

Interaction Ritual Chains in World Politics: Deterrence, Diplomacy, Knowledge Production

**RITUAL DETERRENCE Workshop at the Island of Cres, Moise Palace
17 June 2024**

In the framework of the CEEISA-ISA Joint International Conference 2024, 'Knowing the Global-Local: Imagining Pasts, Debating Futures', University of Rijeka, Rijeka, Croatia, June 18–21, 2024

Convener: Prof. Maria Mälksoo, University of Copenhagen, maria.malksoo@ifs.ku.dk

International Relations (IR) has been taking increasing interest in the constitutive and facilitating role of ritual at various levels of world politics. This workshop mobilizes American sociologist Randall Collins' concept of interaction ritual chains (2004) to explore the place and work of ritual in deterrence, diplomacy and knowledge production in international politics. We proceed from the premise that for these key realms of international relations, 'ritual is not simply an alternative way to express certain things, but that certain things can be expressed only in ritual' (Rappaport 1974, 5). Our workshop probes the ontological and epistemological status of ritual in contemporary international relations. We ask: how does ritual facilitate bonding, mitigate tensions, affectively charge and fuel action in world politics? What would taking ritual seriously in the study of international relations enable us to see and analytically capture? Is there such a thing as a *ritual lens* on deterrence, diplomacy and IR knowledge-making – and if yes, then what does it entail? The focus on ritual arguably opens a novel analytical register in the study of world politics, privileging the situational and contextual, affective, bodily and rhythmic. Acknowledging the ritual features and dynamics in deterrence implies a rethinking of signalling in the study of this central international security practice. In the realm of diplomatic encounters, the relation of face-to-face and small-group interaction rituals to international spectacles, such as force posture movements, military parades, diplomatic summits and commemoration ceremonies, are yet to be systematically expounded. The examination of ritualized knowledge production patterns on the international enables to highlight dubious epistemic habits in the study of world politics in turn. We will further examine the methodological implications of studying ritual action in deterrence, diplomacy and knowledge production in world politics. What are we looking for when looking at ritual action in world politics: symbols, magic, scripts, repetitions, conventionalization, staging/dramatization, specific time-spaces, choreographies, performativity, sacrality – or yet something else? How do all these elements hang together in the interaction ritual chains of international relations? The workshop participants work towards a special issue under the working title of *Ritual Realms and Repertoires in World Politics*.

Convener bio: [Maria Mälksoo](#) is Professor of International Relations at the Department of Political Science, University of Copenhagen. She is the Principal Investigator of the [ERC RITUAL DETERRENCE project](#) (2022-2027) and of the UCPH team in the Volkswagen Foundation-supported [MEMOCRACY consortium](#).



Programme: Monday, June 17

8:30-10:00 Session I: Ritual Deterrence

@Moise Palace Conference Room 004

Discussant: **Benoît Pelopidas** (Sciences Po, Paris, benoit.pelopidas@sciencespo.fr) (via Zoom)

1. **Maria Mälksoo** (University of Copenhagen, Denmark, maria.malksoo@ifs.ku.dk)

From Signalling to Ritual: Conceptualising Deterrence Interaction Chains

2. **Amir Lupovici** (Tel Aviv University, Israel, amirl@tauex.tau.ac.il)

The War in Ukraine, Deterrence, and Ontological Security

10:00-10:30 Coffee break

10:30-12:30 Session II: Military Rituals

@ Moise Palace classroom 009 or 010 on the 2nd floor

Discussant: **Maria Mälksoo** (University of Copenhagen, maria.malksoo@ifs.ku.dk)

3. **Christian Bueger** (University of Copenhagen, christian.bueger@ifs.ku.dk)

Inside multi-national military gatherings: Sites of global rituals and practice

4. **Mariia Vladymyrova** (University of Copenhagen, Denmark, vla@ifs.ku.dk)

Beyond Tactics: Space, Symbolism, and Ritual in Russian Naval Exercises

5. **Cameron Hunter** (University of Copenhagen, Denmark, cpa@ifs.ku.dk)

Ritualised Coordination in the PLA Rocket Force: Nuclear Deterrence, Control and Sacrifice

12:45-14:20 Lunch @Pizzeria i spaghetteria Luna Rossa

14:30-16:30 Session III: Ritual Diplomacy

@ Moise Palace classroom 009 or 010 on the 2nd floor

Discussant: **Dorothy Noyes** (Ohio State University, USA, noyes.10@osu.edu)

6. **Thierry Balzacq** (Sciences Po, CERI, Paris, France, thierry.balzacq@sciencespo.fr):

Why Handshake Matters? Questioning the Visible and Invisible in Diplomatic Encounters

7. **Jennifer Mitzen** (Ohio State University, USA, mitzen.1@polisci.osu.edu):

Global Governance as Ritual (Re)Production of International Community

8. **Juha A. Vuori** (University of Turku, Finland, juha.vuori@tuni.fi)

A Counter-Revolution in Military Affairs: The Introduction of Humanitarian Dissensus into the Police Order of the Non-Proliferation Treaty

16:30-17:00 Coffee Break

17:00-18:30 Session IV: Ritual Knowledge Production

@Moise Palace Conference Room 004

Discussant: **Christian Bueger** (University of Copenhagen, Denmark, christian.bueger@ifs.ku.dk)

9. **Xymena Kurowska** (CEU, Vienna, Austria, KurowskaX@ceu.edu)

The Politics of Ritualisation in the History of IR Theory-Building

10. **Thomas Fraise** (MIT, USA and University of Copenhagen, Denmark, tfr@ifs.ku.dk)
(via Zoom)

Wizards of Armageddon? Magic, Rituals, and the Epistemic Authority of Nuclear Experts

19:00 Dinner @[Restaurant Riva](#)