The Military and Politics

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Course Description

One of the key strategic dilemmas raised by the military is that an organization that has the power to protect a polity from external threats has the potential to threaten the polity itself. The goal of this module is to help understand how this dilemma has been resolved in a variety of contexts. This course explores the role that the military played in state formation, how civilian control over the military is institutionalised or breaks down, how the military affects domestic competition and conflict, and how the military can affect foreign policy. These issues are examined cross-nationally, including developing and developed countries, democracies and non-democracies.

Assessment

Participation 15%

Student participation and discussion is a central aspect of the seminar. This means that it is necessary to do the readings. Students should come prepared with topics of discussion and questions. The assessment of participation will be based on the quality of input into class discussions. To prepare for discussion you should: identify the theory or argument of the readings; identify the method used by the authors in the readings to test their arguments, and evaluate the strength of these method for testing the authors’ argument; and you should think of possible extensions or alternatives to the arguments put forward in the readings.

Response Papers (800 words each) 20%

Students are required to submit two 800-word response papers each worth 10% of the student’s total mark. Students must submit one paper during the first 3 weeks and one from the remaining two weeks. These response papers should critically evaluate the readings. This means identifying a weakness or limitation in the articles and offering suggestions on how to improve the research. The critical evaluation may focus on the empirical or theoretical aspects of the readings or both.

Presentation 15%

Each student will be required to provide a 10-15 minute presentation on one of the readings. These presentations are intended to stimulate discussion. To this end, the presentation should provide a brief overview of the reading, highlighting the main points. Students should emphasise what the strengths of the reading are and what they believe are the primary weaknesses. Potential questions for discussion should also be raised. Grading will be based on the quality of content and presentation of the argument. A sign up list for the presentations will be distributed in the first week of term.
Research Design Paper (2500 words)  50%

The research design paper focuses on a potential research project related to the military and politics. Based on the course materials or other knowledge related to the topic, students should identify a question of interest or puzzle that they do not feel is adequately answered in the literature. Students should define their research question, outlining the variation they hope to explain, develop a preliminary theory to explain the variation, then detail the methods they would use to test the theory. When outlining the methods students should pay close attention to issues such as how they conceptualise their key variables (both independent and dependent variables) and the data they would use to measure them and how the methods they propose can be used to falsify their theory.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism is a serious matter and must be avoided. Students should be familiar with what constitutes plagiarism. Please see http://www.tcd.ie/undergraduate-studies/general-regulations/plagiarism.php for further information regarding plagiarism and the university’s policy regarding it.

Course Outline

The weekly coverage might change as it depends on the progress of the class.

Week 1: General Issues

Required Reading:


(The McMahon and Slantchev reading contains a formal, mathematical model of military behaviour. It is not necessary to understand the details of the models. Pay attention to the introduction, the discussion of the model and how the model relates to empirical research in the field)

Recommended Reading:


Finer, S. E. (2002). The man on horseback: The role of the military in politics. Transaction Publishers


**Week 2: The Military, Military Power and State-Formation**

**Required Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**


**Week 3: The Military and Foreign Policy**

**Required Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**


Week 4: Coups and Military Interventions in Domestic Politics

Required Reading:

Recommended Reading:

Week 5: The Military and Regime Change

Required Reading:

Recommended Reading:
Bell, C. (2016). Coup d’état and democracy. Comparative Political Studies, page 0010414015621081


