



Leibniz  
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# Dealing with Violence

## Resolving Conflicts in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean

### Final report

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## Summary in English

Dealing with violence as part of social crises has been a constant feature in African, Latin American and Caribbean societies since the beginning of European expansion in the late 15th century. Violence has appeared in different forms such as conquest and colonisation, the slave trade and slavery, repression in authoritarian political systems, civil wars, ethnic violence, "femicidios" (the murdering of women due to their gender) and organized crime. In spite (or because) of these challenges, Latin American, Caribbean and African societies have repeatedly come up with strategies for managing conflicts and ending processes of violence. Efforts to settle civil wars and internal armed conflicts have generated a variety of conflict resolution strategies and practices.

Recent peace and conflict research has taken an interdisciplinary approach: History, anthropology and sociology primarily address issues of continuity and change and the social, cultural, economic and political origins of both, violence and the settlement of conflicts. Film, literature and cultural studies engage with the collective memory of violence as well as the processes of remembering and forgetting in the context of specific forms, such as trauma narratives. Literary, cinematic, and other narratives offer valuable insights into the social origins as well as consequences of violent processes.

This conference dealt with various forms, origins, outcomes and strategies for the settlement of violent processes occurring in African, Latin American and Caribbean societies. Scholars and practitioners on both sides of the Atlantic came together to discuss and compare the similarities and differences of various violence and peace processes.

Researchers and professionals from business and administration as well as NGOs with a link to violence and conflict management from all fields (e.g. history, political science, cultural studies) were welcome to attend the symposium.

The international conference "Dealing with Violence – Resolving Conflicts in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean" consisted of 9 panels (two of which took place online), 2 keynote addresses, and a public round table on gender and violence.

40 participants coming from Argentina, Austria, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Kenya, Lesotho, Mexico, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Peru, South Africa, the UK and the U.S. presented and discussed their research in person and online.

The conference was accompanied by the exhibition "Art of Countering Violent Extremism in Kenya" authored by Halkano Abdi Wario and Absolom K. Aswani (curator).

## Zusammenfassung in deutscher Sprache

Der Umgang mit Gewalt als Teil sozialer Krisen ist ein konstantes Merkmal der afrikanischen, lateinamerikanischen und karibischen Gesellschaften seit Beginn der europäischen Expansion im späten 15. Jahrhundert. Gewalt trat in verschiedenen Formen auf: Eroberung und Kolonisierung, Sklavenhandel und Sklaverei, Unterdrückung in autoritären politischen Systemen, Bürgerkriege, ethnische Gewalt, "Femicidios" (die Ermordung von Frauen aufgrund ihres Geschlechts) und organisierte Kriminalität. Trotz (oder gerade wegen) dieser Herausforderungen haben die Gesellschaften Lateinamerikas, der Karibik und Afrikas immer wieder Strategien zur Konfliktbewältigung und Beendigung von Gewaltprozessen entwickelt. Die Bemühungen um die Beilegung von Bürgerkriegen und internen bewaffneten Konflikten haben eine Vielzahl von Konfliktlösungsstrategien und -praktiken hervorgebracht.

Die neuere Friedens- und Konfliktforschung hat einen interdisziplinären Ansatz gewählt: Geschichte, Anthropologie und Soziologie befassen sich vor allem mit Fragen der Kontinuität und des Wandels sowie mit den sozialen, kulturellen, wirtschaftlichen und politischen Ursprüngen von Gewalt und der Beilegung von Konflikten. Die Film-, Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaften befassen sich mit dem kollektiven Gedächtnis der Gewalt sowie mit den Prozessen des Erinnerns und Vergessens im Kontext spezifischer Formen, wie z. B. Trauma-Erzählungen. Literarische, filmische und andere Narrative bieten wertvolle Einblicke in die sozialen Ursprünge und Folgen von Gewaltprozessen. Die Konferenz befasste sich mit verschiedenen Formen, Ursprüngen, Ergebnissen und Strategien für die Beilegung von Gewaltprozessen in afrikanischen, lateinamerikanischen und karibischen Gesellschaften. Wissenschaftler\*innen und Praktiker\*innen von beiden Seiten des Atlantiks kamen zusammen, um die Ähnlichkeiten und Unterschiede verschiedener Gewalt- und Friedensprozesse zu diskutieren und zu vergleichen.

Wissenschaftler\*innen und Fachleute aus Wirtschaft und Verwaltung sowie NRO mit Bezug zu Gewalt und Konfliktmanagement aus allen Bereichen waren zur Teilnahme an dem Symposium eingeladen. Dieses bestand aus 9 Panels (zwei davon fanden online statt), 2 Keynotes und einem öffentlichen round table zu Geschlecht und Gewalt. 40 Teilnehmer\*innen aus Argentinien, Österreich, Tschad, Chile, Kolumbien, Kongo, Costa Rica, Äthiopien, Frankreich, Deutschland, Kenia, Lesotho, Mexiko, den Niederlanden, Nigeria, Peru, Südafrika, dem Vereinigten Königreich und den U.S.A. stellten ihre Forschungsergebnisse persönlich und online vor und zur Diskussion. Die Konferenz wurde von der Ausstellung "Art of Countering Violent Extremism in Kenya" begleitet, die von Halkano Abdi Wario und Absalom K. Aswani (Kurator) zusammengestellt wurde.

## Scientific results

After the welcome addresses by VOLKER EPPING (President of Leibniz University Hannover), ADELHEID WESSLER (Volkswagen Foundation), and CHRISTINE HATZKY (Speaker of the CEAGS, Leibniz University Hanover) MARÍA SOCORRO TABUENCA CÓRDOBA (University of Texas, El Paso, USA) opened the Symposium with the first keynote “*Re-positioning the U.S.-Mexico Border: Images and Discourses of Violence and Perhaps Peace*”. As cultural studies scholar she discussed the necessity to acknowledge not only the *real*, but also the *symbolic* aspects of border-related violence. She argued that borders can be considered as entities that are independent of the nation state, but nevertheless contain the potential to represent, (re-)produce and spread discriminatory discourses, and showed the necessity of a discourse analysis to decode the use of normative language surrounding border conflicts.

The first panel, “*Lynching and Vigilantism in Transregional Perspective*”, was moderated by HINNERK ONKEN (Leibniz University Hanover) and aimed for an interdisciplinary perspective on lynching violence in order to identify similarities and particularities of this practice, considering the specific cultural and historical contexts in Africa, in the Americas, and in a global perspective. NICHOLAS RUSH SMITH (Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership, The City College of New York, USA) opened the section with a lecture on “*Rights in Translation: Vigilantism and the Meaning of Institutional Effectiveness and Failure in South Africa*”. He focused on the question of why vigilante violence occurs after cases of arrest and whether vigilantes respond to police failure. MICHAEL PFEIFFER (John Jay College of Criminal Justice, History Department, New York, USA) continued this discussion with his presentation on “*American Lynchings in Global Context*”. He presented the social boundaries of this collective practice and asked whether “rough justice” was an adequate paraphrase for this form of execution. He called into question the view that it is possible to perform and establish collectivity as well as community through the act of lynching. In her comment, TESSA DIPHOORN (Utrecht University, The Netherlands) followed PFEIFFER’S train of thought. She also triggered a controversial discussion on whether lynching could be regarded as a mechanism of speaking out or not. DIPHOORN put an emphasis on questions of power, injustice, and exclusion in the context of lynching: when dominant groups are the ones who are performing the lynching, this has to be considered in the framing of the discourse around this practice.

The second panel, “*Confronting Terrorist Violence and Resource Injustice: Local Communities and Vigilance Committees as Cases in Point*”, was moderated by WOLFGANG GABBERT and BRIGITTE REINWALD (both Leibniz University of Hanover, Germany). The

main focus of this section was on conflict management processes that take place on levels beneath the nation state. Due to the fact that the state in Latin America and Africa is often seen as an oppressor and is therefore in a crisis of legitimacy, the recognition of local mechanisms of self-government as well as conflict resolution from below have gained more importance. KRISTINA DIETZ (University of Vienna, Austria) opened this panel with a lecture on the topic “*Violence against Activists: Conflicts over Resources in Colombia in Times of Peace*”. She underlined the fact that social activists are continually being displaced, threatened and killed in spite of the (symbolic) peace agreement in Colombia from 2016. She expanded the perspectives on this topic by asking for the class, gender, and racial dimensions of the violence (still) perpetrated against social activists in Colombia. CHUKWUMA UME (Justus-Liebig-University Gießen, Germany) presented on “*Assessing the Determinants and Dynamics for Conflict Resolution and Peaceful Coexistence among Farmers and Pastoralists: Political Ecology Approach*”. He pointed out that the Savannah Region is affected the most by the conflict with Boko Haram. UME chose a differentiated approach to identify the various drivers of the conflict instead of only focusing on the predominantly mentioned group of actors, Boko Haram, like the Nigerian state does. In addition, UWE took economic aspects and climate variables into consideration and thereby expanded the methodological approach towards this topic. Thereafter, REMADJI HOINATHY (Centre for Research in Anthropology and Human Sciences, N’Djaména, Chad) spoke about “*Community Participation in Producing Security: Vigilance Committees and the Fight Against Boko Haram*”. He centered his presentation around the exclusivity of the state, the legitimacy regarding questions of regulation, security, and control as well as the necessity of local defense groups. To sum up these understandings of the conflict, GEMMA VAN DER HAAR (University of Wageningen, The Netherlands) stated that the use of physical violence is serving different purposes. She distinguished between violence as a means of enforcing interests and violence as a means of security building. VAN DER HAAR argued that it is necessary to take these different purposes and their entanglements into consideration. Such conceptions of violence could be regarded as a social construct.

The third section “*Short presentations: Political Violence – Political Solutions?*”, moderated by MATHIAS BÖS (Leibniz University Hanover) aimed to create a space for young researchers to present their projects. NIKOLAS KOULOGLOU (University Sorbonne Paris Nord, France) gave insights into “*The New Typology of ‘Gray Areas’ in Mexico and Colombia and Beyond: Challenging State Dominance*”, discussing whether it is possible to find peace within existing structures of organized crime. JOAQUIN ZAJAC (Gino Germani Investigation Institute, University of Buenos Aires, Argentina) presented on “*Pacifying Neighborhoods, Consolidating Borders: The Presence of the Argentine National Gendarmerie and its Impact in the Southern Area of Buenos Aires (2011-2019)*”, speaking about the different forms of

violence that are taking place in the socially vulnerable neighborhoods in the southern part of Buenos Aires. CAROLINA SÁNCHEZ (Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, USA) dealt with the question of "*How can Culture Contribute to Overcome Violence? A Comparative Reading from Contemporary Colombia and Mexico*". She focused on indigenous cosmological visions and neocolonial extractivism.

Section four, "*Visual Representations of Violence*", was moderated by ANJA BANDAU and HINNERK ONKEN (both Leibniz University Hanover). This panel aimed to contribute to the debate by analyzing how visual representations of violence (photographs, videos, social media, comics, and art) play an essential role in constructing violent spaces in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa. GABRIELA ZAMORANO (Colegio de Michoacán, Mexico) presented the talk "*Elusive Faces: Public Visual Displays / Erasures of Criminal Subjects in Contemporary Michoacán*". In her presentation she focused on the social construction of atmospheres of virtual violence in Mexican daily life through social media and virtual messaging, analyzing the forms of anonymity, identification, and social representation of the figure of the *narco*. MARIA EUGENIA ULFE of the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru presented the talk "*Staging Memory in New Devices and Repertoires in Postconflict Neoliberal Peru*", on narratives of violence in Peru from a visual anthropological perspective, focusing on the example of the "*Sendero Luminoso*" in Peru. ALICIA DECKER (Pennsylvania State University, USA) continued with the presentation "*The Pornography of Pain: Making Sense of African Violence in Graphic Novels of War*." She analyzed how some graphic novels generate discriminatory stereotypes, thereby reproducing colonial and postcolonial structures of violence. The following conversation with the artist FREDDY TSIMBA, a sculptor and visual artist from the Republic of Congo, on the above mentioned exhibition integrated a perspective from the arts into the conference. TSIMBA talked about his sculptural work, experiences, and personal reflections regarding the representation of violence in and through art, the materials he uses, and their symbolism as memory objects.

The roundtable that closed the second day of the conference focused on gender and violence, with CHRIS DOLAN (Makerere University Kampala Uganda), HENRI MYRTTINEN (Mauerpark Institut e.V. Berlin Germany), MONSERRAT SAGOT (Centro de Investigación en Estudios de la mujer, Universidad de Costa Rica), and MARÍA SOCORRO TABUENCA CÓRDOBA as discussants, moderated by SUSANNE BUCKLEY-ZISTEL (Philipps University Marburg, Germany). The speakers focused on the causes, effects, continuities, and transformations of specific forms of gender-based violence on the one hand and locally anchored concepts to address these dynamics of violence on the other. The discussion began with personal approaches to the complex of gender and violence. MYRTTINEN stated that all types of violence have a gendered component. SAGOT added the component of

power linked to violence. The discussants agreed that gender-based violence creates psychological but also economic and emotional effects on the victims. DOLAN pointed out that the discourse on gender corresponds to a neo-colonial phenomenon based on binary structures that are also reproduced in the discussion on gender and violence. SAGOT expanded on this idea by pointing out that colonial power reinforces hetero-normative structures and that much gender-based violence is exercised against those who do not fit into the binary system. According to SAGOT, this is due to the traditional construction of masculinity, which is associated with phenomena of control and domination.

The Africa-focused panel "*Religion as a Maker and Breaker of Violence: Scenarios and Dynamics of Religious Strife and Peacebuilding Strategies*", moderated by Brigitte Reinwald (Leibniz University Hannover) discussed the religious aspects of violent processes in urban environments, the religious instrumentalization of intra-societal conflicts over land resources as well as de-radicalization strategies for dealing with Salafism and Islamic extremism in conflicts in civil society. This section was opened by BRITTA FREDE (University of Bayreuth) with the presentation "*Who's Islam? Religion, Social Injustice and Conflictual Arguments in Contemporary Mauritania*". FREDE contextualized terrorism in Mauritania, pointing out the legitimization of Islamic violence used by references to the "Qur'an or the Hadith." This leads to conflicts over definitions of power about what is the true Islam, generating problems of religious legitimization. The section continued with the presentation "*Towards a Theory of Counter-Jihadism: Exploring Epistemologies of Knowledge of Religious Counter-Narratives in Africa*" by HALKANO ABDI WARIO (Egerton University). It started with a definition of "counter jihadism", pointing out that it is a type of counter-terrorism prevention focused on communities. He drew attention to how religious leaders could be seen as essential protagonists in countering violence. OBVIOUS KATSAURA (University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa) then presented on "*Redeeming the Iniquitous City: Religion, Ritual and Meditations of Violence in Johannesburg*". He explained the concept of the atmosphere of violence, which he explicitly linked to religious violence in urban spaces as a continuum between visible violence and invisible violence, such as structural and psychic violence. According to him, religion plays a fundamental role in these processes of violence since it exerts a new interpretation of violent acts. In his comment on the presentations, ABDOULAYE SOUNAYE (Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin, Germany) emphasized the importance of the relationship between religion and violence and the specific contexts where it develops. He suggested to discuss "community imaginaries" and their connection with concepts such as citizenship and communities under construction.

The sixth panel, "*Shirt Presentations: Remember Violence – Ignore Violence*", was moderated by MATHIAS BÖS (Leibniz University Hannover) and again dedicated to the

research of emerging scholars. NOMPUMELELO ZINHLE MANZINI (Pennsylvania State University, USA) in her doctoral thesis with the title “*An ‘Ignorance that is Active’: If #NotAllMen, then which #menaretrash? Understanding Violence Against Women in South Africa through the Lens of Epistemic Injustice and the Epistemologies of Ignorance*” concentrates on the concept of epistemic and discursive violence. In the frame of her presentation on “*Institutional and Family Memories in Dispute: The Negotiation of Images and Imaginaries about the ‘Victimizer’ around the Internal Armed Conflict in Peru*”, MERCEDES FIGUEROA (Free University Berlin, Germany) captured a perspective “from below” on the role of the military forces in Peru’s civil war. FIGUEROA worked with resources from the intimate sphere such as personal letters, including family narratives to approach the disputed perception of the perpetrators. FRANZISKA ENGLERT (University of Cologne, Germany) gave insights into her work on “*Transitional Justice, Telenovelas and Reconciliation in Colombia*” that focuses on (visual) storytelling concerning the internal armed conflict and the corresponding coping strategies in Colombia.

The second keynote consisted of DEREJE FEYISSA DORI’S (College of Law and Governance, Centre for Federal Studies, Addis Adaba University, Ethiopia) insights on the topic “*The Affordances and Limits of Ethnic Federalism in Dealing with Inter-Group Violence in Africa: The Ethiopian Experience*”. He gave an overview of global forms of federalism, specifically Western federalism, and how they handle ethnic diversity, democracy, and respect for human rights. In this context, the conditions of federalism in the West, the situation of minority groups, the development of their demands, and the structural conditions of Western societies were addressed and opened perspectives for analyzing multinational federations and their relevance for Africa, emphasizing forms of post-colonial state-building. Using the example of Ethiopia, he presented the process of building federalism and rights associated with ethnic communities.

To close the conference, in the seventh section “*Dealing with Violence – Resources and perspectives for a Transregional Research Agenda*”, the organizers of the event, ANJA BANDAU, WOLFGANG GABBERT, MATHIAS BOES, HINNERK ONKEN, BRIGITTE REINWALD and CHRISTINE HATZKY (all Leibniz University Hannover) wrapped up the main points of the conference’s discussions, the insights they gained, and the aspects that were identified for future research, among them questions of gender, the role of the state as well as the combination of local and global perspectives.

The in-person contributions of the conference were supplemented by two online panels moderated by WOLFGANG GABBERT, BRIGITTE REINWALD and MATHIAS BÖS (all Leibniz University Hanover). ELISA CRUZ RUEDA (Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas,



Mexico) started into the eighth section "*Local Communities, Ressource Exploitation and the State*" by holding a lecture on the topic "*Structural Reforms of the Energy Sector in Mexico: Indigenous Rights, Human Rights and the Project of the So-called Maya Train*". CRUZ RUEDA raised awareness for local challenges and consequences of an infrastructure project of this magnitude. JOSEPH MUJERE (National University of Lesotho, Maseru, Lesotho) spoke about "*Local Communities, Chinese Mining Companies, and the Dynamics of Artisanal and Small-Scale Chromite Mining in Mapanzure Communal Areas, Zimbabwe*". Like CRUZ RUEDA, MUJERE concentrated on local positions in order to sensitize for microlevel conflicts that go along with certain economic patterns. PHILIPP NAUCKE (Philipps-University Marburg, Germany) used his presentation "*Conflict Transformation despite (Para-)State Violence: Peasant Peacebuilding in Latin America (Colombia/Guatemala)*" to indicate that there are possibilities to change violent structures while simultaneously (still) being surrounded by those conditions.

ESTHER IKENEYE opened the ninth section "*The Many Facets of Violence: Highlights from Ongoing Research on Nigeria, South Africa, Cameroon and Colombia*" that was dedicated to young researcher's projects and moderated by MATHIAS BÖS (Leibniz University Hannover), by presenting her project on "*Rethinking Bias in Reproductive Health and Rights Protection for Women in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations in Nigeria: A Jurisprudential Analysis*". Her juridical approach to the necessity of protecting sexual rights in situations of upheaval complemented the historical and sociological perspectives on "conflict and gender". In her talk about "*Interventions of Faith Based Organizations in Adressing Violence against Women in Cape Town, South Africa*", FUNGAI CHIRONGOMA (University of Cape Town, South Africa) emphasized that religion works as an additional axis of oppression for women who are already affected by gender-based violence. CATHERINE AKURUT (Nelson Mandela University, Port Elizabeth, South Africa) in her speech on "*Conflict-related Sexual Violence against Males: Recognition by and Responses of Humanitarian Organizations in Africa*", discussed the societal obstacles that male victims face in the process of trauma counselling. ANGELA NAVARRETE CRUZ (University of Hohenheim, Germany) closed the online session with a lecture on the topic "*Agrarian Roots of the Colombian Armed Conflict and Peacebuilding Strategies in Rural Areas*". Since NAVARRETE CRUZ identified unequal land distribution as the central trigger for the civil war in Colombia, she appealed to take peacebuilding strategies into consideration that aim to eliminate the initial problem of land distribution in a sustainable way.

## Conclusion

Due to the Corona pandemic, the symposium could not take place in October 2020 as planned, but only in July 2022. Despite this major postponement and organizational uncertainties (e.g. regarding regulations on entry from abroad, travel permits, etc.), the vast majority of the originally requested participants kept their commitments and ultimately also participated in the event. In some cases, cancellations by individual speakers or commentators could be compensated for by other colleagues. There was no qualitative difference here, but only slight shifts in content within the panels concerned. This had hardly any impact on the overall conception of the conference - and none negative. Further cancellations could be avoided by choosing hybrid solutions and by allowing individual online presentations within the framework of the panels that took place in July in presence. Furthermore, two panels had already been held entirely online a few weeks earlier. Only for the panel on slavery, which was originally listed in the application and was to be moderated by Ulrike Schmieder (Leibniz University Hannover), no solution could be found. It was therefore omitted without replacement.

However, the overall gain in knowledge through the interdisciplinary and international collaboration was not impaired by this. Further perspectives were developed in the discussion and in the exchange among each other. Just like the concrete sustainable effects of the project, this cannot yet be measured exactly, e.g. in appointments or project applications and approvals. What is certain is that there were numerous impulses for follow-up projects, future joint research projects and also institutional collaborations, for example between Leibniz University Hannover and Pennsylvania State University.

On the other hand, the contribution of the symposium to the special goals of the funding initiative is obvious. The audience and speakers were international; in addition to numerous speakers from Germany and other European countries, almost half came from countries in the Global South or have their roots there. This goes even for the in-person part of the conference. 50% of the participants are women. Seven young and emerging scholars presented their research projects in person, five online.

The publicity of the conference has been very successful: the attendance on site was also very high due to the publicity measures (online and analog) as well as the accompanying university events (workshop of the CEAGS, involvement of the students of the Master Atlantic Studies in History, Society and Culture). The same applies to the online panels, which were followed live by more than a hundred users.

The videos of the online panels as well as the audio recordings of the other panels are permanently available on the CEAGS website. Thus, the research data and results are not only secured, but are also permanently available to the public worldwide. In addition, a conference report will be published at H-Soz-Kult, the most important online portal for historical scholarship in Germany.

The circumstances of the Corona pandemic thus naturally had an inhibiting effect on the one hand because of the postponement of the date and the uncertainty regarding the modalities. However, due to the always very good, close cooperation between the organizers on the part of Leibniz University Hannover and on the part of the Volkswagen foundation, the beneficial aspects of the cooperation clearly outweigh the negative ones: especially the hybrid format of the event represents a great added value for the sustainable use. And even the personnel changes were in no way a disadvantage for the symposium.

As a conclusion, the integration of scientific research, the experiences of practitioners and artistic approaches (e.g. in the exhibition) to the topic of "Dealing with Violence" must once again be emphasized as particularly beneficial at this point.