

Managing military crises

Lecturer: Michael Benhamou
Contact information: m.benhamou@opewi.com

Department: International affairs
Semester: 1

Course level: L3 Undergraduate
Domain: International Affairs
Teaching language: English
Number of in-class hours: 33
Number of course sessions: 10 + Exam
ECTS: 6

Course description and objectives

Learn the techniques of military crisis management. During every class, students will be placed in a specific space-time-economic context and be given the role of advisor to a military commander from all geographies (Europe, America, Asia), often from centuries resembling ours (economic stagnation, diseases, resources scarcity) and with varying degrees of moral integrity and rationality. Using the data we have amassed nowadays, students will be tasked to design policy scenarios – integrating cultural biases, ethical concerns, macro-economic adverse effects, climate parameters, the opponent's own cognitive processes, and other weak signals.

Course plan:

- 1) 10-minute introduction by the teacher;
- 2) 20-minute briefs by the student(s) proposing a) an overview of the politico-eco-military situation, b) a study of options, c) a choice of the best possible alternative for a given party;
- 3) Full review by the teacher for one hour and a half – a participative review based on maps, graphs and quotes where students will be asked to choose between policy options on numerous occasions.

Prerequisites

Possessing data analytics skills are advised before taking this class – Excel, Power Point. Tableau, Miro and/or QGIS can also bring value.

Learning outcomes

Students will learn three skills: 1) understand military Command and Control (C2) processes which will help them anticipate future geopolitical events, 2) visualize their own thought processes and see through the eyes of someone else's economic & political rationality, 3) learn how new technologies (AI, drones, satellites) and open data sources can support decision making in the 21st century.

Assignments and grading

Students will be graded in two ways:

1/ 50% of the grade for the preparation of a twenty minutes brief to a military commander (10 to 20 slides) based on the methodology explained in the first two courses. This brief will be followed by 10 minutes of Q&A. Students will prepare the brief either alone or in groups of two to four.

2/ 50% for the final exam where students will be proposed a new case study. They will be asked to prepare visuals accompanied by a short text laying out their politico-military recommendations.

The numerical grade distribution will dictate the final grade. The passing grade for a course is 10/20.

Class participation: Active class participation will be important for the final grade.

Exam policy: In the exam, students will not be allowed to bring any document (except if allowed by the lecturer). Unexcused absences from exams or failure to submit cases will result in zero grades in the calculation of numerical averages. Exams are collected at the end of examination periods.

Course structure

| Session | Topic |
|---------|--|
| 1 | METHODOLOGY – introduction to the course . Focus: 1) presenting each other, 2) explanation of the methodology expected for this course (visuals, structure of the briefs, reading & research tips, locating the bibliography in Paris & online); 3) details on each case study before students pick one of them. |
| 2 | METHODOLOGY – politico-military tutorial based on NATO standards. Focus: 1) understand the politico-military decision-making process; 2) establish strategic visuals for military commanders; 3) Create environment analytics (transport, topography, weather); 4) create actor analytics (psychology, defence economics, society’s weak signals); 5) produce politico-military options and choose one of them. |
| 3 | CASE STUDY – advisor to the Roman Emperor Philip I in the shaky 240s. Taking into consideration falling temperatures, mines scarcity and rising threats in Europe and with Persia, should the emperor choose offense, defence or reallocation of legions? |
| 4 | CASE STUDY – adviser to the Abbasid Caliph al-Faql in the 940s. How should the Caliphate prioritize its territories according to you? In which geographic direction? Should it try to reconquer Spain, focus on Constantinople or consolidate gains in Persia? |
| 5 | CASE STUDY – advisor to the French King Philippe IV in 1300: given military threats surrounding the kingdom and the economic slowdown, should the capital of the French kingdom be established in Paris, Lyon, Bordeaux, or Toulouse? |
| 6 | CASE STUDY – advisor to the (now Germany and Austria based) Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I in the 1660s. America’s conquest and treasures are behind you and the industrial revolution is yet to begin. What should be your military focus on the map? |
| 7 | CASE STUDY – advisor to the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, Anne , in 1710. Grounding yourself in weather troubles, military events and Asian politics, you will draft several strategic options for the Crown strategy in India. |
| 8 | CASE STUDY – advisor to the US Secretary of Defence Jim Mattis in 2018, three years before the Kabul takeover by the Taliban in the summer of 2021. Present bold policy options to overcome opponent forces, explaining the context of operations first as well as the financial & reputational constraints at hand. |
| 9 | CASE STUDY – advisor to Russia’s President Putin in 2021, right before Russia’s offensive in Ukraine. What policy options would you display to the Russian President, bearing in mind his historical references, Russia’s core economic and social parameters and Ukraine’s own risks & potential? |
| 10 | CASE STUDY – advisor to the Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2024. Given China’s economic and social trends, given America’s current military engagements and taking into account the current tactical situation in the China sea, what should Beijing do in Taiwan? |
| 11 | Final Exam – with the support of fifty pages of documentation, prepare an emergency politico-military brief to propose a solution to a crisis after having described three courses of action. Visuals via Power Point slides will be required as well as two-three pages of explanatory reporting. |

Bibliography

- Ansary (Tamim), *A History of the World Through Islamic Eyes*, Public Affairs, 2010
- Arnoux (Mathieu), *Un monde sans ressources : besoin et sociétés en Europe, (XI-XIV siècles)*, 2023
- Aron (Raymond), *Penser la guerre, Clausewitz*, Gallimard, 1976
- Barfield (Thomas), *Afghanistan – a Cultural and Political History*, Princeton University Press, 2022
- Benhamou, Guehenneux, Robinet, “Le Polad : bilan et rôle d’un conseiller particulier”, *Revue de Défense Nationale*, 2017
- Berman, Felter, Shapiro, *Small Wars, Big Data*, Princeton University Press, 2018
- Biltgen, Ryan, *Activities-Based Intelligence*, Artech House, 2015
- Braudel (Fernand), *The Mediterranean World in the age of Philip II*, University of California Press, 2023
- Braudel (Fernand), *The Identity of France*, 1986
- Dalrymple (William), *Anarchy: the Relentless Rise of the East India Company*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020
- Dupuy (T.N.), *Forecasting Battle Casualties and Equipment Losses in Modern War*, Nova Publications, 1995
- Freedman (Lawrence), *Command. The Politics of Military Operations from Korea to Ukraine*, Penguin, 2023
- Gibbon (Edward), *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 1776
- Harper (Kyle), *The Fate of Rome – Climate, Disease and the End of Empire*, Princeton University Press, 2019
- Koselleck (Reinhart), *Futures Past: on the Semantics of Historical Time*, Columbia University Press, 2004
- Le Roy Ladurie (Emmanuel), “L’histoire immobile”, *Annales*, 1974
- Lot (Ferdinand), *The End of the Ancient World and the Beginnings of the Middle Ages*, 1951
- Minic (Dimitri), *Pensée et culture stratégique russe*, Maison des Sciences de l’homme, 2023
- Mladenova (Stanislava), *When Rambo meets the Red Cross*, Rowman Publishers, 2024
- NATO Doctrines & Manuals – Unclassified material
- Rashid (Ahmad), *Descent into Chaos: the US and the Disaster in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia*, Penguin, 2009
- Samuelson, Zeckhauser, “Status Quo Bias in Decision Making”, *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty*, 1988
- Sims (Jennifer), *Decision Advantage: Intelligence in International Politics from the Spanish Armada to Cyberwar*, Oxford University Press, 2022
- Stewart, Knaus, *Can Intervention Work?*, Norton, 2011
- TRADOC, *The Red Team Handbook*, 2018
- Van Uytanghe (Marc), “L’Antiquité tardive, le haut Moyen Age et la seconde moitié du XXe siècle : affinités réelles ou imaginaires”, *Didactica*, 1979
- Wachtel (Nathan), *La vision des vaincus*, Gallimard, 1971
- Yakovleff (Michel), *Tactique théorique*, Economica, 2016

Lecturer's biography

Michael Benhamou – historian by training (Master's degree from Paris 1/Sciences po Paris in 2008), and reserve officer in the French Armed Forces, he served as a political adviser on NATO and European Union operations (Kosovo, Afghanistan, Libya, Gulf, Brussels) before launching his own European Defence think tank, [OPEWI](#). He is also the author of articles or interviews on military topics: [Commentaire](#), [Revue des Deux Mondes](#), [Revue de Défense Nationale](#), [Foreign Affairs](#), [Institut Montaigne](#), [Euractiv](#), [France 24](#), etc. LinkedIn profile [here](#).

Moodle

This course is on Moodle: **yes**

Academic integrity

Be aware of the rules in Université Paris Dauphine about plagiarism and cheating during exams. All work turned in for this course must be your own work, or that of your own group. Working as part of a group implies that you are an active participant and fully contributed to the output produced by that group.