HTTPS://EISA-NET.ORG/EVENT/EXPLORATORY-SYMPOSIA-IN-RAPALLO-2025/

12TH EXPLORATORY SYMPOSIA RAPALLO

26TH–29TH OCTOBER 2025

EXCELSIOR PALACE HOTEL
VIA SAN MICHELE DI PAGANA 8
16035 RAPALLO, ITALY

European International Studies Association

Content

2 Venue

2 When do we need to arrive in Rapallo?

2 How do we get to Rapallo?

3 Programme Schedule

4 SYMPOSIA

4 International Politics of the Far Right

6 Patron-Client Relations in Global Governance: Advancing the Research Agenda

8 Resilience, complexity and relationality. A comparative analysis of resilience policies, practices and narratives in China and Europe

9 The Colours of Intervention: Security Zones, Colours Codes and Everyday Life

11 The meaning of borders in a (post) liberal EU

13 The Politicisation of World Politics

VENUE

Excelsior Palace Hotel
Via San Michele di Pagana 8
16035 Rapallo, Italy

There is no specific working space assigned. The working groups gather in various common areas.

WHEN DO WE NEED TO ARRIVE IN RAPALLO?

Participants will be expected to arrive in Rapallo on the afternoon of 26th October in time for the opening dinner (at 8PM). They will be expected to depart in the afternoon 29th October. The symposia are self-organized: each symposium determines its own schedule while paying due attention to the timing of coffee breaks.

HOW DO WE GET TO RAPALLO?

The EISA Symposia will be held at the Excelsior Palace Hotel (http://www.excelsiorpalace.it/en/) which is walking distance (one km) from Rapallo Train station. The closest airport is “Cristoforo Colombo” Genova International Airport (32 km from the hotel).

The easiest and most cost-effective way to reach the Excelsior is to take a shuttle bus between the airport and one of the Genova train stations, Principe or Brignole, see: http://www.airport.genova.it/en/transportation-airport/. This should take around 30 minutes.

You will then need to take a train from Genova Principe or Brignole to Rapallo (it takes between 30 and 60 minutes depending on which station you travel from). For further info on train schedules see: https://www.trainline.eu/train-times/genoa-to-rapallo.

Another possibility is to arrive at Milan airport. There are direct trains to Rapallo from Milan Central Station.

CLICK HERE FOR MORE FAQ

#EISARapallo25

PROGRAMME SCHEDULE

26 OCTOBER

- Arrival of participants in the afternoon
- 8 PM Welcome dinner at the hotel restaurant (included in the registration fee)

27 OCTOBER

- 7:00–10:30 Breakfast
- Morning: Panels
- 1:00–2:30 PM Lunch (not included in the conference fee)
- Afternoon: Panels
- 4:30 PM Coffee break

28 OCTOBER

- 7:00–10:30 Breakfast
- Morning: Panels
- 1:00–2:30 PM Lunch (not included in the conference fee)
- Afternoon: Panels
- 4:30 PM Coffee break
- 8:30 PM final dinner in town (not included in the conference fee)

29 OCTOBER

- 7:00–10:30 Breakfast
- Departures

SYMPOSIA

Participants:

Lisbeth Zimmermann (Convenor),
Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany
Raffaele Mastrorocco (Convenor),
EUI Florence, Italy
María José Urzua Valverde,
ITAM, Mexico
Alexandros Tokhi,
Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany
Nina Hall,
Johns Hopkins University SAIS, Italy

ES2025-1

International Politics of the Far Right

Description:

The forum is currently under discussion with *International Studies Review*. The group would gather in Rapallo to work together on the revisions received and ensure coherence across the contributions and explore together further steps and inquire the potential to expand the idea of the forum into a special issue or a book. The group will take the chance to discuss organizing panels or workshops together in frameworks such as EISA 2026 and EWIS 2026.

In Rapallo, the group will work together on a forum on the "International Politics and the Far Right" with the aim to develop a research agenda on the topic. The research agenda builds on previous conversations among the symposium participants highlighting the short falls of the current IR scholarship, which often discusses the crisis of international order under the header of "populism" (Wajner, Destradi, and Zürn 2024). In the forum contribution, we argue that this scholarship has created important insights into shifts in international politics by identifying attitudes and rhetorical tools of populists. However, we still miss a more systematic assessment of the origins and implications of the current global shifts. This is because the existing studies assume that populism is a driving force in international politics but diverge their findings on populist preferences and effects. Existing scholarship has been unable to explore the international coalitions and networks populists set up. The forum makes the case that a focus on the ideological dimension of these actors is better suited to explain issues. The forum contributes to existing IR scholarship also by including diverse perspectives in terms of theoretical, empirical, and methodological approaches.

Each contribution of the forum discusses diverse aspects of exploring the far right in international politics. In a brief introductory section (Lisbeth Zimmermann and Raffaele Mastrorocco), we argue that a focus on the international politics of the far right contributes to the current research agenda on populism in international relations. This helps move beyond the populist "people vs. elites" divide and the role of populist leadership

to explore far-right challenges, networks, preferences variation, and their effects on international institutions. A second part (Maria José Urzua Valverde) discusses the network-building and contestation strategies of by conservative-religious groups on gender and reproductive rights in the context of the Organization of American States (OAS). These strategies fit a mode of contestation that is institutional, networked, and sustained over time, rather than tied to populist leadership or electoral cycles. This part contributes to a broader understanding of how international norms are challenged and reconfigured from within, particularly in regional contexts beyond the Global North. A fourth part (Alexandros Tokhi and Lisbeth Zimmermann) discusses the effects of the far right on international institutions. The authors argue that far-right parties in governments exert pressures on international institutions on issues they often prioritize, such as migration, through voluntary funding cuts. This contribution highlights that far-right parties' effects on IOs vary according to the type of mandate and the extent to which it enshrines liberal purposes, while also pointing at the IOs' varying levels of adaptation. A fifth part (Raffaele Mastrorocco and Nina Hall) contributes to the forum by pointing at the variation across forums and policy domains of the far right. It argues that far-right parties in government present a challenge from within IOs as they seek to reshape norms, rules, and policies, but that these challenges are not the same everywhere. Far-right effects vary across forums and issue areas, which the piece discusses by looking at issue areas often targeted by far-right politicians, such as environmental and security policies. In this way, it urges IR scholarship to focus beyond what these politicians say and pay attention to the more subtle ways through which they aim at influencing international institutions.

To conclude, the symposium in Rapallo will enable the group to work together, discuss each other's' contributions to write a coherent forum, and explore future projects on the topic of the far right and international politics. The output of the symposium will take the form of a forum in a high-ranked peer-reviewed journal which aims to contribute to existing IR scholarship and open venues for future research on the subject.

Participants:

Rafael Biermann (Convenor),
Friedrich Schiller University Jena,
Germany

Ivica Petrikova (Convenor),
Royal Holloway,
University of London,
United Kingdom

Nicolò Fasola,
University of Bologna,
Italy

Clara della Valle,
University of Bologna,
Italy

Sebastian Hoppe,
Friedrich Schiller University Jena,
Germany

ES2025-2

Patron-Client Relations in Global Governance: Advancing the Research Agenda

Description:

Patron-Client Relations (PCRs) have long served as a conceptual framework for understanding hierarchical and asymmetric relationships in international politics. Originally developed in anthropology and comparative politics to describe personalised, reciprocal, and often informal ties between individual actors, the concept was later adopted by International Relations (IR) scholars—particularly during the Cold War—to analyse the strategic dependencies forged between superpowers and their allies. Classic examples include the United States' patronage of South Korea and the Soviet Union's support for Cuba, where PCRs were instrumental in shaping global alignments and managing indirect confrontations.

Despite its early prominence, the PCR framework gradually fell out of favour in IR scholarship with the end of the Cold War and the rise of alternative paradigms. However, recent years have witnessed a resurgence of interest in PCRs, driven by the return of great power competition, the proliferation of non-state actors, and the increasing complexity of global governance. Scholars have begun to revisit PCRs in contexts ranging from proxy warfare and development aid to migration and international finance. Yet, much of this literature remains fragmented, often relying on loosely defined uses of the term 'patronage' and lacking a systematic theoretical foundation.

Our research collective has sought to address this gap by re-theorising PCRs for the contemporary era. In a forthcoming edited volume, we develop a comprehensive conceptual framework that captures the nature of patronage in world politics. We expand the analytical scope beyond state-to-state relations to include non-state patrons and clients, multi-layered networks, and diverse policy domains. Our approach emphasises the relational dynamics of PCRs—highlighting the agency of clients, the strategic calculations of patrons, and the mutual dependencies that sustain these ties over time. Our volume will be finalised by the end of this year and published in 2026 with an international university press.

Building on this foundation, our proposed session at the Rapallo Symposium aims to consolidate and extend our research agenda through four interrelated activities: (1) reviewing critical book chapters of our edited volume that still need improving; (2) planning for a special issue in a top-tier academic journal, moving from some of the most innovative

book chapters of our volume; (3) preparing another special issue on ‘Russia’s patronage network in Europe’ where Rafael Biermann has, as part of a European consortium, already successfully passed the first hurdle for funding; and (4) drafting a grant proposal to further engage with the conceptual and empirical aspects of PCRs in world politics. Thus, this next phase of our work will not only enhance the scholarly impact of our findings but also lay the groundwork for future research on the enduring and evolving significance of patron-client dynamics in global politics.

Participants:

Maria Julia Trombetta (Convenor),
University of Nottingham Ningbo, China

Emilian Kavalski (Convenor),
Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland

David Chandler,
University of Westminster, London, United Kingdom

Elena Korosteleva,
Warwick University, United Kingdom

Maximilian Mayer,
Bonn University, Germany

ES2025-3

Resilience, complexity and relationality. A comparative analysis of resilience policies, practices and narratives in China and Europe

Description:

The proposed symposium will discuss how resilience, as a security mechanism, has been implemented and operationalized in different contexts. It analyses discourses, policies and practices in the Chinese context providing a comparative analysis with Europe. It is part of an exploratory, interdisciplinary project that brings together security studies scholars, experts in public policy and water management, psychologists and international communication experts, who gathered at the University of Nottingham Ningbo China at the end of April 2025 for the workshop: “Securing resilient futures: Policies, Narratives and Practices in China and Europe”. The workshop demonstrated the interest for the topic and the importance of a comparative interdisciplinary perspective but also the need to focus on disciplinary clusters to move the debate forward and publish the results. The proposed symposium in Rapallo, with IR experts will build such a cluster to discuss the conceptual challenges involved in translating and implementing the concept of resilience in different contexts with reference to relationality, complexity and the limits of neoliberal approaches. The intent is to work on the proposal for of a special issue, and on the theoretical part of an edited volume considering resilience in a relational context with case studies covering: 1) “early warning for all” as part of the Belt and Road Initiative; 2) The use of the term resilience at the UN Security Council and 3) resilience and critical infrastructure protection in China and in Europe.

Participants:

Nicolas Lemay-Hébert (Convenor),
Australian National University
Ari Jerrems (Convenor),
University of Western Australia
Jonathan Fisher,
University of Birmingham, United Kingdom
Marsha Henry,
Queen's University Belfast, United Kingdom
Florian Weigand,
London School of Economics, United Kingdom

ES2025-4

The Colours of Intervention: Security Zones, Colours Codes and Everyday Life

Description:

Security zones—and the security regulations that come with them—are an integral part of all interventions, shaping local, everyday life both for the host population and for international expatriates. The regulations attached to security zoning, designed to protect expatriates from security threats on the ground, are increasingly codified and have been progressively associated with color-codes. This is true for security risk assessment in travel advice provided by specific governments—the US Department of State, for example, uses different color-codes from blue to red to indicate potential risk to travel—as well as for terror advisory system such as Australia's National Terrorism Threat Advisory System or the UK Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office's Travel Advice system (both green to red).

Color-coded security mapping is also used in peacekeeping practices or other forms of security interventions across the globe. The United Nations has increasingly used color codes to map cities where peacekeepers operate, using different colors to convey specific messages about what constitutes a 'secure'—or 'insecure'—space. These range from 'restricted areas' (yellow, orange) to 'no-go zones' and from 'areas of instability' (red) to 'preferred areas' (blue or green).

Many UN missions use security maps to define which areas are considered to be secure and which are considered to be off-bounds for their own personnel. These zones acquire—or are given—specific colors to denote certain risks in, or the particularities of, the areas. Color-coding has been used—and continued to be used—in many different UN interventions, including in Afghanistan and Iraq ('green zones' as secure zones for the government and the international community and adjacent 'red zones'); in Somalia ('green zone' or 'white zone'—also known as Halane—seen as a secure zone for the government and the international community); in South Sudan and Kenya ('blue zones' as a location approved by UN security authorities for staff to reside); in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo ('red zones' or areas or unrest); and in Haiti ('yellow zone' and 'red zone' as restricted areas for international personnel and 'green zone' as the preferred area of stay for international workers). Using colors for security risk assessment also adds a very specific and emotive dimension to security mapping, reflecting specific color symbolisms and 'imprinting' these on cities

and spaces, embedding a range of practices, responses, and assumptions into the everyday lives of both international and host populations.

This symposium aims to answer two sets of questions:

1) How—and why—does the United Nations map security risks? What logic of securitization does security mapping serve? How is the specific process of mapping conducted by the UN? Which security information/threat is privileged, and why? To what extent are gendered experiences of (in)security considered within this? How is this security information translated into specific colour codes? What are the meanings of these colour codes for the UN and do these meanings vary from mission to mission? How is the UN managing new security information, and changing its mapping practices in light of changing local security environments? How is the UN using maps in security training for its own personnel?
2) How do security maps structure the everyday lives of local populations? How do security maps impact and shape peacebuilding processes on the ground, and to what extent is this impact felt differently by men and women? How do local actors in host countries of peace missions perceive and react to these maps? How do they react to living in areas with a specific colour code attached to it? How are security maps contributing to shape the political geographies of cities hosting peacekeeping missions? What are the temporal implications of such mapping?

Participants:

Michela Ceccorulli (Convenor),
University of Bologna,
Italy

Thomas Christiansen,
Luiss University, Rome,
Italy

Elisabeth Johansson-Nogués,
Institut Barcelona d'Estudis
Internacionals, Barcelona,
Spain

Bahar Rumelili,
Koç University, Istanbul,
Turkey

Sonia Lucarelli,
University of Bologna,
Italy

ES2025-5

The meaning of borders in a (post) liberal EU

Description:

That borders have represented and still are key signifiers for political communities is broadly acknowledged: from the physical manifestation of territoriality to the definition of a homeland and of one's own identity, 'drawing lines' seems to be quite a vital and tireless activity. Yet, the overcoming of borders seems to characterize international dynamics too, from globalization, coordination and integration processes at large, to the development of elements of a cosmopolitan identity. As academics have remarked, borders assume different roles, incarnate different appearances and crucially affect who faces them, for good or worse. Borders can be hard (walls, fences, surveillance systems, agencies, operations, etc) or soft (socially constructed boundaries having to do with processes of self-identification or othering). In the broadest sense, borders can simultaneously open/close, filter/select, include/exclude, performing their function differently in different issue areas. The project here aims to shed light on these issues with a specific focus on the European Union (EU). As borders are signifiers, we wonder what these 'tools' mean for the EU today. This central interrogation does not rest in a vacuum but is instead pinned, crossed and confronted with the 'liberal' tenets the EU embodies, politically, economically and normatively.

Recent events, such as Russia's aggression against Ukraine, Trump's trade challenge, overall disregard of international law by many actors but also renewed fascination with geopolitics have revived the undying relevance of assessing how (pretended) liberal communities in the homeland of liberal democracy—the EU—conceive and use borders. Ultimately, this is key to figuring out how this affects and perhaps re-shapes EU's ontology, as well as to gauge potential frictions (or lack thereof) with its liberal nature.

This project puts together scholars with different profiles and theoretical leanings, and crucially engages them in a joint debate on the meaning, practices and implications of borders and their use for the EU as a liberal polity. The unsolved puzzle between borders and the peculiar shade of liberalism embodied by the EU is discussed in the introductory contribution by Ceccorulli and Lucarelli, which digs in the relation between borders and liberalism in the EU in different dimension. Starting the debate, this article paves the way for a variegated analysis offered by following contributions, each considering a specific aspect/dimension of the use of borders by the EU. Looking at the integration process and its development

(Christiansen), at the relation with its Eastern neighbourhood and potential ontological challenges (Johansson-Nogués), and at the contentious frontier with Turkey and the retreat from key liberal responsibilities on migrants' protection (Karadağ) the project brings to the table burning dilemmas facing the EU. It offers a valuable conceptual and empirical reflection questioning the basics of the EU as a peculiar political community and wonders about different potential versions of the EU and its implications.

Relevant questions originate from crucial reflections on:

- To what extent can borders be landmarks of liberal communities such as the EU?
- What is the responsibility of a liberal political community with respect to a plurality of subjects, internal and external to the EU? How does that translate in terms of borders?
- How does geopolitics relate to borders and how that relation impact the EU and its liberal credentials?
- What happens when liberalism doesn't provide rights and when it instead produces illiberalism?
- What/Who is likely to challenge the bordering processes of the EU? Which could be the sources of contestation or transformation (of which liberal polities are inherently capable of)?

While these dense questions can't find proper and exhaustive answers in the space of a single project, this collective work inserts into a broader debate on the EU and its direction, which is today ever more relevant.

Participants:

Sandra Destradi (Covenor),
University of Freiburg,
Germany

Falk Ostermann(Covenor),
Kiel University,
Germany

David Cadier,
Institute of Strategic Research (IRSEM), Paris,
France

Angelos Chryssogelos,
London Metropolitan University,
United Kingdom

Benjamin Martill,
University of Edinburgh,
United Kingdom

Sibel Oktay,
American University's School of International Service,
Washington, DC, USA

ES2025-6

The Politicisation of World Politics

Description:

All over the world, foreign policy issues are being subjected to increasing levels of politicization compared to previous decades—from the partisan contestation of Western responses to the Ukraine war and 'de-risking' from China, to the heated domestic political mobilization against Pakistan in India and growing contestation of Mercosur in Brazil and Argentina. While politicisation has always existed in world politics, there is not only greater incidence of politicisation in the contemporary world, but it is also of a qualitatively diKerent character: It is occurring in countries and regions notable previously for its absence and across a broader range of issue-areas and policy domains, from security to global health, from trade to migration, and from weapons procurement to climate change.

Politicisation dynamics can be fuelled and driven both by opposition forces and by power incumbents and can unfold at the individual, national, or supranational level (Zürn 2019). Like its forms, the sources of politicisation are diverse, and they have been addressed by a wave of recent research. Populist actors have often sought to politicise foreign policy issues to mobilise their base, to diKerentiate themselves from their predecessors or adversaries, to reinforce national identity, and to conjure helpful external enemies (e.g. Cadier 2024; Destradi et al. 2021; Hintz 2016). Politicisation also reflects the 'blowback' against the depoliticised liberal order of the 1990s, with the emergence of non-liberal power centres (Brosig 2024), new dynamics of contestation mapping onto 'winners' and 'losers' from globalization (Trubowitz and Burgoon 2022) and increasing concerns about the legitimacy of international organizations (Chryssogelos 2019). It is also shaped by the rise of a multipolar order which facilitates more complex dynamics and alliances withinand- between states and sub-state movements (Hofmann and Martill 2021).

While much research has been conducted on the sources of politicisation, the eKects of contemporary politicisation of foreign policy and its mechanisms remain comparatively under-studied. Yet several novel and under-theorised challenges follow from contemporary politicisation. First, politicisation breeds considerable uncertainty and generates commitment problems, eroding long-established foreign policy positions, relationships, and principles. This makes it more diKicult to sustain cooperation among states. Second, politicisation opens up new and unexpected pathways for forging new

alliances and coalitions. As politicisation increasingly blurs the lines between domestic and foreign policy, it opens foreign policy up to 'strange bedfellows' relationships and prompts dynamics of diversification in states' external relations. Third, and conversely, politicisation helps structure choices along partisan lines, including foreign policy, which can stabilise expectations among both citizens and external actors.

The proposed Rapallo Symposium aims to advance this theorization and lays the ground for the empirical investigation of these mechanisms and eKects. We will investigate the sources of politicisation alongside the eKects which these have foreign policy, on international systemic dynamics, and on domestic party systems. To do so, we will draw on our previous, complementary explorations of the link between domestic politics and 2 foreign policy, which have focused on party politics (Chryssogelos 2021, Ostermann and Wagner 2022), coalition politics (Oktay 2022), legislative cooperation and contestation (Oktay 2018), opposition politics (Cadier 2024), state-society relations, and populism (e.g., Cadier et al. 2025; Destradi et al. 2021).