



Tagungsbericht

INTERNATIONAL PATRON-CLIENT
RELATIONSHIPS IN SECESSIONIST
CONFLICTS. EMPIRICAL INSIGHTS
AND CONCEPTUAL
INNOVATIONS

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Final Report

International Patron-Client Relationships in Secessionist Conflicts Empirical Insights and Conceptual Innovations

**Friedrich Schiller University Jena
16 – 19 September 2021**

Abstract

Secessionist conflicts possess, by definition, an international dimension. Usually, a plethora of states, intergovernmental organizations, and non-state actors considerably affect the outbreak, course, and outcome of a conflict. Recently, scholars have begun to use the notion of Patron-Client Relations (PCR) to grasp this phenomenon. In stark contrast to the considerable consequences of external partisan involvement, research on PCRs remains incoherent, fractioned, and lacks a clear demarcation from other conceptions. The four-day workshop in Jena (Dornburg Castles) aimed to collect empirical insights from various cases to inform the construction of a straightforward and innovative PCR concept. A number of senior and junior scholars were asked to investigate particular secessionist conflicts (post-Soviet de facto states, Kosovo, Biafra, Krajina, Western Sahara, and Iraqi Kurdistan) along five dimensions: agency, symmetry, motives, resource exchange, and impact. Through joint brainstorming sessions, each related to a particular dimension of PCRs, accompanied by classical panels on individual cases, the group pooled its knowledge and incrementally built a theoretical concept upon these observations. Insights from practitioners in conflict management and civil society advocacy sharpened the scholarly eye. While the innovative conference design created a fruitful atmosphere for conceptual thinking, controversies about the delineation of the term 'patronage' and the varying impact of patronal interventions demonstrated the need for further research. Eventually, the group managed to put together an initial working definition that is supposed to stir future debates. A special issue in an international research journal will compile the most promising contributions and help initiate a new research program on patron-client relations in secessionist conflicts and beyond.

1. Introduction and State of the Art

Whenever secessionist conflicts are debated in politics and academia, patrons inevitably come to mind. Since some form of foreign support is often crucial for secessionist movements and host states alike, interactions between intrastate actors and their foreign supporters are common features of most secessionist conflicts. Researchers of these interactions often refer to external supporters as patrons, especially in the literature on Russia's support for various de-facto states in the post-Soviet space (Kolstø, 2021). Yet, what international patronage does and does not mean often remains subjective and vague. This ambiguity is in stark contrast to the relevance of international interactions in such conflicts. The main goal of this four-day workshop was to overcome this vagueness and conceptualize patron-client relations in secessionist conflicts by arriving at core definitions, exploring key properties, and assessing their impact on conflicts based on an initial concept paper provided by Rafael Biermann beforehand.

The most comprehensive and influential work on patron-client relations (PCR) was published by Shoemaker and Spanier (1984). It explored the conflict dynamics resulting from both Cold-War superpowers engaging in patron-client relations with 'third-world' countries. Their research was limited to state-to-state PCRs under conditions of superpower competition and heavily focused on security transfers. This concept is in dire need of an update if we want to explore PCRs in the 21st century. While some scholars widen the concept to include non-state actors as clients, such as rebel groups (Salehyan et al., 2014; Marshall, 2019) or de-facto states (Kolstø & Blakkisrud, 2017; Kosienkowski, 2019), and others explore state-to-state PCRs beyond superpower competition or security transfers (Veenendaal, 2017; Newnham, 2020), there is as of yet no publication proposing a comprehensive definition or shared key characteristics and indicators of PCRs. Our workshop aimed at establishing such a definition of patron-client relations, broad enough to include various non-state actors while specific enough to allow operationalization. In this first step, we limited ourselves to PCRs in the context of secessionist conflicts, as this is currently the field of study drawing most on the patron and client terminology. However, in the future, we aim to transfer the insights of this workshop to discussions of patron-client relations in international relations in general.

As a point of departure, we identified common features of patron-client relations in the literature of anthropology and condensed six core properties of PCRs relevant to the application of the concept in the field of international relations. Furthermore, we outlined the five most promising dimensions of research related to patron-client relations in the context of secessionist conflict. The first question is one of *agency*: Who qualifies for being considered a patron? Can

this role be filled solely by state actors, or can non-state actors such as intergovernmental organizations or civil-society actors fulfill comparable functions to potential clients? Is the role of the client restricted to secessionist movements themselves, or can the host state act as a client to external actors as well? Secondly, the underlying *motives* of patron and client in these relationships deserve scrutiny: Why do patrons and clients enter into and uphold a relationship? Why and when do they terminate it? Do rationalist arguments suffice to explain the emergence, maintenance, and dissolution of PCR, or do we need to draw on constructivist thought as well? A third branch of research should focus on *resource exchange*. What types of resources (material and immaterial) are being exchanged, and what can we say about the intensity and duration of these exchanges? Questions regarding *dependence, autonomy, and control* between patrons and clients form the basis for a fourth direction of inquiry: Are clients mere puppets to the whims of their patron, or can they act autonomously despite the underlying asymmetry in their respective resource bases? Finally, the *impact* of PCR on the course and outcome of secessionist conflicts needs to be evaluated: To what degree do PCR contribute to the success or failure of secessionist movements?

To build on this groundwork, we called for papers by junior researchers with a focus on single case studies of secessionist conflicts and strong regional expertise. We asked participants to analyze their cases from a PCR perspective, reflecting on the proposed core characteristics as well as our working definition. Additionally, we proposed they explore one or two of the five above-mentioned research dimensions as they relate to their specific case. Their papers and presentations formed the empirical foundation of our workshop. Seeing that the main goal of the workshop was of exploratory and conceptual nature, we scheduled four brainstorming sessions to create space for in-depth conceptual exchanges. These sessions were intended to facilitate the discussion of specific dimensions of the preliminary PCR concept in small groups, based on empirical insights from the various cases. Results were then compared and discussed in the plenum. In order to assess the PCR concepts applicability in practice, we organized a panel discussion with Felix Schimansky-Geier (Civil Peace Service Program Ukraine) and Sascha Dürkop (Founder CONIFA), as well as an insightful keynote by Lawrence Meredith from the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations of the European Commission.

This paper will present the key input from the presentations in conjunction with the main takeaways from the brainstorming sessions. Following that, we will reflect on our preliminary conceptual work and working definition. Finally, we will outline the next steps toward a

comprehensive research program of patron-client relations in international relations and secessionist conflict.

2. Summary of Contributions

After a guided tour through Jena's city center, the program started on Thursday afternoon, 16 September 2021, with the first input session: an introduction to the patron-client concept by project manager Rafael Biermann (University of Jena). In its essence, the concept denotes a relatively stable social relation between a superordinate patron and a subordinate client involving the exchange of mutually exclusive resources. The presentation culminated in an extensive state of the art from which Biermann deduced a set of core characteristics of patron-client relations in international politics and secessionist conflicts in particular (see the previous chapter). As expected, this initial input session prompted the first debates among the audience, discussing topics such as the idea of a reversal of patron and client positions as well as the relationship between conceptual thinking and empirical observation.

Kamran Palani (Salahaddin University-Erbil) then started the first empirical panel with a presentation on *Uncertainty and Patron-Client Relationships: The Case of Iraqi Kurdistan*. Reconstructing the strategic choices of the government of Iraqi Kurdistan prior to the independence referendum in September 2017, Palani found that the de facto state was fundamentally uncertain about the willingness of its patrons to support the decision. Unable to anticipate international reactions to the unilaterally held plebiscite, the government in Erbil was caught off guard by the absence of support from its main patron, the USA. As Washington even shied away from backing the breakaway state against military recapture by Iraq's central government, Iraqi Kurdistan had to diversify its international interactions. In the wake of the failed referendum, regional actors such as Turkey and Iran became more important for the de facto state. However, their willingness to foster Iraqi Kurdistan's eventual secession from Iraq is doubtful as well. While Erbil receives plenty of tangible support from outside, none of its alleged patrons seems interested in an independent Kurdistan. Moreover, Iraqi Kurdistan now has to balance various sources of external support against each other.

Palani concluded that PCRs in the case of Iraqi Kurdistan are essentially fluid and uncertain. Secessionist clients, the case highlighted, cannot always be completely sure of their patron's intentions. Goals may diverge, patrons may not be reliable, or support their clients for purposes other than secession. On the other hand, Palani's contribution highlighted the agency that clients assume when they interact with a plethora of different patrons, diversifying external

backing, shopping between them, balancing their demands, and looking for the most beneficial outcome. The Q&A picked up on these insights and discussed the notion of reluctant patrons, asking whether such interactions can still be regarded as a PCR. Looming over this debate was the question of the impact of patronal involvement.

Day 1 ended with the first Brainstorming on agency and *Identifying Patron-Client Relationships in Secessionist Conflicts*. Biermann's short introductory remarks, based on his concept paper, made clear that the distinction between 'normal' external supporters and clear-cut patrons is not always apparent. It became clear during the following debate that researchers must carefully investigate the intentions and goals of external actors in order to make a plausible assessment of their quality as patrons. To be qualified as a PCR, the relation must have a certain durability, intensity and be mutually valued, i.e., show signs of reciprocity. Patronal action, however, the audience suggested, could as well be deferred. Regarding intensity, Kolstø highlighted the challenge of operationalizing this parameter adequately. Some preliminary ideas were discussed (i.e., critical nature of patron support to client survival; uncovering a price the patron has to pay to maintain the relationship), but the matter was ultimately left open. Based on Palani's insights, the notion of clusters of patrons was highlighted. The audience briefly discussed possible motives for patron engagement, among them rational interests but also normative, even affective reasons.

The discussion on impact accelerated again during the first empirical panel on the second day that was held by team member Christopher Brucker (Friedrich Schiller University Jena) on *International Civil Society Patronage in the Biafran Secession Conflict, 1967-1970*. Based on his study of the "Biafra Lobby" in the U.S., a network of non-state organizations that advocated in favor of the Biafran de facto state during its quest to secede from Nigeria, Brucker discussed whether civil society actors could plausibly be regarded as patrons for secessionist movements. Motivated mainly by normative and affective reasons and informed by Biafra's international media strategy, the network was able to spur public sympathy for the Biafrans, significantly influence the foreign policy debate in the U.S., and put pressure on the White House to intervene in the conflict. While the resulting intervention remained overtly humanitarian, the Biafra Lobby still managed to direct large sums of aid and donations into the conflict zone, which enabled Biafra to avoid military defeat and thus prolong the conflict.

Whether this advocacy can be regarded as a feature of a PCR, however, was discussed with some zeal in the Q&A. Some critics questioned whether a network, i.e., a coalition of single actors, could be called a patron in the first place. Others doubted whether such a relationship between a coalition of non-state actors on the one hand and a de facto state on the

other could have elements of reciprocity. What do non-state supporters, acting on the grounds of normative conviction or emotional attachment, get back from their clients? The group discussed ideas such as gratification or self-fulfillment. Which impact can partisan involvement of international non-state actors really have on violent secessionist conflicts? Does international advocacy really fall into the same category as military intervention or the stationing of troops, 'classic' features of patronal involvement? The audience, in the end, agreed that the impact of external involvement should be a key factor in assessing whether a dyadic relationship could qualify as a PCR or not. Implicitly, these reservations pointed towards an important quality criterion for theoretical concepts: its selectivity, i.e., the ability to distinguish the phenomenon in question from related yet distinct occurrences.

Till Spanke (London School of Economics) was next with a presentation on *Russian Indirect Diffusion Influences on Abkhaz State and Institution Building without Direct Involvement*. Abkhaz decision-makers have *Russia on their Minds*, as the paper's title claimed, when they plan and implement institutional developments. Russia as a patron for Abkhazia can have an indirect influence on the policies and politics of its client. Investigating legislative and institutional isomorphism, Spanke shed light on how and why Abkhaz elites partially or completely mimic Russian politics and take patron institutions as blueprints in their state-building efforts. Abkhazia, Spanke concluded, mimetically copies patronal institutional models out of sheer inexperience, relies on them because it perceives them as appropriate, and applies patronal setups to compete with the metropolitan state Georgia. Key factors that facilitate this indirect influence are a lack of alternative outside models to follow, for instance, in times of uncertainty or security threats, and a perception among elites that patronal involvement is legitimate in the first place. Under these conditions, Abkhazia has autonomously aligned its policies to Russian interests.

In its essence, the case of Abkhazia demonstrates that cliental agency can be severely restrained by the patron's superiority. Dependency in areas such as security or economy can indirectly lead to the exclusion of alternative state-building pathways. Additionally, apart from official 'high politics,' more mundane interactions such as everyday contacts, trade-links, media, common socialization, i.e., societal notions of appropriateness, can build avenues for patronal influence. Patrons can exert soft power. In response to Spanke's observations, the Q&A again took up the topic of reluctant patrons. Can indirect and, to a certain degree, unintentional influence be regarded as a feature of PCRs? How does that fit into the notion of patronage being a relationship that involves resource exchange, i.e., deliberate acts of both actors? More generally, can intangible forms of external influence be part of patronage?

In his presentation titled *Between Europeanism and Nationalism*, Roland Gjoni (University College Dublin) offered an account of Albania's foreign policy toward kin minorities in former Yugoslav countries. The main research puzzle raised in his talk addressed the question: what explains Albania's passive kin state policy; why did Albania, despite the plight of Albanian communities in Kosovo and Macedonia, refrain from interventionist and irredentist policies after the end of the Cold War? Although Albania was historically perceived as a "patron" or "kin state" by Albanians living in former Yugoslavia, it did not embark upon unilateral intervention in either Kosovo or Macedonia. Gjoni contended that the combined effects of low public pressure for unificatory nationalism from the electorate, the declining elite interest for a national unification process, and increased conditionality of Euro-Atlantic integration discouraged Albania from pursuing irredentist foreign policies.

The second Brainstorming session of the workshop titled *Motives for Forming, Upholding, and Terminating PCRs* began with Biermann's brief introductory address that served as a guidepost for further discussion. He identified three critical areas for the analysis of motivations in patron-client relationships. First, according to Biermann, the longevity and complexity of such relationships require to give special attention to less evident aspects. The benefits that actors reap are usually long-term and partially obscured, which poses a challenge for typical cost-benefit analysis best suited for analyzing shorter and less complex projects. A long-term time horizon and the high degree of involvement increases, for example, the importance of sunk costs and the issue of future payoffs. Second, in addition to the traditional classification of motives as affective or instrumental, Biermann proposed the inclusion of normative or ideational motives. Normative concerns drive the actions of some external patrons who believe that, for instance, violations of human rights or the right to self-determination are a sufficient reason to provide support to the client. Third, Biermann proposed a comprehensive categorization of motives according to which the decision to enter and stay in patron-client relations is shaped by factors such as strategic advantages and ideational like-mindedness.

The following discussion moderated by Eiki Berg (University of Tartu) highlighted some important points. Roland Gjoni drew attention to the fact that motives should not be seen as mutually exclusive - multiple motives may interact and go hand in hand with each other. He also underscored the possibility that an actor can simultaneously have short-, medium-, and long-term motives. According to him, economic cooperation is in some cases coupled with the long-term plans of territorial aggrandizement. Tina Rosner-Merker and Till Spanke argued, based on their case studies of Western Saharan and Abkhazian patronage networks, that motives can change over time. Some motives are long-lasting, while others lose their relevance soon

after the start. Berg asserted that there seems to be a hierarchy of motives. Some motivations are more important than others. Stefan Wolff added that certain motives are characteristic of specific patron types. Civil society organizations have, as a rule, different motivational bases than states with regional or global geopolitical aspirations. The participants agreed that both patrons and clients could endure costs for entering a transborder relationship. Nonetheless, Kristel Vits and Helge Blakkisrud emphasized the precarious client situation in which secessionist groups find themselves. In contrast to parent states who can change patrons more easily, secessionist groups have limited alternatives. Pål Kolstø contended that patrons choose clients following the "my-enemy's-enemy-is-my-friend" logic and that their strategic interests usually trump affective considerations.

Helge Blakkisrud, Nino Kemoklidze, and Pål Kolstø (Norwegian Institute of International Affairs) shared the results of their research on the relationships between de-facto states and their patrons. The main question posed by the presenters was whether a formal diplomatic recognition by a patron state affects its treatment of the secessionist client. The comparative analysis included three cases that involve official recognition by the patron (Abkhazia, Northern Cyprus, South Ossetia) and four that do not (Donetsk, Luhansk, Nagorno-Karabakh, Transnistria). So far, the scholars found no clear pattern of patron involvement with respect to whether the patron recognizes the de facto state or not.

The second workshop day ended with a roundtable discussion on *Civil Society Engagement in Secessionist Conflicts*, moderated by Vello Pettai (European Centre for Minority Issues). The discussants were Felix Schimansky-Geier ([Civil-Peace-Service](#) and [KURVE Wustrow e.V.](#)) and Sascha Dürkop ([ConIFA](#)), both practitioners in the fields of conflict management and civil society advocacy. Schimansky-Geier works as Civil-Peace-Service (CPS) Country coordinator for Ukraine within the program *Strengthening Civil Society for Nonviolent Conflict Resolution*. CPS aims at documenting, disseminating, and further developing constructive and non-disruptive ways to solve conflicts between civil society actors and state agencies. To this end, Schimansky-Geier regularly engages with NGOs, social movements, and activists that operate on the Ukrainian side of the line of contact with the breakaway territories of Donetsk and Luhansk supported by Russia. This engagement includes capacity-building and consultancy through regular workshops and seminars, but also the documentation of human rights abuses in the wake of combat operations.

Dürkop presented a series of unique insights into the challenges and peculiarities of international sports politics from the perspective of unrecognized states, de-facto states, regions, minority peoples, and isolated territories. As founder and erstwhile general secretary

of the *Confederation of Independent Football Associations* (ConIFA), Dürkop has acted as an advocate for football enthusiasts whose official associations are excluded from becoming full FIFA members, including Abkhazia, Biafra, Western Sahara, and Kurdistan. For the most part, the entry conditions of international organized football reflect the current global state order and require member organizations to represent a fully recognized state. Such arrangements effectively exclude teams and sports enthusiasts from regions with disputed international status to compete with their counterparts abroad. For marginalized people affected by looming or latent conflict, such problems add to widespread feelings of isolation and frustration. Civil society advocacy in this field can have a profound impact on people's lives, Dürkop explained, even beyond the peculiarities of high politics. To this end, ConIFA has organized periodic European and World Football Cups, for instance, in Abkhazia (2016) and Northern Cyprus (2017).

Day three started with panelist Tina Rosner-Merker (University of Magdeburg) presenting her paper on *Western Sahara's Struggle for Independence*. Unlawfully occupied by Morocco since 1975, Western Sahara is a highly complex case that combines features of interrupted decolonization, secessionism, de facto statehood, and a government in exile. This melange contributes to an extraordinary degree of internationalization. Rosner-Merker undertook the ambitious task of mapping these numerous international vectors and then investigating if such interactions can be plausibly regarded as PCRs. Particularly noteworthy is Rosner-Merker's decision to not only look for possible patronage in favor of the secessionist client, the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), but also for the metropole Morocco. The scholar found a plethora of international backers for both sides. SADR, for instance, gets substantial backing from Algeria, most importantly through the allowance to use Algerian territory as a safe haven for its sole political-military organization, the Polisario Front. Thanks to the help of its large European diaspora, SADR can also count on the support of a highly active solidarity movement with numerous NGOs. This support network contains prominent figures such as the Spanish actor Javier Bardem or the native Sahrawi Aminatou Haidar. Based on this observation, Rosner-Merker made an argument for considering individuals as potential patrons for secessionist movements.

Morocco, on the other hand, has received plenty of support from countries such as France, Israel, and the USA. Despite the fact that Morocco's actions in Western Sahara are unanimously considered illegitimate and illegal under international law, many Western governments, in particular the USA and France, continue to prevent a political solution to the conflict that would take the interests of the Sahrawi population into account. They purchase

resources that were extracted in the occupied territory, veto against peace initiatives in the U.N. Security Council, and officially endorse Morocco's authority over Western Sahara. This partisan involvement is a key factor for Morocco to uphold its rule over the territory. To varying degrees, many international interactions on both sides fulfill conditions that qualify them as a PCR: they are continuous, stable, and asymmetric. In the Q&A, parts of the audience questioned again whether non-state actors, be they NGOs or individuals, can be patrons at all. While even the most ardent critics acknowledged the importance of civil society actors in such conflicts, some questioned the political consequences that their advocacy could potentially have. The idea to distinguish between major and minor or between primary and secondary patrons received much acclaim. In the end, the group agreed that scholars should invest substantial energy into investigating the impact of patronal interventions.

Brainstorming session III dealt with *Resource Exchange in Patron-Client Relations* and the related problem of resource dependence. According to Rafael Biermann, exchanging resources is at the very core of patron-client interaction. Does this involve only tangible or also intangible goods? What do clients provide in return? Does there have to be a 'resource gap' between patrons and clients? Biermann argued, based on his concept paper, that both actors supply 'non-comparable' goods, e.g., resources that the other does not possess but desires. Actors have distinct 'resource bases': powerful states can provide other resources than NGOs, IGOs, or diaspora groups; secessionist de facto states or movements often lack substantial capabilities, which is precisely the reason they enter into a relationship with an external patron. This observation led to a discussion of shifting 'resource needs': secessionist clients desire different resources depending on the conflict phase. While a rebel movement in the middle of a violent confrontation needs tangible military aid, a de facto state might want diplomatic recognition. Economic and military aid, as well as diplomatic advocacy, are the most obvious types of patronal support. Could normative advocacy or humanitarian relief also be regarded as patron support, then? The notion of 'reluctant patrons' was brought up again, e.g., partisan supporters that, for some reason, withhold their engagement. In the end, the audience concluded that resource exchange needs to be observed in conjunction with the impact such interactions have on the conflict in question.

Team member Ivan Laškarin's (Friedrich-Schiller-University of Jena) subsequent presentation, titled *Anatomy of a Patronage*, was focused on the patron-client relations between Serbia and the Krajina Serbs during the territorial conflict in Croatia. By deriving insights from the empirical evidence, he identified the content of Serbia's support and the impact that this help had on Krajina's secessionist movement. He identified twelve main policy areas of Serbia's

involvement in the separatist conflict in Croatia. Depending on the content of support, these twelve areas are foreign affairs, military, economy, finances, energy, health care, transport, telecommunication, media, culture, education, and humanitarian and refugee issues. Laškarin maintained that Serbia's support for Krajina encompassed all state functions and had a colossal impact on the kin-minority behavior and the emergence of a credible secessionist movement.

The second brainstorming session (IV) on day three was devoted to the topic of *Impact of Patron Support*. As Biermann concluded in his introduction to the session, this dimension is of utmost importance for the research on PCRs as it denotes whether external involvement ultimately "makes a difference." The conventional theoretical and empirical claim is that substantial patronal involvement can tip the power balance in favor of the client. Without external support, the argument goes, secessionists face a credible threat to be re-integrated into the metropolitan state. Vice versa, secessionists without a strong patron cannot expect ever to gain the upper hand in the conflict. On the other hand, empirical insights have revealed that most external support is rather limited and restrained. Moreover, this theoretical "all or nothing" assumption seems to neglect that secessionists seek to realize a set of goals, some of them short of secession, others changing over time. Such 'secondary goals' can be international attention or economic viability, e.g., surviving without fully seceding. Based on these thoughts, the question of impact has to be addressed more nuanced. The impact, Biermann argued, is relative and can have an incremental quality: limited achievements resulting from restrained external support can help realize secondary goals or accumulate over time. This notion makes it plausible to not only look at the material but also immaterial effects, such as legitimization or international sympathy. Actually, measuring impact in relation to secessionist goals by taking their strategic calculus into account, the group concluded, should become a top priority for scholars working on PCRs in the future.

The day ended with a virtual keynote speech by Lawrence Meredith on *The European Union and the Secessionist Conflicts in its Eastern Neighbourhood*. Meredith, Deputy Director-General in charge of Eastern Neighbourhood in the European Commission (DG NEAR), made clear that dealing with the protracted territorial conflicts in the post-Soviet space (in Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, and Azerbaijan) is in the E.U.'s strategic interest. Geopolitical interests and a sense of moral responsibility go hand in hand. Through dialogue formats, which involve civil society organizations, the E.U. aims at engendering different conflict dynamics, taking into account the diverse perspectives of actors involved. While the E.U. recognizes that everyone on the ground shares the wish to have peace, actors have different ideas about how this peace is best achieved. Apart from dialogue, the E.U.'s engagement rests on three pillars: confidence-

building, improving living conditions, and helping preserve identity as well as cultural heritage. On the other hand, the E.U. is aware that it is not the most important factor in these conflicts, which poses a significant challenge for any European conflict management in the region.

Afterward, Kristel Vits (University of Tartu), who has helped to organize the workshop as a team member, presented her work on *Measuring Patronage*. She noted that the existing PCRs vary significantly concerning the field of cooperation and the intensity of patron engagement. Her main aim is to develop an advanced measuring tool that would distinguish between different forms and levels of patron state involvement in client affairs. For that purpose, she proposed a new categorization of areas of cooperation between patron and client. This conceptual model is divided into four dimensions of interaction: economic, political-military, social-cultural, and connectivity. By testing the framework against the empirical evidence from six cases - Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, Transnistria, Kosovo, Northern Cyprus, and Taiwan - she claimed this typology is a potentially valuable tool for assessing the extent of patron and client agency over time and across cases.

Stefan Wolff (University of Birmingham) concluded the program with a presentation on *Methods for Researching Patron-Client Relations*. Continuing his previous ventures into the methodological underpinnings of contemporary conflict research (2020), Wolff designed his contribution as a survey. By systematically reviewing the databases of a number of major journal publishers, Wolff was able to show how little has been published on PCRs in the workshop's six empirical cases. While Kosovo has received substantial scholarly attention, the number of articles for the other cases is significantly lower, with Biafra and Krajina being at the low end of the scale. Most of Wolff's initial findings support central observations that originally inspired us to launch the workshop: In the field of secession studies, research on patron-client relations is marginal. Most works are single-case studies; comparative approaches are rare. Studies lack generalizability and often show no aspirations to draw more general conclusions. There is a heavy focus on post-Soviet de facto states and on secessionist clients. While previously rather descriptive, scholarship is now gradually moving towards more methodological awareness and reflection. Qualitative approaches dominate the field, with process-tracing as the most common research technique. Based on these preliminary observations, Wolff called for more methodological rigor and pluralism in PCR research. Blind spots should be seen as an invitation to explore uncommon avenues of research, such as non-Eurasian or historical cases.

3. Open Questions and Follow Up Projects

Our workshop discussions revealed some crucial open questions, which the unfolding research program on patron-client relations in secessionist conflict still needs to answer. Three ones turned out to be particularly controversial.

First, most pivotal is the question of how to delineate patrons from non-patrons, in particular other more minor supporters. We agreed that not every support should be categorized as patronage but struggled with defining a threshold. We need to avoid an inflationary use of the term, ensure distinctiveness, but leave some operational flexibility.

Second, and related, the question arose whether we should not differentiate patrons of varying significance. Much of the literature focuses on great power patrons (esp. in the post-Soviet space) while neglecting patrons of less standing and impact as well as cases where no great power patron is recognizable while multiple patrons of lesser weight support a client in what might be a patron network. Examples are Western Sahara (Rosner-Merker), Biafra (Christopher Brucker), and Kurdistan (Kamaram Palani). While we definitely advocate to expand the notion of patronhood to medium and small state patrons, international organizations, and civil society organizations to move beyond the simplified image of patronage as great power patronage, we recognized that we might then need more differentiation. In the discussion, we tentatively talked about primary and secondary patrons – obviously, the resources they provide (intensity and scope), as well as the impact they have on the conflict, vary widely.

Third, while the participants agreed that we need to take a much closer look at non-state patrons as well as host state clients, the question remained open whether patrons can also be prominent individuals. The papers by Rosner-Merker and Brucker pointed to such potential patrons. The discussion on this point was intense but inconclusive. We decided to leave it to empirical analysis (and thus the better argument) and not take a categorical decision at this early point of research on the topic.

Regarding follow-up projects, we are planning four initiatives. First, we intend to publish this workshop report in a journal of International Relations. Second, we have agreed at the workshop to publish the most promising papers in a special issue of a peer-reviewed international journal. The title is "Patron-client Relations in Secessionist Conflict." Rafael Biermann is the guest editor. The application is out. It proposes to publish the conceptual paper by Rafael Biermann as an introduction, followed by seven of the workshop papers. Another paper on great power patrons competing in the EU-Russia neighborhood was recruited for the

special edition. The authors were present at the workshop but did not present this paper (Nino Kemoklidze, Tetyana A. Malyarenko, Stefan Wolff).

Third, we have successfully applied to hold another workshop on patron-client relations at the 9th European Workshops of International Studies (EWIS) in Thessaloniki in July 2022, organized annually by the European International Studies Association (EISA). The convenors are Rafael Biermann and Kamaran Palani, and this time the focus is on *international* patron-client relations in general. Again, the goal is to conceptualize the phenomenon based on the five dimensions of the Jena workshop and convene a quite disparate set of scholars working on the topic across many policy fields beyond secession. The major task is to take stock of the diversity of PCR types empirically existing and categorize them for comparative purposes. This includes relations between state patrons and state clients (e.g., China-Myanmar, USA-Latin America, or France-Francophone Africa), non-state patrons (e.g., Albanian diaspora-Kosovo Liberation Army), non-state clients (Iran-Hezbollah), and patron-client networks (e.g., China's Silk Road Initiative and the Central Asian states). Most of these literatures do not apply the PCR concept so far and thus hardly work comparatively, and they are hardly in contact.

Finally, Rafael Biermann managed to obtain a scholarship for a PhD position on patron-client relations in secessionist conflict within the project "Kooperation und Konflikt im Östlichen Europa" (KonKoop) financed by the German Ministry of Education and Research. For the next 42 months, starting April 2022, the Ph.D. will further deepen our insights from the Jena workshop, organize another workshop in 2023 and thus continue to stimulate this emerging research program.

Overall, the workshop can be regarded as a success. The conference concept, in particular, was met with overwhelmingly positive feedback. Participants enjoyed the brainstorming sessions that provided plenty of space for open discussions and conceptual thinking. The exquisite venue created an atmosphere just perfect for intense intellectual conversations. Repeated postponements did not curtail the event's quality at all. Our gratitude goes to the German Foundation for Peace Research for funding the workshop and for supporting us throughout these trying times.

4. List of Participants

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