

Title: Realism, Ethics and the Ukraine War

Speaker: Professor Richard Sakwa, Professor Emeritus of Russian and European Politics at the University of Kent at Canterbury

Date: 10 March 2023

Time: 1200-1315

Where: C-135A/B

POC: Dr. Nicholas Myers

SYNOPSIS:

The presentation outlines the case for an ethics of responsibility, arguing for self-limitation by all sides to ensure that the Ukraine conflict does not escalate to a point that it threatens the survival of humanity. This requires methodological rigor in analysis and conceptual clarity. A number of methodological approaches to the conflict are examined, including realism, idealism, imperialism, postcolonialism and the systemic (the view that domestic politics determines foreign policy, and suggests that an interpretivist approach is the most appropriate. This applies elements of the other approaches but combines them in a pragmatic process-tracing manner. The study then shifts to outlining the broader structure of international affairs, suggesting interaction between the foundational UN-based Charter international system and the creation of various contending sub-orders in the framework of international politics. Among the latter the political West is crucial, created during the first Cold War but surviving thereafter to claim certain universal prerogatives, which challenges the supremacy of the Charter system and its fundamental principle of sovereign internationalism. Instead, democratic internationalism inspired liberal hegemony. In Ukraine this exacerbated the enduring contest between rival visions of Ukrainian nationhood. This raises some fundamental ethical dilemmas, including the proper limits of Russia's security concerns and Ukraine's right to self-defense. The ultimate dilemma is to ensure the survival of the Charter system and with it of humanity itself.

BIOs:

Richard Sakwa is Professor Emeritus of Russian and European Politics at the University of Kent at Canterbury, a Senior Research Fellow at the National Research University-Higher School of Economics in Moscow and an Honorary Professor in the Faculty of Political Science at Moscow State University. After graduating in History from the London School of Economics, he took a PhD from the Centre for Russian and East European Studies (CREES) at the University of Birmingham. He held lectureships at the Universities of Essex and California, Santa Cruz, before joining the University of Kent in 1987. He has published widely on Soviet, Russian, post-communist and international affairs. Recent books include *Putin Redux: Power and Contradiction in Contemporary Russia* (London and New York, Routledge, 2014), *Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderlands* (London, I. B. Tauris, 2016), *Russia against the Rest: The Post-Cold War Crisis of World Order* (Cambridge University Press, 2017) and *Russia's Futures* (Cambridge, Polity, 2019). His book *The Putin Paradox*, was published by I. B. Tauris (Bloomsbury) in 2020 and his *Deception: Russiagate and the New Cold War* came out with Lexington Books in late 2021. He is currently working on *The Lost Peace: How We Failed to Prevent a New Cold War* for Yale University Press.