

Sedef A. Topal, Ph.D.

+1 (509) 339 – 9686 | www.sedefaslitopal.com | topalsedef@gmail.com

Academic Appointments

Ripon College

Department of Political Science
Assistant Professor

2024 - Current

Wisconsin Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies (WIPCS)

University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point
Executive Board Member

Center for the Comparative Study of Civil War

University of York, United Kingdom
Civil War Paths Fellow

2024-2025

Education

Washington State University, Pullman

Ph.D., Political Science and Government

2024

Washington State University, Pullman

MA, Global Politics & Political Psychology

2020

University of Szeged, Hungary

MA, International Relations

2017

Dokuz Eylül University, Türkiye

BA, International Relations

2015

Publications

PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL ARTICLES

Topal, Sedef A. “Rebel Group Mergers: Security Imperatives and the Autonomy Dilemma,” *Journal of Peace Research*, 2026, <http://doi.org/10.1093/jopres/xjag051>

Topal, Sedef A. “Pathways to Cooperation: A Relational Theory of Rebel Alliance Formation,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00220027241232955>

Topal, Sedef A. “A Relational Theory of Jihadist Affiliate Behavior: The Case of Al Qaeda and Islamic State,” *Civil Wars*, 2024, <https://doi.org/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, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.1286>

WHITE PAPERS

Lewis, Jacob S., and **Sedef A. Topal**. 2021. “How does Exposure to Conflict Events Shape Social Trust? A Spatiotemporal Approach,” *Afrobarometer Working Papers Series*, Working Paper No. 189: <https://www.afrobarometer.org/publication/wp189-how-does-exposure-conflict-events-shape-social-trust-spatiotemporal-approach/>

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*.

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

UNDER REVIEW

Topal, Sedef A. “Negotiating the Chaos: Ceasefires and Non-aggression Agreements among Rebels” at *International Studies Quarterly*

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

WORKING PAPERS

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

BOOK PROJECTS

United We Stand, Divided We Brawl: Inside the World of Rebel Alliances. To be proposed to academic publishers in the Fall 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 a Neorealist 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

Areas of research Middle Eastern politics, African politics, political violence and extremism, conflict processes, rebel group behavior, 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

- APSA, 2026:** “Negotiating the Chaos: Ceasefire Dynamics among Rebel Factions in Civil Wars”, *Networks of Rebellion: Authority, Violence, and Political Order in Civil War*, Boston, MA
- WIPCS, 2026:** “Beyond the Battlefield: Political Institutionalization and the Durability of United Rebel Fronts, *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, OH
- 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*, 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*, 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*, 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.” *In Association for Social Economics*, Philadelphia, PA
- ICRP, 2016:** “The Role of Nuclear Weapons in International Peace from a Neorealist Perspective: Iran-US Nuclear Deal.” International Conference on Security & Sovereignty in the 21st Century, Budapest, Hungary
- MANCEPT, 2016:** “Evolution from Democracy to Manipulocracy in the Crisis of State Sovereignty.” The Manchester Center for Political Theory, *Political Theory and Crisis*, the University of Manchester, United Kingdom

Grants, Awards, and Scholarships

Wisconsin Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies Research Grant University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point	2025, 2026
Summer Opportunities for Advanced Research Grant Ripon College	2025
APSA Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant (DDRIG) American Political Science Association	2024
APSA First Generation Scholar Grant American Political Science Association	2023

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

Teaching

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 2024/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

- Principal Investigator (PI), Ripon College** 2025
Summer Opportunities for Advanced Research (SOAR)
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.
- 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
- Workshop Coordinator, University of Szeged, Hungary** 2017
Horizons Global Youth for Justice and Equality
Organizing a lecture series on Israeli-Palestinian Conflict from the perspective of European youth. Lectures included distinguished speakers and documentary streaming.
- Policy Reporter, Sapienza Università di Roma, Italy** 2016
Summer Internship at Centre International de Formation Européenne (CIFE)
Organized a workshop series on 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, United Kingdom** 2015
Erasmus Exchange Internship at the European Documentation Center (EDC)
Addressed 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