

## Realism x Ukraine — in-between Reality and Paradigm

Conveyor:

Dr Mateusz Filary-Szczepanik (mateusz.filary@ignatianum.edu.pl)

The start of full-scale Russo-Ukrainian war was a shock. The public opinion in the West was shocked by the fall of European security architecture and Russian atrocities and war crimes. The intelligence community was shocked that the brave Ukrainians were able to repel the initial Russian push for Kyiv and foil Putin's plans for the subjugation of Ukraine in three days (Cohen, O'Brien 2024). The "only person" who was not shocked was John Mearsheimer (2014, 2022), a prominent U.S. offensive realist who put the blame for war squarely on the West and NATO's eastward expansion. His rationalisation and justification for the Russian aggression still was somewhat shocking for the Western IR community, although his views were mostly repudiated (see for example the essays on the causes of the war in Brands 2024). For the IR and security studies community in CEE, the return of Russian imperialism was not that much of a surprise (Żurawski vel Grajewski 2016) though, even if their warnings were falling on deaf ears of many of their Western colleagues.

The aims of the Workshop:

- 1) to focus on the Russo-Ukrainian War as a case study relevant for realist tradition in IR and its future relevance as a paradigm in this discipline.
- 2) to scrutinise with realist-inspired research various aspects of foreign policies of the states involved in the conflict — both its main protagonists and the cast of supporting characters.
- 3) to challenge the realist paradigm with the relevant knowledge developed in other traditions of IR relating to the conflict and its contexts.

The proposed contributions to the workshop should relate to the following questions and themes:

- 1) Is realism an adequate tradition of political thinking or social scientific paradigm to facilitate understanding or explaining the conflict between Russia and Ukraine?
- 2) What realist insight could be helpful for understanding the foreign policy of states directly and indirectly involved in the conflict?
- 3) What realist thinking has to say about the in-between of the old US-centric world order and the emerging new one?
- 4) Is there a difference between the European, U.S. and global strands of realist thinking — how the Russo-Ukrainian war, as an object of study, could flesh out these possible differences?
- 5) What new insights into the conflict can be provided using approaches and theories other than realism — how do they challenge the traditional realist wisdom and resonate with it?

The core participants of the workshop are emergent scholars orienting themselves around the realist tradition understood inclusively. Hence the participants who chose the workshop based on this call for papers can count on first-class feedback. This is important for early career researchers, who are especially encouraged to submit their proposals — both to help them grow and to give platform for their fresh insights on the age-old questions of war and peace!