Program on State, Sovereignty, and Self-Determination

LCM Seminar

Self-Determination in the early 21st Century

A Double Edged Concept

Sunday-Tuesday, April 27-29, 2014

The Liechtenstein Colloquium will address the important transformations of self-determination in the early 21st century from both theoretical and practical angles. We shall revisit historical tensions (e.g. peoplehood, territorial integrity, sovereignty, sectarianism, ethnic conflict, globalization, ICT, cultural-religious dimensions, strategic issues, secessionism, and generational dimensions) and the manner and extent to which changes since the Fall of the Berlin Wall, 1989, have reshaped these developments and engender new ones. The unification of Germany, the velvet divorce of Czechoslovakia, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, the independence of East Timor, Kosovo and South Sudan, the struggle for Sovereignty of Palestine, and the war in Georgia, represent just some examples of the role played by self-determination. The devolution of Catalonia and Scotland, as well as the Arab Spring 2011 shed new light on self-determination in our time - not to mention the most recent crisis in and around Ukraine. While self-determination thus spells both perils and promise, it is also of interest to investigate how novel structures, actors, their interests and instruments, pull and push one way or another.

This LCM colloquium represents the commencement of the interdisciplinary LISD anniversary project to evaluate the role, impact, and scope of self-determination 20 years after our first such project conducted in 1994/95. This then resulted in the volume Self-Determination of Peoples and the "Liechtenstein Draft Convention on Self-Determination through Self-Administration."
Tentative Seminar Schedule

Monday, April 28
9:00 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

Opening
Wolfgang Danspeckgruber, Founding Director
Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination at Princeton University, Chair

9:30 a.m. -11:00 a.m.
Session I. Self-determination and the End of History

Aviel Roshwald, Department of History / Georgetown University [roshwaav@georgetown.edu]
Aviel Roshwald is a Professor of History. He specializes in the comparative history of ethnic politics and nationalism in Europe and the Middle East and the history of 19th- and 20th-century European international relations.

The Daily Plebiscite as 21st-Century Reality
When, in the 1880s, Ernest Renan suggested that national identity is constituted by a daily plebiscite, he was invoking the idea in a largely metaphorical way. In the 21st century, the gap between metaphor and reality has narrowed dramatically across much of the world. Post-imperial borders once considered fixed are subject to challenge and change in light of shifting pressures of popular opinion as mobilized and manipulated by rival regimes and movements (Eritrea, South Sudan, Kosovo, South Ossetia, Crimea). Elected governments (from Thailand to Egypt to Ukraine) are challenged and sometimes ousted by orchestrated protests whose leaders claim ultimate democratic legitimacy by virtue of their ability to bring their supporters out on the street. Pan-Islamist movements link Internet chat-rooms to tribal territories in networks of socio-political and armed opposition to the very idea of the nation-state. At the same time, Web-based Islamist activists claim a self-appointed authority to reinterpret Sharia law in defiance of traditional institutions and hierarchies of religious jurisprudence. Ever since the American and French revolutions, global history has been shaped in part by the tension between the uneven distribution (both within and across societies) of economic, military and political power on the one hand, and the formally egalitarian concepts of democracy, popular sovereignty and self-determination on the other. Events of the last few years suggest that this systemic crisis is taking on new forms in the age of instant communication and of popular backlashes against globalization. My remarks will invite discussion of some aspects of this crisis.

Uriel Abulof, LISD / Princeton University [uabulof@princeton.edu]
Uriel Abulof is an assistant professor of politics at Tel-Aviv University and an LISD visiting senior research fellow at Princeton University’s Woodrow Wilson School.

We the Peoples? The Taming of Self-Determination
The self-determination of peoples is a universal legitimating principle of the international system; it justifies the system’s very existence. Yet extensive corpus linguistics reveals a puzzling decline in the public discourse on self-determination over the last fifty years. I identify four plausible explanations for this decline: lexical change, silent hegemony, reactive rhetoric, and mission accomplished. I examine each account against both quantitative and qualitative evidence, and argue that together they provide a sound multi-causal complex. Still, there remains a missing piece: the taming of self-determination. Powerful and persuasive agents—state politicians, diplomats, and academics—have sought to master and mellow self-determination, turning the concept from a source of threat into a resource for containing it, notably through the liberal taming of its precarious meaning as revisionist ethnonationalism. The taming of self-determination has undermined its discourse and practice, but has not terminated it, and seems increasingly unsustainable.

Oded Haklai, Political Studies / Queen's University [haklai@queensu.ca]
Oded Haklai is an associate professor of politics at Queen's University; his research addresses politics of nationalism and ethnicity, majority-minority relations, Middle East politics, politics of Israel, Palestinian-Israeli relations, democratization and ethnicity

Self-Determination in the Post-State Formation Era: New Directions for an International Order Principle in the 21st century
Three large waves of state formation have taken place in the Twentieth Century, all of which were premised on the principle of national self-determination. The first followed WWI and the collapse of several losing empires (largely influenced by President Woodrow Wilson’s famous 14 points). The second was in the two decades that followed WWII, which saw the scaling back of European colonial empires. This wave followed the enshrinement of the right to national self-determination in the UN Charter. The third wave came about in Eurasia, following the collapse of the Soviet Empire. Thus, all three major waves came about as a result of imperial collapse, which allowed indigenous national groups to claim a right to national self-determination in the territories from which the collapsing empires withdrew.
As we enter the Twenty First century, the setting is quite different. The world is no longer dominated by empires controlling vast territories, and it is difficult to see where a new wave of state formation might take place. Rather, claims to national self-determination are more likely to come from ethnonational minorities within existing states, thus putting into conflict claims to right to national self-determination against counter claims of existing states to rights to territorial integrity.
11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Session II. The Dangers of Self-Determination

**Amitai Etzioni**, International Affairs / George Washington University
[etzioni@gwu.edu]
University Professor and Professor of International Affairs; Director, Institute for Communitarian Policy Studies

*The Evils of Self-determination*

Self determination was, for almost 200 years, an important liberal principle. It provide a major rationale for bringing self government, liberal democracy, to people who were previously subjugated by others. (True some of these "people" were constructed, but surely their voices were not heard before they gained self determination). Self determination is still sometimes employed in this way, e.g. in Tibet. However, when people break away from a liberal democracy and establish a less liberal regime--self determination is used to justify subjugation! This is now rather common. E.g, in the Crimea. More cases to be presented.

**Mark R. Beissinger**, Politics / Princeton University [mbeissin@princeton.edu]
Henry W. Putnam Professor of Politics, Princeton University
Director, Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies (PIIRS)

*Self-Determination as Pretext for Imperialism: The Russian Experience*

Self-determination is widely understood as an anti-imperial norm that has been responsible in part for the global breakup of colonial empires. But at least in one region of the world—Eurasia—over the last century, self-determination norms have been utilized as easily to justify Great Power territorial expansion as they have been to challenge imperial control. In these comments, I will examine the ways in which self-determination norms have been wielded by Russia to justify overriding sovereignty norms, challenging the territorial integrity of weaker states and rationalizing an expansion of Russian power and influence—at times despite opposition by a majority of inhabitants of the affected areas, the conflicting self-determination claims of indigenous populations, massive Russian settler colonization, or the opinions of the international community. While rooting these behaviors in the communist tradition to self-determination stretching back to the Russian Revolution, I will pay particular attention to the ways in which self-determination norms have recently been utilized by Russia to expand its power and control in the contemporary Caucasus and Ukraine.

**Bernard Yack**, Politics / Brandeis University [yack@brandeis.edu]
Lerman Neubauer Professor of Democracy and Public Policy
Is there any useful role for the invocation of rights in dealing with issues of collective self-determination? Bitter 20th century experience with the assertion of a general right to national self-determination suggests that such rights can promote as much conflict as they resolve. Yet international organizations and leading trends in contemporary political theory continue to encourage their use. Is there a better, more limited way of applying the concept of rights to issues of collective self-determination? If not, are there better, less destructive ways of talking about the appropriateness of claims we make about the shape of populations and territories?

Monday
2:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Session III. Self-Determination and the Politics of Identity

Mikulas Fabry, International Affairs / Georgia Institute of Technology [mikulas.fabry@inta.gatech.edu]
Assistant Professor, School of International Affairs. His research focuses on ethics, international affairs, international security, and nationalism

The Right to Self-determination as a Claim to Independence in International Relations Practice
This presentation will examine the international practice of the right to external self-determination. It will argue that the dominant pattern set during decolonization is still with us: international society, as a whole, is reluctant to endorse unilateral self-determination claims in non-colonial contexts. This includes claims that were generated indigenously as well as those that have arisen following coercive intervention by a third party.

Outi Keranen, Political Science / University College London [outi.keranen@ucl.ac.uk]
Teaching Fellow in International Political Economy and International Relations. Outi’s research interests are in conflict and peace in international relations. Her primary research focuses on statebuilding in post-conflict and fragile regions.

Legitimizing Self-Determination in the Case of Sub-State National Groups: An Analysis of Kurdish Groups and Bosnian Serbs
International recognition of self-determination as a principle that protects and maintains cultural identity and political freedom has practically become an international norm. This is evident especially in the last 20 years from cases such as parts of Eastern Europe as well as nationalist and secessionist or autonomist minority groups in modern states such as the Kurds, Basques, Catalans, Bosnians Kosovars and Serbs (Fabry, 2010). Many of these groups demand cultural and political rights, autonomy or independence claiming their dissatisfaction about their political status in the country in which they reside. The meaning sub-state nationalist groups attribute to self-determination is linked to a
specific international normative context defined by the norms of democracy, human rights for groups with distinct cultural, linguistic and ethnic characteristics and international law. This normative context appears to legitimate the political and cultural demands groups who claim to have distinct identity. The central premise of this paper is that the liberal international normative framework enables sub-national groups to make demands for self-determination. Yet, these claims are grounded in distinctly primordial notions of identity which sit uncomfortably with the cosmopolitan ethos of the current international normative framework. This paper will provide a comparative analysis of two cases, Bosnian Serbs and Iraqi Kurds in order to illustrate this argument.

Elise Giuliano, International Relations and Comparative Politics / Columbia University [eg599@columbia.edu]  
Lecturer in Political Science, focusing on International relations and foreign policy, ethnic nationalism in Russia, Islamic identity and political mobilization in Russia

Ethnic group claims and ethnic conflict: What can we learn from cases of stalled and failed self-determination?  
Approximately twenty five years have passed since movements for self-determination proliferated throughout the former Soviet space. In the present, Russia is annexing Crimea—and possibly other Ukrainian regions—in the name of self-determination for oppressed Russians. These events provide a useful vantage point in thinking about the origins of movements for self-determination. Why do some movements for self-determination appear to be the inevitable expression of a minority group’s desires and interests, whereas other movements seem like the futile pet project of a few self-deluded leaders? Why do some people in multi-ethnic societies come to think of themselves as distinct political communities that deserve political autonomy or statehood? There was a time, before the wars in Chechnya, when many Chechens who identified strongly as Chechens did not support self-determination. And there are many ethnic republics in Russia in which ethnic populations failed to support political entrepreneurs calling for national self-determination during the transition from Soviet rule. Similarly, Ukraine’s multi-ethnic population avoided ethnic polarization and ethnic conflict—and war over Crimea—in the early to mid-1990s.

I propose to discuss the process by which ethnic communities in multi-ethnic societies come to think of themselves as a nation, distinct from other people in their society. Who engages in the project of hardening ethnic boundaries and what kinds of claims do they articulate? Why do some claims resonate with ordinary people more than others? What kinds of counter-claims undermine the political goal of hardening ethnic group boundaries? What role, if any, do external actors (media, international NGOs) play in the politicization of ethnic group claims?

Ilan Peleg, Government & Law / Lafayette College [pelegi@lafayette.edu]
Self-determination and majority-minority relations in deeply divided societies: a comparative analytical framework

This paper will deal with the inherent tension between several forces in the contemporary world, tension that is present especially and acutely in “deeply divided societies”. By definition, in such societies there are several collective identities that reside in the very same political space despite their substantive and often substantial mutual antagonism. The central question of this research is whether one can design a coherent constitutional order that will respond to the rights of self determination of both the majority and the minority, and the parameters of such order (e.g. whether it is based on individual rights or collective rights, the balance between them, their content, etc.).

The paper will present both an analytical framework that might help us in investigating these issues systematically and a series of case studies that will shed light on achieving a measure of acceptable self-determination for minorities within deeply divided societies. It will highlight the difficulty of establishing anything more than a “flawed democracy” in deeply divided societies but will identify concrete steps that could be adopted in such societies in order to significantly improved the quality of their democracy.

This is a part of a larger research project that has resulted to date in two volumes published by Cambridge University Press (2007, 2011). This project might evolve into the completion of a trilogy on this important subject.

Tuesday, April 29

9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Session IV. Self-determining the State

Benny Miller, Politics, Haifa University [bmiller@poli.haifa.ac.il]
Professor of International Relations at the School of Political Sciences, and the Head of the International MA Program in Peace and Conflict Management at the University of Haifa. He is also the President of the Israeli Association for International Studies. Miller is currently a Visiting Professor of Politics at Princeton University.

Stateness, National Self-determination and War and Peace in the 21st Century

How could we explain the variations in the level of peace, order, institutionalization and cooperation in the various regions in the 21st century? I’ll argue that the combined effect of two factors—state capacity and national congruence-- is the most important, although an additional factor can mitigate or aggravate their effects—great power intervention.

The two key factors are state capacity—the effectiveness of the functioning of state institutions; and national congruence—the extent of congruence between geo-political
boundaries and national aspirations and identities in the region (including, notably issues of national self-determination). Regions in which the states are strong and nationally coherent will tend to produce warm peace (Europe and South America). Regions in which at least some of the states are failed states – both weak and incongruent – will generate hot civil wars and trans-border violence (Africa, South Asia and the Middle East); while regions with strong states but incongruent will tend to produce a revisionist model and cold wars among strong states (East Asia and the post-Soviet). Finally, the instability prevalent in regions populated by failed states can sometimes be mitigated by the intervention of a benign hegemon and produce cold peace (the Balkans in the 1990s), but in highly fragmented regions such interventions might face a lot of problems and have some de-stabilizing effects, producing domestic and regional violence (S. Asia and the ME).

Matt Qvortrup, Management and Security / Cranfield University
[m.qvortrup@cranfield.ac.uk]
Senior Lecturer, Department of Management and Security, Cranfield Defence and Security

Referendums: Between the Rule of Law and Realpolitik
The Crimean referendum was criticized by Western powers for being 'unconstitutional'. In all likelihood it was. But the self-same governments supported equally 'unconstitutional' referendums in Bosnia, Croatia, Estonia and, indeed, in Ukraine itself in the early 1990s. Why the change? Based on a historical analysis of the more than 200 ethno-national referendums held since 1793, this paper argues that the support for and opposition to holding referendums has been a distinguishing feature of the use and abuse of the device. The use of referendums reflect the practice of 'Realpolitik' rather than the ideals of the 'Rechtsstaat'. The presentation will largely be based on Dr Qvortrup's new book Referendums and Ethnic Conflict

Karl Cordell, School of Government / Plymouth University
[K.Cordell@plymouth.ac.uk]
Professor, Plymouth School of Government (Faculty of Business). His research focuses on Ethnic Politics, The Politics of Ethnicity in East-Central Europe, German Politics, Polish Politics, German-Polish Relations

Self-Determination in the Twenty-First Century: Some Observations
Self-determination takes many forms. Given constraints of time and space, I wish to offer some observations concerning self-determination in terms of the demand by a given political movement for the creation of an independent state. I shall use South Sudan as a brief case study, because I believe that its sad experience of statehood illustrates the
problems associated with an assumption that self-determination is in itself an automatic panacea for political and wider societal problems.

Montserrat Guibernau, Politics, Queen Mary University of London
[m.guibernau@qmul.ac.uk]
Montserrat is Professor of Politics at Queen Mary University of London. She is also Senior Fellow at the Canada Blanch Centre, London School of Economics.

The consequences of democracy: On Catalonia’s self-determination
The origin of the shift from devolution to secession in Catalonia responds to the outcome of two parallel processes. First, the consolidation of democracy has enabled people to express their political aspirations without fear while regarding them as legitimate – this is new to a society that endured almost forty years of dictatorship. This also explains the novel expectations that democracy has generated among younger people educated within a newly democratic Spain.
Second, since year 2000 demands for greater devolution –never secession at the time– were largely opposed and/or ignored by the Spanish State and a centralist view, shared by both conservatives and socialists, still prevails. On reflection, the main instigator of secessionism in Catalonia has been the lack of responsiveness of the State to demands that could have been accommodated if a ‘consensual’ view of democracy had been implemented.

12:00 p.m.
Session V.: The Future of Self-Determination / Lunch Discussion

2 p.m.
Session VI: Self-determination Crises / Discussion with visiting UN Delegations

5:00 p.m.
Concluding Session – Self-Determination in Our Time
Uriel Abulof
Wolfgang Danspeckgruber

6:00 p.m.
Reception