

SEMINAR SERIES

ARSHIYA SHAH

JEREMIAH SULLIVAN FELLOWSHIP AWARDEE

Tuesday, September 16th

5:00 PM – In-person & Zoom

Coble Hall #108 (801 S. Wright Street)

THE LOGIC OF BORDERLAND UNREST: COLONIAL BORDERS, POST COLONIAL GOVERNANCE, AND THE TRANSNATIONAL DYNAMICS OF VIOLENCE AND UNREST

Colonial borders are often blamed for postcolonial conflict, yet many artificial boundaries remain peaceful while others become enduring hotspots of violence. This paper argues that artificial borders do not inherently produce prolonged or transnational conflict. Instead, they become persistently violent when post-independence states fail to establish inclusive, legitimate, and regionally responsive governance, particularly in peripheral border areas. The study tests whether border artificiality alone explains conflict, or whether its effects depend on early governance failure.

Results show that artificial borders are associated with high levels of terrorism, militant violence, and unrest, but only when early border governance is weak. Regression models confirm that artificiality alone is not a significant driver, but its interaction with governance failure is both statistically and substantively robust. The findings suggest that institutional weakness, in addition to border design, better explains postcolonial border-zone violence.

Arshiya is a senior at the University of Illinois, majoring in Political Science with a concentration in International Relations and pursuing certificates in Global Security and European Union Studies. She is also minoring in Legal Studies and Business. A recipient of the Jeremiah Sullivan Undergraduate Research Award, Arshiya has been deeply engaged in research since her sophomore year. She has worked with Dr. Mayung Jung Kim on her project examining international law and exile decisions. In the upcoming semester, she will be working as a Research Assistant with Professor Don Casler from the Department of Political Science, who is also a Faculty Affiliate at the Program in Arms Control & Domestic and International Security (ACDIS). In addition to her academic research, Arshiya serves as a Research Ambassador with the Office of Undergraduate Research, where she mentors and assists fellow undergraduates in pursuing research opportunities. Her scholarly interests center on global security, international law, and transnational conflict dynamics.



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