

Postdoc: Qualitative Researcher on The Logics of Destruction in Civil War

The Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) is recruiting a time limited, fully funded postdoc on the research project 'Where There's Smoke, There's Fire: Uncovering Scorched Earth Tactics Through Remote Sensing (FIRES)', starting on March 1, 2027, or shortly thereafter.

About the position

The project establishes a new interdisciplinary research agenda, exploring the role of scorched earth tactics in situations of conflict, through a mixed-methods approach combining remote sensing and qualitative methods.

The task of the postdoc is to propose and conduct a well-defined, ethnographically grounded case study through which to examine the deliberate destruction of settlements, livelihoods and/or cropland in internal wars up close: not only where and when it occurs, but what it is embedded in, what it is meant to accomplish, and how it is understood both by those who carry it out and by those who live through it. We are particularly interested in candidates who can situate such intentional burning within wider repertoires of raiding and predation in civil wars — the seizure of livestock, people and labor; the displacement of, and assertion of claims over, peripheral populations — and who can develop, conceptually, what such tactics reveal about how political authority is made, resisted and evaded in situations of conflict at the margins of states. As examples of well-suited cases, northern Nigeria, Sudan, Ethiopia or South Sudan come to mind.

The qualitative case study is one of two pillars of the project, and the candidate is expected to collaborate closely on joint activities with the project team, which includes familiarization with the project's remote-sensing stream.

In addition to the postdoc, the team will consist of senior researcher Peer Schouten and researcher Mikael Naghizadeh, who leads the project's remote-sensing stream, as well as local research partners in case countries. The position is based in Copenhagen, but the candidate is expected to conduct fieldwork, fully funded by the project.

You may expect some travel activity during the postdoc. There are no language requirements besides English.

Who can apply

Reflecting the project's interdisciplinary orientation, candidates with a PhD in anthropology, human geography, sociology, political science, conflict studies, history or cognate fields in the humanities and social sciences can apply. However, given the project's empirical and theoretical orientation, we expect demonstrable experience of extended qualitative fieldwork in conflict-affected settings, together with a record of theoretically ambitious work. Historical or archival depth, competence in a language relevant to the proposed case, and interest in spatial methods, while not required, are a plus.

Given DIIS' mandate to disseminate research to policy makers and the public, candidates must be skilled communicators in English, preferably with experience in communicating their research to a broader audience.

DIIS as a workplace

You will become part of an inclusive and inspiring knowledge environment at an institution that aims to be at the forefront of multidisciplinary research, policy analysis, and dissemination on global affairs. It is essential that you are ready to engage in cross-disciplinary collaboration and that you value input from colleagues with different

approaches, as mixing different disciplinary backgrounds and theoretical approaches is a large part of DIIS' DNA. The project will be anchored in the research unit Conflict and Political Violence. You will have plenty of time to focus on your research on the project, as you do not have teaching obligations. We expect you to publish academically and communicate your research on relevant media platforms, at public seminars, or through lectures. We also expect you to participate actively in the common efforts of the institute. We prioritize a high degree of presence but want our employees to have a good work-life balance. Therefore, we offer flexible working hours and some possibility of working from home. We are located in Copenhagen's museum quarter, approximately 1 km from the city center with excellent public transportation.

Contract and remuneration

The position corresponds to 19 months of full-time work and is offered as a 24-month appointment at 80% of full time, starting 1 March 2027. We are open to alternative arrangements — full-time over a correspondingly shorter period, or a lower rate of employment over a longer one — depending on the candidate's other commitments, provided the appointment concludes before the project ends on 30 June 2029. Please indicate any preference in your application; this will not form part of the assessment of your candidacy.

Remuneration and other job conditions follow the general agreement between the Danish Confederation of Professional Associations (AC) and the Danish Ministry of Finance as well as local collective agreements at DIIS. The normal starting salary for a postdoc at DIIS is between DKK 35.494,83 – DKK 42.108,16 excl. pensions (The stated salary is for full-time employment and is adjusted pro rata for part-time appointments). In addition, it is possible to negotiate a personal supplement depending on your qualifications. A pension contribution of 18.07 % is added to the above-mentioned salary.

Candidates from abroad may under certain conditions be eligible for a special researcher tax scheme. The scheme offers a gross tax rate at 27 % plus labor market contributions, totaling 32.84 %, for a period of seven years. Read more about the tax scheme at <https://skat.dk/skat.aspx?oid=2244911>.

The application

The deadline for applying is 15 October 2026 at 12:00 noon (CEST). Please note that we only accept applications through DIIS' electronic recruitment system (Emply).

DIIS is a diverse workplace, and we encourage all qualified candidates to apply for this position regardless of age, gender, disabilities, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, or political beliefs.

Your application must include all the following documents:

1. A short motivation letter
2. Curriculum Vitae
3. Master's and PhD diplomas (or proof that Ph.D. will be obtained before March 2027)
4. Documentation of academic qualifications, including a complete list of publications
5. Documentation of any policy work and scientific dissemination (media participation, etc.)
6. A two-page reflection setting out (a) the case you would propose and why, (b) the theoretical problem you would use it to address, and (c) how this would speak to the project's overarching question about the logic of destruction in conflict
7. A maximum of 3 relevant research publications that you want included in the assessment. If any of the publications that you want included in the assessment are the result of a joint effort, the extent and the nature of your contribution to each individual work must then be clarified in a co-author statement.

Applications go through a shortlisting process before being sent for external assessment.

The assessment process may take up to several months depending on the number of applications.

Do you want to know more?

If you want to know more about DIIS as a workplace read more here. Questions about salary and employment conditions as well as the application process itself can be addressed to HR at hr@diis.dk. If you have inquiries regarding the substantive focus of the position, [you can contact Senior Researcher Peer Schouten at pesc@diis.dk.](mailto:pesc@diis.dk)

DIIS is an independent public research institution for international studies. We conduct and communicate multidisciplinary research on globalisation, security, development and foreign policy and within these areas we aim to be agenda-setting in research, policy and public debate.

DIIS participates in academic networks and publish in high-ranking academic journals, always striving to excel in academic scholarship.

We continuously assess Denmark's foreign and political situation and inform the Danish media, politicians and the public about our work