



*Francisco de Goya y Lucientes, "The 3rd of May 1808 in Madrid, or "The Executions"", 1814, Prado Museum, Madrid*

Monday 10 June 2024 - Tuesday 11 June 2024

≥ Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies,  
Maison de la Paix, Chemin Eugène-Rigot 2, 1202, Genève

## PROGRAMME

# History of Political Violence and Radicalism Challenges and Opportunities for an Epistemic Community



Monday 10 June 2024

| 10:00 – 10:30 | **Room S7- Welcome and Opening Remarks**

| 10:30 – 11:30 | **KEYNOTE LECTURE**

Timothy Wilson, *University of St Andrews, Scotland*

> Title: 'A Research Agenda in Search of Researchers? Historians and Political Violence and Radicalism'

| 11:30 – 12:00 | **Coffee Break**

| 12:00 – 13:30 | **Room S7 – SESSION I: Relationship with Other Disciplines**

- > 9/11 boosted a broad academic interest in political violence. But it also channelled expertise, funding, and career opportunities towards the field of International Relations. Similarly, driven by the growing interest in 'radicalisation', Sociology, Psychology and Anthropology established themselves as legitimate sub-disciplines of the growing fields of Political Violence and Radicalism. By contrast, historians have been late to this party. Dedicated academic research centres typically find their institutional homes in Political Science or International Relations departments. Historically grounded works on political violence are numerically risible in the prominent journals: *Terrorism and Political Violence*, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* and *Perspectives on Terrorism*. Should, then, historians carve out an independent research space? If so, why has this not happened before now? And how should relationships with other disciplines develop in an academic world increasingly calling for interdisciplinarity?

| 13:30 – 15:00 | **Lunch**

| 15:00 – 16:30 | **Room S7 – SESSION II: Historiographies**

- > Historiographies are the bricks with which historians build up their imagination. Each research project usually deals with a single historiographical tradition, and for good reasons too. Despite the evident benefits, this approach risks to blind us over important questions. What can radicalism in modern history teach us about previous centuries' violence? How did political violence become 'modern'? And are we living in a post-modern phase of extremism? Finally, how should we conceptualise mobile violence that seems to spill over frontiers, and which jumps from region to region? Is there a difference between a global and an international history of violence/radicalism (or not)? Does terrorism look different from a Cold War perspective or in a post-Colonial one? How should a 'new' historical epistemology of violence incorporate gendered violence or complex phenomena such as foreign fighting.

| 16:30-17:00 | **Coffee Break**

| 17:00-18:30 | **Room S7 – SESSION III: Compartmentalisation**

- > In the wake of 9/11, much of the research on political violence and radicalism regrouped under the theme of Terrorism and Radicalisation. This transition insulated different communities of historians of violence/radicalism. Such an epistemological compartmentalisation does not match reality on ground, though. Different forms of political violence are not hermetically separated but co-exist. Gendered violence, ethnic cleansing, and terrorism (amidst other phenomena) may all co-exist and be mutually influential. Would it be suitable to connect experts on different forms of violence/radicalism? Or do we risk overstressing the topic with negative effects on the whole production of knowledge? Would, say, a historian of Genocide benefit from a more systemic interaction with a fellow researcher working on gendered violence? Or are they too different to be studied together usefully?

Tuesday 11 June 2024

|09:30 – 11:00| **Room S7 – SESSION IV: Methodologies and Sources**

- > The history of political violence and radicalism as a research theme lie in a sort of limbo. One side, historians of political violence have tended to shy away from broader methodological debates. On the other, historians not engaging with political violence mostly avoid asking themselves what the potential value of using a focus on violence for their own analyses might be. Why? Is this 'simply' a matter of prioritisation? Or are there systemic mechanisms in the politics of Academia leading to this output? Maybe the answer relates to the sources employed. Historians of extremist groups might face more challenges to retrieve and access granular sources due to the sensitivity of the topic (or, indeed, out of concern for their own security). Additionally, researching traumatic and tragic events questions the crucial interplay between history and memory. This is a central debate in Holocaust and Genocide studies, but which has only partially permeated other thematically linked research fields. Is, for instance, oral history applicable to study radical networks? If so, how should we negotiate the ethical requirements? Should we tailor specific courses for young researchers dealing with this topic?

|11:00 – 11:30| **Coffee Break**

|11:30 – 13:00| **Room S7 - SESSION V: The Future of Past Political Violence**

- > The lack of a (self)-conscious scientific community brings up numerous dilemmas for young scholars. The turn to the 'Global' is in full swing and words as 'transnational' or 'international' normally precede key terms such as of 'violence' and 'radicalism'. Conventionally, History area studies' departments have for long been safe houses for careers. But they, too, are increasingly pressured by new methodologies as global/international/transnational histories. Geography-prone research units risks not guaranteeing natural grounds for young researchers (or at least they call the latter to reinvent the ways they think their 'area' of expertise). Likewise, the widespread absence of dedicated historical research centres blurs the pathways further. The conundrum is then how to imagine an academic career without well-worn pathways and in the face of ferocious competition from scholars trained in other disciplines. Where can a young scholar sharpen their teeth without abdicating to their research's vocations? Do scientific journals allow for that? Is better to reinvent his/her career in Political Science Departments or to bet on the Area Studies' model? Is there a third way, potentially? How can we guarantee and improve future generations' research conditions in the field, if we can at all?

|13:00 – 14:30| **Lunch**

|14:30 – 15:30| **Room S7 -Conclusion**

- > Where do we go from here? Or are we satisfied with the existing structure? Do we feel the need to create a cohesive epistemic community of historians? And if so, which elements should we drop, and which ones should we emphasise. These questions will be the core part of this concluding session with the hope to craft an agenda of actions as concrete as possible.

## List of Participants

- Timothy Wilson, University of St Andrews, Scotland
- Kateřina Králová, Charles University of Prague, Czech Republic
- Aidan Russell, Geneva Graduate Institute, Switzerland
- Stuart Carroll, University of York, UK
- Caoimhe Nic Dhaibheid, University of Sheffield, UK
- Iva Vukušić, University of Utrecht, the Netherlands
- Bernhard Blumenau, University of St Andrews, Scotland
- Nivedita Joon, Geneva Graduate Institute, Switzerland
- Valentine Lomellini, University of Padova, Italy
- Steve Hewitt, University of Birmingham, UK
- Can Haldenbilen, University of Basel, Switzerland,
- Faisal Devji, University of Oxford, UK
- Kasper Brasken, University of Helsinki, Finland
- Michele Benazzo, Geneva Graduate Institute, Switzerland