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Welcome back to PACS's Newsletter!

Since our last release in September 2019, much has been happening at our inter-faculty scholarly network thanks to the funding of the VU Vereniging and support of the VU. Around 100 students took courses within the second edition of the minor Peace and Conflict Studies, which is coordinated by Lenneke Sprik. Students helped to organize a PACS event, Sexual Violence in Conflict with Rosanne Marrit Anholt, Malini Laxminarayan and Dr. Srdjan Sremac as speakers. PACS also celebrated its launch event with a special lecture by Professor Scott Shapiro from Yale University where he discussed his book “The Internationalists.”

Coming soon: Biejan Poor Toulabi will speak about his research on chemical and biological weapons proliferation at PACS first Seminar Series of 2020. He investigated which countries had chemical/bioweapons projects and tried to unravel which explanations account for states’ decisions to embark upon or end weapons programs. PACS member Paul A. M. van Lange also [published an article](#) in Scientific American uncovering how differences in climate can shape ways of thinking.



Research Spotlight

Every newsletter, PACS will highlight the distinguished work of one of its fellows! This newsletter we will recognize Dr. Luigi Corrias, who recently received a fellowship from the NIAS Institute to conduct research on dehumanization in international law. He asks the question: what does the appeal to humanity in international law mean? His research stay at the NIAS will take place from February to June 2020. Read more about his project and some of his recent publications [here](#).

Research Group

In 2018, the VU Vereniging allocated seed money to three research projects in the area of peace and conflict studies. In this newsletter, we present one of them, namely the project by Wolfgang Wagner (political science; coordinator), Barbora Hola (criminology), Jan Willem van Prooijen (social psychology) and Wouter Werner (international law) on “International Norm Violations, Punishment and War.” This project focused on two studies undertaken by Linet Durmuşoğlu, a Research Master student in social psychology, who carried out two survey experiments with more than 2,000 respondents in the US, Germany, and the United Kingdom.

Her studies examined how citizens judge the punishment of states for violations of international norms. The starting point is the idea that, akin to domestic societies, the international system is imbued with norms, ranging from human rights to the acquisition of weapons and the use of force. Norm violations of course occur and give rise to the question of whether and how they should be punished.

Here are the two main findings:

- 1) Support for third-party punishment is higher than for second-party punishment not only in a domestic but also in an international context. Citizens thus support a key pillar of the liberal international order.
- 2) However, support for taking justice into one’s own hand is higher for international than for domestic norm violations, underlining that strengthening the United Nations and overcoming practices of self-help and the use of force without a mandate of the Security Council remains a challenge.

This question is interesting because the international system is different from

domestic societies. Most importantly, there is no equivalent to the sophisticated criminal law system and the sanctioning power of the state on the level of the international system. The United Nations Security Council has a monopoly to authorize the use of force (other than in cases of self-defense), but it lacks coercive power of its own. In a similar vein, international courts and tribunals have remained dependent on states' willingness to accept their jurisdiction and to support their proceedings, resulting in a highly selective practice of punishing international crimes.

The studies are currently rewritten into an article, which will be presented at the annual meeting of the International Society of Political Psychology in July 2020 in Berlin. If you are interested, reach out to Linet for more information or [consider attending the conference in July!](#)



Upcoming Events, Conferences, and Reminders

On 24 and 25 September 2020, PACS will organize [a conference](#) at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam to bring together scholars from various disciplines who work on political violence, peace, and conflict. The keynote, titled “Human Nature and the Decline of War” will be given by Prof. Steven Pinker (Harvard University). A more detailed program will be included in the next newsletter.

PACS also organizes Seminar Series where members of the PACS network can present their research. Our first Seminar will be taking place shortly so look out in your email for news about that. Participants will be able to share their research and discuss new developments in the field of peace and security. Our second session will be in April (Exact date TBD) so if you are interested, please don't hesitate to respond directly to the newsletter or write separately to Gabriella Gricius, who assists in organizing PACS events.

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. If you were forwarded this email and are interested in staying apprised, please sign up below to ensure you continue to receive these emails!