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KING'S
College
LONDON

Social Science Research in the Context of Conflict, War, and Authoritarianism:

Methodological Challenges and New Approaches to Data Collection and Analysis

Symposium

June 23-24, 2023, London

Russia's unprovoked military aggression against Ukraine on February 24, 2022, shattered the Western world as we knew it. While smaller-scale military conflicts have taken place in Europe before (including the war simmering in East Ukraine since 2014), Putin's decision to invade Ukraine became a moment of no return in the relations of Russia with Western countries. Along with moral, strategic, and security implications, the war shattered the status quo in the research on the area as well. The war has put into question the possibility, validity, and reliability of widely used methods in research on the region, such as survey, experiment, interview, ethnography, and others. This challenge requires new approaches to data collection, evaluation of validity and reliability, as well as learning from other disciplines and area specialists. The symposium will address methodological challenges facing scholars of authoritarianism, war, and conflict and particularly focus on methodological and ethical dilemmas in qualitative data collection, validity and reliability of survey research, the potential and limitations of computational methods and online tools as well as addressing personal emotional involvement in knowledge-creating processes that are normally expected to take place in a more neutral environment.

Organising Committee: Gulnaz Sharafutdinova, Maxim Alyukov, Annamaria Kiss, Gregory Asmolov, Julia Taranova.

Preliminary Agenda

June 23, Friday

9:00 – 9:30 Morning coffee / Opening remarks

9:30–11:00 Qualitative fieldwork in the context of conflict, war, and authoritarianism I

Chair: **Gulnaz Sharafutdinova**, King's College London

Olga Gomilko, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine
Academic social responsibility as a subject of the research inquiry during Russia's war on Ukraine

Maria Vyatchina, University of Helsinki
Ethnography of borderisation: people with intermediate statuses and border control after Russian invasion of Ukraine

Anna Matveeva, King's College London
Mission Possible. Qualitative research in war-torn and sensitive contexts: empirical and methodological dilemmas

Talia Kollek, University of Oxford
'We can all be propagandists': Russian LGBTQ+ activism under authoritarianism

Svetlana Erpyleva, University of Bremen
How to study support for the war in wartime? Methodological issues in qualitative research

11:00–11:30 Coffee break

11:30 – 13:00 Qualitative fieldwork in the context of conflict, war, and authoritarianism II

Chair: **Irina Kuznetsova**, University of Birmingham

Marnie Howlett, University of Oxford
The ethics of knowledge production during war and conflict

Elena Racheva, University of Oxford
By us alone: army veterans, patriotic values and the re-militarization of Russia

Jeremy Morris, Aarhus University
Reflections on doing Russian fieldwork in wartime - practical, political and ethical implications

Paul Goode, Carleton University
Outsider ethnography in authoritarian contexts

13:00–14:00 Lunch

14:00 – 15:30 Online tools and computational methods I

Chair: **Samuel Greene**, Kings College London & Center for European Policy Analysis

Maxime Audinet, Institute for Strategic Research (IRSEM) & Paris Nanterre University
Exploring Russia's 'information influence' abroad: a contribution through textual analysis and lexicometry

Kevin Limonier, Geopolitics of the Datasphere Center (GEODE) & University of Paris 8
Building OSINT tools for Russia scholars: methodological and technical challenges

Alexandra Pavliuc, University of Oxford
Decoding gendered political communication on social media around Russia's invasion of Ukraine

Pavel Lebedev, Independent researcher
Adaptive political communications: the role of AI algorithms and social media analytics in adjustment of media strategies

Katerina Tertytchnaya, University of Oxford
Protest-event data collection after the war

15:30 – 16:00 Coffee Break

16:00 – 17:30 Validity and reliability of survey research in the context of war and authoritarianism

Chair: **Tomila Lankina**, London School of Economics and Political Science

Philipp Chapkovski, University of Bonn
The sound of silence: understanding social avoidance in a Russian war context

Alexander Libman, Free University of Berlin
Are there non-political questions during the times of war?

Olga Onuch, University of Manchester
Surveying Ukrainians at war

Elizabeth Woods, Central Asia Barometer
Political and methodological obstacles to public opinion polling in Central Asia

Bryn Rosenfeld, Cornell University
Survey research in Russia in the shadow of war

June 24, Saturday

9:30–11:00 Online tools and computational methods II

Chair: **Alexey Bessudnov**, University of Exeter

Lanabi La Lova, London School of Economics and Political Science
Using text as data methods to study mass media in Russia

Ivan Grek, George Washington University
Open source intelligence methods for the study of Russia-occupied territories of Ukraine

Meagan Todd, Colorado State University
Pros and cons of online tools for data collection, analysis, and communication with undergraduate researchers

Yuriy Zhukov, University of Michigan
Echoes of the past: detecting duplicates in media-generated event data

Aleksandra Rumiantseva, University of Bremen
Competition under censorship: When do state-controlled and independent outlets mirror each other in Putin's Russia?

11:00–11:30 Coffee break

11:30 – 13:00 Research on war, conflict, and authoritarianism in comparative perspective

Chair: **Maxim Alyukov**, King's College London

Jethro Norman, Danish Institute for International Studies
The online and the offline in contemporary conflict ethnography: Reflections from war in Somalia/Somaliland

David Stroup, University of Manchester
Ethnography from outside closed doors: Authoritarianism and fieldwork when the field closes

Martin Dimitrov, Tulane University
Archival ethnography in the study of authoritarian regimes

13:00–14:00 Lunch

14:00 – 15:30 The art of business intelligence: war and data (roundtable)

Participants TBC