

**International Relations Retreat**  
**June 1, 2018**  
**The Village, 15<sup>th</sup> Floor (room 15-b)**

**Agenda**

8:00 AM: Morning coffee and light breakfast

8:45-9:45 AM: **Luke C. Sanford** “The Nature of Natural Resources: The Political Economy of Natural Resource Consumption.”

Student discussant: Abby Vaughn      Faculty discussant: Steph Haggard

9:45-10:45 AM: **Lauren Lee** “Negotiating in Front of Open Doors: The Political Economy of Debt Restructuring Negotiations.”

Student discussant: Shannon Carcelli      Faculty discussant: Lauren Prather

10:45-11:00: Break

11:00-12:00 PM: **Christina Cottiero** “Title: Staying Alive: The Strategic Use of Regional Integration Organizations by Vulnerable Political Leaders.”

Student discussant: Lauren Lee      Faculty discussant: Branislav Slantchev

12:00-12:45 PM: Lunch

12:45-1:45 PM: **J. Andres Gannon** “Use Their Force: Interstate Security Alignments and The Distribution of Military Capabilities.”

Student discussant: Michael Duda      Faculty discussant: Peter Gourevitch

1:45-2:45 PM: **Brandon Merrell** “The Secrecy Gambit: Clandestine Power Shifts and Preventive Conflict”

Student discussant: Jack Zhang      Faculty discussant: Barbara Walter

2:45-3:00: Break

3:00-4:00 PM: **Rachel J. Schoner** “Individual Petition in Human Rights Treaties.”

Student discussant: Kelly Matush      Faculty discussant: Lawrence Broz

4:00-5:00 PM: **Gregoire Phillips** “Brand Name Jihad: The Logic of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Transnational Extremism.”

Student discussant: ShahBano Ijaz      Faculty discussant: Emilie Hafner-Burton

## Authors/Paper Abstracts

**Christina Cottiero** “Title: Staying Alive: The Strategic Use of Regional Integration Organizations by Vulnerable Political Leaders.”

**Abstract:** The role of regional integration organizations (RIOs) in the domestic politics of African states has been under-appreciated. I develop a model of these organizations as providing club goods that are of particular value to weak state members. I argue that leaders with insufficient means to manage their respective domestic crises alone most value RIOs that function as cartels, painting a glossy veneer over collusion to benefit incumbent politicians. Elites cloak survival-boosting behavior under the guise of regional stabilization and peacekeeping interventions. This often entails allowing peacekeepers to target opposition groups and rubber-stamping questionable elections. The strategic use of RIOs for cross-border elite collusion is most likely to occur where the likelihood of crisis spillover across neighboring countries is high, when incumbents are vulnerable to replacement by domestic opposition groups, and when the average economic capacity of member states is low. This dissertation lays out 1. the portfolio of survival-enhancing strategies which become available to leaders of low income countries through cooperation with their neighbors, 2. why some of these strategies for domestic survival require RIOs, and 3. which leaders are most likely to turn toward survival strategies which rely on RIO cooperation.

**J. Andres Gannon** “Use Their Force: Interstate Security Alignments and The Distribution of Military Capabilities.”

**Abstract:** Scholars have asked why countries buy the weapons they do and conclude international threats or domestic factors explain these decisions. Yet, these theories often make opposite predictions and don't tell us why countries possess a certain combination of weapons systems. To fully understand variation in distributions of national military capabilities over time and across states, we must consider the nature of a state's relationships with aligned states. Analyzing the distribution of national military capabilities for all states in the latter half of the 20th century as well as variation in state to state alignment ties and relative alignment positions, I find that interstate alignments have a contingent effect on the specialization and complementarity of a state's distribution of military capabilities. In alignment partnerships with strong ties and hierarchical alignment positions, states are more willing to divide their labor such that each has a controlling share of a different set of military technologies. Alignments can allow for the creation of complementary distributions of military capabilities that have appropriate security and financial benefits for both states but that also give the stronger state foreign policy autonomy by limiting how the weaker state pursue security and wealth. The result is variation in states' distributions of military capabilities as measured by technological outliers – equipment omissions and surpluses. By encouraging specialization and complementarity with the military capabilities of aligned states, states that engage in a shared production model of national security end up with distinct distributions of military capabilities.

**Lauren Lee** “Negotiating in Front of Open Doors: The Political Economy of Debt Restructuring Negotiations.”

**Abstract:** International collaboration often takes place between elites and in private, as is the norm in sovereign debt restructuring negotiations. The technicality and ad-hoc nature of these negotiations make them particularly prone to secrecy. Yet, some indebted states move negotiations into the public eye. Why? What determines the strategies that indebted states choose in negotiations with creditors? In this paper, I provide a political economy model of public position taking in debt restructuring negotiations. I argue that going public with negotiations reveals costly information to citizens about the true state of the economy. By allowing for electoral consequences, the government sends a signal to its creditors in hopes of demonstrating that the risk of default is high and that large creditor concessions are required. But a public signal is only costly and therefore credible if the government is held accountable for economic declines by the political institutions in place. Using original data on creditor characteristics, alongside data on public default declarations and creditor haircuts from 1980-2007, I find that democracies, where elections provide baseline accountability for an economic voting effect, are more likely to publicly declare their debt distress. Within democracies, governments who face acute macroeconomic conditions and a large creditor group are also more likely to use public tactics. Finally, the public gamble pays off; public tactics elicit larger creditor haircuts. Conceptualizing debt restructuring as a continuum of strategies rather than a dichotomy focuses attention on the political dynamics of the restructuring process itself. It places voters and their ability to inflict electoral punishment at the heart of a government’s constraints in international negotiations. By applying theories of economic voting, I demonstrate that predictable domestic costs can be strategically manipulated by leaders at the international level to win preferential policy outcomes.

**Brandon Merrell** “The Secrecy Gambit: Clandestine Power Shifts and Preventive Conflict”

**Abstract:** Signals of strength enable countries to deter threats during crises and extract favorable bargains during peace. However, countries often forgo signaling opportunities by concealing new weapons and technologies. Why do actors sometimes choose secrecy at the expense of signaling? We present a formal model in which a country first decides whether to pursue a military power shift and then whether to announce or conceal its decision. The results show that several common conclusions about crisis behavior should be qualified. First, whereas popular models suggest that incomplete information and credible commitment problems can cause war independently, we demonstrate that the combination of these mechanisms can facilitate peace. Second, we distinguish between two forms of preventive war that create opposing incentives for rising states: *wars of discovery* and *wars of suspicion*. Finally, we show that secret developers and non-developers fall under equal suspicion and must therefore take costly steps to reassure their adversaries. While this *reassurance tax* is part of the ‘gambit’ played by ambitious states, it constitutes a burden for those content with the status quo. The effects generate new predictions for empirical research on arming, allying, and counterinsurgency.

**Gregoire Phillips** “Brand Name Jihad: The Logic of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Transnational Extremism.”

**Abstract:** Nearly two decades following the attack on the Twin Towers in New York City, we know precious little about why extremist organizations build vast, transnational networks of syndicate groups. Groups that pledge *bay'a* (allegiance) to the leaders of the Islamic State or the contemporary Global al-Qaeda network rarely go on to join their new-found sister organizations on the battlefield, do not share significant resources among one another, and almost never interact with the leaders to whom they swear fealty. Such transnational coalitions provide scarce-to-no tangible benefits – and in fact, may pose significant risks – to both core and syndicate organizations. So why do leaders invest in these transnational networks at all, and how do these transnational networks benefit both the core organizations and the syndicate groups that join them? This research agenda seeks to explain the logic of transnational extremist movements by introducing a novel theory of “brand name extremism.” Much like their transnational advocacy foils, extremist organizations co-opt syndicate groups through transnational networks to appeal to fringe audiences otherwise unwilling to take risks to invest in extremism without links to niche issues. On the other hand, syndicate group leaders use allegiance to a transnational extremist network to lock in support within their own organizations while also seeking to monopolize the extremist space in their local market for conflict. Together, these incentives to create and join a transnational extremist network provide the foundation for a common “brand name” that signals a broad-based issue agenda to potential followers and a costly, narrow commitment to a common set of ideological goals to potential competitors. In the projects that follow, I explore the causes and consequences of “brand name extremism” on the potential followers of extremist groups, the local conflict theatres of syndicate groups, and the perceptions of threat by common enemies.

**Luke C. Sanford** “The Nature of Natural Resources: The Political Economy of Natural Resource Consumption.”

**Abstract:** Politicians' re-election strategies can cause serious environmental damage. This paper offers a new explanation for sudden increases in deforestation: competitive elections. The protection of forested areas provides long-term public goods while their destruction provides short-term, private goods for local voters. Politicians facing a competitive election offer to give voters access to forested areas for commercial use of timber and small-scale farming in exchange for electoral support. I test the theory that competitive elections are associated with higher rates of deforestation using satellite-verified global forest cover data and the results of over 500 national-level elections between 1970 and 2005. The findings suggest that the transition to democracy is associated with higher rates of deforestation, that election years may have slightly higher rates of deforestation than non-election years, and that close elections have 25% higher deforestation rates than elections in which one side won by a wide margin. This suggests that democratization is associated with underprovision of environmental public goods, but that contested elections are partially responsible for this underprovision.

A second paper on the same topic adapts a classic model of political business cycles to make predictions about political environmental cycles. It then uses district-level electoral data and monthly deforestation data to test predictions on a sub-national and sub-annual scale.

A third paper focuses on transboundary River Basin Organizations (RBOs) and argues that mainstream theories of international institutions fail to explain the structure of these RBOs. Emphasizing the dynamic created by upstream vs downstream states, I demonstrate that current models of international institutions can be successfully adapted to RBOs by taking into account the nature of the resource being governed.

**Rachel J. Schoner** “Individual Petition in Human Rights Treaties.”

**Abstract:** Why do states sign human rights treaties and delegate monitoring to independent committees, impeding state sovereignty? Moreover, all core human rights treaties provide a mechanism through which states can opt-in and voluntarily allow individual complaints about treaty violations. Why would a state allow individuals to file complaints against it in international law, taking on additional scrutiny and sovereignty costs? Some may argue this mechanism is costless, but then why do individuals and groups use this mechanism to complain about state violations? I analyze the patterns of state acceptance of this mechanism as well as individual filings, arguing that costs systematically vary across states. Lastly, I look at the effect of this institutional design mechanism and examine whether it has any effect on state behavior or discourse in committee documents.