



**Dr. Nathaniel Boyd**  
**CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES FOR THE INTERNATIONAL RULE OF LAW**  
**MPIL Agora**  
**15 November 2023, 16:00-17:00, Room 014**

After much contention, the changing circumstances clause (*clausula rebus sic stantibus*) was recognised as a customary norm and codified in Article 62 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (VCLT). It was included to give credence those exceptional circumstances in which the fulfilment of treaty obligations threatened the very existence of a state. The highly restrictive sense in which it appeared in the VCLT and the extremity of the circumstances posited were intended to restrict its potential use to the truly exceptional case.

For this presentation, Nathaniel Boyd will discuss: **1)** the history of the clause and its eventual integration into international law; **2)** its heyday in the nineteenth century, a moment when it became an accepted norm as well as a political-rhetorical strategy to breach treaty; and **3)** conclude by comparing Article 62 of the VCLT and the appeal to the *clausula rebus sic stantibus* by the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Dmitry Medvedev in 2014 in the context of the Crimean crisis — demonstrating a residual logic of reason of state that is directly at odds with treaty interpretation.



**About the Speaker**

*Nathaniel Boyd* is a post-doctoral researcher on the Leverhulme Trust Research Leadership Award RL-2016-044t – Rethinking Civil Society: History, Theory, Critique, Department of Politics, University of York. He is an Associate Editor for the *Cambridge Reader in the History of Western Political Thought* and has published widely in the field of the history of political thought (Hobbes, Pufendorf, Hegel), classical international law (Vattel) and Hegelian political theory (Kaufmann).