Ontological Security in Geopolitical Times

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The renewed prominence of geopolitics in international affairs poses significant challenges for how states, societies, and other actors pursue ontological security. As geopolitical logics regain centrality, questions arise about how self-narratives, routines, and identity practices are being reshaped, and how these practices in turn sustain great-power rivalry, territorial competition, militarization, and polarization.

Ontological security studies (OSS) has enriched International Relations by highlighting actors' need for biographical continuity and stable self-conceptions. Recent theoretical innovations—particularly those drawing on existentialist and psychoanalytic approaches—have broadened and deepened the field's conceptual foundations. At the same time, closer engagement with geopolitical mindsets, discourses, and practices can enhance OSS's relevance to the policy challenges of our time.

This workshop aims to bring together papers that advance OSS theoretically and empirically in order to address the challenges posed by the growing potency of geopolitics in international affairs. Key questions include:

- Are geopolitical discourses enabling certain forms of ontological security seeking while foreclosing others?
- Do heightened rivalries generate new forms of ontological insecurity?
- How do actors navigate the tension between self-continuity and geopolitical demands for strategic flexibility, exceptional measures, or narrative recalibration?
- How has ontological security been pursued, negotiated, or disrupted in earlier geopolitical eras? To what extent are these historical experiences reflected in contemporary dynamics?
- What are the specific challenges faced by liminal actors in pursuing ontological security in geopolitical times?
- How can ontological security studies be developed theoretically to better account for the growing significance of place and territory in geopolitical times?