

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

PLEDGE

**INTERDISCIPLINARY WORKSHOP
ON THE HISTORY AND POLITICS
OF A PERSISTENT SECURITY DEVICE**



**DYNAMICS
OF SECURITY**

Convenors: Nina Boy (Warwick), Christian Wenzel (Marburg)

This workshop will explore historical and contemporary forms of the pledge as a uniquely cross-disciplinary tool and practice of security. From the Greek symbolon to mortgage, warranty, bail, and seal, the pledge calls up an age-old history of securing or crediting an expectation, relation, or undertaking that is curiously absent from the modern disciplinary landscape. The pledge spans legal, financial, and security aspects yet has no prominent place in law, economics, or security studies. James Der Derian's (1995) brief allusion to security as 'pledge, bond, or surety that one seeks in the face of danger, a debt or an obligation' remains to be taken up, particularly in relation to the prevailing meaning of security as 'condition of safety, protection'.

Academic neglect notwithstanding, the pledge has shown considerable clout in classic works of literature, which display an enduring fascination with the power of the bond and the sacrifice it may entail. From Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* and Schiller's *The Pledge* to Lessing's *Minna von Barnhelm* and Goethe's *Faust*, the pledge has been the protagonist in dramatic explorations of the (in)stability of societal bonds and indispensable element to secure the great contracts of society: debt, marriage, and military conscription (cf. Vogl, 2002). As means to assure the binding character of relations, the pledge performs a defining role in the configuration of the social itself.

Casting a wide net, this workshop aims to take a first step towards a cross-sectional account of the history and politics of the pledge and its continuing relevance today. If from Antiquity to the early modern period, the pledge of hostages, for example, was a key feature of international peace treaties and everyday diplomacy, the present form of the financial system essentially relies on the pledge of collateral. This comprehensive perspective shall serve to detect the peculiarities of distinct forms of pledge, as well as form a basis to collectively explore how these can inform the theorization of security.

We invite contributions from across the humanities, history, law and social sciences to address questions relating to the pledge, including:

- What types of pledge exist throughout the ages? Why have specific forms, such as oaths, hostages, seals or tally sticks, appeared and disappeared?
- How were types of pledge interpreted by contemporary actors and when and how did they become associated semantically with security?
- How does a history of pledge complement or disturb the history of security as protection?

- How does an understanding of the 'original' performative act of the oath (Austin) as security affect securitisation theory?
- What underlying notions of uncertainty/insecurity do practices of contract security reflect? What temporality do they entail and produce?
- How does the pledge produce credit? What values does it mobilise and/or rely on?
- What form of power does the pledge display as basis and limit of political liability? What are the voluntary and coercive aspects of power involved?
- What does a theoretical focus on and excavation of the pledge mean for modern disciplinary boundaries?

Possible topics:

- Studies of specific forms of pledge, such as guarantee, pawn, token, hostageship, collateral, and surety
- Evolution of contract security (eg lien, chattel, security interest) in different legal systems and relation to political security for agreements (eg pledge of territory, third parties, places de sûreté)
- Relation to gift, tribute, fief/feud, capital, stock, credit, and other forms of monetary and non-monetary value
- Role of the pledge in the history of diplomacy, international law, public policy, and the evolution of the international state system
- Securitisation, (self)referentiality and the epistemology of underwriting

Abstracts of 300-400 words should be send to

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by **15 February 2019**. Notification of acceptance will be given by 1 March 2019. Working papers of ca. 4000 – 6000 words are due by **30 September 2019**. Contribution towards travel cost will be possible.

Refs:

Der Derian J (1995) The value of security: Hobbes, Marx, Nietzsche and Baudrillard. In: Lipschutz R (ed.) On Security. New York: Columbia University Press, 24–45

Vogl J (2002) Kalkül und Leidenschaft – Poetik des ökonomischen Menschen [Calculus and Passion: A Poetics of Homo Economicus]. Zürich & Berlin: Diaphanes.