



## ZMO-Colloquium

Thursday, 23 May 2019, 5 pm

### **Dictators Without Borders: The Globalization of Central Asian Authoritarianism and the Ethical Challenges of International Research Cooperation**

Lecture by **John Heathershaw** (University of Exeter)

How does the globalization of Central Asia's authoritarian regimes affect the environment for international research cooperation in Central Asian Studies? What are the limits on 'academic freedom' in this context and what are the ethical dilemmas faced by researchers? Far from being isolated, Central Asia's authoritarian regimes and elites are variously globalized through financial, political and security connections. Such globalization is facilitated via networks of professional enablers which allow these elites to access offshore companies and bank accounts, real estate, and a place in 'the establishment' through visas and residency, school and university places, and philanthropic investments. So enabled, Central Asian autocrats, their relatives and allies form inter-elite relationships through which they increase their political influence overseas and their power at home. By formal agreement and informal practice they are also able to track their diaspora, particularly their political exiles. In extreme cases these exiles are targeted for detention, extradition or even assassination. However, more commonly, they face everyday surveillance, intimidation, and the repression of their relatives and friends who remain in the home country. Such methods are also deployed against academic researchers from Central Asia, particularly those working on topics deemed 'political' and cooperating with

international partners. Drawing on the revised paperback edition of *Dictators Without Borders* (Yale, 2019), ongoing research pertaining to the laundering of money and reputations, and considerable experience of international research cooperation with Central Asian scholars and institutions, this presentation raises important questions both for how we understand the region and how we practice Central Asian studies.

**John Heathershaw** is Associate Professor in International Relations at the University of Exeter. His research concerns conflict, security and development in Central Asia, particularly Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. He served on the board of the Central Eurasian Studies Society (2011-2014) and chaired the society's taskforce on fieldwork safety in 2015-16. Heathershaw is a member of the international advisory board of the academic journal *Central Asian Survey* and Vice President of the European Society of Central Asian Studies. He is currently principal investigator of the research project, 'Testing and evidencing compliance with beneficial ownership checks: investigating the laundering of monies and reputations by elites from African and Central Asian kleptocracies'.