

PECOSXXXX: Conflict and Cooperation

Lead instructor(s): James Cameron

Course content

Why do states cooperate to enhance their mutual security in some areas but not others? Conversely, why do they often cooperate less than they could to optimize their security arrangements? In this course students examine central dilemmas for cooperation and international security including reconciling the transparency needed to verify arms limitation treaties with safeguarding military secrecy, signalling and off-stage diplomacy during international crises, and attribution problems across different issue areas and settings (including bilateral and multilateral contexts). The course introduces students to prominent theories of cooperation and international security, applies these theories to a series of security challenges, and assesses conceptual and empirical dimensions for states and organizations in responding to allegations of cheating and defection from cooperative arrangements.

Learning outcomes

Knowledge

The course engages students in fundamental debates about international conflict and cooperation in a variety of issue areas. Specifically, students will be able to:

- Describe theoretical debates about security competition and cooperation;
- Explain how emerging security challenges affect cooperation problems;
- Identify central cooperative and enforcement dilemmas associated with arms control, cyber security, and WMD treaties;

Skills

The course will help students develop fundamental transferable skills in a number of areas:

- Identify key trade-offs and policy dilemmas for interstate security cooperation;
- Assess evidentiary challenges, including incomplete information and disinformation, in handling these problems;
- Write and present policy recommendations.

General competencies

After the completion of the course, students can:

- Explain variation in security cooperation between states over time and across different issue areas;
- Assess how emerging security challenges challenge existing cooperative frameworks;
- Apply empirical evidence and theoretical arguments to policy debates.

Teaching

Eight two-hour seminars.

Compulsory activities:

- Attend at least 6 out of 8 seminars.
- Prepare 4 (pass-fail) reaction papers of 250 words each summarizing the main argument of one assigned reading and discuss its implications for policy. Students will have to submit four reaction papers to qualify for the exam.
- Prepare 3 written questions for visiting practitioners.

Examination

- Two written assignments assessing cooperation problems associated with contemporary security challenges from a list of assigned questions (each 3,000-4,000 words).

Both assignments count equally.

Language of examination

The language of examination is English.

Grading scale

Grades are awarded on a scale from A to F, where A is the best grade and F is a fail.

Explanations and appeals

- Explanation of grades and appeals

Resit an examination

- Illness at exams / postponed exams
- Resitting an examination

Withdrawal from an examination

It is possible to take the exam up to 3 times. If you withdraw from the exam after the deadline or during the exam, this will be counted as an examination attempt.

Special examination arrangements

Application form, deadline and requirements for special examination arrangements.

Evaluation

The course is subject to continuous evaluation. At regular intervals we also ask students to participate in a more comprehensive evaluation.

Topic outline

Week 1: The risks of cooperation

What are the key costs and risks associated with cooperative behavior in international security? Why do states opt for suboptimal cooperative arrangements? And why is such cooperation uneven? In this introductory session, students will identify key concepts, including the security dilemma, the offence-defence balance, as well as problems related to bargaining and enforcement of international treaties to define the main risks and trade-offs associated with such cooperation. Students will apply these arguments to discuss why we observe variation in the regulation and mutually agreed constraints states impose on different military systems and technologies.

Readings:

Robert Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30:2 (Jan. 1978), 167-214.

Charles Glaser, "Realists as Optimists: Cooperation as Self-Help," *International Security* 19:3 (1994/5), 50-90.

James D. Fearon, "Bargaining, Enforcement, and International Cooperation," *International Organization* 52:2 (Spring 1998), 269-305.

Week 2: The puzzle of nuclear arms control

The emergence of nuclear arms control alongside nuclear competition presents a major theoretical puzzle. Why did bilateral nuclear arms control emerge during the Cold War, and how can we explain its emergence alongside intensifying competition? In this class students discuss arguments for and against understanding arms control as a stabilizing measure and identify the trade-offs between transparency and secrecy in designing arms control agreements.

Readings:

Thomas C. Schelling & Morton H. Halperin, *Strategy and Arms Control* (New York, 1961).

Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution* (Cornell, 1989), 1-45

Brendan Rittenhouse Green, *The Revolution that Failed: Nuclear Competition, Arms Control, and the Cold War* (Cambridge, 2020), 9-27.

John D. Maurer, "The Forgotten Side of Arms Control: Enhancing Competitive Advantage, Offsetting Enemy Strengths," *War on the Rocks* June 27, 2018

(<https://warontherocks.com/2018/06/the-forgotten-side-of-arms-control-enhancing-u-s-competitive-advantage-offsetting-enemy-strengths/>).

Andrew Coe and Jane Vaynman, "Why Arms Control Is So Rare," *American Political Science Review* 114:2, 342-55.

Week 3: Case study: The demise of the INF Treaty

In August 2019, the United States withdrew from the INF Treaty banning intermediate-range missiles in Europe after years of alleged Russian violations against the Treaty. In this session students will be divided into three groups - one

representing Russia, one representing the United States, and one representing NATO - to present each side's perspectives on which party violated the treaty, what was the appropriate response to the alleged violation, and lay out prospects for a new agreement limiting intermediate-range systems.

Readings:

Ulrich Kühn & Anna Péczeli, "Russia, NATO, and the INF Treaty," *Strategic Studies Quarterly* (Spring 2017), 66-99.

Nikolai Sokov, "Avoiding a Post-INF Missile Race," (December 2019)

(https://nonproliferation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/avoiding_a_post_inf_missile_race.pdf).

John D. Maurer, "Post INF Great Power Arms Control," *Real Clear Defense*, September 17, 2019

(https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2019/09/17/post_inf_great_power_arms_control_114747.html).

Week 4: Risk-taking and off-stage cooperation

Conflicts can be understood as competitions of risk-taking, but the historical record also shows that adversaries often engage in off-stage signalling to deescalate crises. In this session students conduct primary source analysis of historical evidence from a nuclear crisis and discuss implications for theories of conflict behavior, distinguishing between "on-stage" and "off-stage" signals. Building on this analysis students will discuss how inference problems can shape the analytic and policy lessons drawn from such crises and what scholars can do to tackle these challenges.

Readings:

Thomas Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Harvard University Press, 1960).

Richard Ned Lebow & Janice Gross Stein, *We All Lost the Cold War* (Princeton University Press, 1994), 110-48.

Austin Carson, "Facing Off and Saving Face: Covert Intervention and Escalation Management in the Korean War," *International Organization* 70:1, 103-31.

Christopher Darnton, "Archives and Inference: Documentary Evidence in Case Study Research and the U.S. Entry into World War II," *International Security* 42:3, 84-126.

Primary source examples:

Department of State Telegram Transmitting Letter from Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy, October 26, 1962

(<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v06/d65>).

Telegram from Soviet Ambassador to the US Dobrynin to the USSR Foreign Ministry, October 30, 1962

(<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112633>).

Week 5: Case study: The Andøya Crisis

Can nuclear war break out by mistake? How do authoritarian and democratic states weigh the costs and benefits of public posturing versus off-stage de-escalation? This

session examines a nuclear crisis from northern Norway in 1995 to probe off-stage signals in a different context and expand on the inference problems discussed in the previous session.

Readings:

Geoffrey Forden, Pavel Podvig, and Theodore Postol, "Two Blind Mice: the Nuclear Danger to Russia and the US from Shortfalls in Early Warning Systems."

Theodore Postol, "Opinion: Near Miss," *Boston and Sunday Globe*, 25 January 2015.

Eivind Thrane, "The history of Andøya Rocket Range," *History of Geo- and Space Sciences* 9, 141-56.

Nikolai Sokov, "Could Norway Trigger a Nuclear War? Notes on the Russian Command and Control System," PONARS Policy Memo 24, Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Monterey Institute.

Primary source examples:

Print copies will be circulated during the session.

Week 6: The attribution problem and chemical weapons use

Why do states get away with using chemical weapons against civilians? What are the dilemmas facing states who wish to see greater accountability when powerful states paralyze the international agencies created to tackle these problems? This session examines why the international community (including the Security Council) and agencies such as the OPCW struggle to attribute responsibility for the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian civil war. Students will discuss the mandate of the OPCW and examine additional steps taken to circumvent the political obstacles to investigation and attribution of such use by individual states. They will identify and discuss the central dilemmas for enforcement and attribution with regards to chemical weapons and civil conflict.

Readings:

Gregory D. Koblenz, "Chemical-weapon use in Syria: atrocities, attribution, and accountability," *Nonproliferation Review* 26:5, 575-98.

John Hart & Ralf Trapp, "Collateral Damage? The Chemical Weapons Convention in the Wake of the Syrian Civil War," *Arms Control Today* 48:3, 6-13.

Brett Edwards & Mattia Cacciatori, "The politics of international chemical weapon justice: the case of Syria, 2011-2017," *Contemporary Security Policy* 39:2, 280-97.

Week 7: Case study: Cyber security and the attribution problem

Can cyber security be understood in terms of pre-existing concepts and cooperative frameworks? How do states decide whether to attribute attacks, and why have states often decided to not do so? This session examines these issues, and features practitioner perspectives on a recent case study, the cyber attack on the Norwegian Parliament and the decision to publicly attribute responsibility for this attack.

Readings:

Andrew Futter, "What does cyber arms control look like? Four principles for managing cyber risk," *European Leadership Network Global Security Policy Brief* (June 2020).

Lucas Kello, "The Meaning of the Cyber Revolution," *International Security* 38:2, 7-40.

Christopher Ford, "The Trouble with Cyber Arms Control," *The New Atlantis* 29, 52-67.

Week 8: The future of cooperation and international security

In this final session, students will prepare group presentations on the prospects of developing future cooperative arrangements to tackle emerging challenges in nuclear arms control and emerging technologies. Students will be divided into "red" and "blue" teams for each issue area, where the red team will identify vulnerabilities and obstacles to cooperation and the blue team will present arguments showing the security benefits of such cooperation. Each team will include U.S. and Chinese perspectives. The red and blue teams will jointly define a key dilemma for such cooperation following their presentations.

Readings:

Jonathan D. Caverly & Peter Dombrowski, "Cruising for a Bruising: Maritime Competition in an Anti-Access Age," *Security Studies* 29:4, 671-700.

Caitlin Talmadge, "Emerging technology and intra-war escalation risks: evidence from the Cold War, implications for today," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 43:6, 864-87

Heather Williams, "Asymmetric arms control and strategic stability: Scenarios for limiting hypersonic glide vehicles," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 43:6, 789-813.

Tong Zhao, "Practical Ways to Promote U.S.-China Arms Control Cooperation," *Carnegie Policy Outlook*, October 7, 2020

(<https://carnegietsinghua.org/2020/10/07/practical-ways-to-promote-u.s.-china-arms-control-cooperation-pub-82818>).