WAR & REVOLUTION

Course organiser: Professor H K Kandil, hk376@cam.ac.uk

Aims and objectives:

- To introduce concepts and theories in the study of war and revolution.
- To illustrate through historical cases how these insights apply.
- To cultivate historical understanding and analytical skills.

Course Description:

War and revolution are two of the most extreme forms of social interaction. Violence and wholesale disruption test the bonds of social life to the limit. What drives people down that path? And how do they conduct themselves in these extraordinary circumstances? The paper explores these questions theoretically, then examines an extended historical case: the United States of America from the revolutionary and civil wars through the two world wars to the Cold War, the War on Terror, and responses to the recent war in the Ukraine.

Teaching & Assessment:

This course is taught in five two-hour lectures (10 hours) in Michaelmas, and assessed by a three-hour exam. Required readings are starred.

Lecture (1) – Understanding War and Revolution
This lecture contrasts the dominant theoretical approaches to causes and outcomes of revolution, before examining the volatile nature of war and whether technology transforms it.

Revolution: Causes and Outcomes


War: Social Nature and Technological Transformations


https://www.clausewitzstudies.org/bibl/Bassford-ClausewitzInAmericaToday.pdf


Essay Questions:
(1) Critically assess the causes of revolution?
(2) Can technology change the nature of war?

Lectures (2-5) – AMERICA

These lectures examine war and revolution in the United States, starting with the War of Independence (18C), Civil War (19C), Cold War (20C), War on Terror and beyond (21C).
Revolutionary War or War of Independence?
*—Crandall, Russell. 2014. *America’s Dirty Wars: Irregular Warfare from 1776 to the War on Terror*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [CH3]

Revolution or Civil War?
World Wars: Hot and Cold

*—Crandall, Russell. 2014. *America’s Dirty Wars: Irregular Warfare from 1776 to the War on Terror*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [CH19]

War on Terror?

*—Crandall, Russell. 2014. *America’s Dirty Wars: Irregular Warfare from 1776 to the War on Terror*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [CH 2, 5-7]
*—Henriksen, Thomas. 2022. *America’s Wars: Interventions, Regime Change, and Insurgencies after the Cold War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [CH 2, 5-8]
Essay Questions:
(1) How revolutionary was the American War of Independence?
(2) Why was the Civil War necessary?
(3) Discuss the logic guiding the evolution of the American war doctrine?
(4) To what extent is America succeeding in reducing the violence of war?