Beyond Hobbesian Legitimacy: Thinking A Way Out Of Neopatrimonialism in Central Asia

*with Jesse Driscoll (University of California, San Diego)*

Despite Tajikistan's impassable mountains, hostile neighborhood, and overall bleak structural inheritance, its civil war was resolved with unusual speed. The Tajik Civil War was settled through the selective co-optation of many different field commanders, many of whom were allowed to retain functional control of men and weapons and disappear into the state security apparatus. In the 1990s, "the state" was a semi-permeable membrane, as various violence entrepreneurs weighed their life opportunities as social bandits against their life opportunities as agents of an internationally recognized sovereign. Many opted for the latter, and elevated their head of state to a position that is completely insulated from regular checks and balances. And so though Tajikistan is still a weak state compared to many of its neighbors, there is an awesome amount of power is centralized in a single human being - Rakhmon. His social legitimacy is built atop what would have been termed "the king's peace" in a previous era: There is no war today, and likely there will be no war tomorrow, because of a process of coalition formation that he personally oversaw. The talk will conclude with a speculative assessment of a set of normative and policy questions that are most urgent to young citizens in Central Asia: Whether and how a more accountable and constrained state apparatus might emerge non-violently over the next generation.

**Jesse Driscoll** is an Assistant Professor at the School of Global Policy and Strategy at the University of California, San Diego. His book, *Warlords and Coalition Politics in Post-Soviet States*, is available through Cambridge University Press in the Studies in Comparative Politics series. His research has been funded by the National Science Foundation.

**Thursday, March 24, 2016**
4:30pm - 6:00pm
1957 E St., NW
Voesar Conference Room, Suite 412
Please RSVP at *go.gwu.edu/driscoll*

*This event is on the record.*