

## "...a True Chameleon."

Transformation, Persistence and Emergence of Military Force and Violence

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VENUE: Dresden, Hotel mightyTwice & Bundeswehr Military History Museum

TIME: 12.–14. September 2023

War resembles a “true chameleon”. Carl von Clausewitz, the Prussian general and philosopher of war, uses this analogy in his work ‘On War’. This reference to the mutability of military force and violence relates to current research trends: increasingly scholars are examining temporalities and processes of violence. Therefore, the 62. International Conference on Military History explores these temporalities of military violence – in war as well as in peace, but also in the transitions in between. In this way, the Center for Military History and Social Sciences of the German Armed Forces offers an interdisciplinary forum for discussing current research.

The temporalities of violence can be grasped by employing three temporal patterns, which by themselves or in combination can stimulate concrete questions. Together, these patterns point to the relations and constellations within the framework of a topology of (military) violence.

- The temporal pattern *transformation* facilitates focusing on changes, disruptions, interruptions, and reproductions of various forms and phenomena of military force and violence. Thus transitions and interstices, but also changes in contexts caused by military violence, are increasingly the focus for analysis.
- This is contrasted with *persistence* as a second temporal pattern. It refers to continuity, permanence, and (ostensibly) long-living cultures of military force and violence. Persistence also points to rediscovery, temporal references, and the integration of existing elements into new contexts.
- This additionally indicates *emergence* as a third temporal pattern. This pattern focuses on the ‘the new’, the (re)materialization and the corresponding hybrids and assemblies between different forms, types, and elements of military violence, and not to forget between military and non-military violence.

These temporal patterns make three perspectives possible. A first perspective looks at change, continuities, and materialization of violence and use of force. A second questions the effects that result from military force violence. A third perspective could focus on the impact of context on the temporal constitution of military violence and the use of force.

To map relations for the investigation of the temporal constitution of force and violence sufficiently, a broad, scalable understanding of military violence is necessary as a point of reference: for example, if the use of force goes beyond the body and the physical, to the violation of integrity in a broad sense (e.g., psyche, cyber, critical infrastructures...); when different forms of practicing violence are analyzed up to representations and imaginations of how to use violence and force; when illegitimate violence, escalation, and massacres but also fluid gray zones, legitimate use of force, and de-escalation, are equally of interest.

This openness can also apply to the concept of the military. The concept extends beyond the regular armed forces of a state or state like formation. Thus, a broad set of actors appears on the research agenda, which extends from armed forces to other state-organized armed groups, to paramilitaries, mercenaries, contractors, private military companies, 'rebel' organizations, and the arms industry and hence opens to the fields of politics, economy, and society.

The openness of the terms violence/force and military, of course, does not exclude contributions with a 'classical' focus on physical violence in the regular armed forces in the concrete situation of its application (i.e. combat). It does, however, broaden the field for further questions.

The following selection of topics coalesce thusly:

- Warfare, operations, combat: What are concrete forms of military violence in the first place, and how do they change (e.g., nuclear warfare) or reproduce themselves before, during, and after its use? What happens in the transition between different events or phases of war and combat? What intrinsic forms of times are evident in different combat operations such as attacks, and sieges, but also in (military) regimes of occupation?
- Time: Which micro and macro temporalities constitute forms of violence? How does imagined use of force (doctrines, images of war) translate via planning (operation plans) into concrete action (combat, fighting)? How can the transition phase from war to peace and from peace to war be analyzed? What paths does violence take when combat operations (officially) end? What zones of nonviolence might exist during an armed conflict, and what are their characteristics? However, where can we also find zones of war in peace?
- Knowledge, experience, memory, media: What role does knowledge of violence and of past experiences of violence play in the military and in societies? How do they change over time? What could be said about commemoration, what about the musealization of military violence? Are there possibly established 'scripts' that military violence follows? How is the temporality of military violence mediated and represented? What could be said about narratives intended to produce meaning?
- Environment, space, geographies: What effect does military violence have on the environment, and what effect does the environment have on violence? Which perspectives arise from the view on the human treatment of nature, animals and their use and abuse in the context of war, and violence? What forms of violence exist in specific spaces and places in (combat zone, rear areas, 'homefront' or in trenches, barracks, POW camps...)? What happens when people cross these zones (military personnel, civilians, prisoners of war...)? How and with what consequences are distant spaces of violence – for instance, in and between empires – interconnected? What geographies of military violence emerge in this way?
- Organization, institution, actors: How does the military or other groups organize the use of force? What is the role of formal and informal violence within the organization – even in connection with other forms of the use of force? What different cultures and spaces of violence exist in the military? How is all of this linked to society and the sphere of civilian life?
- Body, mind: How does violence indirectly and directly inscribe (formation, destruction, injury, etc.) into the combatant's (and other's ) body? What does military violence do to people – physically as well as psychologically – as perpetrator, victim or bystander? What is the role of civilian, soldierly, and other modes of identity (intersectionality)? How does visible and invisible violence relate to each other?
- Sex, gender: What is the significance of gender images and gender relations, as well as their boundaries and interstices, for the manifestations and changes in the use of military force and violence? What is the role of sexual violence and gender-specific violence?
- Materiality, technology: How is violence manifested in the material culture of war and the military? What is the role of technology regarding the temporalities of war, violence, and force?

What are the temporalities of weapons and weapons systems (from planning to development, deployment, impact, repair, conversion, and musealization)? How does the temporality of violence inscribe itself in concrete objects?

Beyond these suggestions, any topic related to the concept is welcome. The ITMG utilizes primarily historical approaches but welcomes interdisciplinarity. All academics participating in the study of violence are warmly invited to participate. The concept intends to span epochs, extends to the immediate present and is open to all analysis of all regions of the globe.

For a contribution, please note:

- Paper proposals should not exceed 500 words. The proposal should include your name, institutional affiliation, and contact address (email). Please also include a short academic CV (max. 1 page).
- If you would like to organize a full panel (max. three presentations, total length 2 hours), please provide a brief outline of the panel and presentation ideas for all contributors under the guidelines mentioned above.
- We are also planning a 'Knowledge/World Café' (info <https://theworldcafe.com/tools-store/hosting-tool-kit/>). If you are interested, please contact us with a proposal for the conference topic and elaborate on your idea under the guidelines mentioned earlier. You are welcome to apply as a team – consisting of two hosts.

The deadline for submissions is **April 15, 2023**. To submit proposals and for more information about the event, please contact us at our email address [ZMSBwITMG@bundeswehr.org](mailto:ZMSBwITMG@bundeswehr.org). A publication of the conference's results will be considered. Conference languages are German and English.

We are looking forward to your ideas!