

Exploring Liminal Spaces in International Politics and International Law: Critical Perspectives on Conflict and Transition

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Call for Papers

The workshop explores the growing complexity of politics, conflicts and governance through the lens of liminality - the ambiguous, transitional spaces where political and legal boundaries blur. Borrowed from anthropology, liminality describes an "in-between" state where actors move between distinct orders. In international politics and law, liminal spaces arise in conflict zones, transitional states or occupied territories where sovereignty and legal norms are contested or evolving. This workshop provides a comprehensive exploration of the interconnected concepts of conflict and transition, examining their doctrinal, theoretical, and practical dimensions. Conflict will be analysed as a clash of theoretical frameworks, a confrontation between political and legal systems and as warfare itself. Similarly, transition will be addressed as a shift in theoretical paradigms, a transformation of legal frameworks and the movement from war to post-conflict. By integrating these perspectives, the workshop examines how conflict and transition reveal shifting dynamics in governance, political orders, and legal structures.

As blurred boundaries increasingly define war, peace, and sovereignty, traditional IR theories centred on state sovereignty within an anarchical system often fall short. Conflicts like Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Gaza war, and challenges such as cyberwarfare and climate displacement expose the inadequacy of conventional frameworks in addressing these complexities. Moreover, supranational entities such as the European Union and the complex interplay between national identity and sovereignty further disrupt state-centric paradigms, underscoring the need for a critical re-examination of theories that integrate both theoretical and practical perspectives on governance in transitional and contested spaces.

The workshop adopts an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on political science, international relations, law, anthropology, and history to examine how actors in liminal spaces navigate ambiguity, negotiate authority, and engage in governance. It critically explores the intersection of politics, law, and sociopolitical structures in transitional zones. Papers are invited to address the political, legal, and normative dynamics of liminal spaces. Contributors are encouraged to address a range of questions and themes, including but not limited to: How are authority, governance, and legitimacy constructed in such spaces? What are the implications of contested sovereignty and transitional legal frameworks? How do historical legacies and socio-political structures shape these "in-between" zones? Submissions focusing on marginalised perspectives, case studies on conflict zones, occupied territories, and transitional justice are especially welcome. This inquiry is not merely conceptual; it challenges dominant paradigms, urging fresh perspectives on conflict, transition, and governance while critically re-evaluating the frameworks shaping the international order.