



VU Peace and Conflict Studies Enters a New School Year

Welcome to a new school year! With the beginning of a new semester with VU and PACS, we are all excited to welcome faculty and students back. Even with social distancing and the strangeness associated with COVID, PACS is still working hard and adapting to these new and unusual ways of life. Below you can find information about the new cohort of the minor, a report about our online workshop on Norm Violations and Punishment in International Relations, a note on a summer school on the 'Construction and Power of Narratives in Conflict-Loaded Societies,' and a short summary of Wolfgang Wagner's new book 'The Democratic Politics of Military Interventions.'

As the previous ones, this newsletter was designed by Gabriella Gricius. Gabriella has left Amsterdam and started a PhD program in Denver Colorado. We wish her all the best and want to thank her for all her work and efforts for PACS!

New Cohort of the Minor Peace and Conflict Studies

After last year's rise in student numbers, this year we again welcomed more students (80) to the minor Peace and Conflict Studies. Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19 which means that we have to teach the entire programme online, it is great that so many students still want to learn more about peace and conflict. We also welcomed new staff members, such as Maaïke Matelski and Nour Gjaltema, who are both responsible for the course Peace and Conflict: from Theory to Practice. Maaïke will also coordinate a course taught in the second period, namely Conflict and Peacebuilding. Maartje Weerdesteijn returned to coordinate the course 'Political Violence and the Human Condition' and teaches the course together with Annika van Baar. In the second period, we are also glad to have Alessandra Bitumi with us, who will teach the Law and Politics of Fencing the Use of Force, together with Wolfgang Wagner and Geoff Gordon. New staff members also means that people have unfortunately left us, and some are worth mentioning because of the valuable contribution they have made in developing the programme. In particular, we would like to thank Rosanne Anholt, and wish her the best of luck in her new role as assistant professor in Public Administration at the VU.

This year, we have also appointed student representatives, who will help us in dealing with any issues or questions that may arise with regard to the minor. We would like to thank Oscar Adams, Charlotte Tierolf and Isabel Bruijstens for taking up this role. They will also reflect on their experience in the minor so far.

Student experience

Oscar Adams:

Being an international business student in Maastricht, the minor peace and conflict studies and the associated subjects are completely new. Besides the fact that my major and minor are not directly in line with one another, the required approaches are likewise very different. Whereas international business is merely focusing on organizational models which can be directly implemented, the literature of the various topics within this minor peace and conflict studies are requiring the student to approach certain matters from different points of view (schools of thoughts). This inevitably creates a better understanding but faces one with considerable challenges.



Nonetheless, I am delighted to take part in this year's minor. After working on specific case studies, one is able to holistically analyze a wide variety of conflicts that emerge in today's global society. Personally, it is of the utmost importance to have the ability to reflect on these global issues whilst paying sufficient attention to the political, economic, and most importantly societal aspects. In today's world, in which another news report regarding (armed) conflicts and subsequent victims are easily perceived to be of everyday life, this minor provides the right instruments to prevent one from becoming indifferentiable.

Isabel Bruijstens:

This minor has been very intriguing and thought-provoking so far! Personally, I come from a liberal arts background and I therefore very much enjoy the interdisciplinarity of Peace & Conflict Studies. Even though the online learning approach has been challenging at times, everyone is trying their best to make it work – and this is noticeable! I look forward to the rest of this minor.



Charlotte Tierolf

At the moment, I am a student Cultural Anthropology at the VU. With future aspirations to work in the development sector, I chose this minor in Peace and Conflict Studies! Up until now I have been very intrigued with everything that we are taught! The classes have been very interesting and enriching. Even though we cannot meet face-to-face, our professors are doing everything to help us out when needed! And, so, I cannot wait for everything that is coming our way!

Online Workshop on Norm Violations and Punishment in International Relations



Although it was unfortunate that the entire PACS conference had to be postponed until next fall, we were still able to host an online workshop on 'Norm Violations and Punishment in International Relations.' The workshop was hosted by Linet Durmusoglu, Barbora Hola, Ronald Kroeze, Jan Willem van Prooijen, Wolfgang Wagner and Wouter Werner.

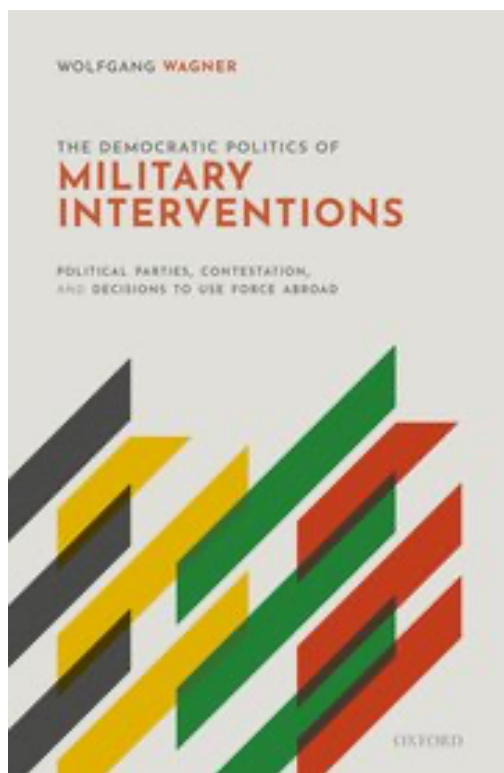
Our starting point was the idea that the violations of social norms and their subsequent punishment do not only occur in domestic societies, but frequently also take place between states at the international level, which opens up a wide variety of questions concerning the nature of international punishment. Stephen Neff (Edinburgh), Mark Drumbl (Washington and Lee University), Kjersti Lohne (Oslo), Elin Hellquist (Stockholm), Michal Onderco (Rotterdam), and Mario Gollwitzer (Munich) presented different perspectives on punishment in international contexts, including views from international law, criminology, political science, and social psychology. The presenters touched upon a wide variety of topics, such as international sanctions, punitiveness in investment law, penal humanitarianism, international criminal law and psychological processes involved in punishment. Despite the large variety in backgrounds, we were successful in finding common vocabulary and had an inspiring and fruitful exchange of ideas on punishment in the international arena. We thank all attendees for their contributions and look forward to discussing advanced versions of all papers in a year.

Summer School “Construction and power of narratives in conflict-loaded societies”

Social divisions can be observed across Europe and the longing for collective identities in particular is gaining new explosiveness. However, who we are is not that easy to answer! This year's summer school looked at the power of narratives: It is important to understand how narratives arise, how they shape identities, and to ask the question of power: Why do some narratives gain the prerogative of interpretation? Who's voice is heard at all? Why do collective identity narratives so often lead to exclusion and stigmatization? How can narratives contribute to reconciliation and peace?

[The Summer School](#) was organized by PACS fellow Fernando Enns and took place 21-29 September 2020.

New Book Alert: The Democratic Politics of Military Interventions



In July, Wolfgang Wagner's book "[The Democratic Politics of Military Interventions](#)" was published by Oxford University Press. It shows that – contrary to a widely shared notion, foreign affairs are not exempted from democratic politics, i.e. party-political divisions are not overcome for the sake of a common national interest. Examining votes in the US Congress and several European parliaments, the book demonstrates that contestation over foreign affairs is barely different from contestation over domestic politics. Analyses of a new collection of deployment votes, of party manifestos, and of expert survey data show that political parties differ systematically over foreign policy and military interventions. The left/right divide is the best guide to the pattern of party-political contestation: support is weakest at the far left of the spectrum and increases as one moves along the left/right axis to green, social democratic, liberal and conservative parties; amongst parties of the far right, support is again weaker than amongst parties of the center.

An analysis of parliamentary debates in Canada, Germany, and the United Kingdom about the interventions in Afghanistan and against Daesh in Iraq and Syria shows that political parties also differ systematically in how they frame the use of force abroad. For example, parties on the right tend to frame their country's participation in the US-led missions in terms of national security and national interests whereas parties on the left tend to engage in 'spiral model thinking', i.e. they critically reflect on the unintended consequences of the use of force in fueling the conflicts with the Taliban and Daesh.

Upcoming Events, Conferences, and Reminders

The original conference that was scheduled for 24-25 September 2020 unfortunately had to be postponed by a year due to covid. You can look forward to attending the full conference on 23 and 24 September 2021! Prof. Steven Pinker (Harvard University) is once again confirmed as the keynote speaker. We're looking forward to having you!

If you know of any conferences or research that you want to be included in the next edition of the PACS Newsletter, please [send an email here](#) with information. PACS is particularly interested in webinars at this time of social distancing. If you were forwarded this email and are interested in staying apprised, please sign up below to ensure you continue to receive these emails!

Who are we?

PACS, the Peace and Conflict Studies Centre at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, is an inter-faculty scholarly network for research on the causes of political violence, on strategies to build peace and on the governance of conflict. These issues require an interdisciplinary approach. Researchers from five faculties – law, social sciences, behavioral and movement sciences, religion and theology as well as humanities - collaborate in PACS.

PACS is managed by a team of seven researchers: [Wolfgang Wagner](#) (chair), [Tanja Aalberts](#), [Arno Akkermans](#), [Marijn Huijtink](#), [Ronald Kroeze](#), [Paul van Lange](#) and [Srdjan Sremac](#). More information on PACS can be found [here](#).