Proposal Abstracts

ADRIANA CUPPULERI
DON’T POKE THE BEAR: A NEOCLASSICAL REALIST EXPLANATION OF RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY IN THE POST-SOVIET SPACE

Since the fall of Soviet Union, Russia has resorted to hard-line foreign policies toward some post-Soviet republics, while it has adopted less coercive approaches with others. This variation has been debated by scholars and policy advisors, yet there is still wide disagreement on the causes and diverse outcomes of Russia’s foreign policy in the post-Soviet space.

In order to address this puzzle, the proposed research develops a neoclassical realist model of Russia’s regional policy. The central assumptions are that Russia has strong incentives to have a sphere of influence because of threats and opportunity at the international level, and that Russia has a broad range of tools for maintaining its sphere of influence. My principle hypothesis is that the higher the level of external threat, the more assertive Russia will be towards post-Soviet republics. However, if neighbouring states counterbalance the dominance of Russia through external alliances, Russia will refrain from escalating disputes. At the same time, the relations between alliances, external threat and policy outcomes are moderated by two intervening conditions: the level of Russian state capacity and its aspiration for status as great power.

By examining 32 political crises between Russia and post-Soviet republics between 1992 and 2016, the proposed research aims to systematically establish the conditions under which Russia has or has not adopted assertive foreign policies in the post-Soviet space. The project adopts a multi-method research design involving Qualitative Comparative Analysis at the cross-case exploratory level, and Process Tracing as a confirmatory method for within case analysis.

GIAN MARCO LONGONI
DOES COHESION MATTER? FRAGMENTED OPPOSITION MOVEMENTS AND THE OUTCOMES OF CIVIL WARS

In the last three decades, civil wars have become more complex and intractable than in the past. One reason for this development has been the proliferation of rebel groups within the armed opposition movements involved in civil wars. Today, armed oppositions are more likely to be movements composed of loosely connected or competing rebel groups rather than cohesive, unitary blocs. Yet, despite their centrality to the dynamics of civil wars, the impact that different structural characteristics and intra-movement dynamics can have on the outcomes of civil wars has been the object of little examination. This study aims to explore the impact of the structural characteristics and intra-movement dynamics on conflict processes by assessing how and to what extent the fragmentation, internal competition, and internal power distribution of armed opposition movements have an impact on the outcomes of civil wars.

Through a nested analysis consisting of a multinominal logistic regression analysis of the civil wars that occurred between 1946 and 2017 and a structured comparison of two case studies, this research will demonstrate whether these variables can be considered, as much as those already identified by the existing research, significant predictors of the outcomes of civil wars.

The expected findings will contribute to disentangling the complexity of civil wars by providing indications, important for academia and policy alike, about how they are more likely to terminate when the involved armed opposition movements are fragmented and bedevilled by internal competition.
JEAN PAUL MOINET
THE DUTY OF NON-RECOGNITION OF UNLAWFUL TERRITORIAL SITUATIONS IN INTERNATIONAL LAW: RECONCILING INTERNATIONAL LEGALITY AND POLITICAL REALITY

It is widely held that international law mandates that States have an obligation not to recognize as lawful a territorial situation created by a serious breach of a jus cogens norm. This obligation is generally considered by legal scholars as a well-established rule of customary international law. However, a significant chasm exists between scholarship and State practice. Moreover, the latter is inconsistent and, consequently, does not provide an adequate basis for answering satisfactorily a series of questions, such as what is the legal basis of the obligation and what is its precise content. These two aspects bring into question the normative force of the duty of non-recognition or, at least, its customary nature. Moreover, the prevailing view in the scholarship consists of a particularly rigid understanding of this obligation and this understanding seems incompatible with the actual political reality.

It follows that the aim of the present study is twofold since it is to critically assess both the normative force of the duty of non-recognition and its responsiveness to the political reality. In order to achieve this aim, this study will consist of an analysis of the relevant State practice and opinio juris, i.e., the constitutive elements of customary international law. More specifically, I will resort to a restrictive approach to the study of these elements since this is the approach which can minimize some of the problems related in general to the study of a customary international law and, more specifically, to this field of international law.

MATTIA ZEBA
LANGUAGE RIGHTS FOR NEW MINORITIES: AN INCLUSIVE PERSPECTIVE ON LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY IN EUROPE

The increasing weight of immigration as a socio-political issue has yet to be matched (at least with similar intensity and prominence) by the legal discourse on language rights for ‘new minorities’. This project aims therefore to explore how a context of cultural autonomy, such as that conceived and implemented for ‘old minorities’, may be adapted and transferred to immigrant groups. By adopting a comparative and inclusive approach to language rights, the project will create a set of legal references drawn from existing systems of protection of ‘old minorities’ in Europe and adapt these practical solutions to the characteristics of the new multinational and multilingual context created by international migratory flows.

The project builds upon two 'structural choices', that is, restricting the scope of analysis to Europe and focusing on local and national language rights provisions. Each of these minority language right regimes will be chosen according to its geo-linguistic features: linguistic islands (Basques, Sami), linguistic peninsulas (South-Tyrolean, Russian-speakers in the Baltic States), and linguistic archipelagos (linguistic minorities of Vojvodina, Serbian National Councils of National Minorities). Language right provisions will be analysed on the basis of some 'functional aspects of language protection', which constitute the basic steps by which a language can become official in a given territory (recognition), taught in school (education), and used by local or national institutions (public use). The main challenge is to go beyond territoriality, personality, and given minority labels to recognise the dynamism of such concepts, which have too often been formulated as static categories.