



American University of Sharjah

Report on Activities, 2020-2021

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Report on Activities: 2020-2021

The academic year of 2020-2021 was a year of consolidation and growth. The sense of uncertainty that had been triggered by the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in early Spring 2020 started to subside. The containment strategies and vaccination programs protected the community, and injected new energies into the productive activities of our society.

Here on our campus at the American University of Sharjah, we took stock of the early lessons of the pandemic under the guidance of our leadership. We continued to engage our students to guide them towards excellence while nurturing responsibility and compassion. We continued to contribute to the creation and diffusion of knowledge through our research projects to. Therefore, I am happy to report that the academic year was of 2020-2021 was intense and productive.

In this report, I will share the major components of my contributions to the mission of the University in regard to research, teaching, and external outreach.

Research Activities

Three major projects were at the core of my research in 2020-2021: 1) The Politics of the US World Order; 2) Human Rights in a Post-Covid-19 world; 3) Applied Quantitative Methods in International Relations. The three areas of research span a large spectrum in my discipline: they cover not only matters of foreign policy, state security, and human protection, but also matters of methods for descriptive and causal inferences. All three projects have made major steps forward during the academic year.

The Politics of the US World Order

Since joining AUS in 2018, the primary focus of my research activity has centered on the writing of a book manuscript entitled “The Shrewd Sheriff: Leverage and Cooperation in the US World Order.” I completed the manuscript in the Summer of 2021. Cambridge University Press agreed to review the manuscript after evaluating my book proposal. The manuscript is currently under peer-review.

This project ties together two major strands of my research: the study of the US world order and the study of political leaders in International Relations. An analysis of the US world order was the theme of my first book, *Anti-Americanism and the US World Order* (published in 2009 by Johns Hopkins University Press); an analysis of leaders’ decisions for war and peace under different institutional structures was the focus of my second book (with H.E.

Goemans), *Leaders and International Conflict* (published in 2011 by Cambridge University Press).

The current project analyzes how the United States has managed and enforced a world order that comprises a large network of alliances, partnerships, basing arrangements, international organizations, business relationships, and civil society connections. In so doing, the manuscript intervenes in one of the most active and lively debates in International Relations scholarship of our time: the debate about the status and decline of the liberal world order (LIO) – to use the acronym of trade in the literature.

My manuscript shares a common concern in the literature about the United States role in international affairs. The major difference from the existing arguments is the specific focus on the political relations with the incumbent leaders in partner and allied nations. My manuscript recognizes that local actors have autonomy and agency; it analyzes the strategies through which the incumbent leaders in allied and partner nations may undermine US attempts at exercising influence; and it demonstrates how domestic political institutions that open up the space for political competition among many prospective challengers can channel the domestic politics in allied and partner nations towards US preferred goals.

The manuscript develops a theory, and it tests it using a mixed-method methodology that combines, on the one hand, quantitative causal modeling using coarsened exact matching and genetic matching and, on the other hand, a focused case comparison of US relations with Iraq and Afghanistan after 9/11, as well as an assessment of what for the United States to sustain and enforce its world order for years to come.

Human Rights in a Post-Covid-19 World

Since 2020, the world has been gripped in a momentous crisis that has upended the patterns of our daily lives. The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed many fissures in the current fabric of international and domestic politics. At the international level, the crisis has generated more acrimony than cooperation, as countries and international organizations have argued over how best to respond to the crisis. At the domestic level, the crisis has highlighted the relevance of leadership, state capacity, and information to devise an effective response. The international human rights regime has not been spared from serious challenges.

The events of the pandemic and the responses of states to it have generated an extensive debate within the human rights literature. In close collaboration with a colleague at AUS, Dr. Jeffrey King, I sought to intervene in the debate on the status of human rights in a post-Covid-19 world by devising a project that would place my University at the center of a renewed collaborative research effort worldwide.

The resources of the Sir Easa Saleh Al-Gurg Professorship were the sine-qua-non parameter in the project. They created the conditions for organizing a group of seven leading scholars on human rights worldwide around a common project.

The project comprises three different components:

- 1) the editorship of a Special Issue for the *Journal of Human Rights*, the leading peer-reviewed journal in the field; The Special Issue collects into a single volume seven novel contributions to the study of human rights;
- 2) the writing of an article for the Special Issue, entitled “The State of Human Rights in a (Post) COVID-19 World”;
- 3) the organization of a two-day (online) roundtable and panel presentations for the AUS community, entitled “Human Rights and the Covid-19 Pandemic: Experiences, Challenges, Prospects” featuring the seven leading academic scholars who are contributors for the *Journal of Human Rights* Special Issue.

The proposal for the Special Issue was approved by the Editorial Board at the *Journal of Human Rights* in July 2021. The manuscripts are currently undergoing the peer-review process.

The Special Issue represents a second wave of research on the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic on social, political, and economic relations. After an initial phase of reactive responses that sought to describe the challenges raised by the pandemic for the international human rights regime, the literature is now poised for a more comprehensive assessment that evaluates the interconnections and trade-offs that are embedded in the international human rights regime.

Beyond editing the special issue, Jeffrey and I will be writing the Introduction, as well as an article that reviews and assesses the research on human rights and Covid-19. The chapter sets the stage for the analyses pursued by the scholars who have agreed to be involved in the project.

The special issue will comprise the following contributions:

- Erica Chenoweth (Harvard University), “Can Civil Resistance Survive COVID-19?”
- Giacomo Chiozza & Jeffrey King (American University of Sharjah), “ The State of Human Rights in a (Post) COVID-19 World”
- Sammy Z. Badran (American University of Sharjah) & Brian Turnbull (University of South Florida), “The Covid-19 Pandemic and Authoritarian Consolidation in North Africa”
- Alison Brysk (University of California, Santa Barbara), “Pandemic Patriarchy: The Impact Of Covid On Women’s Human Rights”
- K. Chad Clay (University of Georgia), “The Effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Human Rights Practices: Findings from the Human Rights Measurement Initiative’s 2021 Practitioner Survey”
- Jeong-Woo Koo (Sungkyunkwan University, Seoul), “Covid-19 Politics in South Korea: Findings from Probabilistic Topic Models of 100,000 Tweets”

- Amanda Murdie (University of Georgia), “Hindsight is 2020: Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic for Future Human Rights Research”

The project also had a prominent outreach component. On March 15 and 16, 2021 we hosted, albeit online, the leading human rights scholars involved in the Special Issue for the *Journal of Human Rights* in a two day event that comprised a roundtable and panel presentations. The event was very successful: more than 110 students and colleagues participated in both days of the event.

Applied Quantitative Methods in International Relations

I completed a book chapter, entitled “Regression Analysis,” for the *Handbook of Research Methods and Applications in International Relations*, edited by R. Joseph Huddleston, Thomas Jamieson, and Patrick James for Edward Elgar. The book is scheduled to be released in 2022. The volume is part of a prominent series of *Handbooks* by Edward Elgar and it provides a comprehensive analysis and assessment of the interdisciplinary character of the discipline of International Relations.

My contribution analyzes the strengths and pitfalls of regression analysis, the workhorse of quantitative approaches to International Relations. My chapter reviews the practices of regression analysis in applied research in International Relations: it assesses the potential contributions of regression analysis to description, to inference, and to causal analysis. It engages the recent initiative by the *American Statistical Association* to go beyond null hypothesis significance testing; and it concludes that regression analysis may continue to be central to applied research in International Relations, as long as the practitioners of regression analysis don’t lose sight of the definition: regression analysis is a technique to synthesize information which measures the mean and variance of the conditional distribution.

Teaching Activities

I contributed to the educational mission of the University by teaching core courses in the International Studies curriculum. I taught three courses in Fall 2020, and three courses in Spring 2021. All courses were upper division courses in the International Studies (INS) curriculum (POL 304, International Organizations; POL 305, Public International Law; POL 308 American Foreign Policy; and INS 350 Moot Court). My classes were popular: I taught a total of 77 students in Fall 2020; and a total of 61 students in Spring 2021. Two of the classes, POL 308 American Foreign Policy and INS 350 Moot Court, were new offerings in the curriculum.

Among the classes I taught, I will highlight INS 350 Moot Court. For that class, I made the strategic decision to devote the class to the study of international criminal law. Students learned how to plead hypothetical (“moot”) cases in front of the International Criminal Court (ICC). That decision paid off on several pedagogical fronts: it expands the coverage of international law beyond what we focus on in POL 305 Public International Law; it addresses salient issues of justice, law, and politics that are at the core of the learning mission of our INS major; it also builds on a diffuse interest about crimes and law enforcement at the

international level among our students. The class provides our students an exposure to issues they will be addressing should they decide to pursue careers in the legal profession.

INS 350 Moot Court also became the launching pad for an additional initiative that had also been very popular in the past but that had remained dormant for a number of years: the participation in an international moot court competition. Six of the students enrolled in INS 350 decided to form a team and compete in the 2021 ICC Moot Court Competition at the Hague. The competition, which is organized by Leiden University and the International Bar Association, is the premier moot court competition in international criminal law. I was the team coach, and I guided the students through the steps of the competition: first, when they prepared three 10,000 word memorials on behalf of the Office of the Prosecutor, the Defense Counsel, and the Government Counsel for the accused; and second, when they prepared for the oral pleadings, which this year took place online over the month of June 2021.

I am very proud of what our team accomplished in a very competitive field of law students, many of whom are JD students! The judges of the competition had many words of praise for the Counsels pleading the cases for our team.

External Outreach Activities

The major outreach activity of the academic year were the organization of the two-day online conference entitled “Human Rights and the Covid-19 Pandemic: Experiences, Challenges, Prospects.” The conference, described in the Research Activity section of this report was a centerpiece in the portfolio of activities in the Department of International Studies.

I presented a paper at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association in April 2021. The Conference took place online. The paper, entitled “The Resilient Hegemon: Prospects for the US World Order,” is a component of the larger project on the the Politics of the US World Order described earlier. The project received favorable feedback from the conference participants.

I also lend time and expertise to contribute to the peer review process for research manuscripts in my discipline. I view the peer-review process as one of the fundamental institutions not only to generate valid, and reliable knowledge but also to foster excellence in research. To review manuscripts is a major commitment, and a major responsibility. This academic year I reviewed manuscripts for the following journals: *American Journal of Political Science*, *American Political Science Review*, *Conflict Management and Peace Science* (twice), *International Interactions*, *International Organization*, *International Studies Quarterly*, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *Journal of East Asian Studies*, *Journal of Politics*. That is a total of ten peer-review referee reports.