

## Section 8– Relazioni Internazionali

**Chairs: Carla Monteleone, Vittorio Emanuele Parsi**

### Panel 8.10 Reaching for allies? The dialectics and overlaps between International Relations and Area Studies in the study of politics, security and conflicts

In 1961 George Modelsky wrote ‘International Relations needs Area Study’. International Relations (IR) theories have indeed for a long time benefited from interdisciplinary approaches (Wight 2002; Sil and Katzenstein 2010; Long 2011; Aalto et al. 2011). Yet, despite few valuable contributions (Katzenstein 2002; Hinnebusch and Halliday 2005; Crocker et al. 2011; Haastrup and Dijkstra 2017), academic cooperation between IR and Area Studies has been hanging in a precarious balance characterised by the ‘perennial contest between partisans of ‘nomothetic’ approaches [...] and ‘idiographic’ approaches’ (Kennedy 1997). Such long-lasting disciplinary and epistemological conflict has been recently revamped, in particular in the wake of the Arab uprisings, when specialists of Middle Eastern Studies realised once again the limitations of political science formulas (Fawcett 2017). At the same time, different traditions of inquiries acknowledge the scientific need to find a middle ground between context-sensitivity and theory-portability. In addition, the emergence of the field of ‘comparative regionalism’ is paving the way to a renewed dialogue between ‘regionally-oriented disciplinarians’ (primarily disciplinary scholars looking at regional phenomena, often comparatively) and ‘discipline-oriented regionalists’ (primarily area specialists who have accepted and adopted theoretical frameworks from a particular discipline, Acharya 2006). Further, an evolving debate on ‘Global IR’ promise to breathe new life into joint intellectual enterprises and interdisciplinary engagements (Bilgin 2016).

Proceeding from the conceptual premises resumed above, this panel aims to collect theoretically innovative yet empirically focused contributions on multiple ‘regional worlds’ in order to study the diverse nature of internationally relevant political agencies, security matters and system of governance across the international system. Hence, we welcome single-case and comparative studies committed to expanding the horizons of both IR and Area Studies, underlining their historical and contemporary interconnectedness. A non-exhaustive list of inputs and research avenues might include:

- 1) the role of regional actors in the international system (including research on non-state actors and their impact in international and transnational politics);
- 2) the ‘Comparative Regionalism’ Agenda (in particular some latest endeavours to go beyond and behind the institutional embodiments of regions, i.e. Parthenay 2018);
- 3) the ‘Comparative Area Studies’ Agenda (including reflections on ‘travelling theories’; the geographic confinement of academic communities; the post-colonial dimension of knowledge production and dissemination);
- 4) the ‘Non-Western IR Theory’ Agenda (including reflections on the situatedness of IR; projects of ‘decentring IR’; ‘decolonising IR’; ‘provincializing IR’, i.e. Beswick and Hammerstad 2013).

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