



Call for Papers

International Conference

Violent Turns

Sources, Interpretations, Responses

The American University of Paris
June 21-23, 2023

The aim of this international conference is to provide researchers with an interdisciplinary platform to investigate and debate the question of contemporary irruptions of political violence and to inquire into the different responses intended to counteract violence. When and why do individuals, groups, and societies come to believe that peaceful means and legal avenues of redress, including non-violent civil disobedience, are insufficient or improper to achieve a social or political goal and to view violent action as morally legitimate and necessary for change? Can one identify trends shaping recourse to violence by parts of the populace? What role does state violence play in the dialectic? When, if ever, is political violence legitimate? How can violence be averted?

These are not new questions in political theory or the social sciences. State and non-state political violence being a regular occurrence in the historical trajectory of all societies, including modern democracies. But they have taken on new salience through the rise of far-right extremist movements and irruptions of individual and group violence of various ideological and social origins. The simultaneity of these phenomena across different countries, and the manifest potential for new violent turns, raises essential theoretical and policy questions, requiring renewed critical investigation.

The George and Irina Schaeffer Center for the Study of Genocide, Human Rights, and Conflict Prevention and the Center for Critical Democracy at The American University of Paris welcome papers that analyze the origins of violence in new innovative directions and studies of state responses to violence and of the strengths and limits of strategies based on education, dialogue, truth and reconciliation, deradicalization and so forth. We are also interested in historical-comparative work situating current political violence across space and time, critical political philosophical investigations of state legitimacy, as well as rightful and unrightful resistance. We welcome contributions in all fields, including psychology, political science, anthropology, sociology, history, law, criminology, literature, and communications as well as approaches promoting creative responses to the theme of the conference.

Suggested Topics

Sources of violence:

- Determinants (personal, community, structural) in the violent turn of individuals, groups, and institutions

- Differentiating drivers of violent turns: political, socio-economic, religious, or psychological
- Are these factors and drivers really discernable and can they be disentangled?
- Identity, othering and violence

Spectrum of socio-political violence

- Symbolic and material violence
- Gendered and racialized violence
- Violence against things, violence against people
- State and non-state violence
- Colonial and anti-colonial violence
- Individual and mass violence

Institutions and violence

- Effects of violence on the rule of law, democratic stability, and human rights
- The role of the law and government institutions in reducing, maintaining, or fueling political violence
- States of exception and state violence
- Prevention, reeducation

Philosophical Investigations

- State legitimacy and legitimacy of non-state violence
- Pacifism, civil disobedience and violent direct action
- Political obedience, systemic injustices, and the right to resist

The conference languages are English and French. Proposals in English or French must include an abstract of no more than 400 words and a short narrative cv of no more than 250 words. Please send all materials to violentturnsconference@aup.edu by December 15th, 2022. We will evaluate the submissions and notify those we have selected by January 31, 2023.

Limited funds for travel and accommodation are available for presenters in need. If you wish to apply for a grant, please include a one paragraph statement requesting financial support.

Organizing and scientific committee:

Philip Golub (AUP), Constance Pâris de Bollardière (AUP), Stephen Sawyer (AUP), Brian Schiff (AUP), Sharon Weill (AUP), Roman Zinigrad (AUP)

