

ZBORNIK POVZETKOV

**6. ŠTUDENTSKA
KONFERENCA** | O MEDNARODNIH
ODNOSIH

Znanje kot oblika upora: študentski pogledi na moč, krizo in
spremembe v mednarodni skupnosti;

Ljubljana, 7. - 8. maj 2026



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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

**THE 6th STUDENT
CONFERENCE** | ON
INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS

Knowledge as Resistance: Student Perspectives on Power,
Crisis and Change in the International Community

Ljubljana, 7 - 8 May 2026



6. Študentska konferenca o mednarodnih odnosih: Znanje kot oblika upora: študentski pogledi na moč, krizo in spremembe v mednarodni skupnosti;

The 6th Student Conference on International Relations:

Knowledge as Resistance: Student Perspectives on Power, Crisis and Change in the International Community

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Izdajatelj in založnik:

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Ljubljana 2026

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Kataložni zapis o publikaciji (CIP) pripravili v Narodni in univerzitetni
knjižnici v Ljubljani

COBISS.SI-ID 290840067

ISBN 978-961-295-164-1 (PDF)



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INTERNATIONAL POLITICS IN MULTIPLEX WORLD

Gerges Abou Faisal, *American University of Science and Technology in Beirut*

Sanctions, Supply Chains, and the Return of Power Politics

This paper examines the transformation of the global political economy through the expanding use of economic sanctions, focusing on the energy value chain rather than state-centric case studies. It argues that sanctions imposed following the Ukraine crisis from 2014 through the full-scale invasion in 2022 and into the present context of 2025 reflect a structural shift away from liberal internationalism toward a security-driven, realist organization of global economic relations. Drawing on realism, liberal institutionalism, and the concept of weaponized interdependence, the paper demonstrates that energy markets have become central instruments of geopolitical power. By analyzing disruptions in energy supply chains, shifts in energy sources and renewables, and their economic and political impacts particularly within the European Union, the study shows that sanctions now function as systemic tools reshaping global governance rather than temporary policy instruments.

Keywords: Economic sanctions, Global political economy, Energy value chain, Weaponized interdependence, European Union energy policy



INTERNATIONAL POLITICS IN MULTIPLEX WORLD

Jan Bevk and Luka Zorko, *University of Ljubljana*

Alliance of Sahel States Combatting Neo-colonialism in an Emerging Multiplex World Order

This article examines how the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) — formed by Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger following military coups in each country — is addressing the structural elements of neo-colonialism, and how the context of an emerging multiplex world shapes these efforts. Drawing on Nkrumah's conception of neo-colonialism and Acharya's notion of a multiplex world, the analysis proceeds through a review of secondary sources organised around two lines of inquiry: the measures the AES is taking to break neo-colonial dependence, and the effect that new partnership opportunities have on those measures. The findings show that the AES is pursuing a comprehensive strategy across the military, political and economic domains, including the expulsion of French and American forces, plans for internal free movement and a common foreign policy, the creation of a common investment bank, and a proposed Sahelian currency intended to reduce reliance on French and European financial institutions. These efforts are facilitated by the relative decline of the West, which has allowed the AES to adopt a multi-alignment strategy and diversify its security and economic partnerships with actors such as Russia, China, Turkey, India and Iran on more favourable and less politically conditioned terms. The article concludes that the multiplex context has expanded the autonomy available to the AES, while noting that the durability of its sovereign development project remains an open question for further research.

Keywords: AES, Neo-colonialism, Multiplex world, Multi-alignment, Sahelian currency



INTERNATIONAL POLITICS IN MULTIPLEX WORLD

Anej Bevk Peternejl, *University of Ljubljana*

Principled but Realistic: Middle Power Foreign Policy Strategy in a Multiplex World Order

Over the past few years, we have witnessed a rise in impunity and disregard for the norms and values of the rules-based liberal international order. With the United States stepping back from its traditional leadership role as the guarantor of the post-Second World War order, a strategic vacuum has begun to emerge. As a result, scholars and politicians alike have started debating the decline of multilateralism and what a transformed international order might look like.

This article explores the “third path” presented by Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney at the World Economic Forum and examines how his vision incorporates principles of pragmatic idealism. Using the descriptions of pragmatic idealism provided by Engberg-Pedersen and Pedersen (2024) and Maloney and Holmberg (2025), I conduct a content analysis of Denmark’s 2023 Foreign and Security Policy Strategy and a discourse analysis of Carney’s speech. The analysis finds that principles of pragmatic idealism are evident in both cases, suggesting that value-driven yet adaptive coalition-building may provide an effective framework for middle- power foreign policy in a changing multiplex world order.

Keywords: Pragmatic Idealism, Middle Power, Foreign Policy Strategy, International Order, Multilateralism



INTERNATIONAL POLITICS IN MULTIPLEX WORLD

Dalai Buarque, *University of Pecs*

The United States' Nouveau Imperialism in the Coming Age of Multipolarity

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the United States has occupied a position of unparalleled influence in international politics. China's accession to the WTO and Russia's transition toward a market economy appeared to reinforce expectations that liberal democracy and economic integration would become universal features of the international system. In the decades since, however, the emergence of new centres of power, alongside rising nationalist and protectionist currents within Western states, has challenged both the unipolar distribution of power and the assumptions underlying the liberal international order.

The second Trump administration has responded to these developments with a foreign policy that places greater emphasis on unilateral action, economic protectionism, and coercive diplomacy. This paper examines the strategic logic underlying this approach and evaluates its potential strengths and weaknesses. It argues that the administration's policies, ranging from trade protectionism to the use of unilateral pressure in international affairs, constitute a coherent attempt to adapt American strategy to an increasingly competitive and multipolar international environment, even if the long-term effectiveness of this adaptation remains uncertain.

Keywords: Unipolarity, Liberal international order, Second Trump administration, Economic protectionism, Multipolarity



INTERNATIONAL POLITICS IN MULTIPLEX WORLD

Maciej Drążczyk, University of Łódź

Polish foreign policy towards Trump's first administration 2017-2020

This study examines Polish foreign policy toward the United States during Donald Trump's first presidential term (2017–2020), analysing it through the theoretical lens of neoclassical realism (NCR). Trump's election triggered a profound crisis in transatlantic relations, marked by a shift from structural to transactional asymmetry, which strained U.S. ties with most European allies. Poland, governed by the Law and Justice party (PiS), constituted a notable exception: instead of perceiving Trump's approach as destabilising, it viewed his administration as an opportunity to deepen bilateral cooperation, particularly in the field of security. Drawing on qualitative analysis of academic literature on Polish–American relations and NCR theory, the study identifies two key variables shaping Poland's behaviour. The independent variable is the international environment transformed by Trump's foreign policy, while the intervening variable consists of PiS's domestic ideological and political preferences.

The findings show that longstanding Polish proAtlanticism, combined with PiS's Americocentric worldview, reinforced Warsaw's pursuit of a stronger U.S. military presence and closer defence cooperation. Initiatives such as the Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement, the "Fort Trump" proposal, and Poland's support for U.S. regional policies reflected this strategic alignment. Ideological affinities between PiS and the Trump administration — including scepticism toward multilateral institutions, criticism of Germany, and a shared populist logic centred on sovereignty — further facilitated bilateral convergence. At the same time, democratic backsliding in Poland complicated relations with parts of the U.S. political establishment, particularly Congress.

Overall, the analysis demonstrates that Polish foreign policy during this period aligns closely with NCR assumptions: systemic pressures originating from the changing international environment were the primary drivers of Poland's strategic choices, while domestic factors shaped the interpretation of these pressures and the specific policy responses adopted by the PiS government.

Keywords: Law and Justice, Trump, Poland, US, Neoclassical Realism



INTERNATIONAL POLITICS IN MULTIPLEX WORLD

Sofia Lohosha, Charles University

The tragedy of small powers: decline of the protective capacity of international law

The fundamental principles of international law are designed to protect state sovereignty and territorial integrity by imposing normative, reputational and legal costs on aggressors. However, power asymmetries reveal that its practical application is uneven, as its protective capacity heavily weakens when major powers selectively comply with legal norms. This paper investigates whether external security guarantees can effectively compensate for the declining deterrent effect of international law when small states face aggression from major powers. Utilizing a qualitative case study approach, the paper analyzes Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, evaluating the breakdown of the 1994 Budapest Memorandum and examining Ukraine's subsequent strategic shift toward NATO and European Union alignments. The analysis reveals that severe differences in material power capabilities allow stronger states to selectively apply legal frameworks without facing consistent, effective punishment. Consequently, traditional legal protections and non-binding political assurances fail when they conflict with a major power's strategic interests, leaving smaller nations disproportionately vulnerable. The paper concludes that neither international law nor alternative security guarantees can provide a reliable shield for small states. Ultimately, these mechanisms only function as effective deterrents if they are genuinely credible and consistently enforced by an international community.

Keywords: International law, Security guarantees, Small states, Russia-Ukraine war, Budapest Memorandum



INTERNATIONAL POLITICS IN MULTIPLEX WORLD

Jack Merret, *Central European University*

Multiplexity and Generative Artificial Intelligence: The Case of Russia

As nations vie for leadership in the field of artificial intelligence, Hunter (2025) finds that, though the US and PRC have assumed a position of global dominance in data infrastructure and the capacity to use it, Russia places in the top three. This paper seeks to qualify this finding. Investment in generative AI has grown since 2022, when Sber CEO German Gref channelled "serious money for the Russian market" into LLMs. Yet projected funding has been steadily downgraded. Russian data centres number just 183—barely 4% of US facilities—with most concentrated in Moscow Oblast. Its domestic chip industry is anaemic, and trade data records an 84% drop in GPU imports since 2022. Despite Russia's vast energy surplus, firms cite difficulties with grid reliability—particularly in the two capitals. Acharya (2017) argues the emerging world order is “a multiplex world”—“a world of multiple modernities.” Yet, as this case study of Russian data centres shows, the challenge of building modernity is as much material as imaginative. As Russian technological backwardness imperils its AI trajectory, Moscow seeks closer cooperation with the PRC, if at the cost of asymmetric technological dependence. This draws into question the viability of a sovereign AI path for Russia, even suggesting the possible emergence of a compound authoritarian slipstream to modernity authored in Beijing. If the asynchronous development of multiple AI trajectories is a signal of the multiplex order, these trajectories are constrained by material path dependencies and, it seems, enmeshed within the logic of one another.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, Russia–China tech dependence, Data centres, Multiplex world, Technological backwardness



INTERNATIONAL POLITICS IN MULTIPLEX WORLD

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EU Migration Policy, State Capacity, and Political Outcomes: Germany and Lebanon in Comparative Perspective

Immigration has become one of the defining political, social, and economic challenges of the twenty-first century, fundamentally reshaping societies and testing the capacity of governments and international organizations to respond effectively. However, the impact of migration policies varies significantly depending on the political institutions, administrative capabilities, and governance structures of individual states. This study examines how European Union (EU) migration policy influences immigration governance both within the EU, using Germany as a member state, and beyond its borders, using Lebanon as a key partner under the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). By comparing these two cases, the research seeks to understand how differences in state capacity shape the implementation and outcomes of EU migration strategies.

The study adopts a primarily qualitative comparative approach supported by selected quantitative data, including migration statistics, refugee population figures, and policy indicators. It analyzes EU migration frameworks, national legislation, institutional responses, and political developments to evaluate how migration governance functions in two very different contexts. Germany benefits from a well-developed legal and administrative framework, substantial financial resources, and direct participation in EU decision-making, allowing it to manage migration challenges with relatively high levels of institutional stability and policy coordination. In contrast, Lebanon experiences significant migration and refugee pressures while facing limited institutional capacity, economic crises, and political fragmentation, making the implementation of migration governance considerably more difficult.

The findings suggest that EU migration policies strengthen governance mechanisms and institutional resilience in member states while simultaneously contributing to the externalization of migration management responsibilities to neighboring countries. This dynamic places a disproportionate burden on countries such as Lebanon, increasing social, economic, and political strain without providing equivalent governance integration or institutional support. The study argues that the effectiveness of migration policy depends not only on the design of EU frameworks but also on the capacity of individual states to implement them. Ultimately, the research highlights the need for more balanced and cooperative migration governance that promotes shared responsibility, institutional development, and long-term regional stability.

Keywords: EU migration policy, Migration governance, State capacity, Germany, Lebanon



INTERNATIONAL POLITICS IN MULTIPLEX WORLD

Aljaž Praznik, *University of Ljubljana*

Why do close partners diverge? The Visegrad Group and EU policy towards Russia under CFSP

This paper examines why the Visegrad Group (V4) — the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia — has struggled to translate longstanding regional cooperation into a coordinated foreign-policy stance toward Russia, and how this lack of pre-coordination interacts with the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) decision-making process. Despite shared history and well-developed institutional channels, the V4 has increasingly become a single-issue grouping with limited reach into foreign and security policy. The paper argues that this fragmentation matters because CFSP operates on unanimity, a rule designed to protect member-state interests but which also creates opportunities for individual states to obstruct or delay collective decisions. Drawing on secondary literature, the paper first situates CFSP's institutional framework and explains why unanimity can mask rather than resolve underlying disagreement among member states. It then traces the roots of V4 divergence to distinct national role conceptions, asymmetric energy dependencies on Russia, and a broader shift toward populist, Eurosceptic foreign policy orientations across the region. Hungary's continued energy ties to Russia are highlighted as a key source of asymmetry relative to its V4 partners. Finally, the paper connects these domestic-level divergences to concrete delays in EU decision-making, using the case of Hungary's repeated blocking of European Peace Facility disbursements and its use of CFSP veto power as leverage in unrelated rule-of-law disputes. The analysis suggests that the absence of V4 pre-coordination is not simply a failure of regionalism, but a structural condition that allows domestic political considerations to shape, and stall EU external action.

Keywords: Visegrad Group, Common Foreign and Security Policy, EU decision-making, unanimity rule, Russia-Ukraine war, regional cooperation, foreign policy coordination



INTERNATIONAL POLITICS IN MULTIPLEX WORLD

Filip Trajkovski, *University of Ljubljana* and **Gjorgji Hadji Vasilev**, *Ss. Cyril*

Between Brussels and Washington: Has North Macedonia's Foreign Policy Alignment Shifted since Donald Trump's Return to the Presidency

This paper examines whether North Macedonia's foreign policy alignment has shifted from an EU-centered orientation towards a US-oriented one, following the government change in Skopje and Donald Trump's return to the presidency in January 2025. Using a dual analytical approach combining foreign policy discourse analysis and behavioral analysis in multilateral diplomacy, the study assesses continuity and change across two distinct dimensions of North Macedonia's foreign policy: official government rhetoric and voting behavior in United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

The discourse analysis reveals a dual trend in the post-January 2025 period. While North Macedonia's official rhetoric has grown warmer and more positive towards the US - particularly in framing the bilateral relationship as a strategic partnership - the European Union remains the country's stated institutional destination. At the same time, official discourse towards the EU accession process has become increasingly assertive and critical, reflecting accumulated frustration with conditionality and blockages rather than abandonment of the country's alignment with the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP).

The voting behavioral analysis, based on 550 UNGA resolutions voted upon during the Biden (2021-2024) and Trump (2025) presidencies, challenges any narrative of foreign policy reorientation towards Washington. Despite a number of controversial exceptions in which North Macedonia voted in line with US positions and contrary to the EU, aggregate voting alignment between the two countries fell substantially, from 52% during Biden's term to 19% under Trump, while its alignment with five key EU member states increased from 82% to 91% over the same period.

The paper concludes that despite ideological affinities between the new conservative governments in both countries and an enhanced bilateral strategic rhetoric, North Macedonia's foreign policy remains structurally oriented towards its partners in the European Union. The observed changes reflect rhetorical recalibration within a broader climate of transatlantic uncertainty rather than a fundamental reorientation of the country's external alignment.

Keywords: North Macedonia foreign policy, EU alignment, US orientation, UNGA voting behavior, Foreign policy discourse analysis



INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL ECONOMY

Marie Josée Dudek, *Lund University*

Colonialism's Quiet Success? Critically Assessing the Impact of Japanese Colonial Rule on South Korean Development

South Korea has frequently been described as a great success story of post-colonial economic development, often related to Japanese colonial rule as facilitating the South Korean developmental state. Recently, however, the Asian colonial modernization thesis and the developmental state concept have been criticized for orientalist underpinnings and proliferation of Western notions of civilization and progress, alongside increasing attention to their impact on national identity construction. By conducting a qualitative single case study, this paper critically examines South Korea's post-colonial economic development through a postcolonial lens, questioning the dominant narrative of Japanese colonial rule as a developmental Springboard.

Interrogating the developmental state framework and its embedded coloniality in the discussion of South Korean economic development, this paper finds that the developmental state thesis foregrounds a Western, universalizing conception of industrial economic development while marginalizing the cultural, political, and societal consequences of Japanese imperial rule. This narrative reflects broader postcolonial critiques of international cooperation and development, in which development is solely understood as economic, neglecting political and societal aspects of the development paradigm. Future research is encouraged to engage post-development and indigenous knowledge concepts for a decolonial re-thinking of development and Japanese – South Korean relations and South Korean development.

Keywords: Postcolonialism, Developmental State, Coloniality, Japanese Colonialism, South Korean Development



INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL ECONOMY

Melisa Durkal, *Central European University*

The Sterling Stag Hunt: Geopolitics, Swap Lines, and the Temporal Politics of Moral Hazard

This paper examines the sterling crisis as a case of institutional breakdown in global capitalism, where discretionary swap lines operated as tools of temporal governance. The puzzle is why the Federal Reserve extended swap support to Britain during the 1964 to 1967 sterling crisis despite the risk of moral hazard. Rather than treating moral hazard as a byproduct of institutional lending or bilateral aid, the paper situates it within the networked hierarchy of central bank cooperation. Methodologically, the paper uses an Empirical Implications of Theoretical Models logic. A modified Stag Hunt model specifies the strategic interaction between a liquidity provider and a recipient government. It identifies when support with adjustment, support with deferral, or withdrawal of support becomes more likely. The model translates geopolitical alignment, renewal credibility, maturity, and ease of access into observable implications as repeated renewals should raise expectations of future support, and informal access should lower the cost of delay. Archival process-tracing evaluates these implications through Fed, Bank of England, Treasury, BIS, and contemporary policy materials. The analysis shows that swap support stabilized sterling while also enabling British authorities to defer devaluation, as sterling instability threatened the dollar-gold system and Anglo-American monetary cooperation. The methodological contribution is twofold. The formal model generates traceable expectations, while archival process-tracing tests, sequences, and refines them. It therefore shows that combining formal modeling with archival process-tracing highlights intertemporal mechanisms in which expectations change over time and shape political outcomes.

Keywords: Sterling crisis, Central bank swap lines, Moral hazard, Formal modeling, Archival process-tracing



INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL ECONOMY

Phuong Le Do Hong, *Zagreb University*

Cost-of-living crisis or price stability: Why the UK and Japan responded differently to post-COVID price pressures?

This research paper examines the divergent economic trajectories and policy responses of the United Kingdom and Japan in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the global energy crisis following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Despite both nations being resource-dependent island economies subjected to identical global supply chain disruptions, their domestic inflationary peaks and policy outcomes differed significantly. Through a comparative case study approach, the analysis assesses which model more effectively protects vulnerable populations during periods of economic calamity. The findings reveal that the UK experienced a severe cost-of-living crisis fuelled by post-Brexit labour shortages and heightened inflation expectations. This led to a wage-price spiral, with nominal wages growing by 5–6% through 2025, further driving up service prices. Integration into European gas spot markets and sanctions on Russian energy caused domestic energy costs to surge, forcing the Bank of England to maintain a hawkish monetary stance to combat persistent inflation. In contrast, Japan maintained price stability by relying on a deeply entrenched “zero-norm” pricing culture, which served as a vital shock absorber against price hikes. Japan’s insulation was further bolstered by long-term, oil-indexed LNG contracts that delayed the global price surge, allowing the Bank of Japan to sustain its ultra-loose monetary policy and Yield Curve Control. While the UK utilised reactive cash transfers that mitigated poverty but failed to curb inflation, Japan employed structural subsidies and price controls that prioritised social stability at the cost of higher fiscal deficits. The analysis concludes that the divergence highlights a fundamental trade-off: Japan prioritised immediate social protection through institutional inertia, while the UK’s reliance on market flexibility exposed its citizens to extreme volatility. Ultimately, both nations are transitioning into a new era of higher interest rates and structural labour shortages, marking the end of the pre-pandemic era of low inflation.

Keywords: Cost-of-living crisis, Inflation dynamics, Monetary policy, Energy price shocks, Social protection



INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL ECONOMY

Ondřej Kujal, *Charles University*

Infrastructure vs. Political Agency: Comparing Energy Decoupling Strategies in Lithuania, Czechia, and Hungary

This research investigates the divergent energy decoupling strategies of post-socialist European states following the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Specifically, it examines how long-term structural constraints, such as established pipeline infrastructure and geography, interact with short-term political agency to determine whether states successfully phase out Russian natural gas or remain dependent. Employing an explanatory mixed-method design, the study utilizes quantitative import volume data alongside a qualitative comparative case study of three historically dependent countries: Lithuania, Czechia, and Hungary.

The analysis reveals that despite sharing similar initial dependencies, these states pursued contrasting energy security paths based on their infrastructural realities and political priorities. Lithuania achieved rapid and total decoupling by April 2022, facilitated by preexisting liquefied natural gas (LNG) infrastructure and a unified political and public consensus. Czechia, lacking direct access to the sea and immediate efficient infrastructure, experienced a delayed phase-out as the administration balanced energy security objectives with the economic burdens of external LNG supplies. Hungary actively diverged from the broader European trend, resisting decoupling to prioritize affordable Russian gas for domestic economic stability while actively opposing EU-level energy sanctions.

Ultimately, the paper concludes that successful energy decoupling relies heavily on both infrastructural readiness and robust political will, resulting in varied outcomes across Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). However, the diverging energy policies of the EU member states in the CEE region are likely to converge in the near future as a result of the mandatory EU-wide ban on Russian gas imports taking effect in 2027.

Keywords: Energy decoupling, Russian natural gas, Infrastructure constraints, Political agency, Central and Eastern Europe



INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL ECONOMY

Jaša Potočnik, *University of Ljubljana*

Internal Accumulation Pressures and Semi-Peripheral Constraint: China in the 2024 Sicomines Renegotiation

This paper examines whether China's rise represents a transition to core status or remains constrained by semi-peripheral dynamics through the framework of World-Systems Theory (WST). While contemporary accounts of global value chains and geoeconomic power often suggest that industrial upgrading and control over strategic sectors increase states' capacity to shape external economic relations, this paper argues that China's ascent instead reproduces structural constraints at a higher level of integration. Building on Minqi Li's conception of China as a semi-peripheral economy, the analysis extends existing WST scholarship and treats China as a test case for assessing how semi-peripheral dynamics persist under conditions of advanced industrial upgrading and deep global integration. It thereby locates semi-peripheral constraint not only in the hierarchical structure of the world-economy but also within the internal dynamics of capital accumulation.

The paper focuses on China's electric vehicle sector, where persistent overcapacity and low profitability intensify the need for secure and low-cost access to strategic inputs, particularly cobalt. This dependence links domestic accumulation pressures to external economic behaviour, limiting the extent to which industrial expansion can be translated into bargaining power abroad. The 2024 renegotiation of the Sicomines agreement between China and the Democratic Republic of the Congo serves as a critical case study in this regard. Despite China's dominant position in downstream battery production and substantial ownership stakes in Congolese mining, the revised agreement required increased Chinese infrastructure commitments, illustrating the limits imposed by dependence on territorially fixed resources under sovereign control.

Rather than demonstrating a successful transition toward core status, the Sicomines case suggests that industrial upgrading may reinforce rather than overcome semi-peripheral constraint. The paper therefore argues that China's experience supports key insights of WST by showing how internal accumulation pressures and external resource dependence jointly reproduce structural limits on economic power.

Keywords: World-Systems Theory, Semi-periphery, China, Electric vehicles, Sicomines agreement



INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL ECONOMY

Julian Szyburski, *University of Łódź*

The emergence of the “Migration State”: Poland’s Political Economy Response to the Ukrainian Refugee Crisis

This essay examines the process of Poland's transformation into a "migration state" in the wake of the refugee crisis triggered by the Russian aggression against Ukraine. The theoretical framework of the paper is based on James F. Hollifield's concepts, specifically the "liberal paradox," which posits that to maintain a competitive advantage, states must keep their economies open, even though migration carries a higher security and political risk than capital. The primary objective of the text is to evaluate the economic and social consequences of this forced transition and to determine whether Poland has been able to profit from its new role.

On the economic front, the essay presents a clearly positive balance of this transition. Drawing on data from the Narodowy Bank Polski (NBP), it highlights the extraordinary labor market activity of Ukrainian refugees. Although their unemployment rate remains higher than that of Polish citizens, it has been steadily declining since the start of the conflict, reaching 20% in 2024. Furthermore, an increasing number of refugees are securing high-skilled positions, while the share of those relying on social security payouts dropped from 60% in 2022 to 50% in 2025, thereby relieving the state budget. Another crucial driver is Ukrainian entrepreneurship; the massive influx of sole proprietorships and limited liability companies has effectively made Ukraine the largest foreign investor in Poland. This collective economic impact is reflected in the GDP, to which refugees contributed an estimated 2.7% by 2024.

Conversely, in line with the liberal paradox, the essay synthesizes the potential drawbacks and security risks to the state order. An analysis of yearly research by the Mieroszewski Centre reveals a troubling trend of growing mutual hostility. The percentage of Poles expressing a negative attitude toward Ukrainians rose to 35% in 2025, while negative sentiments among Ukrainians also experienced a sharp relative increase.

In conclusion, the author asserts that while the transition to a migration state has yielded tangible economic benefits, the rising social tensions pose a meaningful security threat that requires immediate and decisive policy action from the government.

Keywords: Migration state, Liberal paradox, Poland, Ukrainian refugees, Social tensions



INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

Evgenija Iljevka, *University Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Skopje*

Political deadlock and Power Politics in the United Nations Security Council: Reassessing the Uniting for Peace Resolution as a circumvention mechanism on the P5's veto power

The veto power of the P5 members of the United Nations Security Council has long been considered as one of the principal obstacles to the effective maintenance of international peace and security. Although it was originally established to preserve institutional stability and balance participation between the major powers, the veto has frequently resulted in political deadlock, preventing collective action in cases where peace is threatened. This paper examines the Uniting for Peace Resolution 377(A) as a potential circumvention mechanism for the Security Councils' paralysis and evaluates its effectiveness within the broader framework of power politics. By using qualitative research approach, the study analyses primary sources, such as the United Nations Charter and the Uniting for Peace Resolution, as well as secondary academic literature. The focus is put on the case of Palestine in 1997, which illustrates both the possibilities and the limitations of the General Assembly's increased role when the Security Council fails to act. Furthermore, this paper argues that the Security Council's functioning is often influenced by national and geopolitical interests, rather than by impartial legal assessment. Based on Martin Wight's Machiavellian/Hobbesian tradition, the study demonstrates how the international community remains characterised by competition for power, where legal and moral norms possess limited independent authority. In this context, the Uniting for Peace Resolution offers an institutional alternative by enabling the General Assembly to make recommendations for collective measures on different issues. Nevertheless, its non-binding nature and reliance on the political will of member states substantially limit its capacity to provide meaningful outcomes. These findings suggest that, while the Uniting for Peace Resolution can partially reduce the consequences of the veto-driven paralysis and strengthen multilateral responses, it cannot fully overcome the structural dominance of the P5 members. Therefore, maintaining international peace and security remains closely tied to the realities of power politics within the contemporary international order.

Keywords: UN Security Council veto, Uniting for Peace, General Assembly, Palestine, Power politics



INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

Petra Kartela, *University of Vienna*

The Abuse of Veto Power and the UN Security Council's Response to Mass Atrocities: Syria and Israel–Palestine

This study examines how the [mis]use of veto power by the permanent members (P5) of the United Nations Security Council has weakened the Council's ability to fulfil its main responsibility: the maintenance of international peace and security. The paper focuses on the escalation of the Gaza war following the Hamas-led attacks of 7 October 2023. This case was chosen because it represents an example of mass atrocities involving serious civilian suffering and concerns about violations of international humanitarian law. It has resulted in repeated attempts by Security Council members to adopt resolutions on humanitarian pauses, ceasefires, and civilian protection. However, none of these resolutions led to a permanent ceasefire. The inability to stop the war has raised serious questions about the Council's credibility and effectiveness. Although the majority of the Security Council members supported draft resolutions calling for a ceasefire, these were blocked by the vetoes of permanent members. This created the impression that some states, or their allies, are shielded from accountability. The veto power has therefore often allowed permanent members to block collective action when their strategic interests or alliances are involved. The paper argues that the main problem is not the existence of the veto itself, but its misuse, particularly in situations where urgent collective action is essential. The findings show that veto use in the Israel–Palestine conflict has contributed to institutional paralysis and has turned the Council into an arena of geopolitical competition rather than effective civilian protection. As a result, the Security Council's legitimacy, neutrality, and effectiveness in maintaining international peace and security are seriously undermined.

Keywords: UN Security Council; veto power; permanent members; P5; Israel–Palestine conflict; mass atrocities; international peace and security; civilian protection; collective action; accountability; Security Council reform; geopolitical interests.



INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

Nicole Kasa, *University of Trieste*

Rewriting the Rules from Within: BRICS and the Normative Recalibration of UN Peacekeeping

United Nations peacekeeping has long been associated with the liberal peace paradigm, emphasizing democratization, human rights, and institutional reform, largely shaped by Western powers. Over the past two decades, however, BRICS countries have become increasingly prominent as troop contributors, financial supporters, and norm-shapers within UN peacekeeping operations. This shift raises a central question: does BRICS participation constitute a fully illiberal alternative to the liberal peace paradigm, or does it primarily reinterpret existing UN norms in a more state-centric, sovereignty-heavy direction?

This paper argues that BRICS involvement contributes to a post-liberal, state-centric reinterpretation of peacekeeping norms rather than a wholly distinct illiberal model. By prioritizing sovereignty, consent, and host-state ownership, BRICS actors — with China playing a particularly prominent norm-shaping role — push UN missions toward stabilization-oriented frameworks that coexist with, rather than replace, liberal norms. This dynamic reflects what scholars describe as "sovereign internationalism," wherein multiple normative orders are negotiated within existing multilateral institutions rather than outside them.

Two African missions illustrate this trend in practice. MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and UNMISS in South Sudan both display mandate language that foregrounds host-state authority and stabilization priorities, while liberal goals such as human rights protection and democratic consolidation are progressively subordinated to regime stability and sovereignty concerns. BRICS influence thus reconfigures liberal peacebuilding toward a logic in which state authority is not traded away for institutional transformation. In conclusion, what BRICS peacekeeping reveals is not the collapse of the liberal international order, but something far more consequential: its silent, incremental transformation into something the West no longer fully controls or recognizes.

Keywords: BRICS, liberal peace, illiberal peacebuilding, sovereignty, UN peacekeeping



INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

Arij Keenan, *University of Miskolc*

Collective Security versus National Interests in United Nations Security Council Decision-Making: The Case of Syria

This study examines how the national interests of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council shaped collective security decision making during the Syrian crisis from 2011 onwards. The central question guiding this research is: how did the national interests of the P5 reshape the collective security measures in the Council's decision making process in Syria? Drawing on a qualitative case study approach, the paper analyses draft resolutions, official voting records, veto patterns, and statements made by the permanent members throughout the crisis. The findings reveal three key dynamics. First, the veto was not used as a last resort mechanism but as a routine instrument of national interest, with Russia casting 14 vetoes and China casting 8 between 2011 and 2019, effectively paralysing the Council's enforcement capacity. Second, material and normative interests operated simultaneously, as Russia sought to protect its military presence in Tartus and its arms market, while both Russia and China invoked sovereignty and non-interference norms, reinforced by their reading of the Libya intervention, to block the application of the Responsibility to Protect. Third, the Western permanent members' advocacy for collective action was weakened by their own inconsistencies, most notably the entanglement of humanitarian justifications with regime change objectives and the credibility gap created by the unenforced chemical weapons red line. Together, these dynamics reduced the Council from a collective security institution to an arena of great power rivalry, contributing to over 400,000 deaths and the displacement of more than 11 million people, while pushing conflict management outside the UN framework entirely. The study concludes that the Council's failures in Syria are not circumstantial but structural, rooted in a design that makes collective action contingent on great power consensus, and that meaningful reform remains one of the most pressing challenges in international peace and security.

Keywords: United Nations Security Council, collective security, national interest, veto power, Syria, Responsibility to Protect, great power politics



INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

Stefan Mandić, *University of Belgrade*

Nature and Implications of Serbia's neutrality: A Matter of Identity or Strategic Necessity?

The paper touches upon the question, the meaning and the nature of Serbia's military neutrality post 2022 and the beginning of War in Ukraine. The research employs qualitative discourse analysis and interpretation in mainstream media that embody the views of ruling elites, highlighting their agency in forming dominant narratives that shape perceptions of neutrality. The paper commences by showing two primary foundations of this country's neutrality. First one is rooted in ideational factors tied to identity and ontological security, understood as a need to feel secure and certain in "who we are" (Mitzen 342, 2006). The other one is grounded in hard realist assumptions focusing on material factors such as the balance of power, strategy and security and energy dependence.

The paper analyses 60 media appearances of political actors in Serbia, both from the ruling parties and the opposition (from 2022 to 2026), applies qualitative analysis of public and media and pattern detection, and then classifies them into 2 groups (materialist and ideational) with 4 categories that represent dominant narratives connected to questions of neutrality. I then proceed to apply both constructivist and realist analytical framework to the Serbian case addressing the research question concerning the nature of neutrality. Findings suggest that ideational forces and narratives are far more represented in politicians' public appearances, which implies that they can be seen as agents that shape meaning of neutrality. It also shows that *raison d'être* of military neutrality can be better explained and traced back to questions of identity and ontological reasons, rather than just material factors.

Keywords: Serbia, Neutrality, Identity, Ontological Security



INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS

Jos Breznik, Rosa Erb, Rieke Mampaey, *University of Ljubljana*

The rhetorical divergence between the United States and Chinese interpretation of the principle but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities and its effects on the international community since 2015

The principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC) is a foundational element of international environmental law, yet its interpretation remains contested. Existing literature highlights a fundamental tension within the principle: developed nations tend to emphasise capability-based differentiation, while developing nations focus on historical responsibilities. Addressing a distinct research gap connecting these legal interpretations to state rhetorical strategies, this paper investigates: How has the divergence between United States and Chinese interpretations of CBDR-RC evolved? Through a comparative case study utilising qualitative content and discourse analysis, this research evaluates official statements, Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and secondary literature from the adoption of the 2015 Paris Agreement to the present. The texts are analysed across four core normative components of the principle: responsibility, capabilities, equity, and development status. The analysis reveals a stark normative and strategic divergence. The United States interprets CBDR-RC dynamically, focusing on current “national circumstances”, economic capabilities, and forward-looking equity, though its international climate engagement remains highly inconsistent and heavily dependent on the presiding presidential administration. In contrast, China consistently frames the principle as a non-negotiable core tenet anchored in the historical responsibility of developed nations. Despite being the world’s largest current emitter, China strictly maintains itself as a proactive leader of the Global South. Ultimately, the study concludes that this divergence has transcended a mere legal dispute, becoming a deeply strategic and rhetorical contest over the meaning of fairness and leadership in global climate governance. The institutionalised “interpretative pluralism” of the Paris Agreement accommodates broad global participation but sustains foundational disagreements, ensuring that CBDR-RC continues to serve as both a unifying framework and a persistent source of tension in the international climate regime.

Keywords: CBDR-RC, Paris Agreement, climate justice, United States–China climate policy, interpretative pluralism



INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS

Lea Fabjan, Teja Pejić, and Izidor Slapnik, *University of Ljubljana*

Planned Relocation and International Law: Addressing Protection Gaps for Climate-Affected Populations

Nowadays, climate change is pushing us into a time of change, bringing more intense floods, rising sea levels, erosion, and other natural disasters that threaten the very existence and survival of communities around the world. Faced with this serious reality, both governments and communities are seeking approaches to adaptation, including those that involve planned relocation, defined as the organized movement of individuals or groups to a new location where they can rebuild their lives. It can be voluntary or involuntary and can happen within or across borders. Regardless of its ability to tackle climate risks, it is often seen as a measure of last resort, and can even lead to new challenges. Despite its complexity, it is being seriously considered as a solution. The urgency of this issue is evident in the Pacific region, where planned relocations have long been part of adaptive strategies, which sparked our interest in focusing on researching data from this region. Both primary legal documents and academic literature assess climate-related planned relocation across different legal regimes. Our research shows that international human rights law protects basic rights, but doesn't establish a correlation between their protection and climate change. International climate law acknowledges the need to relocate but fails to impose a legally binding obligation on states to accept relocated communities. International refugee law excludes climate-mobility from its scope of protection. Although more legally non-binding documents have been signed on the regional level, the international refugee law regime still doesn't recognise environmental hazards as justification for refugee status and doesn't protect them. Pacific regional documents mainly focus on regional security and loss of community cultural heritage, instead of preparing specific strategies for relocation. This paper concludes that the fragmentation of international law, weak preventive measures, and vagueness of legally binding documents don't give inhabitants of threatened territories much hope for a better future.

Keywords: Climate-induced relocation, International human rights law, International refugee law, Pacific region, Legal fragmentation



INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS

Neža Ferlinc, Lin Gombač and Šárka Tomečková, *University of Ljubljana*

The First of Its Kind: United Nations Compensation Commissions role in environmental damage reparations following the 1991 Gulf War

The environmental harm caused by Iraq during the 1991 Gulf War represents one of the most significant cases of warfare-caused environmental damage in history. Following the war, the United Nations established the United Nations Compensation Commission (UNCC) to provide compensation for damage caused as a result of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, including environmental damage addressed under the F4 category. Drawing on a qualitative analysis of key United Nations documents, this paper examines how the UNCC operationalized environmental damage with the focus being on definition, valuation and implementation of the F4 category and environmental reparations. The findings show that the UNCC recognised environmental harm as compensable for the first time and awarded approximately 4,3 billion US dollars for environmental restoration, however the damages were limited to those directly caused by the invasion of Iraq. The UNCC used innovative methods, such as Habitat Equivalency Analysis, to assess non-commercial environmental resources. The implementation was supported through the Follow-up Programme for Environmental Awards, which ensured transparency and compliance due to independent reviewers and oversight by the Governing Council. The paper concludes that the UNCC established an innovative framework and set an important precedent for future approaches to environmental restoration following armed conflicts.

Keywords: environmental reparations, Gulf War, United Nations Compensation Commission, post-conflict restoration



INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS

Ksenija Todorović, *University of Belgrade* and **Dunja Trifunović**, *Union University*

Hybrid Influence and EU climate governance: Economic-Cost Disinformation Narratives in the 2025 German Federal Election

Across Europe, foreign and domestic actors increasingly deploy information manipulation as an instrument of political influence during electoral cycles, practices conceptualised within policy and irregular-warfare scholarship as Foreign and Domestic Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI/DIMI). This study examines how EU climate and energy policy became a vector for such activity during the 2025 German federal election, when the European Green Deal and Energiewende emerged as prominent targets of cost-centred disinformation narratives. Using a keyword-based search strategy, a database of 50 German-language online sources disseminated between September 2024 and March 2025 across X, Tik Tok and mainstream outlets including BILD, FOCUS, Tichys Einblick and Berliner Zeitung. Entries were coded binarily for thematic presence and analysed through frequency counts. The Energiewende appeared in approximately 92% of observed content, overwhelmingly in negative association with economic harm, excessive cost, policy failure and industrial risk; economic burden featured in 66% of entries, policy failure in 52% and grid instability in 34%. The analysis finds that, rather than fabricated falsehoods, selective framing predominates, linking climate and energy policy to economic decline, attributing perceived failure to Green Party leadership and citing economists, grid operators and industry figures to lend credibility. The study further situates these narratives within a broader hybrid-influence context, noting evidence that authentic German media articles critical of the Greens were repurposed by the Russian-linked Dopplgänger operation, a possible shift from earlier tactics of mimicking credible outlets, alongside cross-domain sabotage targeting the Greens. While direct attribution to a coordinated campaign cannot be established, the findings indicate that selective narrative framing across social and mainstream media contributes to negative sentiment toward German climate policy and reflects an evolving strategy among foreign actors who adopt domestically resonant narratives to advance broader objectives.

Keywords: Information manipulation (FIMI/DIMI), EU climate and energy policy, 2025 German federal election, Discontent framing, Hybrid influence operations



THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION: CLOSING THE CAPABILITY-EXPECTATION GAP?

Matúš Bušniak, *Charles University*

From Rhetoric to Reality: The Capability-Expectations Gap in EU Defence Policy after the Invasion of Ukraine

The 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine was a fundamental challenge to the European Union's traditional role as a "Normative Power", revealing a stark dichotomy between its elevated security ambitions and the material over-reliance on the US-led NATO capabilities. The paper analyses this development with the concept of "capability-expectations gap" by Christopher Hill and the "Capability" dimension of the model of EU actorness by Charlotte Bretherton and John Vogler. It addresses the core research question: How has the Russian invasion of Ukraine affected the capability-expectations gap in the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)?

This paper first assesses the increased rhetorical expectations of the EU through qualitative content analysis. These policies, established via landmark frameworks such as the Strategic Compass and the EU-Ukraine Joint Security Commitments, portray the EU as a key military guarantor able to act autonomously. Secondly, the research contrasts the ambitions with the empirical reality of the EU's material tools. Assessments of the European Defence Industry Transformation Roadmap and the Ukraine Assistance Fund (UAF) reveal systemic weaknesses that have become entrenched in the EU's industrial base, such as slow production lines and sluggish battlefield deliveries.

Results indicate that the Russian invasion has not reduced the capability-expectations gap. Instead, the gap has moved and grown, with political convergence and massive strategic rhetoric moving much faster than the slow increase in actual material capabilities. The paper concludes that while the war has moved forward the EU's security guarantees, ESA is still an aspirational future goal and not a current reality. The EU needs to bring its defence industrial bases and deployable capabilities in line with its high geopolitical rhetoric, or continue to be fundamentally dependent on third party security providers.

Keywords: Capability-expectations gap, EU actorness, Common Security and, Defence Policy (CSDP), Russian invasion of Ukraine, Defence industrial base



THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION: CLOSING THE CAPABILITY-EXPECTATION GAP?

Andrej Chochoski, *University of Pecs*

EU Enlargement Geopolitics: The Case of the Western Balkans amid the War in Ukraine

The War in Ukraine in 2022 fundamentally reshaped the European Union's (EU) approach toward the issue of enlargement and regional integration. The new enlargement agenda became a geopolitical one, especially toward the Western Balkans (WB), as this is a region with a strategic importance for the EU, and a region where the EU seeks to curb foreign influence. The paper examines the role that the War in Ukraine played in changing the enlargement dynamics toward the WB, through a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative analysis is utilised for the comparison of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) funding allocated for the WB between the period of 2019 to 2024 and their respective rankings on the Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index for the same period. Qualitative analysis is utilised for revisiting the External Incentives Model (EIM) developed as a tool for analysing the countries acceding to the EU, however analysed for the WB amid the recent developments and transformations in the enlargement strategy. The findings showcase that the EU has mainly focused on maintaining stability in the WB as opposed to the rigidity of enacting democratic reforms, working on improving the rule of law, and decreasing the levels of corruption. Second, the qualitative analysis shows that the EIM have faltered on all accounts, since the EU has mainly focused on balancing between foreign influence and the need to maintain its own momentum in the WB as the most credible reward. The paper concludes that the War in Ukraine has indeed had a transformative effect on the EU enlargement strategy toward the WB, however in the process has created a pattern on 'Balkan exceptionalism' by focusing on regime stability, instead on reforms.

Keywords: enlargement, war in Ukraine, Western Balkan, European Union



THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION: CLOSING THE CAPABILITY-EXPECTATION GAP?

Francesco Marassi, *University of Trieste*

Youth Perceptions of the Legitimacy and Effectiveness of the European Union in a Time of Global Change

Recent global transformations—including the decline of multilateralism, geopolitical tensions, and economic and climate crises—have shaped citizens' expectations of supranational institutions. Young Europeans evaluate the EU not only on the basis of its formal authority but also on its ability to address concrete challenges affecting their daily lives, such as employment, social protection, climate change, and inequality.

Legitimacy refers to the belief that EU institutions exercise authority in a justified, representative, and acceptable manner. Effectiveness denotes the perceived capacity of the EU to deliver tangible outcomes and address real problems. For young people, legitimacy increasingly depends on institutional performance and responsiveness to their needs.

Research Question: How do young Europeans perceive the legitimacy and effectiveness of EU institutions?

The study uses a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data come from the 2025 Eurobarometer Youth Survey, which examines trust in EU institutions and youth political priorities. Qualitative evidence is drawn from youth consultations, public debates, and digital platforms such as the EU Youth Dialogue and Your Europe, Your Say, which collect proposals to improve EU governance. Combining these methods allows for an understanding of both general trends and the motivations behind youth perceptions, highlighting the connection between trust, institutional performance, and active participation.

Keywords: EU legitimacy, Perceived effectiveness. Young Europeans, EU institutions, Mixed-methods research



THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION: CLOSING THE CAPABILITY-EXPECTATION GAP?

Maria Parthena Moula, *Malmö University*

Terrorist propaganda and digital actors: the algorithmic impact on radicalisation and power in the contemporary international order

This paper examines how terrorist propaganda adapts to and within a digital ecosystem increasingly shaped by algorithmic logics, focusing specifically on visual platforms such as TikTok and Pinterest. In the contemporary international order, these platforms – designed to maximise user engagement through personalised recommendations, aesthetic interaction and rapid content consumption – can be exploited by terrorist organisations to disseminate narratives, shape perceptions and influence audiences through short-form videos, images, trends and visually appealing content. Unlike traditional propaganda channels, these environments enable extremist actors to reach users indirectly through algorithmic amplification, often blurring the boundaries between entertainment, political communication and ideological messaging.

The analysis explores how the recommendation systems of both platforms influence patterns of exposure, visibility and virality, potentially facilitating processes of radicalisation among vulnerable individuals. Particular attention is paid to the role of algorithms in prioritising emotionally charged content and creating personalised information environments that may reinforce existing beliefs and increase engagement with extremist material. Furthermore, the paper investigates the ways in which terrorist groups adapt their communication strategies to platform-specific affordances, employing visual aesthetics, popular cultural references and participatory formats to enhance the appeal and circulation of their messages.

Beyond the dynamics of online radicalisation, the study situates these developments within broader debates on power and governance in the digital age. It argues that algorithmically mediated platforms contribute to a redistribution of power among state, non-state and corporate actors, raising important questions regarding content moderation, platform responsibility and the regulation of extremist communication in an increasingly interconnected global information environment.

Keywords: Terrorist propaganda, Algorithmic amplification, Visual platforms , Online radicalisation, Platform governance



THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION: CLOSING THE CAPABILITY-EXPECTATION GAP?

David Tomažič, *University of Ljubljana*

Capability-Expectations Gap in European Space Policy: EU-ESA Institutional Fragmentation

While the EU is still largely focused on civilian space activities, it has increasingly adopted a more strategic approach, using space for security and defence purposes, framing it as a central component of the European pursuit of strategic autonomy. As the EU lacks the necessary technical capabilities to independently develop and manage its own space programmes, ESA has become its key partner in implementing space projects. However, growing EU security-related demands have intensified disagreements with ESA, given that its cooperation is limited to “exclusively peaceful purposes.” This division of labour, combined with ESA’s peaceful-purpose mandate, has a negative impact on the EU’s capacity to pursue strategic autonomy in space. The objective of this research was therefore to examine how EU-ESA institutional fragmentation constrains the EU’s pursuit of strategic autonomy in space and generates a capability-expectations gap in European space policy. A qualitative case study was conducted, identifying expectations from a key European Commission space policy document, the European Union Space Strategy for Security and Defence, while assessing capabilities from secondary sources. The analysis uses three key concepts: institutional fragmentation, EU strategic autonomy in space, and the capability-expectations gap. In the findings, I argue that diverging priorities between ESA’s focus on peaceful uses of space and the EU’s growing security ambitions limit the EU’s ability to act autonomously, as it remains dependent on ESA for programme design and development. Moreover, fragmented governance further reduces the coherence and consistency of EU space policy, while reliance on programme-specific cooperation undermines the implementation of its space programme. In addition, duplication of efforts and tensions in funding allocation produce inefficiencies and weaken the EU’s long-term control over its space capabilities. I conclude that EU-ESA institutional fragmentation constrains the EU’s strategic autonomy in space across several interrelated policy areas, reinforcing a capability-expectations gap.

Keywords: EU, ESA, institutional fragmentation, capability-expectations gap, EU strategic autonomy in space, European space policy



EUROPEAN UNION NORMATIVE POWER: LEGAL VS. POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Jana Andreska, *University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius*

Between Normative and Hard Power: The European Union's External Action in a Changing International Order

This paper examines the evolving nature of the European Union's external action in a changing international order, focusing on the dynamic between its traditional "normative power" and emerging "hard power" capabilities. The study employs Ian Manners' (2002) conceptualization of the normative power of the European Union as its capacity to reshape understandings of what constitutes "normal" in international relations. Within a context of transatlantic uncertainty, Trump's "America First" strategy emphasized the US's unilateral action and posed a challenge to institutionalized multilateralism. In addition, his outspoken disbelief in narratives of a values-based transatlantic West called into question the reliability of the United States as Europe's principal security partner – prompting the EU to complement its value-based approach with strategic and material capabilities. These shifts in transatlantic relations were further intensified by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, which marked a critical turning point in European security, reintroducing hard geopolitics. Since peace and security concerns have become central to this equation of strained international interdependence, the focus has increasingly shifted toward strengthening the EU's security and defense mechanisms as a logical, strategic necessity in safeguarding the Union's stability. Methodologically, this study adopts a qualitative approach, based on the analysis of secondary literature, in order to address how the security dilemma conceptualizes the EU's external action as it moves toward a more assertive and strategically autonomous actor, and how the Union reconciles its self-conception as a normative power with the increasing necessity to develop hard power capabilities. The analysis indicates that the strategic autonomy formally articulated in the 2016 EU Global Strategy as the EU's "ability to act autonomously when and where necessary," has become part of the EU's renewed international identity, serving as a powerful vehicle for the long-term affirmation of the Union as both a normative and sovereign global actor.

Keywords: European Union, normative power, hard power, security dilemma, strategic autonomy



EUROPEAN UNION NORMATIVE POWER: LEGAL VS. POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Valentina Barone, *University of Passau*

EU Normative Power under Pressure: When Law confronts Geopolitics in Serbia and Albania

In an era of mounting geopolitical competition, the Western Balkans have emerged as a key test case for the European Union's normative power. This paper examines how the EU reconciles normative commitment to rule-of-law standards with its strategic interest in maintaining regional stability within the context of the EU enlargement process. The research asks to what extent EU legal conditionality is adapted under geopolitical pressure and whether it continues to function as a tool of resistance or transformation under geopolitical Constraints.

Drawing on a qualitative comparative analysis of Serbia and Albania based on recent European Commission reports, the paper argues that EU conditionality is not applied uniformly, but operates as a strategically differentiated instrument shaped by external geopolitical pressures and domestic governance conditions. In Serbia, alternative external alignments with actors such as Russia and China reduce EU leverage, resulting in a more flexible and politically pragmatic application of conditionality and the emergence of "stabilitocracy" dynamics. In contrast, Albania demonstrates how stronger Euro-Atlantic anchoring, particularly through NATO membership and foreign policy alignment, enables more intrusive and transformative forms of EU legal conditionality, including judicial reform and an anti-corruption vetting process.

The findings suggest that EU conditionality in the Western Balkans functions less as a consistent normative framework and more as a context-dependent governance tool shaped by geopolitical constraints. This differentiated application highlights tensions within the EU's normative credibility and the coherence of its enlargement policy.

Keywords: EU conditionality, differentiated conditionality, European Union enlargement, Western Balkans, normative power Europe, geopolitical pressures



EUROPEAN UNION NORMATIVE POWER: LEGAL VS. POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Mohammad Ehsan Behbani, *University of Miskolc*

From Soft Norms to Hard Rules: The Extraterritorial Impact of EU Strategic Sovereignty on Labor Relations along the EU China Corridor

This study examines the structural evolution of the European Union's regulatory relationship with China regarding labour and human rights governance. Historically operating as a "normative power" reliant on soft, non-binding mechanisms, the EU has increasingly shifted toward unilateral "hard law" instruments to combat "social dumping" and protect the competitiveness of European firms. Key regulatory measures, including the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) and the Forced Labour Regulation, leverage the theory of "Brussels Effect" to mandate global compliance with International Labour Organization (ILO) standards.

However, the research identifies a critical, bidirectional "structural compliance gap" that undermines these objectives. Apparently, European multinationals operating in China face legal and operational barriers to compliance due to state-controlled labour structures, the monopoly of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU), and restrictions on independent auditing. Inwardly, the expansion of Chinese firms into the EU internal market introduces management practices that weaken collective bargaining. This inward dynamic is often enabled by member states' bilateral engagements with China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The text argues that these bilateral arrangements create a constitutional tension with the EU's duty of sincere cooperation under Article 4(3) TEU, fragmenting external policy and undermining regulatory uniformity.

The study concludes that while the EU exercises strategic sovereignty through robust trade conditionality, it functions as an asymmetrical regulatory superpower. It possesses a vast external reach but lacks internal consistency and enforcement capacity. Without systemic reforms such as introducing a CSDDD safe harbour for structurally constrained jurisdictions, implementing EU-level screening for Belt and Road Initiative type agreements, and amending the Posting of Workers Directive to mandate worker representation for foreign firms, the EU's hard-law approach will merely generate procedural compliance rather than substantive social reform.

Keywords: EU sovereignty, EU-China labour relations, Europe Normative power



EUROPEAN UNION NORMATIVE POWER: LEGAL VS. POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Jiří Brychta, *Charles University*

The Power of Law vs. the Power of Bombs: Balancing EU Legal Principles and Flexibility Under Geopolitical Pressure

To address rising geopolitical tensions and resulting threats to "European" norms, European institutions have responded by circumventing certain rigidities of European law to increase the Union's ability to assert its power in the world. Critics could point out that by doing so, the EU is moving into the territory of internal threats to its norms, such as the Rule of Law or the principle of democracy. In this paper, we aim to explore this balancing act in the EU legal system. Global developments in the 2010s and especially in the 2020s pose a significant challenge to the rigid system of European law as a tool protecting a norms-based identity. Mitigation of and adaptation to this external stress would arguably require more flexibility and power concentration on the European level. However, the reform of primary law, which would lead to higher flexibility when facing foreign pressures, seems quite unlikely at the time of writing. Working with a certain degree of flexibility "around" the existing EU law could lead to "endogenous" risks to the underlying "EU norms" as it can itself help to undermine certain aspects of the "rule of law" or lead to an increase in the EU's democratic "deficit". The currently governing elites are walking a tight rope when balancing flexibility, rule of law, and principles of democracy via the emergence of "informal law" increasingly relying on soft law instruments, which might decrease democratic oversight. This tension in EU legal governance leads us to the following research question: How is the EU legal system balancing the increasing external and internal pressure on its core norms?

Keywords: EU legal system, Rule of law, Democratic deficit, Informal law, Soft law instruments



EUROPEAN UNION NORMATIVE POWER: LEGAL VS. POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

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Shifts in the European Commission's LGBTQ+ Rights Framing Toward Ukraine Following Ukraine's EU Candidacy

LGBTQ+ rights are increasingly intertwined into global conflicts surrounding norms and values. For instance, depictions of a 'queer-friendly EU' clashing with a 'traditional values-oriented Russia' proliferate. While there is an abundance of information on how pro-Russian actors frame LGBTQ+ rights in the Eastern Neighborhood, there is less formal research on how EU institutions engage with these framings, especially following Russia's full invasion of Ukraine. I ask the research questions, how has the European Commission adjusted its framings of LGBTQ+ rights toward Ukraine following the granting of Ukraine's official candidacy status? What normative implications do these framings have for the positioning of Ukraine in relation to the EU? To answer these questions, I employ Kulpa's 'leveraged pedagogy' framework, and conduct a frame analysis of European Commission documents related to Ukraine that mention LGBTQ+ rights. I find that, before Ukraine was granted candidacy status, the Commission largely subsumed LGBTQ+ rights into broader 'fundamental rights' categories. In contrast, following Ukraine's candidacy status, an 'optimistic leveraged pedagogy' framing has emerged. My research contributes to scholarly knowledge on how EU institutions may adjust framings related to LGBTQ+ rights to promote broader normative or geopolitical agendas.

Keywords: LGBTQ+ rights, European Commission, Ukraine (EU candidacy), Leveraged pedagogy, Frame analysis



TECHNOLOGY, POWER, AND THE DIGITAL WORLD

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Command Responsibility without a Subordinate? Revisiting the Doctrine's Conceptual Foundations in the Age of Autonomous Weapons Systems

The increased deployment and development of autonomous weapons systems (AWS) capable of independently selecting and engaging targets raises the pressing question of establishing individual criminal responsibility for war crimes committed with those decisions, a problem which in literature is referred to as the 'responsibility gap'. Several solutions have been proposed to bridge this gap, however, the most prominent proposal has remained the extension of command responsibility. Command or superior responsibility is a form of responsibility for the illegal acts of subordinates which can be established when: 1) a superior exercises control over the subordinate; 2) the superior knew/should have known that their subordinates committed/were about to commit crimes (i.e. mens rea); and 3) the superior failed to prevent/punish those crimes. This paper analyzes the principal arguments in favor of and against the extension of command responsibility over AWS in light of the three outlined conditions for the applicability of this doctrine and particularly focuses on the normative coherence of this proposal within the current architecture of international criminal law. The analysis suggests that the main discord between the proponents and the opponents of the idea centers on whether AWS can be equated with human subordinates. The discussions on the methods of establishing effective control and the severability of the duty to suppress war crimes, though analytically distinct, ultimately stem from the more fundamental question of whether a commander can be responsible for the breaches of IHL committed by an amoral agent. Accordingly, the paper concludes that any consideration of extending this doctrine should primarily focus on this issue.

Keywords: autonomous weapons systems, command responsibility, responsibility gap



TECHNOLOGY, POWER, AND THE DIGITAL WORLD

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Shaping Digital Sovereignty in North Africa: Hybrid Strategies in Morocco and Egypt

Digital sovereignty has become a key dimension of power politics and an instrument of agency for Global South states seeking to overcome postcolonial digital dependency and transition from passive regulatory takers to active rule shapers. This study addresses the research gap regarding North Africa by examining how Morocco and Egypt employ hybrid strategies to navigate competing EU and Chinese influences in shaping their digital sovereignty.

Using a comparative case study method based on official policy documents and secondary academic literature, digital sovereignty is operationalized across three layers — infrastructure, code, and data — to assess each country's approach. Both states combine Chinese technological hardware with EU-inspired regulatory norms, yet follow distinct strategic logics. Morocco prioritizes development and market legitimacy, anchoring its normative framework in EU standards while instrumentally engaging with Chinese hardware. Egypt, by contrast, selectively incorporates EU procedural elements within a state-centric governance model that echoes China's cyber sovereignty approach, reflecting priorities of regime stability and control.

The findings challenge postcolonial dependency narratives that portray Global South states as passive recipients of external digital models. Instead, digital sovereignty emerges as a negotiated condition shaped by inherited legal traditions, infrastructural constraints, and asymmetric power relations. Through hybrid strategies, both Morocco and Egypt demonstrate agency as strategic negotiators, though their autonomy remains structurally constrained. The sustainability of these hybrid strategies over time, especially as geopolitical competition intensifies, remains an open question.

Keywords: digital sovereignty, postcolonial digital dependency, hybrid strategies, North Africa



NARRATIVES, MEMORY, AND POWER: POLITICS OF MEANING-MAKING

Pavel Brada, *Charles University*

Discursive Analysis of Sovereignty-Development Nexus in Xi Jinping's Speeches

In international politics one often hears the big words like sovereignty or development. Yet the two are usually treated as separate analytical domains. With China on rise, it is important to study its impact on the interpretation of crucial norms, including sovereignty. While sovereignty generally entails supreme authority within a state and the ability to act independently, free from external interference, this Westphalian baseline is increasingly contested by China's foreign policy discourse. As a result, the concept of sovereignty is discursively extended by invoking the sovereignty-development nexus. This research asks the research question: how does Xi Jinping discursively link sovereignty and development in his political speeches?

The paper examines this nexus in two speeches delivered at the 60th (2014) and 70th (2024) anniversaries of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, arguing that the linkage constitutes a discursive challenge to the classical understanding of sovereignty by expanding the concept. The analysis utilizes Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, focusing on collocation patterns, the distinction between coordination and subordination, and nominalizations. These are understood as naturalization tools through which interpretation of a concept is rendered self-evident. Moreover, semantical relationship between the two is analysed. The two speeches were hand-coded in Chinese in two rounds of coding using MAXQDA, combining deductive coding for naturalization with inductive coding for the logical relationships.

The findings show development constructed as a coordinate component of sovereignty and as content of sovereignty through self-determination of the development path. Practically this means that the meaning of sovereignty is stretched to include developmental autonomy to its level, thus making giving it a non-negotiable status, on a level of territorial integrity. On more theoretical level, the results also show that sovereignty can be treated as an empty signifier.

Keywords: Sovereignty-development nexus, Xi Jinping, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, Empty signifier



NARRATIVES, MEMORY, AND POWER: POLITICS OF MEANING-MAKING

Enrico Decesari, *University of Trieste*

Will the Youth Fall for Autocracy to Avoid Falling into Chaos? Collective Memories in Anti-System Movements in Contemporary Italy

While younger generations in Western Europe are conventionally envisioned as the natural custodians of liberal progressivism, empirical evidence reveals a profound contradiction: citizens born after 2000 exhibit significantly lower democratic resilience than their predecessors. Their growing openness to non-democratic governance is investigated by examining how contemporary Italian anti-system movements instrumentally reconstruct collective memories to frame authoritarian practices as pragmatic remedies for “democratic chaos”. Setting aside conventional data-driven alarmism, the research adopts a multidisciplinary approach - drawing on geopolitics, political sociology, and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) - to explore how Italian extra-parliamentary formations rebrand executive aggrandizement and illiberal efficiency to address a profound representational vacuum and systemic socio-economic anxiety. This phenomenon is deeply rooted in Italy’s specific condition of post-historicism, fostered under long-term U.S. hegemony, which has induced a “geopolitical anesthesia” and a progressive divestment from a tragic, contingent sense of history. Due to the post-war establishment having prioritised social pacification over a rigorous moral and judicial rupture with past regimes, Fascist and Communist legacies persisted as sedimented subcultures rather than fully processed historical phenomena. Today, anti-system movements on both the Far-Right and the Far-Left exploit these latent repertoires, exhibiting a paradoxical “red-brown convergence” against Atlanticist structures despite their ideological divergence. Through a qualitative assessment of primary sources - including party manifestos, theoretical journals, and digital publications from 2025 - this paper delineates a shared four-phase rhetorical strategy: identity construction via tribal binaries, intellectual doctrinal legitimation, systemic crisis diagnosis, and a revolutionary appeal. Ultimately, youth fascination with authoritarianism emerges not as a literal blueprint desire for totalitarianism, but as a defensive psychological mechanism against institutional entropy, emphasizing the urgent need to restore historical awareness as a vital tool for civic agency.

Keywords: Authoritarianism, Anti-System Movements, Collective Memory, Youth, Italy.



NARRATIVES, MEMORY, AND POWER: POLITICS OF MEANING-MAKING

Mostafa Faour, Mariah Saab, Ayman Sarhan and Faris Zurub, *American University of Science and Technology of Beirut*

How National Identity Affects the Political Views of the Youth in Lebanon Narratives, Memory, and Power: Politics of Meaning-Making

This research examines how ethno-religious identities shape Lebanese youths' political attitudes and their views on Lebanon in a regional context. In Lebanon's multi-confessional state (U.S. Department of State, 2023), sectarian affiliations are institutionalized within the political system, affecting representation, resources, and security beyond private belief. Power-sharing in Lebanon, by structuring political competition along confessional lines, inhibits the development of a unified civic national identity (Hudson, 1968; Salloukh et al., 2015). For younger generations, backgrounds shape political socialization, party alignment, and perceptions of state legitimacy through interplaying sectarian narratives, collective memories, and regional dynamics. This research hypothesizes that the youths' ethno-religious backgrounds strongly shape their political views and national identities (be it Lebanese, Arab, or Phoenician) further influenced by foreign alliances and domestic actors in Lebanon. As a result, political views and identity among Lebanese adolescents vary across confessional lines, reflecting wider sectarian mobilization and contested sovereignty. The study empirically demonstrates the impact of ethno-religious identities on political attitudes and national narratives, contributing to debates on sectarianism and state fragmentation in post-conflict societies. Research Question: How do different ethno-religious backgrounds specifically influence political views among Lebanese youth aged 18-25? This study adopts a mixed-methods snowball-sampling design, using qualitative questions that are then quantified via survey (e.g., To what extent do the participants believe in armed resistance), then analyzing data collected across all areas and ethno-religious backgrounds from December 2025 to March 2026.

Keywords: National Identity, Religious Identity, Political Views, Lebanon, Youth.



NARRATIVES, MEMORY, AND POWER: POLITICS OF MEANING-MAKING

Giorgia Gamba, *University of Padua*

The Governance of Memory: Mapping Power Dynamics in Francophone Memory Policies Literature

Driven by the post-1970s "commemorative frenzy", public policy agendas are increasingly shaped by mnemonic entrepreneurs who challenge state-led interpretations of the past. Conceptualizing the field of memory politics as a competitive space for recognition, this essay examines Francophone memory policies through a systematic lens. The Francophone context—and France in particular—provides a compelling field of analysis, standing out as a primary example of state institutionalization through the implementation of the so-called lois mémorielles (memory laws).

Within this framework, this study investigates how current scholarship conceptualizes the policy-making approaches of mnemonic entrepreneurs across local, national, and transnational levels of governance. Crucially, postcolonial minority groups within this Francophone context play a dual role. In French overseas territories such as Guadeloupe and Martinique, as well as in Algeria—France's former colonial domain—the descendants of colonized populations operate as more than passive recipients of state-led commemorative initiatives. Instead, they actively contest established paradigms, acting as mnemonic entrepreneurs to bring particularistic histories and demands for rights and recognition to the forefront of the public agenda.

To enable a comprehensive analysis of the multi-faceted nature of memory policy-making as presented in Francophone academic literature, this study conducts a systematic literature review employing the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) methodology.

Findings highlight memory policies as strategic instruments for top-down institutional legitimation, while also shedding light on the capacity of grassroots activists and marginalized minority groups to successfully shift specific commemorative demands into formal legislative outputs. Ultimately, this essay argues for a paradigm shift in memory studies: memory governance should no longer be viewed merely as a top-down tool for national identity reinforcement, but rather as a dynamic, polycentric process of negotiation between state institutions and civil society, operating within a complex grey area of strategic interactions.

Keywords: Memory politics, Mnemonic entrepreneurs, Francophone memory laws, Postcolonial minorities, Systematic literature review (PRISMA)



NARRATIVES, MEMORY, AND POWER: POLITICS OF MEANING-MAKING

Marco Gurin, *Leiden University College*

Narrating the State Against Multilateralism: Far-Right Populist Constructions of Globalized Multilateralism in Europe

Globalized multilateralism (GM), understood as the coordination of national policies among three or more states through international institutions, has been a defining feature of the post-World War II international order. While existing research has examined far-right populist (FRP) parties' foreign policy preferences and their interactions with international institutions, less attention has been paid to how these actors conceptualize and narratively construct multilateralism itself. This essay addresses this gap by asking: How do far-right populist parties in Europe narratively construct globalized multilateralism, and how do these narratives redefine the role of the state in international politics?

Drawing on a discourse-oriented constructivist approach, the study analyzes party manifestos, speeches, and official communications of Fidesz in Hungary and Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) in Germany. FRP narratives are operationalized through references to "the people," "elites," and sovereignty, while GM is examined through references to international institutions and multilateral cooperation.

The analysis identifies two central narrative constructions. First, FRP actors portray globalized multilateralism as an elitist project controlled by unaccountable transnational actors and detached from the interests of ordinary citizens. Through a moral distinction between a virtuous "people" and a corrupt international elite, multilateral institutions are framed as mechanisms of domination that undermine democratic legitimacy and national sovereignty. Second, FRP discourse presents GM as a normatively hollow arena in which universalist principles such as human rights and liberal values function as instruments of political power rather than genuine moral commitments. Consequently, international politics is recast as a competitive sphere governed by national interests and strategic calculations rather than shared norms.

The findings suggest that far-right populist parties do not simply oppose multilateralism but seek to redefine its meaning and legitimacy. In doing so, they reimagine the state as a sovereign and self-contained actor prioritizing national identity, autonomy, and selective cooperation. More broadly, the study demonstrates that contemporary contestation over multilateralism is actually not only institutional but also epistemic.

Keywords: Globalized multilateralism, Far-right populist parties, Sovereignty narratives, Discourse analysis, Epistemic contestation



NARRATIVES, MEMORY, AND POWER: POLITICS OF MEANING-MAKING

Milica Ilic, *University of Belgrade*

A little president on our shoulder: How presidential narratives placed in the media affect the making of young political activists in Serbia

This paper examines how presidential narratives in Serbian media represent the embodiment of pastoral power, introduced by Foucault, to exert social control over the youth. In the paper, the presidential narrative is understood as the process in which the leader utilizes storytelling to shape the public's understanding of political reality. The research explores how the state officials present themselves as protective guides, providing security and stability while simultaneously seeking to know and govern the internal thoughts of its citizens. Applied to the Serbian context, this concept manifests as the "little president on our shoulder", representing internalized messages that find their way into the minds of activists. By analyzing online news articles, key word searches were conducted, specifically targeting the ones associated with youth-led political action. The analysis reveals a narrative binary: "real" students who desire state protection are framed as the legitimate, deserving "flock", while political activists are delegitimized through labels such as "so-called students" and "blockaders". With discourse analysis at hand, this paper argues that, while the media portrays activists as a wandering flock, their actions, such as "media wars" represent a rupture in pastoral power.

Drawing on Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, the study argues that state-aligned media outlets work to naturalize these regime narratives as common sense. However, the paper concludes that ongoing youth-led protests and "media wars" initiated by students represent a significant rupture in pastoral power. By rejecting the imposed role of a compliant flock, these activists move beyond regime guidance to forge new political realities. When the internalized voice fades, youth activism not only refuses obedience but starts making potential shifts in Serbia's political landscape.

Keywords: Pastoral power, Presidential narratives, Youth activism, Cultural hegemony, Serbia



NARRATIVES, MEMORY, AND POWER: POLITICS OF MEANING-MAKING

Alberto Rosada, *Padua University*

The dictatorships of the Cono Sur in the memory policies literature: a systematic comparative approach

In recent decades, a global memory boom has transformed the past into a central arena for political dispute, leading to the proliferation of memory studies. In Latin America this memory boom is inextricably linked to traumatic events: the countries of the Cono Sur (Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Brazil) went through military dictatorships between the 1960s and the 1990s. Specific memory policies emerged after their transition to democracy, particularly in the late 1990s and 2000s. The expansion or regression of those policies is linked to the shift of the political momentum between left and right, and more recently the populist far-right.

The four countries used different policy tools: how do they differ in models and timing? A systematic literature review using the PRISMA approach was undertaken, through the creation of a corpus of 5725 articles in Spanish and Portuguese, with “memory places”, “memory laws” and “memory politics/policies” as keywords. The articles were filtered in multiple steps to identify those explicitly mentioning public policies on memory: 654 articles were eligible, with 185 of them dealing with the Cono Sur dictatorships.

Multiple memory policy instruments were identified: amnesty laws and strategies for accountability; truth commissions; school teaching guidelines; establishment of memory places; commemorative rituals. The vast majority of the policies are implemented by the central state; fewer by federal entities and municipalities (mostly in Brazil). The role of activists, often the victims and their relatives, is crucial for the establishment of many policies. An active civil society constitutes an important factor of strength of the memory landscape. The shift to right and far-right administrations has led to the defunding and cancellation of programmes and the outright push for negationist/denialist agendas. The limitation of the review is the absence of the most recent developments (Milei’s and Kast’s governments) in the literature.

Keywords: Memory politics, Cono Sur dictatorships, Memory laws, Systematic literature review, Civil society activism



NARRATIVES, MEMORY, AND POWER: POLITICS OF MEANING-MAKING

Lev Soklič, *University of Ljubljana*

Small places, big issues: rising nationalism and changing political dynamics in Kosovo

This paper explores two overlapping forms of right-wing nationalism in Kosovo through the lens of constructivist international relations theory, which focuses on how ideas, rather than material factors, are important in shaping the identity and interests of states. The first phenomenon concerns religious conversions among segments of the Kosovo Albanian population, from the predominant religion of Islam to Christianity, often framed by its proponents as a return to the pre-Islamic past which they see as key to their European identity. This development is frequently intertwined with expressions of (pan-) Albanian nationalism. The second phenomenon is the articulation of the so-called Kosovar nation, advocated by a Kosovar political scientist and mathematician Nexhmedin Spahiu, an author of a book titled “The rise of the Kosovar nation”, who seeks to differentiate between the Albanian and Kosovar nation. The study aims to investigate the effect of these two nationalistic narratives on the current political dynamics and European integration as well as on the international positioning of Kosovo. It employs a multi-method research approach, using a content analysis of reports, texts, and media appearances by Albanians from Kosovo who embody the phenomena. It likewise includes semi-structured interviews with diaspora representatives in Slovenia with four Muslim Kosovo Albanians residing in Slovenia as well as for one Albanian from Albania who likewise was a resident in the country. The findings suggest that these phenomena contribute to ongoing contestation over national belonging among Kosovo Albanians, while having limited direct impact on the country’s formal European integration process. The paper highlights how different identity narratives shape contemporary debates on national belonging in Kosovo.

Keywords: Right-wing nationalism, Kosovo, Identity narratives, European integration, Constructivist IR



NARRATIVES, MEMORY, AND POWER: POLITICS OF MEANING-MAKING

Anastasia Stanković, *University of Ljubljana*

Inherited Antagonism in Serbian Student Movement: Us vs. Them

In the 2024/2025 Serbian student protests, social media played a central role in shaping political meaning. A prominent pattern is a “us versus them” narrative, which is interpreted as a populist discursive logic that relies on a moral division between a legitimate “us” and an illegitimate “them”. This essay aims to answer how student protest communication on social media constructs the “us vs them” narrative in 2025 and whether this antagonistic boundary-making functions primarily as a resource for mobilisation or also as a driver for polarisation? Using qualitative discursive analysis of Instagram communication from @studenti_u_blokadi, the research essay analysed 81 posts within the three coded categories used: the construction of “us”, the construction of “them”, and the polarising frame of “us vs them”. In comparison between coded categories, the construction of “us” is the most dominant. Polarising frame is present but not dominant which is interpreted as the students use such strategy as mobilising tool. Overall, antagonistic boundary-making mainly strengthens collective identity, but in a smaller share of posts, it also contributes to political polarisation.

Keywords: Student protests, Populist discourse, Us vs them narrative, Instagram, Serbia



NARRATIVES, MEMORY, AND POWER: POLITICS OF MEANING-MAKING

Angelina Svishchenko, *University of Pécs*

Inventing Legitimacy: Historical Narratives in Greek and Turkish Nationalism

History is often regarded as a record of the past: reliable if it survives through centuries. In political discourse it defines who states are, where they came from and why they deserve authority. This paper examines how Greek and Turkish political leaders reinterpret the past to construct national legitimacy in the present, asking how historical narratives are used to justify contemporary political authority and foreign policy positions. The paper employs a qualitative comparative approach combined with discourse analysis of official speeches and commemorative rhetoric, focusing on speeches by Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan between 2015 and 2025. It identifies two distinct but parallel strategies of “inventing legitimacy.” In Greece, legitimacy is constructed through narratives of palingenesis (national rebirth) and democratic continuity. References to the War of Independence, Byzantine heritage, and the defence of democratic values position Greece as a historical guardian of a democratic European tradition confronting persistent external challenges. In Türkiye, legitimacy is shaped by narratives of fetih (conquest) and Ottoman imperial continuity. The modern Turkish state is presented as the continuation of a historic civilizational power with references to the conquest of Constantinople and the reconversion of Hagia Sophia.

The comparative analysis reveals three mechanisms of modern statecraft. First, both states employ archetypal historical metaphors that connect contemporary political claims to foundational national myths. Second, they engage in ontological securitization by constructing the neighbouring state as a recurring historical antagonist. Third, commemorative practices and symbolic spaces function as lieux de mémoire through which these narratives are normalized and reinforced. The paper argues that historical representations are not neutral reflections of the past but strategic political constructions that shape national identity, legitimize state authority, and influence contemporary international relations. Despite their opposing content, Greek and Turkish narratives perform remarkably similar political functions, demonstrating how states transform history into a resource for present-day legitimacy.

Keywords: narratives, legitimacy, nationalism, collective memory, Greece, Türkiye



NARRATIVES, MEMORY, AND POWER: POLITICS OF MEANING-MAKING

Jovana Šeremetović, *University of Belgrade*

Remembering the Yugoslav Wars: How Today's Student Activists from Serbia Still See the Past Differently

The resurgence of student activism in Serbia during 2024 raises questions about how a generation born after the Yugoslav wars (1991–2001) interprets reconciliation and key events such as the operations Bljesak and Oluja, or the siege of Vukovar. As these students have no lived memory of the conflicts, their views show how wartime narratives are reproduced, contested, or transformed in contemporary Serbian society. Drawing on Lipset and Rokkan's theory of social cleavages (1967.), this paper examines the extent to which variations in student perceptions are shaped by social divisions but also by competing historical narratives, formal education, and information environments such as mainstream media or online sources. The research question guiding this paper is how and why Serbian students differ in their interpretations of the Yugoslav wars and what this reveals about identity-related cleavages in post-conflict Serbia. In this study, interpretations are understood as attitudes toward blame, victimhood, and reconciliation, along with level of agreement regarding competing historical narratives. This helps explain a direct relationship between historical viewpoints and identity-related differences (Demirel, 2023). The paper employs a survey as the primary research method to collect quantitative data on Serbian student activists' interpretations of the Yugoslav wars. Through a positivist approach focused on systematic data collection and statistical analysis, I conducted an online survey among university students (Evans and Mathur 2005). The Likert-scale questions and statistical analysis help reveal connections between students' interpretations and their sociopolitical backgrounds, providing quantitative data to explain patterns of memory and interpretation.

The paper points to two dominant interpretative patterns: one rooted in narratives of national victimhood (Obradović 2016) and another adopting a more critical stance that raises questions of political responsibility (Sokolić, Vico, and Kostovićova 2023; Rigney 2018). Differences also emerge between students shaped primarily by history textbooks, those engaging with independent academic sources, and those relying chiefly on the Internet (Dinić 2025.). These pathways generate distinct interpretative communities that illuminate the persistence of social cleavages among younger generations.

Keywords: Student activism, Yugoslav wars memory, Social cleavages, Historical narratives, Serbia



NARRATIVES, MEMORY, AND POWER: POLITICS OF MEANING-MAKING

Jinjing Tong, *Charles University*

Chinese Communist Party Discourse and China-European Union Diplomacy: A Constructivist Account

Most studies of China–EU relations focus on material factors such as economic interdependence, trade relations, or strategic competition. While some constructivist research has explored the role of identity and norms, less attention has been paid to how Chinese Communist Party (CCP) discourse shapes China’s foreign policy behavior. This paper examines how CCP discourse constructs China’s state identity in relation to the European Union and how this influences China’s responses to EU criticism on human rights and sovereignty issues.

Drawing on constructivist international relations theory, the study argues that CCP discourse plays a central role in constructing a state identity centered on sovereignty, non-interference, and resistance to external pressure. Through official narratives, China presents itself as a defender of national sovereignty and political legitimacy against foreign interference.

The paper employs qualitative discourse analysis and a focused case study of the 2021 China–EU dispute over Xinjiang. While the European Union framed its actions in terms of universal human rights and normative responsibility, Chinese official discourse interpreted European criticism as interference in domestic affairs and a challenge to China’s sovereignty. Official narratives frequently linked such criticism to China’s historical experience of foreign domination, reinforcing a sovereignty-based understanding of state identity.

The findings suggest that tensions between China and the EU cannot be explained solely by material interests or strategic calculations. Instead, they also reflect competing identities and discursive frameworks that shape how both actors understand legitimacy, responsibility, and international order. By highlighting the role of discourse in foreign policy, this paper contributes to constructivist studies of China–EU relations and offers a deeper understanding of contemporary diplomatic tensions.

Keywords: China–EU relations, CCP discourse, State identity, Sovereignty norms, Xinjiang dispute



NARRATIVES, MEMORY, AND POWER: POLITICS OF MEANING-MAKING

Skye Warner-Mackintosh, *University of Belgrade*

Belgrade as an Emotional City: The Generalštab and Competing Identities in Serbia

This paper scrutinises the symbolic significance of the Generalštab ruins in Belgrade as a site of contested identity formation in post-Yugoslav Serbia. Located on Kneza Miloša Street, the bombed former Yugoslav military headquarters has become an emotionally charged urban space through which competing state and societal narratives of victimhood, memory, and national identity are mobilised and rewritten. Guided by the research question 'how are the Generalštab ruins mobilised comparatively between state and societal actors', this paper conducts two readings of the building- as a site of victimhood and of injustice and resistance-drawing on memory studies, emotional IR theory, and social geography.

The paper argues that the Generalštab occupies a dual symbolic function. For the state, particularly under Vučić, the ruins have been instrumentalised as a monument to Serbian defiance against Western aggression, reinforcing an ontological security narrative that defines Serbian identity in opposition to Euro-Atlantic values. However, the 2025 decision to lease the building to Jared Kushner exposed the fragility of this narrative, provoking widespread civil protest and revealing the building's emancipatory potential. This revealed an attempt to erase the mnemonic landscape of the 1990s in favour of geopolitical realignment, which could be seen as a betrayal of the people and Serbia's post-conflict identity. At the societal level, the Generalštab has been reimagined as a symbol of resistance to domestic corruption- an emotional through-line uniting generations who share no common memory of the 1990s, yet share a collective grievance against the regime and a desire for systemic change. This intergenerational convergence represents a meaningful reappropriation of victimhood long hijacked by the state. It is argued here that this societal narrative is ultimately prevailing: when politics and space are so deeply entrenched with emotion, the mobilising power of the many outweighs the consolidating power of the few, and the Generalštab becomes a site of reimagining what Serbia could become.

Keywords: Generalštab ruins, Contested memory, Ontological security, Emotional IR, Serbia



PHD SECTION

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The Role of Migrants in Economic Growth: Indian Migration in Germany

During the time I have lived in India for almost four years, I have observed and been interested in the problems related to the migration of Indian workers abroad. This is still a problem that society is paying attention to today, especially in Germany, where the migration of Indian workers, both high-skilled and low-skilled workers, plays an important role in driving the country's economy. This study aims to understand the history of Indian migration and to analyze the economic impact of Indian labor migration, in particular, comparing the role of high-skilled and low-skilled laborers in the economic development of Germany. The study will focus on analyzing the impact of both Germany's economic growth and the impact on India's economy through remittances. It also explores the barriers and problems faced by Indian workers in Germany regarding law, culture, and acceptance from German society.

This study highlights the importance of migration in the process of driving economic growth and development of both the source and destination countries. At the same time, it also pays attention to the social and cultural problems arising from labor migration. The study will help to understand the importance of high- and low-skilled workers as a key driver of the German economy, as well as to help strengthen India's economy through remittances and policy improvements to support the integration of foreign workers in German society.

Keywords: Indian labor migration, Germany, economic growth, high-skilled labor, low-skilled labor, remittances, migration policy, social and cultural barriers



PHD SECTION

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Iran's Narrative of Europe During the 12-Day War: A Discourse Network Analysis of IRNA Coverage

This paper analyses how the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) constructed the role of Europe during the Iran-Israel 12-day war in June 2025. The study uses Discourse Network Analysis (DNA) to examine sixteen IRNA reports that mention Europe, the European Union, the E3, European governments, European politicians, or European publics. The coding identifies 47 Europe-focused actor-claim statements, 15 actor categories, eleven claim categories, and four broader storylines. The analysis shows that the most central claims are about international law, European silence, Europe-related condemnation of attacks, and Europe's dependence on the US-Israel axis. At the same time, a smaller but important pragmatic storyline keeps Europe inside Iran's diplomatic field. The paper argues that IRNA's discourse does not fully remove Europe from diplomacy.

Instead, it constructs Europe as weak, selective, and unreliable, but still important enough to be addressed.

Keywords: Discourse Network Analysis, Iran, European Union, IRNA, JCPOA, 12-day war, political discourse



PHD SECTION

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Terrorist propaganda and digital actors: the algorithmic impact on radicalisation and power in the contemporary international order

This paper examines how terrorist propaganda adapts to and within a digital ecosystem increasingly shaped by algorithmic logics, focusing specifically on visual platforms such as TikTok and Pinterest. In the contemporary international order, these platforms – designed to maximise user engagement through personalised recommendations, aesthetic interaction and rapid content consumption – can be exploited by terrorist organisations to disseminate narratives, shape perceptions and influence audiences through short-form videos, images, trends and visually appealing content. Unlike traditional propaganda channels, these environments enable extremist actors to reach users indirectly through algorithmic amplification, often blurring the boundaries between entertainment, political communication and ideological messaging.

The analysis explores how the recommendation systems of both platforms influence patterns of exposure, visibility and virality, potentially facilitating processes of radicalisation among vulnerable individuals. Particular attention is paid to the role of algorithms in prioritising emotionally charged content and creating personalised information environments that may reinforce existing beliefs and increase engagement with extremist material. Furthermore, the paper investigates the ways in which terrorist groups adapt their communication strategies to platform-specific affordances, employing visual aesthetics, popular cultural references and participatory formats to enhance the appeal and circulation of their messages.

Beyond the dynamics of online radicalisation, the study situates these developments within broader debates on power and governance in the digital age. It argues that algorithmically mediated platforms contribute to a redistribution of power among state, non-state and corporate actors, raising important questions regarding content moderation, platform responsibility and the regulation of extremist communication in an increasingly interconnected global information environment.

Keywords: Terrorist propaganda, Algorithmic amplification, Visual platforms , Online radicalisation, Platform governance