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INTERNATIONAL LAW AS A STRATEGIC WEAPON IN CURRENT CONFLICTS

Call for Papers

Date: 28 May 2027

Venue: University of Valencia

I. PURPOSE

Introduction

The University of Valencia and Pablo de Olavide University are organizing the International Seminar “INTERNATIONAL LAW AS A STRATEGIC WEAPON IN CURRENT CONFLICTS” within the framework of the research projects “Strategies for the Security and Cooperation of the European Union in a Context of Global Instability” (CIAICO/2024/145) and “Lawfare International: The Use of International Law as a Strategic Weapon (LAWFINT)”.

The Seminar aims to analyze the growing use of international law as a strategic instrument in the context of contemporary international relations and, in particular, the phenomenon known as Lawfare.

The strategic use of law can take various forms. It may consist of using legal and judicial instruments to address violations of international law, but also of the interpretation or abusive use of legal rules, procedures, and institutions with the aim of achieving specific political, military, or strategic objectives. This diversity of approaches makes it particularly necessary to advance the conceptual delineation of international Lawfare and to identify its legally relevant elements.

Lawfare is also part of a broader context involving the transformation of forms of conflict and the exercise of international power. Resorting to law may serve as an alternative to the use of force, as a complementary instrument to other strategies, or even as a mechanism intended to prepare or provide a legal justification for certain actions. In this sense, Lawfare may be understood as a phenomenon closely linked to hybrid threats and international security in the current context of global instability.

Lawfare strategies raise important legal questions relating, among other matters, to the interpretation and application of international rules, the principle of good faith, abuse of rights, international responsibility, reprisals, international justice, and the adoption of sanctions. When these strategies develop in the context of armed conflicts, it is likewise necessary to examine their relationship with international humanitarian law.

From this perspective, the Seminar seeks to provide a forum for academic debate on the different ways in which international law can become an element of power and



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confrontation, paying particular attention to its manifestations in current conflicts and to the challenges this poses for maintaining a rules-based international order.

The academic community is therefore invited to submit paper proposals that contribute to deepening the legal, political, and international analysis of Lawfare and the different forms of the strategic use of law.

II. THEMATIC AREAS

Proposals should preferably relate to one of the following thematic areas:

1. Lawfare and International Courts

This area addresses the strategic use of international courts and dispute-settlement mechanisms as instruments of power and to defend the interests of States or other international actors.

Topics may include, among others, the use of international judicial proceedings in situations of conflict, the strategic resort to international courts, the filing of claims as an instrument of political or legal pressure, the reputational effects of international proceedings, and the use of litigation to modify or reinforce particular legal narratives.

Proposals may also address the differences between the legitimate use of international justice mechanisms and practices that may be characterized as Lawfare, as well as the difficulties involved in defining the concept when resorting to courts constitutes a response to an alleged violation of international law.

Particular attention will be paid to issues relating to international justice, international responsibility, the interpretation and application of rules, and good faith, which constitute one of the lines of analysis of the research project.

2. Lawfare and Armed Conflicts

This area focuses on the relationship between Lawfare, the use of force, and armed conflicts.

Law may be used as an instrument of confrontation before, during, or after an armed conflict, either as an alternative to the use of force, as a complementary element of other strategies, or to create the legal or narrative foundations intended to justify certain actions.

Proposals may address the strategic use of rules relating to the use of force, self-defence, occupation, international responsibility, international humanitarian law, or the protection of the civilian population, as well as the manipulation or abusive interpretation of rules applicable to armed conflicts.

Studies on the use of law to obtain strategic advantages on the battlefield, undermine the legitimacy of an adversary, or provoke particular legal or political responses will also be of interest.



3. Economic Lawfare

This area seeks to analyze the strategic use of economic legal instruments and rules as a mechanism for exerting pressure, confrontation, or achieving international objectives.

Proposals may address, among other matters, the strategic use of economic sanctions, restrictive measures, extraterritorial jurisdiction mechanisms, international economic regulation, trade, investment, State assets, financial measures, or legal instruments intended to produce economic effects on other States or international actors.

Contributions examining the legal limits of these practices, their compatibility with international obligations, issues relating to international responsibility, and possible responses to actions that may be considered an abusive or strategic use of law will be particularly welcome.

The relationships between economic Lawfare, international security, contemporary conflicts, and pressure strategies seeking to produce effects similar to those traditionally associated with other instruments of power may also be examined.

4. European Union and Lawfare

This area addresses the relationship between the European Union and the phenomenon of Lawfare, both from the perspective of the Union's own use of legal instruments and from the analysis of strategies directed against the Union or its Member States.

Topics of study may include, among others, the European Union's external action, sanctions and restrictive measures, the rule of law, the protection of fundamental rights, the application of international and European law, the relationship between EU law and international law, and the Union's responses to hybrid threats.

The resilience instruments developed by the European Union in response to the strategic use of law may also be examined, as well as the difficulties involved in identifying and responding to such practices.

The relevance of this area derives, among other considerations, from the fact that the European Union's 2022 Strategic Compass identifies Lawfare as a new tactic employed by States and non-State actors and highlights the need to develop resilience tools in response to this threat.

Proposals may adopt a strictly legal perspective or, where appropriate, incorporate approaches from international relations, political science, security studies, or communications. The multidisciplinary nature is an essential feature of the research project, which expressly encompasses these different perspectives for the study of the phenomenon.



III. FORMAT AND VENUE

The Seminar will be held in person at the University of Valencia on 28 May 2027.

Information on the registration procedure will be published together with the final programme.

IV. SUBMISSION AND ACCEPTANCE OF PROPOSALS

1. Formal Requirements

Those wishing to submit a paper, in Spanish or English, must send the following documents in Word format:

a) A document containing only the following information:

- proposal title;
- full name of the proposer;
- university or affiliated institution;
- academic or professional position;
- email address;

b) A document containing the abstract of the paper proposal.

The abstract must be submitted anonymously, without the proposer's name, and must include:

- proposal title;
- content and research approach;
- methodology, where relevant;
- main issues to be analyzed;
- 3–5 keywords.

The abstract should be 1,000–1,200 words.

c) An abbreviated CV of the proposer, with a maximum length of 2 pages

2. Substantive Content and Evaluation

Proposals will be evaluated by the Scientific Committee according to, among others, the following criteria:

- a) Relevance of the proposal to the purpose and thematic areas of the Seminar.
- b) Quality and coherence of the scientific approach.
- c) Originality and innovative character of the proposal.



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d) Contribution to the legal and/or multidisciplinary study of international Lawfare.

One of the essential objectives of the event is to contribute to conceptual clarity and to legal and diplomatic responses to an international practice that remains insufficiently developed from a legal perspective. Particular consideration will therefore be given to proposals that help advance the identification of specific legal problems, their critical analysis, and the formulation of possible responses.

3. Deadline, Submission Address, and Confirmation of Acceptance

Proposals must be submitted by 30 October 2026 to:

congresolawfarevalencia@gmail.com

Receipt of proposals will be confirmed by email.

The decision regarding the selected proposals will be communicated by 30 January 2027.

Those whose proposals are selected will receive information on the conditions and arrangements for the oral presentation of their papers.

V. PUBLICATION

Acceptance of a paper proposal for oral presentation at the Seminar will not automatically entail acceptance for publication.

If a collective volume containing the results of the Seminar is published, the full texts will be subject to the relevant evaluation in accordance with the editorial criteria and guidelines to be communicated in due course.

VII. ACADEMIC DIRECTION

The Seminar's academic direction is entrusted to:

Prof. Pilar Pozo Serrano. Professor of Public International Law. University of Valencia.

Prof. Antonio Lazari. Associate Professor of Public International Law. Pablo de Olavide University.

Prof. Gloria Fernández Arribas. Associate Professor of Public International Law. Pablo de Olavide University.

Organizing Committee: Celia Martínez Castilla (UPO), Paula Martínez Perpiñá (UV), Alejandro Ramos Miralles (UV)



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VIII. CALENDAR

30 October 2026	Deadline for submission of proposals
30 January 2027	Notification of proposal selection
28 May 2027	Seminar

Organized by: University of Valencia and Pablo de Olavide University.

Within the framework of the projects: R&D&I PID2024-1607180B-IOO, International Lawfare: The Use of International Law as a Strategic Weapon (LAWFINT), funded by MICIU/AEI/10.13039/501100011033/ and “ERDF/EU”, and CIAICO/2024/145 “Strategies for the Security and Cooperation of the European Union in a Context of Global Instability”, funded by the Regional Ministry of Education, Culture, Universities and Employment of the Valencian Government.

Lead Researchers:

Profs. Consuelo Ramón Chornet and Pilar Pozo Serrano. University of Valencia.

Prof. Antonio Lazari. Pablo de Olavide University.