

Rethinking the Past, Present and Future of Violence: Inputs from International Political Sociology

A joint workshop of the DVPW working groups on “orders of violence” and “sociology of international relations”, Berlin, 29-30 October 2025

Amid ongoing wars and shifting borders, authoritarian rule and shrinking spaces for civil society, as well as broader geopolitical transformations, the current empirical realities of international relations raise fundamental questions about how we understand and study the variegated forms and effects of violence in world politics. These changing configurations of violence have also become increasingly acute for European audiences—whether through conflicts unfolding in neighboring regions or through violence that intersects with social tensions within Europe itself. At the same time, we observe a troubling tendency to once again silence certain forms of gendered, racialized, structural or slow violence, subordinating them to broader geopolitical conflicts. Moreover, hard-won visibility in scholarly discourse risks being eroded, especially as academia itself becomes a target of authoritarian practices of silencing.

We believe that these shifting landscapes of violence and oppression demand renewed interdisciplinary engagement. Therefore, the workshop invites contributions that explore the past, present and future of violence, studying either changes in particular forms of violence - from wars to structural inequalities and political oppression - or probing into the broader configurations that link these different forms of violence. We are especially interested in contributions that bridge disciplinary divides and seek to bridge international political sociology and peace and conflict studies. We welcome contributions that seek to advance existing accounts along the following dimensions:

- **Empirical broadening:** Rather than repurposing established IR storylines, we emphasize the need for interdisciplinary research and perspectives mirroring the empirical complexity of violence. Current conflicts, patterns of violence, and structures of oppression are deeply intertwined with long-term trajectories of imperialism, postcolonialism, gendered, racialized and structural violence. Furthermore, certain historical political geographies—such as the political histories of the socialist world or resistance movements—have often been overlooked in IR scholarship, contributing to persistent gaps in understanding patterns of violence, neglect, and oppression.
- **Conceptual and theoretical refinement:** Such perspectives must be accompanied by conceptual and theoretical reflection—sharpening, revisiting, and unlearning existing frameworks. We invite scholarship that engages deeply with international political sociology to challenge and/or deepen existing accounts of violence. We encourage scholars to apply and refine approaches from international political sociology and beyond in their analyses of the past, present and future of violence, identifying what shapes contemporary patterns of violence.
- **Methodological reflection:** This endeavour entails methodological questions: What are good methodologies for uncovering the configurations of violence, their historical legacies and their current changes? For instance, how can archival research respond to contemporary calls for justice and empathy by uncovering forms of (slow, indirect or structural) violence that might only come to light long after their occurrence? And how can we trace and unpack the relations between different forms of violence and identify the drivers and dynamics that have brought about and that re-shape current constellations of violence?

Submission Guidelines

Please send us your abstracts (250 words max.) and short bios (200 words max.) **by May 31, 2025**. The conference language is English. The workshop will take place at the Leibniz Zentrum Moderner Orient Berlin on October 29 and 30, 2025.

Contact Information:

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