



THE ATHENS INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

# Abstract Book

**19<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference on  
Politics & International Studies  
14-17 June 2021, Athens, Greece**

Edited by  
Gregory T. Papanikos

2021



Abstracts  
19<sup>th</sup> Annual International  
Conference on Politics &  
International Studies  
14-17 June 2021, Athens,  
Greece

Edited by Gregory T. Papanikos

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# Preface

This book includes the abstracts of all the papers presented at the *19<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference on Politics & International Studies* (14-17 June 2021), organized by the Athens Institute for Education and Research (ATINER).

A full conference program can be found before the relevant abstracts. In accordance with ATINER's Publication Policy, the papers presented during this conference will be considered for inclusion in one of ATINER's many publications.

The purpose of this abstract book is to provide members of ATINER and other academics around the world with a resource through which to discover colleagues and additional research relevant to their own work. This purpose is in congruence with the overall mission of the association. ATINER was established in 1995 as an independent academic organization with the mission to become a forum where academics and researchers from all over the world could meet to exchange ideas on their research and consider the future developments of their fields of study.

It is our hope that through ATINER's conferences and publications, Athens will become a place where academics and researchers from all over the world regularly meet to discuss the developments of their discipline and present their work. Since 1995, ATINER has organized more than 400 international conferences and has published nearly 200 books. Academically, the institute is organized into 6 divisions and 37 units. Each unit organizes at least one annual conference and undertakes various small and large research projects.

For each of these events, the involvement of multiple parties is crucial. I would like to thank all the participants, the members of the organizing and academic committees, and most importantly the administration staff of ATINER for putting this conference and its subsequent publications together. Specific individuals are listed on the following page.

**Gregory T. Papanikos**  
**President**

**19<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference on Politics &  
International Studies, 14-17 June 2021, Athens, Greece**

**Organizing & Scientific Committee**

All ATINER's conferences are organized by the Academic Council. This conference has been organized with the assistance of the following academic members of ATINER, who contributed by reviewing the submitted abstracts and papers.

1. Gregory T. Papanikos, President, ATINER & Honorary Professor, University of Stirling, U.K.
2. Yannis Stivachtis, Director, Center for European & Mediterranean Affairs (CEMA) and Professor, Jean Monnet Chair, Director of International Studies Program & Director, Diplomacy Lab Program, Virginia Tech – Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, USA.
3. Barbara Zagaglia, Head, Anthropology & Demography Unit, ATINER & Associate Professor, Polytechnic University of Marche, Italy.
4. Ilja A. Luciak, Professor, College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, USA.
5. Christie Kenneth, Professor, Royal Roads University, Canada.
6. Chrysoula Gitsoulis, Adjunct Assistant Professor, College of Staten Island, City University of New York, USA.
7. Jan Reid, Academic Member, ATINER & President, Coast Economic Consulting, USA.
8. Haval Ahmad, Associate Faculty, School of Humanitarian Studies, Royal Roads University, Canada.



**FINAL CONFERENCE PROGRAM**  
**19<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference on Politics & International  
Studies, 14-17 June 2021, Athens, Greece**

**PROGRAM**

**Monday 14 June 2021**

**10.00-10.30**  
**Registration**

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**10.30-11.30**

**Opening and Welcoming Remarks:**

- **Gregory T. Papanikos**, President, ATINER.
  - **Yannis Stivachtis**, Director, Center for European & Mediterranean Affairs (CEMA) and Professor, Jean Monnet Chair, Director of International Studies Program & Director, Diplomacy Lab Program, Virginia Tech - Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, USA. (Video)
- 

**11.45-12.15**

**Andrzej Dubicki**, Associate Professor, University of Lodz, Poland.

*Title: Railway Diplomacy Concept and its Place in Central European International Relations.*

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**12.15-12.30 Break**

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**12:30-13:00**

**Gregory T. Papanikos**, President, ATINER.

*Title: Wars and Foreign Interventions in Greece in the 1820s.*

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**13:00-13:15 Break**

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**13:15-13:45**

**Mihaita Ene**, PhD Student, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Romania.

*Title: The Necessity for Integration and Respect.*

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**13:45-14:00 Break**

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**14:00-14:30**

**Steph Grohmann**, Fellow, University of Edinburgh, UK.

*Title: Ethical Capital: Neoliberalism and the Commoditization of Virtue.*

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**14:30-15:00 Lunch**

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**15:00-15:30**

**Adrian Szumowski**, Assistant Professor, Maria-Curie-Sklodowska University, Poland.

*Title: Empire, Hegemony, Hyperpower? Management of late-Westphalian International Environment.*

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**15:30-15:45 Break**

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**15:45-16:15**

**Reine-Marie Berard**, Researcher, Aix-Marseille University, France.

**Dominique Castex**, Researcher, Bordeaux University, France.

*Title: Epidemics and Wars: Comparative Archaeology and Anthropology of Ancient Greek Mass Burials.*

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**16:15-16:30 Break**

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**16:30-17:00**

**Yannis Stivachtis**, Director, Center for European & Mediterranean Affairs (CEMA) and Professor, Jean Monnet Chair, Director of International Studies Program & Director, Diplomacy Lab Program, Virginia Tech – Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, USA.

*Title: Weak States: The Increasing Relevance of the Socio-Political Aspects of Security.*

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**17:00-17:15 Break**

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**17:15-17:45**

**Natasha Brown**, PhD Student, Pepperdine University USA.

**Eric Schockman**, Professor, Pepperdine University USA.

*Title: Applying Post-Pandemic Global Leadership Analysis to the Race for a Vaccine's Development and Deployment.*

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**Tuesday 15 June 2021**

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**10:00-10:30**

**Abdel Rahman**, Associate Professor, University of Sharjah, UAE.

*Title: Revisiting the Relationship between E-Government and Corruption: An Empirical Investigation.*

---

**10:30-10:45 Break**

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**10:45-11:15**

**Marsela Sako**, Lecturer, University of Tirana, Albania.

**Dafina Peci**, Assistant Professor, University of Tirana, Albania.

*Title: Open Dialogue: Quo Vadis Youth in the EU Integration Process.*

---

**11:15-11:30 Break**

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**11:30-12:00**

**Maria Marta Lobo de Araujo**, Associate Professor, University of Minho, Portugal.

**Luís Ferreira**, PhD Student, University of Minho, Portugal.

*Title: Families, Poor Women and Charity in Early Modern Portugal.*

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**12:00-12:15 Break**

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**12:15-12:45**

**Monika Komušanac**, Assistant Professor, University of Zagreb, Croatia.

*Title: Demographic Breakdown of Croatia and the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic.*

---

**12:45-13:00 Break**

---

**13:00-13:30**

**Simona Villani**, Associate Professor, University of Pavia, Italy.

**Ioana Popa**, Research Fellow, University of Pavia, Italy.

*Title: COVID-19 Mortality in Italy: A Multivariate Ecological Analysis.*

---

**13:30-14:45 Lunch**

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**14:45-15:15**

**Chrysoula Gitsoulis**, Adjunct Assistant Professor, City University of New York, USA.

*Title: Ethical Issues Involving Outpatient Treatment for COVID-19 in the US.*

---

**15:15-15:30 Break**

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**15:30-16:00**

**Stephan Unger**, Associate Professor, Saint Anselm College, USA.

*Title: Sentiment Forecasting of International Relations with AI.*

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**16:00-16:15 Break**

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**16:15-16:45**

**Eugene Allevato**, Professor, Woodbury University, USA.

**Moayad Al-Marrar**, Student, Woodbury University, USA.

*Title: Cognitive Dissonance: Affecting Party Orientation and Selective Recall of Political Information.*

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**Eugene Allevato**

Professor, Woodbury University, USA

&

**Moayad Al Marrar**

Graduate Student, Woodbury University, USA

**Cognitive Dissonance:  
Affecting Party Orientation and Selective Recall of Political  
Information**

Cognitive dissonance theory posits that inconsistencies between attitudes and behaviors cause an uncomfortable arousal state, and people are motivated to reduce this discomfort by changing attitudes or behaviors to increase consistency. This principle applies to research on political affiliation. Due to dissonance processes, individuals focus less on political information that opposes their views and pay greater attention when it is congruent with their views. This study adds to this research by examining whether political orientation causes a similar pattern of selective attention bias during the recall stage. Participants (117) studied a political article on a social issue representing a viewpoint that was favorable to Democrats. Next, participants recalled as much information as possible by typing the information in a textbox. Using a sliding scale, they also rated how they felt about the article in terms of arousal and affect, and indicated whether the article was neutral, positive, or negative. Democrats were predicted to recall more positive information and more positive affect after reading the article than Republicans. Surprisingly, more Republicans, rather than Democrats, recalled more positive information about the article. Finally, those who scored more conservatively on the political slider also reported more positive affect toward the article. Although contrary to the study hypotheses, these results have implications for our current understanding of selective attention in a political context by showing the bias also occurs at the recall stage. It takes a special effort to be able to think outside the bubble. The purpose of this study is to find what it takes to pop the bubble and change the mindset of political engaged people.

**Reine-Marie Berard**

Researcher, Aix-Marseille University, France

&

**Dominique Castex**

Researcher, Bordeaux University, France

## **Epidemics and Wars: Comparative Archaeology and Anthropology of Ancient Greek Mass Burials**

Epidemics and wars are the two main causes of mortality crises, periods marked by an unusually high number of dead in a limited amount of time. As seen lately with the pandemic of COVID-19, managing the corpses during such crises may become a real problem at critical moments. Indeed, the high number of dead bodies to deal with often leads to modifications of traditional funerary practices. This contribution questions the way Ancient Greeks, from Archaic to Hellenistic times (8-3<sup>rd</sup> c. B.C.) handled such mortality crises, focusing on their most dramatic funerary expression: mass burials, which are characterized by the deposition of several dead in a same grave at the same time.

We will discuss how to identify mass burials in archaeological contexts, distinguishing between *simultaneous* depositions and *successive* funerary deposits of corpses over time. In this order, we will present and use the methods of archaeoethanatology. This discipline, born in France in the 1980s, offers new approaches to investigate ancient burials, combining archaeology and paleoanthropology. By confronting archaeological features (taphonomic processes, position of the remains, grave type, offerings, etc.) and bioanthropological data (number of dead, sex, age, pathologies, etc.), we will first define the main characteristics of mass burials; then question how to discriminate between mass burials linked to war, epidemics, massacres and famine.

Our analysis will rely on various mass burials from Athens, Paros, Chaeronea, Tanagra and Greek Sicily. We will argue that war mass burials are relatively easy to identify in the Ancient Greek world, due to the specific osteoprofile of the dead (mainly young men, often exhibiting signs of violent traumas), the possible presence of weapons and, in some cases, specific types of graves and monuments. On the contrary, it appears much more difficult to identify epidemic mass burials, since they may present innumerable variations in terms of osteoprofiles. Examining a 5<sup>th</sup> c mass grave from the Kerameikos cemetery, we will question its common interpretation as related to the

great plague of Athens. Confronting archaeological, anthropological and historical data, we will suggest a few threads to follow to assert or reject this hypothesis. Finally, we will question our abilities, as archaeoanthropologists, to evaluate the impact of epidemics on the funerary treatment of the dead in the Ancient world.

**Natasha Brown**

PhD Student, Pepperdine University USA

&

**Eric Schockman**

Professor, Pepperdine University USA

## **Applying Post-Pandemic Global Leadership Analysis to the Race for a Vaccine's Development and Deployment**

In 2020, the COVID-19 virus emerged as critical threat to global health, economies, nations, and communities. Despite vast and varied attempts around the world to contain the spread and devastating impact of the virus, a vaccine remains the best hope preventing what could be the collapse of modern society. As the pandemic took center stage in the world, historic displays of both triumphant and failed global leadership have come into sharp focus. Harvesting the perspective of global citizens, who have witnessed, experienced, and in many cases, suffered from COVID, on global leadership is an important step in understanding the pandemic's impact and the future prognosis for change. Amidst the active backdrop of the pandemic crisis, the authors conducted a research study analyzing the leadership traits that will be needed in the post-pandemic world for global governance. The investigation sought to understand global leadership traits needed in the post-pandemic world and to understand which leadership traits are needed. Findings of the research hold relevant and timely lessons for global political, public health, and business leaders in the race for a COVID-19 vaccine. The authors propose that:

1. communication
2. respect and regard
3. collective mission

are needed for the successful development and deployment of a vaccine. Specifically, funding is needed for the World Health Organization to marshal global communications around a vaccine. Next, respect and regard for a science-based approach to vaccine development are key. Finally, a collective mission is needed in which global vaccination goals, not national ones, take focus. The recommendations proposed are grounded in orchestration theory, a subset of rational choice theory within international organization and global governance studies.

**Andrzej Dubicki**

Associate Professor, University of Lodz, Poland

## **Railway Diplomacy Concept and its Place in Central European International Relations**

Railway diplomacy is rather new concept that appears in various classifications alongside research on aviation diplomacy, which has also been developed in recent times, in relation to broadly understood diplomacy related to the development of means of transport. In the current situation, the concept of vaccine diplomacy is also a similar one.

While research into the history of railways is currently constantly being developed and new publications and analyses related to this subject are constantly emerging; they are very often focused on typically technical or purely historical aspects, while a little less space is devoted to the so-called diplomatic envelope related to the development of railways and problems such as the export of rolling stock and rail services. This in the past have been devoted to the issues of the so-called diplomatic envelope related to the development of railways and problems such as: the export of rolling stock and rail services, which both in the past, and are now very often the result of current bilateral relations between the countries concerned. It can therefore be assumed that, in this respect, practices are to some extent reminiscent of those observed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century at the dawn of the railway era.

The aim of the article will be to identify the most important problems facing the further development of railways in Central and Eastern Europe, with an aim at restoring its importance after the 1989 year. It was connected, for example, with economic and technological collapse, but also paradoxically with the enrichment of society and the change in its transport habits. An additional element of the analysis will also be an indication of the diplomatic procedures carried out around the issue of rolling stock procurement in "friendly" countries. Compared to certain aspects of aviation diplomacy, there is much broader room for analysis, given the much larger number of companies involved in the production of rolling stock than the airplanes.



**Mihaita Ene**

PhD Student, National University of Political Studies and Public  
Administration, Romania

## **The Necessity for Integration and Respect**

The policies of de-radicalization are as diverse as the states where they are implemented, and as challenging as the many groups they need to address. When the crisis in Syria and Iraq were at their peak, the subject of de-radicalization was referring mostly to young Muslims from Western countries that joined DAESH/Islamic State, or other radical-extremist groups who were active in the conflict zones. Today, although the Islamic radicalization is still happening, the weakening of DAESH, and the lack of a territory for its caliphate, reduced the attention on the subject, but the right-wing radicalization, neo-Nazi is getting more and more attention, and to a less degree the left-wing radicalization. The COVID-19 pandemic created economic problems in many countries, West or East, the strict regulations imposed by the governments created strong frustration feelings and radicalization.

During my posting as an Embassy Staff in Iraq, Kurdistan Region, Erbil and in Pakistan, Islamabad, as Head of the Consular Office, respectively Consular and Political Section, I had the chance to interact with the local authorities in these two countries and I have learnt about their approach in dealing with known terrorist and associates of the extremist organizations. These two countries are dealing with a high level of radicalization, their approach can be considered with flaws, but lessons can be learned, solutions can be replicated and mistakes can be avoided.

In my presentation, I will use a comparative approach, and not necessarily legislation related, but more how the policies of de-radicalization are practically implemented. The strength of a law is as strong as the process of implementation is strict, and not hijacked by the law enforcement agencies and their employees. Many times, the security forces declare war to radical groups in order to prevent any attack happening, but in a war are winners and deceased, and total lack of trust takes surrender and de-radicalization out of the question. At the end of the day, the persons who are radicalized in fact are citizens of their countries, and if the only crime is that of joining a terrorist/extremist group, that means there is still hope that a de-radicalization program to work and to bring back to the mainstream society the elements that are ready to give up the radical/extremist orientation.

Although I don't intend to write a policy paper, conclusions can be drawn out of the comparative analysis and also solutions can be presented in order to make a de-radicalization program more efficient. Of course, customization of the programs in according to the specificity of each country/ethnicity/social etc. background is a must for this type of program to be successful.

**Luís Ferreira**

PhD Student, University of Minho, Portugal

&

**Maria Marta Lobo de Araujo**

Associate Professor, University of Minho, Portugal

## **Families, Poor Women and Charity in Early Modern Portugal**

Since the late medieval period and throughout the Early Modern Age, assistance institutions have been developed and charitable resources have been established specially designed for women. Institutions dedicated exclusively to receiving poor women were founded and individuals, of secular or ecclesiastical origin, bequeathed capital to the endowment of young women or established the sporadic or prolonged transfer of objects, goods and money intended to support the survival of poor women. Orphaned girls, girls of marrying age, elderly women alone, widows with or without children, are some of the subgroups of the “woman” category that were covered by the action of managers of capital destined to alms and assistance to the poor. These relationships were based on the social importance of the gift, as an agent of social cohesion, and were based on the relevance of charity in the salvation of the souls of those who practiced it.

A gender problematization about the roles of the different agents involved reveals a notorious distortion: if men were highlighted as managers and donors, women emerged, mostly, as recipients. Historiography has shown cases of women who, in the absence of guardianship by their husbands and with their own economic means, practiced charity in a similar way to men. Power and authority relations recognized gender differences in view of the socioeconomic context of the different actors in different social structures. Different norms (law, custom, medicine or theology) conceived the feminine gender as inferior to the masculine. The state of nature of women was naturally degenerate to which the virtue of seclusion opposed. The family was a basic unit of education and protection of honour and the cornerstone of the social, economic, patrimonial and productive order of the Ancien Régime. Institutions of assistance and charity could replace, permanently or provisionally, the family structure and assume their roles. In the absence of a close man (father, brother, son) who could guard the woman, institutional responses were developed that provided surveillance and normalization for women at greater risk and social vulnerability.

Using handwritten and printed sources produced and/or preserved by Portuguese assistance institutions between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, we intend to problematize assistance to the poor in view of gender and inequality relations interpreted according to the theory of intersectionality.

**Chrysoula Gitsoulis**

Adjunct Assistant Professor, City University of New York, USA

## **Ethical Issues Involving Outpatient Treatment for COVID-19 in the US**

As experience accrued in treating COVID-19 patients, physicians around the world discovered a higher success rate in treating **high-risk patients** (i.e., patients that exhibited early COVID-19 symptoms -- runny nose, fever, cough, loss of smell, and shortness of breath -- and met one or more of the following conditions: 65 years or older, high-risk comorbidities, and body-mass index  $\geq 30$ ; or under 65 with shortness of breath) as **outpatients** (within the first 5 days of symptom onset) with safe low-cost repurposed (off-label) drugs, rather than as inpatients with those same drugs or other available therapies.

The two most widely (world-wide) prescribed off-label drugs have been Hydroxychloroquine and Ivermectin. **Hydroxychloroquine** is an immunomodulatory drug taken by millions of people since it was first introduced in 1955 to treat malaria and autoimmune diseases such as lupus and inflammatory arthritis. **Ivermectin** is an anti-parasitic drug, also taken by millions of people since it was first introduced in 1981. This paper will evaluate the decisions made by national health organizations (e.g., the Food and Drug Administration, and National Institutes of Health), medical boards, state and federal agencies, pharmacists, hospitals, and others involved in medical decision-making in the US, as well as the World Health Organization, regarding the use of these drugs as a standard of care in **outpatient** settings, whether those decisions were **morally justified**, and how our medical practices can be improved going forward.

**Steph Grohmann**

Fellow, University of Edinburgh, UK

## **Ethical Capital: Neoliberalism and the Commoditization of Virtue**

Neoliberalism has been characterised as an ideology that compels individuals to act as ‘entrepreneurs of themselves’, by turning their cognitive and affective experiences into market assets. While thus ‘emotional labour’ and ‘personal branding’ have been staples of working life for some time, in recent years, morality and ethics have increasingly been subjected to the same mechanisms of commoditisation. Large corporations have long realized the market value of being perceived as ‘ethical’, and to sell customers a clear conscience as an add-on to any commodity or service imaginable. But equally, individuals are increasingly called to demonstrate a good moral character as a condition of market participation – be it in the shape of formal ‘social credit’ systems as operating in China, or in terms of informal peer-credit systems mediated by social media. This move from ethics as a social good to ethics as a market asset is accompanied by a scholarly turn to Virtue Ethics, an ethical theory that essentially treats morality as ‘quantums of virtue’ which can be accumulated and strategically invested. In Bourdieu’s terms, one could therefore say that in addition to social and cultural capital, neoliberal market competition is producing a new category of cultural accumulation: ethical capital. This paper aims to provide an overview of what ethical capital is, and why its rapid emergence should be regarded with critical skepticism.

**Monika Komušanac**

Assistant Professor, University of Zagreb, Croatia

## **Demographic Breakdown of Croatia and the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Demographic breakdown is a common term by which Croatian demographers try to point out the seriousness and subtlety of demographic issues and uncertainty regarding the survival of the Croatian population. The middle version of the UN estimate predicts a decline in the population of Croatia by 750,000 people by the middle of the century, or below 3.4 million, and by the end of the century to an incredible 2.1 million! The specific demographic development of Croatia is a consequence of long-term emigration and emigrant tradition and the action of destructive factors, primarily the European wars in the 20th century and the Greater Serbia aggression in the early 1990s. All of them contributed to the decline in fertility and the occurrence of natural decline and overall depopulation in 1991. Declining birth rates in Croatia have been present since 1979, and in 40 years the number of births has decreased by 45% and today amounts to only 36,000 children! With the increase in mortality in the same period and the stagnation of mortality to an average of 52,000 deaths in the last 10 years, in 2020 the largest negative natural change was recorded. Unfavorable trends in natural movement affected the deterioration of the age structure and accelerated aging of the population, so according to estimates by the Central Bureau of Statistics for 2019, the share of the population over 60 was 25.42%, and the share of the population under 19 was only 19.33%. Since Croatia's accession to the European Union in 2013 until 2019, a total of 230,000 people emigrated, and it is assumed that this number is much higher given the data of immigration countries and the fact that there is no legal obligation to register abroad. The COVID-19 pandemic has only intensified the negative demographic trends in Croatia that have been present for about thirty years. The pandemic in Croatia primarily affected the increase in mortality and continued decline in fertility and natural population decline, so in 2020, according to provisional data, the highest mortality and increase in average annual deaths by about 4,500 people than in 2018 and 2019, the lowest birth rate that fell below 36,000 births and the largest natural population decline of about -20,000 people occurred! Although emigration during the pandemic was slowed down due to certain restrictions on freedom of movement, the end of the pandemic is expected to continue emigration and return to pre-pandemic

emigration trends and reduce the overall demographic potential of the domicile population. In addition to the analysis of quantitative demographic indicators, the factors that influenced the general negative demographic picture of Croatia will be explained, as well as the shortcomings of the system of population measures implemented at the state level.



**Gregory T. Papanikos**  
President, ATINER

## **The Greek Wars of the 1820s: Reasons and Results**

In Greece, the 1820s is a well-remembered decade. So many things happened for the future (Greek) generations to learn. In the beginning of the decade (1821), Greeks rebelled against the Ottomans, but parallel with this war of independence, they, as did so many times in their heroic past, started fighting between themselves (1822), but the Olympians intervened as in Homer's masterpieces and "independence" came as a result of a direct foreign intervention of Britain (Poseidon), France (Athena) and Russia (Hera), in 1827 in the battle field and in 1832 they battled in the negotiation table. This paper looks at the reasons of all these three types of events as well as their results. The reasons can be best depicted as "follow the money" and of course the obvious result was the official creation of an "independent" Greek state in 1832. However, other concurred events have had long-lasting effects on the Greek political and military developments which lasted until the end of the third quarter of the 20th century. These developments are also briefly discussed in this paper.

**Abdel Rahman**

Associate Professor, University of Sharjah, UAE

## **Revisiting the Relationship between E-Government and Corruption: An Empirical Investigation**

This study reinvestigates the relationship between e-government and corruption taking into account some potential methodological problems encountered in multivariate regression models based on the use of cross-country data. Contrary to the stylized fact that e-government reduces corruption, this study finds that e-government has this effect only in combination with gross domestic product per capita which is a very important factor that affects corruption. Moreover, unlike previous studies investigating this relationship, this study includes in its multivariate regression model economic freedom as an important factor affecting corruption. The key finding here is that economic freedom curbs corruption only at high levels of economic development. The interaction of e-government and wealth on the one hand and economic freedom and level of economic development on the other in curbing corruption suggests that there may be synergies associated with these factors in producing this effect on corruption.

**Marsela Sako**

Lecturer, University of Tirana, Albania

&

**Dafina Peci**

Assistant Professor, University of Tirana, Albania

## **Open Dialogue: Quo Vadis Youth in the EU Integration Process**

Albania's EU integration process undoubtedly carries many challenges, but one of the most important challenges for the time and political context is considered to be the involvement of as many young people as possible in dialogue and decision-making. Their involvement in these processes should be more than just a political will to close the chapters but also an indicator of policy pursuit to prevent their marginalization from the decision-making processes for them. The strategic involvement of young people in the integration process is considered increasingly, a priority policy by the EU institutions in order to build a European perspective for countries aspiring to join the EU and to build a European citizenship for the countries that are already part of the union. It is worth noting that in parallel with European initiatives, the initiation of the Berlin Process for the Western Balkans also emphasizes the importance of cooperating with young people in accelerating the integration process, especially in relation to important decision-making issues that directly affect young people. Taking into account these developments, this paper aims to analyze the approach of policies for young people at the level of European Union and the adaptation of these policies in countries such as Albania, which has as one of its main priorities the integration into the European Union. The study of the perception of the young people at the national level is focusing on the identification of the factors that may affect in increasing of their involvement in decision-making during the negotiations process, is also in the focus of this paper.

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**Weak States:  
The Increasing Relevance of the Socio-Political Aspects of  
Security**

**NOT AVAILABLE**

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## **Empire, Hegemony, Hyperpower? Management of Late-Westphalian International Environment**

Empire and Hegemony are among the crucial notions of science of international relations. Many scholar were investigating those concepts, and attempted to define them and estimate whether they retain explanatory value in contemporary situation of accelerated evolution of international system. Within the system governed by anarchy, those two prepositions were considered partial resolution to destructive tendencies generated within the international environment. Albeit those resolutions seem similar, its application required different conditions in order to become effective.

In short, Empire was formalized system of internal relations, governed by military superior center which was essentially resistant for casualties and willing to handle them. Thus this entity generates tributary system partially incorporated into is system as a hierarchical system with application of criterion of proximity to a center of Empire. On the other hand, Hegemony is informal system of external relations, governed by skilled center element of the system, which outweigh economically and militarily remaining elements or coalition which may be created within its zones of influence.

Every mentioned above system is a complex and adequate answer to challenge posed by different set of features and variables generated by particular iteration of international system. The question remains: preconditions to occurrence of which system will be generated by late-Westphalian and subsequent generation of international environment? Contemporary iteration projects many individual characteristics, with regards to complexity, globalization and historical acceleration.

One of the possible solutions to this issue is recently introduce concept of Hyperpower, which could be positioned as a system in between those mentioned above, however its creation embraces new quality of international relations not yet encounter during course of history. This paper will be dedicated to investigating this concept and its usefulness for scientific analysis of contemporary international relations. This objective will be fulfilled by verification of two hypotheses. First hypothesis is stating, that contrary to previous forms, limited predominantly to geopolitical sphere, Hyperpower embraces geopolitics and transnational in equal measures. It is product of a so-

called “virtualization of state” and encompasses tools for effective interaction in both spheres of international environment. Second hypothesis is connected with effectiveness of Hyperpower, which is generally much more passive system than mentioned above. Its activation consumes astounding amount of resources. Therefore its primary application is in most cases passive, strictly limited to the shaping of the perception of remaining elements of international system.

This paper will be divided on four parts. The first part will be dedicated to the definition of Empire and Hegemony and their respective features. The second will investigate the application of Empire and Hegemony in the late-Westphalian international environment. The third will analyze the issue of Hyperpower as a new quality of international relations. And the fourth part will embrace possible scenarios for future shape of post-Westphalian international relations.

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## **Sentiment Forecasting of International Relations with AI**

Geopolitical strategy is characterized by a dynamic and complex structure of entity relationships, geospatial data and human decisions. We employ machine and deep learning techniques to create a framework which allows to identify the affiliation of entities with their respective countries in news articles as well as to estimate the sentiment of news associated with these entities. The change in the sentiment score between countries allows to analyze historic developments of international relations as well as to evaluate the primary and secondary network effects of potential events and policy decisions on the global relationship structure. Thus, we show the potential of AI to improve and forecast international relations.

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## **COVID-19 Mortality in Italy: A Multivariate Ecological Analysis**

There are several evidences suggesting an association between the increase in particulate matter concentration and COVID-19 mortality rates' growth. However, other sociodemographic, structural, fragility factors might impact on COVID-19 mortality.

To explore the sociodemographic, health, fragility and environmental factors associated with an increased risk of COVID-19 mortality in Italy.

Age-standardized COVID-19 mortality rates (cumulative period 1st March-31st May 2020) were published by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT: by <http://dati.istat.it/>) as well as health (mortality index for 2018) and fragility indexes (standardized mortality rate for Circulatory System (CS) diseases on 2017, number of host in old's home (in Italian RSA) for 2016). The source of sociodemographic (old age index) and structural factors (population density) was <https://www.tuttitalia.it/regioni/densita/>. Environmental pollution information (PM10 and PM2.5 annual mean concentration for 2017) were derived from ISPRA public database ([https://annuario.isprambiente.it/sys\\_ind/macro/1](https://annuario.isprambiente.it/sys_ind/macro/1)). A multivariate ecological analysis was used to estimate associations between these factors and age-standardized Covid-19 mortality rate.

The standardized mortality rate for CS diseases and the number of hosts in old's home showed a significant direct association with COVID-19 standardized mortality rate as well as PM2.5 annual mean concentration and living in the northern and central Italian regions. On the contrary no relevant association was found between PM10 and COVID-19 mortality. After a mutually adjustment, only several relationships were confirmed. The model with PM10 among covariates predicted a significant independent increase of 48.14 per 100,000 in the COVID-19 standardized mortality rate for each unitary increase in the overall mortality in the past. Moreover, the population density was directly associated with COVID-19 mortality. On the contrary, a relevant decline around 2 per 100,000 and 12 per 100,000 in the COVID-19 mortality for every unitary increase in old age index and



standardized mortality for CS diseases, respectively, was estimated. If the multivariate model including PM2.5 was focused, the overall mortality rate exhibited a positive relation with COVID-19 mortality while the old age index and standardized mortality for CS diseases in the past an inverse association.

COVID-19 mortality shows strong independent direct association with healthy index and light with structural factor (population density), but it was inversely related with the fragility (standardized mortality for CS disease) and sociodemographic index (old age index). Even if PM2.5 seems borderline related with COVID-19 mortality at univariate analysis, after controlling for other factors this relation disappeared. The findings on independent effect of areas need a deep analysis.

This analysis provides some preliminary evidence about factors probably related with COVID-19 mortality and suggests that air pollution was not directly linked while other factors. It is highlighted the importance of multivariate analyses to understand the factors that increased the vulnerability to COVID-19.