POLS 3201 Crisis and Cooperation in International Relations, Spring 2018

Initial Case Study (10 percent of final grade)

Due: February 26 by midnight via Slack (direct message)

Length: 1000 words (does not include bibliography)

Format: Times New Roman; 12-point font; double spaced; one inch margins; page numbers; .doc/.docx

Purpose: The initial case study is intended to ensure that you are developing a working familiarity with the crisis you have selected for the term project. As the semester progresses, you will build upon and use parts of this initial assignment as you develop the theoretical analysis and your final paper. In future iterations you will begin to articulate an argument about some aspect of the conflict, but the initial case study is solely intended to help you develop a better sense of the contours of your subject matter.

Requirements: The initial case study is not a formal essay. It should not have an introduction, conclusion, or central thesis. Your case study should explain the nature of the crisis or conflict, provide a brief history, indicate the important actors, and explain what their interests or preferences are.

1. Nature/history of the crisis: You should begin with a brief paragraph explaining what the crisis or issue is and then develop a brief history of how it has developed. This has an interpretive element, in that you are selecting some facts and not others, but the writing should be expository rather than argumentative.

2. Main actors: The rest of the assignment should explain who you see as the main actors in the crisis or conflict. For each actor, you should begin to identify their interests, preferences, capabilities, and relationships to other actors, as they relate to the case. By "actors" I do not generally mean individual people (though in some cases particular personalities may matter). Instead, actors will most likely be states, governments, armed groups, international organizations, civil society groups, corporations, categories of people etc. You may choose to write one paragraph per actor, or group actors together by type. For example, in the case of the Syrian civil war, one of your paragraphs might be "nonstate armed groups," or you might split that category into "pro-government militias" and "anti-government rebels," or you might differentiate further between "Kurdish forces," "Islamic State," "Hezbollah," and the "Free Syrian Army." How you differentiate among actors or group them together is also an interpretive task that depends in part on your understanding of the case. Remember, we need to simplify reality to better understand it, so more detailed differentiation among actors may not necessarily be helpful. For example, "Kurdish forces" could be further disaggregated to include the YPG, PKK, KRG etc. but this might not really help us understand the broader contours of the conflict. Use your judgement in deciding how to identify important actors.

3. Bibliography (not included in word count): You should include a bibliography of all the sources you consulted in putting the case study together. Please use Chicago or APA formatting. The bibliography must include at least six sources.

Given the short nature of this assignment, please do not use direct quotes. However, do cite your sources whenever you are referencing or paraphrasing them. The case studies will be graded on the extent to which they demonstrate empirical knowledge of the selected case and correctly identify important actors, as well as the extent to which the assignments have been carefully proofread.