

# Sedef A. Topal, Ph.D.

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## Academic Appointments

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<b>Ripon College</b> Department of Political Science <i>Assistant Professor</i>	<b>2024 - Current</b>
<b>Wisconsin Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies (WIPCS)</b> University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point <i>Executive Board Member</i>	
<b>Centre for the Comparative Study of Civil War</b> University of York, United Kingdom <i>Civil War Paths Fellow</i>	<b>2024-2025</b>

## Education

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<b>Washington State University, Pullman</b> Ph.D., <i>Political Science and Government</i>	<b>2024</b>
<b>Washington State University, Pullman</b> MA, <i>Global Politics &amp; Political Psychology</i>	<b>2020</b>
<b>University of Szeged, Hungary</b> MA, <i>International Relations</i>	<b>2017</b>
<b>Dokuz Eylul University, Türkiye</b> BA, <i>International Relations</i>	<b>2015</b>

## Publications

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### PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL ARTICLES

- Topal, Sedef A.** “Rebel Group Mergers: Security Imperatives and the Autonomy Dilemma,” *Journal of Peace Research*, conditionally accepted.
- Topal, Sedef A.** “Pathways to Cooperation: A Relational Theory of Rebel Alliance Formation.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, February 2024, DOI: 10.1177/00220027241232955
- Topal, Sedef A.** “A Relational Theory of Jihadist Affiliate Behavior: The Case of Al Qaeda and Islamic State.” *Civil Wars*, February 2024, DOI: 10.1080/13698249.2024.2314899
- Lewis, Jacob S., and **Sedef A. Topal**. “Proximate Exposure to Conflict and the Spatiotemporal Correlates of Social Trust.” *Political Psychology*, 44(3): 667-687, October 2022, DOI: 10.1111/pops.12864

### REVISE & RESUBMIT

- Berlin, Mark, and **Sedef A. Topal**. “Authorship Patterns in Jihadism Research,” at *Terrorism and Political Violence*
- Lewis, Jacob S., **Sedef A. Topal**, McDonald Lewanika, Tinotenda Chishiri, and Thulani Mswelanto. “Violence, Trauma, and Trust: Fraught Elections in Authoritarian Regimes,” at *Political Behavior*.

### UNDER REVIEW

- Topal, Sedef A.** “Beyond the Battlefield: Political Institutionalization and the Durability of United Rebel Fronts” at *Security Studies*

Zellman, Ariel, and **Sedef A. Topal**. “Hostage to Fortune? Explaining Kidnapping by Ideological Insurgent Groups,” *at Civil Wars*

#### **WORKING PAPERS**

Berlin, Mark, and **Sedef A. Topal**. “Citation Patterns in Jihadism Research” in preparation for submission

**Topal, Sedef A.** “United but Not Forever, Explaining Exit and Persistence in Rebel Coalitions” in preparation for submission

**Topal, Sedef A.** “Alliance or Liability? The Strategic Outcomes of Rebel Coalitions” in preparation for submission

**Topal, Sedef A.** “Negotiating the Chaos: Ceasefire Dynamics among Rebel Factions in Civil Wars” in preparation for submission

**Topal, Sedef A.** “Secret Alliances? The Patterns of Non-Aggression in Multi-party Civil Conflicts,” in preparation for submission

**Topal, Sedef A.** “Western Foreign Fighters Involvement: Why Join, Leave, or Shift between Conflicts?” in preparation for submission

#### **WHITE PAPERS**

Lewis, Jacob S., and **Topal, Sedef A.** 2021. “How does Exposure to Conflict Events Shape Social Trust? A Spatiotemporal Approach,” Afrobarometer Working Papers Series, Working Paper No. 189

#### **Book Projects**

*United We Stand, Divided We Brawl: Inside the World of Rebel Alliances. To be proposed to academic publishers in the Spring of 2027.*

#### **Commentaries**

“Evolution from Democracy to Manipulocracy in the Crisis of State Sovereignty.” *The American Review of Political Economy*, Vol. 13, 1. ISSN 1551-1383, March 2019

“The Role of Nuclear Weapons in International Peace and Security from Neo-Realist Perspective: Iran-US Nuclear Deal.” *ICRP*, pp. 187-197, ISBN 978-963-12-7822-4, February 2017

“The Future of Europe: Is Europe Moving Forward to Federalism?” *JURIST – Legal News and Research Service*, the University of Pittsburgh, Professional Commentary, October 2017

“Federalist vs. Intergovernmentalists View of the EU.” *JURIST – Legal News and Research Service*, the University of Pittsburgh, Student Commentary, September 2017

#### **Skills, Competences, and Field Work**

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**Areas of research** Middle Eastern politics, African politics, political violence and extremism, conflict processes, peacebuilding, and political psychology

**Quantitative methods** Linear and maximum likelihood estimation, multilevel analysis, network analysis, geospatial analysis, time series and panel data analysis, and machine learning

**Qualitative methods** Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA), process tracing

**Experimental** Field experiments, survey experiments

**Fieldwork** Türkiye, Zimbabwe, Ghana

## Conference Presentations

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- WIPCS, 2026:** “Negotiating the Chaos: Ceasefire Dynamics among Rebel Factions in Civil Wars”, *From Defense to War: New Challenges to Global Peacebuilding*, Madison, WI.
- ISA, 2026:** “Inter-rebel Coalitions: The Rise and Fall of United Fronts”, *Triggers and Trajectories of Societal Violence: Unpacking Civil Conflict Dynamics*, Columbus, Ohio
- WIPCS, 2025:** “Secret Alliances? The Patterns of Non-Aggression in Multi-party Civil Conflicts”, *Global Violence and Peacemaking*, Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI.
- ISA, 2025:** “Hostage to Fortune? Explaining Kidnapping by Ideological Insurgent Groups”, *Religion in Peace Mediation Efforts: Exploring Secular Assumptions, Knowledge Production and Practice*, Chicago, IL.
- ISA, 2024:** “Struggle for Rebel Victory: Durability of United Armed Opposition.” *Rebel Group Decision Making in Civil Conflict*, San Francisco, CA.
- APSA, 2024:** “Secret Alliances? The Patterns of Non-Aggression in Multi-party Civil Conflicts” *Rebel Group Behavior in Multi-Party Civil Wars*, 2024, Philadelphia, PA.
- APSA, 2023:** “Rebel Group Mergers: Is it a Marriage of Convenience or Enforcement?” *Political Psychology Pre-Conference and Conflict Processes and Rebel Groups*, 2023, Los Angeles, CA
- APSA, 2022:** “A Relational Theory of Inter-rebel Group Behavior: The Case of Al Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq.” *Islam and Politics in MENA*, Montreal, Canada.
- MPSA, 2022:** “Inter-group Collaborations between Radical Islamists: Is It an Act of Kindness?” *Terrorist Tactics*, Chicago, IL.
- MPSA, 2021:** “Spatiotemporal Dynamics of Conflict and Social Trust.” *African Politics*, Chicago, IL.
- ICAPE, 2018:** “Political and Governmental Dimensions of Liberal Democracy: System-oriented Crisis, Manipulation, and Transformation.” The International Confederation of Associations for Pluralism in Economics (ICAPE), in *Association for Social Economics*, Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA
- ICRP, 2016:** “The Role of Nuclear Weapons in International Peace from Neo-Realist Perspective: Iran-US Nuclear Deal.” International Conference on Security and Sovereignty in the 21st Century, the Institute for Cultural Relations Policy (ICRP), Budapest, Hungary.
- MANCEPT, 2016:** “Evolution from Democracy to Manipulocracy in the Crisis of State Sovereignty.” The Manchester Center for Political Theory (MANCEPT), *Political Theory and Crisis*, the University of Manchester, United Kingdom.

## Grants, Awards, and Scholarships

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<b>Wisconsin Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies Research Grant</b> University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point	<b>2025, 2026</b>
<b>APSA Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant</b> American Political Science Association	<b>2023</b>
<b>APSA Conflict Processes Section Travel Grant</b> American Political Science Association	<b>2023</b>
<b>APSA First Generation Scholar Grant</b> American Political Science Association	<b>2023</b>

<b>The Arthur and Elizabeth Ritch Endowed Scholarship</b> The College of Arts and Sciences, WSU Pullman	<b>2023</b>
<b>Paul Beckett Fellowship in Public Administration</b> The College of Arts and Sciences, WSU Pullman	<b>2023</b>
<b>Charles H. Sheldon Endowed Graduate Scholarship</b> The School of Politics, Philosophy, and Public Affairs, WSU Pullman	<b>2021, 2022</b>
<b>Scotty and Betty Lukins Graduate Fellowship</b> Thomas Foley Institute of Public Policy	<b>2020</b>
<b>Prof. Nicholas Lovrich Graduate Fellowship</b> The College of Arts and Sciences, WSU Pullman	<b>2019, 2020</b>
<b>H. Paul Castleberry Graduate Fellowship in International Studies</b> The School of Politics, Philosophy, and Public Affairs, WSU Pullman	<b>2019, 2022</b>
<b>Graduate Master's Education Full Scholarship</b> European Union (EU), Trans-European Mobility Program for University Studies	<b>2015-2017</b>
<b>Scholarship for Graduate Summer School at Sapienza Università di Roma</b> Centre International de Formation Européenne (CIFE)	<b>2016</b>
<b>Travel Grant, First Place at Mooting Competition</b> Corvinus University, Hungarian Negotiation Moot Association	<b>2015</b>

## **Teaching**

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### **ASSISTANT PROFESSOR**

- POL256:** Middle Eastern Politics, Fall 2024
- POL241:** Civil War and Conflict Resolution, Fall 2024
- POL105:** Introduction to International Relations, Fall 2024 & 2025
- POL240:** Political Psychology, Spring 2025
- CTL120:** Quantitative Reasoning, Spring & Fall 2025
- POL258:** African Politics, Spring 2025
- POL259:** Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in the Middle East, Fall 2025
- POL260:** Iron Fist, Velvet Glove: The Psychology of Authoritarianism, Spring 2026
- POL261:** Drama, Deals & Deception: A History of Diplomacy (1648-Present), Spring 2026
- POL262:** Migration and Refugee Policy in a Global Context, Spring 2026

### **GRADUATE INSTRUCTOR**

- POL 103:** Global Politics, Fall 2023
- POLS 428:** Issues in Political Psychology, Fall 2021/Spring 2022/Summer 2023
- POLS 102:** Introduction to Comparative Politics, Fall 2020/Summer 2022/Spring 2024

### **TEACHING ASSISTANT**

- POLS 428,** Issues in Political Psychology, Spring 2021
- POLS 402:** Civil Rights and Liberties, Spring 2020
- POLS 101:** American National Government, Fall 2019

## **Relevant Experience**

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| <b>Project Manager, Ripon College</b><br><i>Summer Opportunities for Advanced Research (SOAR)</i> | <b>2025</b> |
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The book project funded by the SOAR Program, conducting data collection and revision on rebel alliances, advising a student assistant on a comparative analysis of inter-rebel cooperation in Syria and Myanmar.

**Trainee, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor** **2025**

*Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR)*

Summer training in social network analysis, Python programming, research with time-series and panel data, supported by the APSA Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant (DDRIG)

**Research Assistant, Washington State University, Pullman** **2023-2024**

*Trust2Peace*

Fieldwork funded by USAID examining jihadist mobilization in northern Ghana, with a particular focus on rebel-civilian relations between AQ and IS-affiliated insurgents and local communities

**Project Manager, Washington State University, Pullman** **2021-2022**

*The Impact of Exposure to Conflict on Social Trust in Africa*

Field research in Zimbabwe, supported by the Carnegie Foundation, to examine how external interventions reshape post-conflict social trust in Africa, administering internal and external IRB processes, maintaining communication with local partners, and assisting the primary investigator during field trips to Zimbabwe

**Policy Reporter, Sapienza Università di Roma, Italy** **2016**

*Summer Internship at Centre International de Formation Européenne (CIFE)*

Organizing a series of workshops on the EU immigration policies and regulations, preparing an institutional report on Europe's border security strategies and their impacts on Syrian refugees, supported by the CIFE

**Editorial Assistant, Cardiff University, Wales, United Kingdom** **2015**

*Erasmus Exchange Internship at the European Documentation Center (EDC)*

Addressing the EU's policy response to the refugee influx, translating the reports published by the European Commission and European Parliament from English to Turkish, and collecting data from prominent news agencies regarding the EU's institutional strengths and weaknesses in handling the Syrian refugee crisis