

Memory in World Politics: Forms, Claims, and Mediating Structures

Call for Papers, 13th European Workshops in International Studies, Izmir, 1-3 July 2026

Convenors

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The past has become an increasingly active site of political labor in global politics. To be sure, states and nations have long sought to mobilize memory, heritage, and civilizational repertoires in the dialectical articulation of identity and difference, and to translate these articulations into rhetorics, interests, and shared strategic-political visions. Recent scholarship has made sense of these trends by marrying IR concepts with those of memory and heritage, such as ‘mnemonic soft power’ (Ohnesorge and Owen 2023), ‘heritage diplomacy’ (Winter 2015), mnemonic and/or ontological security (Mälksoo 2015, Kinvall and Mitzen 2020), the ‘history-memory’ problem (e.g., Zerubavel 1995, Zehfuss 2007, Koyama 2018 & 2023, Subotic 2019, Zarakol 2010), trauma (Bell 2010, Fierke 2013, Hutchison 2016, Edkins 2003) and broader questions of time, narrative, and temporality (Hom 2020, Hutchings 2008, Babik 2019, Onuf 2019). This expanding literature raises a host of challenging questions. How do these practices ‘travel’ contextually and temporally? What kinds of political work do they perform, and how do these change when mobilized by different actors? What modes of reflexivity are appropriate to their study?

This workshop seeks to examine the broader terrain in which memory and heritage shape political and cultural life, and the contestations to which they give rise. We are interested, as well, in exploring how memory appears across a range of mediating structures and conventions, which serve as sites for the production of identity and belonging. These may include narrative forms; material remains and their exhibition; documentary or embodied archives; vernacular, academic, and official histories; new visual and plastic forms; and their mediation through a range of conceptual and aesthetic registers. Such intersections also reveal the limitations of attempts to stabilize certain receptions of the past, including how communities navigate competing claims to them – whether popular or scholarly – and how these receptions are institutionalized, suppressed, or fall into desuetude. In light of the EWIS 2026 theme, the workshop will consider how engagements with the past could be driven by insecurity and fear even as they give rise to new uncertainties and anxieties.

Possible contributions to this workshop might address a range of questions and themes, including but not limited to the following:

- How are various modes of memory mobilized to articulate civilizational, cultural, or historical claims?
- What forms of tensions and uncertainty emerge when the past becomes a site of political engagement?
- How do a range of imperial pasts and their afterlives structure the politics of memory?
- What forms of reflexivity are necessary or apposite when examining heritage and memory?
- What can be learned from new repertoires of post-imperial, national, or colonial nostalgia, whether for the ‘British World’, ‘Ottomania,’ greater Russia, or the Habsburgs; or for sites of resistance to them (Bandung, pan-Africanism, pan-Arabism, the ‘authoritarian international,’ etc.)
- The work of exiled or diasporic communities, vernaculars, and intellectual traditions: the Black Atlantic, the *Huguenots*, ‘Yiddishland.’
- Memorialization and commemoration practices, including counter-memorial projects (*Stolpersteine*, negative-form memorials, public history, *alltagsgeschichte*), their possibilities and limitations, and their associated literary, architectural, and similar forms.
- Expert fields, discourses, and vocabularies as sites for the preservation and transmission of memory.

The convenors welcome submissions and/or inquiries from across the wide spectrum of global studies, from political science and international relations to history, anthropology, sociology, comparative literature, archival science, etc.