

# Military power in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

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## Practical information

**Time and location:** Classes will take place on Wednesdays, from 14.00 to 17.00, in room U24.

**Objective:** This course will provide students with the foundational principles of military power and military operations. It is designed for students who will pursue a career requiring an understanding of the armed forces, for example in the ministry of Defense, in NATO, in NGOs specializing in conflict situations, or as a journalist covering defense issues. It will also be useful for students interested in international relations, and want a better understanding of the role, and limitations, of military power. With this course, *you will not* be able to plan and conduct a military operation: these are skills that take many years to develop, and require specialized training provided by defense academies. But you will understand the fundamental challenges associated with the use of military force, thus being able to engage in an educated dialogue with military professionals, while also exercising critical judgement regarding military discourses.

As the French political scientist Raymond Aron once wrote: “In a democracy, national defense directly concerns citizens. Why shouldn't they try to acquire enough knowledge to understand the issues? What is necessary in terms of economics is no less necessary in terms of strategy”. The return of war in the international system is a reality, and European countries (including Denmark), are now much more likely to be engaged in major combat operations. Moreover, defense spendings are increasing, and it is a democratic duty to be able to assess whether public money is properly spent: these discussions can no longer be limited to a few experts (often with a military background). It is thus critical for citizens, especially those with a background in political science, to now have a fundamental understanding of military power.

**Course structure:** You have been randomly assigned to one of six possible working groups (WGs). The WGs will last for the semester, since you will have to prepare two exercises in WG format (the critical reader and the historical analysis). Moreover, we will regularly

conduct group exercises in class (such as small wargames), and already knowing your WG will help us save time.

A typical class will start with the *critical reader*, for 15 to 20 minutes. I will then lecture about the weekly topic and we will usually conduct a practical activity related to the weekly topic. The last part of the course will be the *historical analysis* by a WG (20 to 30 minutes).

The *critical reader* is an exercise in which the WG will present the weekly mandatory reading, summarize the key arguments, and discuss both their merits and their limits. It is designed to train your critical reading skills.

The *historical analysis* is a presentation of a specific battle or campaign through a military angle: it is designed both to augment your historical knowledge and to apply the concepts and notions we will see in class.

WGs are entirely free to decide how they want to present: it can be one presenter on behalf of the entire WG or a group presentation; it can use visual help (such as powerpoints) or not, etc. Creativity is absolutely encouraged.

The schedule for WG presentations is as follows.

|         | Critical reader | Historical analysis |
|---------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Class 4 | 1               | 4                   |
| Class 5 | 3               | 2                   |
| Class 6 | 5               | 6                   |
| Class 7 | 4               | 1                   |
| Class 8 | 2               | 3                   |
| Class 9 | 6               | 5                   |

**Your responsibilities:** Of course, your basic responsibility is to **come to class prepared and having read the weekly mandatory texts**. By “reading”, I mean “critically engaging” with the texts. Browsing them over breakfast or in the tram is not enough: your texts should be highlighted and annotated, which are signs of deep engagement. Reading academic texts can be intimidating. If this is the case for you, I highly recommend Raul Pacheco-Vega’s website, which provides excellent advice on how to develop reading strategies (available [here](#)). Again, this is about developing skills that will be helpful in your future career (you may not have to read academic papers, but you will certainly have to read policy documents and critically engage with them in order to provide advice and analyses to your employers). **The readings and the lectures complement each other, but cannot be substituted.** I have selected the readings so that they provide a fundamental background to understand the lectures. *In other words, you will miss key information if you only read the texts and skip classes, and you will struggle with the lectures if you have not done the preparatory work of reading the texts.*

*Second, you need to closely follow national and international political news.* It is expected of you that you read at least one good Danish and one good international news outlet *every day*. Excellent sources abound, so you can easily choose: for example *Politiken*, *Ræson*, *Information* or *Jyllands-Posten* in Denmark; *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *The Guardian*, the *Financial Times* or *The Economist* for international outlets. You can also read [Olf](#) for news related to the Danish defense.

*Third, your interest in military power is not confined to the classroom.*

I particularly recommend reading the following websites, which offer high-quality (and free) discussions of contemporary security issues: [War on the Rocks](#) , [The Strategy Bridge](#), [Wavell Room](#) and [Lawfare](#).

It is also a good idea to regularly follow the websites of the main international think-tanks on security issues, for updates and analyses. Think-tank reports are an intermediate form of writing: they typically involve less theoretical and methodological discussions than an academic paper, but they will usually follow a rigorous research process implicitly informed by academic standards. They also have policy recommendations, which are more elaborate (and usually established through a more rigorous process) than an opinion piece in a newspaper. The key US think-tanks relevant for this class would be the [Rand corporation](#), the [CSIS](#), the [CSBA](#) and the [CNAS](#). In the UK, the key players in the security field are the [IISS](#) and the [RUSI](#). In Denmark, you should follow the [DIIS](#) and the [CMS](#). At the European level, the [ECFR](#) is an excellent source.

You can also listen to podcasts related to international affairs and international security. Most of the institutions mentioned above host their own podcasts, and you will have to shop around a little to establish your tastes (in terms of topics covered, flows of the conversation, setting of the podcast, etc.), but I personally recommend the following:

- The War on the Rocks [podcast](#).
- [Revolution in Military Affairs](#)
- [Command and Control](#)
- [Talking Strategy](#)
- [War in Space](#)
- [This Means War](#)
- [Modern War Institute](#)

Remember that the more you read, and the more you inform yourself, the easier your classes will be and the more proficient you will be at your future jobs. Use extra-classroom learning opportunities as much as you can: becoming a life-long learner starts now.

**Examination:** There are two forms of examination in this class. First, a pass/fail mid-term assignment, in which you will be asked to briefly answer a few questions about fundamental concepts discussed in class.

The final exam will be a take-home conceptual and empirical analysis of a contemporary military issue *OR* a review essay of *at least* two books related to modern war. A list of potential topics and books will be circulated during the first week of class.

In terms of presentation, the exams should be submitted in Times New Roman, font 12, with a 1,5 spacing for the paragraphs. They should have page numbers, a consistent citation style and a standard cover mentioning the number of strokes.

The mid-term should have a maximum of 3 pages, each with 2,400 strokes. Spacing and notes included, but table of content, appendixes and bibliography excluded.

The final exam will have a maximum 8 pages, each with 2,400 strokes. Spacing and notes included, but table of content, appendixes and bibliography excluded.

And now, in order for me to get to know you better (and to make sure that you have made it this far into the syllabus), **please send me an email** at [schmitt@sam.sdu.dk](mailto:schmitt@sam.sdu.dk), mentioning in a couple of paragraphs: your name; your background (where are you from, what did you study before?); and your motivation for taking this class.

And move on to the next page to discover the reading list for the class...

## Mandatory readings

### **Class 1: Introduction. Fundamentals: military strategy and the armed forces**

(7 February)

#### *Topics covered:*

- *Fundamental concepts of military strategy*
- *Differences between tactics, operations and strategy*
- *Types of war (covert warfare, counter insurgency, large-scale combat, etc.)*
- *Sociology of the armed forces: organization, cohesion, discipline, doctrine, military culture*

Robert J. Art, "To What Ends Military Power?", *International Security*, 4/4, 1980, pp. 3-35.

William C. Martel, *Victory in War. Foundations of Modern Strategy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011. Read chapter 13, "Military Power and Victory", pp. 341-370.

Peter Viggo Jakobsen, "Causal Theories of Threat and Success – Simple Analytical Tools Making it Easier to Assess, Formulate, and Validate Military Strategy", *Scandinavian Journal of Military Studies*, 5/1, 2022, pp. 177-191.

Delphine Resteigne, "Sociology of the Military", *Handbook of Military Sciences*, 2022.

## Domains

### **Class 2: The land and naval domains**

(14 February)

#### *Topics covered:*

- *Physical specificities of the land of naval domains and how they impact warfare*
- *Fundamental strategic concepts in the land and naval domains*
- *Key systems and platforms and their interactions*

James F. Dunnigan, *How to Make War*, New York, Harper Collins, 2003. Read part 1 "ground combat" and part 3 "naval operations", pp. 14-142; 219-286.

### **Class 3: The air, space and cyber domains**

(21 February)

#### *Topics covered:*

- *Physical specificities of the air, space and cyber domains and how they impact warfare*
- *Fundamental strategic concepts in the air, space and cyber domains*
- *Key systems and platforms and their interactions*

James F. Dunnigan, *How to Make War*, New York, Harper Collins, 2003. Read part 2 "air operations", pp. 143-218.

Richard Harknett and Max Smeets, “Cyber Campaigns and Strategic Outcomes”, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 45/4, 2022, pp. 534-567.

Bleddyn E. Bowen, “From the Sea to Outer Space: The Command of Space as the Foundation of Spacepower Theory”, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 42/3-4, 2019, pp. 532-556.

## Operations

### Class 4: Joint operations and military campaigns

(28 February)

#### Topics covered:

- *Challenges of combining operations in different domains for strategic effect*
- *Debates about operational art/operational level of war*
- *Joint operations/multidomain operations*

Bruce W. Menning, “Operational Art’s Origins”, in Michael D. Krause and R. Cody Phillips (eds.), *Historical Perspectives of the Operational Art*, Center of Military History, US Army, 2005, pp. 3-24.

Eward R. Lucas and Thomas A. Crosbie, “Evolution of Joint Warfare”, *Handbook of Military Sciences*, 2022.

Stephen Biddle, *Military Power. Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2005. Read chapter 3: “The Modern System”, pp. 28-51.

Amos C. Fox, “Myths and Principles in the Challenges of Future War”, *Land Warfare Paper* 23-7, December 2023.

Becca Wasser, *Campaign of Denial. Strengthening Simultaneous Deterrence in the Indo-Pacific and Europe*, CNAS, August 2023.

Historical analysis: the Battle of England (1940)

### Class 5: Fundamentals: command, cohesion, logistics

(6 March)

#### Topics covered:

- *The nature and practice of command*
- *Cohesion in military units and will to fight*
- *The role and importance of logistics*

Pascal Vennesson and Amanda Huan, “The General’s Intuition: Overconfidence, Pattern Matching and the Inchon Landing Decision”, *Armed Forces and Society*, 44/3, 2018, pp. 498-520.

Søren Sjøgren, “What Military Commanders Do and How They Do It: Executive Decision-Making in the Context of Standardised Planning Processes and Doctrine”, *Scandinavian Journal of Military Studies*, 5/1, 2022, pp. 379-397.

Ben Connable *et al.*, *Will to Fight. Analyzing, Modeling, and Simulating the Will to Fight of Military Units*, RAND Corporation, 2018. Read Chapter 1, pp. 1-32.

Mark Erbel and Christopher Kinsey, “Think again – supplying war: reappraising military logistics and its centrality to strategy and war”, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 41/4, 2018, pp. 519-544.

Patrick Bury, “Conceptualising the quiet revolution: the post-Fordist revolution in western military logistics”, *European Security*, 2020, 30/1, pp. 112-136.

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| Historical analysis: Operation Barbarossa (1941-1942) |
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## **Class 6: Multinational military operations**

(20 March)

*Topics covered:*

- *The challenges of coalition warfare*
- *Caveats*
- *Interoperability*

Kathleen J. McInnis, “Lessons in Coalition Warfare: Past, Present, and Implications for the Future”, *International Politics Reviews*, 1/2, 2013, pp. 78-90.

Olivier Schmitt, *Allies that Count. Junior Partners in Coalition Warfare*, Washington, DC, Georgetown University Press, 2018. Read the Introduction, pp. 1-42.

Rosella Cappella Zielinski and Ryan Grauer, “Organizing for Performance. Coalition Effectiveness on the Battlefield”, *European Journal of International Relations*, 26/4, 2020, pp. 953-978.

Patrick Mello, “National restrictions in multinational military operations: A conceptual framework”, *Contemporary Security Policy*, 40/1, 2019, pp. 38-55.

Derrick V. Frazier and J. Wesley Hutto, “The Socialization of Military Power: Security Cooperation and Doctrine Development through Multinational Military Exercises”, *Defence Studies*, 17/4, pp. 379-397.

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| Historical analysis: D-Day and the Battle of Normandy (1944) |
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## Class 7: Innovation and adaptation in military organizations

(10 April)

### Topics covered:

- *Tension between stability and change in military organizations*
- *Military innovation and adaptation*

Olivier Schmitt, *Preparing for War. Strategy, Innovation and Military Change*, Oxford, Oxford University Press (forthcoming). Read the introduction “the challenge of transforming the armed forces”.

Michael C. Horowitz and Shira Pindyck, “What is a Military Innovation and Why it Matters”, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 46/1, 2023, pp. 85-114.

Andrea Gilli and Mauro Gilli, “Why China has not Caught Up Yet: Military-Technological Superiority and the Challenges of Imitation, Reverse Engineering, and Cyber-Espionage”, *International Security*, 43/3, 2018/19, pp. 141-189.

Kendrick Kuo, “Dangerous Change: When Military Innovation Harms Combat Effectiveness”, *International Security*, 2022, 47/2, pp. 48-87.

Historical analysis: Battle of Leyte Gulf (1944)

## Contemporary debates and challenges

## Class 8: Operational concepts and key battlefields

(17 April)

### Topics covered:

- *Debates about maneuver and attrition*
- *Strategic concepts and trends*
- *Potential fighting environments*

Franz-Stefan Gady, “Manoeuvre versus Attrition in US Military Operations”, *Survival*, 63/4, 2021, pp. 131-148.

Frank Hoffman, “Defeat Mechanisms in Modern Warfare”, *Parameters*, 51/4, 2021, pp. 49-66.

Chiara Libiseller, “Hybrid Warfare as an Academic Fashion”, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 46/4, 2023, pp. 858-880.

Brendan Rittenhouse Green and Caitlin Talmadge, “Then What? Assessing the Military Implications of Chinese Control of Taiwan”, *International Security*, 47/1, 2022, pp. 7-45.

Anthony King, “Urban Insurgency in the Twenty-First Century: Smaller Militaries and Increased Conflict in Cities”, *International Affairs*, 98/2, 2022, pp. 609-629.

Historical analysis: the 1973 Arab–Israeli War



## **Class 9: Technology and future warfare**

(24 April)

*Topics covered:*

- *Relative importance of technology in future warfare*
- *Key technological trends*

Christian Brose, “The New Revolution in Military Affairs”, *Foreign Affairs*, 98/3, 2019, pp. 122-134.

Stephen Biddle, “Back to the Trenches. Why New Technology Hasn’t Revolutionized Warfare in Ukraine”, *Foreign Affairs*, 102/5, 2023, pp. 153-164.

Jacquelyn Schneider and Julia MacDonald, “Looking Back to Look Forward: Autonomous Systems, Military Revolutions, and the Importance of Cost”, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 2023.

Michael C. Horowitz, “Artificial Intelligence, International Competition, and the Balance of Power”, *Texas National Security Review*, 1/3, 2018, pp. 37-57.

Simona R. Soare, Pavneet Singh and Meia Nouwens, “Software-defined Defence: Algorithms at War”, *International Institute for Strategic Studies*, 2023.

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| Historical analysis: the battles of Fallujah (2004) |
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## **Class 10: Wargame**

(8 May)

No readings