

Systemic transformation and national role contestation: The domestic politics of deconstructing and redefining the 'West'

Co-convenors: Dr. Angelos Chrysogelos and Dr. Toby Greene

The international system is undergoing a transformation. The Western consensus of the 'Liberal International Order' is challenged not only by non-Western powers but within the West itself. Even in states deeply embedded in Western political, economic and security architectures, radical and populist parties push back on the main tenets of liberal institutionalism, with those on the right doing so in the name of the survival of the 'native' ethnocultural community. At the same time, in non-Western states and in liminal states on the margins of the West, there is ongoing debate about how to relate to the modernising and secularizing influences of liberalism, which challenge traditional values and hierarchies.

The transition to a post-Western order goes hand in hand with an ideological contestation in the space left by the retreating liberal consensus. For this reason, we assume that debates about states' relationships with this new order and the formerly dominant West are increasingly a field for contestation between different visions of national identity, the nature and borders of the political community, and the values that political systems must embody. Put simply, whether Western, non-Western or liminal, we expect the contestation of national roles, and the contestation of states' understanding of and relationship with the West, to be intricately connected and reinforcing.

It is in this framework that we believe national responses to the Russian invasion of Ukraine must be analyzed. This is a global political event which presents every country with comparable dilemmas about how to align in relation to a US and European led campaign to punish Russia and support Ukraine. By extension, it can reveal the divergent visions of global order within states with different degrees of embeddedness within Western security and identity communities, as well as how these interact with the internal contestation of these states' political identity and foreign policy roles.

Some of the research questions this workshop will explore include (but are not limited to):

1. What are the main arguments over how states should orientate towards the Ukraine conflict in national party political discourse, news media and/or social media?
2. How do these discourse and policy contestations relate to key cleavages shaping the political system and its decision making?
3. How do these discourse and policy contestations connect to debates with respect to relations with and understandings of the West; transnational identities or 'natural alliances'; and wider questions of world order?
4. How are international actors, powers and personalities viewed, debated and contested inside states, and how does this map over debates about foreign policy roles and national identity?

The workshop welcomes contributions rooted in a variety of theoretical approaches (IR, FPA, comparative politics), ideally combining them in a way that highlights the links between contestations of domestic identity, foreign policy roles and relationship with the West. We are happy to see both single-case (national) contributions as well as regional, comparative and theoretical approaches falling within these parameters. The aim of the workshop is to bring together analyses of Western, non-Western and liminal states, therefore regional diversity of empirical analysis is particularly welcome. We are committed to hosting a workshop with a global perspective reflecting the diversity of the academic community. We welcome scholars at all stages of their career.