

Call for Papers
Concepts in IR: Approaches, Histories and Methods
EWIS 2026 (Izmir University of Economics)

Concepts have moved from a marginal concern to a central topic in International Relations (IR) theory. While IR has long relied on key concepts (e.g., security, sovereignty, power, order), recent scholarship increasingly treats concepts as explicit analytical objects: historically situated, socially embedded, and contested formations that structure political possibilities. This workshop brings together scholars interested in **historical conceptual analysis** broadly conceived, and invites contributions that explore how concepts emerge, change, and organize political life in and beyond IR.

The workshop is motivated by two observations. First, conceptual work in IR has drawn productively on Koselleck, Skinner, and Foucault, yet these approaches represent only part of a wider landscape of methods for studying conceptual transformation, contestation, and world-making. Second, conceptual analysis holds promise for illuminating intersubjective order in IR, but it also risks reifying categories if differences between social theories and methodologies are ignored. We therefore aim to broaden the analytical horizon and foster dialogue across traditions concerned with conceptual change, conceptual struggle, and conceptual performativity.

We welcome papers that engage one or more of the following guiding questions:

1. Concept formation: How do new concepts form in response to novel social and political problems, and what forms of knowledge, imagination, and political action do they make possible?
2. Contestation and power: How do conceptual struggles unfold, and which social forces, exclusions, and power relations stabilize particular meanings while rendering others invisible?
3. Performativity: What effects follow from using a concept - how do concepts, once activated, reshape the world they purport to describe?

Possible themes include (but are not limited to): methodological innovations for tracing conceptual change; conceptual contestation around sovereignty, security, risk, order, empire, and legitimacy; concepts in and of capitalism, finance, and geo-economic rivalry; climate politics and the transformation of environmental concepts; concepts linked to technology, infrastructures, and digital governance; and postcolonial/decolonial struggles over political and economic vocabularies. Submissions may be theoretical, methodological, or empirically grounded, but should use conceptual analysis to generate insight relevant to broader IR debates.

The workshop format will prioritize intensive discussion. Participants will be expected to circulate short papers in advance and to engage closely with each other's work. We particularly encourage submissions from early-career researchers and from scholars working across different methodological and theoretical traditions.

Submission details follow the EWIS 2026 instructions and application system (see the EWIS 2026 call). Please prepare an abstract (max. 300 words) and a short bio, clearly indicating how your paper speaks to the workshop's aims and questions.

Convenors

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