

BETWEEN PERIPHERIES:

Critical-Relational Security from CEE and the Global South

All keynotes, panels, workshops, registration, and reception are held in Tallinn University's Mare Building (Uus-Sadama 5 / Narva rd. 25)

22nd January (Thursday)

15:00-16:30 Workshop “What is our role as scholars at a time of monsters?” (Mare Atrium, 3rd Floor). Moderators: Birgit Poopuu and Benjamin Klasche

17:00-18:30 Documentary Screening (M-218). Moderators: Kevin Molloy and Sophie Turner

Films: Paulina Belik – ‘From Narva With Love’; Maria Kapajeva – ‘The Enforced Memory’

23rd January (Friday) M-134, M-225, M-213, M-218 (Mare building, Tallinn University)

09:30-11:30 Keynotes (M-218)

- Madina Tlostanova, Professor of Postcolonial Feminisms, Linköping University, Sweden

“Can the abandoned re-exist? Imagining transversal onto-epistemic survival/care/adaptation coalitions between peripheries”

- Nivi Manchanda, Professor of Global Politics, Queen Mary University of London, UK

“Jean Genet and the Politics of Fugitive Solidarity”

12:00-13:30 Panel presentations (parallel sessions)

Session 1 (M-218). Roundtable: Looking Back, Moving Forward: Decolonial Dialogues on Central Asia and Eastern Europe

This roundtable presents a forthcoming special issue emerging from the Decolonial Dialogue Forum held at the University of Amsterdam in October 2024. The Forum brought together leading scholars working on Central Asia, Eastern Europe, and Northern Eurasia to challenge dominant, Russia-centric academic narratives and examine the impact of colonial legacies on contemporary forms of governance, migration, and identity in the region.

Framed within the theme of “Between Peripheries,” the roundtable interrogates how knowledge production from and about these geographies can be decolonized through interdisciplinary, dialogical, and intersectional approaches. Key themes include epistemic marginalization, post- and decolonial political imaginaries, racialized labor migration, gendered resistance, and cultural survival. Participants will introduce their contributions to the special issue and reflect on broader thematic intersections. Together, the roundtable fosters dialogue on building transregional decolonial solidarities between ‘peripheries’ and advancing non-imperial modes of scholarship across the Eurasian space.

- Dr. Olga Burlyuk (University of Amsterdam) will examine discursive colonialism in Eastern Europe and argue for relational, care-centered methodologies in political science.
- Dr. Nodira Kholmatova (University of Amsterdam) will explore how Central Asian labor migrants are racialized and governed through exploitative policies in Russia and beyond, jeopardizing mobile populations’ security and representation.
- Dr. Gulnaz Sibgatullina (University of Amsterdam) will reflect on cultural and linguistic decolonization among ethnic and religious minorities in the Russian Federation.
- Dr. Diana Kudaibergen (University College London) will discuss digital activism in Kazakhstan as a form of resistance to authoritarian and colonial power structures.
- Dr. Tereza Hendl (University of Augsburg) will explore decolonial feminist approaches to care, embodiment, and knowledge-making in post-socialist spaces.
- Dr. Assel Tutumlu (Near East University) will provide a comparative perspective on decolonial politics and resource governance in Central Asia and Turkey.



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Session 2 (M-225). Land, Justice, and Resistance: Indigenous and Environmental Struggles.

Moderator: Benjamin Klasche

- Liu Yung-Chen: "Resisting Colonial Frameworks Through Practice: Lessons from a Pangcah-Led School Movement"

As a Han teacher disillusioned by the high pressure of exam-driven education, I left the school system heartbroken-unable to see a way out for my students or education. In 2020, when I encountered the Sakalatamdaw working group-Pangcah-led education team, I saw a glimmer of hope. Sakalatamdaw is the Pangcah term for the Pangcah primary school, which means: education to become a human being. Sakalatamdaw working group has been resisting Taiwan's Han-Chinese dominated colonial framework through practice for nine years. This paper reflects on what I have learned through participating in and observing this ongoing school movement. I identify three mechanisms of decolonial practice: (1) forming grassroots reform collectives, (2) moving beyond colonizers-defined of Indigenous culture, and (3) disrupting the reproduction of dominant language, values, and culture in formal schooling. The movement also challenges dominant understandings of "culture" in education. (1) Culture is not a subject taught in the classroom; rather, it must be practiced continuously throughout daily life. (2) Traditional knowledge is not static or stuck in the past, but dynamic and responsive to the present. As a non-indigenous researcher, presenting the experiences of the Pangcah can serve the following purposes: (1) Help the Han understand that the Pangcah have not been legally granted leadership in education and continue to be colonized. (2) To provide a method for decolonization and recovery of cultural rights.

- Hyeyoon Park: "Two Narratives of Securitization and Norm Development in Transnational Governance of Critical Mineral Resources: Toward sustainability?"

Along with the rapidly increasing global demand for critical mineral resources for energy transition, critical mineral resource governance has become an urgent topic in security debates. The intensified geopolitical turbulence, particularly after the Russian-Ukraine War trigger the securitization of critical mineral resources, which (re)shape the core norm structure in the current transnational mineral resource governance architecture. This paper examines different approaches to securitizing mineral resources and to what extent sustainability norms are emphasized by transnational governance institutions, considering the tremendously negative social and environmental risks of mineral resource extractions. Drawing on securitization and norm literature, this research traces institutional and policy discourse changes related to critical mineral securitization in ten selected transnational mineral resource governance institutions out of fifty-two cases based on a mapping exercise. The main findings demonstrate two emerging narratives of securitization emphasized by different types of governance institutions: 1) a hierarchical national security-centered nexus, prioritizing national security norms over sustainability norms (norm-ordering), and 2) a horizontal multi-layered security nexus, emphasizing multiple norms interlinked, such as a human rights norm, an environmental norm, and a national security norm (norm-layering). The divergent ontological understandings of "security-norms" show a normative fragmentation in the governance realm, which could lead to accountability problems among the main governance actors. In addition, this finding speaks to the critical question of "whose security matters" in a transitioning world an issue deeply rooted in the relational ontology of International Relations, particularly through the lenses of critical and ecological security, and closely aligned with the core theme of the CEEHub conference.

- Kanika Varma: "Reimagining Democracy from Below: Caste, Ecology, and Resistance in the Indian Farmers' Protest"

The 2020-21 Indian Farmers' Protest, one of the largest mass mobilizations in recent history, offers a generative site for rethinking the categories and agents of global politics. Defying the historical fragmentation of agrarian struggles along caste and class lines, the movement brought together both landed and landless peasants in sustained resistance to neoliberal agricultural reforms. But the protest went beyond legal demands or economic grievances. Through decentralized organizing, collective care infrastructures, and the symbolic occupation of public space, it articulated a radical vision of democracy rooted in ecological justice, social equality, and renewed claims to land and livelihood. Rather than being a reactionary defense of tradition, the protest forged new political imaginaries, challenging dominant assumptions about who speaks for the rural, what counts as resistance, and how democratic life might be enacted from below. In this way, the movement itself theorized and practiced alternatives to capitalist and caste-based modes of ordering, offering a living critique of extractive development and state abandonment. By centering the voices, strategies, and solidarities emerging from this struggle, the protest expands the terrain of political thought, refusing the narrow temporalities and agents traditionally prioritized in International Relations. It illuminates how resistance is not only oppositional, but also constitutive-actively building new worlds from the ground up. As such, the movement invites us to reconceive the objects, methods, and purposes of global political inquiry, opening space for forms of knowledge and politics that disrupt disciplinary enclosures and make room for more emancipatory futures.



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- María Cárdenas: "Learning from milenaria initiatives and ancestral diplomacy: on pluriversal strategies for planetary survival"

The paper starts from three main assumptions: First, that we are facing a global polycrisis (Albert, 2024), where violence and destruction overlap. Second, solutions to this polycrisis require pluriversal responses (Escobar, 2020), and third, pluriversal actors seek strategies for peace and protection that are both rooted in and go beyond the limits of the nation-state. Understanding Colombian ancestral activism among Indigenous, Afro-Colombian, and other ethnicized actors, as one of many starting points from where pluriversal peace and protection diplomacy emanates (Cárdenas et al. 2023, Cárdenas 2025b), the paper discusses two pluriversal strategies: first, community initiatives toward protection in Colombia, such as the Guardia Cimarrona and Guardia Indígena, and their inter-ontological alliances to protect the pluriverse (Cárdenas 2023). These milenaria (millennial) initiatives originate from the protection against colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade and have protected their communities and their communities' ontologies up until now (Cárdenas 2025a). They can not only help us move beyond Euro- and anthropocentric security approaches but also assist in redefining how we should understand «living in security» to live without fear. Second, it examines pluriversal peace and protection initiatives that emerge from the local level through rooted and conventional diplomacy at the transnational and global levels to explore the empirical and theoretical potential of pluriversal responses to current global peace and security threats.

In dialogue with the fourth and fifth key questions of the 1st International Conference of the Central and Eastern European Security Hub ("Between Peripheries: Critical-Relational Security from CEE and the Global South," Tallinn University, 22–25 January 2026) and building on critical ethnography and on-going collaboration with ancestral activists and diplomats, the paper explores how such initiatives prompt a rethinking of time, space, protection, and territory. By foregrounding rooted diplomacy from Colombia, the paper advances relational and pluriversal theorizing in peace and conflict studies, critical security studies, and international relations, and highlights its relevance for local and global political practice.

14:30-16:00 Panel presentations (parallel sessions)

Session 1 (M-218). Forging Solidarities: Global South and Global East Connections.

Moderator: Birgit Poopuu

- James Eastwood: "Solidarity under fire: imperial entanglements and anti-colonial resistance in Ukraine and Palestine"

Since the invasion of Ukraine and the genocide in Gaza, the imperial politics of both wars have become entangled in mainstream and critical security discourses. The Biden Administration and its allies justified their support for Ukraine and Israel as part of a 21st-century "arsenal of democracy." Yet in reality Western hypocrisy in supporting Israeli apartheid and genocide has undermined efforts to cultivate solidarity with Ukraine, especially in the Global South. Compounding this problem, some left-liberals and even post-colonial scholars have called for opportunistic alliances with NATO against Russian imperialism. In response, certain Leftist critiques draw parallels between Western support for Israel and Ukraine to suggest that Ukraine's struggle for self-determination is an imperialist cause. These competing framings have crowded out alternative narratives that emphasize the anti-imperial nature of both the Ukrainian and Palestinian struggles. Anti-imperialists have failed to fully grapple with what solidarity might mean when the Western military-industrial complex backs both Ukrainian resistance and Israeli genocide. To address this gap, this paper reassesses the connections between Western support for Ukraine and Israel from an anti-imperialist perspective. It begins by deconstructing the rhetorical strategies that analogise Ukraine and Israel, revealing the flaws in such an equivalence. The paper then analyses the military aid provided to Israel and Ukraine, highlighting significant differences but also areas of overlap, especially in artillery and missile defence. It situates this pattern of aid within broader imperial and capitalist interests, arguing that these structural factors, not political principles, drive Western support. Meaningful solidarity with Ukraine and Palestine, the paper contends, requires rejecting entanglements with Western imperialism and its military-industrial complex. Drawing on historical examples of solidarity with anti-colonial liberation struggles in the Global South - particularly the Algerian War of Independence and the Angolan Civil War - it charts a path forward. The paper concludes by exploring what this alternative solidarity might look like in Ukraine today.



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- Ragnar Weilandt: “The costs of double-standards: Anti-Western sentiments, disinformation and the reactions to Russia’s war on Ukraine in the Global South”

While the Western world was rather fast, united and unequivocal in condemning Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, reactions from the Global South were more varied. Russia's war on Ukraine is that of a European empire on a country it formerly colonised. Yet, among those countries most sympathetic to Russia's narratives and most critical of Western support for Ukraine are many of the countries in the Global South that were formerly colonised by European empires. This paper explores and discusses the origins of such sentiments by tracing the legacy of Western and Soviet conduct during the Cold War as well as more recent, post-1989 developments. These latter ones include most prominently Western policy in the Middle East, and in particular the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq as well as decades of Western support for the state of Israel in its conflict with the Palestinian people. In doing so, the paper illustrates how in obtaining rather limited open support from non-Western countries, the Ukrainians are paying the price for perceived and actual double standards in European and American past and present conduct in international affairs.

- Mohammed Mutala Surazu: “Voices from the Edge: CEE and Global South Perspectives on Security and Resistance”

This paper explores the intersections of security and resistance as understood and articulated from the “edges” of global power specifically from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and the Global South. Mostly, the Western-Centric institutions and epistemologies shapes security discourse within the CEE which serves as grounds for alternative narratives emerging from post-socialist and postcolonial contexts. A critical examination of these regions often framed as peripheries in global politics generate distinct approaches to security that are relational, historically grounded, and deeply intertwined with experiences of marginalization, imperial legacies and structural violence. Reading from interdisciplinary insights from critical security studies, postcolonial theory, and DE colonial thought, the paper analyzes how actors in CEE and the Global South challenge dominant security paradigms by centering human dignity, political autonomy, and collective resilience. It highlights how grassroots movements, feminist networks, and indigenous and de colonial activists articulate security not merely as protection from threats but as resistance to neoliberal governance and external political control. A careful comparative study, such as anti-militarist resistance in Eastern Europe, anti-colonial solidarity movements and localized peacebuilding efforts in Africa and Latin America offers relational frameworks rooted in shared historical struggles and cross-regional solidarities. This further disrupts global security logics of East/West and North/South within the entire European bloc. Ultimately, the paper argues for re-centering international security discourse around the lived realities and epistemologies of those long excluded from global policy making. By amplifying voices from the edge, it contributes to an emerging understanding of security that moves beyond hegemonic models to embrace multiplicity, resistance and the politics of everyday life.

- Mina Baginova: “Contested Solidarities: Feminist Politics of Security in Central and Eastern Europe After 2022”

The 2022 full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine has exposed structural tensions within transnational feminist politics, catalyzing a reckoning around the meaning of solidarity, resistance, and security. While many Ukrainian and Central and Eastern European (CEE) feminists articulated security as an existential and embodied condition rooted in survival, territorial sovereignty, and collective resistance, segments of Global South and Western feminist networks responded with anti-militarist manifestos grounded in universalist anti-imperialist frameworks. As Hendl et al. (2022) argue, these positions often reproduce privileged pacifism and epistemic erasure, sidelining the specific historical and geopolitical experiences of post-socialist and borderland feminists. This paper draws on multi-sited ethnographic research conducted between 2022 and 2024 across CEE transnational feminist networks. It examines how CEE feminist activists have responded to these frictions not only by resisting their marginalisation within transnational discourses, but by reclaiming their own political genealogies, including dissident, anti-fascist, and solidarist traditions. Through this, they are actively redefining security not as a state-centric or militarised concept, but as a condition of livability, dignity, and resistance rooted in specific place-based struggles. This reframing echoes Kurylo's (2022) concept of counter-populist performances of (in)security, in which feminist protest reclaims space and recasts vulnerability as collective strength. The paper argues that these developments mark a pivotal rupture in feminist internationalism, demanding a shift away from binary frameworks (e.g., North/South) toward a more plural, historically attentive model of solidarity. By centering CEE feminist epistemologies and practices, the paper contributes to a reimagining of transnational feminism that accounts for geopolitical difference not as a threat, but as a generative condition for alliance.



Session 2 (M-225). Challenging International Power Hierarchies.

Moderator: Lina Klymenko

- Reiko Shindo: "Multisensory listening practices: Doing fieldwork when you do not 'speak the language'"

'Do you speak the language?' In the context of academic research, this question is often directed to researchers who are about to embark on ethnographic (or ethnographically inspired) fieldwork in a 'foreign' place: they are expected to understand the language of the research site, which allows them to listen better to the voice of people whom they interact. The question about language competence for fieldwork thus appears to be technical, merely inquiring about research skills necessary for well-informed research. This paper starts from a different premise, however: I consider that the language competence question in ethnographic research is about knowledge production in the context of coloniality. Ethnography is 'a research method and a mode of knowledge production...seeking to understand – through a Western gaze – foreign cultures and distinct communities' (Koskinen-Koivisto et al., 2020, p.xx). In other words, whether a person can 'speak the language' of other people is inseparable to the question of whose 'voice' is heard and how it is taken as 'knowledge' by whom. Although the current ethnographic research is not the same as that of the colonial era, the 'various kinds of unbalanced power hierarchies...continue to pose challenges' for ever-evolving ethnographic research practice (Koskinen-Koivisto et al., 2020, p.xxi). In this regard, colonialism never stays in the distant memory but continues to shape contemporary ethnographic research whereby the perceptions of and narratives about the 'other' are produced through the power relations involving researchers and people around them. In this paper, I focus on the ways in which coloniality and language reveal a specific condition of senses embedded into the question about language competence. Drawing on the writings of three postcolonial authors, Rey Chow, Wen Youjou, and Lee Yangji, I examine in what way the verbo-centric approach to knowledge production is deeply implicated into colonial practices and highlight the critical roles multiple senses play in locating postcolonial voices.

- Leena Vastapuu: "From Social Navigation to Social Rafting: A Critical Revision"

This paper proposes social rafting as a conceptual alternative to the widely utilised notion of social navigation especially in youth and conflict research (e.g., Honwana 2000; Utas 2005; Vigh 2006). While "navigation" has undoubtedly served as a useful metaphor for describing agency in precarious settings, it remains imbued with colonial, imperialistic, and patriarchal undertones. Such connotations evoke images of mastery, control, and conquest over unknown territories that are not only historically problematic but also analytically limiting. Based on ethnographic research in postwar Liberia, I introduce social rafting as a more grounded and relational metaphor. Unlike navigation, rafting does not presume skill, direction, or sovereignty over one's path. Instead, it highlights the collective and often improvised ways in which individuals move through "rivers of insecurities," shaped by the materials at hand, the strength of the current, and the presence, or absence, of fellow rafters. Social rafting foregrounds vulnerability but also resourcefulness, and the uneven distribution of safety and support. In doing so it offers a nuanced possibility to approach agency in conditions of structural precarity and violence. This conceptual shift challenges dominant epistemologies in academic knowledge production practices by decentering a Eurocentric metaphor through lived experiences from the Global South. It contributes to broader efforts to decolonize theory and methodology in the study of conflict, youth, and mobility.

- Sirke Mäkinen: "How to Dismantle Coloniality? Kazakhstani Academia and Global Knowledge Production"

This paper examines the role of Central Asia in global knowledge production from the perspective of Kazakhstani academia-representatives of the Global East. Specifically, it explores how Kazakhstani scholars conceptualise the need to decolonise global knowledge production, and what this entails in practice within the context of Kazakhstan and, more broadly, Central Asia (see e.g. Doolotkeldieva & Ortmann, 2024; Sharipova et al., 2024). Key questions include: From whom or what should decolonisation occur? What are the implications for international collaboration in education and research? With whom should Kazakhstani scholars, higher education institutions, and the government engage? Who or what constitutes the main obstacles to equitable knowledge production? Theoretically, this qualitative case study draws on Raewyn Connell's concept of Southern Theory and employs thematic analysis as its principal analytical method. The primary data consist of semi-structured interviews conducted by the author in 2024 with institutional-level actors-namely, academics and administrators working in the humanities and social sciences at various universities in Almaty-as well as media materials published by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

- Tyyne Karjalainen: "From just peace to just peace: Ukraine shaping European knowledge production on the war"

Earlier research has noted that knowledge production on Russia's war in Ukraine has long been dominated by epistemic imperialism and "Westplaining." However, during the full-scale invasion, it has become evident that Ukraine's diplomatic efforts have succeeded in influencing Western policy narratives. European leaders adopted President Zelenskyy's concept of a just peace and followed the Ukrainian example of contesting calls for peace at any cost. This paper analyses how Ukraine managed to challenge hierarchies of knowledge production during the full-scale war and to assert epistemic agency in the international discourse. It also explores the limits of this shift, as illustrated by the change in international narratives following Donald Trump's re-election. To do this, the research analyses speeches of European state leaders before the full-scale invasion, before Trump's re-election, and after it.

- Lina Klymenko: "Decolonizing Memory Norms: The International Recognition of the Holodomor as the Ukrainian Genocide"

Since February 2022, following the advent of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, the Ukrainian government has made great efforts to promote the remembrance of the 1932-33 famine in the Soviet Ukraine known as the Holodomor from the margins of historical knowledge to the core of international collective memory discourse. The Ukrainian Parliament appealed to international organizations and parliaments across the world, urging them to recognize the Holodomor as a genocide of the Ukrainian people and to condemn the current Russian war of aggression. This appeal has been met with a strong response, not only among European Union's heavyweights such as Germany and France, but also among international institutions, e.g. the European Parliament, which had previously remained reluctant to acknowledge the Holodomor as a Ukrainian genocide. Given this evolution of perspective, I wonder how this change in international remembrance practices became possible. How do countries challenge international hierarchies and emancipate themselves through mnemonic decolonization? How do they change the accepted knowledge production modes and channels to achieve this task? My contribution traces the transformation of the Holodomor memory over the last several decades, first in the Ukrainian diaspora in North America, then in Soviet Ukraine, and finally in independent Ukraine. I argue that Ukraine's strategy to challenge the international "memory norms" has been grounded in three modes of knowledge production about the Holodomor: 1) experiential knowledge (making other countries "experience" the famine through certain remembrance rituals), 2) narrative knowledge (employing a certain type of language in policy documents), and 3) relational knowledge (referring to similar historical experiences suffered by other nations).

16:30-18:00 Panel presentations (parallel sessions)

Session 1 (M-218). Roundtable: (Re-)Thinking Feminist Perspectives on Peace, War & Security.

This roundtable, featuring a selection of authors contributing to a new edited volume on (Re-)Thinking Feminist Perspectives on Peace, War & Security, explores the theoretical, methodological, empirical, and geographical boundaries of feminist scholarship on peace, war and security – beyond what is traditionally defined as the Global North. Even with more scholarship on Feminist Security Studies emerging from places outside the anglosphere (e.g. Estudios Feministas de Seguridad desde América Latina y el Caribe just published open access here: <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/la-seguridad/21867.pdf>), most of the research published in this area continues to originate from scholars and institutions based in the Global North. In the wake of the current global crises and the many feminist contestations, it is critical to take the interdisciplinary thinking beyond the Western hegemony and engage in productive discussions that will encourage transnational multidirectional flow of feminist knowledge and bridge the North-South/East-West divide at academic, activist and policy levels. Given the theme of the conference, we hope our reflections will be welcome and that conference participants will provide inputs beyond that of the panelists to further strengthen this work.

Participants: Mila O'Sullivan, Bénédicte Santoire, Graziella Piga, Laura Luciani, Josefa Stiegler, Oksana Dutchak

Session 2 (M-225). Borders, Migration, and Racialized Security in Europe.

Moderator: Amal Abu-Bakare

- Marco Zampieri: "Europe's Border Empire: Securitizing Migration Through Racialized Outsourcing"

This paper offers a critical analysis of the growing paradigm in EU externalized migration policy characterized by outsourcing of migration management practices outside of EU borders, notably through agreements with third countries in North Africa and the Western Balkans. The paper uses two cases of EU border externalization as entry points to critically interrogate the normalization of such policies. The first case focuses on a 2024 agreement between Italy and Albania, which entails the construction of migrant camps managed by Italy on Albanian soil to detain and process asylum seekers. The second case focuses on the EU migration agreement with Libya, which provides funding and training to the Libyan coast guard to facilitate illegal pushbacks on the North African coast. The paper makes a post-structural analysis of (re)bordering and othering in Europe's geographical neighborhoods by combining policy documents and migrant testimonies in both cases. In doing so, the paper argues that the growing externalization paradigm in EU migration policy, justified on the ground of responding to the so-called "migration crisis" and combating human trafficking, in practice relies on extant North-South and Center-East colonial relations to target racialized migrants in an attempt to restrict, detain, deter and push back asylum seekers, often by relying on authoritarian actors. This securitizing approach, in turn, results in a multiplication of human right violations, increasing exposure of refugees to violence, and reproducing North-South and Center-East colonial hierarchies. Key words: EU Migration Policy, Externalization, Rebordering, Colonial Relations.

- Melanie Jandl: “Visual Securitization of Intersectional Identities: European Media’s Approach to Refugee Movements from Ukraine and the Global South”

Identities and news stories can be regarded as social constructs dependent on cultural, social, and political contexts. Especially in discourses about migration, we often find media narratives stipulating an “us” as opposed to “them.” However, an individual is never only a man or a woman, Black or white, old or young, rich or poor, straight or queer—they are an identity at the intersection of all these attributes, which positions them within a particular hierarchy dependent on social class, sex, gender, race, age, and more. The line between “us” and “them”, “threat” or “victim” thus becomes blurry. This paper derives from my master’s thesis, which analyzed the visual securitization of refugees and other migrants depending on the intersectional identity of depicted individuals in Serbian and Hungarian news media during the “long summer of migration” in 2015. The research revealed the gendered and racialized logic in distributed photographs and how they were used to securitize people coming to Europe in respective national contexts. It furthermore underpinned how the erection of a border fence between an EU Member State and a candidate country constructed the dichotomies of “us” and “them” not only between refugees and locals, but within Europe itself, and took into account the migration experiences of people from the Western Balkans toward the EU and Central European states by applying Lene Hansen’s model of intertextuality. While the initial research focused solely on the events of 2015, this paper includes new contexts and experiences stemming from the recent migratory developments in Europe, i.e. the war in Ukraine. It aims to contrast media narratives about the intersectional identities of Ukrainian refugees with those of refugees and other migrants simultaneously coming to Europe from the Global South. This should exemplify the importance of intersectional identities in Europe’s securitization of migration and the consequent policy decisions addressing respective refugees and migrants.

- Paul Higate: “An analysis of those fleeing conflict in Russia and Ukraine: Towards an everyday Geopolitics of the post-migrant actor”

This paper explores the post-migration experiences of Russian and Ukrainian migrants settling in post-Soviet satellite countries and parts of Latin America, emphasizing the everyday negotiations through which they navigate belonging, security, and identity. Drawing on post-migration literature, which shifts analytical focus from departure and arrival to the prolonged processes of integration, adaptation, and meaning-making, the study highlights how these migrants engage with host societies’ civil institutions, often marked by ambivalence and bureaucratic exclusion. Their interactions with welfare systems, legal frameworks, and local communities are shaped by both expectations rooted in shared Soviet histories and the evolving political estrangement between origin and host states. These individuals simultaneously maintain transnational connections to family, media, and sociopolitical life back home, complicating fixed notions of resettlement and national loyalty. As such, migrants function as everyday agents navigating layered positionalities-between insider and outsider, victim and suspect, kin and stranger. Their presence surfaces tensions around national identity and regional security, especially in contexts where the legacies of Soviet rule and current geopolitical conflict intersect and extend as far as the previously non-aligned Latin America. Post-migration perspectives reveal how integration is not merely an administrative or cultural challenge, but a lived, ongoing negotiation of precarity, aspiration, and belonging. This study argues that Russian and Ukrainian migrants must be conceptualized not only in terms of displacement but as vectors through which broader geopolitical dynamics are materialized in local, everyday contexts. Migration, thus, is reframed as a site where individual lives reflect, absorb, and at times contest the shifting contours of post-Soviet and Latin American geopolitics.

- Josefa Maria Stiegler: “Securing Nordic Exceptionalism? Racialized Insecurities and Grassroots Responses in Sweden’s Urban Peripheries”

This paper explores how racialized, gendered and classed hierarchies shape security discourses and practices in Sweden. Sweden is often positioned as paragon of “Nordic exceptionalism”, the idea that the Nordic region is commitment to peace, equality and welfare, shaping humanitarian norms as international peace-makers. Yet since the early 2000s, Sweden has seen a sharp rise in deadly shootings linked to criminal networks, drawing significant attention both nationally and internationally. This surge in violence has become a politicized issue, often used to support anti-immigration narratives and legitimize increasingly punitive security measures. As a result, residents of racialized, working-class communities-where much of the violence is concentrated are often portrayed as the source of the problem, rather than recognized as citizens entitled to safety and protection. Rather than centering on state-centered notions of security, this paper asks: who is authorized to speak security in contemporary Sweden? How do communities living at the intersection of violence and securitization articulate their own security needs? How do residents respond to the simultaneity of neighborhood violence, state surveillance and policing? By foregrounding everyday perspectives, this paper shifts the focus from top-down definitions of security to lived experiences and grassroots forms of resilience and care. In doing so, it contributes to a critical-relational understanding of security that resonates with broader dynamics in the Global South and Global East-contexts where marginalized groups face similar paradoxes of hypervisibility and abandonment. Sweden’s racialized peripheries are thus not peripheral to security debates but offer vital insights into how global hierarchies and local struggles intersect, unsettle, and potentially reconfigure our understanding of security from below.



- Dr. Syed Shah: "Unlikely Alliances: Strategic Convergence, Sectarian Flexibility, and Security Solidarities in the Middle East"

This paper examines the emerging patterns of strategic convergence between Sunni militant groups and Iran's Shi'a-led regional security architecture. Moving beyond essentialist narratives of Sunni-Shia enmity, this research employs a relational security framework to examine how shifting geopolitical dynamics, anti-imperial sentiments, and survivalist logics are reshaping the sectarian contours of security across the Middle East. The study focuses on non-state actors operating in Syria, Gaza, Iraq, Yemen, and Afghanistan-contexts where securitization, foreign intervention, and fragmented sovereignty have rendered traditional alignments fluid. The central argument is that shared resistance to Western hegemony enables these unlikely alliances. Rather than viewing them as ideological contradictions, the paper conceptualizes them as adaptive practices of relational security that emerge from the margins of the global order. These formations reflect a broader Global-South logic of security that challenges the dominance of Western-centric frameworks. Methodologically, the study combines critical discourse analysis with qualitative interviews conducted with native security experts, journalists, and grassroots actors from the regions under examination. These narratives present grounded insights into how local communities and militant networks frame security, legitimacy, and alliance-building in conditions of prolonged instability. By situating these dynamics within a comparative Global South-Global East perspective, the paper contributes to a decolonial rethinking of security solidarities, revealing how subaltern actors co-produce alternative security imaginaries under conditions of exclusion and crisis.

Session 3 (M-134). Colonial Legacies: Violence, Law, and the University.

Moderator: Maria Mälksoo

- Bohdana Kyrulo, Kseniya Oksamytina, and Yulia Ioffe: "Colonial, Decolonial, and Anti-Colonial Imaginaries of Peace in Ukraine"

Competing imaginaries of peace in Ukraine after the 2022 full-scale Russian invasion reflected divergent conceptions of international order and global justice. Russia framed its aggression as a contribution to international security that delineated spheres of influence, revived great power management, and pacified allegedly chaotic Ukraine. Countries aspiring to act as neutral mediators, such as China and Brazil, reproduced colonial narratives that legitimized Russia's demands for domination over its neighborhood, requested Ukraine to accept subjugation in the name of global stability, and misrecognized paternalistic hierarchies in the Russo-Ukrainian relations as affinity and shared history. In response, Ukraine articulated a distinct variety of anti-colonialism that foregrounded sovereignty, territorial integrity, and boundary enforcement over the decolonial focus on hybridity. Ukraine's imaginaries of peace rejected self-victimization and peripheralization yet did not offer a critique of modernity and Eurocentrism. These findings demonstrate the need for recognizing multiple varieties of anti-colonial resistance shaped by specific colonial formations.

- Sheema Khawar: "The Colonial University: Examining Histories of Surveillance, Dispossession, and Control on Campuses"

In this paper I narrate the history of the earliest universities established on Turtle Island and South Asia, paying attention to their intimate ties with colonial infrastructures of governance, securitization and trade. Starting from the 1600's I briefly outline these histories, drawing connections across colonizing missions on Turtle Island and South Asia to illustrate how these missions provided the financial capital and the impetus for the formation of institutions such as Harvard University, University of California Berkeley and the University of Calcutta. These exploratory missions rapidly transformed into militarized incursions colonizing vast swathes of land across the globe, with an accompanying desire for the disciplined study of foreign lands, objects and cultures for the consumption of the British empire. The ivory tower created epistemological inroads, reproducing logics of the empire from the core to the colonies (Cohn, 1996) and effectively providing both, a justification as well as a concerted study of this endeavor. The university emerged as a critical site of knowledge production on liberal visions of social and political organization, and world making through capital accumulation. India, like other colonies, came to represent the limits of liberalism, her people scripted out of rational humanity, and deprived of the attendant dignities and virtues of the human condition. Here I argue that the earliest universities emerged as vital cogs in the colonial machinery, to shore up settler sovereignty, cultivate docile subjects and provide intellectual cover for mass-scale settler violence (such as genocide, enslavement, violent displacement and eco-cide). By mapping the earliest counterinsurgency infrastructures that were developed to surveil and subjugate native dissent across these distinct geographies, I illustrate how the university came to serve as a critical node of the colonial surveillance machinery.



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- Sachiko Funabashi: "Concept of Peace, State Identity Formation and Colonial Amnesia: The Case of the UK and Japan's Interventions in Afghanistan, 2001-2010"

This research aims to investigate the articulation of 'peace' in political discourse by examining the cases of the UK and Japan's interventions in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2010. While Peace and Conflict Studies examine the peacebuilding process in post-conflict countries, the conceptual analysis of peace among intervening actors has long been neglected. Peace has also been overlooked in Foreign Policy Analysis, as it is frequently regarded as a superficial, idealistic notion that merely adorns government statements. Buzan (1984) suggested that security is a balanced concept bridging the realist concept (power) and the idealist one (peace), which partly explains the current tendency to prioritise security over peace in academia. However, given the prevalent popularity of the concept of peace and ongoing debates on the tyranny of peace in world politics-highlighting its power to 'peace-wash' complex histories and struggles-it is imperative to consider how peace functions within the foreign policies of intervening states. Therefore, this paper will critically analyse the UK and Japan's government discourse on peace, exposing the imperial and colonial legacies embedded in shaping the concept of peace, while transcending the binary understanding of Western and non-Western countries. I argue that the UK and Japan's understandings of peace are intertwined with their processes of identity-making, which also coincide with their history-making, shaping the past to align with their self-understanding. As memories of World War II typically influence their states' identities, their connections to the military and militarism will also be interrogated, questioning the dominance of a militarised understanding of peace and security. In summary, it will examine the concept of peace in the political discourse of intervening actors and its entanglement with identity formation, highlighting the production of knowledge in the name of peace and advocating for a relational approach to understand the concept of peace.

- Mónica J. Sánchez-Flores: "Racializing Nation(s); a Radical Relational Approach to Processes of Racialization"

Racializing nation(s) is a book chapter where I propose that thinking about race and processes of racialization in terms of individuals and groups, as is done in late global capitalism, works to sustain coloniality (of being and knowing). And racism itself is substantialist thinking. Looking at the socially constructed notion of race in substantialist/deterministic or pseudo-substantialist/co-deterministic (Dépelteau 2018) terms hides the paradoxes that people living racialized bodies face with respect to privilege, disadvantage, and oppression-but those paradoxes exist in various ways for people with racial privilege too. In contrast, radical relationism conceives of embodied beings as clusters of relations in constant co-creation and entanglement and thus presupposes the materiality and embeddedness of human bodies. In the global south and the south of the global north, this materiality includes especially the intergenerational consequences of colonization and coloniality that manifest in embodied life, in aspects such as living conditions, availability of opportunities, education, health, criminalization, or intergenerational trauma (Kendi 2019). Racializing nation(s) embraces the decolonial notion that modernity exists inextricably entangled with coloniality (Quijano 2000) and explores how substantialist thinking works with coloniality for the purposes of what Mills (2023) has called "global white ignorance" as a form of "structural gaslighting" (Berenstain, 2020, Pohlhaus, 2020, Longair, 2025). The latter works through power differentials to racialize whole nations and distort the reality of modernity/coloniality, thus hiding its violent colonial side (and creating white ignorance about it), obtaining complicity from racialized embodied entities in this occlusion, and doing so within a power differential between racialized and non-racialized bodies under white supremacy. I use autoethnography and the example of mestizaje as a whitening project in Mexico and Latin America to illustrate this process as well as Saul's (2008) ideas on métissage in Canada.

- Wasiq Silan: "Millet as a Grain of Soul: Reclaiming Sovereignty through Indigenous Land-Based Practice in Taiwan"

Official political discourse has a distinct way of discussing questions of nationhood and sovereignty, often shaped by dominant Western institutions and state-centric epistemologies. This paper challenges the state-centric understandings of sovereignty by engaging with the notion of Indigenous relational sovereignty. Although contested, it generally points to a paradigm through which Indigenous nations self-govern and fulfill ethical responsibility grounded in kinship across different beings. This presentation centers on the sacred role of millet in Tayal life. For the Tayal, millet is not just a commodity or heritage crop. It is a grain of the soul, carrying memory, identity, and the Tayal law Gaga. To plant and care for millet is to sustain a web of relationships: with ancestors, with the land, and with generations yet to come. Drawing on the Millet Ark project-a land-based, community-led initiative in Taiwan-this presentation explores how Indigenous Tayal communities use millet not just to restore biodiversity or cultural practice, but to heal trauma, rebuild kinship, and reassert Indigenous presence. Millet Ark is led by Pagung Tomi's decade-long initiative to plant back ancestral millets in the Tayal territory, in a way plant back Tayal's knowledge, stories and cosmology that were once thought to be lost. Millet becomes a living expression of sovereignty, rooted in care, reciprocity, and grounded ways of knowing. Meanwhile, Millet Ark enacts a politics of refusal and regeneration. Taiwan's state-centric governance tends to operate in silos, often fragmenting and domesticating Indigenous actions-reducing sacred practices like caring the land of millet to cultural performance or agricultural education. This presentation aims to resist that reduction by strengthening and reframing millet cultivation as a valid, sovereign practice-one that reclaims identity, land, and political agency on Indigenous terms.



24rd January (Saturday)

09:30-11:00 Panel presentations (parallel sessions)

Session 1 (M-218). Epistemologies of the Periphery: Decolonizing Knowledge and International Order.

Moderator: Anders Wivel

- Shalabh Chopra: “Who Gets to Hope? On Situated Knowledge and the Ethics of Theorizing Hope”

This paper asks whether hope can truly be understood or theorized by those who have never needed it for their survival. Inspired by male-exclusionary feminism, which argues that men can never fully appreciate the ideals of feminism since they lack the lived experience of gendered discrimination, and thus can never be true feminists, it contends that theorization of political hope by those who have never fully borne the brunt of living under oppressive conditions, can never fully appreciate the nuances of hope which sustains the oppressed. The paper is based on a combination of an autoethnographic dialogue with a Palestinian refugee in the US, conversations with pro-Palestine activists in Aotearoa New Zealand, and personal recollections of attending pro-Palestine protest events. It seeks to explore the ‘gap’ there is between those who have directly experienced life under brutal Israeli subjugation and their understandings of hope, and those who express solidarity with the Palestinian cause. Ultimately, it argues that hope is not just an affect, but a situated knowledge, accessible only through conditions that make it necessary. Theorizing hope, then, for those who have not lived through such conditions, is ethically and politically fraught.

- Kateryna Pishchikova: “Global East as Method: Pluralizing the Binaries, Deimperialising the Region”

The Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has inspired new connections of solidarity and knowledge exchange aimed at opening the “black box” of the so-called post-Soviet region and at giving recognition to the plurality of the voices within. In Political Science and International Relations, this highly diverse region was too often studied within the predominant framework of transition to the western liberal model at the expense of region-based perspectives and indigenous knowledge(s). Despite great advances in critical IR literature, this region also remained largely off the radar of important debates on “globalizing”, “decentering” and “worlding” International Relations, with only a few notable exceptions. These overlapping liminalities perpetuated the region’s invisibility and limited its agency in international politics as much as in the discipline of IR. This paper treats the Global East as an epistemic space, from which structures, agencies and political imaginaries of regions can be questioned and (re)constructed. Building on a dialogic rather than dialectic approach to identity construction, it challenges a number of binaries that render the region invisible and fragmented. It also shows how the region’s overlapping liminalities and inter-imperiality limit the scope for political agencies and perpetuate existing insecurities in the region torn by war. The paper’s approach questions prevailing “geo-epistemologies” pointing instead to the territorial fluidity of knowledge and the need to de-essentialise identities and political projects. Although written primarily in dialogue with the IR literature, the paper contributes to broader decolonial ontologies and pluralist epistemologies that characterize a number of critical approaches across different disciplines.

- Emilian Kavalski: “The Persistence of Binaries in Global IR... or Why the Many Worlds Remain Invisible”

Despite the emergence of multiple global orders, persistent binary imaginaries such as “Global North/South” and “cooperation/competition”-continue to shape International Relations (IR) analyses across both mainstream and critical approaches. These binaries create significant blindspots that render many worlds invisible. Eastern Europe exemplifies this double exclusion, remaining largely absent from both Global North narratives of dominance and Global South critiques of marginalization. This reinforces the widespread perception that “globality happens elsewhere,” exposing the limitations of dominant IR paradigms. The 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine marks a critical reckoning, revealing Eastern Europe’s agency and its insurgent “unmapping” strategies that actively challenge inherited static cartographies and fixed state-centric imaginaries. To address these epistemic blindspots and illuminate the obscured multiplicity of global realities, this paper advances a topological perspective. It reconceptualizes connectivity as dynamic, power-laden encounters that co-constitute agency through contested proximities, where “reach” is understood in terms of relational intensity rather than spatial distance. Applying this lens uncovers IR’s landscape as a pluriversal space of interlocking regional worlds. Through an analysis of Eastern Europe’s transformation from a passive buffer zone to an active frontline region, this study challenges enduring binary frameworks and strives to make visible the many worlds that coexist yet remain obscured within global IR discourse.



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- Nadège Nzeyimana: “Beyond Western Frames: African Relational Perspectives on Climate and Security”

The climate crisis poses significant threats to peace and security, especially in vulnerable and conflict-affected regions. Yet it is frequently reduced to an environmental or natural disaster issue, framed as a market-based failure, leading to solutions grounded in capitalist mechanisms and technocratic fixes. This limited perspective overlooks the wider web of interconnections surrounding the climate crisis, including its links to peace and security. At the same time, it reinforces western discourses that position the Global South as passive victims and the Global North as both problem-solver and saviour. Such colonial binaries portraying an “all-powerful West” versus a “powerless Global South” marginalize the experiences and knowledge of those most affected by climate and security crises and limit the possibility of achieving transformative solutions. In this context, this article offers an exploratory contribution toward rethinking solutions to the climate crisis through a radical relational approach rooted in African knowledge systems and cosmologies.

Session 2 (M-134). Centering Care in War: Everyday Survival and Social Reproduction in (Post-)War Ukraine.

- Natalia Lomonosova: “Who has the time? Time-deprivation, violence and social reproduction in (post-)war Ukraine”

Since the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the concept of resilience has become central to public and international narratives about the country’s capacity to withstand the crisis. Yet the everyday labour that sustains this resilience – particularly in social service provision has remained largely invisible. This article examines how municipal social workers in Ukraine, the majority of whom are women, have maintained the provision of public services under conditions of war. Drawing on focus group discussions and interviews with social workers and managers across diverse municipalities in 2020-2025, the article investigates how these workers have navigated intensified demands amid displacement, infrastructural collapse, and widespread socio-economic hardship. Rather than viewing wartime resilience as a sudden response to the crisis, the article foregrounds the long-standing coping practices that social workers developed in response to structural austerity, decentralisation reform, and chronic underfunding since 2014. These pre-war strategies – including informal task-sharing, unpaid overtime, and reliance on personal networks and resources have been scaled up and repurposed during the war. By tracing the continuity between pre-war and wartime adaptations, this study contributes to critical scholarship on resilience, care work, and the everyday state. It calls for a rethinking of resilience not as a heroic or spontaneous response to conflict but as a labour-intensive and historically produced condition that relies on the invisible work of frontline care workers to compensate for structural failures in public policy and welfare provision. This raises concerns about the long-term sustainability of social protection systems that depend on the continued overstressing of local public sector workers.

- Olena Tkach: “The politics of (health)care: healthcare and nursing in the aftermath of the Russian invasion of Ukraine”

During the last few years, there have been two major shakeups in the Ukrainian healthcare system: COVID-19 and the full-scale Russian invasion. Both of these events have increased the demand for healthcare medical staff, as has increased the real risk to their lives. However, these factors had different effects on the bargaining power of nurses in Ukraine. If during the pandemic their salary doubled, then during the war, payments were cut and the network of medical facilities was reduced. The author proposes to consider in more detail the reasons for these differences, as well as the conditions that contributed to the politicization of this environment and the birth of the first nurses’ movement in the history of Ukraine, which challenges the underestimation of nursing work.

- Agnieszka Fal-Dutra Santos and Yuliia Soroka: “Everyday Violence, Everyday Survival: Towards Feminist Political Economy of War and (Post-)War Reconstruction”

Violence unleashed by a war is rarely, if ever, confined to the frontline and does not only manifest in physical harm. Political, economic, physical, psychological and symbolic forms of violence are intertwined; public violence – on the frontline, on the street, or in refugee camps often spills into the private space of homes; and the violence of war often continues into “peacetime”. The concept of war economies allows to capture how economic processes of production and reproduction, as well as economic policies developed during war and in its aftermath, intertwine and intersect with the violence unleashed by war. The Ukrainian war economy is shaped by a number of factors: the Russian aggression itself and the destruction it has caused; the mass displacements, which have affected people’s access to jobs and support infrastructures; and the changes in Ukrainian economic policies both to fund the war effort and to meet the requirements of international donors and lenders. In this paper we propose the notion of wartime care economies in order to make visible the way Ukrainians, and Ukrainian women in particular, are negotiating these factors in order to ensure social reproduction. Drawing on first-person narratives from Ukraine, literature of Ukrainian feminists and other secondary and gray literature, we examine the way intensified demands for care are being met through six different types of practices: individual care within households, neighborly and family support networks, displaced support networks, volunteering, civil society organizing, and the labor of workers employed in the social services sector. We suggest that an understanding of war economies is incomplete unless it takes into account the often non-monetized value created in the wartime care economy.



Session 3 (M-225). (Non)Secure Site of Solidarity: Converging Contradictions.

- Andrei Vazyanau: “Solidarity, Security, and Subalternity in Belarusian Experiences of Schengen Visa Seeking”

EU visa policies historically were influenced by intersecting, and occasionally conflicting ideas of security, ideals of solidarity, and the legacy of colonialism. However, visa-seeking practices in these contexts were rarely studied ethnographically. Following ethnographies of passport and visa use in the contexts of Balkan states and Central Asia, my presentation focuses on experiences of Schengen visa seeking among Belarusian nationals after 2022. Although Belarus was the world champion in the number of Schengen visas per capita with the lowest rejection rate before 2020, Belarusian applicants faced multiple restrictions since 2022, when Russian troops used Belarusian territory to invade Ukraine. Embassies of EU states in Belarus have started redirecting Belarusian applicants to consular offices in Russia, leading to new practices such as visa tours from Minsk to Moscow, where obtaining a Schengen visa is easier. While the number of visas issued to Belarusians dropped drastically from 681k in 2018 to 164k in 2023 and 157k in 2024, the number of Schengen visas issued to Russian nationals increased in 2024 (541k, in comparison to 449k in 2023). Using ethnography of visa seeking and visa use by Belarusians in 2024-2025, I explore the role of EU visa issuing practices in the construction of the subaltern Belarusian subject. First, I describe the discursive erasure of 2020 protests, 2022 anti-war resistance, and ongoing cultural partisanship in Belarus, contrasting with the 2020-2021 rhetoric of solidarity with Belarusians. Then, I analyse how, for Belarusians, visa-conditioned mobility is entangled with security concerns. After this, I focus on how Belarusian visa seekers experience and interpret today's Europe via visa application procedures.

- Nanina Graf: “Visibility on the Regime's Terms? Political Prisoners and Counter-Archives in Authoritarian Belarus”

In authoritarian regimes like Belarus, the visibility of political prisoners in the public eye is a calculated instrument of power. Prisons and penal colonies serve not to uphold security and the rule of law, but to punish and discipline dissent voices in an exemplary manner. The sudden reappearance of previously incommunicado detainees such as Maryia Kalesnikava and Viktor Babaryka, staged in a conversation with pardoned former prisoner Raman Pratasevich, or the unexpected release of Siarhei Tsikhanouski as well as the pardon of death row inmate Rico Krieger, are not acts of clemency. They are moments of state-controlled visibility, where signs of submission, frailty, or repentance are instrumentalized. In this context, visibility does not equate to safety. Rather, it becomes part of the Lukashenka regime's fluid and diffuse machinery of symbolic control. The decision to show, release, or pardon a political prisoner is not based on legal standards, but on the regime's shifting needs, whether to manipulate domestic sentiment or to influence international perception. In stark contrast stands the practice of testimony. Political prisoners and their support networks resist invisibility by creating counter-archives through letters, statements, and meticulous documentation. These acts record prison conditions, expose abuse, and reach out to the public that are otherwise structurally denied to them. In doing so, they reclaim a measure of agency in a system designed to erase it. Testimony, memory, and solidarity become tools of resistance and subjectivation, not grounded in state protection, but in collective responsibility. Especially in an environment marked by isolation and repression, these practices carve out fragile yet meaningful spaces of agency. They offer an alternative vision of security, one rooted in shared vulnerability, documentation, and transnational solidarity, where the state has systematically failed to provide it.

- Tania Arcimovich: “What is My Role in This War?” Becoming in Epistemic Solidarity”

The paper focuses on the drastic changes in the process of knowledge production caused by the Russian War in Ukraine. Epistemically, Ukrainian academics insist this war is “colonial” and “imperial”. They highlight the awareness of the politics of knowledge as a struggle for a particular truth regime and their epistemological positionality. However, the paper argues that this war emerges not between countries but intervenes in the field of knowledge production globally. Drawing on the experiences of female displaced scholars from Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia, this paper develops the concept of epistemic solidarity as one of the primary effects of this war. The aim is not to compare the experiences of these female scholars because they are incomparable in many respects, including power, recognition, and visibility in global academia. However, this comparison, or rather confrontation, is necessary to reveal tensions between these positionality, placing the notions of security and trust at the center. The correlation between different geopolitical viewpoints, including the Global South perspective, facilitates an examination of the specific dynamics in the epistemic field that are prompted and influenced by the Russian war in Ukraine. Additionally, it allows for the disclosure of various combinations of relations and connections among different agents who might be involved in creating solidarity as a strategy not merely to resist imperialism and epistemic coloniality but to decentralise and re-globalise the field.



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- Patryk Labuda: “Second World Approaches to International Law: Challenging Misperceptions and Building Bridges among Semi-Peripheries”

Where is Eastern and Central Europe (ECE) on the mental maps of international lawyers? This core question, which animates a new cross-disciplinary project called ‘Second World Approaches to International Law’ (SWAIL), emerges from the realization that, over three years after Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, many scholars from our region increasingly interrogate how the discipline of international law conceptualizes and interprets today’s events in Ukraine, a contested space situated at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, East and West, North and South. The project begins from the premise that ECE – an ill-defined, ambiguous, and often pejorative term encompassing the continent beyond the West – occupies a liminal space in international law. Neither of the ““core,”” nor fully of the ““periphery””, ECE occupies a semi-peripheral, often invisible mental space, which results in a form of dual exclusion: from both mainstream Western international law, and from non-Western, Third World Approaches to International Law. Against the backdrop of the SWAIL project, this paper examines how West-centric ideas like ‘civilization’, ‘imperialism’, ‘colonialism’ and ‘race’ – integral to international law concepts like ‘sovereignty’, ‘self-determination’ or ‘decolonization’ – include and exclude certain people’s experiences, defining both the history and the present of the discipline. Drawing on evidence from the post-2022 Russia-Ukraine war, the paper leverages debates about global responses to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine among scholars to interrogate how analyses – from Western and Global South perspectives – rooted in unwittingly West-centric frameworks often misdiagnose ECE’s context to make tenuous assumptions about the function of international law in the region. Integrating insights from post-colonialism, literary studies, comparative international law and IR scholarship, the paper explores the promise and limitations of centring ECE, as well as paths for collaboration with scholars from similarly situated regions, especially central Asia, Latin America and liminal actors like Vietnam, Japan or Liberia.

11:30-13:00 Panel presentations (parallel sessions)

Session 1 (M-218). Feminist Epistemologies and the Politics of Embodied Security.

Moderator: Élise Féron

- Annick T.R. Wibben: “Conceptualizing violence as continua – feminist insights for our time”

Feminists have long refused to treat wars as entirely distinct from peace. This arises first and foremost from a commitment to building knowledge on the basis of women’s experiences – experiences that are often marked by violence in the home, the public, and the international, as well as during peace and war. Consequently, feminists have argued that violence in peace-wartime needs to be conceptualized as a continuum. This paper reviews the existing literature on the topic to draw out key strands of feminist theorizing of violence as continua (multiple) with the aim of further developing the conceptual and theoretical basis in light of current global events – from the incessant gender backlash many countries are experiencing domestically (yet certainly a global phenomenon) to the total wars in Ukraine, Gaza, and beyond.

- Mila O’Sullivan: “Understanding Ukraine through Feminist Wartime Knowledge”

In response to Russia’s full-fledged war on Ukraine in 2022, many Western feminists imposed their abstract pacifist agendas as hegemonic idea of peace over Ukraine. Feminists in Ukraine and broader Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) have argued that this is a form of epistemic violence, calling for contextualizing knowledges that centre local and indigenous embodied experiences of the war and the patriarchal and imperial legacies of the Russian and Soviet empires (Hendl et al. 2024). While building on these epistemic debates, I explore how feminists’ wartime knowledge in Ukraine can help us understand their resistance to war and reimagining of peace across the past, present and future. I do so by drawing on decolonial and post-socialist feminist approaches (Sonevytsky 2022; Havelková 1996) aiming to advance feminist theorizing that is reflective of the reality and respectful of local agencies amidst the war context in Ukraine. The paper draws on in-depth interviews with Ukrainian feminists conducted in Ukraine prior to and after February 2022, including on repeated interviews. This allows to delve into the complexities of their lived experiences exposed in their stories and practices of resistance and political activism, care and self-care, self-protection and their everyday survival strategies. I show how these are reflected in the peace dilemma apparent among feminists prior to 2022 and in evolving feminist positions on “peace through victory” (Kyselova and Landau 2025) amidst Ukraine’s self-defence against Russia’s full-scale war. I demonstrate that their lived experiences and political agencies are crucial for the emancipatory path towards reimagining peace and reclaiming knowledge. Producing this knowledge can at the same time encourage more transnational dialogue and exchanges of embodied experiences across the Global South and North and ‘in-between’ spaces.



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- Zahra Edalati: “Feminist Peace Responses to Antifeminist Mobilizations Amid Everyday Militarization”

Focusing on two distinct yet comparable case studies, Iran and Finland, this study explores how critical anti-militarist feminist narratives engage with and resist militarization in different political and social settings. Iran has long been a militarized and securitized society under an authoritarian system. Since 2022, however, feminist movements have gained remarkable momentum, particularly with the emergence of the Woman, Life, Freedom movement in response to state repression and systemic gender-based discrimination. Militarization in Iran remains an ongoing process, intensified by regional tensions, its complex relationship with the United States, and recent Israeli attacks on Iran. These dynamics reinforce the illusion that women's issues must be sidelined in the name of 'national security'. In consequence of this illusion, women are considered a threat to national security, and women's oppression is escalated. Finland, traditionally associated with the Nordic Peace model and widely regarded as a global leader in gender equality, has experienced a parallel shift toward militarization since 2022. The war in Ukraine, NATO accession debates, and the rise of far-right, antifeminist movements in Finland and across the Nordic region have brought everyday militarization into focus. Although Finland is recognized for its commitment to peace and gender equality, the rise of antifeminist mobilization challenges this perception. These developments raise critical questions about whether the Nordic concept of peace can effectively counter rising antifeminist currents. This study draws on field observations, discourse analysis, media archives, and interviews with experts to examine feminist resistance in both contexts and explore how militarization reshapes gender politics across different geographies.

- Laura Luciani: “How are all these leaflets going to make Syunik safer?” Exploring the gendered politics of resilience along Armenia’s borderlands”

Over the past decade, resilience has become a buzzword in international interventions, including in the field of security. While some scholars problematise resilience-building interventions as a form of governmentality, others approach resilience from the bottom-up, highlighting its potential for coping with unjust systems and for resistance. This paper examines how ‘resilience’ redefines relations of (in)security in Syunik, Armenia’s southernmost province, and its gendered implications. Following the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war, and against the backdrop of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Syunik emerged as a vulnerable borderland shaped by two major refugee inflows from Nagorno-Karabakh, continuous border escalations and Azerbaijan’s expansionist threats. In this context, the resilience framework was adopted by a range of socio-political actors concerned with navigating uncertainty. Drawing on critical and feminist interventions across security studies, geopolitics and IR, the paper unpacks the ambiguities that emerge from the encounter between resilience-building interventions and local agency. It explores how ‘resilient subjects’ come to be and for which ends, while also considering bottom-up practices that disrupt the logics of top-down interventions. Building on fieldwork conducted between May 2023 and February 2024, the paper shows that resilience operates as a polysemic concept which is able to reshape relations of (in)security in complex and uneven ways. The discursive repertoire of resilience allows to legitimise gendered power relations at multiple scales, thereby sustaining geopolitical competition, elite-driven neoliberal interests and militarisation. At the same time, resilience is generative of multiple subjectivities and forms of agency – some of which may challenge dominant forms and prefigure alternatives based on solidarity and care. By foregrounding the gendered implications of resilience in a borderland marked by armed insecurity and intersecting imperialisms, the paper offers a critical interrogation of why and how resilience becomes ‘necessary’ – and for whom – in the (post-)conflict settings of Eastern Europe and beyond.

- Karmen Tornius: “The relational ‘becoming’ in women, peace and security ecosystems: Kenya and Ukraine”

On the surface, comparing women, peace and security (WPS) policies in Kenya and Ukraine may not make sense. Their security threats are entirely different: Kenya faces bouts of ethnic violence and terrorism threats, as well as previous experience with post-electoral violence; Ukraine is in active international conflict, with parts of the country occupied by a foreign power. Yet, that both countries adopted their first WPS national action plan, and are currently implementing a second one, offers a point of entry. The WPS action plans can be conceived of as a strategy of liberal peacebuilding. They are promoted by the UN Security Council and, on the ground, largely driven by UN Women. While both Kenya and Ukraine have proactive women's civil society which has to a degree become engaged in the national policy formulation on WPS, the processes for articulating, drafting and later assessing the impact of those policies are permeated by technocratic language and bureaucratic practices. They follow the UN Women model of global norm translation through Steering Committees, Working Groups; by echoing the language and ‘pillars’ set out in the UN Security Council resolutions; and by hiring consultants whose TOR's are almost interchangeable from country to country. In this paper I attempt to explore what kinds of relationships and relationalities do the WPS policy processes create. I am interested in interrogating the processes through which actors become rendered experts, brokers, allies, donors and perhaps adversaries to WPS, and how do power asymmetries as well as competing security rationalities shape those ‘becomings’. Juxtaposing the experiences of Kenyan and Ukrainian WPS actors will offer an opportunity to tease out Global South-Global East connections in the context of hegemonic and global liberal peace governance.



Session 2 (M-225). Security from Below: Everyday Life, Resistance, and Urban Belonging.

Moderator: Timothy Raymond Anderson

- David Rypel: “Which version of a secure life? Navigating everyday insecurity as a queer person in Georgia (Sakartvelo)”

This paper explores one specific dilemma that queers in Georgia (Sakartvelo) face when attempting to make their lives more secure: secure in what way? My ethnographic research reveals that punitive cisgender normative regimes of belonging compromise queer lives across five registers of security: physical, autonomous, material, relational, and infrastructural. A physically secure life is concerned with the integrity of one's body. An autonomously secure life allows individuals to feel that they live authentically and choose their own path. A materially secure life is about the ability to meet basic needs within Georgia's bleak socioeconomic climate. A relationally secure life provides validation, nurturing, and the confidence to be vulnerable without fear of rejection. Finally, an infrastructurally secure life relies on trust in accessible support networks during times of need. However, achieving security across all registers is difficult and contradictory. One is often forced to make trade-offs, where gains in one area come at the expense of another. For instance, enduring family abuse may be necessary to retain material support. Therefore, one often manages to enact only a partial or compromised version of a secure life, rarely a secure life. At the same time, there appears to be no universal hierarchy of concerns: people decide what kind of security currently matters to them the most in ways that do not necessarily follow preordained patterns, making attempts to create a universal definition of security futile. This paper draws on data generated between 2019 and 2023 through ethnographic research on the everyday security of queers in Georgia, using in-depth interviews and participant observation. It offers insights into research on security, belonging, and queer life in Georgia.

- Nawal Shaharyar: “Urban Belonging: Relational Security and Everyday Citizenship in Tallinn's Lasnamäe District”

This paper explores how everyday practices in Lasnamäe—a predominantly Russophone district of Tallinn, Estonia—challenge dominant frameworks of security. Moving beyond state-centric orientations to urban space, the paper investigates how security is negotiated not through institutional apparatuses, but social interaction, spatial visibility, and performative acts of citizenship in seemingly apolitical community practices such as urban gardening, historical walking tours, and park usage. These activities, often dismissed as mundane, are reframed as a form of performative citizenship—ways in which marginalized residents stake claims to space, history, and national narratives from a position of perceived ‘outsiderness’ to assert their citizenship status. Lasnamäe's position as a post-socialist, Soviet-planned periphery renders it both materially and symbolically marginal within national imaginaries. While municipal and EU actors increasingly promote urban gardening and community initiatives as tools for integration and sustainability, this paper demonstrates how such projects are also sites of contestation—marked by narratives of who constitutes a legitimate, and local urban subject. These practices reveal how security is experienced and redefined from below, as residents and non-state actors use shared spaces to forge claims to recognition, visibility, and belonging within Estonia. By attending to how residents engage in gardening, community memory projects, and discursive acts of place-making, the paper shows how performativity operates as a mode of claiming security through symbolic embeddedness and social participation. These lived enactments of citizenship function as subtle yet powerful reminder of how everyday security is not limited to safety but also extends to a ‘right to the city’ – a right to belong and be part of the city and the nation. This study contributes to critical-relational approaches to security offering new insights into how the Global East can enrich and complicate global security discourses.

- Kevin Molloy: “Mapping the Peripheral: A Critical Approach to Culturally Embedded Knowledge in the Estonian Borderland”

This paper uses a critical relational approach to assess the different (in)securities of a peripheral and marginalised Estonian community to explore lessons on human security. This approach aims at studying global politics by focusing on the local context and bringing the voices of those in peripheral areas to the fore. By focusing on the community in Narva, the border town between Estonia and Russia, the paper amplifies the need to understand the insecurities and cultural bordering of the local communities, who are all too often excluded from societal cohesion processes, to aid in providing the social and political tools to produce promotive societal integration. This leads to the research problem of how Narvans' everyday acts of socio-cultural bordering (re)create (in)securities, and threaten or enhance social cohesion. A critical relational approach facilitates focusing on the specific relations that matter to Narvans, gaining a more complete understanding of the forces that both constitute and contest the border, and produce the mutual dissociation that has established a national and social divide within Estonia. Methodologically, this paper is taking a bottom-up perspective, through the vehicle of ethnographic relational interviewing, which produces a selection of narrative-vignettes of the borderland of Estonia. Firstly, the narrative-vignettes highlight the importance and potential of attending to culturally embedded knowledge on both a local and human level. Secondly, they raise essential questions about power relationships, security and social integration within Estonian society by highlighting what everyday acts of socio-cultural bordering look like in actual practice.



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- Melika Mahmutović: “(Everyday) Security in the post-Yugoslav Balkans: Decolonial and Postsocialist Perspectives on Liminal Legacies”

The post-Yugoslav Balkans are frequently analysed in International Relations (IR) scholarship through the prism of violence, instability, and regional disputes. Framed as a ‘problem space’ for the international community, the region has been subjected to externally imposed security governance, which has constrained its capacity to explore and acknowledge complexities of its liminal, semi-peripheral position and engage meaningfully with its socialist and nonaligned legacies. This paper draws on decolonial and postsocialist scholarship to scrutinize the region’s socialist past, treating it both as a situated historical experience and a potential analytical lens for the assessment of contemporary security considerations in the region. Through a close reading of residual socialist mentalities, particularly those related to alternative ideas of citizenship, community, and attachments to nonalignment solidarities and coexistence, I argue that these experiences offer a different understanding of security in the region. Rather than being confined to militarized, state-centric frameworks, security is recast as a holistic, everyday practice embedded in social relations and lived experiences. The paper thus explores the interstices between postsocialist and decolonial perspectives to reconceptualize security as embedded in everyday realities and alternative epistemologies emerging from the post-Yugoslav space. These are rooted in memories and experiences of repression, resistance and liberation, and expressed through socialist and nonaligned forms of modernity. In doing so, the paper thus contributes to critical security studies by centring local epistemologies and conceptual tools as sources for rethinking the sites, subjects, and practices of (everyday) security in IR.

- Dina Bolokan: “Security from below: transnational solidarity and antimilitarist resistance among Russian conscientious objectors and activists”

This paper examines how Russian conscientious objectors and grassroots activists in Lithuania, Georgia, Armenia and Kazakhstan are co-producing forms of “security from below” in response to militarization, state repression, and displacement. Since the beginning of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent military mobilization, thousands of individuals have resisted conscription-many of them forced into exile, navigating legal limbo and socio-political marginalization across borders. Based on qualitative interviews with objectors and those supporting them, this research traces the emergence of transnational solidarity networks that provide legal aid, housing, emotional care, and political visibility. These networks often led by activists, NGOs, collectives, and diasporic communities-challenge dominant, state-centered security paradigms by reimagining safety as a relational, decentralized, and antimilitaristic practice. Rather than viewing security as protection by the state, they construct it against militarized state violence and through horizontal, care-based infrastructures. The paper highlights how these practices of resistance and care are embedded in a broader geography of feminist struggles against state violence and militarism, connecting post-Soviet dissent with other struggles in the Global East and Global South. By analyzing security as a contested and lived experience, this study contributes to critical-relational security scholarship that foregrounds the voices and practices of those excluded from traditional security frameworks. It asks: how do solidarity networks operate across borders in conditions of legal and political precarity? And what alternative visions of peace, belonging, and resistance emerge from these shared spaces of refusal?

14:00-15:30 Panel presentations (parallel sessions)

Session 1 (M-225). Contested Spaces: Post-Imperial and Post-Socialist (In)Securities.

Moderator: Marko Lehti

- Nadège Boels: “From Minsk to the Margins: Reimagining Security and Belonging through Belarus’s Liminal Geopolitics”

This paper examines how Belarus’s liminal position between East and West has shaped its political, cultural, and symbolic development from 1991 to the present, and how this position informs contested understandings of security. Drawing on the frameworks of liminality, symbolic geography, and othering, the study explores how Belarus’s geopolitical ambiguity has contributed to its marginalization within dominant security discourses that continue to prioritize state elites and Western institutions. The research adopts an interpretive methodology, combining 20 semi-structured interviews with members of the Belarusian diaspora and discourse analysis of approximately 100 public speeches by exiled opposition figures, around 50 from the period of the 2020 protests and 50 from the post-2022 context shaped by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Together, these sources illuminate how non-state actors imagine Belarus’s identity, borders, and geopolitical orientation, and how they articulate alternative visions of security rooted in displacement, dissent, and resistance. The paper pays particular attention to the role of gendered protest, especially the prominence of women in the 2020 mobilizations, as a way of unsettling dominant conceptions of security as militarized order. By situating Belarus within the conceptual space of the Global East, the study also connects its experience to broader global hierarchies of securitization and exclusion. It argues that Belarus exemplifies how strategic ambiguity and symbolic exclusion render certain security claims invisible, both regionally and globally.

- Anush Petrosyan: “Understanding Security through the Issue of Missing Persons in the South Caucasus”

Based on an examination of the cases of missing persons during the First Karabakh War (1992-1994) and the Georgian-Abkhazian war (1992-1993), this contribution argues that the issue of missing persons has been instrumentalized by state actors to shape national security, while the practices of affected families and communities may challenge these state-centered narratives. States often use the issue of missing persons to compete in international settings and discredit one another as the conflict legacies continue during times of relative peace, while the issue of the missing, and their relatives' mobilisation, albeit fragile and disadvantaged, cause discomfort to the political elites from within. To explore these issues, we collected data on types of memorialisation, forms of mourning, practices of search and discourses about the search, activism, advocacy, and public actions by civil society organisations in Armenia and Georgia. In contrast to the state-led discourses about the missing, in both Armenia and Georgia, family-led organisations and mobilisations offer an alternative understanding of national security, in three main ways: first, they counter states' attempts to promote standardised forms of memorialisation by reinstating the individualities of the missing. Second, grassroots actors favor embodied modes of remembrance and activism, which highlight their understanding of security within an everyday peace and violence perspective, as opposed to national understandings of security. And third, family-led organisations challenge the nationalist framings of security through search initiatives and discourses that attempt at building bridges with the “other side”, and/or that stem from empathy, solidarity, and shared grief across national divides. Nuances are also observed when bodies are found: while states tend to hail the found bodies as those of national heroes, families are keen on reaffirming their status as beloved family members too, and the multiple roles that they used to play in their everyday lives beyond national framings.

- Tiina Hyypä: “From an Authoritarian Society to Coexistence: Rebuilding Trust in Postwar Syria”

The regimes of Hafez and Bashar al-Asad created and maintained authoritarian order where violence, mistrust and personal networks ordered the society. During this time, trust was found from small, intimate networks: family and close friends. After the rupture put in motion by the 2011 uprising, Syrians faced a new reality. They created new spaces and relations of trust. This was remarkable as the authoritarian regime had for decades sought to divide the people. During the uprising and subsequent war Syrians from different parts of the country and different ethnic and religious backgrounds had possibilities to come together and to organize for an alternative future. The networks of trust expanded and took new forms. The December 8 revolution was another rupture in Syria's history that changed the society profoundly. From now on the relations between people will again be redrawn and trust renegotiated. In this paper, building on literatures on trust and peacebuilding and drawing from observations and interviews in Syria and abroad, we propose that Syrians need to learn to trust each other again while facing yet another uncertain situation. Based on their history during the war it is not an impossible task but it will not be easy either. Grassroot initiatives led by Syrians can generate spaces for dialogue and help rebuilt trust.

- Alessandro Macculi: “Rebel Epistemologies: Non State Armed Actors between Representation and Recognition”

This paper explores the theoretical, political and epistemological dimensions of the marginalisation of non-state armed actors (NSAAs) in international politics. Although NSAAs are increasingly exercising de facto authority across fragmented state spaces, dominant liberal discourses continue to delegitimise their political subjectivity by casting them outside the bounds of legitimacy and normativity. The paper argues that this marginalisation occurs along three interconnected dimensions: ontological, political and epistemic. Ontologically, NSAAs are excluded from frameworks of recognition as legitimate international actors. The state-centric paradigm elevates the nation-state to the status of the only legitimate political entity, relegating NSAAs to the realm of the ‘non-political’ and ‘illegitimate’. Politically, governance structures established by NSAAs are often reduced to functional or survivalist logics and are denied their transformative and relational potential, particularly with regard to their embeddedness within civilian communities and alternative social imaginaries. Epistemologically, dominant knowledge regimes reproduce testimonial and hermeneutical injustice by denying NSAAs and civilians under their control the capacity to narrate and interpret their own political experiences. The final section offers a case study of the Kurdish Women's Protection Units (YPJ), analysing how Kurdish female fighters are subjected to threefold exclusion: as women, as Middle Eastern subjects and as subaltern epistemic agents. Their representation reveals how hegemonic discourses simultaneously essentialise, depoliticise and silence subaltern subjectivities within global security narratives. By engaging critical security studies, postcolonial international relations, and feminist epistemologies, this paper calls for a structural politics of recognition grounded in epistemic pluralism. Such a perspective resists the reductive association of political legitimacy with Western models of governance, and affirms the epistemic dignity of subaltern actors and the alternative orders they produce. Ultimately, it argues that confronting epistemic injustice is a prerequisite for rethinking political authority in a post-Westphalian context.



Session 2 (M-134). Roundtable: Women's Networks as Security Infrastructure: Theory and Practice from Europe's East.

Moderator: Grazina Bieloussova

Since Russia's assault on Ukraine in 2014-and especially after the full-scale invasion of 2022-women's formal and informal networks have become indispensable to civilian survival, military social reproduction, and recovery. This roundtable convenes four practitioner-scholars to probe such gendered infrastructures of security and extend the Ukrainian insight to other conflict zones.

Participants:

- Hamida Giyasbayli (Azerbaijan) opens with an auto-ethnographic account of grassroots peacebuilding under authoritarianism. From exile, she shows how feminist, queer, and diasporic solidarities weave inside-outside lifelines that protect political prisoners and redefine peace beyond state-centric stability scripts.
- Tasha Lomonosova (Ukraine) traces the quiet heroics of paid municipal care workers. Drawing on fieldwork, she reveals how these mostly female employees build horizontal alliances with NGOs, businesses, and city services to keep social protection functioning when budgets collapse, positioning resourcefulness as core national resilience.
- Olha Kostina (Kryvyi Rih) shifts the lens to women-led community hubs in a heavy-industry region. She unpacks the uneasy bargains these groups strike-securing funds through political parties or polluting enterprises-while still carving emancipatory spaces for women-led publics amid war-economy extractivism.
- Oksana Potapova (Donbas/Kyiv) closes by situating eastern Ukrainian women's self-organisation within broader security doctrine. Mapping networks from Telegram alert chats to shelter cooperatives, she argues that their collective agency forms a de-facto social security system whose vitality must be measured, financed, and safeguarded alongside kinetic defence assets.

Collectively the speakers advance three claims: (1) dispersed, gender-coded capacities are strategic security assets; (2) supporting women-led civil initiatives is integral to national defence and post-war reconstruction; and (3) success metrics must include the robustness of these networks before, during, and after hostilities.

Session 3 (M-218). Art, Narrative, and Alternative Knowledges of Security.

Moderator: Louise Ridden

- Oksana Potapova: "Documentary theatre as a space of alternative knowledge making about gendered realities of war in Ukraine"

This contribution makes a methodological and an epistemic intervention into feminist peace research. I follow Premaratna and Praveena's argument that the arts is more than a method or a tool for research or peacebuilding, as it allows for engagement with the everyday, embodied, and local knowledge and can offer alternative epistemologies, as well as engage with the political in a more critical way (Premaratna&Praveena, 2021). I extend this argument by underscoring that while arts-based methods, specifically theatre, are often seen as effective tools of building peace in the post-war period, the arts can also serve as methods of ongoing epistemic resistance during war-time – by creating space for multiple, embodied, and marginal knowledges to co-exist and enter the public sphere in a heavily militarised context, such as ongoing war. In my intervention, I will draw on analysis of several documentary and post-documentary plays created in Ukraine since 2022, which cover multiple gendered experiences of war. One of the plays is "Military Mom", produced in Kyiv in April 2025 and written by a woman-veteran as part of a developing "Theatre of Veterans" project. The play centres the complex experience of a female paramedic who struggles to combine her role as a combat with her role as a mother, aiming to both resist and subvert the violence embedded in systems of motherhood and military service. A second play is an embodied performance by Kharkiv-based Nafta Theatre, titled "Someone like us". In it, performer Nina Khyzhna explores questions of vulnerability, empathy and trauma through performative practice and her positionality of an artist living and creating in a frontline city Kharkiv. Other plays will be selected closer to the presentation of the paper. Through analysis of these plays I will argue that these spaces of embodied epistemic authority constitute crucial spaces of resistance and security-making from below, contributing to a potential of a more feminist war-time present and post-war future in Ukraine.



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- Shiera Malik: “Curatorial Epistemologies and Security Hierarchies: Rethinking Knowledge Production Beyond the Museum-University Nexus”

This paper draws from a six-month intensive research program examining the politics of knowledge in curatorial practice to interrogate how both security studies as an epistemological framework and cultural institutions mutually reinforce hierarchies between center and periphery. Security studies, as a knowledge system that authorizes particular ways of understanding threat, protection, and order, operates through similar exclusionary mechanisms as curatorial epistemologies—the ways museums, galleries, and cultural institutions organize, display, and authorize knowledge about Global East and Global South experiences. Through an analysis of feminist curatorial methodologies and decolonial curation practices, this paper argues that the security studies-museum-university nexus functions as interconnected knowledge-producing institutions that systematically exclude non-Western ways of knowing security, peace, and resistance. Drawing on cases from both CEE and Global South contexts, I examine how alternative curatorial frameworks expose the epistemological limitations of security studies itself while centering lived experiences of marginalized communities typically rendered invisible by both academic security discourse and mainstream cultural representation. The paper develops a theoretical framework of “curatorial security” to analyze how cultural representation and security knowledge production operate as mutually constitutive sites of epistemic violence, but also as spaces for fostering critical-relational solidarities across the Global East-South divide. By examining curatorial practices that resist both traditional museological display and orthodox security analysis, this work reveals how cultural workers, artists, and community organizers create alternative epistemological frameworks that challenge security studies’ foundational assumptions while prioritizing care, resistance, and transnational connection. This research contributes to rethinking security studies as an epistemological project by demonstrating how curatorial knowledge politics can transform both what counts as security and who is authorized to define it.

- Rumbidzai Kapurura: “Narrative Sovereignty and Climate Justice: Global South Voices in the Governance of the Climate Crisis”

With a focus on how voices from the Global South assert epistemic agency through artistic and political interventions, this thesis explores the significant role of narrative sovereignty in climate justice. It questions prevailing frameworks for climate governance, which are largely the product of institutions in the Global North and frequently ignore the knowledge systems, cultural expressions, and lived experiences of the most climate-vulnerable communities. The research centres creative works as critical interventions in climate discourse and advances narrative sovereignty as a conceptual framework and a practical praxis through an interdisciplinary and decolonial approach. The empirical foundation of the thesis aims to demonstrate how rhetoric and artistic production are used to enact narrative sovereignty. The literary and visual works of Kamau Brathwaite, Derek Walcott, Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner, Wangechi Mutu, and El Anatsui are examined in Chapter 5, emphasising how their material practices, poetics, and aesthetics make up independent acts of storytelling. By expressing memory, resistance, relationality, and spiritual depth, these artists expand the scope of climate justice beyond policy documents and technocratic jargon and reimagine ecological narratives. Their writings turn marginality and silence into potent decolonial languages that oppose epistemic violence, colonial legacies, and extractivism. The thesis advocates for a pluralistic, relational reimaging of climate governance, grounded in decolonial theory and the politics of epistemic justice. As a dialogic, culturally situated process, narrative sovereignty rejects colonial knowledge hierarchies and affirms a variety of ontologies. The thesis contends that women, Indigenous peoples, artists, and cultural practitioners from the Global Majority are not ancillary to climate action—rather, they are essential creators of climate justice by highlighting the visual, emotional, and spiritual aspects of climate resistance. Finally, by demonstrating how storytelling, art, and performative speech serve as instruments of resistance, healing, and worldmaking, this thesis adds to ongoing efforts to decolonise climate discourse. In climate governance, it promotes a more comprehensive epistemic shift that values cultural uniqueness, prioritises community-led knowledge production, and embraces the radical potential of Global South narratives to create more equitable, sustainable, and inclusive futures.



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- Ritu Vij: “Subaltern Precarity in Insecure Times”

In what has been described as a “new age of insecurity” the concept of precarity has emerged as a central heuristic in efforts to account for the changed landscape of employment and social protection in advanced industrialized economies, inaugurating claims about a unified Black and White experience that constitutes a shared condition of economic and ontological insecurity in global capitalism. Critics of this universalizing move have called attention to the erasure of colonial and racial violence in the unequal global distribution of insecurity/precarity across spatialized and racialized lines and the “methodological whiteness” (Bhabha) that subtends the aggrandisement of the economic precarization of a largely male, white, middle-class population into a universal claim of shared precarity. Building on this critique of the historical and epistemic erasure of colonial violence, but also, however, pressing against its tendency to construe subaltern (black) precarity as either abject or redemptive, I aim to conceptualize the specificity of subaltern precarity in an age of insecurity and coloniality in relation to capital. In the first intimation of the larger project, this paper offers a close reading of a widely acclaimed cinematic text, Anamika Haksar’s genre defying ‘Ghode ko Jalebi Khilane Ja Rahan Hoon (Taking the Horse to Eat Sweets), to develop a notion of capital as pharmakon (as both medicine and poison), that helps illuminate the antinomies that attend subaltern precarity’s relation to (global) capital. Beyond the standard tropes of survivance and/or resilience, subaltern precarity, I contend, opens new avenues for theorizing living and being in relation to capital thereby challenging claims of an emergent universal ontological insecurity.

- Toni Cerkez & Wasiq Silan: “Prolegomena for Technodiversity: On Data and Indigeneity in Research”

Modern Western technology tells a universal story. Humanity is here to progress on the account of techno-social development. The envisioned result is a global consciousness resting on continuous excavation of data from bodies and lives, most notably perpetuated by Big Tech systems such as Facebook (Zuboff 2019, Monsees et al. 2023). This story rests on the domination of modern Western technology over other forms of technical activities, a cosmotechnic of Progress (Hui 2021). Defined as a ‘unification of moral and cosmic orders through technical activities’ (Hui 2019, \$29/30\$), cosmotechnics denaturalizes underlying assumptions behind ‘technicity’ and helps bring technodiversity. Many have documented and studied the histories of racism underpinning IR as a discipline and science in general (Ferreira da Silva 2007, Bethencourt 2013, Anievas, Manchanda and Shilliam 2015, Davis, Thakur and Vale 2021). However, they have undertheorized the specific role of technical activities and concepts as they underpin racialized ontologies and epistemologies in IR (Dekeyser 2023). There is a lack of awareness of how concepts such as data and information perpetuate extractivist dynamics embedded at the core of Western cosmotechnics. Data is something taken, or given without payment, for information processing and knowledge acquisition. But what if we problematize our-understanding of data based on research encounters with non-Western cosmologies? Drawing from co-author’s research on Taiwanese indigenous peoples, we make an argument that problematizing political ontologies and epistemologies of data in contemporary research in IR helps challenge Western cosmotechnics and leads to technodiversity. We argue that thinking of data as something to be ‘guarded,’ ‘cared for,’ and at times ‘protected’ contributes to efforts at de-colonizing research whilst opening productive avenues for more innovative approaches in exploring indigenous worlds, non-Western cultures, and indeed ways in which IR narrates itself as a discipline.

16:00-18:00 Closing High-level Roundtable (M-218)

The Power of Peripheries: Possibilities of Solidarity and Global Futures

- Chairs: Anna M. Agathangelou, York University, CA and Olga Burlyuk, University of Amsterdam, NL.
- Participants: Botakoz Kassymbekova, University of Zurich, CH; Mustapha Pasha, Aberystwyth University, UK; Bohdana Kurylo, LSE, UK; and Alexandros Zachariades, University of Cyprus, CY.



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