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KEYNOTE LECTURE

Intersecting hierarchies and plural habitus

Miklós Hadas

The keynote speaker of the workshop, Prof. Miklós Hadas will discuss the logic of intersecting hierarchies, including the issue of plural habitus, exploring the links between social structures and social practice. He will seek to find common ground between economic, cultural, and gender (etc.) dimensions using Bourdieusian and Eliasian conceptual arguments.

PANEL 1: CULTURAL AND SOCIAL HIERARCHIES IN A POSTCOLONIAL WORLD

Homo Hierarchicus

Katalin Turai

Louis Dumont in his essay *On Value* (1980) claims that pre-modern societies by and large know themselves to be part of a hierarchical universe, in which ranked human society is part of a hierarchical cosmos. The structure of society is at one with the structure of the world as perceived. In contrast a society explicitly based on equality is the innovation of the Enlightenment era and the transition from adhering to the values of a ranked world and social order to one based on equality, i.e. equal dignity, equal rights and equality before the law is ongoing, the latter gaining dominance across the globe only recently. However, argues Dumont, at the end of the day, the principle of equality and of hierarchy both will have to play a role in the organization of a functioning human community. He maintains that hierarchy is an inherent organizing principle of any system, thus it is here to stay and must be reckoned with, which is the motivation for entitling his book on the Indian cast system *Homo Hierarchicus*.

How are the organizing principles of hierarchy and equality present in the values of a given society? What may modern society based on the principle of equality have to learn from studying communities whose values reflect the belief in the necessity of hierarchical order? These are the questions Dumont sets himself out to analyse and I have deemed timely to reflect on his findings, since globalization exacerbates the tensions stemming from the transitions from an explicitly rank based to an explicitly dignity and rights based social order. In my paper I will present and reflect on Dumont's claims regarding the values of hierarchy, investigate his arguments and the symbols he relies on to convince us and also dwell on some more contemporary work focussed on the psychological consequences of transitioning to societies based on proclaimed equal dignity. It is apparent that the tensions involved in such transition are large enough to affect international relations and fuel violent conflict. Lacking social cohesion is replaced by groups defining themselves via rigid boundaries and exclusion, argues Dumont.

Another consequence of transitioning (between pre-modern hierarchical and modern systems) is elaborated by Lindtner, *Humiliation in a Globalizing World: Does Humiliation Become the Most Disruptive Force?* (2004, 2013) who investigates the psychosocial consequences of losing one's place

in traditional order, yet, not achieving the status of proclaimed dignity in any meaningful way and calls our attention to 'humiliation entrepreneurs' who consciously create, excite, fuel humiliation to channel the indignation thereby aroused to serve dubious agendas. Global justice would require the holistic vision of a shared world where subordination to the functional hierarchies required by social cohesion is cultivated as opposed to arbitrary, imagined hierarchies based on race, ethnicity or sheer financial and military power.

Purity/impurity in Islam – Changing sacred hierarchies

Márta Wollner

The presentation is a case study on FGM (khifad), a practice to recreate, and sanctify the patriarchal hierarchy structure, as the only appropriate social order which has a special relation to Islamic ritual purity. In contemporary Egyptian society, there exists an ongoing debate in religious law about reinterpretation to separate this custom from sacred tradition. The separation opens the way for removal without harming the ideal principle of ritual purity.

The Islamic Ritual Purity in Sharia law (Tahara) can be regarded as a deep layer of the social value system. The idea of tahara has a personal and a social aspect. FGM is a special phenomenon including both (personal and social) aspects: It ensures the ritually pure female body and a pure marital and social life. Khifad means reduction, pacifying. Compared with male circumcision- which also ensures a pure male body-, helps to increase the male power, and gives a higher potency to activity, the articulated "benefits" of the female version are to reduce female sexual desire, and advertise the necessity to cut out the "bad organ", which threatens the only appropriate Social Order, the Patriarchal Family. This aspect alone is enough to draw attention to salient inequalities and gender hierarchy.

This topic has a relation with gender aspect, but due to the ritual purity law, it has more connection to sacred- or alternative hierarchy systems. The FGM is a case study, to introduce the alternative, and still vivid pre-modern systems of hierarchies, and it shows the attachment of those hierarchies to the sanctified religious systems. The debate in religious law shows the slow but ongoing process of change. Rationalization is taking place, which can be considered one of the main pillars of the Weberian Modernization Concept. The study primarily analyzes the content of the fatwa on female circumcision in khifad, supplemented with primary data from field research.

Decolonizing Panchayats in India. Exploring Gandhian decentralization as a mechanism for grassroots involvement

Sumit Kumar

As far as experiments go, India has been a successful one, it is the largest representative democracy in the world, the largest number of voters and the largest number of political parties across the spectrum. It boasts of a reasonably free press, a reasonably independent judiciary and a reasonably technocratic bureaucracy. However, as much as representation has been successful, participation or the direct involvement of people in the governance has been a failure.

This paper firstly explores why despite having a long tradition of grassroots level institution like panchayat, Indian democracy remains centralized? Why do panchayats, despite regular five-year elections with affirmative action in favour of disadvantaged sections of society, face a scenario of decreasing participation with each electoral cycle? Secondly, this paper explores the possibilities

associated with the application of a Gandhian model of decentralization and whether it could decolonize panchayats and regenerate participative mechanisms rooted in Indian society?

The research uses secondary data published by the state and published studies on panchayats to frame the problem. Postcolonial theory specially Dipesh Chakrabarty's concept of heterogeneity of the historical timelines of colonial societies and Bourdieu's concepts of Field, Practice and habitus is used to explain the colonization of Panchayats. In Europe, the 'maison du roi' differentiates into the bureaucratic field, juridical field and the political field giving birth to the modern democratic state. In pre-colonial India the 'maison du roi' does not exist, and therefore the birth of the so called modern democratic India is not a natural process.

Colonization is a process which is different from mere conquest and one of the essential elements of this process is the destitution of indigenous institutions. Amongst various other destitutions, colonization of India also destituted the Panchayats. Whatever the state of precolonial Indian society; the social fields had their own struggles, the social forces that characterised the field were unique to the Indian society. Colonization transplants new modern fields into the colonial Indian society and the agents within these new fields lose agency as they are unaware of the practice of these new fields. They carry forward their habitus that had developed in the pre-colonial indigenous fields into the new modern colonial fields. Since these agents are unable to produce or reproduce the symbolic capitals associated with these colonial fields, they either lose agency in these fields or they start converting material capital into the symbolic capital of the field. The colonial fields get corrupted structurally and this structural corruption is inherited by the post-colonial fields of independent India.

When Panchayats get revived in post-colonial independent India, the structural corruptions of the post-colonial political, juridical, and bureaucratic fields are inherited by these new panchayats. Gandhi had already sounded a warning to this effect in his 1908 work 'Hind Swaraj'. He was quite wary of modernity and its violent repercussions and suggested a different model of decentralization, limitation of state and revival of Panchayats. Gandhi suggested concentric circles of co-equal institutional framework, where the individual is at the centre and power radiates outwards from this centre.

The intersection of postcolonial dynamics: Implications for street children in Bangladesh

Suha Shidratul Moontaha

In the context of Bangladesh and its postcolonial dynamics, European colonization has left a profound impact on various aspects of society, including migration patterns and the welfare of marginalized groups like street children. European colonization in the region, particularly by the British Empire, introduced significant changes in governance, landownership, and economic structures, which continue to shape present-day realities. Therefore, drawing upon a theoretical framework informed by postcolonial theorists, particularly its critique of power imbalances and cultural hegemony, this study examines the role of socio-economic disparities and ethnic tensions as primary influences on migration patterns. This study also explores the intricate interplay of postcolonial dynamics, and its influence on rural-to-urban migration patterns in Bangladesh, specifically focusing on the ramifications for street children in Bangladesh. Against evolving national, global, political, social, and cultural hierarchies, this research explores systemic inequalities and oppression exacerbated by these dynamics. Employing qualitative methods, this study uncovers the underlying drivers of migration and the vulnerabilities faced by street children. By doing so, this study aims to inform policy interventions grounded in principles of social justice, economic solidarity, and rights-based approaches. The findings provide

valuable insights into the structural inequalities inherent in hierarchical systems, offering pathways for addressing their impact on migration dynamics and child welfare in Bangladesh.

People in lowest rung of social hierarchy: Dalits in India

Karunanithi Gopalakrishnan

It is relevant and also important to know Varna (Class) and Jati (Caste) with reference to Dalits in India for a specific reason that the former provides a historical and sociological background to understand about the latter in a more meaningful way. Apart from the four fourfold classification of Varna System, a fifth Varna, viz. Panchamas (Untouchables) existed outside this system. They were engaged mostly in menial and polluting tasks. About 3000 castes were the result of intermixture of four Varnas over centuries. The phenomenon of caste is based on the notion of 'purity and pollution'. The term 'untouchability' came out of legitimization of discretionary practices against people born into particular castes. Those caste people were called Dalits meaning 'broken people'. It is surprising to note the persistence of caste (social) hierarchy among the Dalits. This paper deals with the situation of Dalits in colonial as well as postcolonial India besides presenting their present scenario and future possibilities.

Colonialism today: An ethnographic analysis of Quijano's Colonial Matrix of Power through the case-study of Afro-Ecuadorian women life stories

Diana Vallejo Robalino

Colonialism today: An ethnographic analysis of Quijano's Colonial Matrix of Power through the case-study of Afro-Ecuadorian women life stories Diana Vallejo Robalino Anibal Quijano's colonial matrix of power constitutes a pioneer analysis on the ways power relations have subsisted and reproduced even after the colonial administration ended in the Americas. Quijano positions the construct of race as the main category for class hierarchization in the Latin American societies. By taking into account the entanglement of race, class, capitalism and modernity exposed by Quijano, I aim to draw on some empirical reflections based on my ethnographic research with Afro-Ecuadorian women from Guayaquil-Ecuador. The research had as its main objective to explore the Afro-Ecuadorian women's narratives of spatialized collective memory through four socio-spatial units they relate to: Esmeraldas (the Ecuadorian province from where they migrated from), Guayaquil (the city they migrated to), Nigeria neighborhood (the popular settlement they built and currently live in) and Africa (as the 'mythical' homeland their ancestors came from). Following the life stories of 17 women, I will discuss in which ways the multiple layers of their identities but particularly the social, cultural and economic processes that have shaped their experiences as Afro-Ecuadorian women, resonate and challenge Quijano's theory.

PANEL 2: GENDERED HIERARCHIES

The changing hierarchies in terms of intersectionality: Imagining autonomy in subaltern gender

Nazan Eren

Hierarchy refers to a structure of authority where individuals are organized based on their status. The term originates from the combination of "hieros," signifying sacred, and the suffix "-archy," denoting types of government, leadership, social influence, or organization. Initially, it was associated with a system of orders among angels and celestial entities. Accordingly, angels in the higher-ranking have more power and authority than lower ones. The correlation between hierarchical placement and power is conspicuously evident. Consequently, an inquiry arises: what factors ascertain the hierarchical delineation within the mundane world? The determination of these ranks is intricately linked to the concept of nomos. Nomos (-nomy), derived from the Greek term meaning "law" or "custom," plays a crucial role in shaping societal structures and individual positions. It encompasses the established norms, legal frameworks, and cultural conventions that define the hierarchy within human societies. This intricate interplay between nomos and individual status underscores the dynamic nature of hierarchy in the mundane world, where societal rules and cultural values contribute to the formation and recognition of distinct social strata.

The presentation explores whether it is possible to construct an autonomous (self-government) existence, using intersectionality as a method to capture clues to the dynamic nature of hierarchy in the mundane world. In particular, it will be examined whether intersectionality can be used as a means of giving voice to subaltern genders that the heteronormative silences as nomos. In the realm of normative practices (nomos), heteronormativity establishes a binary conception of gender. Within this framework, the challenge of representation emerges for individuals who do not conform strictly to either female or male categorizations, or those who identify with both female and male genders. The inquiry into the application of intersectionality to gender representation introduces additional elements, including considerations of race, ethnicity, socio-economic class, religion, etc. Established societal norms, such as the prevalence of a dominant racial group within the confines of a nation-state, confer elevated positions within hierarchical structures, whereas marginalized elements, characterized by lower income levels, occupy less privileged positions in the hierarchy. Likewise, the elevated hierarchical status held by an individual with substantial income diminishes in influence when their representation extends beyond heteronormative gender boundaries. Consequently, changing hierarchies presents an aspect that empowers subaltern genders with a sense of autonomy.

Reshaping the discourse: The role of gender in social justice. The cases of migrant women and artificial intelligence robots

Anna Ujlaki

Hierarchies are hardly compatible with liberal democracy. It is common knowledge that the liberal democratic ideals of equality and freedom are essentially incompatible with inequalities related to gender and race or other social characteristics such as sexuality or age. How is it that we are witnessing a resurgence of inequalities and the exclusion of certain people from social and political institutions based on their group characteristics? Gender inequality and second-class citizenship are well-known problems not only in hybrid and autocratic regimes, but also in liberal democratic circumstances.

However, the presentation shows that this challenge is not only a practical problem but is also present in liberal theory. The argument is this: Despite the claim of inclusivity of different groups of people that is closely associated with liberal political theory and philosophy, there is a moveable but stable built-in threshold in liberal theory that sets the terms for whose (or what) claim to inclusion deserves recognition. In other words, the presentation shows how different potential subjects are partially or wholly excluded from the recognition of subjects. To illustrate the argument, two contemporary examples related to the concept of gender and the well-known example of the exclusion of women from the political sphere are used. The first example is the case of migrant women and girls and the way in which their specific experiences of exclusion are addressed in liberal theory. The second, more controversial example, is that of artificial intelligence carer robots and intimate companionship robots.

"I don't want to pay taxes in a country like this" - The experiences of gender and sexual minorities as citizens in Hungary

Elizabet Végh

My presentation focuses on social phenomena, political events and legal issues related to gender and sexual minorities in Hungary. In my research, I explore the narratives of members of different gender minority groups on how they construct their citizenship through their sexuality. My question is how gender minority experiences shape people's experiences of citizenship. Drawing on international literature, I explore notions of citizenship and sexual citizenship. I break down the concept of citizenship into four elements: civic, political, social and participation in civil society. I interpret sexual citizenship as a concept linking identity and human rights. On the other hand, I consider sexual citizenship as a set of sexual rights and sexual responsibilities.

I use a qualitative methodology, conducting in-depth interviews with 12 people belonging to sexual and gender minority groups. I break citizenship down into its mechanisms, so that I can analyse where the greatest inequalities exist within the experience of citizenship. Overall, interviewees had great difficulty in exercising their different rights. They perceive the Hungarian legal system as discriminatory on several points. They cannot even enjoy their most basic rights to individual freedom. They have no obligations to the state and government other than the obligation to pay taxes. Their argument is that they are members of a minority group, deprived of all their rights, and they react by leaving the country, i.e. by not paying taxes. They are not passive bearers, but use up whatever capacity they have left. The Hungarian government's actions have a significant impact on the citizenship experience of sexual and gender minorities.

International adoption and surrogacy - Blind spots in the Hungarian discourse

Ráhel K. Turai

International adoption has been discussed for decades in waves. As the result of the most recent scandals, at the end of January 2024 Denmark stopped international adoption, which primarily concerns their agreement with South Korea. Surrogacy has become a controversial topic in the last couple of years globally, including debates about the European Certificate of Parenthood in EU institutions at the end of 2023. In both of these phenomena concerning parenting, reproduction, and international transfer of children, gender hierarchies and regional hierarchies are closely interwoven. The presentation examines how in the Hungarian media these hierarchies are reflected and discussed. I ask: do media discourses approach the phenomena of international adoption and surrogacy with a

critical and structural lens on social inequalities? To what extent do discourses address the responsibility of wealthier countries, as well as the vulnerability of women? Is there a difference between right-wing and left-wing media in how they present the cases? Are opposite-sex and same-sex couples discussed differently? Based on the discourse analysis of selected Hungarian media and social media content, I will argue that there are blind spots in the way either political side approaches these topics: while right-wing discourse tends to employ homophobic arguments, media associated with the political left often leaves global and gender hierarchies unaddressed.

Overview of the reproductive rights and health of women with disabilities

Barbara Menyhárt

My ongoing doctoral research focuses on examining the situation of people with disabilities in Hungary, specifically exploring the phenomenon of intersectionality affecting women with disabilities. I aim to identify the factors that hinder or support the realization of sexual and reproductive health and rights for women with disabilities. Through presenting the cumulative disadvantage of women with disabilities, I aim to draw attention to social inequalities, their consequences, the sensitivity of marginalized groups, and ultimately contribute to shaping the social discourse around sexuality and reproduction of individuals with disabilities.

In my presentation, I will attempt to define the place of sexuality and reproduction in disability policy, presenting relevant national and international legislative sources, statistical analysis, and trends. As for the preliminary results, women with disabilities face numerous disadvantages in various areas and stages of their lives due to the intersection of their disability and gender. They are pushed to the margins of society, and their situation is even more unfavorable than that of non-disabled women or men with disability, especially in terms of sexual and reproductive rights. These rights are an essential part of comprehensive healthcare provision, and the realization of sexual and reproductive health and rights is indispensable to human dignity and is closely related to achieving gender equality and combating gender-based violence.

Are some children's rights more important than others? The Hungarian ombudsman's engagement with the children's rights to a healthy environment

Ágnes Lux

As we accept the fundamental thesis, that human rights of children are indivisible, whether we speak about civil, political, economic, social or cultural in nature, they are all inherent to the dignity of every children. Consequently, they all have equal status as rights. There is no such thing as a 'more important' right. There is no hierarchy of children's rights. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC) has become one of the fastest and most widely accepted human rights treaties in the world gave birth to the idea of 'global child' and obliges states to protect children. Independent children's rights institutions (ICRIs) often in a form of an ombudsman are working in promoting and protecting children's rights. In this paper I examine the interferences between the activities of the Hungarian Commissioner for Fundamental Rights with a general (stronger?) mandate with a special task to defend the rights of the child and acting with a specialized deputy for the right of the future generations. My main focus lays on the experience, that he still does not confront issues around environmental and climate change when it comes to children's rights, however it is also an immanent provision of the UN CRC itself and data and research specifically link environmental harms to abuses of human rights (McInerney-

Lankford et al. 2011; Sinden, 2008; Knox, 2009), and its close connections with children's rights are increasingly gaining ground (Bakker, 2020; Nolan, 2021), as climate change clearly affects born children and future generations even more.

PANEL 3: IS EUROPE A HIERARCHICAL CONSTRUCTION?

A Polanyian approach to a social Europe

Andrew Ryder

Using Polanyian-influenced analysis the presentation argues that authoritarian populism in Europe is a deceptive double-movement, anxieties and insecurities created by neoliberalism and austerity are being articulated into nativism and narrow and nostalgic identity frames. A vision of a New Social Europe could challenge the zealotry of what Stiglitz termed market fundamentalism and return to the post-war trajectory of the 'Les trente glorieuses' but this time more environmentally and third world friendly and robust with leaps rather than baby steps being taken in a bolder and more transformative trajectory. A New Social Europe should also counter nativism and monoculturalism by fostering and nurturing inclusive European citizenship, that is intercultural, cosmopolitan, and embraces critical forms of multiculturalism and affirmative action. In brief the presentation advocates the development of European policy and identity shaped and directed by a hierarchy of social justice inclusivity and human rights.

Do we have political obligation towards the European Union?

Zoltán Gábor Szűcs

The answer to this question is far from obvious even though some argue that there exists political obligation towards the European Union either on the grounds of fair play (EU being a fair cooperative enterprise creating duties of fair play) or a natural duty of justice (De Angelis 2021, Eleftheriadis 2012). There are at least three potential problems with having political obligation towards the EU that need to be addressed: one might be seen as specific to the EU, namely whether the EU is the kind of polity that we usually see as creating political obligation; another one is rather general: even if we assume that the EU is capable to create political obligation it is still an open question what kind of ground it provides for political obligation; and, finally, it is possible that we think that the kind of moral relations that are sometimes associated with the concept of political obligation are better conceived of in different terms in the case of the EU not because of any specificity of the EU but because we do not think that political obligation is the best way to conceptualize these moral relations. The paper will argue that the concept of political obligation is relevant (and is better than other approaches) to capture important moral relations between the citizens and polities. It will also argue that the EU is exactly the kind of polity that we can see as creating political obligation. Finally, it will also argue that a realist membership account offers the best account of the political obligation of the citizens of the EU. It also offers a critical perspective to the politics of the EU.

Quo vadis European Union? Is there a constitutional moment for the EU rule of law?

Gábor Halmai

What is the best way to keep the European Union as a community of the values of democracy, the rule of law, and fundamental right entrenched in Article 2 TEU amidst its own institutions' democratic deficit and the democratic backsliding in some of its member states? For many these failures indicate that the EU should not continue to build on the national sovereignty of its members, but rather pursue a true

federal 'integration through law' promoted by Walter Wallstein, the first President of the Commission, despite the rejection of the European Constitution. This approach goes together with the weakening of national sovereignty and identity, the rejection of constitutional pluralism, a more depoliticized and hierarchical Union. The presentation also raises the question, whether there is a possibility for law and politics acting in tandem, resulting in an equilibrium that can be considered as the de facto constitution for Europe in a potential constitutional moment for the European rule of law.

Enhancing judicial autonomy? The ECtHR on judges' freedom of expression

Ágnes Kovács

The presentation discusses how Europe's transnational courts can help national judiciaries resist the erosion of the rule of law and judicial independence. It critically evaluates the most recent approaches elaborated by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) to address attacks on judicial independence. The presentation builds on the assumption that freedom of expression has become a prominent tool for domestic judiciaries to defend their autonomy in autocratic settings. Today, the ECtHR provides a high level of protection for extrajudicial speeches regarding the rule of law, which can be seen as a transnational response to the deterioration of the rule of law in many European states. However, the presentation explores the limitations of this response and asks whether alternative approaches to transnational judicial cooperation can have greater potential to enhance judicial autonomy at the domestic level.

Roma civil society and community-led local development and monitoring in Hungarian and EU Roma policies

Imen Khemakhem

This presentation endeavors to dissect the intricate interplay between Roma civil society, Hungarian policy frameworks, and European Union (EU) mechanisms. With a focal point on the Hungarian National Strategy for Roma Integration (NSRI), the presentation embarks on an illuminating journey, scrutinizing the Assessment Report of Roma Civil Monitoring (RCM) and the Assessment Report of the European Commission.

Commencing with a brief contextual backdrop, the presentation offers a panoramic view of the Roma population in Hungary, elucidating their present socioeconomic conditions, and outlining the array of integration instruments and mechanisms at play. From this foundational understanding, the discussion transcends into the realm of policy analysis methods and theoretical constructs, constructing a robust framework for evaluating the NSRI through scholarly lenses.

Central to the discourse are the NSRI reports emanating from both the European Commission and the Roma Civil Monitor CSOs coalition. Through meticulous examination, the presentation unpacks the methodologies, findings, and implications embedded within these reports, unraveling their pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of Roma integration policies. Moreover, the presentation amplifies its depth by incorporating insights gleaned from interviews with key stakeholders intimately involved in drafting the RCM report, alongside structured qualitative questionnaires administered to European Commission Officers.

By synthesizing these diverse perspectives, the presentation endeavors to shed light on the indispensable role of Roma civil society in influencing policy discourse and outcomes, not only within Hungary but also within the broader European landscape.

Navigating the refugee crisis: The role of NGOs in Sweden's integration strategies and policy responses

Aysenur Polater

Most European societies and countries have experienced large-scale immigration since World War II. Sweden is one of these countries that has a history of immigration and has experienced large refugee resettlements. However, after these large waves of immigration, many countries like Sweden had to find strategies to deal with "the integration of new groups". Research shows us that the immigrants' inclusion or integration process to the social structures of host communities have emerged as a challenge for nation-states and welfare state policies. Following the "refugee crisis," a number of Member States in the EU have implemented illiberal policies and imposed limitations. In this context the participation of civil society is more important than ever for holding EU and Member State institutions to account for a liberal, democratic and humanitarian agenda.

The presentation focuses on the relationship between the Swedish state and NGOs in the reception and integration of the newly arrived refugees following the "Refugee Crisis". In doing so, this presentation utilizes information gathered from interviews and documents to assess prevalent narratives surrounding the refugee crisis. While examining the dynamics between NGOs and Swedish authorities within the context of the Swedish Red Cross, it also emphasizes the perspectives of organization employees involved in integration efforts. Within this framework, the presentation seeks to delve into the repercussions of Sweden's shift towards more stringent refugee policies amid the refugee crisis, particularly in relation to its long-standing reputation as a refugee-friendly nation. Furthermore, it aims to critically analyze the endeavors of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating in Sweden in response to these evolving policy landscapes.

PANEL 4: CONFLICTING GLOBAL HIERARCHIES

Caught in a war of identities: Domestic polarization and the loss of U.S. consensus about the Ukraine conflict

Áron Tábor

In the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, a rare bipartisan consensus was formed in the United States as Republicans and Democrats largely equally saw Russia's actions as a "major threat" to U.S. interests. However, two years later, this consensus has clearly eroded, as a growing partisan divergence is observable, which has even started to influence policy outcomes with the inability of the U.S. Congress to vote on aid provision to Ukraine. Domestic divisions increasingly undermine the ability of the U.S. to assume its international leadership role and the possibility of Donald Trump's return to the presidency sparked discussions in Europe how to prepare for a situation in which U.S. security guarantees can no longer be taken for granted. Thus, domestic upheavals in the United States can significantly alter international order, eroding the power of Western institutions, and potentially leading to the transformation of international hierarchies.

Under such conditions, it is crucial to make sense how U.S. domestic shifts affect attitudes to a rules-based international system generally, and to the U.S. support of Ukraine particularly. What explains the erosion of the consensus as some Republicans move away from the support of Ukraine? Do Republican politicians simply follow the lead of Donald Trump, or has Trump's unique take on many international issues successfully tapped into existing discontent with international arrangements among the Republican base? While traditionally public opinion has been understood to follow elite cues, recent research has pointed out how the public may also influence decision-makers under certain circumstances. The paper argues that such interaction can especially become salient when foreign-policy issues are connected to internal identity divisions; as domestic polarization has sharpened, contestation over the preferred global role has undermined the articulation of a coherent U.S. policy.

By examining the loss of U.S. domestic consensus on the Ukraine war at both the levels of public opinion and in the shifts of political discourse, I highlight how fears about internal recognition can spill over to foreign policy debates as threatened substate identities are projected into the international sphere. Thus, while the paper remains agnostic about the true direction of the causal mechanisms between elite cues and public opinion shifts, it argues that discourses that resonate with deeply held identity-based beliefs related to international politics can seriously undermine policy consensus, and may constrain policy choices, especially in an election year.

When talking peace favors the aggressor: The discursive construction of appeasement in Viktor Orbán's conception of Russia's war in Ukraine

Tamás Peragovics

What does Viktor Orbán mean when he talks about peace in the context of Russia's war in Ukraine? This paper investigates the Hungarian Prime Minister's discourse following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. It relies on a select corpus of speeches made by the Hungarian Prime Minister since the invasion, and its purpose is to critically reconstruct his conceptualization of the war's meaning and the way to achieve peace. Substantively, Orbán construes peace as cessation of hostilities at all costs, and peaceful behavior as arresting any material support towards Ukraine, above all the Western

weapons shipments and troop trainings. Orbán also invokes the material asymmetry between Russia and Ukraine, which he alleges is inherent in the relationship. By taking these positions, Orbán's call for peace becomes a call for abandoning Ukraine and subjugating it to the will of a stronger and better endowed Russia. The paper argues that this is evidence of Orbán's peace being a form of great power appeasement, and that the primary objective of the discourse is to create the condition of possibility for Western inaction. Orbán's discourse is primarily focused on normalizing and rationalizing doing nothing for Ukraine, and its key discursive strategies are de-contextualization, disconnection, and expropriation.

Everyday empathy: Reimagining conflict narratives between Russia and Ukraine

Ivetta Délczegh

In the aftermath of the Ukrainian-Russian conflict, a notable trend emerged in the Balkans, where a significant number of Russians, along with a smaller proportion of Ukrainians, sought refuge and built a collaborative community within the inclusive spirit of the Serbian community. The research aims to uncover the dynamics of coexistence among the Russian, Serbian, and Ukrainian nationalities in the Balkans. Additionally, it seeks to highlight the factors that contribute to reducing intercultural tensions among ordinary individuals.

The chosen methodology involves the analysis of semi-structured interviews and media content, specifically designed to capture the nuanced experiences and aspirations of Russian and Ukrainian immigrants in Serbia. Through these interviews, I aimed to comprehensively understand their motivation for selecting Serbia as their new home, the obstacles they encountered, and their aspirations for a brighter future based on their war-related experiences. Additionally, the media analysis serves to augment the interview findings, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the daily challenges faced by individuals from conflict-affected countries.

Preliminary findings from my research suggest that Russians and Ukrainians who have migrated to Serbia have adapted to cohabitation and, despite past events, are reluctant to alter this dynamic. Both nationalities express a desire for increased empathy from the global community, stemming from diverse motivations. In my presentation, I will delve deeper into the motivations behind the desired Russian-Ukrainian cohabitation in Serbia and the specific areas in which they anticipate increased empathy from the global community.

In today's geopolitically charged atmosphere, conflict prevention is crucial. Therefore it's important to draw attention to the tools that promote openness towards other nations, thereby reducing ethnic tensions and promoting sustainable community development. Certain findings of my study may provide practical solutions to similar conflicts, such as the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, and conflicts between other nationalities, paving the way for maintaining cross-border peace.

Blind Davids versus imaginary Goliaths: Flawed narratives of the Israel/Palestine conflict and their defective policy outcomes

András Schweitzer

One of the many difficulties of achieving a peaceful compromise to the Israel/Palestine conflict is the incompatibility of the main narratives about it. The pro-Israeli master narrative is based on the story of Jewish homecoming and the creation of a national state, which must be constantly defended against

mortal enemies, although it is justified historically and legally. The pro-Palestinian master narrative is about a people that has been indigenous to their land and yet has been deprived of self-determination and needs to fight an anti-colonialist war even after European colonizers long left the neighboring Arab countries.

In this paper I argue that the main problem with this narrative-pair is not that either one would be generally incorrect or that they would imply different solutions. Rather, the biggest problem has to do with how the “other” is constructed: as an imaginary mirror-figure to fit the interpretative contours. In other words, the two narratives are selective but largely accurate historical interpretations, however, they are complemented with a logical yet deeply incorrect representation of the intentions and actions of the “other”. In the case of the pro-Israeli nation-building account, the “other” is (must be!) imagined as an extremely violent, irrationally uncompromising counter-nationalism. In the case of the anti-colonial pro-Palestinian narrative, the “other” is portrayed as a racist, colonialist oppressor (how else?). All this misunderstanding stems from the total uniqueness and peculiarity of the encounter: a situation where an essentially Central/Eastern European ethno-nationalist undertaking (Zionism) came into contact and clash with a characteristic Middle Eastern Arab anti-colonial movement.

The true irony is that the communication and political actions of the two sides gradually transformed the “other” to really resemble the mis-portrayed images by now. Contrary to analyses by scholars like Rashid Khalidi or Ilan Pappé, Zionism was not inherently a racist-colonialist ideology, nor was Israel an apartheid state at its foundation. Similarly, despite the claims of some Israeli politicians, Arabs (Palestinians) originally were not hell-bent to “drive the Jews into the sea”. A constructivist interpretation and historical analysis of the long *durée* escalation of the conflict along these lines can have the potential to highlight how, contrary to frequent claims, neither Palestinian violence nor Israeli occupation is intrinsic, but prompted in part by the actions of the other side, therefore neither can be expected to end unilaterally, but rather jointly, based also on a more accurate perception of the other.

China’s “global community of shared future” in the world of zero-sum thinking – how does Xi Jinping handle the “major changes unseen in a century”?

Kinga Soós

As the 2024 Munich Security Report which has just been published in February this year pointed out, it’s a general worldwide tendency that the appeal of global cooperation is weakening and the rationale for absolute benefits is getting out of sight, governments (especially in Eastern Europe, Western Asia, the Indo-Pacific, and the Sahel region) are rather concerned about relative gains. The Report suggests that in these times of the (re)emergence of zero-sum thinking cooperation between “like-minded states” needs to be maintained as an upgraded transatlantic partnership.

In the meantime, China became the third most imminent risk perceived by the US (and vice versa). Some would argue that these fears are not unfounded, Xi Jinping has (re)introduced the formula of “major changes unseen in a century” shortly after the 19th Party Congress (2017). At that time, Xi also pointed out that the evolution of the structure of the international system was increasingly and irreversibly moving towards rebalancing. The shift in the balance of power is also bringing inevitable changes to the global governance system, Xi said at the 2018 BRICS Summit in Johannesburg. Thus, the question motivating our presentation is how does China try to contest the existing international hierarchy, how could those changes identified by Xi be understood, especially in this world of zero-sum thinking?

In order to be able to tackle these questions we are going to analyze the concept of a “global community of shared future” that became the symbol of China’s vision of the ideal form of international order. As such it has been regarded (by the 2023 white paper on BRI published by the State Council Information) as the final objective of the Belt and Road Initiative, the country’s largest ongoing geoeconomic project.

Latin American development perspectives and their foreign policy implications

Béla Soltész

Latin America has traditionally been perceived (by foreign powers and by Latin American political actors themselves) as a region where the United States’ strategic interests set the rules of the game. Two centuries after the proclamation of the Monroe Doctrine, however, the U.S.’s regional hegemony is being contested by growing Chinese economic presence. Yet, differently of the Cold War’s power dynamics, the current international setting allows Latin American countries to maintain multiple alignments, or to pursue a policy of ‘active non-alignment’.

Recent events nonetheless suggest that foreign policy alignments of certain Latin American governments are tied to perspectives of economic development that they perceive, or aim to open, through maintaining or changing these alignments. A paradigmatic case is the profound change of Brazil’s foreign policy following the return of Lula da Silva to the presidency in January 2023. Another, equally paradigmatic event is the withdrawal of Argentina’s application for a membership in the BRICS bloc, following the election of Javier Milei in November 2023.

Based on an overview of these two countries’ recent policy changes, strategic documents, and selected presidential speeches, I argue that these changes did not only happen due to a sort of realpolitik driven by costs and benefits of a certain alignment, but are deeply rooted in a set of values and beliefs of the respective governments about development. Lula’s Brazil is actively challenging the current international hierarchy in terms of institutional and financial settings – for which BRICS is, or can become, instrumental – and at the same time pursuing a more central role of the state in development policymaking. On the contrary, Milei’s Argentina has started a major deregulation and liberalization of its economy, coupled by a re-orientation towards the United States and accepting Western dominance. In my presentation, I aim at identifying the notions of hierarchy and development that shape these countries’ current foreign policy.