

Call for Papers

Research Workshop on Islamist Armed Conflicts and the Prospects for Conflict Resolution

Zürich, Switzerland 28–30 September 2018

One of the most pressing challenges on the contemporary global agenda for peace and security is how to resolve armed conflicts involving militant Islamist groups. While conflicts involving organised armed actors with self-proclaimed political aspirations framed in religious terms constituted a small minority of all armed conflicts at the time of the end of the Cold War, the picture has now changed. In 2016, about half of all armed conflicts recorded by the Uppsala Conflict Data Programme (UCDP) involved warring parties who expressed their political aims at least partly along such lines, ranging from demands to incorporate Islamic law in part into existing state legislation to a desire to unify the Muslim world and establish a worldwide caliphate.

Importantly, this category of conflicts appears less likely to see attempts at peaceful conflict resolution. While local and international peacemakers have successfully contributed to a general decline in warfare since 1991 through mediation, negotiations and peace agreements, quantitative research have shown that Islamist armed conflicts are at least in part less likely to experience such tools. Why is this the case? In spite of a growing literature on conflict resolution in civil wars, we know surprisingly little about the conditions under which these conflicts may be brought to an end, especially beyond military means. The purpose of this workshop is to contribute to a more comprehensive theoretical and empirical understanding of this research problem. The overarching question that will guide the discussions at the workshop is the following: Are armed conflicts fought over religiously defined aspirations different from other types of conflicts when it comes to challenges associated with conflict resolution, and if so why and how?

Bringing together scholars of diverse disciplinary backgrounds – political scientists, IR-scholars, peace and conflict researchers, scholars in the field of security studies and terrorism, as well as religion and theology scholars – we invite papers that could address, but are not limited to:

- How do Islamist armed groups compare to other types of armed groups, including those guided by leftist or nationalist ideologies, in terms of their willingness or ability to engage in negotiations and political accommodation? Are there any systematic similarities and differences, and what are the implications?
- What kinds of religiously framed political demands are likely to make Islamist armed conflicts more difficult to solve compare to other types of conflicts (e.g., how do demands to implement sharia laws within the confines of an existing state compare to demands for the establishment of a separate territory)?
- In what way does the organisational structure of some Islamist armed groups, e.g., broader international networks and cell-like organisational structures, influence the possibilities for conflict resolution?
- Are Islamist conflicts and Islamist armed groups treated differently by policy-makers and international and local peace organisations, for example in terms of their willingness or ability to engage in mediation and other diplomatic efforts?



- What are the implications of our international legal frameworks and practices, such, as for example terrorist listings, for the possibilities for peaceful settlement of Islamist armed conflicts?
- How do the transnational dimensions of some Islamist armed conflicts challenge conflict resolution in theory and practice?
- How can we explain shifts and transformation by Islamist armed actors over time – in terms of moderation, openness for accommodation or shifts to political means of struggle – both within and across cases?

Time, location and funding

The 2,5 days workshop will take place in or near Zürich, Switzerland (venue TBC) on 28–30 September. The workshop begins on Friday morning 28 September, so plan to arrive on Thursday the 27th already. The workshop is organised by Uppsala University within the framework of the international research project “Resolving Jihadist Conflicts? Religion, Civil Wars and Prospects for Peace” and the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA). The workshop is an integral part of FBAs ongoing commitment to promote high quality research within the field of peace, security and development through its Research Working Groups (RWG). Members of FBAs RWGs with relevant abstracts are encouraged to apply. Part of the workshop will also be devoted to a discussion with policy makers and practitioners with experience of conflict resolution in these contexts. The organisers will cover costs associated with international travel, transfer between the airport and the conference venue as well as accommodation for all participants.

Submission of abstract

We invite junior and senior researchers with diverse backgrounds to address this theme in contemporary or historical contexts. Both single and comparative studies are welcomed, as well as both quantitative and qualitative research designs. We prioritise contributions that are theoretically informed, methodologically sound and empirically oriented.

Please submit a proposal no later than **3 April 2018**. Your proposal should contain a paper abstract of max 250 words. Selection will be made on the basis of the submitted abstracts. You are allowed to submit more than one abstract. Notifications about acceptance will be sent out no later than 15 April. Abstracts and queries should be sent via e-mail to Daniel Finnbogason at daniel.finnbogason@pcr.uu.se and Frida Pålsson at frida.palsson@fba.se.

To read more about the international research project “Resolving Jihadist Conflicts? Religion, Civil War, and Prospects for Peace”, please go to: <http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/resolving-jihadist-conflicts/>

We look forward to your participation!



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