



Why fight? Ideology and politics in militaries and paramilitary organisations, 1916-2001

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National University of Ireland, Dublin

War was ubiquitous in the short 20th century. From the great theatres of the World Wars to the smaller in scale conflicts of decolonisation and the Cold War, military clashes between state and non-state actors played a central role in shaping the world's recent past and present. Beyond the obvious geopolitical implications, the wars of the past century left a lasting imprint on the politics and cultures of the populations they involved. These non-directly military aspects and consequences of warfare have been the subject of much historical research in recent years, leading to a fruitful cross-fertilisation of military history with social, cultural and political historical approaches.

Most of this work has focused on the impact of military experiences on civilian life, as exemplified by the “brutalisation” and failed demobilisation paradigms. “Why fight?” is an attempt to employ similar approaches to ask questions in the opposite direction. We are delighted to announce **Professor Lien-Hang T. Nguyen** and **Professor Sönke Neitzel** as our keynote speakers.

We are interested in examining the ways in which the activities of militaries and paramilitary groups have been shaped by developments and concerns related to politics and ideology, that is to issues originating in the civilian domain. The themes we would like to explore include, but are not limited to the following:

- The political ambitions and/or activities of officers and soldiers;
- Military doctrine adaptations as a response to political developments;
- Attempts to resist civilian control and/or influence non-military policy;
- The influence of ideology on the design of operations and determination of objectives;
- Ideological and political dimensions of everyday military life, including the content of education at military academies and the activities of specifically ideological military structures (e.g. commissars and military chaplains);
- The transformation and/or integration of paramilitary groups into regular militaries;
- Related methodological approaches and issues.

Chronologically, most of the 20th century lies within the scope of this conference. The specific timeframe (1916-2001) we have chosen reflects our intention to keep the analytical focus on the post-WWI era, without however excluding some of the highly politicised armed conflicts that started within its context, like the Russian Civil war and the Easter Rising as a prelude to the Irish War of Independence. Similarly, while post-1989 events lie within the scope of this



conference this does not extend to the events surrounding the so-called War on Terror. We are particularly keen to hear from researchers working on post-WWII topics as well as areas beyond Europe. Papers offering comparative accounts are especially welcome. We aim to include as broad a range of armed groups as possible, from standing national armies to the military wings of national resistance groups, the only caveat regarding paramilitaries being that such groups have a recognisably military structure and that their motivations for fighting relate to the fate of an existent or potential territorial entity. Thus, while organisations such as the Provisional Irish Republican Army lie within this conference's analytical framework, groups like the Red Army Faction do not.

Scholars interested in presenting a paper at the conference are invited to submit an abstract of 300 words accompanied by a short biographical note to: whyfight2020@gmail.com

The deadline for submissions is 30 January 2020.

The conference is convened by the **UCD Centre for War Studies** and will be held at the premises of the **National University of Ireland** in Dublin. It is organised as part of a Marie Skłodowska Curie Action.