

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

Association for the Study of Nationalities (ASN) European Conference

Reconfiguring National Identities amid Multiple Crises

18–20 September 2026
Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory
University of Belgrade

Organizer:

Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, University of Belgrade,
in cooperation with the Association for the Study of Nationalities (ASN)



ASSOCIATION FOR THE
STUDY OF NATIONALITIES

Edited by:

Adriana Zaharijević, Gazela Pudar Draško, Maja Pupovac, Vujo Ilić

Publisher:

Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, University of Belgrade

Design:

Marko Ristić

ISBN:

This volume contains a collection of paper abstracts presented at the international conference titled *Reconfiguring National Identities amid Multiple Crises*, which was held in Belgrade from 18 to 20 September 2026. The organization of the conference was supported in part by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia, grant no. 7422, through the project *Imagining a Nation: The Contesting Serbian National Narratives (XX-XXI Century) – IMAGINATION*. The conference was also supported by the Heinrich Böll Stiftung – Belgrade Office, and the Embassy of Ireland in Serbia.



Science Fund
of the Republic of Serbia



IMAGINATION



HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG
BEOGRAD



Ambasáid na hÉireann | Poblacht na Seirbia
Embassy of Ireland | Republic of Serbia
Амбасада Ирске | Република Србија

Organizing committee:

Adriana Zaharijević, University of Belgrade (co-chair)

Vujo Ilić, University of Belgrade (co-chair)

Gazela Pudar Draško, University of Belgrade

Jelena Vasiljević, University of Belgrade

Maja Pupovac, University of Belgrade

Milivoj Bešlin, University of Belgrade

Miloš Janković, University of Belgrade

Vukan Marković, University of Belgrade

Program committee:

Adriana Zaharijević, University of Belgrade

Denisa Kostovicova, London School of Economics and Political Science

Florian Bieber, University of Graz

Jelena Džankić, European University Institute

Jelena Vasiljević, University of Belgrade

Maja Pupovac, University of Belgrade

Milivoj Bešlin, University of Belgrade

Olga Onuch, University of Manchester

Peter Vermeersch, University of Leuven

Szabolcs Pogonyi, Central European University

Vujo Ilić, University of Belgrade

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

Session 1

Panel 01 Minority Recognition in Southeast Europe

Panel 02 Theorizing Nationalism and Knowledge Production

Panel 03 Crisis, Security, and National Identity in Serbia

Session 2

Panel 04 Minorities in the Baltics and Eastern Europe

Panel 05 National Identity in North Macedonia

Panel 06 National Identities and Protests in Serbia

Session 3

Panel 07 Minorities in Central Europe

Panel 08 Identity, Language, and Education

Book Panel 1 The Croatian Diaspora in Argentina: From Martyrs to Memory Guardians

Session 4

Panel 09 War, Law, and Memory

Panel 10 Nationality and Literature

Book Panel 2 Realigning Humanitarianism in the Balkans: From Cold War Politics to Neoliberal Ethics

Session 5

Keynote Lecture

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

Session 1

Panel 11 National Identities in the Age of Empires

Panel 12 Russian and Belarusian Identity in Exile

Roundtable 01 Rethinking Migration and “Home” in Southeast Europe

Session 2

Panel 13 National Identities in the Era of World Wars

Panel 14 Ethnic Identification and Mobilization

Panel 15 The Impact of Russia’s War on Kin Politics in the Region

Session 3

Panel 16 Croatia's National Narratives on War, Communism, and Nationalism

Panel 17 Responses to the War in Ukraine

Panel 18 Deliberative Communication without Democracy

Session 4

Panel 19 Nationalism and the Far-Right

Roundtable 02 Legacies and Meanings of Antifascism in Yugoslavia and Beyond

Book Panel 3 "Русский мир" and "Srpski svet": Ideas, Projects, Wars

Session 5

Keynote Lecture

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20

Session 1

Panel 20 Turkish Identity in Turkey and Beyond

Panel 21 Labor Migration and Conditional Inclusion in Southeast Europe

Panel 22 Populism, Backsliding, and Contested Identities

Session 2

Panel 23 National Identity from Socialism to Post-Socialism

Panel 24 New Labor Migration in Croatia

Roundtable 03 The Balkans in the World Turmoil

Session 3

Panel 25 Migration, Racialization, and Belonging

Panel 26 Ukrainian Identity, Language, and Culture

Roundtable 04 The Balkans in Crisis. Populism, Post-Democracy, and the Geopolitical Impact

Session 4

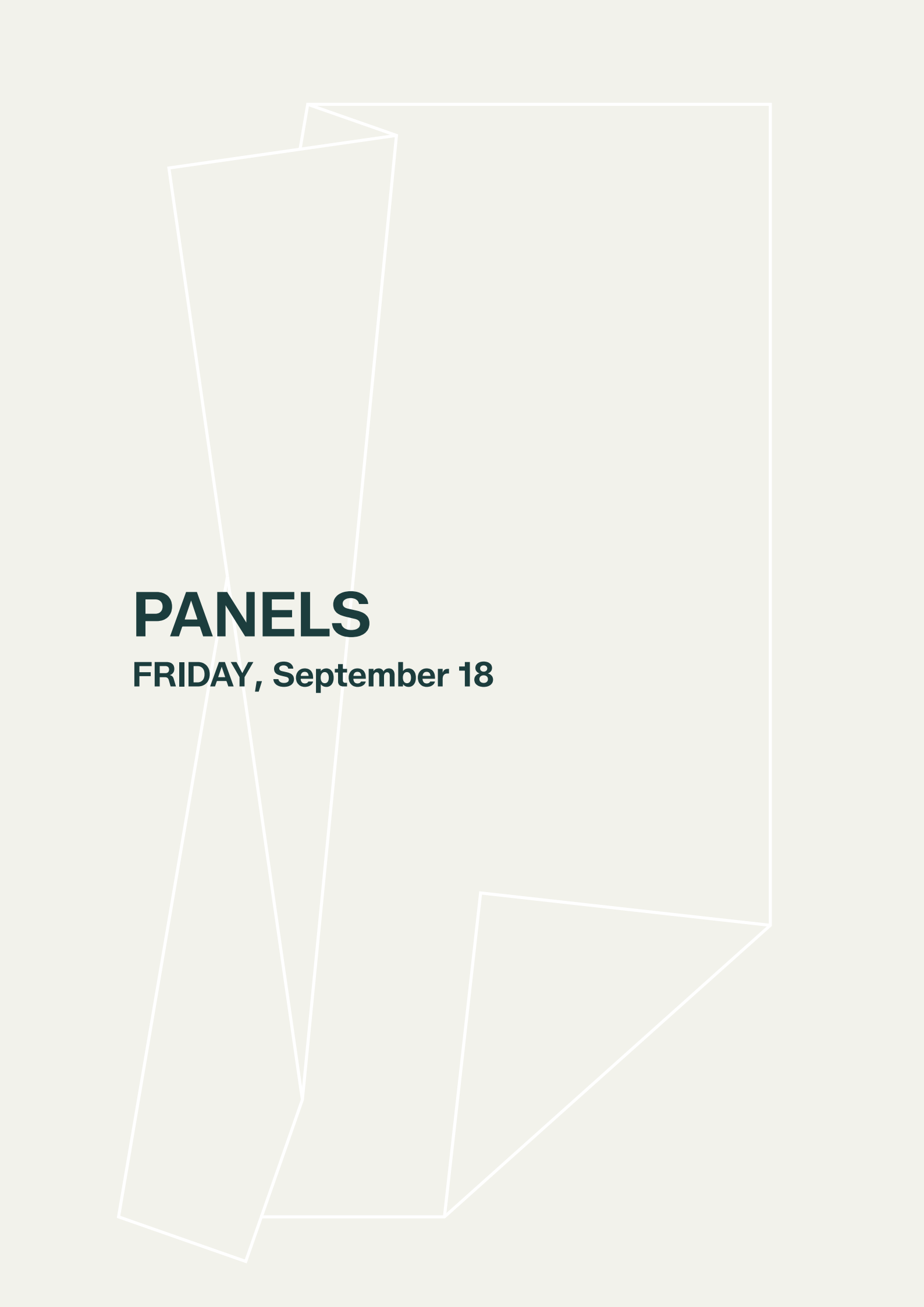
Panel 27 Everyday Life and Political Economy in the Yugoslav Space

Panel 28 Ukrainian Identity, Memory, and War

Panel 29 National Identity and European Union Enlargement

Session 5

Panel 30 Narrating the Nation in the Yugoslav Space



PANELS

FRIDAY, September 18

PANEL 01 MINORITY RECOGNITION IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE

Friday 18 September, 08.45–10.15, Floor I

Contested Identities under Asymmetric Regime of Minority Recognition in Greece

Zora Popova

Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria

popova@instarc.eu

Inter-minority competition over identity recognition can fragment collective mobilization and sustain a pattern of weak minority rights implementation. Findings from qualitative fieldwork conducted in Greece in 2025—including semi-structured interviews with minority representatives, local stakeholders, and policy experts; participatory observation; community-level consultations in Western Thrace; and analysis of stakeholder resolutions issued between 2014 and 2024—demonstrate how contested identities redirect political engagement away from shared structural challenges and toward intra-minority differentiation. The paper outlines how institutional minority frameworks produce both contested and hierarchical identities. In Western Thrace, diverse groups—Turkish, Pomak, and Roma—are formally subsumed under the single religious category of “Muslims”, obscuring internal distinctions and limiting avenues for self-identification. At the same time, Turkish communities on the Greek islands are effectively denied recognition altogether, while other groups, such as those identifying as Macedonian, have been historically acknowledged in legal terms as “Slavic people” through 20th-century provisions that have never been implemented in practice. This uneven and selectively applied recognition framework not only constrains minority-state relations; it also structures competition among minorities themselves, as groups seek visibility, legitimacy, and access to external support within narrowly defined and inconsistently enforced regimes of recognition. Examining education as a prism through which these broader dynamics become visible—and as a key tool of identity formation—the article highlights how structural inequalities are experienced, interpreted, and reproduced across minority communities. Empirical evidence points to a set of persistent and cross-cutting challenges, including the gradual closure of minority schools, limited access to bilingual secondary education, the absence of minority-language early childhood provision, and highly centralized governance structures with minimal community participation. Despite their shared nature, these issues are rarely articulated through joint claims. Instead, they are channeled into group-specific

demands, reinforcing fragmentation and limiting the scope for coordinated advocacy. Overall, the analysis demonstrates how inter-minority rivalries actively weaken collective claims-making. Rather than forming alliances around overlapping rights deficits—particularly in education, language use, and institutional representation—minority actors frequently prioritize boundary-making practices and competing identity narratives. This results in parallel, and often disconnected, advocacy efforts that fail to reach the threshold of political salience required to influence national-level policy. The paper conceptualizes this dynamic as a condition of “managed fragmentation”. By internalizing tensions within and between minority groups, systemic shortcomings in minority rights implementation remain diffuse and politically contained. In this context, the absence of cross-minority coordination does not merely reflect division—it indirectly stabilizes existing governance arrangements by reducing pressure for structural reform. Finally, it draws on the conclusion that while minority communities in Greece operate under distinct legal, historical, and socio-political conditions, the convergence of their practical challenges underscores the unrealized potential of coalition-based advocacy. Strengthening cross-minority cooperation—particularly in the domains of education governance and language rights—emerges not only as a normative imperative but also as a strategic prerequisite for transforming fragmented claims into effective demands for the implementation of rights.

PANEL 01 MINORITY RECOGNITION IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE

Friday 18 September, 08.45–10.15, Floor I

Borders Shaping Perceptions – Cross-Border Agency of Young Turkish Minority Persons in Western Thrace Compared with Youth from the Denmark-Germany Border Region

Martin Klatt

European Centre for Minority Issues, Germany

klatt@ecmi.de

Borders Shaping Perceptions of European Societies (B-SHAPES) is a Horizon Europe research project (2023-2026) scrutinizing how borders shape our perceptions of society. One of the work packages focused on minority youth and their borderland lives in a time of re-bordering. My paper draws on empirical material gathered in this research, with a special focus on two borderlands with reciprocal majority-minority/minority-kinstate situations but totally different policy approaches: the Turkish minority in Greece (research on the Greek minority in Istanbul was impossible due to ethical and legal challenges) and the reciprocal Danish minority in South Schleswig (Germany) and German minority in North Schleswig (Denmark). While the latter is considered a model of national conflict resolution and minority accommodation, the situation of the Turkish minority in Greece – only recognized as religious (Muslim) minority according to the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne – can be described as negative reciprocity with plenty of tit-for-tat retaliations reflecting the difficult relations between Greece and Türkiye – and the Cyprus issue around the division of the island and the proto-state of Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. I have previously addressed the potential of minorities as agents in peace-building and cross-border activities in general (Klatt 2017). Data gathered from a two-day workshop with young (16-30) Turkish minority persons in Xanthi reveals active cross-border living practices, a certain pride of being a Turkish minority in Greece, rather clear perceptions of what is Greece, Türkiye and Europe/EU, and strong expectations of EU proactiveness in improving the situation of the minority to be summarized in recognition and respect. At the same time, expressions of discrimination and stigmatization are expressed. Nevertheless, the young minority persons perceive themselves as agents and bridge-builders – not that different from narratives of informants from the model region at the Danish-German border. When we discussed these results with stakeholders of regional policy and cross-border cooperation implemen-

tation, geopolitical difficulties (external EU border, erratic Turkish politics, political suppression of non-AKP politicians) were mentioned as a main hindrance for better cross-border cooperation as well as minority inclusion. The results demonstrate that geopolitics still plays a pivotal role for the choice of adoption of minority policies – and that overcoming these usually contributes to cooperative, non-discriminative and inclusive minority policies. Likewise, EU leverage, real or perceived, is considered a strong factor for the adoption and implementation of inclusive, non-discriminatory minority policies.

PANEL 01 MINORITY RECOGNITION IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE

Friday 18 September, 08.45–10.15, Floor I

Minority in Turkey, Foreigner in Greece: The Institutional Gatekeeping of Antiochian Greek Orthodox Belonging Border Region

Eleni Pothou

Koç University, Turkey

epothou20@ku.edu.tr

This paper explores how ethnic and national boundaries are produced and re-configured through institutional classifications and practices by which states differentiate, regulate, and manage populations. Building on Brubaker's state-framed groupness and Foucault's notion of governmentality, it analyzes how these classifications construct group identities and impose normative expectations about belonging within the national order. At the same time, these classificatory regimes generate moments of ambiguity when applied to groups whose claims of belonging challenge dominant national narratives. Empirically, the paper follows the Antiochian Greek Orthodox community in Istanbul and their relocation to Athens, examining how their classification across national contexts exposes tensions between rigid state categories and ethnic kinship. The analysis focuses on two institutional gatekeeping regimes: minority schooling in Turkey, and residence permit administration in Greece. In Turkey, as part of the larger Greek Orthodox community, the categorization of the minority schools reveals institutional suspicion and exclusion from the national narrative. When members of the Antiochian Greek Orthodox community migrate to Greece, lacking traceable Hellenic lineage, Antiochians face institutional gatekeeping, which transforms their status from co-members of the Greek Orthodox minority in Turkey to foreign nationals in Greece. Whereas Turkey's classificatory regime prioritizes religious affiliation, the Greek state operationalizes belonging through co-ethnicity and *jus sanguinis* (right of blood). In the Greek case, the study further reveals how individuals navigate institutional boundary regimes in practice especially in moments where participation is denied, or rendered conditional through political mobilization and strategic use of social capital. Methodologically, this paper combines in-depth interviews with community members and association representatives in Istanbul and Athens with discourse analysis of state-produced repertoires. The discourse analysis traces how national imaginaries are embedded in administrative documentation. The interviews, in turn, facilitate an examination

of how these classifications are encountered, negotiated, and circumvented in practice, revealing the tensions and ambiguities that arise when classificatory regimes are applied in practice. Taken together, the paper contributes to the scholarship on nationalism and ethnicity, by demonstrating how institutions operate as sites of boundary production, where state-framed groupness is translated into practices of governmentality that regulate belonging. Administrative classifications render symbolic distinctions durable, and politically consequential, yet they also produce what this paper conceptualizes as ontological friction for communities whose belonging remains in limbo across national regimes. At the same time, the analysis shows how individuals strategically navigate and overcome gatekeeping through social networks, and the formation of associations that articulate claims and seek institutional recognition.

Association of Serb-Majority Municipalities in Kosovo: Community Self-Governance between Decentralization and Personal Autonomy

Ljubica Djordjević

European Centre for Minority Issues, Germany

djordjevic@ecmi.de

For more than two decades, Kosovo's political and institutional consolidation has remained constrained by unresolved status disputes rooted in traditional sovereignist conceptions of statehood. In the course of the gradual international recognition of its independence from Serbia, a series of negotiated guarantees were introduced to safeguard the rights and collective interests of the Serbian community. One of the most prominent and debated arrangements is the proposed Association of Serb-majority municipalities, envisaged as a mechanism of enhanced local self-governance. However, rather than facilitating normalization, the Association has become a central point of contention between Belgrade and Pristina, with divergent interpretations of its scope and competences reflecting deeper disagreements over sovereignty, territorial authority, and constitutional order. The proposed paper provides a conceptual examination of the Association of Serb-majority municipalities through three analytical lenses: Kosovo's legal framework, relevant European standards, and selected comparative examples from Europe that may offer valuable lessons. Kosovo has a two-tier system of governance, consisting of central and local levels, with local self-government serving as the sole form of decentralization. While the Kosovo authorities claim that local self-government is based on 'civic' principles and is 'ethnically blind', this characterization is not entirely accurate. Notably, the Kosovo legal framework, more specifically, the Law on Local Self-Government, establishes a form of asymmetric decentralization at the local level by granting "enhanced" competences to certain municipalities. The selection of these municipalities is based on an ethnic criterion, namely that they have a Serb majority. Moreover, the Kosovo Law on Communities contains several provisions in the areas of culture, education, and health that could serve as supplementary elements grounded in personal principles, thereby complementing territorial decentralization. Although no explicit minority right to autonomy is established at the international level, autonomy is widely regarded as a valuable channel for minority participation

and is frequently encouraged in practice. While states may be reluctant to introduce territorial forms of minority autonomy, the concept of non-territorial, or personal, autonomy has received renewed attention as a model enabling a degree of minority self-governance without posing risks of secession. Against this background, the paper explores three examples of combining territorial and personal elements of minority self-governance: the Joint Council of Municipalities in Croatia; the specific arrangements for Hungarian minority self-governance in Serbia, Slovakia, and Romania; and the institutional framework for Swedish speakers in Finland. The central aim is to identify possible instruments that could be used to protect the Serbian community while at the same time not undermining Kosovo's stability.

The Distance Principle, Nationalism, and Mišćević's 'Hated Neighbor Truism'

Viktor Ivanković

Institute of Philosophy, Croatia

viktor.ivankovic@ifzg.hr

This paper revisits late Nenad Mišćević's critique of nationalism through what he calls the "Distance Principle" and the "Hated-Neighbor Truism" (2001), and reassesses their implications for contemporary liberal nationalism. Mišćević argues that liberal nationalist theories often rely, explicitly or implicitly, on a moralized notion of proximity: the idea that moral obligations intensify with cultural, historical, or geographical closeness. Co-nationals, being "closer," are said to generate special obligations and partiality among one another, including claims to self-government and the institutional promotion of national culture. Mišćević observes, however, that the contents of nationalism are typically addressed not against distant strangers but against closest neighbors: groups sharing linguistic similarities, history, territory, and intertwined institutions. From this observation, which he calls the Hated-Neighbor Truism, Mišćević generates two philosophical challenges for liberal nationalists. First, if proximity grounds partiality, then neighboring groups – often entangled through "Russian doll" minority structures, mixed families, shared history, and cultural overlap – should also attract heightened concern rather than hostility. Second, nationalist animosity appears to place nationalism in tension not with cosmopolitanism, but with "macro-regionalism". I argue that Mišćević's second claim is largely correct: many liberal nationalist and rooted cosmopolitan accounts already concede that liberal nationalism is not inherently opposed to cosmopolitanism. Indeed, authors such as Nussbaum (1994), Tan (2002), and Kymlicka and Walker (2012) maintain that national commitments are compatible and can function as vehicles for universalist aims. In this respect, Mišćević's reframing is illuminating. However, the first implication that nationalists cannot consistently invoke proximity while rejecting similar obligations to neighbors rests on an overly "gradual" interpretation of the Distance Principle. On this reading, partiality increases linearly with cultural closeness. Yet few prominent defenders of national partiality adopt such a simple view. For Thomas Hurka (1997), historical interaction must be supplemented by a "mutual benefit" condition: only relationships that produce objective goods

can ground justified partiality. For Bob Goodin (1988), special obligations arise from institutional commitments within political boundaries. For liberal nationalists such as Tamir (1995) and Kymlicka (1996), societal/national culture matters because it enables autonomy and democratic justice within bounded institutions, not because of sheer ethnocultural similarity. On these views, cultural proximity alone is insufficient to generate obligations, and thus does not straightforwardly extend to neighbors. Nonetheless, Mišćević's Hated-Neighbor Truism retains significant normative force. It presses nationalists to address a largely neglected question: under what conditions, if any, are collective resentment and suspension of cross-border partiality ever justified? Drawing on Rawls's account of moral emotions triggered by injustice, I suggest that negative neighbor-directed emotions may be morally intelligible when they respond to violations of basic rights or institutional sabotage. In such cases, resentment may function as an injustice-signaling emotion rather than as mere xenophobia. The deeper challenge for liberal nationalism, therefore, is not just consistency with proximity, but the development of principled criteria distinguishing reasonable resentment from pathological nationalism. Mišćević's intervention is best understood as forcing liberal nationalists to clarify the moral status of collective emotions and their role in structuring obligations between neighboring political communities.

PANEL 02 THEORIZING NATIONALISM AND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

Friday 18 September, 08.45–10.15, Floor IV

Marginalized History of Racial Capitalism and Abolition of 'Europe'

Dusan Bjelic

University of Southern Maine, US

bjelic@maine.edu

Roberto Dainotto's book *Europe (in Theory)* (2007) argues that 'Europe' is a carefully constructed simulacrum of self-invented universality in the 18th and 19th centuries, sustained in theory only today despite being contradicted by its history. The paper argues that, in order to project a sense of universality, modern European nations are the graveyard of premodern history. Today, as a political entity without history, the European Union is a perfect example of a simulacrum. In fact, there is a creeping assumption that because the European Union is a new political entity without a previous history and has formally denounced colonialism and anti-Semitism, it somehow deserves a clean slate and the right to shift ownership of the colonial histories of its member states onto former colonial subjects. The tacit separation of the European and the colonial histories has long been evident in the national histories of former colonial empires, but its main purpose is to conceal the history of internal colonization as the process of the formation of 'Europe' from the core of the Latin Christendom, expanding during the late Middle Ages conquests, colonization, and cultural change in all directions from England to Palestine, from Eastern Europe to the Iberian Peninsula, from the Baltics to the Balkans. Each modern European nation is a graveyard of internal premodern colonial histories, comprising the official colonial and the silent indigenous histories. For their part, to preserve the fiction of 'Europe's' universality, the Balkan national historiographies erased their own colonial histories to legitimize their conformity with the universalistic canon of Western historiography. Missing from their narrative is the fact that before the Balkans became modern nations, they were indigenous European heretics and slaves. The Catholic Church's as well as the Orthodox Church's extermination of the Balkan heretics and their enslavement by Venetian and Ragusan bourgeoisies made them human casualties of the rise of capitalism, racism, and modern 'Europe.' Frantz Fanon's term "colonial Manichaeism" explains colonialism by referring to the medieval war on heresy and slavery as the crucial moment in the formation of the West's ontological dualism ("world cut in two"), through which capitalism and modern

European nations came into being as a 'civilization.' This paper excavates the buried history of 'other' pre-modern indigenous Europe and its suppressed social imaginary, thereby warranting the abolition of 'Europe' as we know it and a fresh negotiation of the meanings of 'Europe,' the nation, and the Balkans.

PANEL 02 THEORIZING NATIONALISM AND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

Friday 18 September, 08.45–10.15, Floor IV

Yugoslav Area Studies and Knowledge Production after Ukraine, Gaza, and the Second Trump Presidency

Rory Archer

University of Graz, Austria

rory.archer@univie.ac.at

This paper examines how recent geopolitical ruptures reshape the production and circulation of knowledge in Yugoslav Area Studies. During the existence of Yugoslavia, scholarship tended to focus on the country's political experiments in self-management, market socialism, the national question, labor and industrial relations, and the dynamics of the party-state. With the collapse of the state and outbreak of the War of Yugoslav Succession in 1991, the research landscape concerning Yugoslavia changed rapidly as scholars sought to account for ethnically framed conflict and state collapse in a new post-socialist context. For many scholars of Yugoslavia this meant a rapid reorientation in terms of the object of research; simultaneously, a glut of scholarship was produced about the country's collapse by scholars with little or no experience of conducting research in the region. The collapse of state socialism saw a marked expansion in the study of nationalism and ethnicity internationally, and Yugoslavia became a paradigmatic case for theorizing ethnonationalist conflict. While this brought new attention and resources to the field, it also risked overwhelming earlier analytical gains made by experienced scholars of Yugoslav socialism. In the 2000s and 2010s, scholars began to more systematically assess the developments in the field, and a new generation of researchers probed aspects of the Yugoslav dissolution, producing more sophisticated and conceptually informed studies of state collapse and armed conflict. This paper seeks to open discussion on how Yugoslav Area Studies has responded to seismic geopolitical shifts in recent years and whether these developments compel reconsideration of the field's underlying ontological assumptions, scalar framings, and implicit liberal teleologies regarding (post) Yugoslav space. For example, the War of Yugoslav Succession was widely framed in the 1990s – amid a broader climate of liberal triumphalism – as an anomaly, the first major armed conflict in Europe since World War II. Has the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine since 2022 unsettled this exceptionalist framing? How does scholarship on genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina resonate with analyses of genocide in Gaza since 2023? Does democratic backsliding in the United States

and across Europe destabilize assumptions about democratization, the rule of law, and Europeanisation that became mainstays of post-2000 Area Studies research on Yugoslav space? This contribution argues that while scholarship under the rubric of 'Yugoslav Area Studies' possesses substantial analytical resources for understanding ethnically framed violence, genocide, and democratic backsliding, it has thus far been extremely cautious in mobilizing this expertise beyond the (post) Yugoslav context.

Everyday Nationhood and Academic Freedom: How Banal Nationalism Shapes Academic Freedom in Albanian Higher Education

Kriton Kuci

Mediterranean University of Albania, Albania

kritonkuci@umsh.edu.al

In recent years, academic freedom has emerged as a central concern across Europe, particularly in contexts marked by democratic backsliding and the resurgence of nationalist discourse. While overt political interference in universities has received considerable scholarly attention, less visible forms of nationalist influence embedded in everyday academic practices remain underexplored. This paper examines how banal nationalism shapes academic life and knowledge production in Albanian higher education. Drawing on qualitative research conducted between 2023 and 2026, including semi-structured interviews with university faculty, analysis of institutional documents and examination of public academic debates, the paper explores how nationalist assumptions permeate academic environments. These manifestations do not necessarily take the form of explicit censorship or direct political intervention, but instead operate through subtle mechanisms such as the privileging of nationally framed research agendas, the marginalization of critical or transnational perspectives, the symbolic elevation of national themes within curricula and informal expectations regarding the protection of national reputation. The Albanian case offers a particularly revealing context for examining these dynamics. As a post-socialist country undergoing European integration while simultaneously experiencing strong nationalist discourses surrounding history, language, and identity, Albania illustrates the tensions between internationalization and nationalization in higher education. Universities are increasingly integrated into European academic networks through mobility programs, international collaborations and open science initiatives, including participation in transnational frameworks such as COST Actions etc. Yet these processes coexist with persistent national frameworks that shape research priorities, academic legitimacy and intellectual boundaries. The paper argues that banal nationalism operates as an implicit regulatory framework within academia, influencing not only what and how can be studied but also how academic authority is constructed. Rather than relying solely on coercion, na-

tionalist influence often functions through internalized norms, professional expectations and institutional cultures that align academic work with national narratives. This contributes to a form of epistemic boundary maintenance in which certain lines of inquiry are implicitly encouraged, while others are discouraged or marginalized. By focusing on the everyday reproduction of national frameworks within academic institutions, this study contributes to broader debates on academic freedom, nationalism, and the politics of knowledge in contemporary South-eastern Europe. It also engages with discussions within European research policy, particularly those concerning open science and the internationalization of knowledge production, highlighting how nationalist epistemologies can coexist with efforts toward academic openness and transnational collaboration. The findings underscore the need to move beyond formal definitions of academic freedom to consider the subtle, cultural and discursive mechanisms through which academic autonomy may be shaped. In doing so, the paper contributes to the sociology of nationalism and higher education studies, offering new insights into how national identity continues to structure academic life in an increasingly interconnected European research landscape.

PANEL 03 CRISIS, SECURITY, AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN SERBIA

Friday 18 September, 08.45–10.15, Floor VI

**The Yugoslav People's Army in Civil War:
National Identity and the Tearing of the Social Fabric,
1990–May 1992**

Tanja Karmzova

EHESS, France

tanyacostigliola@gmail.com

To consider the Yugoslav case exclusively as either the failure of a political idea or, on the contrary, as its success for a limited period, amounts to setting aside a body of evidence that draws our attention to nuances and perceptions, as well as to the evolution of events. In this respect, the case of the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) is particularly rich in information. This transnational, federal, and communist conscription-based army constituted a compulsory stage in the life of every young Yugoslav man until the tearing apart of the social fabric that bound together the constituent peoples of the Federation. When the interethnic and interconfessional conflicts of the 1990s intensified and turned into wars, the JNA became a kind of polymorphous identity chimera, definable at will according to the respective affiliations of its supervising ministry, its general staff, its senior and junior officer corps, or its conscripts. All were fighting, most of them unwillingly and without knowing what or whom they were fighting against. We therefore propose to reflect on this sense of cultural and ethnic belonging within a key state institution: the Army. Through a few specific examples of colonels and generals who took part in these wars, we will attempt to illustrate the complexity of this Yugoslav specificity under the authority of defense-related laws between 1989 and May 1992. We will focus in particular on General Dragoljub Bocinov (who disobeyed his general staff by refusing to bomb the city of Split), General Jovan Divjak (who placed his Bosnian identity above his Serb ethnicity), and finally General Ratko Mladic (whose communism evolved into a deadly Serb nationalism). We will incorporate an additional perspective into our analysis by exploring how the French diplomatic corps in Yugoslavia understood the identity transformation of the Yugoslav People's Army, as well as that of France's political leadership between 1990 and the spring of 1992. Drawing on documents from the French diplomatic archives and interviews conducted for the study that we work on, we will also assess UNPROFOR's position at the outset of its deployment. The aim of this inquiry is to highlight the very thin and easily crossable boundary between citizenship and identity within an eminently violent political and military environment.

The Idea of the “Serbian World” as a Response to the Trauma of 1991

Paulina Zofia Iłowiecka

University of Warsaw, Poland

p.ilowiecka@uw.edu.pl

1991 marked the beginning of the disintegration of Yugoslavia. This event brought with it a series of consequences for Serbs, including wars, loss of territory and human resources, international isolation and sanctions, and, consequently, poverty. These factors resulted in a decline in the international status of the Republic of Serbia relative to that of Yugoslavia. For the Serbs, who constituted the largest nation in Yugoslavia and, after 2006, have their own titular state, these events resulted in a national trauma. One of the ways of dealing with the traumatic experience was offered by the idea of the “Serbian World,” which posited the existence of a Serbian cultural and spiritual space beyond its new borders and signaled the ties connecting Serbs remaining in the former Yugoslav territories, which after the dissolution became part of other states, with their titular state, Serbia. This is part of the phenomenon in which communities that are unable to cope with a sudden loss of significance are forced to redefine their identity. The resulting grandiose ideas serve as a compensatory mechanism. Although the term “Serbian World” originated in the 19th-century Serbian press, it disappeared for a century and re-entered public discourse after 2020 thanks to a group of Serbian national activists from Montenegro who, following protests over the adoption of a law in Montenegro nationalizing the Serbian Orthodox Church’s properties, decided to promote the idea in Serbia itself. Based on this, it can be concluded that the idea of the “Serbian World” in its current form originated in diaspora representatives’ seeking protection from the titular state. It was at this time that the idea of the “Serbian World” gained widespread media attention, thanks to its adoption by the Serbian ruling elite, who used the argument of protecting the interests of the Serbian minority to interfere in the internal affairs of neighboring countries and to distract public attention during periods of image crises. With the ambition to understand how the loss of status by the state and the experience of national trauma can be soothed by self-aggrandizing ideas, this paper focuses on the idea of the “Serbian World”. The goal is to highlight its compensatory and uplifting function. To achieve this, content and

discourse analysis will be conducted on the texts and statements produced by the proponents of this idea, representing both political and cultural elite. The analysis of messages, statements, and other texts of culture from proponents of “Serbian World” allows us to reconstruct the main tenets of this idea. Additionally, we will recover how the “Serbian World” entrepreneurs depict Yugoslavia and the loss of Kosovo and Metohija and whether they interpret these events as traumatic; what role they ascribe to the Serbian diaspora and, last but not least, what formula of Serbian identity and the status for the Serbian state they foresee.

PANEL 03 CRISIS, SECURITY, AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN SERBIA

Friday 18 September, 08.45–10.15, Floor VI

Victim by Conviction: Ontological Security and the Introjection of Global Crises in the Serbian Official Narratives

Jana Stanković

University of Belgrade, Serbia

stanko500324@student.fpn.bg.ac.rs

This paper aims to explore how international crises can threaten or reshape narratives about a country's identity. Drawing on the ontological security theory, this paper will examine how Serbia's self-identity, including its historical legacy connected to contemporary nationalism, has been exposed to various external and internal pressures, especially in times of global crisis and changing international relations. It focuses on Serbia's fundamental need for biographical continuity and a firm and continuous self-identity despite these external shifts. I argue that the Serbian state manages "epistemic insecurity" (the fear of political finitude) by introjecting global events into its own established historical legacy of collective victimization. The analysis focuses on two contemporary events through the approach of critical discourse analysis: the 2022 National Security Council Conclusions regarding the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the 2024 discourse in the speech of the Serbian president during the UN General Assembly session on the adoption of the Resolution on the commemoration of the Srebrenica genocide. The preliminary analysis suggests that these events are not treated by state actors as isolated geopolitical changes but are discursively linked back to historical traumas.

Language, Trauma, and the Securitization of National Belonging: Political Legitimation and Counter-Narratives in Contemporary Serbia

Claudia Mayr-Veselinović

Technical University of Leoben, Austria

claudia.mayr-veselinovic@unileoben.ac.at

This contribution examines how national identity is discursively reconfigured in contemporary Serbia through the interaction of political rhetoric, collective trauma, and civic counter-mobilization during overlapping societal crises. Focusing on the aftermath of the 2023 mass shootings in Belgrade and Dubona/Orašje and the 2024 Novi Sad railway station canopy collapse, the study analyses how political elites and civil society actors compete over the meaning of grief, responsibility, and national belonging. Drawing on critical discourse analysis, securitization theory, and trauma studies, the paper argues that language functions not merely as a communicative medium but as a central mechanism of political legitimation and boundary-making. Based on an original corpus of more than 3,000 parliamentary transcripts (2023–2025), complemented by media discourse and public political communication, the analysis demonstrates how governing elites employ delegitimizing labels, historical analogies, and threat narratives to redefine protest movements as dangers to the nation. Building on Wæver's concept of securitization, the paper shows how political actors transform civic dissent into an existential security issue through speech acts that frame protests as externally orchestrated destabilization or internal subversion. Through such discursive moves, opposition groups are constructed as "foreign agents," "traitors," or "extremists," thereby shifting them symbolically outside the imagined national community. Securitization thus operates not only as a security strategy but as a mechanism for redefining national belonging through "othering." The analysis integrates Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence, Butler's theory of performative speech, and the discourse-historical approach associated with Wodak. It demonstrates how authorization, moral evaluation, rationalization, and mythopoetic narratives function as key strategies to reshape the boundaries between legitimate citizens and internal enemies while normalizing exceptional political measures. From a socio-psychological perspective, these dynamics contribute to processes of trauma reproduction. When collective mourning is delegiti-

mized or framed as a political threat, language produces secondary victimization and obstructs the symbolic integration of crisis experiences. In response, protest movements develop counter-narratives that reclaim public space. These movements reframe national identity not through state-centric security, but through “radical vulnerability,” solidarity, and demands for institutional accountability. The paper draws on the “Triadic Model of Language-Induced Trauma Dynamics” – linking psychodynamic processes, securitizing discourse, and political outcomes. The model explains how crises become turning points in national identity formation: while populist rhetoric seeks stability through exclusionary securitization, civic mobilization rearticulates national belonging around recognition and participation. By situating Serbia within broader debates on populism, democratic backsliding, and crisis governance in South-eastern Europe, the study contributes to understanding how struggles over language simultaneously become struggles over security, memory, and the future of national identity.

PANEL 04 MINORITIES IN THE BALTICS AND EASTERN EUROPE

Friday 18 September, 10.30–12.00, Floor I

When Loyalty Replaces Rights: Securitization and the Narrowing of Internal Self-Determination in Latvia

Hanna Vasilevich

Institute for Minority Rights, EURAC, Italy

hanna.vasilevich@eurac.edu

This paper examines recent shifts in minority governance in Latvia through the lens of internal self-determination. Since 2022, minority protection has increasingly been discussed in terms of security and loyalty rather than rights and pluralism. While these developments are rarely framed as restrictions on minority rights as such, they have tangible consequences for how minority participation, representation, and autonomy are understood and regulated in practice. The paper argues that self-determination is being narrowed not through overt repression or responses to secessionist mobilization, but through preventive governance that redefines legitimate minority agency in security-related terms. The analysis is based on a qualitative study combining an examination of legislative changes and parliamentary debates with eleven semi-structured interviews conducted with minority stakeholders and policy-adjacent actors in Latvia. This material allows for tracing how security-oriented framings enter policy justifications and how they are experienced and navigated by those affected. The paper shows how loyalty-based reasoning becomes embedded in ordinary governance, reshaping the practical conditions under which minorities can articulate claims and exercise agency. By focusing on internal self-determination in a context where secession is not at stake, the paper contributes to broader discussions on democratic stress, minority protection, and the changing boundaries of self-determination in contemporary Europe.

PANEL 04 MINORITIES IN THE BALTICS AND EASTERN EUROPE

Friday 18 September, 10.30–12.00, Floor I

Ethnic Minority Resistance in Latvia

Aleksandra Kuczyńska-Zonik

Catholic University of Lublin, Poland

aleksandra.kuczynska-zonik@kul.pl

This presentation offers a critical reflection on an under-researched area of the sociality of social discontent and ethnic minority (EM) resistance in Latvia during the rapidly changing global order and addresses an important topic linked to the quality of democracy in this region. The main research objectives are to: (1) to elaborate the means, types, and forms of resistance (individual, collective, uncovered, covert, formal, informal) among Russian speakers in Latvia, (2) by empirical observation to investigate the interlinkages between different resistance forms that contribute to social change. My aim is to assess the effectiveness, productivity, creativity, and mobility of resistance to answer the question of whether resistance may challenge and transform the EM position in relation to power. From a methodological point of view, this is a comparative study on multiple levels. Also, a qualitative research design is selected for this study (20 semi-structured interviews and observations). The paper will present partial results of the research project: Ethnic and National Minority Resistance in Central Europe (ENMinResCE), which aims to identify minority resistance strategies, their resources, and agendas aimed at increasing inclusiveness in society. This paper will focus on the case of the Russian-speaking minority in Latvia, and will attempt to answer the following questions: how do minority strategies and resources, the flexibility of the political system, and external conditions influence the success or failure of minorities in their efforts to bring about social change?

PANEL 04 MINORITIES IN THE BALTICS AND EASTERN EUROPE

Friday 18 September, 10.30–12.00, Floor I

Between Secession and Unity: The Role of Parent State Titulars in Shaping Separatist Conflicts in Moldova and Georgia

Keith Harrington

Dublin City University, Ireland

keith.harrington@dcu.ie

The collapse of the Soviet Union led to the emergence of several de facto states, entities that lack international recognition yet possess many characteristics of statehood. Today, three post-Soviet de facto states remain: Transnistria, which seceded from Moldova in 1992, and South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which broke away from Georgia in the early 1990s. The circumstances that led to the creation of these de facto states differed considerably. The conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia are typically characterized as ethnic wars, whereas the Transnistrian War is often portrayed as an elite-driven conflict. Although the circumstances that led to the creation of these de facto states differed, they share an important common feature: prior to and during their wars of secession, each region was home to a substantial number of parent-state titulars, the dominant ethnic groups from the states they seceded from. According to the 1989 Soviet census, Moldovans accounted for 40 percent of Transnistria's population, while Georgians constituted 45 percent of Abkhazia's and 29 percent of South Ossetia's. While existing scholarship has examined the experiences of these communities before and after wars of secession, how they responded to the emergence of separatist movements and how they navigated the subsequent wars remains underexplored. This paper fills this gap by examining how Moldovans in Transnistria, and Georgians in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, responded to separatist mobilization and the wars that followed in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It compares patterns of response both between regions and within them, demonstrating significant regional variation. The paper outlines a theoretical model to explain these differences, arguing that resistance was strongest in areas where parent-state titulars formed a local majority, possessed a robust ethnic identity, and where local elites supported the parent state's territorial integrity.

PANEL 04 MINORITIES IN THE BALTICS AND EASTERN EUROPE

Friday 18 September, 10.30–12.00, Floor I

Between Secession and Unity: The Role of Parent State Titulars in Shaping Separatist Conflicts in Moldova and Georgia

Alexander Osipov

International Centre for Ethnic and Linguistic Diversity Studies, Czechia

aosipov1@gmail.com

The paper considers the agenda of redress and reparations for so-called formerly deported peoples in Russia (FDPs). FDPs are ethnicities that were forcibly resettled in the 1930s-1950s to remote areas of the Soviet Union, suffered human and material losses, and were partly not allowed to return after Stalin's death. This issue, being a heated one in the late 1980s – early 1990s, was institutionalized through the adoption of the 1991 Russian law on the 'repressed peoples'. Although the agenda, underpinned by a collective trauma and the strong wording of the law, must have led to political debates and contentions, the real developments were different and demonstrated two paradoxes. First, the agenda must have been highly problematic for the Russian authorities, but they keep showing positive attitudes to the 'rehabilitation' agenda and have not tried to rescind or substantively amend the related legislation, even to delete the term 'genocide' which denoted the deportations. The law is still in force, and it was to a certain extent implemented, albeit to a limited degree. Second, the FDP movements, which emerged during the 1980s liberalization, by the mid-1990s largely ceased or diverted their activities without achieving their initial goals in the absence of pressure or intimidation of the then half-democratic Russian government. In sum, these developments look as an effective depoliticization of the agenda, or the formation of its common perception as a matter of technical measures against the backdrop of a tacit societal consent to the basic principles. The author seeks to explain this phenomenon by addressing the content, conception, and history of the 1991 law on the repressed peoples and the subsequent bylaws. The study's focus is on the role of lawmaking in the production of depoliticized imaginaries, attitudes, and institutional prerequisites. The paper considers the major actors who contributed to the elaboration of the drafts and the rationalities they followed. The study's empirical data comprises the author's findings in Russian archives, national legislation, and media publications. The theoretical approach combines the analyses of framing modes and opportunity structure. Methodologically, the study employs situational analysis and process tracing.

PANEL 05 NATIONAL IDENTITY IN NORTH MACEDONIA

Friday 18 September, 10.30–12.00, Floor IV

Macedonian National Identity between Domestic Reframing and External Contestation, 2008–2018

Blagoj Conev

Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, North Macedonia

b.conev@utms.edu.mk

Unlike neighboring national identities in the Balkans, which began to take shape in the second half of the nineteenth century—largely following the establishment of nation-states—the Macedonian national identity, in its modern sense, began to form after 1944, with the creation of the first Macedonian state in history. This process of national consolidation was completed with the establishment of a fully sovereign nation-state in 1991. However, whereas neighboring Balkan identities, during their formative phases, passed through multiple stages of definition and consolidation—processes that can be theoretically interpreted through primordial, perennial, and ethnosymbolist approaches, largely facilitated by state-regulated educational systems—the Macedonian identity, after its final institutional consolidation, was defined almost exclusively through a modernist framework, specifically reflecting a Stalinist conception of nationhood. This conception understood identity primarily as a set of legal-political and economic frameworks, largely detached from collective memory and from any primordial or perennial linkage to historical statehood in the Balkans. As a consequence, the establishment of the Macedonian state in 1991 did not resolve questions of identity but instead generated an internal identity crisis within Macedonianism itself. This crisis intensified after 2008, following Greece's blockade of Macedonia's accession to NATO, a moment that marked a decisive shift toward ethnosymbolist and primordial-perennial interpretations of Macedonian identity. During the period 2008–2018 in Macedonia (today's North Macedonia), these interpretations became dominant to the extent that alternative theoretical approaches were increasingly framed as negations of Macedonian identity itself. This dynamic not only defined but further deepened the crisis of Macedonian national identity by transforming it into an object of international legal and political negotiation. As a result, Macedonian national identity—together with its unresolved theoretical and political contradictions—became a *sine qua non* of diplomatic negotiations between North Macedonia and its neighboring states.

PANEL 05 NATIONAL IDENTITY IN NORTH MACEDONIA

Friday 18 September, 10.30–12.00, Floor IV

Borderland Anxieties and the Reinvention of the Past: Contesting National Identity Narratives in North Macedonia

Natasha Sardzoska

University of Rijeka, Croatia

natasha.sar@gmail.com

In this paper, I examine the ongoing reconfiguration of national identity in North Macedonia, within broader borderland tensions in Southeast Europe, and I explore how national narratives in North Macedonia have been continuously reshaped through strategic reinventions of the past, demographic anxieties, and antagonistic responses to bordering states and supranational actors. Since its independence in 1991, the country has undergone multiple name disputes, mostly with Greece. The resolution of the long name dispute through the Prespa Agreement marked a shift in the international position, but it provoked debates about authenticity and legitimacy. Now, renewed tensions with Bulgaria, over interpretations of shared history, geographic continuity and linguistic distinctiveness, reveal historiography as a terrain of harsh political struggle, transforming public discourse in a zone of nationalist mobilization. Thus, the paper argues that national identification should be read not as a fixed condition but as a mobile and reactive process induced by “borderland anxieties.” As a state located at the geopolitical outskirts of Europe, North Macedonia’s struggle for recognition unfolds in constant dialogue with limitrophe impositions. The postponement of EU accession has generated ambivalent attitudes toward the process, ranging from aspiration and ambition to defensive and obsessive antagonism, mass paranoia, and anti-European rhetoric shifted by populist actors, framing the EU as an agent of humiliation and imposed compromise, thereby recasting concessions in foreign policy as “betrayals” of the nation. Drawing on discourse analysis in media representations and public narratives, I examine how selective readings and arbitrarily coined meanings of a common past in the post-Yugoslav transition are deployed to stabilize a sense of contingency amid multiple crises. In line with Eric Hobsbawm’s notion of “invention of tradition,” I argue, through the Macedonian case, how national pasts are not merely remembered as administrative legacy but as histories actively constructed to legitimize present political projects of symbolic mnemonic, cultural, and urban reconfiguration, to

reframe hybrid historical legacies, and to disseminate demographic “threats” that feed into exclusionary imaginaries of isolation. From the cultural theory perspective, I focus on hybridity and ambivalence (Homi K. Bhabha) in borderlands identity building, emphasizing how societal fear and ontological uncertainty (Zygmunt Bauman) become vectors and agents of proliferation of these nationalistic somewhat mythological narratives of identity (i.e. recently North Macedonia has requested from the EU “a guarantee of the national identity” claiming to be an almost rigid and cast into stone statute). By conceptualizing a paradigmatic borderland society, the paper contributes to a debate on re-configuring national identities in the context of crises and demonstrates how anxiety becomes a constitutive element of societal articulation. Rather than understanding this antagonism as merely pathological or irrational, the analysis locates it within structural asymmetries and recognition struggles that characterize small states on the geopolitical periphery. Ultimately, I argue that the Macedonian case of “identity obsession” reveals the systematic fragility of national narratives in contemporary Europe, demonstrating how contested identities, continuously porous and blurred, are negotiated through conflict and crisis, and emotional and symbolic reinvention of mental maps within borderland spaces disrupted by unresolved histories.

PANEL 05 NATIONAL IDENTITY IN NORTH MACEDONIA

Friday 18 September, 10.30–12.00, Floor IV

Fair Is Foul, and Foul Is Fair? Examining Support for Different Understandings of Fairness in North Macedonia

Indraneel Sircar*

University College London, UK

i.sircar@ucl.ac.uk

Adam Fagan

King's College London, UK

Borjan Gjuzelov

Institute for Democracy Societas Civilis Skopje, North Macedonia

**presenting/corresponding author*

Ongoing European Union (EU) accession processes in Southeast Europe prioritize institutional transformation focused on the rule of law. EU efforts remain predominantly based on an institutional approach with less attention on understanding deeply embedded norms and values. Hence, we examine understandings of fairness, which are at the core of norms on which the rule of law is based, in the EU candidate country of North Macedonia. We do this as a way of challenging the way prevailing norms in Southeast Europe are viewed externally by the EU and others. We draw on Laura Niemi's conceptual and methodological framework, distinguishing between three understandings of fairness: impartiality, charity, and reciprocity. Impartiality refers to adhering strictly to distributive rules and commonly equated with fairness. However, fairness can also entail distributing based on needs (charity) or on past favors (reciprocity). We explore these three understandings of fairness using an original vignette-based survey experiment administered to two groups of respondents in North Macedonia: 1) judicial practitioners (n=99); 2) undergraduate and postgraduate law students (n=70). We investigate three main questions in the study. First, we examine whether the relative support for different forms of fairness differs in a Southeast European context (with higher support for reciprocity and charity compared with impartiality) for both groups. Second, we investigate whether there are differences in the relative support for different notions of fairness between students (possible judicial practitioners in the

future) and current judicial practitioners. Third, and perhaps most importantly, we gauge whether understandings of fairness differ between more and less experienced judicial practitioners, since they have vital responsibility for rule of law implementation in North Macedonia.

PANEL 05 NATIONAL IDENTITY IN NORTH MACEDONIA

Friday 18 September, 10.30–12.00, Floor IV

Ethnoreligious and Political Divide versus Personal Identity in Macedonian Society – Students' Attitudes and the Processes of Individualization and Secularization

Petar Atanasov*

Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, North Macedonia
p.atanasov@isppi.ukim.edu.mk

Bojana Naumoska

Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, North Macedonia

Driton Maljichi

Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, North Macedonia

**presenting/corresponding author*

The main goal of this paper is to analyze the processes of individualization and secularization in relation to students' attitudes, considering the ongoing pressure from collectivist identities and rapid social changes in Macedonian society. This will be done on two levels. Firstly, the paper will rely on data from original research among the student population in public universities, and will compare these results with those of a similar research project conducted by the same research team ten years ago. Secondly, the findings will be a device to measure the intensity of the individualization process, which was researched a decade ago, but will also analyze whether the rapid social changes have an influence on students' lifestyles. The main thesis is that the process of individualization in Macedonian society is slow due to multiple factors (ethnic, religious, and political), and is not engendering the process of secularization, compared to the Western and Northern Europe experience, despite rapid social changes. These multiple polarizations and collectivistic pressures, together with the weak process of individualization, do not support the development of a civic model of social integration. The paper is based on the results of an annual scientific project financed by the University 'Ss. Cyril and Methodius' in Skopje, conducted by the Institute for Sociological Political and Legal Research.

Towards New Patriotism in Serbia? Political Contestations and the Idea of Nationhood in/around 2024/26 Student Protests

Tamara Petrović Trifunović

University of Belgrade, Serbia

evena304@gmail.com

One of the prominent discursive frames in discussing contemporary Serbian society has been the division of the political community into Two Serbias (“traditional” and “modern”, “national”/“patriotic” and “cosmopolitan”, “pro-war”/“anti-war”, “uncivilized/cultured”, etc.). This narrative has dominated intellectual and public debates at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century. While this political cleavage remains present in public and everyday life, its reconfiguration has also long been underway, particularly through the figure of “Third Serbia” (Spasić & Petrović). It encompasses the striving for “unity” instead of the supposedly unproductive “dwelling on the past” (i.e., 1990s wars during the collapse of the socialist Yugoslavia), elitism, classism, and “fault-finding”. In the figuration of “Third Serbia”, the narrative suggests that the once-rookie Serbian nation should look optimistically into the future and reconstruct itself as a nation/nationhood “just like any other” - banal, everyday, and sometimes ecstatic. These discursive-historical fragments resurfaced during the 2024/26 student protests in Serbia, rerouting discussion of the movement and the movement’s narratives away from some of their key initial features (direct democracy, political reaffaction and re-engagement of large segments of society, demands for accountability and the rule of law, etc) back to these old binaries and to the core of the idea of nation and nationhood in Serbia today. Stemming from the interviews with students participating in the protest, conducted as part of the project “The Wave of Student Revolt in Serbia: University Blockades 2024-2025” (Institute for Sociological Research, University of Belgrade – Faculty of Philosophy), the follow-up inquiry in the third year of the protest movement will focus on participants’ reflections on the meaning of patriotism, popular sovereignty, nationhood and national belonging. The focal points of the complementary analysis of the official discursive production of the student movement will be large protests and marches through Serbia, commemorations, and national public holidays.

PANEL 06 NATIONAL IDENTITIES AND PROTESTS IN SERBIA

Friday 18 September, 10.30–12.00, Floor VI

Nationalism and Civic Protest in Georgia and Serbia

Marko Žilović

University of Belgrade, Serbia

marko.zilovic@fpn.bg.ac.rs

Nationalism identifies Others as friends or foes, a designation that can have far-reaching political consequences. For example, European post-communist countries with strong anti-Russian national traditions generally had an easier time democratizing in the early 1990s (Darden and AGB 2006), while the positionality of a nation in triadic nexuses constituted by the nation-state, ethnic minorities, and ethnic kin abroad (Brubaker 1996) could durably associate notions of the Left or the Right with nationalism or liberalism (Rovny 2024). Similarly, contemporary mobilization against authoritarianism often draws on the emotional power of nationalism, but variation in national narratives that movements can draw on leads to differences in protest strategy and outcomes. To unpack this complex relationship, I conduct a paired comparison of the recent protest waves in Georgia and Serbia. Post-communist Georgia and Serbia exhibit remarkable similarities. In both, the 1990s were marked by authoritarian rule, ethnic conflict, and economic collapse. Electoral revolutions in the early 2000s ushered in a decade of economic liberalization, tentative democratization, and efforts toward European integration. Since 2012, however, disillusionment with reformist elites has enabled the rise of dominant parties – Georgian Dream and the Serbian Progressive Party – that eventually built highly corrupt forms of competitive authoritarianism while strategically hedging between Russia, China, and the West. Both regimes have now faced a decade of civic protest, culminating in large-scale mobilizations of recent years. Despite these similarities, ongoing protests in Georgia and Serbia differ markedly in framing, repertoires, coalition-building strategies, and political effects. I argue these differences stem from the contrasting geopolitical implications of salient national stories in the two countries. While both national narratives emphasize medieval statehood, survival under imperial domination, and the role of Orthodox churches, they differ in the identity of the primary national Other. In Georgia, nationalism is predominantly anti-Russian, shaped by Soviet domination and reaffirmed by Russia's 2008 intervention and recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In Serbia, nationalism is predominantly anti-Western, shaped by the West's obstruction of Serbian nationalism in the

Yugoslav wars of the 1990s and reaffirmed by the decision of major Western countries to recognize Kosovo in 2008. These differences condition how civic movements can draw on nationalism. In Georgia, implied alignment between nationalism and pro-Western liberalism enables protesters to engage in thick identity polarization, portraying the regime as betraying the nation's European future. In Serbia, where predominantly anti-Western nationalism implies opposition between nationalism and liberalism, protesters pursue identity unification through thin "civic" nationalism that papers over disagreements within the anti-authoritarian coalition. These strategies are reflected in protest symbolism, such as in the much-discussed prominence of EU and U.S. flags in Georgia and the ban on foreign flags in Serbian protests, but also in protest size, their social composition, geographic reach, and the capacity of civic movements to generate electorally viable challengers. Drawing on an original protest event dataset, interviews, participant observation, and secondary sources to demonstrate and explain these differences, the paper contributes to research on nationalism and democracy and to the literature on social movements.

PANEL 06 NATIONAL IDENTITIES AND PROTESTS IN SERBIA

Friday 18 September, 10.30–12.00, Floor VI

Nationalism and Civic Protest in Georgia and Serbia

Anneliese Schenk-Day*

The Ohio State University, US
schenk.67@osu.edu

Adrijana Miladinović

The Ohio State University, US

Steven Z. Bao

The Ohio State University, US

Jack Wippell

The Ohio State University, US

**presenting/corresponding author*

Following the collapse of a railway station canopy in Novi Sad on 1 November 2024, which killed 16 people, Serbia entered a prolonged cycle of student-led anti-corruption mobilization that rapidly expanded across the country and into the diaspora. These protests were not only a response to infrastructural failure and perceived corruption but also a battleground over what it means to be Serbian. This paper examines how this protest wave reconfigures national identity amid overlapping crises. Rather than treating national identity as a stable background condition, we analyze it as an object of struggle that is actively made, contested, and moralized in public space. Drawing on thirty in-depth interviews conducted from January to March 2026 with protesters aged 20–50 in multiple Serbian localities, complemented by field observations at demonstrations, we trace how protesters engage in boundary-spanning practices that foster cross-cutting solidarity. In this context, “being Serbian” is reframed as civic responsibility and collective care, expressed through practices such as maintaining disciplined protest routines, mutual aid, and an insistence that accountability is patriotic rather than “anti-national.” Participants frequently describe solidarity as something felt and learned through contact with strangers, including teachers, lawyers, agricultural workers, and other groups who join student-organized actions. Symbols, especially flags and widely shared protest emblems, become tools for making a more inclusive national “we” legible and emotionally compelling. The Serbian student protests show that national identity is advocated by both sides, but with sharp-

ly different political logics. Protesters frame national symbols, especially the Serbian flag, as reclaimed from partisan monopolization. Carrying the flag signals that demanding accountability is patriotic rather than “anti-Serbian” and helps assemble an inclusive national “we” that spans internal divisions. In contrast, government-aligned actors deploy the same symbols to equate loyalty to the ruling party, or to state institutions as currently governed, with loyalty to Serbia itself, casting dissent as betrayal. As repression, stigmatizing narratives, and the presence of organized counter-protesters intensify, both camps sharpen negative boundaries. Protesters increasingly define “not Serbian” as corruption, coercion, and violence, and often condemn neutrality as morally unacceptable. Government supporters, meanwhile, mark students and their allies as outsiders to the nation. This symbolic struggle thus brings tangible consequences: it structures who is recognized as a legitimate member of the national community and who is morally suspect. We argue that these competing patriotic claims can simultaneously sustain mobilization and accelerate polarization by pushing national identity into an explicitly moral register. By linking crisis-triggered mobilization to everyday symbols and practices of solidarity and exclusion, the paper contributes to debates on contesting national narratives in Southeastern Europe and on populist responses to democratic crisis. The protests function as a site where national identity is being renegotiated toward civic accountability, even as conflict dynamics produce new symbolic and moral boundaries that may reshape political community beyond the protest cycle.

PANEL 06 NATIONAL IDENTITIES AND PROTESTS IN SERBIA

Friday 18 September, 10.30–12.00, Floor VI

Reconfiguring Belonging through Protest: Bosniak Participation in Serbian Student Protests

Sabina Pacariz

Northeastern University London, UK

s.pacariz@gmail.com

This paper will investigate the Bosniak involvement in student protests across Serbia through the case of the University of Novi Pazar, with particular interest in the impact it has over the perception of state identity and belonging in Serbian society. Unlike the pro-democratic demonstrations in the 1990s, the Bosniak population is participating in student protests for the first time, deliberately circumventing the representative bodies (minority councils, parties, and even religious institutions). Considering that the Serbian hybrid regime is sustained via multiple patronage networks, it comes as no surprise that clientelism has spilled over into the formal representative institutions for minority inclusion. As a result, the study proposes that the Bosniaks do not consider themselves fully represented or part of such a regime, thus their protests suggest renegotiation of their identity and belonging within Serbia. In order to gain a more wholesome understanding of democratic resilience, one should approach the minority lens not only through the whether aspect of inclusion, but also how they're included. The paper makes the claim that despite the rising autocratisation on elite level, the grassroots mobilization of minorities suggests a somewhat contradictory rise in democratization and Europeanisation 'from below', through creating alternative routes of inclusion in the political debate. The phenomenon also suggests a significant shift in perceptions among the majoritarian group, not only through close engagement and inclusion of the protesters from Novi Pazar, but also through proposing a new imaginary of how democracy should function in an ethnoculturally heterogeneous society. Methodologically, the paper will rely on semi-structured interviews with activists, paired with desktop research.

PANEL 06 NATIONAL IDENTITIES AND PROTESTS IN SERBIA

Friday 18 September, 10.30–12.00, Floor VI

From Ethnicity to Solidarity: Reimagining Serbian National Identity through Transnational Mobilization

Filip Balunović

University of Belgrade, Serbia

filip.balunovic@gmail.com

The former Yugoslav diaspora is frequently associated with reactionary forms of “long-distance nationalism.” As Yugoslavia disintegrated, its diaspora often mirrored the collapse of the once-dominant ideal of “brotherhood and unity.” When this foundational Yugoslav slogan lost its resonance at home, the question arises whether its normative core migrated alongside the hundreds of thousands of economic migrants and refugees displaced by the wars of the 1990s and 2000s. More specifically, one may ask whether the idea of Yugoslavia, as a value system rather than a national or ethnic identity, continues to persist abroad despite the dominant paradigm of nationalism that has shaped much of the diaspora’s political expression. This question can be approached through a specific empirical lens: the mobilizations and solidarity activism that emerged in response to the student-led uprising in Serbia from late 2024 throughout 2025. The focus here is on the signs of slight transformation of Serbian national identity from without, particularly through the fostering of transnational and transethnic solidarity across the so-called “Yugo-sphere” in the diaspora. Post-Yugoslav individuals from different ethnic and national backgrounds engaged in collective action abroad, uniting not on ethnic grounds but around shared opposition to authoritarianism. The research also aims at analyzing how protest framing, symbolic repertoires, and domestic political contexts shape transnational engagement, which in turn feeds back into the symbolic construction of Serbian national identity itself. Importantly, impulses toward a more inclusive and value-based, rather than exclusively ethnic, understanding of national identity also emerged from within Serbia, particularly through the visible participation of Muslim citizens from Novi Pazar in the student movement. They were further reinforced by other practices, such as the international running and cycling tours organized by Serbian students, which actively fostered solidarity mobilizations within the diaspora. Such developments represent both a consequence of, and a precondition for, the possibility of transethnic solidarity activism in the diaspora. In this sense, the dormant idea of “brotherhood and unity” re-enters the discursive arena

in which Serbian national identity is debated and reformulated. This does not imply that Serbian national identity has been fundamentally transformed. Rather, it suggests that counter-hegemonic ideas – generated through solidarity practices – have emerged to contest the previously absolute dominance of ethno-national and clericalized conception of identity that has characterized much of post-socialist Serbia. The study therefore challenges essentialist interpretations of diaspora identity that reduce political behavior to fixed national or ethnic origins. Instead, it highlights the active construction of identities through mobilization processes and their articulation in relation to homeland politics and symbolic repertoires. More broadly, the project contributes to debates on how diasporas interact with homeland politics, under what conditions they embrace internationalist rather than nationalist forms of solidarity, and how the symbolic framing of domestic protests shapes activism abroad. Employing interviews, content analysis, and participant observation, the study advances both social movement and diaspora scholarship by theorizing the conditions under which diasporas move beyond long-distance nationalism toward transnational, value-based solidarities.

PANEL 07 MINORITIES IN CENTRAL EUROPE

Friday 18 September, 14.00–15.30, Floor I

Nationalising Policies and Cultural Diversity: What Kind of 'the People' Do We Want to Be?

Anna Muś

University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland

anna.mus@us.edu.pl

For some time now, Polish scholars and minority rights activists have been warning that ethnic policy in the Republic of Poland is not effective. The protection of cultural diversity (including minority rights) is weak, and wider cultural policy actually may have a rather opposite effect: it may lead to cultural assimilation (Duć-Fajfer 2020). Those warnings have been largely ignored. However, the nation-building project, which began in 1918 after the restoration of the Polish state, can hardly meet the criterion proposed by Wimmer: “political equality between groups is a key defining element of nation-building” (2018, 6). Additionally, there is no effective system for the representation of minority communities and their interests (i.e. Agarín 2019). The prevalence of an ethnocultural understanding of the nation and an inefficient minority rights protection system shows that the general readiness to accommodate “otherness” seems to have been an illusion in Poland, similarly to the democratic consolidation installed to meet Western expectations rather than to reflect grassroots popular attitudes (as argued by Dawson and Hanley, 2016). It is hardly new, as Brubaker used the example of the II Republic of Poland for his concept of the “nationalizing state” (1996). Thus, questions emerge: who is perceived as part of the People in Poland and who is not? Who should have political and cultural rights, which the state is supposed to protect? The paper analyses how the concept of the nation influences state policies (only in the field of ethnic/cultural policy) and citizens’ preferences for those policies. It combines qualitative content analysis of legal instruments and calls for applications in funding opportunities in the sector of culture with frequency analysis of the state-wide survey results (n= 1156, representative sample). The paper considers the relation between the concept of national identity and public policy choices as still relevant in liberal democracies. It also takes into consideration changes over time (especially the difference between the years of the Law and Justice government labeled as populist and governments that came before and after).

PANEL 07 MINORITIES IN CENTRAL EUROPE

Friday 18 September, 14.00–15.30, Floor I

Gorals: Slovakia's Latest Recognized National Minority

Ábel Ravasz

Matthias Bel Institute, Slovakia

abelravasz@gmail.com

In February 2025, the government of Slovakia recognized the Gorals as the country's newest, 15th national minority. It is thus the first country that has afforded such status to this group, which is also present in Poland, Czechia and Romania. Historically, Goral identity has been heavily contested, especially between Poland and Slovakia. In Poland, they have traditionally been defined as part of the Polish nation, and in (Czecho-)Slovakia, as part of the Slovak nation. During the first half of the 20th century, the two countries have claimed legitimacy and control over the ethnic Goral villages in the borderlands between them, leading to frequent and sometimes violent border changes (in 1918, 1938, 1939 and 1945). This history has practically throttled the development of an independent narrative of the Gorals as a nationality in either country (as well as identity-focused research about them). Moreover, Gorals have also been defined as an ethnographic group or even an occupational group, leading to an inability of both the community and the countries in which they live to provide an adequate framework for the support and transmission of Goral culture for future generations. This paper summarizes the results of a five-year field research project – the so-called Atlas of Goral Communities – completed between 2020 and 2024, documenting the current situation of the Gorals in Slovakia. During the research, all villages that the literature flagged as having a Goral population were visited by field workers, and data about population distribution, language use, institutions and cultural heritage were gathered. The methodology was developed on the basis of Slovakia's Atlas of Roma Communities research project (2004–), but specifically modified to fit the different situation of the Gorals. The paper presents the data gained through this research, showing both the persistence of Goral culture and its vulnerability in younger population groups. This is complemented by a new reading of the history of the Gorals in Slovakia, thus combining disparate sources of local, regional and national history to give a comprehensive narrative of the genesis and development of this group. The analysis also briefly reflects to the Goral moment that defined as its goal the recognition of this group as a national minority, largely influencing the political decision of the government in 2025.

The paper concludes by presenting the agenda of the recognition of national minorities in Slovakia over the past two decades. During this period, the country has recognized four new national minorities (Russians, Serbs, Vietnamese and Gorals) in addition to the 11 already afforded such status before. In the absence of a comprehensive law on the status of national minorities, such recognition takes the form of ad hoc political decisions, often contested both politically and academically. The paper shows how the recognition of the Gorals fits this pattern, and what the practical implications of such a recognition are for the future of this community.

PANEL 07 MINORITIES IN CENTRAL EUROPE

Friday 18 September, 14.00–15.30, Floor I

The Situation of Ethnic Hungarians in Ukraine and Slovakia: To What Extent Do Kinstate–Host State Relations Matter?

Peter Balogh

Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary

balogh.peter@krtk.elte.hu

It is often assumed that policies aimed at good bilateral relations contribute to improving not just binational attitudes but also the rights and status of any kinstate's diaspora in the given host state (Filep 2017, Pampolina 2018). At the same time, the opposite shall be true if especially the leaderships of the given countries are at odds with each other. Additionally, the attitudes and agency of minorities as well as the policies of and references to supranational organizations are also important. Thus, the analysis applies the quadratic nexus model (Smith 2002, Krasniqi 2013) but with a stronger focus on kinstate–host state relations. This paper partly builds on the author's recent work in Ukraine (2021–23) and Slovakia (2024–25) that focused on interethnic and kinstate relations in the two countries' partly Hungarian-inhabited regions (Balogh & Kovály 2025), as well as on local perceptions of EUrope (Balogh 2025, Balogh forthcoming). In both regions, the narratives of local elites and citizens were rather diverse, ranging between reconciliatory and 'othering' attitudes. Perceptions of Europe similarly varied from person to person or even with one and the same informant. There was a difference in the extent to which the kinstate and its recent diaspora as well as other policies were embraced, where the tone was more unanimously positive among Ukraine Hungarians. This can be explained by the fact that the latter are in a more volatile position and, unlike Slovak Hungarians, often dual citizens. Regarding bilateral relations and their impacts on ethnic minority rights, particularly of Hungarians, the previously good ties between Ukraine and Hungary have (in)famously deteriorated over the past decade. This was paralleled by a decline in minority rights in the mid-2010s to only gradually improve since 2020 – in part due to external pressure by the Council of Europe, the EU, and Hungary. However, particularly since the full-scale invasion, Hungary has further instrumentalized the minority issue to justify its anti-Ukraine policy, which is ever less credibly driven by a genuine concern for the minority's needs and aspirations. When it comes to Slovakia–Hungary relations over the past twenty years, the

status of Slovakia Hungarians has tended to suffer more under Fico's governments. Dual citizenship was banned right after Hungary broadened it in 2010, and stricter minority-language laws have been proposed. Most controversially, any criticism of the Beneš decrees has recently become penalized even though property is still being confiscated on their grounds. Yet the Hungarian government has turned a blind eye to this even though, or rather because, its Slovak equivalent has become its main ally in the EU in recent years. The (tentative) conclusion is therefore that in the case of Ukraine-Hungary, there is a clearer relation between the evolution of bilateral relations and minority rights than in the case of Slovakia-Hungary. Further, in both cases, EUrope is perceived as rather absent in this regard.

PANEL 07 MINORITIES IN CENTRAL EUROPE

Friday 18 September, 14.00–15.30, Floor I

Extracting the Nation: Mining, Territorial Belonging, and Minority Survival in Two East-Central European 'Margins'

Giustina Selvelli

University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

giustina.selvelli@gmail.com

This paper examines how contemporary energy transition and extractive regimes reshape minority-nation relations through lived experiences of landscape transformation, memory, and future-making in East-Central Europe, drawing on ethnographically informed interviews and field materials. It builds on anthropological debates on extractivism (Voyles 2015) and minority-nation relations, to conceptualize national belonging in ethnolinguistic minority communities located in non-central and historically marginalized regions as a socio-ecological and territorially grounded process shaped through everyday engagements with landscape, resource regimes, and vulnerable heritage. Focusing on two ethnolinguistic minority regions historically shaped by extractive economies—Lusatia in eastern Germany (Sorbian minority) and the Timok Valley in eastern Serbia (Vlach minority)—the paper explores how the mining industry contributes to shape contemporary debates on national economic priorities while affecting the social and cultural conditions of minority community reproduction. In both regions, local residents and activists link environmental degradation to the erosion of intergenerational knowledge transmission, transformations of land-based livelihoods, and the loss of culturally meaningful landscapes. In Lusatia, debates surrounding lignite mining and post-mining land rehabilitation are closely connected to memories of village displacement and to ongoing claims over remaining forested and agricultural spaces. In eastern Serbia, copper mining and related industrial activities have reconfigured ecological systems that sustain pastoral practices, water access, and communal land use, generating new forms of environmental and social vulnerability. These processes ultimately reveal how extractive and energy transition regimes remain embedded within nation-centered development models that prioritize economic growth and environmental stability over the long-term maintenance of cultural and ecological diversity. Within these frameworks, minority regions are often positioned as peripheral spaces of “internal colonialism” (Hechter 1999), whose landscapes, resources, and social

histories can be transformed or sacrificed in the name of national development and energy security. By foregrounding these dynamics, the paper argues that the preservation of ecological and cultural diversity constitutes part of the same political question. Extractive conflicts thus become arenas through which minority communities negotiate the conditions of their sociocultural survival through struggles over territory, collective memory, and future-making under conditions of multiple crises.

PANEL 08 IDENTITY, LANGUAGE, AND EDUCATION

Friday 18 September, 14.00–15.30, Floor IV

Imperial Nations under Construction: Nation-Building through Education in Austria (1867–1914) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (1878–1914)

Adnan Pečković*

University of Vienna, Austria

a.peckovic@gmail.com

Nicole Gotling

University of Vienna, Austria

**presenting/corresponding author*

Our paper will discuss how the results of the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 and the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878 led to the new configuration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and its inclusion of the Balkans within its jurisdiction, respectively, and to the development of different national identities within separate states of the empire during its duration until World War I. More specifically, we will focus on how the Austrian government reformed and tailored educational institutions, curricula, and teaching materials to create specific ideas of national identity and national citizens. Using a discourse-historical approach (e.g., Wodak) to analyze educational legislation, curricula, and textbooks, we will demonstrate the creation of national identity through two cases: the internal case of the Austrian nation and the external case of the Bosnian nation that should be loyal to Austria and the larger Austro-Hungarian Empire. To start, Austria and Hungary came together to form the Austro-Hungarian Empire (technically, the Austria-Hungary Dual Monarchy) in 1867. This unification acted as a salve for the greatly diminished and precarious state Austria was in following its defeat to Prussia in 1866, the disbanding of the German Confederation (previously the Holy Roman Empire) which the Austrian Habsburgs had led for centuries, and the exclusion of Austria from unifying with the rest of the German states in the subsequent German Empire. These monumental changes resulted not least in a national crisis of identity for Austria: up until their exclusion from a unified Germany, Austrians had been considered German; after their exclusion, they had to figure out what Austrian identity was if it could not be German. Although unified with Hungary, many Austrian institutions remained separate, such as education. Austria's

Ministry of Education reformed their whole educational institution starting in 1868, and we will show how the reformed curricula, especially through national history and geography subjects, developed until WWI as a process of creating an idea of what this new Austrian national identity should be. At the same time that Austrians were dealing with their own national crisis situation in Austria, the Austro-Hungarian Empire started its administration in Bosnia and Herzegovina after the Russo-Turkish War and the Berlin Congress (1878), although Bosnia and Herzegovina still technically stayed under Ottoman rule until its full annexation by Austria-Hungary in 1908. Bosnia and Herzegovina was a multi-ethno-religious country (mixed between Muslims, Catholics, and Orthodox), so the change to being ruled by the Catholic Austrian Monarchy created a political crisis since they were not accepted by each ethnic and religious community equally. The crisis was reflected in the struggles of different ethnic and religious elites for educational and religious autonomy, which in turn led to both the preservation of existing infrastructure and the creation of new schools and other ethnic and cultural institutions. Through the analysis of Austrian and Bosnian education legislation and textbooks, this paper will highlight what has previously been neglected in this case: the national identities and imaginaries constructed in primary and secondary schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina under the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

PANEL 08 IDENTITY, LANGUAGE, AND EDUCATION

Friday 18 September, 14.00–15.30, Floor IV

School Policy and the Nationalisation of Polish Peasants in the German Empire: A Case Study of School Strikes in the District of Gnesen/Gniezno, 1906–1907

Dorota Kurek-Ślizewska

Institute of Contemporary History, Slovenia

dorota.kurek-slizewska@inz.si

The school strikes that swept through Prussian Poland in 1906–1907 are often regarded as a key event in the Polish “struggle for independence” against the “German oppressor” and have been discussed extensively in the literature. My paper takes a micro-scale view to reconsider the involvement of rural populations in these events, focusing on a single, small Prussian district, Kreis Gnesen (with a 65% Polish majority in 1905). The district seat, the historic Polish city of Gniezno, played an important role in church administration and had strong symbolic significance as the first capital of Poland. Through the analysis of Prussian police and administrative reports from this mostly rural area, my microhistorical perspective contributes to understanding peasant motivations, sheds light on how national agitation was received by peasants living in small communities and points to factors that influenced their attitudes and could lead to flare-ups of national emotions. Sometimes, where hostility towards the Prussian school was transferred to the local German population, these emotions could slide into ethnic conflicts. Among the underlying factors influencing peasant attitudes, the paper brings into sharper relief the role of religion and its intertwining with national agitation and the family, which provoked passionate responses against state interference into the upbringing of children. The same body of sources also enables a closer scrutiny of the social composition of school strikes and highlights the participation of women and agricultural workers, often overlooked as passive actors in national movements. On the other hand, wealthier peasants often seem to have directed collective action by refusing to allow their children to attend religious education classes in German. The role of women is especially visible in cases where fathers declared that their children were encouraged to strike by their wives without their knowledge or consent and in mixed marriages, when Polish wives decided on the religious upbringing of their children. On a microhistorical scale, my findings corroborate John Kulczycki’s argument in his macro-level synthesis (*School Strikes in Prussian Poland, 1901–1907*) that the school strikes repre-

sented a decisive crisis in state–society relations in the Prussian partition of Poland, transforming previously limited political engagement among Polish peasants into a broad mobilization and intensifying anti-state and anti-German sentiments on an unprecedented scale. On a broader level, my analysis gives insights to popular responses to imperial educational policies, and to the nationalization of rural populations in East-Central Europe.

PANEL 08 IDENTITY, LANGUAGE, AND EDUCATION

Friday 18 September, 14.00–15.30, Floor IV

Learn Your Neighbor's Language, Ignore Your Enemy's Language: When Serbs in Kosovo Learn Albanian

Marija Mandić

University of Belgrade, Serbia

marija.mandic@ifdt.bg.ac.rs

In the Autonomous Province of Kosovo of the Republic of Serbia within Yugoslavia, Albanian-Serbian bilingualism prevailed among the Albanian population, while the Serbs, as the state majority, mainly spoke only Serbian, with passive understanding of Albanian. Although Serbian and Albanian were official languages in the province, Serbian was the *lingua franca*, i.e., the language of inter-ethnic communication. Albanians often interpreted this linguistic hierarchy as an index of the subordination of their own community and an attempt by the majority community to attribute inferiority to them. However, using the majority language as the exclusive language of interethnic communication was typical of other minorities, not only in Yugoslavia but also across Europe after the Second World War. In Yugoslavia, in line with the principles of brotherhood and unity, institutional multilingualism was also developed in schools, so Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo studied each other's language in primary and secondary education from 1970 to 1990 as an optional or mandatory school subject under the name Language of the Social Environment (LSE). Yugoslav sociolinguists believed that this would achieve a better balance among ethnic communities. This educational practice was likewise positively valued among speakers of all nationalities in interethnic environments. The school subject LSE was abolished in the 1990s, when nationalism and ethnic tensions were growing in the country, leading to the breakup of Yugoslavia (1991) and then to the declaration of independence of Kosovo (2008). The Law on the Use of Languages (2006) granted Albanian and Serbian equal status as official languages in Kosovo, while the establishment of the Language Commissioner (2012) underscores the importance of the language issue. However, Serbian is not taught in Albanian educational institutions in Kosovo and vice versa. A 2018 survey showed that the majority of young Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo do not know the language of the other community, but the majority also said they wanted to learn Serbian or Albanian. According to that survey, only five percent of Serbs in Kosovo speak Albanian, and 31 percent understand it partially. Albanians speak Serbian in 18 percent, and 49 percent

understand it partially. These percentages drop drastically among the younger population. Based on contemporary field research on Serbian communities in Kosovo, comprising participant observation and qualitative interviews, this paper aims to explore the attitudes of Kosovo Serbs towards the Albanian language. The paper raises several research questions: What are the views on learning Albanian and Serbian then and now? What values are attributed to the Albanian language, and what do they index in a broader social context? In the first part, I present basic information about the language situation in Kosovo, including legislative data, demographic data, and the institutional setting. Then I describe the field research context. In the analysis, I apply critical discourse analysis and sociolinguistics. The paper examines whether changes in the status of Serbs in Kosovo have led to changes in their attitude towards the Albanian language.

PANEL 08 IDENTITY, LANGUAGE, AND EDUCATION

Friday 18 September, 14.00–15.30, Floor IV

Proclamations of Linguistic Truths as a Political Genre

Vuk Vukotić

Vilnius University, Lithuania

vukotic.vuk88@gmail.com

In the years 2022 and 2023, media reported that two declarations, one “On the Borders of Serbian Language, the other “On the Borders of Serbian Literature,” respectively, were unanimously accepted during a scholarly conference held at Tršić, the birthplace of the principal standardizer of Serbian literary language. While the texts of both Declarations are remarkably vague (no actual borders are determined), they resort to a provocative, expansionist vocabulary, implying that much of what comes under the name “Bosnian” and “Croatian” should actually be considered “Serbian”. The meaning of these Declarations is best sought not in the referential meaning of their text, but primarily within their political context, and – most importantly – as part of a long-standing tradition of the SEE region which imagines that linguistic issues can be solved by proclamations (whether in the form of agreements or declarations). In this paper, I present a critical history of linguistic proclamations, including the 2017 Declaration on the Common Language, the 1967 Declaration on the Name and Status of the Croatian Literary Language, the 1954 Novi Sad Agreement and the 1849 Vienna Agreement, arguably the originator of this genre. I treat the texts as having an illocutionary force, observe the causes and effects (intended and unintended) they had on the development of the debates on the proper naming, definition and territoriality of languages (and, by implication, nations) in the West Balkans.

**BOOK PANEL 1 THE CROATIAN DIASPORA IN ARGENTINA: FROM MARTYRS TO
MEMORY GUARDIANS**

Friday 18 September, 14.00–15.30, Floor VI

Nikolina Židek, Amsterdam University Press and CEU Press, 2026

MODERATOR:

Siniša Malešević

University College Dublin, Ireland

sinisa.malesevic@ucd.ie

PARTICIPANTS:

Jelena Djureinović

University of Vienna, Austria

djureinovicjelena@gmail.com

Sven Milekić

University of Rijeka, Croatia

sven.milekic@uniri.hr

Vjeran Pavlaković

University of Rijeka, Croatia

vjeranp@gmail.com

Nikolina Židek

IE University Madrid, Spain

nizidek@gmail.com

Following the collapse of the fascist Independent State of Croatia (1941–1945), around 10,000 political émigrés fled to Perón’s Argentina. This study traces the Croatian diaspora’s evolution from its founding to the present. Initially marked by trauma—military defeat, exile, and reprisals—the community redefined its identity within Cold War geopolitics, first as victims of communism, later as champions of democracy. For decades, it viewed itself as guardian of the Croatian national cause. The establishment of independent Croatia in 1991 challenged this role, prompting reflection on whether to remain diaspora Croats or reintegrate into the homeland. Drawing on archival research and oral testimonies, Nikolina Židek explores how intergenerational memory shaped identity across time. She shows how the community preserved its origins while adapting to new realities, ultimately transforming into “planetary Croats” who use social media and transnational networks to connect with

Croatia. Apart from the substantial role of the Croatian diaspora in the 1990s war and independence (through lobbying and financial and military support), the involvement of the diaspora in Croatian politics persists today—whether from abroad or at home—and their political engagement has affected and eroded the democratic standards of modern Croatia, especially after joining the EU. Apart from understanding how diaspora communities function and familiarizing ourselves with the mechanisms and tools used to preserve and transmit memory over time and through generations, the case studied in this book shows us how ideas survive, reconfigure, and come back.

PANEL 09 WAR, LAW, AND MEMORY

Friday 18 September, 15.45–17.15, Floor I

Memory Proxy Wars: Identifying International Conflict in Local Mnemonic Practice in the Western Balkans

Drew Caveney-Holler

Durham University, UK

jgng75@durham.ac.uk

International exportation of official collective memory by national or supra-national actors is increasingly recognized as an important feature of international relations. This exportation can have several distinct purposes. The EU, for example, attempts to institutionalize particular local collective memories within candidate nations that signal a commitment to the EU's moral and liberal democratic norms and ideals (e.g. David, 2020). Alternatively, Russia exports memory in order to construct common narratives between nations to garner cultural and political alliance (e.g. McGlynn and Đureinović, 2023). Despite their differences, these memory-based foreign policies may target the same region: the EU and Russia, for instance, both invest significant resources in influencing local memory in the Western Balkans. However, the interaction and dialogue between two (or more) coexisting internationally exported collective memory frameworks in a third region is currently understudied. This paper investigates and theorizes this dynamic with specific attention to its effects on local conflicts, sub-national identities, and prospects for long-term peace. I posit that when opposing or incompatible exported memory frameworks coexist in the same geopolitical space, they clash and compete as they vie for influence in the recipient region. This competition is likely to exacerbate local conflicts as the two international actors manipulate and weaponize local collective memory to politically endorse certain identities whilst disempowering others. This is especially the case in post-conflict or transitional regions, where national, subnational and/or local identities are highly contested and rooted in starkly distinct memories of the past. As each international actor leverages local dynamics for indirect conflict, I term this phenomenon 'memory proxy wars'. I argue that memory proxy wars are likely to provoke pre-existing local enmity through their strategic targeting of specific versions of local history, and thus may act as a significant oppositional force to reconciliation and peace processes in post-conflict regions where memory is sharply divided. This paper is part of an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded PhD project that seeks to explicate memory proxy wars through case

analysis of Russian and EU influence in local memory practices in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. It utilizes discourse analysis of official governmental documents to elucidate memory-based foreign policy, combined with planned ethnographic fieldwork within the region.

Forging Europe's Youngest Nation-State: How Memory Politics Have Shaped Kosovo's National Identity since Its Declaration of Independence in 2008

Krenar Bytyqi

University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands

kranar123@gmail.com

This paper examines how memory politics have shaped Kosovo's national identity following its declaration of independence in 2008. Through a qualitative research design combining ethnographic fieldwork, memorial site observation, and semi-structured interviews, the paper investigates how political elites, state institutions, and commemorative practices have constructed a dominant ethnonational narrative centered on the concepts of victimhood, armed struggle, and liberation. Theoretically drawing from memory politics, constructivist national identity, and postcolonial state-building, the research reveals that Kosovo's memorial landscape privileges the Kosovo Liberation Army's (KLA) legacy while alienating alternative narratives, including those of civil resistance movements and non-majority ethnic groups. The main findings show that although the politics of memory in Kosovo serve to unify the dominant Albanian majority, they also entrench symbolic exclusion and deter the formation of a pluralistic civic identity. The paper uncovers how these institutionalized practices contribute to a hierarchical and militarized representation of national identity. It further identifies the internal contestations within the Albanian majority as key to understanding Kosovo's evolving political and cultural identity. The paper concludes by calling for a proliferation of inclusive memory practices and further research into both intra-majority narrative diversity and subaltern commemorative cultures.

PANEL 09 WAR, LAW, AND MEMORY

Friday 18 September, 15.45–17.15, Floor I

'Who Sit Here Now in Judgment': Problems in Designing a Court to Try Aggression

Timothy Waters

Indiana University, US

tiwaters@iu.edu

At Nuremberg the American prosecutor acknowledged the awkward fact that the court was prosecuting only one of the countries that had invaded Poland: "While this is first applied against German aggressors, the law includes, and if it is to serve a useful purpose it must condemn, aggression by other nations, including those which sit here now in judgment." The project had to start somewhere and had to become general to 'serve a useful purpose. 80 years later, for the first time, one of those states will be subject to an international court's jurisdiction for aggression – but only one: Last year, Ukraine and the Council of Europe agreed to form a special tribunal to try Russian leaders. The court must still be created, but the announcement was hailed as an important step for justice and the rule of law. Yet the agreement produced a framework strikingly similar to Nuremberg: a court to try one country's leaders for a particular act of aggression. That particularism and that delay are instructive. Whatever prosecuting aggression is supposed to do, we've been talking about doing it for a long time, but don't do it often. This raises important questions about the purposes of such a court, and what the uses and limits of law are. What functions does such a court serve? Is it an instrument of lawfare, a tool in this war? Is it a step towards a global, rules-based order? Or is this thing we call law a permanently ad hoc condition?

PANEL 09 WAR, LAW, AND MEMORY

Friday 18 September, 15.45–17.15, Floor I

National Heroes by Law: The Legal Enactment of National Heroism in Contemporary Romania

Mihai S. Rusu

Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Romania

mihai.rusu@ulbsibiu.ro

In postsocialist Romania, Parliament has developed a unique form of memory legislation that formally designates historical figures as “Heroes (and Martyrs) of the Romanian Nation.” Emerging from earlier laws commemorating the victims of the 1989 Revolution and prohibiting the public glorification of fascist figures, this legislation transforms heroism into a juridical category. The article traces the genealogy of this legal practice and situates it within the broader European “legal turn” in the governance of memory. Through the case of Romania, it identifies the rise of a legal mnemo-political regime in which commemoration is enacted through lawmaking and national heroes are produced by statute. Unlike the negative memory laws that dominate Europe – those criminalizing Holocaust denial or restricting the rehabilitation of authoritarian leaders – Romania’s hero legislation represents a positive form of mnemonic governance that legislates who must be remembered and revered. Yet, despite their legal form, these acts function primarily as symbolic declarations: they generate no juridical effects, serving instead as performative instruments of political competition. By engaging in an escalating struggle to canonize increasingly more historical figures, parliamentary parties of divergent ideological orientations risk opening what might be called Romania’s “heroes’ box.” The resulting politicization of commemoration through legislative means reveals a drift toward ethnonationalist rhetoric, transforming the legal canonization of national heroes into a mechanism for partisan legitimation and a renewed cult of the nation.

PANEL 10 NATIONALITY AND LITERATURE

Friday 18 September, 15.45–17.15, Floor IV

Literary Circles and the Parallel Integration of Non-Serb and Female Youth in Interwar Belgrade (1929–1936)

Željka Oparnica

University of Belgrade, Serbia

zeljka.oparnica@ifdt.bg.ac.rs

Since the nineteenth century, literary circles have been treated primarily as bourgeois and national institutions. This paper challenges that interpretation by analyzing high school literary circles in Belgrade between 1929 and 1936 as sites of political incubation and cross-ethnic integration under dictatorship. I argue that literary groups were the first sustained arenas in which non-Serb students and female high school students entered oppositional political networks beyond established ethnic divisions. The paper asks: why did these semi-cultural associations integrate minority and female students more effectively than formal political organizations, and did these two processes unfold through similar mechanisms? The focus is on Belgrade gymnasiums during the first wave of repression following the January 6 Dictatorship, when student activism at the University of Belgrade was under intense surveillance. Despite expulsions and arrests, political mobilization persisted among high school students. While scholarship has acknowledged the existence of gymnasium activism, it has not examined the internal composition of literary circles or systematically analyzed when, where, and under what conditions minority and female participation expanded. The analysis draws on a large but rarely used corpus of approximately 3,000 interviews with participants in the student protests of the 1930s, conducted in the late 1960s and early 1970s and preserved in the Archive of Belgrade. These memoirs repeatedly identify literary circles as the first step into politics, preceding formal involvement in student protests and, in most cases, the Communist Party. By stratifying literary groups across male and female schools and tracing patterns of participation, I demonstrate that integration was neither incidental nor symbolic. It depended on specific constellations of teachers, access to progressive literature, peer networks, and the intensity of repression. The paper shows that cross-ethnic inclusion and female politicization developed in parallel through collective reading practices that reoriented belonging from nation to class. In doing so, it reframes interwar high schools not as peripheral extensions of university activism but as decisive laboratories of political formation and innovative integrative practice in Belgrade, but also the wider Yugoslav space.

PANEL 10 NATIONALITY AND LITERATURE

Friday 18 September, 15.45–17.15, Floor IV

Nationality as a Narrative: Three Perspectives from Post-Yugoslav Literature

Katarina Grković

Andrássy University Budapest, Hungary

katarina.grkovic@andrassyuni.hu

This paper examines the transformation of national identity in times of crisis through three literary case studies situated in and around the Bosnian War. Rather than approaching national identity as a stable or inherited category, the selected works reveal it as contingent, relational, and profoundly reshaped by displacement, violence, and structural societal change. The first case study analyzes *My Parents* by Aleksandar Hemon*. The book portrays the divergent identity trajectories of Hemon's parents after their forced emigration to Canada. His mother, who had strongly identified with and actively participated in the socialist project of Yugoslavia, experiences the collapse of both the state and her own sense of belonging. In exile, her Yugoslav identity becomes historically obsolete and socially illegible. His father, by contrast, foregrounds a Ukrainian ancestry that is mostly based on folk songs and traditions very loosely related to his everyday life. Within Canada's multicultural framework, this reclaimed Ukrainianness provides symbolic stability and recognizability as a refugee subject. The text thus demonstrates how national identity can dissolve yet also be strategically reassembled in diaspora. The second case turns to the autobiographical narrative of Alen Mušić, a child born as a result of wartime mass rape. His life story unsettles the ethno-nationalist logic that equates identity with bloodline and genetic origin. Although his biological father was a Serb soldier and he was raised in a Bosniak family, Mušić's narrative shows that belonging emerges not from biology but from lived relationality and everyday care. His example is deeply subversive within a nationalist matrix structured around the question "Čiji si?" (To whom do you belong?) His example reframes the way citizenship is perceived, since his existence proves a need for a new legal category. The third case examines *Schindlerov lift* by Darko Cvijetić, which depicts a structural transformation of communal life. In the microcosm of a residential building in Prijedor. The city once mainly revolved around workers' identity, being organized around a mine is structurally changed by the experience of war. This shift becomes visible in everyday practice – holidays celebrated, songs sung, food eaten. Cvijetić's fragmented

narrative form mirrors this societal fragmentation, showing how nationalist ideology penetrates intimate spaces and reorganizes social relations from within. It also shows the complexity of emerging nationalities within the political and economic change within a society. Taken together, these three narratives – emigration, contested biological origin, and collective reconfiguration – demonstrate that crisis can be productive through destruction, creating new identities and new divisions. Literature thus becomes a key site for tracing how national belonging is lost, renegotiated, and socially institutionalized in moments of violent rupture.

PANEL 10 NATIONALITY AND LITERATURE

Friday 18 September, 15.45–17.15, Floor IV

The Imaginary of the Global East: An Analysis of Symbolic Topography in Historical Narrative (On Yaroslav Hrytsak's book "Ukraine: the forging of a nation")

Barbara Markowska-Marczak

Civitas University, Poland

bmarkowska@civitas.edu.pl

Since the end of the Cold War, the post-Soviet region has become a liminal space. This is a consequence of the fall of communism as a modernization project, which fundamentally affected the structure and mentality of these societies. The opposition between the wealthy North and the poor, backward South, dominant in globalization narratives, creates a kind of blindness regarding the political subjectivity and historical distinctiveness of all states and societies that do not fit into this division. They are too poor and unstable to be considered Northern states, but also too rich and civilizationally advanced to be equated with Global South states. Martin Müller calls this mechanism dual exclusion and advocates for an effort to restore the East's role as a center of knowledge production. To this end, he conceptualizes it as the Global East—at once different from the rest of the world and yet connected to it; equal to the North and South, not subordinate to them (2020: 736). The Global East seems too strong to be considered a global periphery, yet too weak to be part of the core. In this space, power relations "run in every direction": colonizing and colonized discourses, the logic of aggressors, and the memory of victims intersect. Most often, within historical narratives, nations fulfill both roles, which can lead to socio-identity rifts and conflicts within the heterogeneous field of collective memory. In other words, the East eludes epistemology and is difficult to categorize within the political imagination. In this paper, I will argue that one attempt to write such a global history from an Eastern perspective, one that is not at odds with the West, is Hrytsak's (2023) work on crystallizing Ukraine's historical identity. It is a narrative without a single center, a dispersed narrative, creating a porous and heterogeneous space in which various intensities of modernization processes are possible, as well as different time perspectives (long and short durations, the role of events and individuals within the context of deeper processes). The author admits to an ambition to capture global history intersected with long duration, that is, processes and structures that have their own subterranean dynamics and cannot be described through a

history of events. Instead, they imbue what happens with deeper meaning. The methodology stems from a dual mode of connecting various elements: the author has arranged narratives in the form of intersecting threads and perspectives, where periods of long duration are interwoven with a spotlight on a phenomenon (grain, Ukrainian song, borderland, violence, language) that can be treated as a focal point. He wants to show the converging points between Ukrainian and worldwide history. Points that demonstrate mutual influence, thus breaking down the stereotype of double exclusion. They create a system of arguments that invites discussion—this is not a closed history, but a text that forges new connections. Moreover, it is a narrative that “deconstructs” the (de)colonization frame and encourages its abandonment as an obstacle in the process of liberation from the past.

PANEL 10 NATIONALITY AND LITERATURE

Friday 18 September, 15.45–17.15, Floor IV

The Literary Canon in Ukrainian Classrooms: School Curricula and Nation-building in 2022

Hanna Liebiedieva

Södertörn University, Sweden

hanna.liebiedieva@sh.se

The paper examines the update of the World Literature curriculum in Ukrainian schools from 2022. It is a pilot version of a research project on the history of the transformation of the world literature canon in Ukrainian school curricula from 1991 to 2025. The research will reveal how the literary canon was transformed and implemented in school education within the context of nation-building, at two levels of change in the school curriculum: institutional regulation and practical implementation. The first level will be analyzed using materials from the Ministry of Education, including officially approved curricula, national test materials, teacher recommendations, and official textbooks. The second level will be revealed through an analysis of press coverage of the curriculum changes and interviews with Foreign literature teachers from different regions of Ukraine. The conference paper will introduce a pilot study focusing on the 2022 curriculum update. These changes were implemented in connection with the rethinking of literary education amid the full-scale invasion. Emphasizing the importance of the subject “Foreign Literature” for nation-building is stated as a goal of the latest update of the foreign literature program in the official decision on updating the content of curricula (Decision, 2022). At first glance, the use of foreign literature as a tool for nation-building seems paradoxical, especially considering that Ukrainian schools offer two literature subjects: Ukrainian and foreign literature. However, this is due to the specific historical context of Ukrainian education: with independence, a major task for educational policy emerged – to deconstruct the Soviet literary canon, identify orientations for the formation of a new vision of the world literary canon, and determine the place of Ukrainian literature within it. This complex task is a field of ongoing negotiations concerning national identity. One of the most striking examples of nation-building in the 2022 update of the literature curriculum is the transfer of Mykola Hohol, a Ukrainian writer who wrote in Russian, and Tair Khalilov, a Crimean Tatar writer, from the foreign literature curriculum to the Ukrainian literature curriculum (Decision, 2022). This transfer indicates a shift from an ethnic to a civic understanding of the nation. The

paper will examine how the process of reshaping the literary canon in school curricula operates in practice, which actors, groups, and institutions influence it, and the guidelines these actors follow in creating a world literature curriculum, using the 2022 curriculum update as an example.

**BOOK PANEL 2 REALIGNING HUMANITARIANISM IN THE BALKANS:
FROM COLD WAR POLITICS TO NEOLIBERAL ETHICS**

Friday 18 September, 15.45–17.15, Floor VI

Čarna Brković, Indiana University Press, 2025

MODERATOR:

Ljiljana Pantović

University of Belgrade, Serbia

ljiljana.pantovic@ifdt.bg.ac.rs

PARTICIPANTS:

Jelena Kupsjak

University of Zadar, Croatia

jkupsjak@unizd.hr

Bojana Radovanović

University of Belgrade, Serbia

bojana.radovanovic@ifdt.bg.ac.rs

Robert Hayden

University of Pittsburgh, US

rhayden@pitt.edu

Čarna Brković

Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, Germany

carna.brkovic@uni-mainz.de

During the Cold War, humanitarianism was intensely debated across capitalist, socialist, and nonaligned worlds, but many of these debates faded from view after the end of socialism. In *Realigning Humanitarianism in the Balkans*, Čarna Brković traces shifts from Yugoslav Red Cross engagements within the Non-Aligned Movement in the 1970s to humanitarian work in a refugee camp in Montenegro (2000–2018), showing how regimes of care and discipline became central channels of support and sociocultural integration, while also generating deep disappointment for both aid workers and displaced people. The panel explores what it means to “realign” humanitarianism across the West, East, and South and what this reveals about worldmaking in the Global East today.

KEYNOTE LECTURE

Friday 18 September, 17.30–19.00, Floor VI

Nationalism, Everywhere, All at Once

Florian Bieber

ASN President / University of Graz, Austria

Nationalism seems to be everywhere. Politicians, intellectuals, political parties and movements in Europe, North America and beyond are endorsing radical nationalist positions. Migration control, border reinforcement and rejection of international cooperation are on the rise. These movements cooperate globally in an attempt to undo both the international order and liberal democracy. Yet this global trend is mostly framed as populist or far-right, rather than as a new nationalist wave. Furthermore, scholarship on nationalism has become highly fragmented, and despite the rise of nationalism, nationalism studies appears to be in crisis. How can we study nationalism in a contemporary context, and how can scholarship adequately respond to the challenge it poses?



PANELS

SATURDAY, September 19

PANEL 11 NATIONAL IDENTITIES IN THE AGE OF EMPIRES

Saturday 19 September, 08.45–10.15, Floor I

National Identity as '*corpus delicti*'? The High Treason Trial in Zagreb (1909) as a Source for Studying Popular Nationalism in Late Habsburg Croatia-Slavonia

Oliver Pejić

Institute of Contemporary History, Slovenia

oliver.pejic@inz.si

The High Treason Trial in Zagreb (1909) is widely considered a watershed event in fin de siècle Croatian history. In its course, the Croatian government accused 53 members of the Serb Independent Party of conspiring with a revolutionary irredentist organization from neighboring Serbia with the goal of inciting a popular insurrection, overthrowing Habsburg rule, and establishing a unified South Slav/Great Serbian state. While the prosecution built its case upon evidence indicative of individual conspiratorial involvement, it also heavily relied on a constructivist argument about the novelty of Serb national consciousness among Croatia's Orthodox Christians. According to this narrative, Serb consciousness had been a product of relatively recent concerted nationalist activism and ultimately served to mentally prepare the once loyal Orthodox population for Great Serbian unification. Throughout the course of the trial, the prosecution summoned more than 400 witnesses from a wide array of social backgrounds and engaged in meticulous discussions regarding the "true" nature of popular national identity and its interconnectedness with top-down nationalist activism. Owing to its constructivist agenda as well as reliance on national consciousness as a form of legal evidence, the High Treason Trial thus produced a uniquely rich collection of sources relevant for the study of popular nationhood that historians have yet to examine in detail. The goal of the present paper is to address the potential and limitations that the Trial's proceedings have for studying non-elite engagement with nationalism. By focusing on select recurring themes, the paper will show how the discussions contained within the Trial complement as well as complicate traditional narratives of popular nationhood in late Habsburg Croatia-Slavonia. Finally, the paper aims to situate the story of developing popular Serb national consciousness within the wider transnational history of mass politicization in fin de siècle Central and Eastern Europe.

PANEL 11 NATIONAL IDENTITIES IN THE AGE OF EMPIRES

Saturday 19 September, 08.45–10.15, Floor I

How and Why Did Peasants Adopt Non-Dominant National Symbols at the Turn of the Century? The Romanian Colors in Dualist Hungary

Ágoston Berecz

Institute of Contemporary History, Slovenia

oguszt@gmail.com

Travelers to parts of Transylvania, the Banat and the lower reaches of the Mureş/Maros River during the last twenty years of Hungarian sovereignty noted the presence of the red, yellow and blue Romanian national colors on ribbons and other clothing accessories worn by peasants on holidays and market days. By the 1900s, news of gendarmes raiding fairs and villages on Eastern Orthodox feast days, searching for and seizing tricolored items had become a regular occurrence. The apparent popularity of national symbols among the peasantry not only challenges historians' skepticism about peasant nationalism before the First World War, but is also remarkable given the arguably low levels of rural patriotism in contemporary Romania, where these symbols were official and their use was encouraged. Based on more than 175 press and archival reports describing 95 incidents with gendarmes and administrators, I aim to untangle the origins and development of this trend and the possible meanings that peasants could attribute to these colors. One half of my argument is that the Romanian peasantry learned to use them to contest the increasing penetration of the state into their lives, and in particular the explicit and implicit Hungarian state policies that treated cultural and linguistic diversity as a security threat and securitized minorities with kin states across the borders. The Hungarian state policy most clearly defied by the display of Romanian colors was, of course, the ban on "foreign" colors introduced in 1879. This persecution of Romanian colors rested on their perception as irredentist emblems, which did poor justice to the underlying meanings. The ban also remained ambiguous and its implementation was fitful and uneven even during the 1900s, as the Hungarian state lacked the infrastructural power to enforce it in the countryside. So far, this dynamic recalls what Siniša Malešević termed the homogenization of dissent in connection with Habsburg Bosnia-Herzegovina. To add fuel to the fire, Dualist Hungary was also a nationalizing state that increasingly painted its own colors everywhere, from public buildings to tobaccoists and village entry signs, prescribing the hoisting of the state flag on

holidays and virtually demanding its presence at electoral rallies. However, the popular uses of the Romanian tricolor were more varied and fluid, and not limited to ribbons and scarves. An invented tradition, activists began to popularize it in the 1850s and 1860s, primarily as an ethnic/ethno-confessional symbol. There are indications that this effort built on popular devotion to church banners. After 1879, activists denied that the official ban applied to their colors. Exploiting the difference between their version and the national flag of Romania (horizontally rather than vertically striped), they claimed either that it represented the old standard of Transylvanian princes or that red, yellow and blue had been the traditional color combination in folk embroidery. In reality, it seems to have taken two generations to really catch on among the people, to embody local and ethno-confessional solidarities and become sites of popular anti-state protest.

PANEL 11 NATIONAL IDENTITIES IN THE AGE OF EMPIRES

Saturday 19 September, 08.45–10.15, Floor I

National Categories in the Village: Rural Appropriations of Nationalist Propaganda in Late Dualist Hungary

László Vörös

Institute of Contemporary History, Slovenia

Laszlo.Voros@inz.si

The presentation examines the circulation and reception of nationalist political propaganda within Slovak-speaking rural communities in the Kingdom of Hungary during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The analysis draws on a large collection of letters written by peasants, artisans, and other rural inhabitants to the editorial boards of two newspapers issued by Slovak nationalist activists, who also published a peasant calendar. These print media primarily targeted rural readers. The corpus includes the two newspapers issued by Slovak nationalist activists and their peasant calendar, as well as additional Slovak-language calendars and newspapers produced by supporters of Hungarian state nationalism. Examining these widely circulated print products makes it possible to reconstruct the discursive environment shaped by competing nationalist agencies. The peasant letters, together with letters and readers' reports published in the newspapers, reveal how nationalist framings and categories were received, selectively appropriated, and adapted to local social realities. During the approximately fifteen-year period under investigation, references in the letters to injustice, abuse of official power, national betrayal, opportunism, and moral decline were increasingly articulated through vocabulary and explanatory motifs drawn from nationalist discourse presented in the analyzed calendars and newspapers. Categories taken from Slovak nationalist discourse – including representations of Jews, liberals, county officials, and “national renegades” as agents economically and morally harming Slovak peasant communities – were used to frame long-standing conflicts as well as new tensions emerging along political and socioeconomic lines. At the same time, themes prominently promoted by Slovak nationalist propaganda, such as demands for national endogamy or disdain for bilingualism, were largely absent from the letters. The material thus allows an analysis of how elite concepts were selectively appropriated and recontextualized in lived social contexts. Conversely, motifs characteristic of Hungarian state nationalist rhetoric directed at the Slovak-speaking peasantry – including portrayals of Slovak activists as morally corrupt Pan-Slavs, traitors, and agents of foreign

powers, as well as appeals to loyalty to the Hungarian patria – were neither present in the analyzed letters nor invoked in order to be explicitly rejected, despite their prominence in Slovak nationalist propaganda. This suggests that rural correspondents perceived and accepted the logic of exclusivity inherent in the competing discourses and accommodated themselves to it, without embracing it unconditionally. The presentation argues that nationalist discourse aimed at rural communities gradually became more attuned to rural life phenomena, framing them through the lens of national antagonism and emancipation. However, its reception was not a unidirectional process of ideological dissemination. Rather, the evidence suggests ongoing selective appropriation and reconfiguration. The analysis suggests that, in many cases, nationalist propaganda became effective insofar as it offered categories capable of structuring concrete local conflicts. Its reception was therefore frequently selective and pragmatic, though not exclusively so. It was shaped by pre-existing social relations rather than ideological alignment alone. By focusing on discursive practices rather than presumed internal identifications, the presentation provides a historically grounded understanding of minority nationalist propaganda and how it was mobilized among non-elite rural populations within a nationalizing, poly-ethnic state.

PANEL 12 RUSSIAN AND BELARUSIAN IDENTITY IN EXILE

Saturday 19 September, 08.45–10.15, Floor IV

Claims to Modernity and Negotiation of Status in Politically Driven Migration: Russian Migrants in Serbia and Symbolic Boundary-Making

Ivan Shamansky

Central European University, Austria

ivshamanskiy@gmail.com

This paper explores how Russian migrants who moved to Serbia after the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 articulate and negotiate their difference vis-à-vis the host population and how these articulations reflect the middle-class imaginaries of modernity. The paper focuses on Russian middle-class migrants who have moved from Russia to Belgrade, Serbia, since 2022. While many of them had not planned to leave Russia before 2022, making the departure rather unexpected, their social and economic position facilitated their mobility, marking them as relatively privileged migrants. The co-existence of vulnerability and middle-class advantage constitutes the paper's central empirical and analytical focus. Serbia has become a major destination for Russian nationals since 2022, due to visa-free entry, relatively accessible residence possibilities, and the growing community of Russian speakers. Unlike the post-Soviet destinations of Russian post-2022 migration, Russia and Serbia do not share a history of imperial relations but do have an alliance between their political regimes, making Serbia a particularly illuminating case for Russian post-2022 migrants' articulations of difference. Theoretically, the paper draws on the concept of symbolic boundaries to analyze how Russian migrants classify people, places, and practices to construct and stabilize conceptual distinctions. Using qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with Russian migrants in Belgrade, I show how Russian migrants use claims to modernity in their everyday classifications to make sense of their lives abroad and their position in Serbia. I understand the articulation of difference as a meaning-making process shaped by cultural repertoires and structural conditions. By centering migrants' own accounts, the paper demonstrates how symbolic boundary-making serves as a practice of self-positioning seeking to define boundaries between "us" and "them". I propose that the articulation of difference serves to foster the positive identity associated with the community of Russian-speakers in Serbia, as a response to migratory precarity, external stigma, and moral burden associated with Russia's war on Ukraine.

Furthermore, modernity emerges as a “nested” and moralized category, unevenly spread between Russia, Serbia, and Western Europe. Analyzing the claims to modernity among Russian migrants in Serbia reveals their attempts to order the social world hierarchically and highlights their aspirations within their migratory life projects. The paper contributes to scholarship on migration and nationalism by demonstrating how collective identities are constructed and negotiated in the context of migration through classed and spatialized claims to modernity. Additionally, by focusing on migration between Europe’s semi-peripheries rather than toward the “West”, the paper complicates the conventional center-periphery model in migration scholarship, revealing how modernity acts as a meaning-making category.

PANEL 12 RUSSIAN AND BELARUSIAN IDENTITY IN EXILE

Saturday 19 September, 08.45–10.15, Floor IV

“How Are You?” – Everyday Questions as Sites of Intercultural Difference and the Reconfiguration of Negotiation of National Identities in War-Driven Migration

Ivetta Délczegh

Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary

ivetta.delczegh@gmail.com

This paper examines how subtle intercultural differences become socially significant in the context of war-driven migration, focusing on Russian migrants in Belgrade. It explores how everyday interactions reflect and reshape culturally embedded norms and narratives, revealing how seemingly minor communicative practices carry broader social meaning. Adopting a cultural mediation perspective, the analysis centers on a seemingly trivial yet analytically revealing question: “How are you?” While this question is often treated as a routine politeness formula, different cultures attach varying expectations to it regarding the expression of emotions, sincerity, and the management of social relations. These differences are not merely variations in communication; rather, they embody deeper cultural narratives and collective experiences that shape processes of integration, social relations, and meaning-making. Drawing on a qualitative, triangulated research design, the study combines semi-structured interviews with digitally mediated discourse analysis, extending the scope of the research beyond physical settings. This approach captures how everyday communication unfolds within transnational and digital environments, where multiple cultural and national narratives intersect. The findings indicate that intercultural differences become visible in everyday interactions and play a role in shaping how individuals relate to one another within changing social contexts. These micro-level encounters can be understood as sites where broader national and cultural narratives are implicitly negotiated, particularly in the context of ongoing geopolitical conflict. The study argues that war-driven migration not only exposes pre-existing cultural differences but also transforms them through everyday interaction, contributing to the ongoing reconfiguration of national identities. These processes generate both tensions and opportunities for adaptation, as migrants and host societies navigate shifting norms and expectations. Beyond its theoretical contribution, the study highlights how everyday communication functions as a key site through which

social boundaries are reproduced, challenged, and reinterpreted. In this sense, the findings offer new insights into the processes shaping intercultural coexistence in contemporary, transnational, and digitally mediated social contexts.

PANEL 12 RUSSIAN AND BELARUSIAN IDENTITY IN EXILE

Saturday 19 September, 08.45–10.15, Floor IV

Memory in Exile: Belarusian Diaspora and the Reconfiguration of National Identity amid Crises

David Pergl

Charles University, Czechia

dav.pergl@gmail.com

Following the mass protests in Belarus in 2020 and the subsequent wave of repression, tens of thousands of Belarusians initially left the country, and current estimates suggest that several hundred thousand now live in exile across Europe. This displacement gave rise to new, politically active diasporic communities. This article examines the Belarusian diaspora primarily in Lithuania, Poland, and the Czech Republic, conceptualizing it not merely as a community of refugees but as an active mnemo-political actor. These groups mobilize the past to articulate collective identity, legitimize protest resistance, and formulate alternative visions of Belarus's political future, thereby reconfiguring national identity under conditions of crisis. The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 marked another critical turning point, further shaping diasporic reflections on history, geopolitics, and regional power relations. Drawing on long-term ethnographic research conducted between 2017 and 2025, including over 60 in-depth interviews, participant observation, and analysis of commemorative practices and public discourse, the article explores how diasporic memory practices emerge at the intersection of multiple historical and geopolitical frameworks. Interaction with host societies provides not only institutional spaces for memory-making but also discursive opportunity structures that influence how the past is framed and politically mobilized. Conceptually, the article argues that contemporary Belarusian memory activism unfolds within an inter-imperial field connecting overlapping historical legacies, including the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Soviet continuity, and alternative oppositional traditions beyond the Soviet framework. These legacies function as symbolic resources for legitimizing diasporic identity and as mobile genealogies strategically employed in cultural diplomacy, institutional memory-building, and transnational narrative production. Inter-imperiality is thus understood not as a return to a single historical model but as the ongoing interaction of multiple imperial formations reconfigured through diasporic practices. Empirically, the article compares three diasporic centers in Central and Eastern Europe. Vilnius draws on

densely layered historical symbolism shaped by the legacy of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, anti-imperial resistance, and contemporary geopolitical tensions. Warsaw functions as a laboratory of experimental memory-making, oriented toward reframing protest experiences and developing new mnemonic repertoires in exile. Prague embodies the continuity of the interwar exile of the Belarusian People's Republic and the strategic use of cultural and intellectual heritage to promote Belarusian national and democratic aspirations internationally. Together, these cases demonstrate how memory in exile operates as a form of geopolitical infrastructure, connecting actors, legitimizing diasporic organizations, and shaping political imaginaries beyond the nation-state. By framing the Belarusian diaspora as an active laboratory of memory practices, this article contributes to the understanding of how national identities are reconfigured amid political crises, authoritarian repression, and transnational displacement, offering insights into broader processes of national identity formation in Central and Eastern Europe under conditions of crisis.

ROUNDTABLE 01 RETHINKING MIGRATION AND “HOME” IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE

Saturday 19 September, 08.45–10.15, Floor VI

MODERATOR:

Jacqueline Nießer

Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies, Germany
niesser@ios-regensburg.de

PARTICIPANTS:

Rory Archer

University of Graz, Austria
rory.archer@univie.ac.at

Tanja Petrović

Institute of Culture and Memory Studies, Slovenia
tanja.petrovic@zrc-sazu.si

Nejra Nuna Čengić

Institute of Culture and Memory Studies, Slovenia
nejra.nuna-cengic@zrc-sazu.si

Andela Pepić

University of Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina
andjela.pepic@fpn.unibl.org

The phenomenon of migration in Southeast Europe (SEE) cannot be understood through economic lenses alone; it is deeply embedded in the sociopolitical construction of space and identity. Modern migration in SEE is increasingly transnational and translocal rather than binary. Moving West is often framed as “joining Europe,” encompassing the perceived “better arrangements” of Western states rather than merely seeking higher wages (Melegh, 2023). Since 2010, visa liberalization across most SEE countries has increased migration, with labor initially serving as a tool for relocation. However, contemporary migration in SEE is no longer only about labor. Motivations have shifted from purely economic to institutional, driven by corruption and a lack of “existential security.” The 2010 liberalization thus became a catalyst for a permanent demographic shift rather than the temporary circularity envisioned by the EU. Unlike the Gastarbeiter programs of the 1960s, which were state-managed and tethered to bilateral agreements, modern SEE migrants navigate “liberalized” spaces as individual agents. Their stories often reveal a “post-nation-

al” identity, where “home” is wherever administrative and economic systems function best. This challenges the state’s narrative of the migrant as a “hero of the diaspora” destined to return and save the nation. Instead, migrants create a “transnational social field” (Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013) that operates entirely outside the control of the home state’s nationally framed rhetoric. This roundtable explores the shift from state-managed migration of the 1960s to the “liquid migration” of the post-2010 era. The discussion will examine how the 2010 visa liberalization regime transformed migration from a temporary economic strategy into a permanent demographic exit, contesting national narratives of “homeland” and “return.” It will also consider the extent to which post-2010 migrants use their “freedom of movement” to engage—or disengage—with the home state’s political failures while seeking stability in their new countries. The roundtable is organized under the project Enhancing Capacities for Quality and Impactful Research on Transformations, Labor, and Migration in Southeast Europe (RETLAMI-SEE), funded by EU Horizon Europe and coordinated by the Faculty of Political Science at the University of Banja Luka. The project strengthens interdisciplinary research and supports early-career scholars through mentoring, networking, and collaboration with the University of Vienna, the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (ZRC SAZU, Ljubljana), and the Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies (IOS, Regensburg).

PANEL 13 NATIONAL IDENTITIES IN THE ERA OF WORLD WARS

Saturday 19 September, 10.30–12.00, Floor I

Negotiating Nationhood: Regional Elites and Competing Visions of Integration in Post-World War I Transylvania

Sanda Luminița Ignat-Coman

Lucian Blaga Central University Library, Romania

ic.luminita@gmail.com

This paper examines the role of regional elites in shaping the national project in Transylvania after the First World War, situating the analysis within broader debates on nationalism and post-imperial state formation. Drawing on Benedict Anderson's concept of the nation as an "imagined community" and Rogers Brubaker's understanding of nationhood as a contingent and negotiated process, it conceptualizes nation-building as a dynamic interaction between central authorities and The study focuses on Iuliu Maniu and Octavian Goga, two prominent Transylvanian leaders who became important political figures in the newly created Greater Romania after 1918. Both have supported the union with Romania but promoted different models of integration. Both viewed Greater Romania as a national community broadly defined by ethnic criteria, yet they diverged in how this objective should be achieved. Maniu advocated gradual integration, emphasizing the preservation of Transylvania's administrative traditions and legal particularities inherited from the Austro-Hungarian framework. In contrast, Goga supported rapid political and administrative centralization, coupled with cultural homogenization, and criticized regionalist tendencies as obstacles to national unity. Over time, however, their ideas diverged even more sharply: Goga became increasingly radicalized, embracing authoritarian and exclusionary ideas, while Maniu remained a consistent defender of democratic principles, even as the political regimes of the period drifted toward authoritarianism. Their contrasting approaches reveal that nation-building in interwar Romania was neither uniform nor predetermined, but shaped by competing political projects. The paper also engages with Michael Billig's concept of "banal nationalism" to show how national identity was constructed not only through institutional reforms but also through everyday political discourse, including parliamentary debates and the press. It argues that the national project functioned as a negotiated narrative, continuously redefined through political conflict and accommodation. Transylvanian elites thus played an active role in shaping, rather than merely implementing, the process of national consolidation in post-imperial East.

PANEL 13 NATIONAL IDENTITIES IN THE ERA OF WORLD WARS

Saturday 19 September, 10.30–12.00, Floor I

Articulating Minority Rights: Petitions to the League of Nations in Interwar Europe

Julia Bavouzet

University of Vienna, Austria

julia.bavouzet@univie.ac.at

The aftermath of World War I and the subsequent collapse of the Central European empires profoundly reshaped the political and social landscape of Central and Eastern Europe. The emergence of new (alleged) nation-states transformed relations among national groups and compelled individuals to renegotiate their loyalties and modes of identification. On the one hand, the redefinition of citizenship along more exclusionary lines exposed many to discrimination, forced displacement, and statelessness. On the other hand, the institutionalization of the category of “national minority” within the postwar international order reconfigured collective mobilization and local political dynamics. In this context, phenomena such as everyday ethnicity and national indifference (Egry 2019; Zahra 2010) acquired renewed analytical significance. At the same time, the League of Nations emerged as a key international actor in the region’s postwar reconstruction (Becker and Wheatley 2020). Tasked with overseeing the minority protection regime, it created new avenues for political engagement: through the petition procedure, individuals and groups could appeal directly to an international forum and articulate claims to cultural and minority rights vis-à-vis their own states (Cowan 2003). This paper centers on petitions submitted to the League by minority associations, organized groups, and private individuals. It will examine the rhetorical and strategic practices through which petitioners articulated their claims, with particular attention to processes of learning to “speak national” (Dragostinova 2008). Moreover, these sources provide a unique lens for analyzing how individuals understood and negotiated their rights within a rapidly shifting context. Finally, the paper contributes to ongoing methodological debates by proposing a comparative perspective between European minority petitions and those originating from mandate territories. It asks to what extent a shared language of petitioning to the League emerged and how such practices circulated and became globalized.

PANEL 13 NATIONAL IDENTITIES IN THE ERA OF WORLD WARS

Saturday 19 September, 10.30–12.00, Floor I

**Overlapping Sovereignty and Forced Belonging:
Competing Regimes of National Belonging in South
Tyrol, 1939–1943**

Eden McLean

Auburn University, US

ekmclean@auburn.edu

Between 1939 and 1943, the Italian borderland of Trentino–South Tyrol became a laboratory for state identity-making as Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany imposed overlapping and often contradictory regimes of national classification on its residents. This paper uses archival sources from Italy, Austria, and Germany to argue that the so-called Option of 1939 – a bilateral agreement that required German-speaking residents to choose between Italian and German citizenship—transformed “German-ness” into a flexible administrative tool that each regime reshaped to meet shifting political, diplomatic, and military needs. The states’ competing efforts to define who counted as “German” not only produced incompatible identity regimes but also erased many regional collective identifications and destabilized communities whose residents did not fit neatly within either state’s nationalized categories. Nazi officials presented German-ness as affective, spiritual affiliation – “feeling German” – that prioritized emotional allegiance over ancestry or linguistic practice. Italian authorities, by contrast, treated German-ness primarily as a set of external markers, such as surnames and everyday language use, expanding or contracting the category strategically to retain loyal subjects or expel suspect ones. These divergent classificatory logics forced residents into a rigid, state-imposed binary – “German” or “Italian” – that bore little resemblance to their lived, locally rooted, and often multilingual, self-identifications. These competing definitions had tangible institutional effects, as schools, youth organizations, and welfare agencies became key arenas where the two regimes enacted their visions of national belonging. Nazi-affiliated language courses and youth programs promoted an expansive, racialized Germanness tied to the Reich, while Fascist officials tightened curricular controls and intensified Party youth activities to enforce a more rigid *italianità*. As both states claimed authority to determine the “true” national character of the region’s residents – and regulate their education, mobility, and citizenship accordingly – Trentino–South Tyrol effectively became a shared administrative space in which

residents often had to navigate contradictory demands and dueling systems of governance. The fluid and instrumental nature of “German-ness” in Trentino-South Tyrol during the Option reveals how authoritarian regimes can weaponize ethnic classification to suppress existing forms of collective identity, and how wartime conditions intensify these pressures into coercive projects of forced belonging. More broadly, this case illuminates how national identity in borderlands is not simply transformed in moments of crisis but actively produced, contested, and constrained by state regimes seeking to shape the boundaries of legitimate belonging.

PANEL 13 NATIONAL IDENTITIES IN THE ERA OF WORLD WARS

Saturday 19 September, 10.30–12.00, Floor I

The Policy of Accomplished Facts: Nationalist Violence and Anticipatory National-Building in Eastern Poland, 1941–1944

Stanisław Boridczenko

University of Szczecin, Poland / Ruhr University Bochum, Germany

stanislaw.boridczenko@usz.edu.pl

Reports of the Polish government-in-exile from late 1943 and early 1944 documented a rapid escalation of violence in the eastern territories of prewar Poland, as local nationalist groups sought to act before the anticipated arrival of the Red Army, during a period when German occupational control over the region was weakening. These assessments reflect a broader wartime dynamic in Eastern Europe: the collapse of state authority enabled nationalist movements to transform territorial claims into demographic realities in preparation for the postwar order. This paper examines that process through the concept of *polityka faktów dokonanych* ("policy of accomplished facts") – the deliberate attempt by non-state actors to create irreversible political and demographic outcomes during wartime. Using a comparative framework, the study analyzes the Lithuanian, Belarusian, Ukrainian, and Polish cases. Across these contexts, nationalist movements developed variants of a politics of accomplished facts, seeking to secure postwar territorial claims by reshaping population structures in advance. Despite differing ideologies and organizational forms, they converged in treating demographic transformation as a legitimate pathway to national self-determination. The escalation of violence followed a recognizable dynamic. Initial targets were activists of rival nationalist movements. Over time, retaliatory cycles expanded the category of legitimate enemies until ethnic belonging itself became sufficient grounds for violence. In the southern part of the region this culminated in large-scale massacres; in the northern areas violence was more fragmented but still deadly. These processes contributed to the deaths of tens of thousands of civilians in a wartime environment in which competing national projects operated without mutually recognized limits. The paper's central contribution is theoretical. It reconceptualizes wartime ethnic violence not primarily as a byproduct of occupation policy, ethnic animosity, or bilateral conflict, but as a forward-looking strategy of sovereignty production. The "policy of accomplished facts" is analyzed as a mechanism through which nationalist movements sought to pre-structure

the postwar order by aligning territory, population, and anticipated statehood before formal sovereignty was determined. Crucially, the capacity to pursue such strategies was shaped by asymmetries of state legacy. Movements oriented toward restoring an existing state framework – most notably in the Polish case, but also in Soviet – operated under constraints tied to citizenship continuity and institutional restoration. By contrast, nationalist actors without comparable commitments to state continuity faced fewer internal limits in re-defining territory and population simultaneously. The paper thus argues that relationships to prior statehood fundamentally structured the radicalization pathways of nationalist movements under conditions of state collapse.

PANEL 14 ETHNIC IDENTIFICATION AND MOBILIZATION

Saturday 19 September, 10.30–12.00, Floor IV

Statistical Recognition of Mixed Ethnic Identities in Post-Socialist Censuses

Karolina Lendák-Kabók*

Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary

karolina.kabok@tatk.elte.hu

Nóra Anna Rózsa

Hungarian Central Statistical Office, Hungary

**presenting/corresponding author*

This paper examines how post-socialist states statistically recognize, reduce, or render invisible mixed and multiple ethnic identities through census practices. Drawing on a comparative analysis of census questionnaires, methodological guidelines, and official statistical publications across Hungary, Romania, Czechia, Slovakia, and the successor states of former Yugoslavia, the study argues that ethnic categories in censuses are not neutral measurement tools but institutional mechanisms that shape the boundaries of national belonging. The paper develops a three-level analytical framework for assessing the statistical recognition of complex identities: (1) the measurement level, referring to question wording and response options; (2) the coding and data-processing level; and (3) the publication level, where identities ultimately become publicly visible or disappear. Although social realities increasingly involve layered and mixed identifications, most census systems continue to operate according to a single-category logic rooted in nation-state traditions. The findings reveal distinct regional patterns. Post-Yugoslav countries typically allow open self-identification at the questionnaire level but reduce responses to a single ethnic category during coding, reflecting the political centrality of ethnicity in institutional and minority governance arrangements. Hungary and Slovakia institutionalize additive multiple identification through sequential questions, yet without creating hybrid statistical categories. In contrast, Czechia and Slovenia illustrate models in which ethnicity becomes statistically marginalized, limiting the visibility of complex identities. Romania represents an intermediate case, where multiple identifications may be expressed but are absorbed into singular official categories. The paper argues that the statistical recognition of mixed identities depends less on technical survey design than on broader historical and political conceptions of nationhood. Census practices therefore actively participate in governing belonging and defining which identities become legible within the state.

PANEL 14 ETHNIC IDENTIFICATION AND MOBILIZATION

Saturday 19 September, 10.30–12.00, Floor IV

From Nominal to Strong Ethnic Identification: A Cognitive-Sociological Mechanism of Nostalgia in Bashkortostan

Evgeni Varshaver

Independent Researcher, Russia

varshavere@gmail.com

This paper examines how strong ethnic identification emerges among individuals for whom ethnicity initially functions as a nominal category, drawing on a cognitive-sociological framework and empirical data from Bashkortostan. While existing literature has identified multiple factors associated with salient ethnic boundaries, the mechanisms through which individuals become strongly identified with an ethnic category remain insufficiently specified. The paper addresses this gap by reconstructing recurrent causal chains that generate strong ethnic identification at the individual level. Conceptually, ethnic identity is defined as a linkage between representations of the self and representations of an ethnic category, such that ethnically marked objects, practices, and symbols are perceived as part of the “self.” The analysis focuses on how this linkage is formed and intensified. Empirically, the paper is based on a mixed-methods study combining qualitative interviews and a survey. The qualitative stage involved 74 in-depth interviews centered on perceptual and communicative experiences related to ethnicity. Through systematic coding and comparative analysis, several recurrent factors and mechanisms were identified: the influence of a significant other for whom ethnicity is salient, the professionalization of ethnicity, life-course crises, and experiences of discrimination. However, the most frequent and analytically productive mechanism was identified as “ethnicization through nostalgia.” This mechanism unfolds as follows. Individuals raised in rural, predominantly non-Russian-speaking environments move to urban settings, where they begin to experience nostalgia for people, places, and everyday practices associated with their childhood. In the urban context, these elements are already symbolically ethnicized through cultural policy, public space, and organized events. As a result, previously taken-for-granted aspects of rural life—landscapes, objects, practices—are reinterpreted as ethnic markers. Participation in emotionally charged events further reinforces this process by linking positive affect to ethnicized symbols and narratives. Through this sequence, ethnic schemas become af-

fectively charged and are incorporated into self-representation, transforming nominal identity into strong identification. The quantitative stage (online survey in Bashkortostan, N=1104) tested the empirical robustness of this mechanism. A cumulative index capturing the components of “ethnicization through nostalgia” (migration, nostalgia, participation in events, etc.) was constructed and used alongside measures of other mechanisms in a series of regression models predicting the strength of ethnic identity. The results show that the nostalgia mechanism has the strongest explanatory power ($\beta = 0.399$, $p < 0.01$, $R^2 = 0.33$), outperforming alternative factors. Notably, discrimination does not have a statistically significant effect. These findings suggest that strong ethnic identification in Bashkortostan is not primarily driven by conflict or exclusion, but by a cognitive-affective mechanism that links nostalgic experience to ethnically structured symbolic environments. More broadly, the paper demonstrates how cognitive sociology can be used to identify and test mechanisms of identity formation, moving beyond variable-centered explanations toward the reconstruction of causal processes.

PANEL 14 ETHNIC IDENTIFICATION AND MOBILIZATION

Saturday 19 September, 10.30–12.00, Floor IV

War and Narratives of Belonging: German-Jewish Volunteers in the Israel Defense Forces

Dania Lemmer

Central European University, Austria

LemmerD@ceu.edu

How do German-Jewish soldiers in the Israel Defense Forces narratively construct and ground their combat motivation? This paper asks why German-Jewish volunteers choose to serve in the IDF and examines what their enlistment reveals about the transformation of national identities under conditions of conflict. Dominant theories of combat motivation, largely shaped by post-World War II military sociology, explain soldiers' willingness to fight primarily through institutional socialization and small-group cohesion, viewing motivation as a product of the state-military apparatus. While these frameworks account for dynamics within the military structure, they remain limited in explaining motivations that emerge prior to enlistment and transcend the nation-state, tending to understate the role of personal narratives. This paper advances a narrative approach to combat motivation, conceptualizing the soldier not merely as an institutional actor following orders but as a sense-making subject who situates their participation in war within broader life stories of identity, responsibility, and belonging. Rather than asking how militaries generate cohesion, it asks how individuals narratively construct the moral and existential grounds on which fighting becomes meaningful. The selected sample of qualitative interviews ensures variation across units, roles (combat and non-combat), ranks, and service periods. Participants include German nationals who voluntarily serve in the Israel Defense Forces as well as German-Israeli citizens who serve beyond the mandatory period and spent formative years in Germany, enabling a focused and comparative analysis of how prior socialization intersects with military service in Israel. This research argues that combat motivation is articulated and legitimized through narratives grounded in moral responsibility, collective memory, and a transnational understanding of Jewish peoplehood. The interrelated processes of narrative construction revolve around prior socialization experiences, the formation and negotiation of identity, and senses of belonging within Jewish communities, while during the period of service they are further shaped by the internal dynamics of the military corps. Shoah memory operates as a structuring frame

of moral or symbolic responsibility toward the Jewish people. At the same time, experiences of antisemitism in Germany reinforce Jewish and Israeli identification, often prompting participants to distance themselves from dual German identities in moments of threat. Following October 7, volunteers perceive ties to the Jewish community as more salient, with military service becoming an embodied expression of solidarity. Ultimately, the study argues that war does not simply mobilize soldiers – it reconfigures narratives of belonging. Voluntary participation in a foreign military is experienced as a morally desirable act grounded in trust, identification, and a shared sense of collective vulnerability. For these German-Jewish volunteers, military service becomes a crucible in which European, Jewish, and Israeli identities are not simply expressed but actively renegotiated.

PANEL 15 THE IMPACT OF RUSSIA'S WAR ON KIN POLITICS IN THE REGION

Saturday 19 September, 10.30–12.00, Floor VI

How Do Kin-states Matter? A Typology of Methodological Approaches and Challenges

Jennie Schulze

Duquesne University, US

schulzej@duq.edu

The multiple overlapping and competing nationalisms that exist between kin-states, the conationals in other countries that they claim to protect, and the states where those conationals reside has been the subject of a tremendous amount of scholarship on Central and Eastern Europe. While several states in the region make claims to protect conationals outside their territorial borders both in discourse and policy, kin-state activism takes a variety of forms throughout the region. Russia's war against Ukraine, which has been at least partially justified on the basis of a duty to protect conationals, has raised a host of questions surrounding how scholars should define kin-states, and whether "unwilling" conationals can be theorized within the same ontological framework as minority or majority groups that actively seek protection. While definitional questions are important and taken up by other authors in this volume, this article seeks to engage with existing scholarship on how we can study kin-state effects. Once a state claims to be taking action on behalf of its conationals abroad, how can we measure the impact of that activism on target states and societies? In other words, how do we know that kin-state claim matter? Through a review of leading scholarship on kin-state nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe, this article unpacks existing methodological approaches in order to introduce a typology for measuring different types of kin-state effects on target states and societies. In doing so, it also identifies important areas for future research, as well as challenges for studying kin-state effects in the current political moment.

PANEL 15 THE IMPACT OF RUSSIA'S WAR ON KIN POLITICS IN THE REGION

Saturday 19 September, 10.30–12.00, Floor VI

Kinship in the Eyes of the Beholder: Russia's Civilizational War in Ukraine

Angela Kachuyevski
Arcadia University, US
kachueya@arcadia.edu

Although Russia has offered several justifications for its war on Ukraine, the argument that Russians and Ukrainians are essentially “one people,” that the Russian nation was divided by the collapse of the Soviet Union, and that Russia has a special claim to its “historical lands,” provides a central legitimizing basis for Russian actions. Yet, despite the framing of Russian policy as driven by kin-state responsibilities, Russia's actions call into question generally accepted notions of kin politics. This paper explores how Russia's conception of crossborder kinship is employed to justify military aggression in Ukraine by framing an imperial project as a defensive one designed to address existential threats to the “historical homeland” from the West. This portrayal rejects any agency for the Ukrainian people, instead it argues that the conflict in Ukraine is between Russia and the West. In this paper I also consider how the putative kin in Ukraine have reacted in ways that Russia did not expect, as many Russian-speaking Ukrainians have made clear that Russia's concept of kinship is not widely shared in the predominantly Russian-speaking areas that are the focus of current Russian military conquest. The occupation of Crimea and the onset of insurgency in Donbas in 2014 led many Russian-speaking Ukrainians to strengthen their Ukrainian identity and reject kin ties, even as they remained predominantly Russian-speaking. I conclude this paper with some consideration of how the current war might further solidify these shifting identity dynamics.

PANEL 15 THE IMPACT OF RUSSIA'S WAR ON KIN POLITICS IN THE REGION

Saturday 19 September, 10.30–12.00, Floor VI

Kin-Minorities as Hostages and Bargaining Chips in Times of War

Szabolcs Pogonyi

Central European University, Austria

pogonyi@ceu.edu

The paper compares the political responses of Hungary, Poland and Romania to the Ukraine war and the implications thereof on ethnic minorities in Ukraine. The paper has three aims. First, to assess if and how the three countries' kin-state strategy was influenced and informed by broader geopolitical objectives. Second, the paper will also try to gauge the long-term implications of the three kin-states' politics in the Ukraine war on ethnic kin populations in Ukraine. Third, through the presented comparative analysis, the paper will point out the shortcomings of the triadic and quadratic nexus models in explaining variations and dynamics of kin-related interstate and interethnic struggles. Wars always create intricate geopolitical situations in neighboring states, particularly for those with significant ethnic kin populations in the war-affected country. In the case of the Ukraine war, the situation of kin-states and kin-minorities has been even more peculiar and sensitive, considering that Russia attacked Ukraine claiming (among others) that the 'special military operation' intended to protect ethnic Russians from the abuses of the Ukrainian nationalist state. Russia's pretentious use of ethnic kin-minority protection for the occupation of Ukrainian territories has obvious and important repercussions for other territorially concentrated transborder ethnic minorities in Ukraine as well as their kin-states. Using the literature on kin-state activism, I will show how the war in Ukraine impacted the already complex opportunity structures of the triadic nexus of the three kin-states, kin-minorities and home states of minorities. Despite the fact that Hungary, Poland and Romania were all EU and NATO members, they offered diametrically opposing responses to the Ukraine war. While Poland and Romania provided military and other help for Ukraine, Hungary offered at best a hesitant and ambiguous support for Ukraine in the war (also blocking its NATO membership application) claiming that it puts first the interest of Hungary and Hungarians in Ukraine. At the same time, Hungary (similarly to Poland and Romania), refrained from making any irredentist claims or suggestions that they are interested in territorial adjustment even when Russia allegedly 'offered' Ukrainian territories to them. The paper

will relate the findings to the literature on kin-state engagement politics by claiming that in interstate relations, kin-states put their geopolitical interest before the interest of kin-minorities. Most importantly, even if they claim to do so, they do not engage in kin-politics that compromises their state-centric geopolitical interest. This also implies that despite the destabilization of the neighboring state that hosts kin-minorities, kin-states seeking their own geopolitical interest refrain from making irredentist claims.

PANEL 15 THE IMPACT OF RUSSIA'S WAR ON KIN POLITICS IN THE REGION

Saturday 19 September, 10.30–12.00, Floor VI

Transnistrian Poles, between the Kin-State and the Patron Russia

Magdalena Dembińska

Université de Montréal, Canada

magdalena.dembinska@umontreal.ca

Focused on the effects of kin-state policies on their bilateral relations, the literature has little to say about minorities themselves. It also ignores cases where a minority is targeted by competing trans-sovereign policies. This paper seeks to fill these gaps by exploring the effects of the soft power of the kin-state on the strategies of minorities in the case of Poles finding themselves in a particularly complex context of Transnistria, the separatist region of Moldova. On the one hand, Poland clearly supports Chisinau against the rebellious republic and intervenes with its external minority by offering resources and quasi-citizenship (Karta Polaka). On the other side, Russia, the patron-state of Transnistria, exercises major counterbalancing soft power with its compatriot policies that include Polish residents. In dialogue with the literature on kin-states' policies, the objective is twofold: to understand the changes induced by the adoption of trans-sovereign laws in the way minorities identify themselves, as well as in their political strategies; and to complicate the triadic relational geopolitical field in which they navigate by adding to the minority/state of residence/kin-state relationship an additional external actor, the patron-state. The degree of agency and the ability of minorities to adapt will therefore depend on their relations (1) with the (non)state institutions of the States of residence, (2) with those of the kin-state, but also (3) between the state of residence and kin-state and, in the cases that interest us, (4) between the latter and the patron-state. The paper presents preliminary results on Poles in Transnistria based on extensive fieldwork in 2023, 2024 and 2025.

PANEL 15 THE IMPACT OF RUSSIA'S WAR ON KIN POLITICS IN THE REGION

Saturday 19 September, 10.30–12.00, Floor VI

Unwilling Kin-Minorities

Zsuzsa Csergő*

Queen's University, Canada

csargo@queensu.ca

Szabolcs Pogonyi

Central European University, Austria

**presenting/corresponding author*

Scholarship on kin-state politics takes for granted the strategic alliance and overlap of the interests of kin-states and kin-minorities. While it is acknowledged in the literature that kin-states often use transborder politics as a pretext for pursuing geopolitical aims or vote hunting rather than trying to genuinely help kin-minorities abroad, little attention has been given to cases where kin-minorities ignore, contest, or resist kin-state actors' trans-sovereign efforts. One recent and striking example of such contestation is the case of Russian-speakers in Ukraine. Despite the fact that Russia claimed to defend the rights and interests of Russian speakers by attacking Ukraine, many Russian speakers and ethnic Russians not only took up arms to defend Ukraine but also decided to learn Ukrainian and identify as Ukrainian. While this is a unique and extreme case, it illustrates that kin-minorities do not necessarily support or agree with kin-state's trans sovereign projects. The main aim of the paper is to identify the main dynamics of the contestation of kin-state politics by kin-minorities. With the help of existing case studies and comparative analyses, we will show that kin-minorities often ignore, contest or outright resist kin-state engagement on two levels. On a micro level, individuals who are claimed as ethnic kin by the kin-state do not necessarily identify and act as wished by kin-state actors. Similarly, institutional kin-minority actors and movements also often resist and challenge kin-states' transborder political projects. The paper will identify the critical junctures and systemic variables that explain the crystallization of individual and collective kin-minority contestation of kin-states' trans-sovereign projects.

PANEL 16 CROATIA'S NATIONAL NARRATIVES ON WAR, COMMUNISM, AND NATIONALISM

Saturday 19 September, 14.00–15.30, Floor I

Revolution, Republic, and Statehood: Nationalist Articulations within the Commission for History of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Croatia

Ivan Roško

University of Zagreb, Croatia

irosko@ffzg.unizg.hr

In both traditional historiography and much of the public discourse across the former Yugoslav states, the 1990s are commonly portrayed as a sharp rupture between the ruling ideology of authoritarian socialism in Yugoslavia and the emergent democratic capitalism of the successor states. While this interpretation is not without merit, the narrative of radical discontinuity tends to obscure significant ideological continuities, particularly with regard to nationalism. This paper draws on a chapter of my doctoral dissertation that comparatively examines nationalism in the Socialist Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Croatia. The analysis is grounded in a neo-constructivist conceptualization of nationalism as a globally grounded political ideology that is contextually embedded and ideologically polyvalent. Rather than treating nationalism as antithetical to socialism, the study explores their compatibility and mutual articulation. The empirical focus is on discussions among members of the Commission for History of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Croatia. Established in 1956, the Commission underwent several reorganizations throughout the 1960s and 1970s, yet largely retained its mandate as a political body tasked with researching the history of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia/Croatia, the workers' movement, and the National Liberation War, as well as coordinating relevant institutions. Analysis of the stenographs of discussions inside the Commission on Party history during the 1965–1988 period reveals just how much the Partisan struggle in Croatia in particular was seen by the members of the committee (consisting of historians and communist intelligentsia in Croatia) not only as a communist revolution, but also as a struggle for perceived interests of the Republic. Even more notably, for the establishment of a Croatian state, the primary ideological cornerstone of post-90s Croatia, today embodied in the narrative of the “Homeland War.”

PANEL 16 CROATIA'S NATIONAL NARRATIVES ON WAR, COMMUNISM, AND NATIONALISM

Saturday 19 September, 14.00–15.30, Floor I

"The Veterans Shouldn't Be Trusted": Alternative Narratives among Croatian 1990s War Veterans

Sven Milekić

University of Rijeka, Croatia

sven.milekic@uniri.hr

As part of the violent dissolution of socialist Yugoslavia, between 1991 and 1995, Croatian forces fought against Croatian Serb rebels – aided by the Yugoslav People's Army and Serbian paramilitaries – who occupied a quarter of Croatia's territory. However, in 1995, Croatian forces managed to free most of this territory, while the rest was integrated into a transitional UN-administered territory. As a state internationally recognized during the 1990s war (the Homeland War), this armed conflict serves as Croatia's state- and nation-forming political myth. Thus, the Homeland War is enshrined in the Constitution as the final historical event in which Croats demonstrated their "determination and readiness for establishing and preserving" Croatia as an independent and sovereign state. The dominant, official narrative about the War offers a sanitized account of an otherwise complex historical event, portraying it as an exclusively defensive war against "the Greater-Serbian aggression". Alongside other actors, associations of Croatian veterans are the leading memory entrepreneurs concerning the collective memory of the 1990s war. These numerous associations, enjoying different levels of local, regional, and national support, have access to media, politics, and institutions, and act as influential actors in Croatian society. By controlling the narrative, these associations act as important veto players, often blocking or slowing policy changes or other societal developments. Therefore, they oppose changes in the veteran welfare, state support for national minorities, or public discussion on different transgressions of Croatian forces and political elites during the war. Their 2025 wave of banning or preventing different counter-narratives and (pop) cultural events in society demonstrates they are still powerful. However, examining Croatian veterans on a micro level reveals how different counter-narratives of the 1990s war and its legacy are alive and even gaining some strength. Aside from the reproduction of popular tropes promoted by associations, many veterans, in semi-structured interviews and focus groups, conveyed ideas that subvert the dominant narrative and subsequent hegemonic discourse about contem-

porary Croatia. Even when unprompted by the researcher, these counter-narratives of Croatia's war crimes, ultra-nationalism, Croatia's problematic role in the Bosnian War and general condemnation of political leadership often took an important place in the discussions or interviews. In combination with veterans' dissatisfaction with corruption, clientelism and fraudulent transformation of public ownership and de-industrialization, these counter-narratives paint a different picture of Croatia and play an essential part in their post-war (re)construction of identity.

PANEL 16 CROATIA'S NATIONAL NARRATIVES ON WAR, COMMUNISM, AND NATIONALISM

Saturday 19 September, 14.00–15.30, Floor I

Contesting or Converging? Croatian Political Responses to ICTY Judgments on Bosnia and Herzegovina

Senna Šimek

University of Zagreb, Croatia

senna.simek@gmail.com

The role of the Republic of Croatia in the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, specifically during the conflict between the Croatian Defence Council (HVO) and the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ABiH) in 1993–1994, represents the most controversial aspect of the “Homeland War,” one that has been systematically downplayed, relativised, or openly denied in its later interpretations through Croatia’s foundational state-building political myth. Namely, Croatia’s role has been repeatedly criticized in the judgments of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), which established that Croatia participated as a party to the (international) conflict by financially and militarily supporting, and to some extent controlling, Croat forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina, during which war crimes were committed. The judgments further confirmed the existence of a joint criminal enterprise led by the Croatian political and military leadership, aimed at creating a Croat entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina through the ethnic cleansing of the non-Croat, predominantly Muslim population. This aspect of the war remains highly taboo, as it fundamentally challenges the dominant narrative of the war as purely defensive, in which Croatia is positioned exclusively as a victim. Building on this, the paper examines to what extent we can meaningfully speak of contesting national narratives when it comes to Croatian political elites. More specifically, it analyses how Croatian governments responded to the Trial Chamber and Appeals Chamber judgments in the cases of Blaškić, Kordić and Čerkez, and Prlić et al. Notably, the first-instance judgments were delivered during periods of nominally left-wing governments (2000–2003 and 2011–2015), while the Appeals Chamber judgments were issued under nominally right-wing governments (2003–2008/11 and 2016–2020), allowing for a comparative analysis of potential ideological differences. The analysis focuses on reactions at the highest political level, ranging from individual statements and parliamentary debates to official documents and government conclusions, in order to assess whether significant differences in interpretation and political instrumentalization of

these judgments exist. The central argument is that differences between nominally left- and right-wing governments are limited and that, despite expectations of ideological divergence, there is a strong degree of continuity in how Croatia's role in Bosnia and Herzegovina is addressed. At the same time, the paper suggests that certain differences are shaped by temporal and contextual factors, particularly in relation to the period before and after Croatia's accession to the EU in 2013.

PANEL 16 CROATIA'S NATIONAL NARRATIVES ON WAR, COMMUNISM, AND NATIONALISM

Saturday 19 September, 14.00–15.30, Floor I

Counter-Narratives for the Initiated? How Fiction Films Challenge the Official Memory of the 'Homeland War,' and Why It Does (Not) Matter

Tamara Kolarić

Dublin City University, Ireland

tamara.kolaric@dcu.ie

The 1991-95 war of independence in Croatia, known domestically as the 'Homeland War', mobilized a national(ist) narrative which has since become the dominant thread of the national collective memory. Significant literature exists on this memory narrative: its origins during the war, its evolution and embodiment in the constitution and other documents, as well as the political and societal actors and processes contributing to it or trying to challenge it. Less attention has been dedicated to the relationship between film—an accessible, popular way of narrating the past—and national memory, especially specifically in the Croatian, as opposed to the wider post-Yugoslav, context (most existing works focus on a few 'canonical' films from across former Yugoslavia). Yet at the same time, cinema is widely understood by authors in memory studies as an important tool of narrating the past (literature refers to films impacting memory narratives as 'memory films'), and often as a way of producing counter-narratives to the dominant national memory. With regard to the latter, Croatia has been no exception: a number of films have, in different ways, challenged the now-dominant memory from the early days of its making. Yet while these have at times not only offered radical interventions into the narrative but also received significant public attention (and sometimes pushback), their memory impact has been very limited. In this paper, I aim to achieve two things. One is to, expanding on my PhD research and borrowing concepts from the work of key authors in post-Yugoslav cinema studies, map out the forms of resistance to the dominant narrative of the 'Homeland War' in contemporary Croatian feature fiction film, with a particular emphasis on the rarely-researched last decade. The other is to, drawing on theoretical work done together with my colleague Petar Mitrić about cinema and audience engagement (Mitrić and Kolarić, 2023), as well on recent works looking at other areas of cultural production such as literature (e.g. Wierød Borčak, Ortner, and Sindbæk Andersen, 2025), offer a preliminary answer to why filmic memory narratives have played at best a limited role in memory-making in contemporary Croatia – a thorough empirical examination of which is yet to follow.

PANEL 17 RESPONSES TO THE WAR IN UKRAINE

Saturday 19 September, 14.00–15.30, Floor IV

Narratives of War and Peace in the Communication Strategy of Political Elites in Hungary and Serbia

Viktoria Zakinszky Toma*

University of Novi Sad, Serbia

tomaviki80@gmail.com

Norbert Merkovity

University of Szeged, Hungary

**presenting/corresponding author*

The paper offers a comparative analysis of Hungarian and Serbian governments' political communication related to the narratives of war and peace since the beginning of the war in Ukraine. In both countries, the instrumentalization of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict by political elites becomes useful for strengthening internal political support in connection with sensitive national and social issues. The Hungarian government's communication strategy uses themes of peace, sovereignty, and economic realism to justify its ambivalence toward both NATO and the EU, where foreign narratives and national communication are indistinguishable, and the war in Ukraine shifted from an external issue to a matter of national identity, reflecting Hungary's geopolitical positioning and domestic legitimacy struggles (Merkovity-Hajdu 2025). In Serbia, Russia is seen as a friendly country that guarantees the preservation of Kosovo, the autonomy of the Republika Srpska and provides gas at a favorable price, while the West is bound to pressure Serbia to introduce sanctions against Russia and achieve a solution in relations with Kosovo. President Vučić monopolized the narrative of war in Ukraine, while promoting Serbia's neutral position on the issue (Crta 2022). The war in Ukraine confirms the already existing ethnicized and one-sided views of the past in the discourses of political elites in Serbia (Surlić-Milić 2024). By doing comparative analysis based on empirical research conducted in the past years since the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, including media monitoring, critical discourse analysis and focus groups in both countries, the paper intends to draw attention to different modes of political communication strategies of political elites, offering a perspective of framing the Ukrainian conflict „from within“, i.e. the EU, as well as outside its borders. These strategies show significant similarities in spite of the hugely different geopolitical and historical perspectives of the two countries.

PANEL 17 RESPONSES TO THE WAR IN UKRAINE

Saturday 19 September, 14.00–15.30, Floor IV

The Controversies of Self-Determination: National Identity and the Development of the Decolonization Discourse in the Belarusian Pro-Democratic Community

Tatiana Shchytsova

European Humanities University, Lithuania

tatiana.shchytsova@ehu.lt

Amid multiple crises, Belarusians have faced historical challenges as a European nation that require them to reevaluate their national identity and position within Europe. I argue that the processes of national self-determination within the pro-democratic Belarusian community are marked by two controversies. The first controversy concerns the concept of national identity. On the one hand, the leading political institutions of the Belarusian democratic forces promote “The Conception of National Revival”, which resembles the ethnic nationalist discourse of the old opposition. On the other hand, many Belarusian intellectuals and cultural activists advocate an alternative approach that differs from the first in terms of language policy and general attitude toward historical narratives. One of my research objectives is to explore the discrepancy between these two approaches. The second controversy relates to the rapidly developing decolonization discourse within Belarusian academic, activist, and political environments since 2022. The research must raise questions about the meaning and validity of the term “decolonization” in this context. On the one hand, the spread of the decolonization discourse has been highly motivated. The demand for the term “decolonization” originated from an acute awareness of the need to resist the imperial aspirations of the Russian authorities to politically and culturally subjugate Belarus, Ukraine, and other countries in the region. On the other hand, the applicability of the term “decolonization” and the postcolonial lens in relation to Belarus and other countries in the region is a matter of scholarly debate. The nonlinear genesis of the modern Belarusian nation, as well as the active participation of Belarusians in Soviet modernization, call into question the appropriateness of using the term “decolonization.” The proposed paper aims to analyze these controversies and their practical implications. The study is multidisciplinary in nature. Along with philosophical approaches, it will employ approaches from identity and nationalism studies, postcolonial and decolonial studies, and post-Soviet Belarusian studies. It will entail a discourse analysis of a wide range of texts by

Belarusian politicians, experts, intellectuals, journalists, and art activists that address national identity, decolonization, and deimperialization and circulate in the public domain.

PANEL 17 RESPONSES TO THE WAR IN UKRAINE

Saturday 19 September, 14.00–15.30, Floor IV

Minority Identity and Democratic Participation in the Context of an Aggressive Kin State

Marianna Makarova

Tallinn University, Estonia

marianna.makarowa@gmail.com

The war in Ukraine, where protection of minorities was used as a pretext for full-scale invasion by the Russian Federation, has had an enormous impact on Europe, from economic tensions to decreased security and the re-opening of previously forgotten fears and grievances deeply rooted in history. For countries with substantial Russian-speaking populations like Estonia and several others, the impact is on both security and societal cohesion. The article explores shifts in both the perceived position and agency of the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia and shifts in minority identification, particularly the growth of bicultural Estonian Russian identity. The analysis is based on data from the Tallinn University research project “The dynamics of national identity strategies in Estonia in the context of Russian aggression in Ukraine” and qualitative interviews conducted in 2025 within the project ENMinResCE by Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski Jana Pawła II. Previous studies have shown that bicultural minority identity significantly differs from single identity in their relation to psychological wellbeing and self-esteem, as well as the impact of context factors, such as, for example, history discourse on the strength of minority ethnic and national identity. The analysis explores the impact of context factors, such as active war with immediate proximity where the kin state plays the role of aggressor, and related securitization by the host state, on minority relation to the host state, as well as strategies employed to negotiate the impact - possibly including shifts in identity.

PANEL 17 RESPONSES TO THE WAR IN UKRAINE

Saturday 19 September, 14.00–15.30, Floor IV

A Place to Call Home? The Transformation of Transcarpathian Hungarians' Territorial and Ethno-Cultural Identities Amid War

Roman Rudenko*

WU Vienna University of Economics and Business, Austria

roman.rudenko@wu.ac.at

Mykola Homanyuk

Kherson State University, Ukraine

**presenting/corresponding author*

In the context of Ukraine's civic integration policies and Hungary's kin-state politics, the Hungarian community of Transcarpathia has been undergoing a transformative process of sense-making regarding its territorial and ethno-cultural identity. During the full-scale Russian invasion, rifts between the positions of Ukraine and Hungary have deepened. Our goal is to give voice to members of the Hungarian community to understand the effects of crisis and macro-politics on everyday experiences, perceptions of belonging, as well as interethnic cohabitation in the traditionally diverse region. We aim to contribute to theory on multiculturalism by discerning whether and how ethnic minorities translate their territorial belonging to a civic and political identity during critical junctures. Reflecting our positionality as researchers, we aim to respect our study participants' knowledge and experience stemming from rootedness in a region marked by diversity and historic peripheral status. We conducted 13 semi-structured interviews with representatives of the Hungarian community in Transcarpathia in July 2025. While data analysis is ongoing, first evidence suggests an entrenchment of positions within the community. Thus, while one group subscribes to an ethno-centric view based on Hungarian particularism, often associated with the consumption of Hungarian state media resources and emigration from Transcarpathia, the other takes a more civic-minded position that embraces elevating the role of the state language as a driver of social mobility within Ukraine. In our analytical approach, we draw on theoretical perspectives on minority inclusion and identity (e.g., Wimmer, 2016), and multiculturalism and civic integration (Banting & Kymlicka, 2013; Wright & Bloemraad, 2012; Bloemraad & Wright, 2014), while allowing the qualitative data to speak

for itself. We contribute to a better understanding of the region's complex position in cross-border relations, considering Hungary's kin-state politics (Erőss et al., 2016, 2025; Tátrai et al., 2017; Waterbury, 2014), Ukraine's minority language policy (Besters-Dilger, 2023; Kulyk, 2013; Moser, 2014; Pavlenko, 2008) as well as Transcarpathia's unique historical context (Butt, 2002; Csernicskó & Laihonen, 2016; Dickinson, 2010). Acknowledgments: We are grateful to IWM Vienna for supporting data collection with its Documenting Ukraine grant.

PANEL 18 DELIBERATIVE COMMUNICATION WITHOUT DEMOCRACY

Saturday 19 September, 14.00–15.30, Floor VI

Deliberation and Anti-Deliberation: Communicative Practices in Weak Post-Conflict Democracies

Ivor Sokolić*

University of Hertfordshire, UK
i.sokolic@herts.ac.uk

Irena Fiket

University of Belgrade, Serbia

Denisa Kostovicova

LSE, UK

**presenting/corresponding author*

This paper develops a conceptual framework for analyzing how deliberative and anti-deliberative practices shape political communication in weak and unconsolidated post-conflict democracies. It argues that the prospects for deliberative democracy are uniquely constrained in contexts characterized by power asymmetries, neopatrimonial governance, and deep-seated conflict cleavages, where communicative processes unfold under significant structural pressures. The paper advances the claim that anti-deliberation should be conceptualized as a distinct and analytically significant mode of political communication. Anti-deliberation is defined as the active and systematic violation of deliberative norms through exclusion, manipulation, and domination, combined with the denial or weaponization of difference. Rather than treating such practices as peripheral deviations from deliberative ideals, the paper positions them as central to understanding how political communication operates in weak democratic settings. In addition to defining anti-deliberation, the paper examines the risks associated with its diffusion across the political system. As anti-deliberative communication spreads, it erodes deliberative norms and weakens efforts to counter democratic backsliding. The paper draws on numerous empirical examples to show how deliberative and anti-deliberative dynamics coexist and interact across formal institutions, civil society, digital spaces, and small groups. The analysis reveals that pockets of high-quality deliberation persist, yet remain fragile and vulnerable to anti-deliberative forces.

PANEL 18 DELIBERATIVE COMMUNICATION WITHOUT DEMOCRACY

Saturday 19 September, 14.00–15.30, Floor VI

Parliamentary Debates: Anti-deliberation as a Smoking Gun of Autocratization

Tara Tepavac

University of Belgrade, Serbia

tara.tepavac@ifdt.bg.ac.rs

This paper explores parliamentary debates as both mirrors and mechanisms of democratic erosion in competitive authoritarian regimes. Based on the case study of the Serbian Parliament, this paper traces how the quality of parliamentary discourse evolves across several parliamentary legislatures which correlate with the regime transformation from liberal/electoral democracy to electoral autocracy (2008-2024), characterized by systemic undermining of parliamentary democracy and heavy socio-political polarization. The paper focuses on a comprehensive analysis of parliamentary transcripts in line with the critical discourse analysis and Discourse Quality Index approach to examine the extent to which the parliamentary plenary in competitive authoritarianism serves as a place of deliberation, or rather anti-deliberation. Building upon the notion of deliberation as communication that resides upon justified arguments, mutual respect and debates on the common good with transformative potential for interlocutors' relations, the paper seeks to improve our understanding on how the deliberative ideals are being upheld or violated by the MPs in the context of autocratization, and determine any patterns in regard to the topics discussed in the speeches of the MPs, as well as to MPs' party affiliations, education levels and gender. By analyzing the quality of plenary debates, rhetorical strategies, and dominant narratives within the Serbian parliament, the chapter examines how the quality of parliamentary discourse changes (including increased populist rhetoric, presidentialization of politics in the plenary speeches of the MPs, polarization within the debates, delegitimization of opposition voices, and selective framing of legislative issues), reflecting broader autocratization tendencies. Along these lines, this paper aims to deepen our understanding of violations of deliberative ideals in parliamentary discourse by exploring the extent to which (anti-)deliberation in parliamentary debates contributes to further undermining of the deliberative role of the Parliament, as well as the role and reputation of MPs, in a competitive authoritarian regime.

PANEL 18 DELIBERATIVE COMMUNICATION WITHOUT DEMOCRACY

Saturday 19 September, 14.00–15.30, Floor VI

Deliberating Reconciliation: A National Citizens' Assembly on Dealing with the Past in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Damir Kapidžić

University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

damir.kapidzic@fpn.unsa.ba

Citizens' assemblies have been used to address difficult policy questions and constitutional change, as well as more routine issues, including in challenging and post-conflict contexts. At the same time, various forms of deliberation have played an important role in interpersonal reconciliation. However, policy-shaping deliberative instruments have so far not been applied to inform reconciliation policy in post-conflict settings. This paper examines the first national citizens' assembly on reconciliation, held in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2026. Thirty years after the end of the war, Bosnia and Herzegovina still lacks institutionalized policies aimed at reconciliation and dealing with the past. Meanwhile, an entire generation has grown up exposed to divergent narratives of the conflict, responsibility, and victimhood. Drawing on pre- and post-assembly surveys and pre- and post-interviews with participants, this paper assesses the impact of deliberation on individual attitudes. This analysis is complemented by process tracing and interviews with decision-makers to examine whether and how deliberation contributed to the initiation of reconciliation-focused policies under conditions of persistent political gridlock. The findings contribute to broader debates on the capacity of deliberative processes to engage with traumatic pasts, including questions of memorialization and reconciliation policy.

PANEL 18 DELIBERATIVE COMMUNICATION WITHOUT DEMOCRACY

Saturday 19 September, 14.00–15.30, Floor VI

From Armed Conflicts to Online Friendships: The Role of TikTok in Bottom-Up Deliberative Reconciliation in Former Yugoslavia

Ivana Stepanović

Institute of Advanced Studies Kőszeg, Hungary

ivana.stepanovic@iask.hu

This paper examines how social media have become unexpected sites of bottom-up reconciliation in the former Yugoslavia. Drawing on digital ethnography and narrative analysis of TikTok conversations from 2023 to 2025, the paper investigates how ordinary users from across the former Yugoslav republics created transnational friendships and engaged in dialogues about the wars of the 1990s, producing reconciliatory narratives through an interplay of deliberation and anti-deliberation. These conversations represent a form of grassroots transitional justice that operates outside formal institutional frameworks. The paper then examines how these discussions have continued and transformed in the context of the transnational spread of youth-led anti-corruption protests across the region. The paper traces how the reconciliatory narratives provided a foundation for a new kind of cross-ethnic alliance, one oriented around shared civic demands for justice. The paper explores the tension between deliberation and anti-deliberation, where nationalist and pro-government counter-narratives competed with civic reconciliatory voices for visibility and legitimacy within algorithmically mediated environments. It argues that social media narratives on transnational solidarity and non-ethnic alliances against corruption in the region mark a shift from memory-based to values-based reconciliation that represents an important development in bottom-up peacebuilding. This raises broader questions about how digital platforms, despite their commercial logics, blur the borderline between private and public, and anti-deliberative tendencies can catalyze new forms of transnational civic identity in post-conflict societies.

PANEL 18 DELIBERATIVE COMMUNICATION WITHOUT DEMOCRACY

Saturday 19 September, 14.00–15.30, Floor VI

**Social Movements in Deeply Divided Societies:
Toward a Processual Approach**

Chiara Milan*

Scuola Normale Superiore, Italy
chiara.milan@sns.it

Lorenzo Bosi

Scuola Normale Superiore, Italy

**presenting/corresponding author*

In an age marked by resurgent polarization, the notion of “deeply divided societies” is regaining analytical relevance beyond its traditional association with post-conflict or ethnically segmented states. Contemporary democracies appear in fact traversed by profound faultiness of ethnic, ideological, cultural and epistemological nature. Against this backdrop, the notion of “deeply divided societies” offers a valuable analytical lens through which to interpret both the origins of these divisions and the ways in which they are articulated, institutionalized, and potentially accommodated. A social movement perspective, however, can provide a complementary contribution: it illuminates how these divides can be reimagined, reconfigured and negotiated from below. We hence propose to study deeply divided societies through the analytical lenses of social movement studies, which allows for a more dynamic understanding of social boundaries, their reproduction, and their potential transformation from below through contentious collective action. Building on the intersection between social movements scholarship and deeply divided societies studies, we aim to offer an innovative and comprehensive typology of social movements in deeply divided societies. We contend that the limited efforts made so far to classify social movements in deeply divided societies remain unsatisfactory. We thus propose a new typology to classify social movements in deeply divided societies. While acknowledging that ethnic cleavages have historically been the most salient, our typology seeks to be adaptable to societies traversed by different types of cleavages. By adopting a processual approach, we conceptualize identities (including but not limited to ethnic ones) in relational and processual terms, that is, as created and maintained through social interaction – and, therefore, subjected to change over time.

PANEL 19 NATIONALISM AND THE FAR-RIGHT

Saturday 19 September, 15.45–17.15, Floor I

Holocaust Memory in the Context of Contemporary Hungarian Nationalist Identity Politics

Richard Papp

Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary

pappriki@gmail.com

Eighty years have passed since the deportations of Jews in Hungary. Meanwhile, there has been no collective confrontation with the memory of the Shoah. In my paper, I will analyze this problem from the perspective of today's official, government-directed identity and memory policy strategies and narratives in Hungary, as well as their nationalist mythical-cultural memory patterns. The ideology of today's Hungarian government is based on modern Hungarian nationalist myths. In these, Hungarian national identity is based on the myths of both the "defender of Europe" and its "victim." In this essentialized ideology, the "Hungarian destiny" is presented as one that "protects" Europe "even though Europe has repeatedly betrayed" the country and the "values of the Hungarian nation". This is linked to the Hungarian Fundamental Law, in practice functioning as the constitution, promulgated in 2011, which states that the country's sovereignty ceased to exist in the decades between the German occupation in 1944 and the regime change in 1990, and therefore the Hungarian state cannot be held directly responsible for the horrors of the Shoah. All this can be traced in the narratives of official Holocaust commemorations and in the memorials built during the current Hungarian government's terms. The analysis of these narratives is also important because they feature prominently in the interviews that I recorded during my five-year cultural anthropological research project examining local memories of the Holocaust. Thus, I will address the following questions in my presentation: How does contemporary Hungarian memory politics perpetuate the forgetting of the Holocaust and the lack of social dialogue about it? What narratives exist in Hungarian identity and memory politics that conceal Hungarian complicity and shift historical responsibility onto others? How do these narratives affect everyday social discourse and local memories? Do different memory narratives and memory activism exist in Hungarian society, and if so, are they given a voice in comparison to the state narratives? I will attempt to answer these questions by analysing the results of the Visegrad Fund - Transgenerational Holocaust Memory in Central Europe 2022-2024 research project that I led, as well as based on my ongoing cultural

anthropological research in Hungary. Inextricably linked to these, I will interpret the social context and patterns of memory politics that characterise and shape the atmosphere of Holocaust remembrance in contemporary Hungary.

PANEL 19 NATIONALISM AND THE FAR-RIGHT

Saturday 19 September, 15.45–17.15, Floor I

Farewell to Liberal Universalism: Three Contemporary Wars and the Mainstreaming of Czech Soft Nationalism

Zora Hesová

Charles University, Czechia

zora.hesova@ff.cuni.cz

The Czech Republic has long been considered the liberal exception in Central Europe, resisting nationalist-conservative populism until Andrej Babiš's 2025 electoral victory and subsequent coalition with the far right. However, this reading misses a crucial dynamic: the illiberal, nationalist turn may have been initiated by populist outsiders, but it was also incrementally normalized by the liberal-conservative mainstream itself between 2018 and 2025. This paper argues that the Fiala government's liberal-conservative coalition (2021-2025) abandoned core liberal universalist principles well before the populist electoral breakthrough, adopting what I term "soft nationalism"—a civilizational and selective rights framework that maintains liberal rhetoric while rejecting universal human rights commitments. Through discourse analysis of parliamentary debates, government statements, and media framing around three critical conflicts—the culture wars over the Istanbul Convention and equal marriage (2018-2025), the war in Ukraine (2022-), and the war in Gaza (2023-)—I demonstrate how mainstream actors incrementally normalized exclusionary and identitarian frameworks that radical right parties later amplified. The culture wars reveal the rejection of gender equality and LGBTQ rights as "Western impositions" threatening Czech sovereignty. Ukraine support, while genuine, was framed through civilizational identitarianism rather than universal humanitarian principles, contrasting sharply with Czech hostility toward 2015 Middle Eastern refugees. The Gaza conflict exposed the complete abandonment of Václav Havel's human rights-based foreign policy doctrine, with the government prioritizing geopolitical alignment over humanitarian and legal concerns. Drawing on recent literature on illiberalism, radical right mainstreaming, and critical liberalism studies (Mondon & Winter 2024; Krzyżanowski et al. 2025; Brown et al. 2023), this paper reframes the Czech case through the lens of the "radicalized mainstream" (Ebner 2023; Thiele et al. 2024). Rather than asking how populists eroded liberal democracy, I examine how liberal-conservative elites themselves transformed liberalism into a negative political identity—defined primarily through opposition to Russia, Islam, and "gender ideology" rath-

er than positive commitment to universal rights or at least to the maintenance of a universalist consensus. This mainstreaming of selective universalism and civilizational thinking created the discursive conditions that enabled more radical nationalist mobilization. The Czech case reveals a distinct reconfiguration of national self-understanding as promoted both by the political mainstream and the populist right: not through frontal assault by populist outsiders (the Hungarian/Polish model), but through incremental normalization by ostensibly liberal defenders of democracy. Understanding this process challenges simplistic narratives that locate illiberalism solely with populist challengers and reveals the fragility of liberal universalism when confronted with economic crisis and geopolitical realignment. The contribution will make a special case for the Czech “soft” national-conservatism and its redefinition of liberalism as a (negative) political identity and contribute to the understanding of illiberal mainstreaming and the relationship between liberalism and nationalism.

PANEL 19 NATIONALISM AND THE FAR-RIGHT

Saturday 19 September, 15.45–17.15, Floor I

Civil Society as a Mode of Hybrid Governance in Serbia

Alexandra Karppi

King's College London, UK

alexandra.karppi@gmail.com

Narodne Patrole (“People’s Patrols”) was founded in 2020 as a civic association aimed at protecting Serbian citizens from migrants, often resorting to violent street actions. The group became known for its vaccine skepticism, anti-EU rhetoric, and exclusionary nationalism. Narodne Patrole never faced prosecution for its attacks, seeming to enjoy preferential treatment from the Serbian government. Its members appeared in pro-government media and rallies organized in support of the ruling party. Yet, to call it captured by the state ignores the group’s contentious activities, such as participation in ongoing student-led protests or rallies against the government’s decisions on lithium mining. Moreover, the group heavily criticizes the ruling party’s “weak” stance on Kosovo and close relations with the EU online and in fringe media. This puzzling relationship raises important questions about whether and how these actors are embedded in the country’s power structures, what functions they serve in this competitive authoritarian regime, and whether these roles shift when the regime appears to be under threat. Existing scholarship provides few answers, having long viewed civil society as a vehicle for democratization, state-building, and post-conflict reconciliation, otherwise sidelining civic groups aligned with the state as “GONGOs” (government-organized non-governmental organizations) with little analytical weight. Groups like Narodne Patrole therefore remain under-theorized, their positions in different governance systems poorly understood. Should these actors be read as autonomous, contentious activists or loyal mercenaries of the state? Do their roles shift over time, and if so, under what conditions do they change? This theory-building paper argues that “uncivil society” (Kopecky and Mudde 2003) constitutes an understudied mechanism of hybrid rule, with the analytical potential to explain how competitive authoritarian regimes like Serbia manage public dissent and extend their rule. Using process tracing and drawing from within-case studies in Serbia, I posit that uncivil society is instrumentalized by President Aleksandar Vučić’s government to diffuse accountability for governance failures and covert repression, legitimize the regime at home and abroad, and retain stability in times of crisis. In advancing this theoretical framework, the paper speaks directly to

PANEL 19 NATIONALISM AND THE FAR-RIGHT

Saturday 19 September, 15.45–17.15, Floor I

Flags, Chants, and Belonging: Football Fandom and Nationalism in Serbia and North Macedonia

Ivan Stefanovski*

Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, North Macedonia

ivan.stefanovski@isppi.ukim.edu.mk

Dimitar Nikolovski

Eurothink Center for European Strategies, North Macedonia

Astrea Nikolovska

Czech Academy of Sciences, Czechia

**presenting/corresponding author*

Nationalism and identity scholarship largely agree that sport is a part of popular culture that contributes to the theoretical conceptualization of the nation as an “imagined community” (Anderson 1991). Scholars from different disciplinary backgrounds are in accord that sport plays a strong social, cultural and political role in (re)producing collective identities on multiple societal levels (Brentin & Cooley 2015). Arguably, football as the most popular sport in the Western Balkans plays a prominent social and cultural role. Football stadiums are arenas in which collective identities, social boundaries, and political ideologies are embodied, performed and contested. In the Western Balkans, football fan cultures have played a particularly visible role in articulating nationalist narratives and negotiating legacies of socialism, war and post-socialist transformation (Brentin 2015, Brentin 2016). This paper offers a comparative analysis of two prominent football fan groups in the Balkans – Delije, supporters of Red Star Belgrade in Serbia, and Komiti, supporters of FK Vardar in Skopje, North Macedonia, examining how their practices reflect and construct nationalist and exclusionary ideologies. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with rank-and-file supporters and a qualitative analysis of publicly available data, including social media content, internet forums, visual symbolism, chants, and choreographed performances, the paper focuses on the verbal and nonverbal dimensions of football fandom. It analyzes how embodied practices such as chanting, display of banners, collective movement, and ritualized presence in public space function as vehicles for nationalist expression and boundary-making. Particular attention is paid to the symbolic repertoires mobilized by each

ROUNDTABLE 02 LEGACIES AND MEANINGS OF ANTIFASCISM IN YUGOSLAVIA AND BEYOND

Saturday 19 September, 15.45–17.15, Floor IV

MODERATOR:

Sven Milekić

University of Rijeka, Croatia

sven.milekic@uniri.hr

PARTICIPANTS:

Vjeran Pavlaković

University of Rijeka, Croatia

vjeranp@gmail.com

Eric Ušić

University of Rijeka, Croatia

usic.eric@gmail.com

Jelena Djureinović

University of Vienna, Austria

djureinovicjelena@gmail.com

Nikolina Židek

IE University Madrid, Spain

nizidek@gmail.com

The roundtable brings together different perspectives on the history and memory of antifascism in Yugoslavia and the post-Yugoslav space, focusing on the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War and their legacies. The Spanish Civil War, as the pivotal event in the global history of the struggle against fascism, involved around 2000 Yugoslav volunteers. Yugoslav communists understood the Spanish Civil War as a lesson for the later revolution, and the Spanish volunteers would become key actors in the uprising against Axis occupation that began in 1941 and in the socialist state that emerged from it. The People's Liberation War, as the antifascist struggle and socialist revolution is usually referred to, was the birthplace of socialist Yugoslavia as well as its main source of legitimacy. The roundtable explores legacies and meanings of these events that shaped Yugoslav society after 1945 and remain relevant today, looking at ideas and practices of international solidarity, visible traces and memoryscapes. Bringing together local, regional and international scales, the

roundtable discusses: the memory of the Yugoslav participation in the Spanish Civil War in Rijeka, the antifascist wartime graffiti in the Northern Adriatic, the Yugoslav solidarity with the Spanish Republic in exile and the connections between the antifascist past and the anti-colonial struggles in Africa.

BOOK PANEL 3 “РУССКИЙ МИР” AND “SRPSKI SVET”: IDEAS, PROJECTS, WARS

Saturday 19 September, 15.45–17.15, Floor VI

Armina Galijas, Srednja Europa, Zagreb, 2026

MODERATOR:

Florian Bieber

University of Graz, Austria

florian.bieber@uni-graz.at

PARTICIPANTS:

Radina Vučetić

University of Belgrade, Serbia

rvucetic@gmail.com

Vedran Džihic

Austrian Institute for International Affairs / University of Vienna, Austria

vedran.dzihic@univie.ac.at

Siniša Malešević

University College Dublin, Ireland

sinisa.malesevic@ucd.ie

Armina Galijaš

University of Graz, Austria

armina.galijas@uni-graz.at

This book panel focuses on a recently published monograph (2026) that offers a well-founded comparative analysis of Russian and Serbian nationalist and hegemonic discourses, particularly the ideological formations of the “Russian World” (Russkiy mir) and the “Serbian World” (Srpski svet). The interdisciplinary, historically grounded study demonstrates how these discourses construct political legitimacy, mobilize collective identities, and respond to crises ranging from threats to democratic and social orders to war and territorial conflict. Drawing parallels between the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s and Russia’s war against Ukraine since 2022, the monograph illustrates how similar narrative structures, historical justifications, and affective mobilizations recur in different temporal and geopolitical contexts. The book uses history as an analytical tool to identify recurring structures of nationalist and imperial argumentation and to better understand how political actors operate within these structures. The study further examines whether “Russkiy mir” and “Srpski svet” should

be understood as ideas, political concepts, or concrete projects, arguing that these formations move fluidly between different “states” rather than following a linear development. By situating both cases within broader theoretical debates on empire, nationalism, and hybrid political orders, the book challenges rigid distinctions between imperial and national projects and demonstrates how neo-imperial and ethno-national logics frequently overlap and reinforce each other in practice. The panel also explores forms of resistance to and rejection of these hegemonic ideologies. Instead of viewing them as monolithic or unquestioned, it examines how intellectuals, civil society actors, and competing political movements develop counter-narratives that challenge hegemonic claims and articulate alternative visions of belonging and political order. Overall, the panel contributes to the ongoing debates on nationalism, neo-imperialism, and the instrumentalization of history. The book offers an original and timely contribution that is relevant not only to historians, sociologists, and political scientists, but also to a broader audience seeking a deeper understanding of current ideological conflicts and their far-reaching implications in Europe and beyond.

KEYNOTE LECTURE

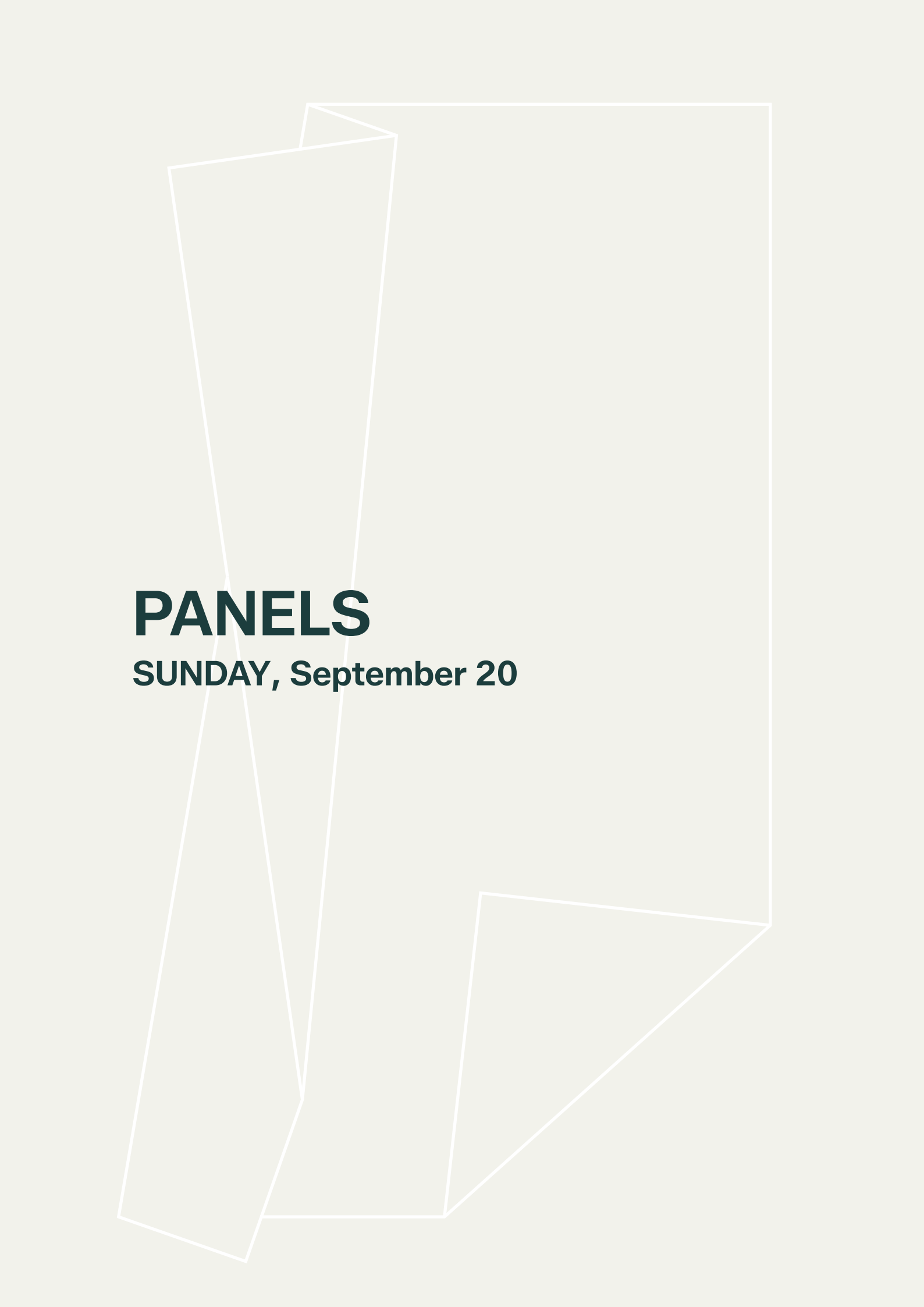
Saturday 19 September, 17.30–19.00, Floor VI

Nationalisms, Wars, and Micro-Solidarities

Siniša Malešević

University College Dublin, Ireland

Scholars often point to the willingness of ordinary people to die for their nation in interstate wars as evidence of the strength of nationalism. Nationhood is thus treated as the dominant form of collective solidarity. My presentation challenges this interpretation by distinguishing sharply between group solidarity and the ideological power of nationalism. It examines the social mechanisms through which micro-level bonds become coherent narratives of national solidarity. I argue that solidarities formed through prolonged face-to-face interaction are embedded within social organisations and translated into nationalist terms. In this process, deep attachments to immediate groups come to be represented as expressions of national solidarity. Direct experience of war does not, therefore, automatically generate strong bonds of national solidarity. Rather, nationalist mobilisation depends on sustained coercive-organisational, ideological, and micro-interactional work. This work reframes and reproduces existing forms of attachment. Individuals often fight primarily from moral obligation and emotional attachment to their immediate social groups, rather than from an abstract commitment to the nation. Yet nationalism remains central to violent conflict. Nationalist ideas and practices permeate the organisational and ideological structures through which local solidarities are constituted and mobilised. The presentation therefore shifts attention from the battlefield to civilian institutions and everyday social domains where nationalism is generated, reproduced, and normalised.



PANELS

SUNDAY, September 20

PANEL 20 TURKISH IDENTITY IN TURKEY AND BEYOND

Sunday 20 September, 08.45–10.15, Floor I

Constructing the Self through the Other: Mimetic Rivalry on the Greek Perception in Turkish Society

Evren Ahmet Demir

Ankara University, Turkey

eademir@ankara.edu.tr

This paper examines how the Greek image functions as a constitutive element in the formation of Turkish national identity. The main argument is that the Greek figure in Turkish collective imagination operates as a structurally necessary “other”, the one through which Turkish national subjectivity is produced and sustained. Following the First World War and a war of national independence fought largely against Greek forces, the newly established Republic of Turkey took on the project of nation-state and national identity building as its central agenda throughout the 1920s and 1930s. A careful reading of the century-long relationship between the Turkish and Greek nation-states reveals that the period of reconciliation and rapprochement immediately following the war was, paradoxically, the era of their closest relations. This rapprochement would gradually fade during the Cold War, ultimately giving way to heightened tensions and militarized conflicts. At this juncture, the mutually negative, hostile, and malevolent images inherited from the wartime period, images that had never ceased to overshadow the positive representations forged during the years of reconciliation, were once again recalled and rendered permanent. A crucial reason for this outcome is that the boundary separating “us” from “them” carries a profoundly generative character that goes well beyond a merely descriptive demarcation of differences. This study therefore seeks to explain the mediations through which affect toward a proximate neighboring nation is constituted. The paper operates at the intersection of Freud’s “narcissism of minor differences” and Girard’s “mimetic rivalry”, arguing that the very proximity and similarities -geographical and cultural- intensify the need for differentiation. In order to test this framework empirically, the paper draws on data from approximately 40 semi-structured interviews conducted in two cities: İzmir, a city that hosted a significant Greek presence for centuries, is geographically close to Greece, and experienced Greek occupation between 1919 and 1922; and Ankara, the capital of the Republic, which has no history of Greek occupation and serves as the administrative center of the state. Through this fieldwork, the study attempts to observe both the

explanatory purchase of the theoretical framework in making sense of the nature of conflict and hostility, and the ways in which geographic proximity and the experience of occupation have shaped and transformed national memory and affective dispositions toward the Other.

PANEL 20 TURKISH IDENTITY IN TURKEY AND BEYOND

Sunday 20 September, 08.45–10.15, Floor I

Greek and Turkish Everyday Nationalisms in Divided Cyprus

Özker Kocadal

Cyprus International University, Cyprus

ozker.k@gmail.com

This paper analyzes the operation of everyday nationalisms in divided Cyprus, focusing on the routinized reproduction of Greek nationalism and Turkish nationalism among Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities. Rather than centering elite negotiations or moments of crisis, the study examines how national belonging is subtly and continuously reproduced through mundane practices embedded in daily life on both sides of the island's dividing line. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork, as well as analysis of school textbooks, media discourse, and commemorative rituals, the paper demonstrates how national identity is sustained less through overt mobilization than through routine practices and habitual forms of "flagging." These include the omnipresence of Greek and Turkish flags in public space; the naming of streets, schools, and institutions after national heroes; the structuring of public holidays around mainland-centered historical narratives; and educational curricula that foreground Hellenic or Turkish national histories. Such practices embed the island's political division into everyday spatial and symbolic orders, rendering it ordinary and socially normalized. The analysis shows that everyday nationalism in Cyprus operates through a dual orientation. Inwardly, it consolidates communal cohesion and reproduces narratives of collective suffering, sacrifice, and entitlement. Outwardly, it sustains symbolic and affective attachment to the respective "motherlands," positioning Greece and Turkey as cultural and historical anchors. In this sense, everyday nationalism exceeds the territorial boundaries of the island, situating local identity within broader transnational imaginaries. At the same time, these routinized national frameworks coexist with forms of pragmatic coexistence. Since the partial opening of checkpoints in 2003, cross-communal mobility, trade, and social encounters have complicated rigid narratives of separation. Yet even these interactions are filtered through national lenses, often reinforcing rather than dissolving symbolic boundaries. The paper argues that the persistence of division cannot be understood solely as the outcome of diplomatic deadlock or geopolitical interests. Instead, it is continually reproduced through subtle, repetitive

practices that naturalize territorial separation, moralize historical memory, and normalize alignment with external nation-states. By foregrounding the micro-politics of everyday life, this study contributes to scholarship on nationalism and conflict transformation, demonstrating how the division in Cyprus is sustained through ordinary social routines. Understanding these everyday mechanisms is crucial for assessing both the intractability of partition and the potential of reunification.

PANEL 20 TURKISH IDENTITY IN TURKEY AND BEYOND

Sunday 20 September, 08.45–10.15, Floor I

External Legitimacy vs. Internal Agency in Northern Cyprus

Nur Çetiner

Istanbul Kültür University, Turkey

nrctnr@gmail.com

The Turkish Cypriot national identity has long been framed through a binary of international isolation and asymmetric dependency on Turkey. However, recent developments reveal a more complex struggle that transcends traditional nationalist rhetoric. This paper analyzes the emerging conflict between Turkey's quest for the external legitimacy of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) and the Turkish Cypriot leadership's pursuit of internal agency and functional autonomy. Crucial to this analysis is the recent election of Tufan Erhürman as a President of the TRNC in October 2025. His victory underscored the Turkish Cypriot electorate's clear democratic preference for a leadership committed to autonomy, marking a significant departure from the candidate openly supported by Ankara. Further, this struggle for agency is deeply rooted in the concept of ontological security, as the Turkish Cypriot community seeks to maintain a sense of self amidst conflicting external pressures. Beyond physical or economic survival, the insistence on local autonomy represents a vital effort to protect the continuity of a distinct Turkish Cypriot identity against the risk of ideological and institutional assimilation. The study utilizes a comparative discourse analysis of two pivotal moments: President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's 2025 UN General Assembly call for the recognition of the TRNC, and President Tufan Erhürman's "First 100 Days" policy manifesto. While Erdoğan's diplomacy focuses on achieving a top-down, state-centric status, Erhürman's vision, which is documented in his "100 Days" booklet, emphasizes a bottom-up approach centered on the rights, international legal subjectivity, and institutional autonomy of the Turkish Cypriot people. Incorporating a neoliberal critique, the paper further examines how infrastructure politics serves as a tool for deepening dependency. By analyzing the recent Fiber Optic Infrastructure Protocol and the subsequent protests in Northern Cyprus, this study argues that such protocols represent a form of governance through infrastructure that often undermines local agency. Similar to the logic of the earlier Water Supply Project, these neoliberal impositions create a paradox: while Ankara calls for the political "sovereignty" of the TRNC on the

global stage, it simultaneously curtails the island's economic and technological autonomy through bilateral protocols. In conclusion, the research asserts that the reconfiguration of Turkish Cypriot identity is no longer solely a reaction to the Greek Cypriots but a sophisticated negotiation with the "Protector" (Turkey). The tension between being a "recognized state" (external status) and a "sovereign people" (internal agency) forms the new epicenter of political contestation in Northern Cyprus.

PANEL 20 TURKISH IDENTITY IN TURKEY AND BEYOND

Sunday 20 September, 08.45–10.15, Floor I

Becoming a Turk: Turkicising Narratives in Hungary under the Orbán Era

Zoltán Egeresi

Ludovika University of Public Service / University of Pécs, Hungary
egeresi.zoltan@uni-nke.hu

This paper investigates the emergence and consolidation of “Turkicising” narratives in Hungary during the era of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, with a primary focus on discourse analysis. Rather than approaching the phenomenon solely through the lens of foreign policy, the study emphasizes how political language, symbolic references, and identity constructions have contributed to reshaping perceptions of Hungarian cultural and geopolitical belonging. The analysis centers on speeches, interviews, and public statements by Viktor Orbán, identifying recurring motifs that construct a narrative of historical and cultural affinity with the Turkic world. The paper argues that these narratives are not incidental but form a coherent discursive framework that repositions Hungary as part of a broader Eastern, and specifically Turkic, civilizational space. Key themes include the reinterpretation of Hungarian origins, the valorization of steppe heritage, and the contrast between a dynamic “East” and a declining “West.” Such rhetoric serves both domestic and international purposes: it legitimizes alternative geopolitical orientations while also fostering a distinct national identity that challenges dominant Western-centric paradigms. Within this discursive context, Hungary’s accession to the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) as an observer member in 2018 is examined not primarily as a foreign policy shift, but as a symbolic and narrative resource. Government communication frames this membership as a “return” to historical roots, reinforcing claims of cultural kinship. Hungary’s active participation in OTS initiatives and the establishment (2019) of a Representative Office further amplify these narratives, embedding them in both institutional and communicative practices. Importantly, this affiliation has also facilitated closer relations with other Turkic states beyond Turkey, which are likewise framed through the language of shared heritage. The study also explores the interaction between official discourse and societal currents, particularly the presence of neo-Turanist movements in Hungary. While not central actors in policymaking, these groups contribute to the circulation and normalization of Turkic identity narratives through cultural events, media, and grassroots

activism. Their discourses often parallel and, at times, reinforce governmental rhetoric, suggesting a mutually constitutive relationship between state and society in the production of these narratives. By foregrounding discourse analysis, the paper demonstrates that the “Turkicisation” of Hungary is best understood as a process of narrative construction. It reflects a broader attempt to redefine national identity and Hungary’s imagined place in the world, where language, symbolism, and historical reinterpretation play a more नरिणant role than material policy shifts alone.

**PANEL 21 LABOR MIGRATION AND CONDITIONAL INCLUSION IN
SOUTHEAST EUROPE**

Sunday 20 September, 08.45–10.15, Floor IV

**Labour Shortages, New Migration, and the Shifting
Boundaries of Belonging in Post-Yugoslavia**

Tamara Pavasović Trošt

University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

tamara.trost@ef.uni-lj.si

This paper examines how labor shortages and emerging immigration regimes are reshaping social boundaries across the post-Yugoslav region. Once predominantly understood as migrant-sending societies, countries such as Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro are increasingly dependent on foreign labor due to demographic decline, emigration, and structural labor shortages. Drawing on comparative analysis of migration governance, public discourse, and labor-market restructuring, the paper explores how the arrival of new migrant populations is transforming relations toward existing minorities and redefining hierarchies of belonging in Southeast Europe. Building on scholarship on differential inclusion, everyday bordering, and boundary-making, the paper argues that labor migration produces new forms of conditional inclusion in which migrants are incorporated economically while remaining socially and politically marginalized. The analysis pays particular attention to how states distinguish between culturally proximate migrants from the post-Yugoslav space and newly racialized workers from Asia, the Middle East, and Africa (typically referred to as migrants from “third countries”), revealing shifting boundaries between insiders, tolerated outsiders, and undesirable others. The paper further compares countries with more established labor-immigration systems, particularly Croatia, to states such as Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina that until recently primarily experienced emigration. While Croatia has developed more institutionalized mechanisms for labor recruitment and migrant management, many practices continue to rely on temporariness, precarity, and restricted social inclusion. In contrast, newer receiving states display institutional improvisation and governance gaps that intensify migrants’ vulnerability. The paper contributes to debates on post-socialist nationalism, migration governance, and the reconfiguration of belonging beyond the Western European core.

**PANEL 21 LABOR MIGRATION AND CONDITIONAL INCLUSION IN
SOUTHEAST EUROPE**

Sunday 20 September, 08.45–10.15, Floor IV

Reconfiguring the Boundaries of Belonging in Contexts of Demographic Decline and Labour-Migration Regimes

Marija Pavicevic

Université Sorbonne Paris Nord, France

pavicevic_marija@yahoo.com

This article examines how labor migration to countries historically categorized as “migrant- sending” is reconfiguring boundaries of belonging, citizenship, and social inclusion in contexts of demographic decline and labor shortages. Focusing on Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Montenegro, the article addresses three interrelated research questions: (1) how emerging labour-migration regimes structure inclusion and exclusion in these states; (2) how migrants are hierarchised through legal frameworks and political discourses of “cultural proximity”; and (3) what these transformations reveal about the resilience and limits of nation-building narratives under conditions of economic dependency on foreign labour. Conceptually, the article draws on scholarship on migration regimes and boundary-making (Favell 2022; Mezzadra and Neilson 2013; Brubaker 2017), engaging with debates on the instability of the sending/receiving country dichotomy (de Haas 2010; Skeldon 2012) and the racialization and stratification of migrant labor beyond traditional Western destination states (Anderson 2013; Shachar 2020). It advances the concept of labor-shortage migration regimes to capture the coexistence of economic openness and socio-political closure in semi- peripheral, post-socialist contexts. Empirically, the article adopts a comparative qualitative research design combining policy analysis, labor market data, and 45 semi-structured interviews conducted between 2015 and 2024 with migrant workers from Asia, the Middle East, and neighboring regions, as well as state officials, employers, trade union representatives, and local community actors. The analysis focuses on work permit regimes, sector-specific recruitment practices, access to housing and welfare, and pathways to long-term residence and citizenship. The findings demonstrate that while demographic decline and labor shortages have transformed Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Montenegro into emerging migrant destinations, state responses remain characterized by temporary, segmented, and highly stratified forms of inclusion. Migrants are differentially positioned along axes of nationality, religion, race, and perceived cultural fa-

miliarity, producing hierarchies of “desirable,” “familiar,” and racialized “other” workers. Limited access to social rights and long-term legal security reinforces migrants’ precarity and constrains their incorporation into local societies. The article argues that these regimes reveal a structural paradox: economic reliance on migrant labor coexists with political imaginaries that frame diversity as provisional, undesirable, or threatening. By foregrounding labor migration to demographically declining post-socialist societies, the article contributes to migration studies debates on regime transformation, racialization beyond the Global North, and the reconfiguration of belonging under conditions of demographic and economic restructuring.

**PANEL 21 LABOR MIGRATION AND CONDITIONAL INCLUSION IN
SOUTHEAST EUROPE**

Sunday 20 September, 08.45–10.15, Floor IV

Language Proficiency and the Deskillling of Migrant Care Workers in Slovenia

Antonija Todić

Institute for Ethnic Studies, Slovenia

antonia.todic@gmail.com

Slovenia, a post-socialist state marked by demographic aging, increasingly relies on migrant workers to sustain its eldercare sector. However, due to its shifting position as a country of both emigration and immigration, national policies remain maladapted to this reality. This article examines the experiences of migrant care workers to answer the question of how language proficiency requirements function as mechanisms of differential inclusion that shape the professional trajectories and experiences of migrant care workers in Slovenia's eldercare sector. Drawing on May's (2023) conceptualization of linguistic racism, I examine how formal language requirements operate as structural gatekeeping mechanisms that are decoupled from actual communicative competence. In Slovenia's post-Yugoslavian context, ethnic hierarchies intersect with EU mobility regimes to produce distinctive patterns of labor market segmentation, where language certification serves to legitimate the exclusion of certain migrant groups from formal employment regardless of their functional language abilities or professional qualifications. The article is based on 11 biographical narrative interviews with migrant care workers and 6 expert interviews conducted between 2022 and 2023 in Slovenia. The care workers interviewed include women aged 25-76 from Serbia, Kosovo, Croatia, Ukraine, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and North Macedonia who migrated to Slovenia between 1984 and 2016, some of whom have foreign citizenship. They work across formal institutional care, formal home care, and informal care arrangements, holding positions ranging from nursing assistants and personal assistants to cleaners and informal caregivers. Participants were recruited through personal networks and snowball sampling from expert interviews. The six expert interviews included representatives from public and private care institutions (directors, HR managers), a cultural mediator, an NGO representative working on migrant workers' rights, and a government official. These interviews provided institutional perspectives on language requirements and hiring practices. To complement interview data, policy documents were also

examined, especially the recent Slovenian strategies on migration (2024) and integration of non-EU nationals (2023). Findings reveal three ways in which language requirements produce differential inclusion. First, certification requirements hinder skills recognition: women with professional credentials work below their skill level because they cannot pass language tests despite demonstrating functional workplace communication. Second, the certification pathway is structurally inaccessible to those already employed in care, since shift work schedules, caregiving responsibilities, and limited free course hours create barriers to passing the required tests. Third, policy categories operate independently of linguistic reality, as EU citizenship status determines access to state-funded language courses regardless of actual need, even though speakers from EU and non-EU post-Yugoslav countries share similar linguistic relationships to Slovenian. Meanwhile, integration and migration strategies frame language as an individual deficit of “vulnerable” migrant women rather than acknowledging the systemic production of informality through inaccessible certification. The case of Slovenia demonstrates how the legacy of Yugoslavia creates particular hierarchies among migrant care workers that differ from standard EU/non-EU distinctions. It shows how apparently neutral language policies become sites of contestation in societies unprepared for their new role as receiving countries. Unlike Western European states with colonial pasts and globally taught languages, post-socialist states on Europe’s semi-periphery produce distinct mechanisms of linguistic exclusion.

**PANEL 21 LABOR MIGRATION AND CONDITIONAL INCLUSION IN
SOUTHEAST EUROPE**

Sunday 20 September, 08.45–10.15, Floor IV

**Do I Belong Here? Investigating the Influences of Skill
Development, Mismatch, and Workplace Justice among
Migrant Workers**

Filip Peovski*

Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, North Macedonia
peovski@eccf.ukim.edu.mk

Bojan Kitanovikj

Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, North Macedonia

Violeta Cvetkoska

Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, North Macedonia

Ljupcho Eftimov

Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, North Macedonia

**presenting/corresponding author*

Confronted with intensifying labor shortages and demographic decline, post-socialist European countries, which have long been defined by outward mobility, are now rapidly becoming destinations for labor migrants (Radu et al., 2026). In these new migration destination contexts, recruitment networks and employer demand often expand faster than migration governance, integration policies, and institutional coordination (Predojević Despić & Lukić, 2024). As a result, we believe this produces ambiguity and uneven regulation that shape labor relations and boundaries of belonging (Barnickel & Beichelt, 2013). Additionally, little is known about how this shift reshapes everyday boundaries of belonging on the ground. Existing labor migration research has largely focused on Western Europe and North America, overlooking how skill (mis)match and justice at work interact in these newer destinations to shape migrants' experiences and longer-term attachment. Addressing this gap, the study's research question examines how opportunities for skill development, perceived skill (mis)match, justice at work, social participation, and discrimination jointly influence migrant workers' sense of belonging in North Macedonia's labor-shortage sectors, as determinants of social participation and integration of migrants at work. This comes at a time when the country is increasingly opening its doors to migrant workers to fill pressing labor market

gaps. Drawing on boundary-making and belonging scholarship and theories of migrant skill formation and (mis)match, we develop and test a model linking migrants' opportunities for skill development (measured with items adapted from Pejtersen et al. (2010)), perceived skill (mis)match (measured with items adapted from Maynard et al. (2006)), justice at work (Pejtersen et al., 2010), social participation (Mars et al., 2009), and experiences of discrimination (Harnois et al., 2019) to their sense of belonging in the host society. Thus, we conceptualize them as outcomes of potential institutional lag, rather than just organizational practices. Using a cross-sectional survey of migrant workers employed in labor-shortage sectors across North Macedonia and structural equation modeling, we examine how fair access to skill development opportunities and adequate skill utilization influence perceived justice, and how these in turn foster migrants' participation in workplace and community life. We expect that higher skill mismatch and perceived discrimination will be associated with lower justice and reduced social participation, thereby undermining feelings of belonging, while meaningful opportunities for skill development will partially offset these negative effects. The findings will inform debates on how new migrant-receiving contexts in post-socialist Europe redraw boundaries between labor market insiders and newcomers and will signal how workplace practices can either reinforce or challenge racialized and hierarchical constructions of migrant labor. By linking micro-level experiences to macro-institutional conditions, the study's originality lies in bringing together skill (mis)match, justice at work, social participation, and discrimination in a single explanatory framework focused on a new destination context, offering conceptual refinement of sustainable labor migration. Additionally, the findings are relevant for migration policymakers and labor authorities, who seek to design fairer, more inclusive labor-migration structures focused on inter-institutional coordination, enforcement capacity, skills recognition, equitable access to training, and mechanisms for safeguarding migrants' voice and protection.

PANEL 22 POPULISM, BACKSLIDING, AND CONTESTED IDENTITIES

Sunday 20 September, 08.45–10.15, Floor VI

Populism, Democracy, Identity: Silent Counter-Revolution of Fallen-Below People in Left-Behind Places

Nikola Ilić

University of Belgrade, Serbia

nikola.ilic@fpm.bg.ac.rs

The aim of this paper is to critically examine the recent wave of populism in relation to contemporary democracy and the underlying drivers of its rise. In the last decade, in many countries, populist actors gained electoral victories or mobilized significant segments of voters. Existing scholarship explains these developments by clustering causal factors in two main categories: economic grievances or cultural backlash. Contrasting this view, the paper argues that a theoretical framework that accounts simultaneously for both material and symbolic issues is needed to better capture the contemporary rise of populism. Although populist discourse is frequently articulated through cultural narratives (predominantly nationalistic and anti-immigration rhetoric), large-N surveys remain insufficient for explaining adequately the rise of populist support and its variations. Therefore, a more differentiated analysis of right-wing populist voters is needed, contrasting strictly “culturalist” voters to “materialist” voters, whose political preferences are rooted in material insecurity, despite voting for right-wing populists. This group of voters is often equaled under predominant cultural explanations, despite the influence of socio-economic causes. For this purpose, the paper uses insights from the “geography of discontent” and “foundational economy” approaches. The former highlights how regional underdevelopment and marginalization (“left-behind places”) generate favorable conditions for populist mobilization, while the latter emphasizes how the growing precarization of both middle- and working-class groups and the struggles to meet foundational goods and services (housing, transport, healthcare, education, etc.) reflects into politics. The focus on the growing support for right-wing populist platforms is a common topic in both approaches. The paper’s contribution is to show how integrating these perspectives with theories of populism and qualitative research enables a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between material grievances and identity politics - how identities are central to the explanation of the rise of populism in contemporary (multiple) crises.

PANEL 22 POPULISM, BACKSLIDING, AND CONTESTED IDENTITIES

Sunday 20 September, 08.45–10.15, Floor VI

From Hungary to the Trump 2.0 White House: The Second Coming of the Orbán Playbook Thus Bringing the Tocquevillian Warning of “Tyranny of the Majority” to Fruition

Nicole R. Stokes

Pennsylvania State University, Abington, US

nks5344@psu.edu

This chapter revisits De Tocqueville’s most famous concept and warning in light of the current political environment and recent authoritarian challenges from the second Trump Administration coupled with heightened populism and polarization. Many U.S. conservatives and Trump allies view Viktor Orbán’s regime in Hungary as a blueprint for “conservative statecraft.” Critics point to similarities between Orbán’s past actions—such as reconfiguring the judiciary and public media and seizing control of higher educational institutions—and the “Project 2025” blueprint associated with Trump’s second term. Despite Trump’s promises and early denials during the presidential campaign, he has already implemented many of the Project 2025 provisions within the first five months of his second term. I argue that Orbán’s and Trump’s respective leadership share several commonalities—their rise to power using nationalist rhetoric heavily steeped in anti-immigrant; anti-domestic minorities and strategic use of othering language; their continued centralization of power vis-à-vis simultaneously isolationist and bullying approaches to regional and global politics and “illiberal” domestic governing philosophies leveraged to suppress any opposition. The rise of authoritarianism in the United States rings eerily familiar to De Tocqueville’s famous warning of the ‘tyranny of the majority’ noting critical flaws in American democracy. Alexis de Tocqueville coined the term to describe the danger in democracies where the majority imposes its will, suppressing dissenting opinions, limiting intellectual freedom, and elevating polarization, leading to an “odious” majority that is difficult to challenge and where the majority’s power can become absolute. De Tocqueville described tyranny as the majority’s interests and opinions dominating the political landscape, repressing minority perspectives and groups and forcing them to conform out of fear of social or professional repercussions. He asserted that tyranny exists not just through laws, but as a “moral or social” pressure where the majority’s opinion dictates prevailing social customs and seeks to limit free thought. De

Tocqueville noted that individuals in democratic societies, focused on their own equality (or, in the case of Maga Trump supporters, focused on perceived scarcity and deprivation), may prioritize security over liberty thus, allowing a tyrannical state to become increasingly centralized, powerful and potentially absolute. Despite this bleak warning, De Tocqueville observed several potential bright spots in American society. De Tocqueville's writings offer potential solutions for tyranny that can strengthen democratic habits and institutions, thereby reducing polarization in the face of these modern challenges.

PANEL 22 POPULISM, BACKSLIDING, AND CONTESTED IDENTITIES

Sunday 20 September, 08.45–10.15, Floor VI

Populism, Democratic Backsliding, and Ethnic Politics: Lessons from Upper Silesia

Nóra Baranyai

Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary

baranyai.nora@krtk.elte.hu

In Poland, populism, democratic backsliding, and ethnic issues have come into focus particularly in the past decade, especially during the Law and Justice (PiS) government (2015–2023). After the 2023 elections, a coalition led by Donald Tusk came to power, promising to restore the system typical of liberal democracies. However, the government's room for maneuver was limited by the specifics of the Polish power structure, the extensive powers of the President of the Republic, and the deep social polarization, which is also reflected in the election results from time to time. There are two ethnoregional groups in Upper Silesia that have been deeply affected by PiS's populist measures and rearguard actions, albeit in different forms. The German community, concentrated in the western part of Upper Silesia, constitutes the largest officially recognized national minority in Poland and has been continuously represented in the lower house of parliament, the Sejm, since the political change in 1990. Although unfavorable demographic trends – namely the decline in the number of the German minority and the gradual weakening of its territorial concentration – have long pointed to the possibility of electoral vulnerability, the complete loss of parliamentary representation in the 2023 elections nevertheless marked a significant and unexpected turning point. The elections were then characterized by an intense competition between the authoritarian-populist Law and Justice party (PiS) and the pro-EU Civic Coalition (KO), which resulted in an unprecedented level of political mobilization that ultimately contributed to the loss of the German minority mandate. Post-1989 censuses indicate that the Silesian community, which is concentrated mainly in the eastern part of Upper Silesia, constitutes Poland's largest minority group, yet the state does not formally recognize Silesians in its Minority Law. Following multiple unsuccessful attempts, and in line with a campaign promise by Donald Tusk prior to the 2023 parliamentary elections, in spring 2024 the Sejm and Senate adopted a bill granting regional language status to Silesian. President Andrzej Duda, representing the opposing political camp, vetoed the legislation, and the governing parties lacked the three-fifths majority required

to override him. After Duda's two-term presidency, Karol Nawrocki was elected as Poland's new president in 2025. The bill was resubmitted to parliament and again approved by both chambers; however, Nawrocki, despite running as an independent but enjoying support from the Law and Justice (PiS), continued Duda's policy and rejected the legislation again. Based on statistical and electoral data, indices and content analysis of parliamentary debates, the presentation outlines the events, challenges, and prospects affecting the two ethnoregional communities in Upper Silesia in recent years.

Challenging Gendered National Norms and Narratives in Poland. Alternative Practices of National Identity Through Engaged Clothes

Jowita Baran

Jagiellonian University, Poland

jowita.baran@doctoral.uj.edu.pl

Research shows that the pattern of constructing national identity using religious and ethnic categories still dominates in contemporary Poland. Such a conception of the nation entails specific rules, norms, and roles organized around the categories of gender and sexual identity (Anthias, Yuval-Davis 1989). Polish nationalist discourse is built on a heteronormative and patriarchal foundation; sexual minorities and feminists are considered a threat to the traditional order of the nation (Bratcher 2020). In recent years, such an essentialist vision of Polishness was institutionally maintained by the then-ruling coalition of right-wing, conservative parties (from 2015 to 2023) who pursued policy of exclusion that included “anti-gender” and “anti-LGBT ideology” campaigns (Korolczuk 2020; Gwiazda 2021). At the same time, queer and feminist organizations actively resisted such policies and campaigns, also by constructing alternative visions of national identity. During my research on “engaged clothes” (intended to express opinions on socially significant topics - political, but also social), I observe that the rainbow and feminist symbols are used to challenge heteronormative national norms. I notice that the rainbow in the Polish context is not only a tool for expressing pride and belonging to the LGBT+ community. Those clothing elements are often combined with other symbols - anti-government, anti-fascist; national symbols are also modified by “adding” rainbows or feminist elements. This allows to notice that the rainbow and feminist symbols become entangled in the processes of re-definition of national identity. It also highlights practices of challenging gendered national norms, rules, and narratives in Poland through clothes. The presentation focuses on the re-definition of national, heteronormative roles in contemporary Poland. The main aim is to analyze how - through material artifacts - national rules, dominating narratives, and norms are contested and negotiated. As the analysis of the collected material proved, there are contradictions between restrictive gendered norms and patterns of practicing Polishness. The following questions organized my inquiry: what are the strategies of constructing and

reproducing visions of national identity using rainbow and feminist clothing? Is wearing those clothes an act of patriotism or an act of rebellion against the oppression of a strictly heteronormative, patriarchal nation – or both? I will discuss visions of questioning those dominating rules and expanding boundaries of gendered national scripts. By examining these material practices, during the presentation I will argue that “engaged clothing” allows for the expansion of national boundaries. Ultimately, these practices provide a new answer to the question “what does it mean to be Polish?” in an era of deep social polarization. The findings are based on the triangulation of data collected during the doctoral research in sociology. The analysis includes interviews (IDI) with people wearing rainbow clothes, content and semiotic analysis of products from online stores and photographic material collected during participant observations.

PANEL 23 NATIONAL IDENTITY FROM SOCIALISM TO POST-SOCIALISM

Sunday 20 September, 10.30–12.00, Floor I

From Primordial Origins to Discourse: An Analysis of Theoretical and Research Approaches to the Nation in Scholarly Monographs from the Second World War to the Present

Damir Zejnulahović*

University of Belgrade, Serbia

damir.zejnulahovic@ifdt.bg.ac.rs

Miloš Janković

University of Belgrade, Serbia

**presenting/corresponding author*

The paper examines how theoretical and research approaches to the nation in Serbian academic production have changed across three key historical periods: the socialist period after the Second World War, the 1990s, and the post-2000 period. The analysis draws on Bakić's typology of six basic approaches to the nation and on Bourdieu's concept of the scientific field as a heuristic framework for understanding the relationship between theoretical positions and historical context. Empirically, the field is identified through an expert survey. In addition to mapping theoretical orientations, the paper focuses on shifts in the dominance of particular approaches across different historical constellations. Starting from the insight that scientific paradigms are formed in interaction with broader socio-political processes, the paper shows how theoretical thinking about the nation moves between different theoretical and research frameworks, thereby conceptualizing the scientific field as a dynamic space in which knowledge about the nation is continuously redefined.

PANEL 23 NATIONAL IDENTITY FROM SOCIALISM TO POST-SOCIALISM

Sunday 20 September, 10.30–12.00, Floor I

Constitutionalization of National Identity: Yugoslav and Serbian Case Study

Srdan Milošević

Union University, Serbia

spmilosevic@gmail.com

The constitutionalization of national identity refers to the process through which constitutions define, institutionalize, and symbolically reproduce a collective political and national community. Constitutions do not merely regulate political power, but also articulate narratives about the historical subject, sovereignty, language, territory, and the relationship between civic and ethnic forms of belonging. The example of former Yugoslavia and Serbia illustrates the changing character of this process. Socialist Yugoslavia constitutionalized a supranational socialist and multinational identity based on the ideology of братство и јединство ("brotherhood and unity"), while simultaneously recognizing the equality of constituent nations and nationalities. In contrast, the post-socialist constitutions of Serbia increasingly emphasized the national character of the state, combining civic constitutional principles with references to the Serbian nation, historical continuity, and the protection of national identity. This transformation reflects a broader shift from socialist multinational constitutionalism toward post-socialist nation-state constitutionalism in Eastern Europe.

PANEL 23 NATIONAL IDENTITY FROM SOCIALISM TO POST-SOCIALISM

Sunday 20 September, 10.30–12.00, Floor I

Nationality and Patriotism in Primary School Textbooks in Serbia (1950s to 2000s)

Srdan Radović

Institute of Ethnography SASA, Serbia

srdjan.radovic@ei.sanu.ac.rs

Since the general educational reform of the late 1950s in then-Yugoslavia, pupils had started attending obligatory 8-year elementary education in the constituent republic of Serbia, with reformed curricula and new teaching subjects. General instructional aims and tasks of elementary education, and especially of the subjects designated as part of the social sciences group of subjects, placed significant emphasis on socializing pupils into the socialist community, with thematic focus on contemporaneity and decreased, yet still selected historical overviews. This (creatively) translated into school textbooks, especially those for the first four grades of primary school, within the scope of teaching subjects that were designated as learning about nature and society, where classes and textbooks explained homeland, nation, and (contemporary) society to pupils. Given some authors' position that national identity building ensues in the state school system, these educational practices could be depicted as 'patriotic' or 'national' education. By examining school curricula and primary school textbooks aimed at learning about nature and society for younger pupils (the first four grades of elementary school), this presentation will analyze what concepts of community, nation, and nationality were presented to Serbian pupils, and what identity markers were thus deployed in the classroom via textbooks. By analyzing these materials from the late 1950s until 2000, a shift in concepts and markers related to nationality, which occurred with the breakup of Yugoslavia and the fall of socialism, will also be discussed and interpreted.

PANEL 23 NATIONAL IDENTITY FROM SOCIALISM TO POST-SOCIALISM

Sunday 20 September, 10.30–12.00, Floor I

Becoming European: The Myth of 1989, National "Normalisation," and the Teleology of Transition in East Europe and the Balkans (1990s-2000s)

Vukan Marković

University of Belgrade, Serbia / University of Cambridge, UK

vukan.markovic@ifdt.bg.ac.rs

The paper explores the assumption that the 1989 revolutions in Eastern Europe and the Balkans were simultaneously a process of democratization and an "awakening of the nations," that is, the return of nationalist language as the primary register of legitimation. It was shared throughout the post-socialist world, regardless of the type of transition these societies underwent – both those that experienced wars, dissolutions and those that had peaceful transitions featured it alike. The major difference between these societies was more related to the figure of the perceived enemy to the national awakening than to the response to the metahistorical Zeitgeist of 1989, as it was usually interpreted so far. In this sense, this paper is part of a recent revision in historiography, which tries to paint a more nuanced and reflexive picture of 1989, against the teleological and victorious narratives of "struggle for freedom." Notwithstanding the positive consequences of 1989, the presumption that national awakening went hand in hand with integration processes, the collapse of the socialist model was thus more reminiscent of earlier historical episodes (19th-century state principles, the Congress of Vienna, etc.) rather than the newly minted promises of global and European emancipation. Therefore, this paper investigates how the promise of liberal democracy was fused with the promise of national "normalization:" the recovery of sovereignty, history, and an "authentic" identity, all achieved through the rejection of socialist internationalism. To do this, this paper will present the period from 1989 to the mid-2010s as a prolonged attempt to "resolve" national histories through European integration – namely, to translate them politically and symbolically into a narrative of a return to Europe. In the Balkans, this symbolism is more closely tied to "leaving behind" the Balkan identity markers. This process is not merely institutional, through integration into the EU, but deeply ideological: it entails rejecting the failed socialist dream of reordering both the historical subject and societies, and it accepts neoliberal globalization as the only norm of modernization, internalizing the teleology of transition, and an implicit willingness

to embrace a post-historical horizon. Within this narrative, returning to Europe becomes, for Eastern European and Balkan nations, a desirable resolution of history and a lasting redefinition of national identity against the Sonderweg principles of the socialist era. Such a narrative saw its final collapse with the polycrisis of the 2010s and 2020s, and in particular with the onset of the War in Ukraine in 2022. Heading forward, the myth of 1989 is facing a crossroads – the attempts to preserve the uplifting sentiment of European integration, liberalization, and democratization are confronted with the very real prospects of the failure of the “end-of-history” politics and the resurgence of a different, more visceral, type of nationalism, which were, as we have shown here, looming within this myth in the first place.

PANEL 24 NEW LABOR MIGRATION IN CROATIA

Sunday 20 September, 10.30–12.00, Floor IV

Hard Bordering and the Governance of Mobility: Croatia and Slovenia in Comparative Perspective

Veronika Bajt*

Peace Institute, Slovenia

veronika.bajt@mirovni-institut.si

Franka Zlatić

University of Zadar, Croatia

**presenting/corresponding author*

Research on migration governance in Europe often focuses on legal frameworks, high-level policy shifts, or EU-driven border regimes. Yet far less attention has been paid to how bordering is produced through the everyday administrative practices that structure migrants' lives and shape political contestation around mobility. This paper asks: How do Croatia and Slovenia operationalize state-led boundaries through law, policy, and bureaucratic routines, and how does this process shape political conflict and broader social transformations in two post-socialist states now repositioning themselves as migrant-receiving societies? We argue that bordering in Croatia and Slovenia is not merely a legal or security phenomenon, but a multi-layered governance strategy in which formal institutions, welfare systems, and administrative encounters interact to produce differentiated inclusion. This process unfolds in a regional context marked by demographic decline, labor shortages, and increasing reliance on migrant workers—developments that have intensified political contestation over immigration, integration, and the meaning of social membership in post-socialist societies. In connecting public debates, local governance practices, and migrants' experiences, the paper shows how bordering mechanisms not only regulate mobility but also restructure social hierarchies and reshape notions of belonging. The paper makes three contributions. First, it proposes a theoretically integrated framework that conceptualizes administrative practice as a central site of boundary-making. Rather than treating citizenship law, visa regimes, welfare rules, and policing as separate domains, the analysis shows how these instruments become co-constitutive when activated in practice. The framework draws on scholarship on everyday bordering, critical state theory, and racialization to capture how exclusion is enacted, negotiated, and justified in routine state-migrant interactions. Second, the paper

presents a systematic literature map of Croatian and Slovenian scholarship on labor migration, border governance, welfare conditionality, and migrant incorporation. We synthesize legal analyses, social policy studies, ethnographies, and media research. Third, the paper advances a comparative empirical analysis of how bordering is operationalized through three mechanisms: Formal legal and policy instruments, including citizenship and residence regimes, sector-specific work permits, and employer-tied mobility channels that create hierarchies of access and dependency. Welfare and housing regulations, which structure migrants' material inclusion and shape local political debates around burden-sharing, fiscal contribution, and social deservingness. Administrative and mediated encounters, including frontline bureaucratic decision-making, municipal-level enforcement, and political/media framings that render some migrant groups culturally incompatible or economically disposable. Drawing on policy documents, administrative guidelines, parliamentary debates, and comparative secondary sources, the analysis shows that these mechanisms generate political contestation around labor migration and contribute to emerging social transformations. This particularly involves the racialization of labor, the stratification of rights, and shifting public imaginaries of who belongs in post-socialist Europe. By situating Croatia and Slovenia within broader debates on new labour migration in the region, the paper demonstrates how everyday governance contributes to the reconfiguration of social relations in societies long defined by outward mobility rather than immigration, directly reflecting the overarching theme of this special issue.

PANEL 24 NEW LABOR MIGRATION IN CROATIA

Sunday 20 September, 10.30–12.00, Floor IV

New Labor Migration and Gendered Violence in Europe's Semi-Periphery: Counter-Economies at the Edges of Racial Capitalism

Emina Bužinkić

Institute for Development and International Relations, Croatia

emina.buzinkic@gmail.com

This paper examines how new labor migration reshapes and racializes the social fabric of Croatia, a country long understood as migrant-sending but now increasingly reliant on migrant workers amid shifts in transnational racial capitalism, commonly justified through narratives of demographic decline, emigration, and labor shortages. It further interrogates how these processes are deeply gendered, producing differentiated regimes of vulnerability that expose both migrant women and racialized men from the Global South to distinct yet intertwined forms of violence. It asks: (1) How do digitalized labor regimes, state migration policies, and employer practices govern new labor migration in Croatia as a traditionally migrant-sending society facing labor shortages? (2) How do racialization, gendered Islamophobia, and legal precarity shape migrant workers' everyday experiences of belonging, exclusion, and disposability across work, public space, and institutions? (3) How do migrant workers navigate, contest, and reorganize these conditions through collective organizing, union struggles, and the formation of counter-economic practices? The article draws on year-long critical ethnographic fieldwork, narrative inquiry, and long-term collaboration with migrant-led collectives and labor activists in Croatia. It focuses on migrant and non-migrant workers employed in sectors marked by acute labor shortages and increasing platformization, subcontracting, and informality, including logistics, construction, delivery, and care. Particular attention is paid to the gendering of platform capitalism, where algorithmic management, rating systems, and subcontracted chains intensify surveillance, extractive tempo, and bodily risk. In these regimes, racialized men from South Asia, North Africa, and other regions of the Global South are frequently positioned as hyper-available, physically expendable labor—subject to street violence, police scrutiny, and workplace injuries—while migrant women are concentrated in feminized sectors of care and service marked by affective labor, harassment, and moral scrutiny. The analysis shows how migrants are rendered hypervisible in urban space—as racialized bodies in streets,

worksites, and service economies—while remaining structurally invisible within law, welfare regimes, trade unions, and dominant cultural imaginaries. This hypervisibility often translates into everyday forms of gendered and racialized violence, including verbal abuse, public hostility, and the securitization of racialized masculinities. This paradox of hypervisibility and structural invisibility reinforces migrants' positioning as temporary, disposable, and external to the national community. Conceptually, the article brings critical migration studies into dialogue with critical race studies, transnationalism, racial capitalism, and feminist political economy. It foregrounds gendered violence not as an episodic outcome but as a structuring logic of contemporary labor migration regimes, intertwined with racialized constructions of threat, dependency, and moral backwardness. It argues that new labor migration in traditionally migrant-sending societies produces shifting and uneven boundaries of belonging shaped by both local racial histories and transnational circuits of labor extraction, governance, and capital. By situating platform capitalism within this racial and gendered contract, the paper shows how digital infrastructures reorganize older colonial hierarchies into contemporary forms of algorithmic control and differential disposability. These dynamics challenge methodological nationalism by demonstrating how belonging is negotiated across legal, social, and transnational scales.

PANEL 24 NEW LABOR MIGRATION IN CROATIA

Sunday 20 September, 10.30–12.00, Floor IV

The Politics of Anti-Labour Migration Protest: Political Contestation, Mobilizations, and State Ambiguity in Croatia

Andrea Spehar

University of Gothenburg, Sweden

andrea.spehar@pol.gu.se

This article analyses the emergence of anti-labor migration protests in Croatia as a form of political contestation accompanying the country's rapid transition from a migrant-sending to a migrant-receiving state. Over the past decade, Croatia has become one of the European Union's leading per capita importers of foreign labor, following the liberalization of work permit regimes introduced to address demographic decline and acute labor shortages. This reversal is driven by intersecting structural pressures, including population decline, sustained economic growth, and large-scale emigration of Croatian workers to other EU member states. Against this backdrop, the growing visibility of new labor migrants—particularly from non-European countries—has become a focal point for anti-labor migration mobilization and protest. The article asks: How and why have anti-labor migration protests emerged in Croatia, who are the key actors driving these mobilizations, and how are they connected to the state's ambiguous and segmented governance of new labor migration? More specifically, it examines (1) which actors mobilize against migrant workers, (2) which narratives and discursive strategies they deploy, and (3) how state policies and governance arrangements enable or constrain these mobilizations. In doing so, the article links anti-labor migration protest to broader processes of political contestation, boundary-making, and social transformation in post-socialist Europe. Theoretically, the article builds on the concept of segmented migration governance, which captures how Croatia has combined extensive liberalization of labor admission with weak institutional oversight, limited integration measures, and fragmented responsibility across state actors. The article extends this framework by showing how such ambiguity creates space for bottom-up mobilization and protest, while simultaneously enabling elite actors to politicise labour migration without assuming responsibility for its social consequences. Empirically, the study draws on critical framing analysis of media reporting, protest events, political statements, and online mobilization between 2024 and 2025. The material captures local protests, nationalist

demonstrations, and digital campaigns opposing migrant workers, as well as the narratives circulating across these arenas. The analysis identifies a heterogeneous set of actors—including far-right parties and nationalist social movements—who mobilize against labor migration. Central to their claims is the politicized narrative of population replacement, which frames the recruitment of foreign workers as a demographic and cultural threat. The findings demonstrate that anti-labor migration protests are not simply reactive responses to migrant presence. Protest narratives do not primarily contest the economic need for labor migration, but instead target its cultural visibility and symbolic meaning. These mobilizations interact with elite-driven politicization and technocratic depoliticization of labor migration, reinforcing a fragmented political field in which economic dependence on migrant labor coexists with discourses of exclusion and threat. By connecting anti-labor migration protest to new labor migration and segmented governance, the article contributes to the special issue by demonstrating how labor migration reshapes political conflict, social boundaries, and claims to belonging in post-socialist societies. It shows that contestation emerges not despite technocratic migration governance, but precisely because of the ambiguities and exclusions it produces.

ROUNDTABLE 03 THE BALKANS IN THE WORLD TURMOIL

Sunday 20 September, 10.30–12.00, Floor VI

MODERATOR:

Stefano Bianchini

Retired Professor, Italy

stefano.bianchini@unibo.it

PARTICIPANTS:

Francesco Privitera

University of Bologna, Italy

francesco.privitera@unibo.it

Milica Uvalić

European University Institute, Italy

milica.uvalic@eui.eu

Robert Craig Nation

Dickinson College, US

nationr@dickinson.edu

Ekaterina Entina

HSE University, Russia

e.entina@hse.ru

Sara Barbieri

EU Civilian Missions Expert, Italy

barbieri.sara@gmail.com

The Round Table on “The Balkans in the World Turmoil” aims to discuss the ongoing dynamics of Southeast Europe in the context of the current World disorder and geopolitical restructuring. In particular, given the topic’s relevance, the round table will be structured into two mutually related discussions. During the first part, the speakers will focus on the persistent regional instabilities in EU candidate countries, their political and social contexts, and their dependencies on external factors within a geopolitical framework in transition. Such instabilities will then be analyzed, focusing on worsening uncertainties marked by the intrusive power politics of external players, particularly the US, China, and Russia. During the second part of the round table, the main topics under scrutiny will concentrate on the challenge of achieving

lasting peace and managing the sources of tension in the region, including human, complex, and energy security risks. Therefore, participants will analyze geo-economic challenges, economic realities and opportunities, NATO, and the strategic priority of strengthening the economic integration of the Balkans. Furthermore, the common economic space of the Balkans, as the region of the four seas, will also be a focus as global civilizational connectivity between the East and the West, and between the North and the South.

PANEL 25 MIGRATION, RACIALIZATION, AND BELONGING

Sunday 20 September, 14.00–15.30, Floor I

Ethnicity Revisited: Racialization and Scales of Difference after the “Migrant Crisis” in Northwest Bosnia-Herzegovina

Elissa Helms

Central European University, Austria

helmse@ceu.edu

Since the break-up of socialist Yugoslavia, the region has predominantly been studied through the lens of ethnicity and nationalism. In recent years, scholars have begun to explore how the region can be understood through the category of race, asking what local and migrated populations living here have been racialized, how racism and anti-racism were produced by socialist-era solidarity with the Global South, and how racism has been considered as foreign to the region. But how distinct are the categories of ethnicity and race in their practical effects and everyday understandings? Based on ethnographic research in Bihać in the northwest Bosnian region bordering on Croatia and the EU during the peak of the “migrant crisis,” this presentation explores classifications of race, racism, ethnicity, and culture in relation to the migrant influx and to their own community. Building on a recent publication that posited scale-making as a way to conceptualize different vocabularies of difference applied to different groups, I explore more deeply the ways in which locally rooted ethnic and cultural distinctions might also be understood as processes of racialization even where skin color does not play a decisive role. I show how this is particularly evident in the logics of genocidal, ethnicized violence in the 1992-95 Bosnian war, in the discourses and practices of othering Bosnian Roma, and in the ambiguous racialization of Bosnians in relation to the north and west core of Europe. I show how classifications of race, ethnicity, skin color, and culture – including the denial of race as a relevant concept – have historically been in flux, shifting through different periods of overlap, convergence, and distinction while also being shaped by imaginations of scale.

PANEL 25 MIGRATION, RACIALIZATION, AND BELONGING

Sunday 20 September, 14.00–15.30, Floor I

Familiar Foreignness: Turkic Affinity and the Reconfiguration of National Identity in Central Asian Women's Migration to Türkiye

İmge Tuğçe Bağır

Independent Researcher, Turkey

tugcebagir@gmail.com

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, outward migration has become structurally embedded in Central Asian societies. Existing scholarship has largely interpreted these movements through remittance economies and labor market differentials, while paying comparatively limited attention to the symbolic and relational conditions that render migration economically viable. This paper argues that migration from Central Asia to Türkiye is not only an economic process but also a site where historically grounded narratives of national and cultural affinity are reactivated, negotiated, and transformed. Focusing on Central Asian women's migration to Türkiye, the paper conceptualizes mobility as a strategic and relational process of capital conversion shaped by post-Soviet imaginaries of belonging. Narratives of Turkic affinity—rooted in earlier formations of Turkish nationalism and rearticulated in the post-1991 period—circulate across state discourse, media, and everyday interactions, producing a sense of cultural proximity that reconfigures the boundaries of national identity. These narratives do not erase difference; rather, they produce a form of “familiar foreignness” through which migrants become simultaneously proximate and subordinate within the host society. Drawing on qualitative fieldwork, the paper examines how such narratives intersect with the gendered organization of domestic and care work. Within intimate household settings, perceived cultural affinity facilitates trust-based employment relations, while also intensifying expectations around emotional labor and moral comportment. Migrant women engage these conditions neither as passive recipients nor as fully autonomous agents, but through situated practices of negotiation. They learn to mobilize culturally legible forms of familiarity, regulate affective investment, and establish boundaries in response to shifting expectations. By foregrounding these practices, the paper shows that national identity operates not only at the level of political discourse but also within everyday labor relations, where it is continuously enacted and reworked. Migration thus emerges as a key site for the reconfiguration of national narratives under conditions

shaped by post-Soviet transformation, economic precarity, and shifting regional hierarchies. In this sense, the paper contributes to broader debates on how national identities are redefined through mobility, care economies, and the lived experience of multiple, overlapping crises.

PANEL 25 MIGRATION, RACIALIZATION, AND BELONGING

Sunday 20 September, 14.00–15.30, Floor I

Domesticating the State Through Immigrant Encounters

Irina Culic

Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania

irina.culic@ubbcluj.ro

Recent scholarship on the datafication of borders and migration focuses on how digital technologies transform migration management, policies, and the experiences of migrants. Digital systems like facial recognition, language detection, and automated decision-making intensify migration surveillance, transforming borders into mobile, ubiquitous systems that track individuals in manifold contexts outside border crossings. Through specific systems of categorization, states and the systems they employ produce, control, and sometimes dehumanize migrants. The new technology used in managing migration introduces a new level of legibility for states, reversing their logic of verifying immigrants for access purposes into suspecting any foreigners of becoming potential overstayers, illegal immigrants, or criminals, while increasing control, policing, and surveillance of their own populations. At the same time, traditional activities using officers' experience and practical knowledge through paperwork and interviewing continue to be used alongside digital means. My paper proposes to investigate a specific case of encounter between aspiring immigrants and the destination state officers, by examining how Romanian applicants for permanent immigration to Canada gazed back to the Canadian state and constructed their own, collective, legibility grid to support their immigration project. The study is based on a set of 218 narrative accounts of interviews held by applicants in the provincial nominee class (economic immigrants) with 38 immigration officers from Quebec between 2001 and 2005, of which 15 failed to materialize in obtaining the *Certificat de Sélection du Québec* (CSQ). I identify strategies of domesticating and humanizing the immigration officer – the state embodied, of making home by appropriating the space of the Embassy and of the place of the interview, of claiming belonging through phantasies of miraculous encounters with the specific person of the officer. They also document the legibility practices of the Canadian state, by reflecting on how the immigration administration, through the immigration officer works, how their file is processed and interpreted through interview questions, categories filled in the CSQ, and the fluidity of the decision through the negotiations, trade-offs,

and power games. By describing the ways in which they have prepared for the interview, and the minute logic of assembling the successive files required for the whole process and for the interview, the applicants also document their reading, enacting, innovating, and transformation of the administrative documents and acts. The paper also reflects on the changes brought by the recent overhaul of the immigration system, which centralized, externalized, automatized, and formalized the selection process, in line with the transformations brought by the logic of financial efficiency and the technological possibilities of datafication.

PANEL 25 MIGRATION, RACIALIZATION, AND BELONGING

Sunday 20 September, 14.00–15.30, Floor I

Reclaiming the Nation Through Solidarity Acts and Moral Emotions

Margit Feischmidt

Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary

feischmidt.margit@tk.hu

Inspired by Sarah Ahmed's (2014) earlier appeal (What do emotions do?) and the current invitation of ASN to understand new forms of national identities amid multiple crises this paper raises the question of 'What solidarity-driven moral emotions can do?' by exploring the interplay between civic activism, solidarity movements, moral emotions, and counter-politics. By analyzing about 50 interviews and online documents of civic activists in Hungary, this paper aims to (1) identify the moral emotions that served as engines for civic and solidarity mobilization; (2) the role of emotions in giving political sense to solidarity practices, (3) the perceived restorative impact of civic and solidarity movements; (4) and finally how civic nationhood and moral citizenship (Muehlebach, 2012) is understood as an alternative to the exclusionist nationalism and perceived immorality of the political regime in Hungary. The affective aspects of civic activism and solidarity movements will be examined in two data sets: (1) in the narratives of civic activists and volunteers who helped refugees in 2015 and 2022 and perceived their actions as a moral and political stance against organized irresponsibility; and (2) in the narratives of civic activists participating as election observers and vote counters at the 2022 parliamentary elections and thought contributing to the preservation of what remained of democracy while becoming close observers of the democratic opposition's defeat.

PANEL 26 UKRAINIAN IDENTITY, LANGUAGE, AND CULTURE

Sunday 20 September, 14.00–15.30, Floor IV

Protection of Minority Languages in Ukraine from the Perspective of the European Charter on Regional or Minority Languages

Ljudmila Popović

University of Belgrade, Serbia

ljudmila.popovic@fil.bg.ac.rs

In the first part of my presentation, I will refer to the sociolinguistic situation in the Russian Empire and the USSR from the aspect of the Ukrainian as a minority language, and to the numerous bans on the Ukrainian language in that period. This part is necessary in order to explain the nominal status of the Ukrainian language as the state language in the independent Ukraine after the declaration of independence on August 24, 1991. In the conditions of a post-colonial culture, which still determines the basic trends of the policy of the Ukrainian state in the sphere of the protection of minority languages, the consequences of the permanent colonization of Ukraine by Russia can be felt in both cultural and social life. This part of the presentation is also necessary in order to explain a paradoxical sociolinguistic situation – even during Russia's aggression against Ukraine, Ukrainians in Eastern Ukraine and partly in Central Ukraine continue to speak the language of the aggressor, even though they unanimously oppose the aspirations of that aggressor to be destroyed – spiritually and physically. In the second part of the presentation, I will look at the status of minority languages in Ukraine, especially since 2005, after Ukraine ratified the European Charter on Regional or Minority Languages and submitted reports to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on the level of protection of those languages. Data will be drawn from these reports to show progress in the process. In parallel, I will analyze the so-called language laws that regulated the status of the minority languages in Ukraine, as well as other international and national legislation related to the regulation of the use of the language in public life. Based on all the mentioned facts, a general synthesis will be made that will help to reach a clearer picture and conclusions regarding the topic of the presentation.

PANEL 26 UKRAINIAN IDENTITY, LANGUAGE, AND CULTURE

Sunday 20 September, 14.00–15.30, Floor IV

Schools as Instruments of Cultural Genocide: Education under Russian Occupation in Ukraine

Vicente Ferraro

Federal University of Lavras, Brazil

vicentee.ferraro@gmail.com

Over the past decades, a robust body of scholarship has examined the role of schools in nation-building, particularly in fostering “imagined communities” that extend beyond local identities. Yet a crucial dimension of educational policy remains comparatively understudied: the use of schools as instruments of identity erasure, forced assimilation, political indoctrination, and, more broadly, cultural genocide. This article argues that educational systems can operate as central mechanisms of cultural genocide, targeting not only identities but the institutional foundations that sustain them. Drawing on Raphael Lemkin’s original formulation of genocide—which encompasses the destruction of cultural, social, and educational structures—I analyze Russia’s educational policies in the territories occupied since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Empirically, the study is based on two sources: (1) semi-structured interviews with teachers, education professionals, and civilians who experienced occupation, conducted online and in person during fieldwork in 2025; and (2) content analysis of official and propagandistic Russian materials, including government websites, media outlets, Telegram channels, and platforms such as RuTube. I show that children and adolescents constitute the primary targets of these policies, as occupation authorities perceive them as more malleable and susceptible to long-term identity transformation. Through the imposition of the Russian curriculum, the rewriting of history, and the introduction of explicitly nationalist and doctrinal content, these policies aim to reconfigure Ukrainian identity and integrate younger generations into a Russian political and cultural framework. By examining this contemporary case, the article contributes to broader debates on education, nationhood, and political violence, advancing the concept of cultural genocide as a key analytical lens for understanding the role of schooling in contexts of occupation and war.

PANEL 26 UKRAINIAN IDENTITY, LANGUAGE, AND CULTURE

Sunday 20 September, 14.00–15.30, Floor IV

Queer Ukrainian Identities in the Time of War: From Disidentification to Anti-Imperialist Subjectivity

Eugenia (Yevheniia) Seleznova

Central European University, Austria

seleznova_eugenia@phd.ceu.edu

The paper discusses the way LGBTQ+ Ukrainians are navigating and renegotiating their national identities and subjectivities in the context of the ongoing war and displacement. It draws on the data collected from over 50 semi-structured interviews conducted in 2023-2025 with LGBTQ+ Ukrainians currently primarily residing in Ukraine, Germany, and Poland, as part of an ongoing ethnographic research. The contextual background of my research is primarily informed by gendered elements of Ukrainian martial law and overall sexual politics (e.g., travel ban for men of a certain age; lack of recognition for same-sex couples; lack of protection against SOGI-based hate crimes). In my body of argument, the ongoing Russian aggression as well as increased societal debates on Russian colonialism has led to the development of a new queer Ukrainian subjectivity, with the notion of “Ukrainianness” being separated from governmental and nationalist agenda, and narrated as primarily anti-imperialist. This finding widens the understanding of queer Ukrainian identities and subjectivities during the war, and contributes to the recent debates regarding the notions of homonormativity/homopatriotism in a militarised Ukrainian context (as raised by Olha Plakhotnik, Maryna Shevtsova), separating the LGBTQ+ Ukrainians’ sense of belonging to and connection with Ukraine from the cis-heteronormative notions of national belonging. At the same time, my findings show that some LGBTQ+ Ukrainians who have found themselves intersectionally marginalised due to the Ukrainian gendered and sexed wartime politics – primarily, cisgender men (so, subjected to military draft and travel ban), those with disabilities and/or experiences of SOGI-based violence, tend to disidentify with Ukrainian subjectivities, and are looking to develop different, “replacement” identities and subjectivities – e.g. that of a naturalised, “newly-made” European, with the Ukrainian identity becoming “archived” and signifying the past cultural and familial connections, but not citizenship or belonging to the nation. This reflects how embodied experiences of state-imposed sexed and gendered constraints reinforcing heteronormative citizenship roles can serve as disidentification factors for those intersectionally oppressed. The research contributes to Eastern European gender/sexuality and nationalism scholarship.

ROUNDTABLE 04 THE BALKANS IN CRISIS. POPULISM, POST-DEMOCRACY, AND THE GEOPOLITICAL IMPACT

Sunday 20 September, 14.00–15.30, Floor VI

MODERATOR:

Damir Kapidžić

University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

damir.kapidzic@fpn.unsa.ba

PARTICIPANTS:

Anna Krasteva

New Bulgarian University / CERMES, Bulgaria

anna.krasteva@gmail.com

Sonja Stojanović Gajić

University of Rijeka, Croatia

sonjasg@cas.uniri.hr

Dušan Janjić

Forum for Ethnic Relations, Serbia

djanjic@gmail.com

Stefano Bianchini

Retired Professor, Italy

stefano.bianchini@unibo.it

The Round Table on “The Balkans in Crisis. Populism, post-democracy, and the geopolitical impact” addresses the Balkans as a critical site for understanding the entanglement of populism, post-democracy, and shifting geopolitical dynamics in an era of multiple, overlapping crises. Positioned at the intersection of the European Union, Russia, Turkey, the US, and emerging global actors, the region offers a particularly fertile ground for analyzing how external pressures and internal transformations co-produce new political, economic, and societal configurations. The discussion departs from the premise that the crisis in the Balkans is no longer episodic but increasingly structural - a condition rather than an exception. Building on the concept of post-democracy, the roundtable will explore how formal democratic institutions persist. In contrast, substantive democratic practices are eroded, often accompanied by the rise of populist actors who mobilize crisis narratives to consolidate power. Economic vulnerabilities - ranging from uneven development and dependency to energy insecurity

rity - further amplify these dynamics, while geopolitical contestation reshapes policy choices, alliances, and public discourses. The roundtable will address three interrelated dimensions. First, it will analyze the nexus between populism and post-democracy in the Balkans, focusing on how crisis narratives are instrumentalized in political competition and governance. Second, it will examine the political economy of crisis, including how external dependencies and economic pressures influence domestic political trajectories. Third, it will investigate the impact of geopolitics, asking how the war in Ukraine, EU enlargement fatigue, and the rivalries of geopolitical actors reconfigure national strategies, identities, and regional cooperation. By bringing together scholars from political science and political economy, the roundtable aims to foster a dialogue across perspectives and methodologies. Participants will reflect on key questions: How do geopolitical shifts reshape domestic political economies and democratic trajectories? Is the Balkans a laboratory of post-democracy or a precursor of broader European trends? What forms of resilience, contestation, or alternative futures can be identified in the region?

Football as a Contested Space of National Narratives and Urban Imaginaries: Rijeka/Fiume across Regime Changes (20th–21st Centuries)

Vanni D'Alessio

University of Naples Federico II, Italy

gidaleess@unina.it

The northern Adriatic city of Rijeka/Fiume represents a paradigmatic case of a contested urban space situated at the intersection of Mediterranean, Central European, and Balkan cultural spheres. Throughout the twentieth century, the city underwent successive regime changes (Hungarian, Independent, Italian, Yugoslav, and Croatian), each accompanied by attempts to redefine sovereignty, belonging, and national narratives. This paper examines football as a privileged arena in which these competing narratives have been articulated, negotiated, and visually inscribed into the urban and rural spaces of the city and its surroundings. From the early 20th century onward the city and its vicinity have hosted a variety of football clubs operating in Italian, Croatian, German, and Hungarian, reflecting the multilingual social fabric, the cultural and political divides of this territory. The analysis focuses on three interconnected dimensions: the organization and composition of clubs across regime transitions; the uses and transformations of playing grounds as politically charged spaces; and the visual and linguistic representations surrounding football in the public sphere. This paper addresses the activity, organization, and composition of team sport clubs, which have been using Croatian, Italian, German, and Hungarian as their official or daily language in the different political frameworks of this contested and divided, ultimately united, port city. The Kantrida stadium, used by teams of different national identities and citizenships as their “own”, stands at the center of the analysis, since its early 20th-century transformation from a quarry to a football pitch, while other grounds will also be considered. The history of Kantrida exemplifies how sport practice, fandom, and infrastructures became embedded in shifting sovereignty frameworks and in discourses of ethnic and national belonging. By examining football practice, media discourse, emblems, graffiti, and fan cultures, the paper shows how sport both responded to and shaped Hungarian, Italian, Yugoslav, and Croatian national and transnational imaginaries. Rather than interpreting football exclusively as a vehicle of nationalist mobilization, it ar-

gues that sport functioned simultaneously as a divisive and integrative force. Regime changes generated policies of symbolic erasure and re-inscription (re-naming clubs, altering emblems, marginalizing languages), yet everyday practices of players and supporters often sustained hybrid identifications. By situating football within broader processes of war, demographic transformation, and political transition, the paper contributes to debates on contested national narratives in Southeastern Europe and on the reconfiguration of national identities across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

PANEL 27 EVERYDAY LIFE AND POLITICAL ECONOMY IN THE YUGOSLAV SPACE

Sunday 20 September, 15.45–17.15, Floor I

Socialist Servants: Domestic Workers in Yugoslav Expat Households in Zambia

Goran Music

University of Vienna, Austria

goran.music@univie.ac.at

The Yugoslav community in Zambia during the 1970s was made up primarily of experts and workers from self-managed companies employed within the framework of Non-Aligned Movement member states' collaboration. The task of these expats was to aid in the development of the host country and train the local workforce. Unlike labor relations in workplaces, which were partly shaped by the ideological imperatives of solidarity, racial equality, and friendship, the private sphere was more open to the influence of social norms inherited from colonial times and expectations of a lifestyle associated with being "white" in Africa. One ubiquitous feature of the everyday lives of foreign workers in Zambia was access to cheap domestic labor. Yugoslav workers and their families seized this opportunity, which was seldom available at home, and employed local maids, nannies, guards, and gardeners in their households. At the same time, the Yugoslavs saw themselves as being different from the traditional Western white elites in Africa. This created ambiguities, moral dilemmas, and disputes inside the community over this practice. Based on the published memoirs, oral interviews, and archival holdings, the article will examine the unconventional practice of socialist workers and the intelligentsia employing racialized domestic workers and seek to reveal the accompanying notions of social inequality, work discipline, culture, hygiene, and security.

PANEL 27 EVERYDAY LIFE AND POLITICAL ECONOMY IN THE YUGOSLAV SPACE

Sunday 20 September, 15.45–17.15, Floor I

Socialism on Borrowed Time: Sovereign Debt and Temporal Crisis in Yugoslavia

James Robertson

University of California, Irvine, US

jamesmr1@uci.edu

The sovereign debt crisis that beset Yugoslavia in the 1980s played a profound role in undermining the state's legitimacy. More than simply eroding the living standards of its citizens, this crisis disrupted socialism's temporal order. As utopian visions of a future of credit-fueled growth collapsed into austerity and ethnic conflict, the regime of historicity that underpinned state socialist ideology was disrupted. To capture the temporal dimension of Yugoslavia's sovereign debt crisis, this paper explores the metaphor of "borrowed time" as it circulated in cultural production from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s. It tracks the movement of this metaphor from its use in the economic field, where it served as a critique of the socialist government's reliance on foreign credit, to the political and cultural field, where it became an explanation for the resurgence of ethnic animosity and violence. Through a reading of three films from this period - *Balkanski špijun* (1984), *Već viđeno* (1987), and *Lepa sela lepo gore* (1996) - the paper demonstrates how the transposition of this metaphor allowed economic explanations for the collapse of the federation to structure essentialist accounts of the incompatibility of its national communities. In so doing, the metaphor rendered the nationalist violence of the 1990s inevitable, framing it as the coming due of a debt incurred by the socialist regime's policy of brotherhood and unity. Reading Yugoslavia's collapse as a temporal crisis of sovereign debt helps us better understand the political and cultural dynamics of the "end of history" across Europe. It demonstrates how the global financial turbulence of the 1970s reordered experiences of historical time in ways that undermined the post-WWII order on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

National Identity through Nationalist Music: Soft Power and Cultural Nationalism in Republika Srpska

Jakub Novák

University of Ostrava, Czechia

jakubnovak48@seznam.cz

This paper explores the role of nationalist music in shaping and reinforcing nationalism in a post-conflict society, focusing on Republika Srpska as a case study. While existing scholarship on post-war nationalism in Bosnia and Herzegovina has predominantly emphasized institutional arrangements, political elites, and formal memory politics, this paper shifts attention to cultural production as a key site of identity formation. Music is approached as a medium through which national narratives are articulated, circulated, and normalized in everyday life. The study is grounded in theories of nationalism, narrative construction, and cultural power, and conceptualizes nationalist music as a form of soft power operating at the intersection of culture and politics. Rather than treating music as a passive reflection of political discourse, the paper argues that it actively contributes to the construction of collective identities by mobilizing emotional attachments, historical references, and symbolic boundaries. Empirically, the paper employs a qualitative research design combining discourse analysis and field-based interviews. The core of the analysis consists of a discourse analysis of selected lyrics from nationalist music produced and consumed in Republika Srpska. These texts are examined as narrative structures through which themes of collective victimhood, heroism, territorial belonging, and historical continuity are articulated. To strengthen analytical validity, the textual analysis is triangulated with semi-structured interviews conducted in situ with cultural actors and members of the audience, allowing for insight into how these musical narratives are interpreted, internalized, and reproduced. By situating nationalist music within the broader context of post-war transformation and multiple ongoing crises—political, democratic, and socio-economic—the paper demonstrates how cultural practices contribute to the persistence and adaptation of nationalism beyond the immediate aftermath of conflict. The findings highlight the importance of cultural and discursive dimensions in understanding nationalism in post-conflict societies and suggest that music functions as a particularly resilient and influential vehicle for nationalist narratives. Focusing on Republika Srpska, the paper contrib-

utes to broader debates on nationalism, soft power, and identity formation in Southeastern Europe, emphasizing the need to integrate cultural analysis into the study of post-conflict nationalism.

PANEL 28 UKRAINIAN IDENTITY, MEMORY, AND WAR

Sunday 20 September, 15.45–17.15, Floor IV

From Internal Divide to Frontline Identity: Reconfiguring Ukrainian National Narratives through War and Trauma

Olexandra Zvyagina

University of Warsaw, Poland

o.zvyagina2@uw.edu.pl

This paper examines the reconfiguration of Ukrainian national identity in the context of war, focusing on the transformation of the long-standing East-West divide as one of the central national myths. Drawing on theories of national narratives, collective trauma, and myth-symbol complexes in nation-building, the study argues that Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 catalyzed a fundamental narrative shift: the internal axis of division (East vs. West) was replaced by an external axis of differentiation (Ukraine vs. Russia). Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine inherited an ambivalent identity landscape shaped by Soviet legacies, Russification policies, and unresolved historical memory. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, dominant political and cultural discourses portrayed Ukraine as a divided nation. The industrial, predominantly Russian-speaking East was frequently depicted as culturally and politically oriented toward Moscow, while the Western regions symbolized Ukrainian linguistic revival, historical continuity, and European orientation. This interpretative framework was reinforced both domestically and through Russian political rhetoric and media narratives, consolidating the image of Ukraine as internally fragmented and civilizationally "torn." The events of 2014 Euromaidan, the annexation of Crimea, and the war in Donbas began to destabilize this narrative but did not fully dismantle it. Despite growing civic mobilization and military resistance, the myth of the "brotherly nation" and assumptions of cultural proximity to Russia persisted in parts of society. The full-scale invasion launched on 24 February 2022 fundamentally altered this structure. Regions previously labeled as "pro-Russian" became epicenters of resistance, destruction, and mass violence. Cities in Eastern Ukraine, such as Kharkiv, Mariupol, and Bakhmut, were no longer imagined as ambivalent borderlands but as heroic frontline spaces defending state sovereignty. In the emerging national narrative, the East is reimagined not as a zone of doubtful loyalty but as a resilient frontline of the nation. This symbolic reconfiguration marks a decisive rupture with earlier representations and undermines the paradigm of internal division. The paper argues that collective trauma op-

erates here as a nation-redefining force. Shared experiences of bombardment, displacement, occupation, and existential threat have generated a new myth of unity forged through suffering and resistance. Importantly, the study does not claim that regional differences within Ukraine have disappeared; rather, it demonstrates that their symbolic function within the national narrative has been fundamentally redefined. The East-West axis has been supplanted by a Ukraine-Russia axis, in which national identity is constructed through explicit differentiation from Russia, despite deep historical, linguistic, and cultural proximity. Methodologically, the study employs qualitative discourse analysis of presidential speeches, wartime media narratives, and selected examples of popular cultural production from 2014 to 2024. By tracing shifts in the language used to describe eastern regions, the analysis reveals a movement from ambivalence toward heroization and symbolic centrality. By analyzing the transformation of the East-West myth, the paper contributes to broader debates on how wars reshape national narratives and how collective trauma can catalyze identity consolidation, inviting comparison with other European societies experiencing violent rupture and identity reconfiguration.

PANEL 28 UKRAINIAN IDENTITY, MEMORY, AND WAR

Sunday 20 September, 15.45–17.15, Floor IV

Building National Community through Recent War Heritage in Ukrainian Museum Projects

Elżbieta Olzacka

Jagiellonian University, Poland

elzbieta.olzacka@uj.edu.pl

This paper explores how recent war-related heritage has been mobilized in Ukrainian museum projects as a means of building and consolidating national community amid ongoing war and broader memory transformations. Drawing on research conducted since 2018 in Ukraine's First ATO Museum (later renamed the Museum of the Russian-Ukrainian War) and exhibition projects at the National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War, I examine how material related to the war in Donbas, and later the full-scale invasion, has been collected, displayed, and transformed into heritage within museum space. The artifacts under discussion include military equipment brought directly from combat zones, often deformed by explosions, uniforms and gear marked by fighting, tattered flags from key battle sites, and personal belongings of fallen soldiers donated by their families. Through processes of selection, contextualization, and display, these objects undergo heritagization: they are framed as meaningful carriers of collective experience and incorporated into publicly accessible narratives about the present war. I argue that war-related objects function in three closely intertwined ways. First, as "witnesses of events," they reinforce the authenticity and immediacy of the story being told. Second, as "secular relics," they contribute to the formation of a new heroic canon linking sacrifice, moral obligation, and collective solidarity. Third, as evidence of violence and atrocity, they delineate symbolic boundaries between the Ukrainian community and its aggressor. In museum practice, affective engagement generated through specific modes of display becomes a key mechanism of community formation. Particular attention is given to the challenges of exhibiting recent and sensitive heritage in a context of overlapping crises. Ukrainian museums operate not only during an ongoing war but also amid efforts to reinterpret the contested legacy of the Second World War and Soviet memory frameworks. By placing heritage related to past and present wars within a shared narrative space, museum projects construct a unifying story of a long Ukrainian struggle for independence. Recent war heritage thus provides new interpretive frames that help integrate different memory regimes and legitimize both past and current sacrifices as parts of a continuous fight for sovereignty.

PANEL 28 UKRAINIAN IDENTITY, MEMORY, AND WAR

Sunday 20 September, 15.45–17.15, Floor IV

National Identity in Migratory Contexts – The Ukrainian Diaspora in Poland and Canada as a Site of Belonging Negotiation

Emil Chról

University of Warsaw, Poland

e.chrol2@student.uw.edu.pl

This paper offers a comparative analysis of two distinct forms of Ukrainian collective presence beyond the territorial state – the contemporary migrant community in Poland and the historically constituted Ukrainian diaspora in Canada – in order to examine how national identity is reconfigured under conditions of multiple and overlapping crises. Situating the analysis within debates on nationalism, transnationalism, and diaspora formation, the study engages classical diaspora theory (Safran 1991; Cohen 1997), constructivist and processual approaches to identity (Hall 1990; Clifford 1994), and transnational migration theory (Glick Schiller et al. 1992; Vertovec 2009). The central argument is that the Ukrainian population in Poland does not yet constitute a fully institutionalized diaspora but rather represents a dynamic migrant formation embedded in dense transnational social fields shaped by war, displacement, and ongoing geopolitical instability. Empirically, the paper draws on qualitative expert interviews with representatives of Ukrainian migrant organizations, combined with theoretical analysis of diaspora formation as a historically contingent process. The comparison demonstrates that differences between the two cases reflect distinct structural conditions under which extra-territorial national formations emerge. The Ukrainian diaspora in Canada developed through long-distance migration, limited return mobility, and the gradual partial autonomy of collective memory from ongoing transformations in the country of origin. This enabled the institutional stabilization of diasporic identity and the consolidation of symbolic attachments capable of persisting across historical ruptures. By contrast, Ukrainian migration to Poland unfolds under conditions of geographical proximity, intense circular mobility, and real-time informational connectivity, especially in the context of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine. These factors sustain a continuous orientation toward the homeland and constrain the emergence of an autonomous diasporic memory. The paper argues that the key analytical distinction between diaspora and contemporary migrant community lies in the degree to which

collective identity becomes partially decoupled from ongoing transformations in the state of origin. In this sense, the Ukrainian presence in Poland reflects not a consolidated diaspora but an emergent and still incomplete process of diasporisation shaped by war, mobility, and the ongoing reconfiguration of national belonging.

PANEL 28 UKRAINIAN IDENTITY, MEMORY, AND WAR

Sunday 20 September, 15.45–17.15, Floor IV

EU Enlargement and National Minorities: A Candidate Country Policy Analysis

Vello Pettai*

European Centre for Minority Issues, Germany

pettai@ecmi.de

Ljubica Djordjević

European Centre for Minority Issues, Germany

**presenting/corresponding author*

As the European Union gears up for a new round of enlargement, it has refined and tightened its monitoring of national minority rights standards as part of the screening and assessment process. Central to this process is the embedding of minority issues into Chapter 23 of the *acquis communautaire* that relates to the judiciary, anti-corruption and the protection of fundamental rights. This means that minority issues are scrutinized both as a starting and ending point for the accession process as a whole. This more rigorous approach has led several candidate countries to develop clearer minority rights policies as well as action plans. These documents reflect not only a degree of dialogue with minority groups themselves, but also an object of negotiation with the European Commission and even individual member states. They are therefore intersectional documents between both domestic and European audiences. This paper will review and compare the strategies and action plans on national minority protection in five accession countries: Montenegro, Serbia, North Macedonia, Moldova and Ukraine. (These are the countries where the most clearly designated documents relating to this issue have been adopted.) The study will leverage the two-level (national-European) analytical frame by focusing on research questions such as: • what has been the process of developing these plans (through external consultants, ministerial officials, etc.)? • how do the documents compare on a technical level (scope, depth, etc.)? • how has public consultation been organized around the documents? • how linked are the documents to the Framework Convention, the European Charter or other standards (including monitoring bodies' recommendations)? • what is the inter-relationship/overlap with Roma issues? • what has been the eventual political dialogue with EU authorities around these documents? • what do these documents indicate in terms of how each country is positioning its mi-

minority policy as part of accession? The study will contribute to understanding how national minority issues are playing into EU enlargement, including in comparison to previous enlargement waves.

PANEL 29 NATIONAL IDENTITY AND EUROPEAN UNION ENLARGEMENT

Sunday 20 September, 15.45–17.15, Floor VI

**EU Accession Conditionality and Constitution-Making:
The Case of North Macedonia**

Marko Milenković*

Institute of Social Sciences, Serbia / Johns Hopkins SAIS Europe, Italy
mmilenkovic@jhu.edu

Justin O. Frosini

Bocconi University / Johns Hopkins SAIS Europe, Italy

Angelina Cvetkovska

Johns Hopkins SAIS Europe, Italy

**presenting/corresponding author*

This paper examines the role of EU accession conditionality in the constitution-making process, using North Macedonia as a case study. It contributes to the theory of culturalised conditionality by analyzing the incorporation of specific constitutional amendments into the country's EU accession framework. In particular, it explores how bilateral disputes with Greece and Bulgaria – culminating in the Prespa Agreement and the Treaty of Friendship – became embedded in accession negotiations and translated into formal requirements to amend the country's constitution. The paper analyses how issues relating to identity, heritage, and history were introduced into the enlargement process through the exercise of member state veto power and political leverage within the Council. It demonstrates how such identity-related demands, while formally situated within bilateral relations and international agreements, acquired institutional force once incorporated into the EU accession procedure. This development illustrates the increasing interconnection between enlargement policy and constitution-making in candidate states, where compliance with accession conditions may extend beyond the adoption of the *acquis* to encompass constitutional provisions linked to identity and state symbolism. The research highlights the structural asymmetries between EU member states and candidate countries in shaping accession conditions. It assesses the implications of these asymmetries for the legitimacy and legal coherence of conditionality, particularly in relation to democratic sovereignty and international legal commitments. By situating the North Macedonian case within the broader context of Western Balkan enlargement, the study contributes to

ongoing debates on the evolving scope of EU conditionality. It argues that the integration of identity-related issues into accession negotiations represents a significant institutional development with lasting constitutional and political consequences.

PANEL 29 NATIONAL IDENTITY AND EUROPEAN UNION ENLARGEMENT

Sunday 20 September, 15.45–17.15, Floor VI

'The Region' in the Post-Yugoslav Imaginaries: Identity Narratives in Regional Policies of Slovenia and Serbia

Ivana Milićević

University of Belgrade, Serbia

ivana.milicevic@ifdt.bg.ac.rs

Regional cooperation in the post-Yugoslav space remains contested, with limited results, and is frequently interpreted as driven primarily by external incentives, particularly regional mechanisms within European Union (EU) enlargement policy. Following the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the end of the conflicts of the 1990s, this space became incorporated into the broader post-Cold War process of “new regionalization”. As the process of post-conflict stabilization and integration was largely driven by EU initiatives, scholarship on regional cooperation in post-Yugoslav space has predominantly focused on the impacts of EU integration, examining the (lack of) success of EU enlargement policy mechanisms to improve regional cooperation, within the paradigm of Europeanisation. In that context, the relation to “Europe/EU” is recognized as a key reference point influencing identity narratives in the region, and critical literature on Balkanism sheds light on discourses of Othering which dominate this dynamic. However, by focusing on externally driven narratives, existing approaches mostly overlook different interpretations of regional identity among the post-Yugoslav states, which are also reflected in their regional policies, mediating identity narratives between a nation-state and Europe. This research shifts the analytical focus to national constructions of “the region” and examines how they shape states’ regional policies and positioning towards the EU. It adopts a post-structuralist approach that theorizes foreign policy as a discursive practice and understands identity and foreign policy as mutually constitutive. From this perspective, foreign policy documents do not merely reflect pre-existing identities but are rather recognized as key sites through which identity is articulated, reproduced or transformed over time. Empirically, the study comparatively analyses Slovenia and Serbia regional policies in the period after the 2000s, considering their differing positions vis-à-vis the EU. As Slovenia is a member state since 2004 and Serbia remains a candidate country marked by polarised membership debates, including these states provides an opportunity for a comparative perspective in examining how state positioning toward the EU shapes the regional identity narratives. By analyzing

official foreign policy documents, the research identifies key narrative frames and basic discourses through which “the region” is defined and positioned, and analyzes how particular representations of Europe and the post-Yugoslav space enable specific regional policies. Understanding identity as performative and inherently unstable, the study traces how discursive constructions of the region emerge and transform, and how they interact with changing foreign policy priorities. In doing so, it highlights that regional cooperation cannot be fully understood as a response to functional interdependence of states or external incentives. Instead, it is deeply embedded in national conceptions that shape how states imagine their place both within the post-Yugoslav space and the symbolic map of Europe. The comparative analysis of identity narratives in foreign policy documents in Slovenia and Serbia shows competing conceptions of a region in two states, positioning it within different identity dynamics within references to nation and Europe. By focusing on the national narratives on the region, the research contributes to regionalization scholarship by offering a more nuanced account of the relation between identity, foreign policy and regional cooperation in the post-Yugoslav space.

PANEL 29 NATIONAL IDENTITY AND EUROPEAN UNION ENLARGEMENT

Sunday 20 September, 15.45–17.15, Floor VI

Europe as a Binding Myth: International Dimensions of Albanian Populist Discourse

Agata Domachowska

Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland

a.domachowska@umk.pl

Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama once declared that “Europe is the only religion that brings all Albanians together,” a statement that has since become emblematic of his broader narrative on Albania’s European identity. The aim of the research is to examine Rama’s discourse on Albanians and Europe as articulated across international forums and in meetings with leaders of the European Union. The study analyzes how Rama employs populist framings of European unity, the symbolic construction of “Europe” as a supranational identity project, and the strategic functions this rhetoric performs in both Albania’s foreign policy and domestic political arena. The analysis reveals how Rama mobilizes the idea of a unifying “European religion” to reinforce support for EU integration, strengthen his political legitimacy, and portray Albania as intrinsically embedded within the European space. The research also assesses the implications of this narrative for international perceptions of Albania and for the evolving dynamics of the country’s internal political discourse.

PANEL 30 NARRATING THE NATION IN THE YUGOSLAV SPACE

Sunday 20 September, 17.30–19.00, Floor I

The Nation in Pacifist Discourse: Slovenian Women's Magazines in the 1930s

Neja Blaj Hribar

Institute of Contemporary History, Slovenia

neja.blaj-hribar@inz.si

During the interwar period, certain strands of nationalism increasingly embraced biologically defined and racialized conceptions of the nation and adopted more militarised forms. This development was not limited to Nazism and Fascism, and was not confined to supporters of authoritarian regimes; they also influenced their opponents, often as a defensive response to perceived external threats. In contrast to these radicalized forms of nationalism, pacifism provided a different political and moral framework for responding to the instability of the interwar period. It gained significant political influence after the First World War, particularly in countries deeply affected by the conflict. However, its strength varied across Europe and often remained more an aspirational ideal than a consistently implemented political program. With the deterioration of the international situation in the 1930s and the perceived ineffectiveness of international organizations, pacifists were increasingly criticized as utopian and politically unrealistic. Women's movements were among the most important carriers of pacifist ideas throughout the interwar period. Even in the 1930s, when pacifism faced growing skepticism, many women's organizations continued to advocate peace-oriented principles. This raises an important question: how did pacifist ideology relate to nationalism? How was the nation conceptualized within pacifist discourse, and what role did national belonging play in shaping pacifist arguments? The case of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, particularly its western and northern regions, is especially relevant in this context. The postwar borders redrew the political map of the region, leaving part of the Slovene- and Croat-speaking populations within the territories of Italy and Austria. The proximity of fascism was therefore not merely an abstract political development, but a tangible geopolitical and cultural threat. This situation shaped public debates on nationalism, statehood, and international relations, and provides an important framework for understanding how pacifist ideas were expressed and negotiated within Slovenian-speaking society. In the presentation, I will examine the representation of the nation in pacifist thought by focusing on women's political thought in two Slovenian

women's magazines, *Žena in dom* [Wife and a Home] and *Ženski svet* [Woman's World], in the 1930s. I will research who were the women who engaged with these topics, in what way, and from which ideological framing. Through an analysis of their writings, I will explore not only the idea of "brotherhood among nations", but also how the nation itself was perceived and articulated within pacifist thought.

PANEL 30 NARRATING THE NATION IN THE YUGOSLAV SPACE

Sunday 20 September, 17.30–19.00, Floor I

Affective Afterlives of the Yugoslav Wars: Perpetrator Life Writing from the ICTY

Dušan Janković

Utrecht University, the Netherlands

20.dusan.jankovic.01@gmail.com

This paper examines a corpus of autobiographical texts authored by individuals convicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), with a particular focus on Bosnian Serb political and (para)military actors. Produced largely under conditions of internationalized incarceration in the aftermath of the Yugoslav Wars (1991-1999), these texts form part of a substantial body of writing generated by twenty-two ICTY indictees. The 'ICTY Library', as Serbian historian Vladimir Petrović (2018) calls it, comprises over one hundred published works across various genres ranging from compilations of documentary material, novels and poetry, to memoirs and diaries. While the visibility and political influence of accused and convicted war criminals in post-Yugoslav public life, especially in Serbia, has been extensively documented (Subotić 2009; Steflja 2017; Hola and Simić 2018; Ristić 2019), the popular resonance of these autobiographical narratives has also contributed to the emergence of what Ristić (2018) terms the 'ICTY celebrity'. Hitherto unexamined from a literary studies perspective, this paper approaches 'ICTY life writing' as a potent cultural form through which ethnic identity, historical responsibility, and national belonging are textually and affectively rearticulated in post-conflict Serbia and Republika Srpska. I argue that ICTY life writing participates in the post-Yugoslav, post-Dayton formation of Serbian national identity by translating international juridical condemnation of wartime atrocity into embodied experiences of ethnic persecution and historical captivity. Through four case studies – Milan Lukić's "Confessions of the Prisoner of the Hague" [Исповест Хашког Сужња] (2011), Vinko Pandurević's "The Hague Submarine" [Хашка подморница] (2019), Biljana Plavšić's "I Testify" [Сведочим] (2005), and Duško Tadić's "Diary of the First Prisoner of the Hague" [Дневник prvog haškog zatočenika] (2010) – the paper shows how the speaking subject is constituted through bodily intensities dispersed across affectively charged landscapes and social structures. Villages, forests, warzones, prisons, and courtrooms thus become narrative loci through which 'anti-Serb violence' is imaginatively renegotiated via gendered, familial, and

religious markers. These textual-affective configurations produce moral coherence that resists the logic of international law, rework national humiliation and victimhood, and restructure how the Yugoslav Wars are felt and remembered. Bringing together life writing theory (Smith and Watson), affect theory (Ahmed), and Marxist literary criticism (Williams; Jameson), this paper develops a novel methodological and theoretical framework to the study of 'perpetrator testimony'. It asks how autobiographical texts written by perpetrators of mass atrocity in the Bosnian War (1992-1995) generate historically resonant fantasies wherein violence is displaced, denied, or collectivized and the Serbian national subject is reconfigured through space, body, and history. By analyzing perpetrator life writing from the ICTY as an affective practice rather than a factually sound historical account of the Bosnian War, this paper contributes to interdisciplinary debates on nationalism, memory, and perpetration of mass violence. It further demonstrates how narratives emerging from the 'other side' of the ICTY continue to trouble reconciliation efforts in Southeastern Europe.

PANEL 30 NARRATING THE NATION IN THE YUGOSLAV SPACE

Sunday 20 September, 17.30–19.00, Floor I

The Undesirable Other: Serbs in Contemporary Croatian Film

Nebojša Đorđević

University of Belgrade, Serbia

nebojsa.djordjevic811@gmail.com

At the beginning of 2026, the Croatian film *Svadba* (The Wedding) became a regional blockbuster. The best European documentary film in 2025, according to the European Film Academy, is *Fiume o morte!* by Igor Bezinović. A year earlier (2024), the Croatian short film *Čovjek koji nije mogao šutjeti* (The Man Who Could Not Remain Silent) also entered the shortlist for an Oscar. This wave of international recognition for Croatian cinematography has an interesting common thread: all these films transcend narrow national frameworks, incorporating “other” identities, peoples, and spaces. This paper explores precisely that contradiction at its most sensitive point: the portrayal of Serbian identity. Through the analysis of three key films created in the last ten years: the documentary *Srbenka* from 2018 (by Nebojša Slijepčević, who would later make *The Man Who Could Not Remain Silent*) and two works from 2019: the sci-fi zombie comedy *Poslednji Srbin u Hrvatskoj* (The Last Serb in Croatia, directed and written by Predrag Ličina) and the historical documentary/drama *Dnevnik Diane Budisavljević* (The Diary of Diana Budisavljević, directed by Dana Budisavljević), the paper examines how Serbian identity is represented at a time when Croatia has consolidated its statehood and territorial integrity, thirty years after the war. The theoretical framework combines Stuart Hall’s approach to identity in popular culture with postcolonial concepts of the “Other” and hybridity. This analysis shows that, although these films open a space for marginalized voices and question national narratives, Serbian identity within them remains structurally undesirable. It appears as foreign, problematic, and constantly surrounded by cultural distrust and the political burden of the past. The paper further argues that the very impossibility of a neutral or normalized representation is best seen in what the films omit. Therefore, the biographical film *Dražen* (2024) is also introduced into the analysis, whose “silence” about Petrović’s origins—not only in the film but in public discourse—is louder than many clichés. Dražen Petrović is almost the heroic (first) basketball player of independent Croatia, yet we know almost nothing about his relationship with his father (who is of Serbian origin) and Yugoslavia (where

he achieved his greatest successes). In a way, Serbian identity is still present as an inexpressible tension at the heart of Croatian culture. The conclusion of the paper asserts that, despite international success and the efforts of the authors, Croatian film fails to intellectually and emotionally incorporate Serbs as the Other into the national narrative. The representation remains trapped in the dialectic of revelation and concealment, pointing to deeper, unresolved social rifts. Through the acknowledgment of his own hybrid position, the author also positions this analysis as a personal examination of the boundaries between ethnic formations in the post-Yugoslav space.

