**Conference**

**Responsibility, Nihilism, and Ontological (In)Security**

**Istanbul Policy Center Sabancı University - September 10, 2022**

**Keynote Speeches by Prof. Bahar Rumelili and Dr. Nolen Gertz**

**Call for Abstracts**

At the political level, we have been witnessing democratic backsliding, civil wars, refugee “crisis,” and inter-state wars for the last two decades. At the existential level, nihilism has been invading the human being Self as, for example, technology and social media continue to suture ourselves – in this world – as blind selves, as nihilists. The first set of political challenges can be grouped under the theory of *ontological security*, whereas the second set can be labeled as *nihilism.* Confronting the first set of challenges materializes through ontological security-seeking strategies, aiming at restoring the status of security at the being/Self-level. Confronting the second set materializes through responsibility. This Conference aims to bridge these four concepts: ontological (in)security – nihilism, on the one hand, and ontological security-seeking strategies – responsibility, on the other.

Ontological security refers to the security of an entity’s *being*, whether this entity is an individual, group, state, or a regional power (e.g., the EU). How an entity becomes secure is something contested a lot among scholars. Nonetheless, we can define certain themes forming the basics of a being’s security: continuity (the auto-narrative of the being sustains its continuity from the past to the future); consistency (the being’s narrative, values, and meanings are devoid of contradictions), self-esteem, and others.

Nihilism refers to avoiding reality. A nihilist is a group or a person who detaches itself from confronting reality. Nihilism has various techniques, including blind belonging to a crowd or a collective action that prevents us from taking responsibility in terms of what we do and for what; and sinking totally into a routine that also blinds us from seeing reality deeply. The antipode of nihilism is responsibility; it is a commitment towards ourselves to be active and present in reality to face it, not escape from it. It requires cognitive awareness and full agency.

In this Conference, we seek to wed responsibility/nihilism to ontological (in)security. However, the scope is not limited to the theoretical level; concepts and empirical topics, such as democratization, democracy backsliding, revolutions, social movements, and human rights, can also be included. Each of these topics can be discerned and developed under nihilism/responsibility-ontological security as they hinge on empirical or theoretical frames.

**Who can apply?**

The Conference is open to all **MA and Ph.D. students** in Turkey and abroad.

**How to apply?**

Participants can apply following one of two paths. Firstly, participants submit their abstracts to the committee by **August 21, 2022**, at the latest (see below for the topics the abstracts can tackle). Secondly, participants who do not want to submit abstracts can attend the Conference to listen to the discussions and presentations. Those whose abstracts are rejected by the committee can still attend the Conference as listeners and therefore are kindly requested to fill out the application form as an attendee.

The participants should complete the **Google Forms** to apply for the Conference by August 21, 2022. The organization committee will communicate with the authors of the abstracts who will be included in the program to finalize the conference program.

**Are there any registration fees?**

No. The conference registrations are free of charge. However, the participants will handle the transportation and accommodation fees.

**Questions to be considered in the abstract submissions:**

The abstracts should contain 250 words containing the title, author and contact info, and keywords. The questions we aspire to deal with include, but are not limited to:

1. How responsibility/nihilism and ontological security can be linked together? How is nihilism associated with ontological (in)security/anxiety, *if any*? How can responsibility subvert or improve the ontological security of a social/political entity (individual, group, or state)?
2. How can current political issues (EU’s relations with neighbors, EU identity, Human Rights, democracy, and democracy backsliding, including populism, etc.) be analyzed and studied using the framework of nihilism/responsibility-ontological security?

**Organization Committee (in alphabetical order):**

Aslı Şebnem Haliman, MA, Koç University

Erman Ermihan, Ph.D. Candidate, Kadir Has University

Dr. Nasuh Sofuoğlu, Kadir Has University

Samer Sharani, Ph.D. Student, Sabancı University

**Scientific Committee (in alphabetical order):**

Prof. Bahar Rumelili, Koç University

Dr. Nolen Gertz, Twente University

Aslı Şebnem Haliman, MA, Koç University

Erman Ermihan, Ph.D. Candidate, Kadir Has University

Dr. Nasuh Sofuoğlu, Kadir Has University

Samer Sharani, Ph.D. Student, Sabancı University

**Where and When the Conference will Be Held:**

The Conference will be held face-to-face at Istanbul Policy Center Sabancı University on September 10, 2022 (the exact address will be sent via email after registration).

**For Registration:**

**Fill in the following form:** [**https://forms.gle/EXgeN11yxPWdMxPN8**](https://forms.gle/EXgeN11yxPWdMxPN8)

**The aftermath of the Conference**

A compilation booklet of abstract submissions will be prepared by the organizing committee and shared with the participants. The organization committee will communicate the participants willing to compile a special issue publication, followed by a joint meeting to determine the journals.

**Draft Schedule**

* 10.00-10.05 - Welcoming by the Organization Team
* 10.05-10.35 - Opening Speech by Dr. Nolen Gertz
* 10.35-11.05 - Opening Speech by Prof. Bahar Rumelili
* 11.05-11.20 - Coffee Break
* 11.20-12.20 - Session 1
  + Moderator and Speaker: Nasuh Sofuoğlu (10 min)
    - Speaker1 (10 min)
    - Speaker2 (10 min)
    - Speaker3 (10 min)
* 12.20-12.30 - Break
* 12.30-13.30 - Session 2
  + Moderator and Speaker: Samer Sharani (10 min)
    - Speaker1 (10 min)
    - Speaker2 (10 min)
    - Speaker3 (10 min)
* 13.30-14.00 - Longer Break - lunch/snack
* 14.00-15.00 - Session 3
  + Moderators and Speakers: Aslı Şebnem Haliman & Erman Ermihan (10 min)
    - Speaker1 (10 min)
    - Speaker2 (10 min)
    - Speaker3 (10 min)
* 15:00 - Evaluation Session and Family photo
  + Organization Team, Prof. Bahar Rumelili and Dr. Nolen Gertz