

EWIS 2020 Call for Papers

Thinking outside the box about the inside of the (black) box – second image reconsidered

Workshop convenors:

Dr Magdalena Kozub-Karkut, Jagiellonian University (magdalena.kozub@uj.edu.pl)

Dr Mateusz Filary-Szczepanik, Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow (m.z.filary@gmail.com)

Workshop Summary:

The aim of the workshop is to bring together scholars interested in the state actor as a major focus of their International Relations theories research. The unfortunate metaphor of the state as a black box or a billiard ball is quite common in the discourse of our discipline. It is used as a scornful label by scholars displeased with the traditional neorealist approach to defining state as a like unit or as an easy way of glancing through the subject of the state and getting on to the serious problems of international political system operation by said neorealists. There are though, more and more voices in the discipline calling for unpacking the black box – neoliberals with their democratic peace thesis (Doyle 1983, 1986), neofunctionalists (Moravcsik: 1997), FPA approaches and more recent neoclassical realist (Wohlforth 1993; Zakaria 1998, Lobell et al. 2009; Ripsman et al. 2016) and critical theory voices (Keyman 1997; Shani 2008), to name a few. Our goal is to bring these voices together and reflect upon their usefulness and theoretical significance. We see our workshop as a space for numerous possible subjects of submitted papers – historical, demystifying the state as an object of theorizing in the discipline much richer than the proverbial black box; critical – pointing to various socio-politico-linguistic processes that shape the language and social practice of state operation in world politics; foreign policy oriented – either inspired by traditional FPA or more recent neoclassical realist thinking. The common denominator of the papers we would like to see presented during the workshop is their theoretical background and grounding. We want to encourage papers that either test or otherwise engage the theoretical approaches to the state by means of empirical research, papers that try to present the original theorizing about the role of the state in world politics, papers that challenge the current theoretical wisdom about it or, last but not least, papers that provide new and unconventional reading thereof. Since this is our main goal, we welcome all possible contributions provided that the methods they use are sound and well thought over no matter their paradigmatic provenience – we believe after Feyerabend (1975) that “anything goes” as long as this helps to bring forth creative scholarship and not a lazy intellectual work. In this spirit, we want to connect to the growing movement in the discipline that argues for more open and pluralist global IR – where scholars can discuss freely their ideas not constrained by tribal thinking of warring scientific paradigms.

Under this broader objective, we propose the following questions as indicative of the sort of topics that we would like papers to address:

- What is the significance of the state as a unit/ level of analysis in disciplinary discourse of IR?
- What is the role of the individual as a level of analysis in IR?
- What is the significance of states' societies in the process of preferences' configuration?
- How is the state (as a concept) employed in particular empirical research within IR?
- How does the state structure the political community as a response to international stimuli?
- How does the state react to the international system stimuli and how does it learn how to deal with the systemic pressures?
- How to use different theoretical approaches (mixing, synthesis, analytical eclecticism) in order to better explain/understand international phenomena?
- From meta-theoretical perspective – does anthropomorphization of the state tells us something about its nature or is it just a linguistic phenomena?