

BMI's 9th Annual Conference

Institutions, Society & Global Policy

Conference Summary

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Tel-Aviv University

Prof. Itai Sened, Petr Pesov

Executive Summary

During the BMI 9th Annual Research Conference - the topics addressed varied from Institutions, Society and conducting global policy. BMI fellows have contributed to the discussion by presenting progress in their research focusing on conflict resolution, demographics, and inequality this year. The presentations included ground-breaking theoretical and practical contributions the students have worked on in their doctoral and post-doctoral positions. Additionally, two expert panels took place. The first focused on the rise of the European far-right, analysing both the demand and supply side of the challenge to determine what increases the support for the populists in electoral cycles, establishing that both have significant effects and act in synchrony with one another. Second, they addressed the challenges in the international legal system, as they pertain to the accountability or rather the lack thereof, of international organizations like the United Nations, proposing new ways of solving this problem that is of great relevance during the war in Ukraine and the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. After the 9th year of operation, BMI is looking forward to expanding its activities in sustainability, human development, and institutions; the next step will be a conference in Krakow in the fall of 2023.

BMI Research Symposium

Community Currencies, Decentralization, and International Humanitarian Aid

Eve Guterman, BMI Fellow, Department of Public Policy, TAU

The research conducted by Eve Guterman focuses on analysing whether the distribution of international humanitarian aid as decentralized tokens has more significant welfare benefits. Most organizations usually identify high-risk areas and airdrop fiat currency in the region, but to address this knowledge gap Eve conducted a Randomised Control Trial (RCT) by injecting humanitarian aid through the World Food Program - through prepayment for goods and services & creating decentralized tokens in the Kitui region of Kenya. The main research question introduced for the study is: can participation in a decentralized community currency network reduce losses to individuals and society born of monopoly control of currency? The methodology consisted of panel surveys with screening, baseline, midline, and end-line of 17 sections focusing on spending and consumption indexed into five categories: consumer surplus, social welfare, the strength of the local economy, social solidarity, hunger, and tracking financial diaries. The trial group using the token saw a decrease in the variable of hunger; however, the study's most interesting finding was the spill over effect of the token, considering that out of 40 groups put in 3 categories, only 5 had no interactions with the treatment. This likely suggests the high functionality of the token. Between the lowest engagement groups & and highest engagement groups, there was no overwhelming support for the hypothesis, but the treated groups had higher hunger metrics. According to people's records - they said that the effect of the treatment mainly was on savings and food consumption. A mapping of 12 months of transactions shows that villages that participated in the study made transactions 100 km away; thus, the perceived economic network is much larger than what international organizations consider. Furthermore, there are strong economic bonds with villages with high financial capacity, which had enormous network connections with the people in the study. The outflow of tokens suggests unexpected results: looking at individual villages is a mistake - the local economies need to be defined on a different level. The first step towards this is mapping the regions' networks so that aid can be distributed in a way fitting the region.

Black and white differences in subjective survival expectations: An evaluation of competing mechanisms

Shayna Bernstein, BMI Fellow, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, TAU

Economic behaviour directly shapes saving and spending patterns and retirement planning, which interests social security systems, insurance providers, employers, and policymakers. Ideas of when people will die are more directly related to economic behaviour, while survival expectations, which Dr. Bernstein deals with, impact health behaviours - smoking, alcohol consumption, poor nutrition, and health test adherence. Psychological well-being is affected by having a greater sense of control, producing happiness and subduing stress, and providing greater emotional support. Disparities in the end-of-life experience are reflected in racial inequalities, and survival expectations reflect information directly relevant to mortality risk. Health status, lifestyle, and parental longevity are essential for this - but also social factors such as socioeconomic status and exposure to social adversity throughout the life course. The black American population tends to report higher survival expectations than white Americans of the same age, which is a racial anomaly. Demographers find survival expectations to be both accurate and not, depending on the study. To model this - Dr. Bernstein used interview data for two cohorts on survival expectations in combination with Weibull & Gompertz survival curves. Looking at the interviews - it was possible to see a survival crossover for the 1937-1941 birth cohort and racial anomaly 1932-1936 birth cohort of American Males. There might be underlying cultural attitudes determining the type of focal point clustering. For white men, survival expectations were fairly accurate, while black men had a worse survival estimation. When constructing an expected survival estimation, the factors considered included biomedical, socioeconomic, health, psychological, and social aspects. With 100% certainty of survival, white and black people enjoy life more, are happier, and have higher satisfaction with friends than white people, while health factors are also better. The black population is 1.28 times more likely to select 100% for living past 75, but at the same health levels, they are 1.67 times more likely to do so. Additionally, older black Americans are more optimistic than their white peers through coping strategies. Racial differences in survival expectations may account for social and economic behavior differences.

Help or no help? That's not the only question – different types of helping towards refugees and disadvantaged groups and their relevance for social equality

Nadine Knab, BMI Fellow, Department of Conflict Resolution, TAU

The world is facing huge challenges of refugees of conflict and climate change. Society portrays the attitudes towards refugees very polarising way: discrimination vs. welcoming; however, this dichotomy does not work in life. Helping often entails a power hierarchy through time/money/other means, and helping can differ in its capacity to change power relations. There is a difference between dependency-oriented helping and discrimination; however, both could contribute to maintaining social inequality between social groups, while autonomy helping improves social standards. The threat perception level could determine why people choose dependency-oriented helping instead of discrimination. Another variable that Dr. Knab works on is social norms. To be in line with norms while perceiving threats could lead to dependency-oriented helping rather than discrimination to maintain power hierarchy while complying with the norms. To assess this - Dr. Knab defined dependency-helping as giving vouchers, discrimination as of higher importance to help Germans than refugees, and autonomy-helping as increasing chances on the job market. The interaction between threats (security, symbolic, economic) & social norms (social environment, country level) could predict the choice of action toward refugees. Autonomy helping should not be affected by norms, only by threat perception, since people would show no help if they felt threatened. The higher the threat and the presence of norms would, lead more likely to opt for dependency-oriented helping. The same study conducted in Israel yielded similar results. How can autonomy-helping intentions be increased? This would include messages of dependency/reliance while maintaining the quality of life (helping during natural disasters) and expanding cultural vibrancy. Through introducing common goals fostered by joint work could have negative perceptions. Looking at autonomy assisting a group in confronting the message of reliance showed higher autonomy-helping tendencies. Creating superordinate goals that require people to work together could lead to a higher provision of autonomy help. These results inform the way organizations develop and communicate their campaigns depending on what kind of help they want to introduce.

Navigating through crises: Civil society organisations working with African asylum seekers in Israel

Nora Meissner, BMI Fellow, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, TAU

The research on the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the work of civil society organizations working with African Asylum Seekers living in Israel conducted by Nora included interviews with 15 organizations conducted between mid-2020 and 2023 to determine how they navigate the crisis. Conditions of context and history of the context, crisis management habits matter to answer this question. Protracted displacement is defined as a temporary state of violence-induced spatial mobility that ends after the displaced person. This is the situation of African asylum seekers in Israel from Eritrea and Sudan that arrived between the mid-2000s and 2013, and at the onset of COVID, included 30000 and 8000 children. Israeli non-arrival regime for asylum seekers is non-refoulement yet not processing claims, serving the population a temporary protection visa with no social rights. The Global phenomenon of protracted displacement is increasing, while the conventional understandings describe it as static, large-scale refugee camp settings. Yet, there is emerging scholarship addressing dynamics. External events influence breaking the existing routine work of organizations pertaining to their mandate, requiring orientation and action. Simultaneously Israel issues policies and decrees that criminalize refugees' arrival and incentivizes departure by opening an open-detention facility in the Negev deportation plan to Rwanda. Dealing with individual-level crises within the Asylum Seekers population as part of daily routine differs from collective crises threatening the asylum seekers population, which led to large-scale mobilization. This balances organizations between services and advocacy. At the same time, organizations also had to deal with lockdowns and humanitarian crises in the refugee community. Organizations that served as a social safety net for a hyper-vulnerable population had to shift to aid provision, adaptation of services, and increased advocacy. Crisis navigation develops from the interrelation of the history of structural context and the history of practices in that context, providing opportunities for social innovation and organizational development, the importance of preparedness, and resilience. Fields are formed by actors around specific issues and with their logic sets habitus mechanism (set of disposition), structuring actors' practices, embodied history, constantly evolving within the organization's observable practices. The field of support for African asylum seekers conflicts with the state - organizations are positioned based on their capitals, the habitus produced within critical conditions by daily engagement with personal crises and experience of critical events. The practical dimension of crisis management habitus is described as a set of relational dispositions to navigate crises. The habitus performance is

assessed through communication, collaboration, coordination, consultation, and campaigning. The practices during COVID included: the reactivation and establishment of channels for constant information sharing, humanitarian aid provision, mental health support, advocacy for pandemic-related rights, increasing coordination, situation-specific expertise; community needs and perceptions, information videos; posters; webinars. No organization can navigate crises alone, neither individual nor collective. Relationships' conditioning set of dispositions was not created ad-hoc but emerged from the field and history within it; thus, crisis navigation should be viewed as a dynamic of protracted displacement.

Protracted Conflicts and their roots, an attempt at an interdisciplinary conflict typology

Petr Pesov, BMI Fellow, Department of Conflict Resolution, TAU

The macro-level goal of Petr's research is to create a typology for comparing and understanding conflicts according to the processes behind causing military escalations. Conflicts are viewed within the social-political-military triad through narratives, violence, and structural causes. Each individual case of conflict is viewed as a process: from roots to escalations. Looking at it from an interdisciplinary perspective would make a comparative analysis of conflicts and possible solutions easier for scholars. Most previous frameworks are either single or dual-disciplinary, while the multidimensionality of conflicts must be entertained to get the full picture. The escalation model would focus on all relevant disciplines identified: Social Psychology, Social Anthropology, International Relations, Political Science, and Military Studies within the key elements: narratives, collective identities, elite-level decision-making, structural causes, and collective violence. Each of the unique parameters has a delicate ability of two-way interactions, affecting each other. The process of structural causes through narratives of collective violence signifies a unit of analysis while adding a temporal dimension to the research. At the same time, the interaction between collective identities and decision-making that also occurs and evolves through narratives, as a tool used by societies to frame social context and reduce uncertainty, allows us to look at the two important levels within any party to the conflict. The concentration of the research would revolve around frozen, violent, intergroup, intractable conflicts over territory to address whether conflicts of this kind can be grouped according to the process of their evolution from causes to violence. Methodologically this would consist of qualitative elite & expert interviews that will be used alongside secondary sources for process tracing purposes to develop models and later cluster those according to relevant variables. Theoretical contribution can be denoted through the new conflict typology, grouping conflicts according to their processes, something that will be novel in the field of

conflict resolution, as well as a refined model of conflict escalation from structural causes to violence will be suggested with a goal to enable scholars to look at conflict cases as processes in a different manner than what is offered by existing works.

The Rise of The Extreme Right in Europe: A Panel Discussion

Prof. Itai Sened, Head of BMI; Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, Tel Aviv University

Multiparty democracies are in crisis because of the use of “Legitimate” enemies. This is not a consequence of cultural, economic, or sociological deterministic forces. All of these are in the background and play a role, but to a large extent, we witness the consequences of a particularly popular, quite toxic, entry strategy played mostly but not only by new right-wing entrants. This phenomenon was analysed in Germany, Austria, and the UK by Prof. Sened and BMI alumni Dr. Karen Umansky. A party agenda is formed through new public concerns by creating a “legitimate enemy”. Parties help crystallize who is the enemy and use it as a weapon. In Austria - the FPÖ took economic and safety concerns and made it the fault of the immigrants, while in Great Britain, UKIP followed this scenario but used the EU as the legitimate enemy. This led David Cameron and the conservatives to the referendum, BREXIT, and disappearing after the damage was done. Virtually non-party enters using a legitimate enemy strategy, does all the damage, and disappears as a political entity, a situation troubling for multiparty democracies. AfD is another example, where in 2013 EU was the legitimate enemy; in 2017, they switched to Merkel’s open-door immigration policy. While they gave Merkel many nightmares - they caused little harm in the political space de facto, as the German democracy remained in its previous form with a slightly modified policy towards immigrants. The only existing measure of policy outcomes, as they ensue from electoral results, is the uncovered set. Major shifts of the exposed set mean major shifts in expected policy through synchrony between voters and politicians. A similar situation can be seen in the US with Donald Trump Jr. and Itamar Ben Gvir in Israel.

Rise of the Italian Far-right

Prof. Daniella Giannetti, Department of Political and Social Sciences, University of Bologna

A permanent phenomenon in the European scenario, especially after the Pandemic and the war in Ukraine, influences voter behavior and attraction to the far-right. A similar strategy was used by the Italian right, manipulating the EU dimension. Salient issues of public opinion and party agenda work in tandem to create populist right, where the five-star movement is a prime

example. Moving policy towards their own position in 2018 - made the coalition composition robustly different. The connection between EU security, taxes vs spending, and the environment is interesting amidst the war and the environmental policy. The position of the economic left-right has less relevance nowadays, rather than the pro and anti-EU integration forces playing a role in determining party popularity and success. This analysis focuses on the policy issue on the supply-side, but there is also a demand side. Electoral volatility is a big problem in Italy, as the leader's personality, perceptions of credibility, and reliability are important. For instance, Meloni did an excellent job communicating an image of consistency. Extreme parties affect the possibilities of policy outcomes, and sometimes the far-right in government must moderate themselves; the other parties in the coalition need to adopt a more extreme position to gain an electorate. Italy moves from extreme to extreme, but within the coalition, the variance of policy outcomes is quite small.

Decomposing the Rise of the populist radical right

Dr. Roee Levy, School of Economics, Tel Aviv University

The dramatic increase in support of the populist radical right parties (PRRP) poses widespread implications: joining/leading governments, affecting policy, and eroding democratic norms. Despite a rich literature on the rise of populism, there is no consensus on the main explanation. To answer how the support has increased - there are three possible scenarios:

1. Supply: have party positions changed?
2. Demand I: have voters changed?
3. Demand II: have priorities at the ballot changed?

Dr. Levy, together with colleagues, conducted this research by analysing changes driving the rise of PRRP, merging comprehensive datasets on party positions and voters attributes, estimating voter priorities, documenting key trends in each component, and quantifying the relative importance of each component using decomposition through the multidimensional utility model and the position of the party on voter issues by assuming that voters choose the party with the highest utility. In simple terms, the options include:

1. Voters could have stopped voting left because parties moved too much to the left.
2. Voters could have started caring more about the conservative agenda.
3. Voters could have prioritized culture over economics.

The full model encompasses taking the party's valence into account, observing many party positions, a rich set of voter attributes, and estimating priority parameters using machine

learning techniques. If voters with specific attributes start supporting certain types of parties without the change in parties - priorities change. On the supply side - shares of sentences in the manifesto discussing topics - capture change in positions. The demand side includes questions on demographics, opinions, and the supported party. With this, it is possible to calculate the support level at a given time. Descriptive analysis - parameters are not causally identified. Components could affect each other, and entry/exit of new and old parties was included as a residual, assuming sincere voting. Half of the rise in PRRP support occurred before 2011. Voter attributes did not change drastically, but priorities explain about 45% of the increase in support; the rest is mostly the entrance of new parties. Many more voters are indifferent between the economic positions; however, in culture, the people moved more to the right. More people vote on culture instead of economics when comparing 2005-2009 and 2017-2020 datasets. Based on the opinions of economics and culture - the left shrank, the right increased, and polarisation increased on cultural issues, not on economics. Voter opinions don't matter that much, only accounting for 7%. In some countries - people have shifted to the right, but looking at the aggregate, we don't see a general move to the right. Changes in voter priorities drive recent PRRP support, and there is empirical evidence that voters prioritize cultural positions, activating a reservoir of populist voters.

International Law in Current, Turbulent Times

Prof. Eyal Benvenisti, Whewell Professor of International law and the Director of the Lauterpacht Centre for International Law, University of Cambridge

After Mythology: A Call to Rethink the Functions and Limits of International Organizations

Prof. Benvenisti explained that the legal blue helmet: International law shields International Organisations (IOs) from legal accountability through:

1. Freedom to act: independent legal personality
2. Freedom to expand mandate: broad and implied powers; subsequent practice reflects consent
3. Freedom to ignore other international organizations: "Principle of Speciality."
4. Freedom from international law applicable to states (IOs subject to "general rules of international law incumbent upon them")
5. Freedom from legal accountability (litigation subject to consent; otherwise, immunity)
6. Freedom of state parties from responsibility for the IO's acts

Everything is grounded in the opinions of the international court of Justice, inspired by the Western-leaning judges of the International Court of Justice. The United Nations has an objective distinct legal personality also toward non-member states. The existence of the UN is an objective fact, but so that a legal obligation to the organization may bind non-members, the latter must conclude a special agreement with these states. Unless the charter was liberally interpreted, the Soviets threatened to withdraw, which could have undermined the UN project. In the present state of affairs, many are grateful that there is at least an imperfect instrument for world order, viewed as efficient in some ways. Lawyers' enthusiasm was shared by related contemporaneous theories: David Mitrany's functionalism, Friedrich Hayek's economic conditions of interstate federation, Expert rule through the global bureaucracy, IR theories: neo-liberal institutionalism, constructivism (based on transaction costs economics, game theory, and sociology). Three main misconceptions are prevalent and unquestioned surrounding IOs:

1. IOs are inherently about joint gains
2. Diversity is a sign of progress and expertise
3. IOs are functional - resolving coordination and cooperation problems by the commonality of interests

However, experience shows:

1. IOs are the reflection of international and domestic politics
2. Fragmentation - divide and rule tool for the hegemon
3. Diverse interests, no sense of commonality within IO bureaucracy -> IOs require checks on power to promote common goals

IOs reflect reality, the strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must. IOs expand hegemonic domination even further: pulling resources and risks, benefitting from others, laundering responsibility, projecting soft power of expertise, creating selective alliances, evading domestic checks and demands for accountability, and satisfying commercial lobbies. This can be seen in the actions of the World Health Organization during COVID-19. The coordination required the collective vision: directing an apolitical, science-based coordination effort. The WHO personnel should be technicians, not politicians, but rather health professionals through qualifications. However, the reality is different as science is conceived to be Western. In practice, it's impossible to expect more developed countries to be overruled by the voter of nations less developed from a medical and social point of view while simultaneously - lobbies thrive. Are IOs inherently well-suited to promote cooperation?

Easy to establish a stable tit-for-tat since rational egoists can have incentives to form international regimes, but finding a way to cooperate through all conditions is almost hopeless. Idealized narratives about the resilience of IOs cover only a small subset. The possible ways to address this is to create a typology of the IO sphere that can help to identify design flaws in several IOs, as well as who benefits and who loses, assessment of the desirability of rethinking the hands-off approach of international law to regulation of IOS and an inquiry how to design institutions.

Respondent by:

Dr. Daphna Shrager, Former Principal Legal Officer at the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs, and currently Visiting Professor, Faculty of Law, Tel-Aviv University

Responsibility of the United Nations – Between Law and Politics

To discuss the lack of responsibility without accountability - Dr. Shrager addressed the role of the UN in the Rwanda genocide and Srebrenica massacre. The UN had a role in the failure to provide protection for Rwanda; while not equipped with heavy weapons, it only had to deal with people who had machetes and did nothing. The UN force in Srebrenica was 30,000 and was unsuccessful in preventing acts of massacre. The UN rejected the claims by the families of the deceased and injured. Although the UN will argue for immunity, the real question was - what was the legal obligation that the UN has violated? The general question of what is much larger than what is dealt with now. However, the unfortunate answer is likely that there was no legal obligation. In the absence of responsibility for preventing genocide - the claims were against contingents rather than against peacekeeping operations. Fundamentally, the UN has national contingents - the families in Rwanda were safe until the Belgians left and the genocide was conducted. By order of the Dutch authorities, Bosnians were seeking refuge in a Dutch compound - they were given up to the Serbs. In both cases - the legal claims by relatives to Belgium and Netherlands in national courts succeeded. The responsibility falls on national governments rather than the UN. There has never been a debate in the UN between the secretariat and political organs to find the responsibility. Another example is sexual exploitation of abuse - the practice was there for two decades, and only after was it made public worldwide. This practice has been brought to light in Congo, and the UN had to act upon it. However, it was debated as a case of misconduct vs. a criminal act; in the latter's case, the UN has no jurisdiction, shifting the case to the nation-state. Despite destroying many lives across many countries, no one brought a claim against the UN. Additionally, Dr. Shrager touched upon the case of the outbreak of Cholera in Haiti, killing 10,000 people. The Nepalese contingent

was to blame. Claims were brought against the United Nations - however, there was never a discussion within the UN, and all claims were denied. What went wrong? The UN has faced its consequences in none of these cases, enjoying immunity. The secretary-general can not admit responsibility without approval from the member state. They should have moved the debate to the political organ, like the General Assembly, rather than the secretariat. It was a mistake to think that one could bring the claims against the UN in a national court. On the other hand, to presume that the UN will entertain claims from individuals or NGOs is also a mistake. This should have been brought up on the level of states. Haiti, for example, should have claimed the UN; however, they can't do that since they need assistance from the organization. The UN's reputation matters greatly; redefining the concept of accountability to states and rejecting it when it comes to you is hypocritical. The legitimacy of the UN has been tarnished. For as long as you can't claim against the UN - it all depends on the will or the UN's lack thereof. Facing its responsibility and accountability will be the most important challenge moving forward.