

ABSTRACTS IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER OF PARTICIPANTS

Vladimir Ajzenhamer, Faculty of Security Studies, University of Belgrade

Bandwagoning without a Locomotive: The European Union as a Strategic Relic of Unipolarity

Since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, much of the analytical debate has focused on why many states outside the Euro-Atlantic area have refrained from fully aligning with the Western position toward Russia. In regions such as the Middle East, major actors, including the Gulf monarchies, have opted for hedging strategies, balancing relations with competing great powers rather than joining a single geopolitical camp. Against this broader global pattern, the behavior of the European Union appears increasingly anomalous.

This paper argues that while much of the international system is moving toward hedging as a rational strategy under emerging multipolarity, Europe largely continues to rely on bandwagoning. Yet this bandwagoning increasingly lacks a clear strategic “locomotive.” During the early stages of the Ukraine war, European alignment was largely structured around the United States’ leadership under the Biden administration, which mobilized a unified Western response against Russia. However, shifts in American political priorities (most visibly during the transition to Donald Trump’s renewed presidency and the subsequent recalibration of Washington’s approach to the war) have exposed Europe’s structural strategic dependency. As the United States redefines its level of commitment to the Ukrainian conflict and to European security more broadly, the question of who provides strategic direction for Europe becomes increasingly salient.

The paper contends that the European Union’s persistent reliance on bandwagoning reflects deeper structural and historical factors rooted in the legacy of the unipolar moment. The EU’s strategic culture, institutional design, and security architecture remain heavily embedded in a system where the United States functioned as the central organizing power of the Western alliance. In a more fragmented and multipolar international environment, where middle powers increasingly hedge rather than align, this pattern leaves Europe without a clear strategic driver.

Consequently, the EU risks becoming a strategic relic of unipolarity: a geopolitical actor accustomed to alignment but lacking the capacity to generate autonomous strategic leadership. The emerging international order thus raises a fundamental question for Europe: if the locomotive of bandwagoning disappears, what direction does the wagon follow?

Key words: bandwagoning; hedging; European Union; Ukraine war; multipolarity.

Stefan Aleksić, University of Belgrade

The Chernobyl Problem: Is Socialism Radioactive and Should It Be Nuclear

By accident or not - the HBO series "Chernobyl" (2019) employed the same strategic and discursive framework to delegitimize socialism, multi-ethnic state and nuclear energy and it is precisely the reason I believe that it functions as a contemporary iteration of a long-standing ideological critique directed at the socialist project. This unexpected intersection maybe suggests a profound structural affinity between socialist project and nuclear energy.

Drawing upon the investigation into the political economy of nuclear energy, this presentation argues that the nuclear sector - as a technical, epistemic, and industrial

field - offers a blueprint for resisting the neoliberal imperatives of *labor precaritization*, *production outsourcing*, and "*leaning*" of the industrial processes. I contend that the industry's decline in the 1980s was not primarily a reaction to high-profile accidents, but rather a consequence of the emergence of neoliberalism: high level of vertical and horizontal integration inherent to nuclear power and industry creates a structural barrier to capital, making it uniquely resilient to the fragmentation of production chains - unlike many other industries.

Consequently, the features that make nuclear energy "inefficient" under a market-centric lens - long investment cycles, resistance to public spending and public spending cuts, resistance to socialised energy networks, and an integrated, non-atomized workforce - position it as a strategic asset for a socialist framework. Unlike the fragmented nature of the renewable energy market, nuclear power offers a pathway toward socialized investment, labor stability, and energy sovereignty from globalized commodity chains. Ultimately, this necessitates a critical reappraisal of the socialist movement's prevailing opposition to nuclear technology.

Key words: nuclear energy, production chains, industry integration, political economy.

Nikola Dedić, Faculty of Music, University of Arts, Belgrade

The Meaning of Trump: Bonapartism and the Law of the Tendency of the Rate of Profit to Fall

In mainstream media of liberal (or 'left') provenance, a whole series of terms appears with which authors attempt to describe and explain the historically specific situation in which both the USA and the global capitalist system find themselves: right-wing populism, neoliberal authoritarianism, protectionism, democratic backsliding, and even fascism. The problem with these terms is that they are predominantly ideological rather than theoretical. In this paper, we will attempt to theoretically describe the aforementioned historical constellation by invoking two concepts developed by historical materialism: the concept of Bonapartism, on the one hand, and fascism, on the other. Bonapartism was defined by Karl Marx in his famous work *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, while the phenomenon of fascism was addressed by numerous Marxist authors. However, we argue that no one did so as convincingly as Alfred Sohn-Rethel, who, in his book *Economy and Class Structure of German Fascism*, connected this phenomenon with the most significant contradiction of the capitalist mode of production – the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. In this paper, we will attempt to demonstrate whether and in what way both concepts – Bonapartism (in the Marx's sense) and fascism (in the Sohn-Rethel's sense) – are helpful for understanding the Trump era and the global conjuncture in which the world capitalist system finds itself. Our main thesis is that Trumpism is the ideology of reproducing capitalist relations under the conditions of its epochal crisis, i.e., that it represents capitalism by 'other means' in the way Sohn-Rethel describes this phenomenon, but that it is not yet classical fascism. Whether Bonapartism will evolve into fascism depends on the possibility of overcoming the current profitability crisis, as well as on the global response of the masses to the attempts of the American bourgeoisie and its satellites to overcome the crisis by 'other means'.

Key words: Trumpism, Bonapartism, fascism, capitalism, capitalist crises, law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall.

Radhika Desai, University of Manitoba, Canada, London School of Economics and Political Science, UK

The 'Relations of Producing Nations' in the Inevitable but Tortured Transition to Socialism

At the start of the second quarter of the twenty-first century, with the United States vainly supporting two Israeli wars, against Palestine and Iran, we are witnessing the crescendo of the US militarism that inaugurated the century. The US-led West is miring itself deeper into conflicts it cannot win. While it is clear that a new order must emerge, it is equally clear that, so far at least, the political forces necessary to effect the transition are, at best, weak and fragmented. What is necessary in this dire situation is to trace the lineaments of the necessities latent in the current situation. This is what this paper will do through the lens of geopolitical economy, the Marxist approach I have proposed to examine what Marx termed 'the relations of producing nations', which places imperialism and anti-imperialism at its centre and considers the struggle between them as their motor.

My analysis will start with the analysis of capitalism, which entered its senile monopoly phase as early as the early twentieth century and culminated in the Thirty Years' Crisis of Capitalism and Imperialism (1914-1945). It will treat the entry of socialism on the terrain of the relations of producing nations as a historical necessity. Taking the analysis through the golden age, its crisis and the onset of neoliberalism, it will show that the attempt of the latter to restore to capitalism a youthful vigour was bound to fail. The result of nearly 5 decades of neoliberalism has been an enfeeblement of capitalism, its financialization, productive decline and military impotence.

The current schism in the Atlantic Alliance will be read as a necessary phase in the history of capitalism's decline where attempts to restore can only open the door to its exist from the world stage

Key words: Capitalism, Imperialism, Geopolitical Economy, NATO, Socialism.

Bojan Dimitrijević, Singidunum University, Belgrade; **Milenko Dželetović**, Faculty of Security Studies, University of Belgrade

The Economic Future of Europe in the Context of an Emerging Multipolar Order

Introduction: This paper examines the multi-layered crisis of the European Union, analyzing it through the lens of internal economic stagnation and political divisions that undermine its unity. The EU is critically assessed as a geopolitical and ideological construct, while mechanisms of public opinion formation are explored as instruments of control in a post-democratic era marked by rising skepticism. Particular attention is devoted to the asymmetric dynamics of EU–US relations in the context of a potential second Trump presidency, taking into account the EU's deep integration within NATO structures, which directly affects Europe's strategic autonomy.

Alongside the crisis of Western institutions, the paper briefly analyzes the rise of BRICS as a key factor reshaping global relations, fostering new polarizations and regional realignments. Within the framework of theories on the disintegration of the global capitalist system, alternative development models and the future of the world under conditions of ecological crisis are outlined.

The aim: This study analyzes the strategic economic challenges faced by the European Union as a result of the transformation of the global power structure from a unipolar to a multipolar system. The aim is to examine the EU's economic prospects in the context

of geopolitical fragmentation, trade tensions, the rise of new economic centers, the war in Ukraine and the Middle East, and the erosion of the existing international economic order.

Methodology: The research is based on a review of current economic forecasts from leading international institutions (IMF, OECD, European Commission), as well as a comparative analysis of the geopolitical strategies of key actors. Indicators such as GDP growth, share in global trade, and dependence on external supply chains are considered.

Preliminary findings indicate that Europe stands at a turning point, where its traditional reliance on open markets and exports is becoming increasingly vulnerable due to the rise of protectionism and "trade wars." A trend of slowing growth in the eurozone has been documented, particularly in comparison with the more dynamic economies of the United States and the Indo-Pacific region. Key risks include energy dependence, a technological gap relative to leading powers, and internal political fragmentation that slows structural reforms.

Key words: European Union, multipolarity, geopolitical risk, strategic autonomy, global trade.

Ivica Lj. Đorđević, Faculty of Security Studies, University of Belgrade

War as a system reset in the conditions of the paradigmatic crisis of capitalism: a Balkan perspective

As the winner of the Cold War and the sole superpower during the 1990s, the USA underwent a crisis due to a missed opportunity to reform itself and overhaul the world order. A process rooted in the logic of the rise and fall of great powers led to the paradigmatic crisis of capitalism, which had already exhausted its potential. Instead of reforms, the old model based on an imperial approach and the pursuit of absolute global control was reintroduced.

The events following the fall of the Berlin Wall could have been anticipated based on the behavior of the USA, the dominant world power at the time. Instead of establishing a qualitatively new global order, the political pamphlet *The End of History* was proposed as a seminal work. Another, more serious, sign that the wrong path was being pursued came with Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations*. Finally, NATO's eastward expansion confirmed the apocalyptic scenario conceived by the strategists of the so-called West. The course of events in the early 21st century closely resembled the state of affairs on the eve of the First and Second World Wars, which leads us to the conclusion that capitalism has no other solution to the systemic crises it causes other than a reset in the form of a war scenario.

The policy of controlled chaos implemented on a global scale has not bypassed Southeast Europe. The inability to offer a new geopolitical framework as a way out of the situation has led to retrograde processes reminiscent of the Middle Ages. Although the drastic consequences of this are first felt on the periphery of capitalism (the Balkans), they also affect its very centre (the EU).

Key words: crisis, paradigm, capitalism, geopolitics, Balkans.

Marko Đorđević, no affiliation

Work Stoppages, Strikes, and Blockades in the Serbian Public Sector in 2025

A wave of strikes, work stoppages and blockades had struck the Serbian economy in early 2025. While complex and multifactorial, this wave of workplace actions is seldom discussed in an economic context. It is often identified as only a small part of the overall political crisis that struck the country in late 2024, but we believe this to be a reductionist approach. In this presentation, we will focus on the basic economic parameters and issues of the Serbian public sector – where the strike wave originated prior to 2025. Only then will we introduce the relevant global and local political events that kept elevating the initial crisis. We believe that this is the only way to conceptualise and analyse the more sophisticated, nuanced ideological, and class problematics that underline the strike wave of 2025. Our working hypothesis will be that this wave was defined by: 1) a broad ideological consensus of public sector employees and their employer; 2) its break down, and 3) subsequent restoration.

Key words: Marxism, class struggle, labour unions, strike, conformism.

Vadim Goncharov-Onishchenko, independent researcher

Economic drivers of the conflict in Ukraine

Mainstream academic interpretations of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict predominantly reduce it to a geopolitical rivalry between Russia and NATO driven by security concerns, while in public discourse it is more often presented as a clash of values (the defence of democracy, the fight against Nazism, etc.). Both perspectives remain confined to either the form or the ideological surface of the conflict and overlook the economic interests that underlie it. Ideological justifications and security narratives obscure the continuous struggle over natural resources, markets, trade routes, labour power, and spheres of investment — a struggle that inevitably pushes states towards armed confrontation.

Building on the Clausewitzian conception of war as a continuation of policy by other, violent means and the Marxist-Leninist understanding of politics as the most concentrated expression of economics, this paper argues that the conflict in Ukraine reflects the collision of economic interests among competing capitalist states. Such a claim, however, cannot rest on assertion alone and requires empirical substantiation. The argument draws on an analysis of Ukraine's post-Soviet economic restructuring and the dynamics of transnational competition both before and during the conflict. Particular importance resides in the following interrelated aspects: *first*, the collapse of Ukraine's productive base and its transformation into a backward resource-based economy dependent on foreign capital and financial institutions, thereby turning the country into a field of competition among major capitalist economies; *second*, the systematic displacement of previously dominant Russian capital through legal constraints, administrative pressure, seizures and nationalisations, which intensified interstate tensions and laid the ground for subsequent military-political confrontation; *third*, the extensive economic interests of Russian and Western capital in the elimination of competition and the redistribution of assets in Ukraine; and *fourth*, the structural incentives of the military-industrial complex that prolong armed confrontation. By foregrounding these political-economic drivers, the paper situates the Russo-Ukrainian conflict within broader debates on imperialism, militarisation and global rivalry, contributing to critical analyses of European security and world capitalism.

Key words: imperialism; economic interests; capitalist competition; political economy of war; Russo-Ukrainian confrontation.

Carlos González-Villa, University of Castilla-La Mancha

From Yugoslavia to the Eurozone: Passive Involution and the Dynamics of European Fragmentation

This communication develops ‘passive involution’ as a conceptual framework for understanding the political-institutional trajectory of the EU since the eurozone crisis. It stems from a methodological concern: over the past decade, analogies between Yugoslavia and the EU have proliferated, highlighting the entanglement of economic, political and social crises with territorial fragmentation, yet these analogies have not been systematised from a perspective that assesses the effective possibilities available to emancipatory forces in each conjuncture.

Conceptually, passive involution emerges from a discussion of Gramsci’s notion of ‘passive revolution.’ Unlike the later—where political-institutional changes respond to the need of the bourgeoisie to occupy the state as a hegemonic apparatus in a context of developing productive forces—passive involution describes political transformations oriented toward managing the stagnation of productive-forces development. In this setting, dominant classes fearful of falling behind tend to anchor themselves to externally winning projects, even at the cost of surrendering strategic capacity to foreign capital.

The possibilities available to left-wing forces in the European passive revolution are structured by national and European parliamentary activity, as well as by an internal dynamic marked by the inability to formulate long-term strategic analyses. The rise of the far-right has transformed an potential defensive tactic into a total strategy of preserving a liberal order that relies increasingly less on its rules and increasingly more on its weapons. Against this backdrop, expanding their strategic horizon requires moving beyond reactive parliamentary containment toward rebuilding long-term projects capable of contesting the structural drivers of passive involution, thus shifting from liberal-order guardianship to a selective, conflictual use of institutional spaces.

Key words: European Union, Yugoslavia, Passive involution, External dependence, Socialist politics.

Institute for Labour Studies: Nejc Kralj, Arne Kušej, Andraž Levstek, Lovrenc Rogelj

The New Cold War: An Analysis and Theoretical Assessment

Over the past decade, the notion of the Cold War has been revived as a lens through which to interpret the United States’ geopolitical position vis-à-vis Russia and China, as well as to make sense of its recent military engagements, economic policies, and strategic programs. Notably, the idea that the U.S. is engaged in—or on the brink of—a “New Cold War” has circulated not only among socialist and certain liberal critics of U.S. imperialism but has also become commonplace among America’s political and economic elites, who are intent on preserving U.S. global dominance, particularly in response to China’s economic ascent and its potential to dominate key markets in the coming decades. U.S. industrial might and manufacturing capabilities have come under increasing pressure from cheaper and more efficient Chinese production, contributing to a growing trade deficit and rising debt. To preserve its leading economic

position, the U.S. administration has increasingly relied on protectionist measures and a more assertive foreign policy, seeking to secure key resources and, in some cases, to weaken or eliminate potential Chinese allies across multiple theatres. Against this backdrop, the panel will assess the extent to which the concept of a “New Cold War” can be productively employed within a historical materialist framework to analyze the current dynamics of U.S. imperialism and the concrete ways in which America’s ruling classes are responding to the crisis of the unipolar order. It will also examine where analogies with the “Old” Cold War break down, and how they may obscure more than they clarify.

Key words: New Cold War, United States, China, Russia, imperialism.

Zoran Kanduč, Institute of criminology at the Faculty of Law, University of Ljubljana
Imperialist sanctions and a peripheral world war

Social reproduction – within national states (most of which being bourgeois formations functioning in and through class struggle) and imperialist world capitalist system – consist of a totality of economic, political and ideological processes. Each of them contains negative sanctions (i.e. punishments) being activated if and when the process in question seems to be going off (or deviating from) the structurally right or appropriate course. These negative sanctions – e.g. various types of economic constraint, financial blackmail, used or threatened violence, and “excommunication” – can be conceived as basic mechanisms of reproduction of both class and imperialist rule, although they can be used also in the struggle against the imperialism and capitalism, i.e. as a means of transformation of existing power relations on a global, regional and national level. The presentation deals mainly with imperialist sanctions; firstly, because imperialism is still the cause of huge human suffering or (both relative and absolute) deprivations of exploited classes, and, secondly, because they are often the most severe ones (provoking enormous social and material damage). The principal reason why they are applied is defence of national sovereignty (independent foreign and internal policy oriented preferably to the needs of the majority of population and accompanying by the construction of autonomous economic and social system), irrespective of the way in which is justified and regardless of the political format in which it is put into practice. In this respect, a proxy (or rather coalition) war against the Russian federation led by the USA, NATO and EU (collective West) and the war of aggression against Iran will be analysed. After the collapse of historic socialisms, destruction of Iraq, Libya, Syria and other weak “rogue” states, Russia, Iran, China (being the most serious threat to USA hegemony) and DPRK have become the last powerful obstacles to the unrestricted global imperialist rule (being established after the end of the “cold” war, introducing the unipolar world order).

Key words: capitalist world system, imperialism, war.

Mihajlo Kopanja, Faculty of Security Studies, University of Belgrade
From burden carrying to burden shifting: shifting alliance dynamics and the strategic transformation of NATO

Past year represented the biggest test for European security – not because of an external threat, but because of internal shifting in NATO alliance dynamics. Although Russian invasion of Ukraine posed one of the most significant challenge for Europe since the end of the Second World War, it was rising fractures in the dynamics within

NATO that finally forced the EU to take their own security much more seriously. And there are good reasons for that. For the better part of 80 years, Europe did not have to worry about their own security. The United States did that. Since NATO's inception in the late 1940s, almost the entire weight of European security was carried by the United States. In conceptual terms, the US was burden carrying the entire alliance. This made sense as NATO was formed in a strategic environment of bipolarity in which the U.S. was one of the two superpowers. When Berlin Wall fell, and Cold War ended, the U.S. strived towards sharing the burden with its European counterparts, with varying degrees of success – primarily because of the lack of a major state adversary. But events since 2022, the changing strategic environment marked with rise of challengers and U.S. decline, are forcing the U.S. to fully reconsider this position.

This paper argues that the fractures we have seen do not signify the end of NATO – but its strategic transformation. Both resentful of continuous burden carrying and fearful of its declining power vis-à-vis China, the U.S. neither can nor want to carry the burden of NATO. Instead, fearing *alliance entrapment*, the U.S. has aggressively induced fears of *allied abandonment* in its European counterparts in order to shift the burden of alliance commitments away from the U.S. and to the EU. By showing how, as US relative power declined, alliance dynamics has been managed from burden carrying by the US during the Cold War, to somewhat of an attempt at burden sharing during the post-Cold War era, to today's attempts at burden shifting to the EU, this paper provides the framework for interpreting current fractures in NATO as a part of strategic transformation and not its dissolution.

Key words: United States, European Union, NATO, alliance dynamics, burden sharing, burden shifting, burden carrying, alliance entrapment, allied abandonment.

Marko Kržan, nonaffiliated, Ljubljana

Sub-imperialism and Collective Imperialism: Causes and Prospects of the Russo-Ukrainian War

In order to understand the causes of war, it is necessary to analyse the policy that given states and (ruling) classes pursued before the war, and the political system, in which they acted. In case of Russo-Ukrainian war, the system at stake is the capitalist world-system, dominated by a specific form of international relations, namely *collective imperialism*, in its specific period of existence, i.e. the period of *restauration of capitalism* in the former “socialist societies”.

The next step is to analyse the long-term policies of main agents of the social processes that lead to the war. All agents were solving the problem of restauration of capitalism, but within different circumstances and with differing aims. The policy of the US and imperialist camp in general aimed at (re)integrating former socialist states into the world-capitalist system on structural positions allowing the reproduction of the system. The policy of the ruling strata of the “transitional societies” was aimed at adapting their social structure to this new situation. The usual outcome was the establishment of economically dependent (i.e. peripheral) and politically dominated (i.e. comprador) capitalist social formations.

However, we find important deviations from this trajectory in the cases of Ukraine and Russia. In Ukraine, bureaucracy and bourgeoisie meandered between dependency on the Russian and Western capital/states, which (articulated with ethnic/linguistic/ideological divisions in Ukrainian society and policy of Russia)

eventually threatened the unity of the country and created the elements of civil war within the broader international conflict.

This brings us to the crucial question concerning the role of Russia. Unlike all other former socialist states, Russia was not a comprador/peripheral social formation before the elimination of capitalism. On the contrary, it was an imperialist state with a key role within the system of classical imperialism as a regulator of intra-imperialist relations and a decisive factor in inter-imperialist wars (Napoleonic, WW1, in the form of USSR also in WW2). With the system of classical imperialism, characterised by antagonistic relations between imperialist states/camps, being replaced by a system of collective imperialism under US hegemony, characterised by complementary relations between them, reintegration of Russia into the capitalist world-system was not merely a matter of reoccupying its former structural position, because it no longer existed. It seems that the long-term policy of Russian ruling strata was aimed at establishing a sub-imperialist social formation, meaning a capitalist social formation that is peripheral (i.e. economically dependent), yet not comprador (i.e. politically dominated). The current war and its aftermath will show whether Russia can impose this contradictory arrangement to its population on the one hand and to the dominant powers on the other, and whether the current world-system can accommodate for it without significant changes.

Keywords: Lenin's analysis of war; Collective imperialism; Sub-imperialism; Restoration of capitalism; Russo-Ukrainian war.

Alpar Lošonc, Faculty of Technical Sciences – Department for Social Sciences, University of Novi Sad, member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts

Freedom and the Fetish of Security in the EU, Which Aims to Be a Civilization Once Again

The relationship between freedom and security represents a traditional contradiction in European self-understanding. However, it can be shown that this same contradiction acquired real meanings within the dynamics of imperialism. In other words, without imperialism and emerging capitalism, we cannot understand the forms of the historical and logical manifestation of this contradiction. Now, the same questions are being raised in connection with the European Union, which in its ambitious self-apologies has defined itself as an entity that, with its "normative power" and the transcendence of the articularity of nation-states, has resolved this contradiction. The bearers of European institutionalization hoped that their efforts to converge with other actors in the world order would fit into the global chain of capitalism in such a way that the European Union would preserve not only its distinctiveness but also the aforementioned "normative hegemony." To possess normative hegemony means to strive to be Kant in the post-Kantian era, that is, to mediate normative determinants for the entire world. The European Union, or rather its representatives, have thereby defined themselves not only as the bearers of an empire that competes with other empires, but recently also as a civilization that should serve as a bulwark against those who cannot gain entry into that same civilization. In other words, by insisting on civilizational ambitions, the European Union wishes to emphasize its own, according to its self-understanding, legitimate particularity, which now stands in an antagonistic relationship towards those on the other side of civilizational boundaries. However, neither this concept nor the relationship between freedom and contradiction can be imagined without taking into account the dynamics of global capitalism, that is, the positioning and integration of

European fractions of capital into the "imperialist chain." The discursive stabilization of the concept of civilization can only be understood in this way, namely, as a reorientation of capitalism in Europe within a world constellation that is no longer bounded even by the totalizing conceptions of neoliberalism. In doing so, the EU is gradually abandoning its normative intentions in favor of rearmament, through which it seeks to anticipate the always problematic phenomenon of military Keynesianism. This brings back the classic question of the tension between freedom and security, in which the demands of security always prevail.

Key words: European Union, security policy, military Keynesianism, civilization.

Fin Lucu Dražovič, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana
Contradiction of the Islamic Republic of Iran

In the presentation, I seek to analyze what I perceive as the key contradiction of the Islamic Republic of Iran: a sincere anti-imperialist stance upheld by political elites since the 1979 revolution on the one hand, and continuous and increasingly stringent neoliberal policies within the country on the other. With the Axis of Resistance, Iran represents the last obstacle to the complete Zionization of the Middle East and to parallel imperialist domination in the region. As demonstrated by the war initiated by the United States and Israel, Iran has developed, at both the political and military levels, a system capable of reproducing itself even in the face of a joint military attack by the United States and Israel.

On the other hand, the political elites of the Islamic Republic have performed far less successfully in a war conducted by other means, namely the so called risk based sanctions imposed by the United States on Iran in 2011. They have sought to counter these sanctions primarily by continuing neoliberal measures, and by directing all political and diplomatic efforts toward the United States and Europe in order to secure an agreement to end the sanctions.

The aim of this presentation is not to provide an overview of the economic policy of the Islamic Republic, but rather to analyze the historical factors that have brought Iran to a point at which it is capable, in political and military terms, of resisting imperialist powers, while at the same time being unable, or at least unwilling on the part of certain political elites, to develop a resilient economy. Sanctions are the modern equivalent of a medieval siege, yet the Islamic Republic has further intensified their destructive effects.

Key words: Iran, Islamic Republic, Anti-imperialism, Neoliberalism, Zionism.

Marković Ksenija, Marko Mandić, Milan Blagojević, Institute of Social Sciences, Belgrade

The European Union as an Ideological Marker: Factors of Euroscepticism in Serbia

This paper analyzes the factors that shape emotional closeness to Europe and euroscepticism in Serbia, starting from the assumption that attitudes toward the European Union in contemporary peripheral societies are not primarily the result of rational economic calculations, but rather of ideological and political polarization. The research is based on longitudinal public opinion data collected in Serbia from 2018 to 2025. The analysis comprises multiple survey waves to identify key predictors of

emotional attachment to Europe and the likelihood of voting against Serbia's accession to the EU in a hypothetical referendum.

The results show that political ideological orientation (left–right scale) is the most stable and strongest predictor of attitudes toward the European Union. With each shift to the right, emotional attachment to Europe significantly declines, while the probability of euroscepticism increases. In addition to ideology, the spatial dimension also plays an important role: residents of rural and peripheral areas demonstrate noticeably higher levels of euroscepticism compared to residents of large urban centers. Socioeconomic factors such as income and education show considerably weaker and less stable effects across different waves of the survey.

The findings suggest that the European Union in Serbia is increasingly functioning less as a normative framework associated with the values of democracy and integration, and more as an ideological marker within domestic political conflicts. In this sense, attitudes toward the EU are becoming part of broader political polarization, which further complicates the communication of European policies on the European periphery. The paper contributes to understanding the relationship between ideology, social stratification, and perceptions of European integration in the context of hybrid political regimes.

Key words: European Union, euroscepticism, left-right orientation, political polarization, Serbia.

Igor Mitrović, Independent researcher, Belgrade

China in the world-system

This paper analyzes the contemporary socio-economic system of the People's Republic of China through the prism of left-wing theoretical debates on the relationship between socialism and capitalism. Drawing on a dialectical approach and insights from Marxist and world-systems traditions, it critically examines two dominant interpretations: one that characterizes China as “socialism with Chinese characteristics,” and another that views it as a form of state or (semi-)peripheral capitalism.

Arguments supporting the socialist character of the Chinese system include the thesis of the “primary stage of socialism,” the central role of the state in guiding the market, the dominance of state ownership in strategic sectors, and the political subordination of the capitalist class. In contrast, critical perspectives emphasize the predominance of wage labor, generalized commodity production, high levels of inequality, processes of primitive accumulation, and China's deep integration into the global capitalist system.

Drawing on world-systems theory and the concept of unequal exchange, the paper examines China's position within the global hierarchy of core, semi-periphery, and periphery, as well as its role in global value chains and the transfer of surplus value. It further addresses whether China's rise represents a challenge to the existing imperialist structure or its transformation into a novel form.

China's development unfolds within the structural logic of global capitalism while generating new contradictions with potentially destabilizing effects. Limitations placed on “unproductive” accumulation intensify the contradictions inherent in capitalist relations of production and contribute to the rapid development of the productive forces. At the global level, China's trajectory can be understood as a form of “non-hegemonic globalization.” The paper concludes that China represents a contradictory social formation in which socialist and capitalist elements coexist, whose future will be

shaped by class struggle, transformations in the global system, and the ideological orientation of the Communist Party of China.

Key words: China, socialism, capitalism, world-system, unequal exchange.

Rastko Močnik, Faculty of Media and Communications, Belgrade

From Western hegemony to US domination – or an Exit from Global Capitalism?

We will schematically present the heterogeneous processes and class practices whose combination engendered the war in Ukraine. At the phase of decline of the “American” systemic cycle of accumulation, combined with the demise of the “Fordist” accumulation regime, the capitalist center reacted by introducing new forms of capitalist exploitation in the center, of neo-colonial exploitation of the Global South, by forcing Central and Eastern Europe to re-establish dependent capitalism and by attempting to reproduce this model in the post-Soviet space. Faced with the failure of the neoliberal rescue of Western collective imperialism, the US has retreated to a position of national imperialism and the EU, strengthening its neocolonial grip on its traditional southern periphery and its newly acquired dependencies in Central and Eastern Europe, has embarked on an accelerated militarization of its societies with a view to a confrontation with the Russian Federation in the near future. The newly formed comprador bourgeoisies in post-socialist Europe support this trend, while a more complex class dynamic in the Russian Federation has restrained Western imperialist expansion in the post-Soviet space. The controlled introduction of the capitalist mode of production in the People's Republic of China has enabled a peripheral country to become, in a historically unique way, the world's leading economy and has given rise to an ambitious attempt to build a “harmonious society.” However, the success of the PRC is perceived as a threat to declining Western powers, making it necessary to search for alternatives to global capitalism.

Key words: socialism, capitalism, collective imperialism of the West, war.

Rade Pantić, Faculty of Media and Communications, Singidunum University, Belgrade

Against the Anti-Corruption Discourse: The Political Sphere in Peripheral Capitalist Social Formations

Today's student movement in Serbia, based on new forms of political organization through direct democracy and plenary decision-making, has placed the abolition of political corruption at the center of its demands addressed to the authorities. As many scholars have noted, anti-corruption discourse—which locates the causes of the backwardness of peripheral countries in the capitalist world-system in the political corruption of their public institutions—became during the final decade of the twentieth century the dominant ideological framework for explaining the underdevelopment of these countries in relation to the core. At the same time, it functioned as a mechanism for disciplining peripheral states in accordance with the requirements of global capital accumulation.

This contribution seeks to provide an alternative explanation of peripheral corruption. Our hypothesis is that so-called illiberal political regimes represent peripheral variants of the neoliberal authoritarian states of the core. According to Nicos Poulantzas, who analyzed the transformation of the political sphere in advanced capitalist countries

during the 1970s, the new form of “authoritarian statism” is characterized by the narrowing of parliamentary powers, the transformation of political parties, and the depoliticization of social relations under the dominance of technocratic economic ideologies, emerging from new processes of capital internationalization. In core countries, these processes produced ruling mass parties increasingly fused with the administrative state bureaucracy, while the welfare state was dismantled and a new ruling capitalist bloc formed under the dominance of the financial fraction of capital. Financialization stabilized capitalist class power and subordinated the working class by increasing the rate of exploitation while maintaining relatively high standards of consumption.

In the capitalist periphery, however, integration into the world system occurs through dependent financialization. The absence of developed financial markets leads ruling state parties to compensate for the functions of the welfare state through party-based employment in the public sector, thereby absorbing surplus labor. From this perspective, what is commonly perceived as peripheral corruption or “state capture” represents a substitutive mechanism for integrating subordinate domestic capital and impoverished working masses into the global capitalist system in the absence of both a welfare state and a developmental economic project.

Key words: periphery, political corruption, authoritarian statism.

Dejan Petrović, Faculty of Security Studies, University of Belgrade

Is History Saying Something to Us? On The Closer Collaboration Between Historical Sociology and Security Studies

As the continuous stream of troubling news pours from media outlets, there is a sense of existential angst nesting within everyone who has a basic historical knowledge of the events leading to World War II. Lukewarm reaction of the international community to Maduro’s abduction alongside with the US territorial claims concerning Greenland, while right wing populism is gaining hold practically everywhere against the backdrop of American tariff policy and a fear of another global financial crash looming around the corner. And, of course, there is war in Ukraine, Palestine and maybe Iran on this list that seems to have no end. Should we panic and repeat proverbs concerning cyclical nature of history with a healthy dose of self-congratulatory sentiment mixed with futility? There is a sociological subdiscipline that seems to be underutilized in security studies that tries to create a theory of historical contingency while walking a narrow line between randomness and teleology, as Charles Tilly puts it. Historical sociology can bring to the table scientific analysis of historical patterns mostly based on a comparative method in a situation where increased uncertainty can cause emergence of discourse within academia that is founded on guess work, ahistorical models and simplified psychological profiles of various state leaders. On this place an attempt will be made to describe specific ways in which previous promise can be fulfilled. This is not a unique call for a closer collaboration between historical sociology and security studies, and similar attempts have been made in the past twenty years, so some space will be dedicated to this also.

Key words: Security Studies, Historical Sociology, Comparative Method, Predictability.

Rok Plavčak, no affiliation

The Wealth of Theory and the Poverty of Politics: Social Intelligibility and the Production of the Political

The paper proceeds from the observation that there exists a profound disjunction between contemporary radical and critical theory and political practices, which are often confined to less drastic reforms and corrective, partial interventions. The initial thesis is that this divide constitutes a structural consequence of capitalist hegemony, which produces social intelligibility (that which is socially thinkable and representable) and thereby determines the conditions under which something can be apprehended as a political object (political ideas, theories, programs, practices, alternatives). In order to account for the gap between radical left political theory and entirely non-radical political practice, the paper introduces a tripartite (though not strictly hierarchical or ontological) division of the modalities of the political into: the politically actualizable (that which can be socially actualized as politics), the politically imaginable (that which can be socially conceived as political), and the socially unintelligible (that which cannot be socially conceived as political).

Radical, highly theoretical, or counter-hegemonic ideas—despite being conceptually fully elaborated—thus remain outside the socially representable political framework, within which they cannot even appear as political forms, but instead—such as, for instance, the theoretically fully intelligible idea of the socialization of the means of production—are cast as utopian, extremist, and irrational.

Political imagination can therefore be understood as a secondary derivative of social intelligibility produced by capitalist-liberal hegemony. The latter, in an extension of the classical Gramscian tradition and in articulation with critical realism, is interpreted not as the organization of social consent, but rather as the material-semiotic infrastructure of the political, functionally linked to the reproduction of the conditions for the successful reproduction of capitalism, and locationally anchored in (liberal) civil society, which—drawing on an analysis of its functioning—we identify as a regulatory apparatus.

This leaves open, of course, the question to what extent hegemony can be transformed within existing conditions, and to what extent certain historical crisis situations may temporarily soften the limits of political intelligibility, even though this does not necessarily imply a lasting transformation of capitalism and its reproduction.

Key words: Capitalist hegemony, material-semiotic infrastructure, political imagination, social intelligibility, liberal civil society.

Đurđica Stanković, Marko Mandić, Institute of Social Sciences, Belgrade
Where are we now: BRICS+ Expansion in the emerging World Order

The expansion of BRICS+ represents a significant factor in the transformation of the global political and economic order, although its geopolitical power is not yet fully defined. In many regions, BRICS+ is seen as an alternative to the West and as a tool to strengthen the role of Global South countries, while Western countries, especially the EU and the USA, generally view the group as heterogeneous and economically weak.

The new members, including Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the UAE, have different motives: Egypt and the UAE seek economic opportunities, Iran aims to escape isolation and ease sanctions, while Saudi Arabia sees BRICS+ as a pragmatic platform for diversifying foreign relations. The expansion increases pressure on international

organizations to reform their structures and better incorporate Global South countries. This paper examines whether the expansion of BRICS+ has the potential to reshape the global political and economic order and strengthen the role of Global South countries in international governance.

The BRICS+ economies account for approximately 36% of global GNI, 46% of the world's population, and over 40% of global oil production, suggesting considerable potential to strengthen their influence in international trade and finance. However, disparities in economic performance among members, China's slowing growth, and the consequences of the war in Ukraine for Russia limit the group's short-term geopolitical impact. Furthermore, tensions involving Iran, Israel, and the USA introduce additional uncertainty, particularly regarding energy markets and regional security.

The authors conclude that, despite its heterogeneity and lack of formal structures, BRICS+ expansion reflects a gradual shift toward a multipolar world, functioning primarily as an economic and symbolic platform that enhances cooperation among developing countries. Nevertheless, despite these developments, BRICS remains secondary in light of current geopolitical rivalries, competing national interests, and ongoing conflicts, which continue to constrain its cohesion, strategic relevance, and transformative potential.

Key words: BRICS+, Global South, EU, USA, China.

Nenad Stekić, Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade

Not having a strategy is all? Serbia's foreign policy drift toward the West

Serbia's foreign policy has long been described through the framework of the "four pillars", balancing relations with the European Union, the United States, Russia, and China. In practice, however, this balancing strategy has increasingly shown signs of transformation. This paper argues that Serbia's contemporary foreign policy is characterized less by a clearly articulated grand strategy and more by gradual, pragmatic adjustments that result in an informal alignment with Western actors. Several recent developments illustrate this shift. Serbia continues to maintain its formal aspiration to become a member of the European Union, while political signals from Belgrade suggest a willingness to adapt to EU institutional expectations. Notably, President Aleksandar Vučić has indicated openness to the idea of a "veto free" accession framework, implying Serbia would not obstruct EU foreign policy positions once inside the Union. At the same time, broader geopolitical dynamics, including heightened United States military engagement in the Middle East and Serbia's efforts to maintain constructive relations with Washington, reinforce the importance of Western partners in Belgrade's strategic calculations. Serbia has taken steps to diversify its energy supplies and reduce structural dependence on Russia, signaling a partial break from a historically central pillar of its external relations. Public opinion trends also appear to mirror these developments. Survey data from the COMPASS project indicate growing acceptance of closer cooperation with Western actors, suggesting that the traditional four pillar framework may be evolving into what could be described as "two and a half pillars", the European Union and the United States as primary partners, China as a secondary economic partner, and Russia's role gradually diminishing. By examining these political, economic, and societal indicators, the paper explores whether Serbia's current trajectory represents strategic ambiguity, pragmatic adaptation, or the emergence of a new pattern of informal Western alignment.

Key words: Serbia's foreign policy, European Union accession, informal alignment, great power balancing, Western Balkans geopolitics.

Paul Stubbs, Emeritus, The Institute of Economics, Zagreb

NAM, the NIEO, and BRICS: from moral re-ordering to new global inequities?

In 2013, the academic Radhika Desai argued that the BRICS grouping of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa presented the most important challenge by developing countries to Western supremacy since the Non-aligned Movement (NAM) and the New International Economic Order (NIEO). This paper revisits the NIEO as part of NAM's "golden age" and its turn to economic questions in the 1970s. It suggests that, whilst both formations were contradictory, not least in terms of the role played by socialist Yugoslavia, they represented a kind of moral re-ordering based on South-South co-operation, support for the least developed countries, and collective self-reliance. BRICS' recent expansion to 11 countries (BRICS+) and its numerous initiatives regarding terms of trade, finance, de-dollarization, and development reflect how very different the balance of economic power is compared to 50 years ago. Chinese-led understandings of a rules-based order are worthy of deep consideration. At the same time, BRICS, and in particular Chinese, visions of development tend to be extractivist, neocolonial, and exploitative—seeking to shape the rules of a new global capitalist order in these countries' interests rather than more equitable forms of South-South cooperation. BRICS+ has the potential to shake the foundations of the current, hypocritical rules-based international order, but the precise forms this could take remain uncertain.

Key words: NAM, NIEO, BRICS+, inequality.

Nebojša Šavija – Valha, independent researcher, Sarajevo

The EU in Bosnia and Herzegovina – Integration or (Neocolonial) Stabilisation?

Based on analysis of expert interviews and 30 years of personal experience in the fields of peacebuilding, this presentation examines whether the European Union's engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina mirrors a neocolonial construction characterised by centre-periphery power imbalances and "projectized" democratisation. The analysis reveals a deep scepticism toward the current EU integration model, which often prioritises the interests of external "instructors" over local needs. A recurring theme is the top-down nature of peacebuilding, primarily driven by Anglo-Saxon and EU frameworks that fail to translate into the daily lives of citizens. Rather than fostering organic democratic growth, the EU is often perceived as a "centre for building personal careers" for international bureaucrats. This creates a culture of dependency, where local civil society is forced into a state of "governmentality" or "corporate" structures to satisfy rigid administrative requirements, effectively "killing" genuine local enthusiasm. The interviews highlight an unequal exchange where the EU demands high-level democratic standards while ignoring the "economic misery" and the "neoliberal spheres" that have exacerbated local poverty. The EU's focus on short-term gains and "quick wins" is criticised for lacking a long-term strategy, leading to a "frozen conflict" where political elites profit from the status quo. Furthermore, financial mechanisms are described as "gaslighting democracy," as they often stifle small, local organisations while favouring big ones through high-threshold funding and administrative burdens.

Finally, it appears that the EU and the international community engage primarily with local "peace cartels", dubious political elites who utilise narratives of fear to maintain power, contributing to complete "elite capture" of the society. While the EU theoretically provides an "avenue" for progress, its failure to challenge the structural flaws of the Dayton Constitution allows neighbouring powers to interfere, further cementing BiH's peripheral status both within the region and in Europe as a whole.

Key words: Bosnia and Herzegovina, EU, top-down liberal democratisation and peacebuilding, elite capture.

Ivana Vasić-Lalović, Center for Economic and Policy Research, Washington DC
The Vicious Cycle of Debt and Climate in the Global South

As of March 2026, 75 out of 119 low- and middle-income countries with available credit assessments from the IMF and rating agencies are in or at risk of debt distress. Most of these countries are also highly climate-vulnerable. Unsustainable debt burdens and high interest rates mean that many developing countries are trapped in a debt crisis, making direct trade-offs between paying costly debts and financing public services, climate resilience, badly needed infrastructure investment, and additional sustainable development goals. An unfair international financial architecture perpetuates this vicious cycle.

The presentation will quantify the external public debt in developing countries and present an overview of the interconnected debt and climate crises. Using data from the World Bank International Debt Statistics, it examines the debt burdens of low-and middle-income countries for which figures are available and presents estimates for 2026. Finally, it highlights necessary, systemic changes to the international financial architecture, and the growing movement behind them.

Key words: Sovereign debt, climate crisis, sustainable development, International Monetary Fund, climate finance.

Jelena Vidojević, New South Institute, Johannesburg
BRICS+ and the New Global South: who Benefits and Why?

Over the past two decades, the international system has undergone profound transformation, as global power has become increasingly diffuse and less institutionally structured. Despite numerous attempts to conceptualize this transition, little consensus has emerged regarding the nature of the world order currently taking shape. Existing analytical frameworks reflect both the uncertainty of this period and the limitations of traditional theoretical vocabularies, many of which remain insufficient to capture the depth of ongoing systemic change. Among the most compelling interpretations is Amitav Acharya's conception of a *global multiplex order*, characterized by the absence of a single hegemonic power and the proliferation of consequential state and non-state actors.

These transformations are closely linked to shifts within the Global South, which has become economically, politically, and strategically more heterogeneous and vigilant, and increasingly influential in shaping emerging global arrangements. Within this evolving landscape, BRICS+ has emerged as a prominent, but deeply contested, political formation. Celebrated by some as an institutional expression of multipolarity

and South–South cooperation and criticized by others as an arena for new hierarchies, BRICS+ remains conceptually ambiguous in both purpose and representational scope. This paper argues that a fundamental tension persists between the multipolar ambitions of emerging powers, whose engagement is primarily driven by self-interest, and the principle of sovereign equality, especially from the perspective of smaller and less influential states within the Global South.

It therefore asks whether BRICS+ generates meaningful political or institutional added value, for whom such value is produced, and whether the grouping can legitimately claim to speak for, or represent, the Global South as a whole. By situating BRICS+ within broader debates on representation, authority, and hierarchy in an emerging multiplex world order, the paper contributes to ongoing discussions on the future of Global South politics under conditions of contested multipolarity.

Key words: BRICS+, New Global South, Global multiplex order.

Vukasović Dejana, Ristić Irena, Lazović Danica, Institute of Social Sciences, Belgrade

From normative power to geopolitical aspirations: the European Union and the Western Balkans after 2022

This paper examines how the EU perceives itself as an international actor in foreign policy discourse following the Russian invasion of Ukraine and how this self-perception has shaped its enlargement policy. While the EU has traditionally regarded itself as a normative power and a value-driven supranational organisation, the war in Ukraine has shifted security and geopolitical concerns to the forefront of enlargement policy, marking a watershed moment. Drawing on poststructuralist and postcolonial perspectives within international relations and European integration studies, the paper argues that, through foreign policy discourse and underlying narratives of danger and threat, the EU's identity is constructed and continually reinforced as meanings are created, producing a new reality that supports appropriate foreign policy practices. Focusing on the relationship between the EU and the Western Balkans, and conducting interpretive analysis of speeches delivered between 2022 and 2025 by senior officials of the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR/VP), alongside key official strategic documents concerning the EU's global role, the paper demonstrates that the EU has started to perceive itself as a geopolitical actor capable of thinking and acting in “the language of power”. It also uncovers that the EU discourse of danger and the militarisation of Europe—followed by the imagining of military needs and militaristic assumptions as not only valuable but also “normal”—lead to a paradigm shift within enlargement policy—from its previous abstract commitment based on values to a security-based Union. Assigning security objectives to the enlargement process changes its original design and raises questions about the necessity of full membership for the Western Balkans.

Key words: European Union, Enlargement Policy, Western Balkans, Militarisation, Geopolitical Union.

Miha Zadnikar, free-lanced cultural worker, Ljubljana

Huey P. Newton's theory of imperialism, genocide, and technology – as reflected in Marxism, and its significance today

Huey P. Newton, co-founder of the Black Panther Party (BPP) with Bobby Seale, the party's primary political strategist and tactician, has started his studies in imperialism and developed his theory of *intercommunalism* in the fall of 1970, two months after his release from solitary confinement, penned in response to his deep disappointment with the backlash from the Black community following the BPP's pledge to offer troops in support of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam. Many could not grasp what the liberation of Black people could have to do with the Vietnamese Communists against whom the U.S. was waging war. The theory of *intercommunalism* was Newton's attempt to outline a political and economic account of how he understood the world to be structured at the time – under a *new type of imperialism* – but it was also his attempt to formulate a political strategy. From that moment on, Newton worked on a wide range of theoretical problems, including a series of studies into the global »decentralization of production«, the »technology question«, as well as »technology vs. land«, etc. It seems that one fails to engage with the uniqueness of the political theory produced by Newton (and the Panthers), often conflating the Party with other movements from the era. It is also the case that much of the political »left« today simply refuses to read theory produced by the BPP, to say nothing of other Black radical thought. Not only those in search of theory to inform their political practice will find value in Newton's treatment of the problems of race, nationalism, genocide, and internationalism, his speculations on the future of surplus populations and questions of class composition, and – nota bene! – *the role of information technology in future possibilities for struggle*. Newton believed that imperialism had developed into a new stage known as »reactionary intercommunalism«, characterized by *the rise of a small »ruling circle« within the U.S., which had gained a monopoly on advanced technology and the education necessary to use it*. While Newton has recently been studied more seriously than ever – yet too often quoted »only« as a precursor to Hardt and Negri's theory of empire – one finds his theory very fruitful while a) reading it comparatively with other Marxists theories of imperialism, and b) understanding what is actually going on within the »newest world order/imperialism« (»geopolitical situation«). Newton's pioneering political theory of (media) technology in the 1970s (*sic!*) offers a productive field to observe and theorise both imperialist (political class) abuse of technologies, and offer common people using them wisely, to break (Western) censorship, clear the picture, if not establish a »revolutionary intercommunalism«...

Key words: reactionary vs. revolutionary intercommunalism, ruling circle, militarism, technology, education.

Igor Ž. Žagar, Education Research Institute, Ljubljana.

Foreign Information Manipulation & Interference (FIMI): EU's Mechanism to Counter the Freedom of Speech and Information

The present paper examines the political basis, institutional orientation, operating methods, and civil liberties implications of the *European External Action Service (EEAS)* framework for countering *Foreign Information Manipulation and*

Interference (FIMI), together with its Slovenian adaptation by the Trivelis Institute. FIMI is presented as a security framework focused on intentional, coordinated, and deceptive conduct rather than merely false, unpopular or “different” content. Its political orientation is liberal democratic, pro-European, and Euro-Atlantic, nominally seeking to protect elections, institutional trust, independent media, public debate, and the European Union's capacity to implement foreign policy. Operationally, it combines actor, behaviour, content, degree, and effect analysis with taxonomies of tactics, technical attribution, structured data exchange, infrastructure mapping, exposure, regulation, diplomatic action, and sanctions. The paper contends, however, that FIMI becomes methodologically and politically problematic when it transitions from demonstrable coordination of deceptive conduct to narrative similarity, “normalisation”, or unwitting amplification (of “problematic” views). In particular, the notion that citizens are merely passive transmission channels, as FIMI treats them, is erroneous. These individuals may engage with a wide range of sources, including Russian, Chinese, European, and other materials, meticulously analysing arguments and formulating independent positions that align with foreign views. The existence of such an agreement does not inherently indicate manipulation.

The Trivelis analysis of Slovenia provides a pertinent illustration of this risk, as it delineates a mature local influence architecture. However, the public evidence is insufficient to support that conclusion reproducibly, given the paucity of data, sampling rules, coding procedures, coordination thresholds, or alternative explanations. A legitimate counter-FIMI policy should therefore presume intellectual autonomy, protect access to foreign ideas, distinguish influence from interference, require technical, financial, or organisational evidence for attribution, test domestic explanations, publish confidence levels, and provide proportionate responses, correction, review, and rights of reply. The actual anti-FIMI policy, however, resorts to illegitimate and illegal restrictions on freedom of speech, censorship, criminalisation of different ideas, and even the restriction and deprivation of human rights. We will look at some prominent examples.

Key words: EEAS, FIMI, freedom of speech, censorship, human rights.