military Relations I

February 20

- Risa Brooks, *Shaping Strategy: The Civil-Military Politics of Strategic Assessment* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008).

7. Civil-Military Relations II

February 27

- Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984), Chapters 1-2.
- Stephen Biddle and Robert Zirkle, "Technology, Civil-Military Relations, and Warfare in the Developing World," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 19, no. 2 (June 1996): 171-212.
- James T. Quinlivan, "Coup-proofing: Its Practice and Consequences in the Middle East," *International Security* 24, no. 2 (Fall 1999): 131-165.
- Ulrich Pilster and Tobias Böhmelt, "Coup-Proofing and Military Effectiveness in Interstate Wars, 1967-99," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 28, no. 4 (2011): 331-50.
- Talmadge, *The Dictator's Army*, Chapter 1.
- Vipin Narang and Caitlin Talmadge, "Civil-Military Pathologies and Defeat in War: Tests Using New Data," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 62, no. 7 (August 2018): 1379-1405.

8. Military Culture March 6
Paper Topic #2 distributed
- Austin Long, *The Soul of Armies: Counterinsurgency Doctrine and Military Culture in the US and UK* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2016), Chapters 1-4, 6-7, 9.
 - Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 27-32, 70-88.
 - Theo Farrell, "Global Norms and Military Effectiveness: The Army in Early Twentieth-Century Ireland," in Risa A. Brooks and Elizabeth A. Stanley, eds., *Creating Military Power: The Sources of Military Effectiveness* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 136-157.
- Recommended:
- Andrew F. Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).
9. No Class: Spring Break March 13
10. Small Unit Cohesion March 20
Paper #2 due
- Edward A. Shils and Morris Janowitz, "Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (Summer 1948): 280-315.
 - Omer Bartov, *Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 29-58.
 - Stephen G. Fritz, "'We are trying ... to change the face of the world'—Ideology and Motivation in the Wehrmacht on the Eastern Front: The View from Below," *Journal of Military History* 60, no. 4 (October 1996): 683-710.
 - Elizabeth Kier, "Homosexuals in the U.S. Military: Open Integration and Combat Effectiveness," *International Security* 23, no. 2 (Fall 1998): 5-39.
 - Anthony King, "On Combat Effectiveness in the Infantry Platoon: Beyond the Primary Group Thesis," *Security Studies* 25, no. 4 (Oct.-Dec. 2016): 699-728.
 - Alexander B. Downes, "Would Transgender Troops Harm Military Effectiveness? Here's What the Research Says," *The Washington Post Monkey Cage*, August 1, 2017.
- Recommended:
- Robert Macoun, "What Is Known about Unit Cohesion and Military Performance," in *Sexual Orientation and U.S. Military Personnel Policy: Options and Assessment* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1993), 283-331.
 - Robert J. Macoun and William M. Hix, "Unit Cohesion and Military Performance," in *Sexual Orientation and U.S. Military Personnel Policy: An Update of RAND's 1993 Study* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2010), 137-65.
 - Agnes Gereben Schaefer et al., *Assessing the Implications of Allowing Transgender Personnel to Serve Openly* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2016).
11. Societal Cohesion March 27
- Barry R. Posen, "Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power," *International Security* 18, no. 2 (Autumn 1993): 80-124.
 - Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 21-27, 56-70.
 - Castillo, *Endurance and War*, Chapters 1-2.
 - Lyall, *Divided Armies*, Chapter 3.

12. Military Innovation and Adaptation

April 3

- Adam Grissom, “The Future of Military Innovation Studies,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 29, no. 5 (October 2006): 905-934.
- Review Posen, *Sources of Military Doctrine*, Chapters 1-2.
- Stephen Peter Rosen, *Winning the Next War: Innovation and the Modern Military* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994), Chapters 1-3.
- Theo Farrell, “Military Adaptation in War” and “Back from the Brink: British Military Adaptation and the Struggle for Helmand, 2006-2011,” in *Military Adaptation in Afghanistan*, ed. Theo Farrell, Frans Osinga, and James A. Russell (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2013), 1-24 and 108-35.

Recommended:

- Stuart Griffin, “Military Innovation Studies: Multidisciplinary or Lacking Discipline?” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 40, nos. 1-2 (2017): 196-224.
- Ryan Grauer, *Commanding Military Power: Organizing for Victory and Defeat on the Battlefield* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
- Nina A. Kollars, “Military Innovation’s Dialectic: Gun Trucks and Rapid Acquisition,” *Security Studies* 23, no. 4 (2014): 787-813.
- Nina A. Kollars, “War’s Horizon: Soldier-Led Adaptation in Iraq and Vietnam,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 38, no. 4 (2015): 529-553.
- Harvey M. Sapolsky, “On the Theory of Military Innovation,” *Breakthroughs* 9, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 35-39.

Part III. Case Studies13. Case Study: World War I

April 10

- Review Biddle, *Military Power*, Chapter 5.
- Millett and Murray, *Military Effectiveness*, Chapters 2-6, 8-9.
- Edward J. Erickson, “Strength against Weakness: Ottoman Military Effectiveness at Gallipoli, 1915,” *Journal of Military History* 65, no. 4 (October 2001): 981-1011.

14. Case Study: The Battle of France

April 17

Paper Topic #3 distributed

- Review Kier, *Imagining War*, 56-88.
- Philip A. Karber et al., *Assessing the Correlation of Forces: France 1940* (McLean, Va.: BDM Corporation, 1979), Chapters 2-5.
- Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence*, Chapter 4.
- Don W. Alexander, “Repercussions of the Breda Variant,” *French Historical Studies* 8, no. 3 (Spring 1974): 459-488.
- Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millett, *A War to Be Won: Fighting the Second World War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2001), 63-90.
- Castillo, *Endurance and War*, Chapter 4.

15. Case Study: Iraq and/or Vietnam

April 24

Paper #3 due

- Talmadge, *The Dictator’s Army*, Chapters 2-5.
- Weeks, *Dictators at War and Peace*, 84-96 and 136-58.
- Castillo, *Endurance and War*, Chapters 6-7.