Seventh Annual New Faces Conference
Brief Abstracts

Catharina Wrede Braden

Have democracies' abilities to make credible threats eroded? Wrede Braden argues that democracies have developed a reputation for casualty intolerance in the years since the Vietnam War, and that this reputation has resulted in a decline in the credibility of democracies' threats to use force. These arguments contradict two well-established findings in the discipline: first, that democracies enjoy a "credibility advantage" over non-democracies in making threats to use force; and second, that states do not get "reputations for resolve" that affect the credibility of their threats. Drawing on work in cognitive psychology, social psychology and business, her work suggests that the Vietnam War marked a turning point in the perception of democratic regimes' ability to suffer costs in wartime. Behavior in a series of subsequent conflicts, including abrupt withdrawals from Beirut and Somalia, solidified these perceptions. A statistical analysis of 2500+ militarized interstate disputes between 1816 and 2001 shows that democracies have seen their threats reciprocated with increasing frequency relative to non-democracies since the mid-1970s. A threat made by a democracy is now significantly more likely to be reciprocated than a threat made by a non-democracy, indicating that democracies' historical "credibility advantage" has disappeared. The timing of these shifts strongly suggests that a reputation for casualty intolerance in the cause; this finding is supported by preliminary data from case studies.

Mark Bradley

Bradley's presentation focuses on civil-military relations in North Carolina within the framework of the state's protracted and often violent transition from civil war to peace during the Reconstruction era (1865-1877). Throughout Reconstruction, the U.S. Army's mission consisted of four objectives: to keep the peace, protect blacks and white loyalists, implement Federal policy, and conciliate former Confederates. Army officers soon discovered that accomplishing the first three objectives often rendered the fourth objective impracticable, yet this did not discourage them from making the attempt. The process of conciliation began with the generous initial surrender agreement drafted by Union Major General William T. Sherman, a commander better known for his devastating marches through Georgia and the Carolinas, than for his peacemaking efforts. Throughout the army's twelve-year occupation of North Carolina, army officers continued to conciliate their former enemies, even when faced with such dangerous and daunting obstacles as the Ku Klux Klan. The army's presence in the Tar Heel State was marked by uneven success in accomplishing its mission. During the ex-Confederates' long—and ultimately successful—struggle for dominance, the army likewise proved more successful in promoting sectional reconciliation than in preserving the civil and political rights of the freed people. The rapprochement of Federal soldiers and white North Carolinians in the mid-1870s has been hidden from view by an avalanche of Lost Cause propaganda, leading present-day historians to the erroneous conclusion that the process of national reunion began after Reconstruction.

Michael Findley

One of the greatest threats to the peaceful resolution of civil wars comes from "spoilers" — leaders and factions who use violent or nonviolent strategies to alter the course and outcome of a peace process. Spoilers have successfully wrecked peace agreements in contexts as diverse as Rwanda, Angola, Northern Ireland, and Bosnia, which resulted in the resumption and sometimes expansion of civil war. Findley uses an agent-based computational model to capture the complexities of the peace process and to derive hypotheses. His model explores how groups learn by experience about their prospects for benefiting from the ultimate outcome of the civil war based on the intermediate outcomes of battles, negotiation offers, and implementation attempts. Findley derives hypotheses from the model about spoiler behavior at each of three stages and tests them using statistical analysis and case studies. He also conducts an in-depth case study of Bosnia (1992–1995) to evaluate the model's causal mechanisms. The model and empirical analysis demonstrate that vastly different incentives affect spoiler behavior at different stages leading from war to peace. The symmetry (or asymmetry) in the distribution of capabilities, the number of actors, and the role of third-parties all affect spoiler group decision-making differently depending on the stage. His analysis indicates that peace processes are path dependent and events occurring during war have a direct impact on what is possible during negotiations and implementation.

Wayne Hsieh

How a society wishes to fight a war frequently differs from how it actually fights it, and the armies of the American Civil War correspond to that truism of military history. The vast majority of Northerners and Southerners entered the Civil War with a set of cultural expectations that glorified the unprofessional citizen-soldier; they ended the war with the same sort of professional and disciplined military organizations that antebellum American political culture had seen as an inherent threat to the liberties of a republican polity. When a sectional war broke out, the raw and disorganized state of both adversaries' volunteer military forces dictated that they both draw generals and drillmasters from the relatively small pool of trained West Point graduates. Cultural and ideological preference found itself wholly unable to provide a plausible alternative to West Point's version of professional expertise. The citizen-soldier ideal, however, was still strong enough to help create frictions between civil and military leaders, especially in the Union, where the conservative politics of most West Pointers and the contested nature of Northern war aims poisoned many important civil-military relationships. This crucial military expertise, as important as it was, both imprisoned and empowered the West Pointers who commanded both sections' armies. They gave both contending armies similar levels of military proficiency that in turn helped lead to the indecisive nature of Civil War military operations, as opposed to the dominant scholarly interpretation that focuses on the rifle-musket and fieldworks. Furthermore, questions of organizational maturity, tactical doctrine, and morale all deserve further consideration during the Civil War, as opposed to issues concerning individual generalship and the role of technology.

Jacob Kathman

In this research, Kathman addresses the regional stability interests of third party interveners in civil wars. Existing research on intervention does not account for a third party's interests in a civil war's regional context. He draws on theories of war diffusion to argue that potential interveners with salient foreign policy interests in a civil war's geographic region will be attracted to intervention in an attempt to contain the conflict when the likelihood of diffusion is high. In this sense, relationships outside of the civil war state intervener dyad are causally related to intervention decision making. The theory informs the creation of dynamic measures of civil war contagion risk and the foreign policy interests of potential interveners. These measures are used to predict the onset of third party intervention and to determine the relative effectiveness of intervention as a tool for containing civil war hostilities. The empirical findings indicate that third parties consider the regional diffusion consequences of civil wars in the intervention decision making process.

Paul MacDonald

One of the most common ways powerful states in international politics organize their relations with weak polities is through imperial rule, yet most international relations theorists argue that the structure of international system should discourage hierarchic relations of empire. To account for empire, MacDonald presents a "hierarchic realist" theory of imperial rule, which argues that great powers use imperial rule to provide security through control over less powerful polities. Great powers opt for imperial rule under two conditions – when they face new threats that other strategies such as hegemony cannot meet and when they the possess the necessary social ties with subordinate polities to construct imperial institutions. He evaluates the utility of this theory in comparison with offensive realist and liberal institutionalist explanations by examining three cases drawn from the British Empire in the nineteenth century – India, South Africa, and Nigeria.

Daniel Sargent

Historians of the Cold War have tended to disregard change in the international system itself, instead focusing on geopolitics. This dissertation contends that the international politics of the1970s can be better understood in a context of structural upheaval. It reveals how the integration of economies and societies – globalization in today's terms – framed U.S. relations with the external world in the 1970s. Symptoms of the new "interdependence," as contemporaries described it included the emergence of new international actors, the integration of markets, and the articulation of transnational ideas. Many of these developments had their roots in long-term historical trends. But the 1970s was a decade of vital acceleration, as transnational forces challenged an international system predicated on the primacy of sovereign states. This dissertation utilizes a range of newly available sources to reveal how the upheavals of the 1970s affected public policy in the international realm. It shows that the 1970s experienced a transition from a cold-war pattern of international relations to a post-Cold War future. This conclusion has two important implications. First, it demonstrates how many of the globalizing trends associated with the 1990s can be traced to the 1970s, thus complicating the periodization of "Cold War" and "post-Cold War" eras. Second, it explains how transformations in the international system affected world politics in the 1970s.

Todd Sechser

Sechser's research project is about the use and effectiveness of compellent threats. Specifically, he investigates why weak states sometimes resist compellent challenges from disproportionately stronger powers, often fighting hopeless wars instead of acquiescing peacefully. Drawing on literature in economics, he argues that compellent threats are likely to fail when challengers cannot credibly commit to refrain from making future demands. Asymmetric wars are thus explained as reputation problems in which weak states resist threats from stronger aggressors in order to deter future depredations. Because powerful challengers are uniquely unable to commit to future restraint, this logic implies that military strength may actually undermine the effectiveness of compellent threats.