Call for papers

From Informal to Insurgent Governance: Modes and Transformation of Social Capital in the Caucasus (and beyond)

7-8 June 2014, Tbilisi State University, Tbilisi, Georgia

A Workshop Organised by

Tbilisi State University, Faculty of Humanities
Dublin City University, Institute for International Conflict Resolution and Reconstruction
Tallinn University, Institute of Political Science and Governance
Tallinn University of Technology, Faculty of Economics and Business
European College, University of Tartu
Kimmage Development Studies Centre

In this workshop, we would like to explore non-traditional forms of stateness and governance with reference to informal practices, insurgents, de facto states, active civil society and other forms of governance in the Caucasus and in the former Soviet Union.

Rationale and possible topics

Max Weber, in his classic definition of the state, described it as ‘a human community which (successfully) claims a monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory’. However, with this expansiveness comes a lack of specificity. Weber’s ideal type of the state is silent on what the state should or should not actually do, beyond claim making.

In the US and Western Europe, the expansion in the scale of the state over the course of the first three quarters of the 20th century, and its ever expanding role in the economy and society was such that the lines between the state and civil society have often became blurred. Antonio Gramsci, for instance, saw
civil society as a zone of contestation between the state and opposing political forces; in such a conceptualization the line between what constitutes the state and non-state actors becomes increasingly blurred. Jean Francois Bayart, in considering African states, examined this aspect in greater detail – describing the manner in which states can become subsumed by social networks and patron–client relationships to such a degree that they can no longer be considered to be functionally differentiated from their social contexts. Recent post-structuralist views on informality also identify its non-economic role as a zone between the state and its citizens that can create “bubbles” in areas where the state (and its failed intervention) is replaced without being formally contested.

Fusing these perspectives together, we are left with an uncomfortable yet potentially useful perspective – not only that states can be more than simply those institutions recognized by fellow states as “states”, but also states can often do less than what they claim to do. If, in the first case, talking about ‘the state’ is less useful than considering ‘stateness’, in the second case informality can be seen as bridging the gap between what a state claims to do and what it actually does. Governance, from such a perspective, can come in many forms, and often occurs in spheres beyond the purview of those entities belonging to the cozy club of internationally recognized states.

We would welcome contributions dealing with a wide variety of forms of governance. Geographically, we are primarily interested in the region from the Caucasus to the Caspian and Central Asia. However, we are happy to accept contributions on other regions if they have the potential to make a significant contribution to the workshop.

We encourage contributions that deal with both micro and macro aspects of governance. In particular (the list is not exhaustive):

**Micro-dimension**
- Non-state-provided welfare: how micro structures (e.g. clan, family, village) can provide welfare that the state is unwilling or unable to
- Citizens’ initiatives and civil society activisation to complement state-provided services
- State-citizen relationship, compliance or lack thereof by the citizens and its rationale
- Discourses blurring the normative notion that corruption is bad for a state
- Informal and unorganised resistance to and renegotiation of state-led instructions
- Bourdieu v. Putnam definitions of social capital and their function in a modern state
- Expressing discontent or dissent through street protests but also non-compliance (refusing to perform a duty, comply with a rule or law) and how, by becoming increasingly popular, this might form the basis of a social movement

**Macro-dimension**
- Informal, or unrecognised, institutions that begin to replace state rule on some territory or some aspects of political/economic life
- Phases and modes of insurgent governance in the Caucasus and beyond
- De facto/unrecognised states, contestation of territories, competencies, sovereignty
- Consequences of (Non-) recognition of de facto states (Abkhazia, Kosovo, South Ossetia,
Nagorno-Karabakh, TRNC

Consolidating Contested States in Conflict and Cooperation

De Facto States and the International Community

Building Cooperation between ‘Parent’ States and Secessionist Territories in the former USSR

Shades of Sovereignty in post-Soviet Self-determination Conflicts

The Legitimising Strategies of De Facto States and their Evolving Claims for Recognition

Political Symbolism and the Struggle for Independence/Recognition of De Facto States.

Technical details

There is no workshop fee; thanks to the support of Tbilisi State University, the Irish Research Council and the Marie Curie scheme we are able to cover all coffee breaks and meals (lunches and dinners) for selected participants.

Funds to cover accommodation for selected participants are available. However, if you can get support from your institute please inform us so we can accommodate a higher amount of speakers.

Submission deadline: 10th of April 2014

Authors will be informed by the 18th of April 2014 about the results

Submission material

Please prepare one single page, possibly in word, containing:

- An abstract (300-500 words)
- A short biographical statement (up to 300 words)
- Information on whether you need accommodation (or whether you can get support from your university)

Send everything to:

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