

Class 1: Political Violence in Germany

Introduction and types of political violence

Dr. Michael C. Zeller

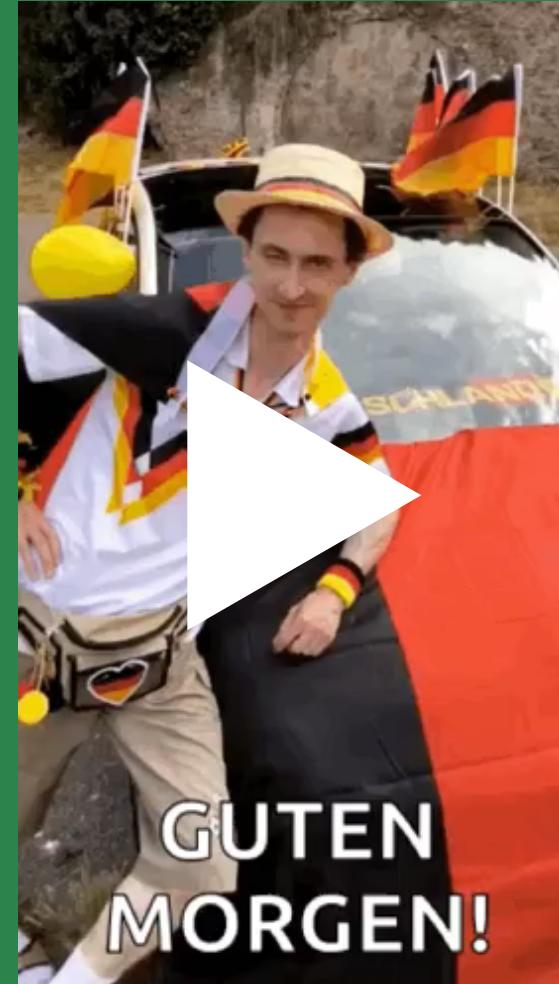
Agenda for the day

- Poll: course introduction
- Course Introduction
- Quick intro to concepts
- Onto our topic: political violence (PV)
- Any questions, concerns, feedback for this class?

Poll: course introduction

Course Introduction

- What is ‘political violence’?
- How this course relates to Prof. Bolleyer’s lecture
- Course structure
- Learning aims
- Notes of caution
- Course assessment
- Office hours and communication
- course website
- Q & A and student introductions



Can you understand me?

- Lots of different languages represented in the room → but please don't be shy: feel empowered to participate, even if you are not so confident in your English skills
 - I will avoid 'calling on' people to contribute

Read the syllabus!

- We have a shiny new (developing) website for the course
 - <https://michaelzeller.de/course-pv/>
- Before our next meeting, your task is to peruse the website
 - especially the **Syllabus** and **Readings** pages.

Defining political violence

- Broadly: *the use of force by a person or group with a political motivation/purpose*
- it includes (but is certainly not limited to) assault, robbery, rioting, insurgency, assassination, terrorism, rebellion, guerrilla warfare and civil war, revolution
- acts of political violence can be distinguished by *the nature of the objectives*, the *targets* of attacks, the *organisational structure* of groups, and by the *repertoire* of actions.

Connection to Prof. Bolleyer's lecture

- This course is one of the Grundkurse for Prof. Bolleyer's **Einführung in das politische System Deutschlands**
- This course is a detailed investigation of a related topic—not a tutorial on the material in Prof. Bolleyer's lecture
 - So—as should go without saying—for both the lecture and GK: read and attend classes

Structure of the course

Date	Class	Lecture
2025-10-16	1	Introduction and types of political violence
2025-10-23	2	Causes: setting the stage for political violence
2025-10-30	3	Radicalisation
2025-11-06	4	Selecting violent/nonviolent strategies
2025-11-13	5	Radical subcultures and mobilisation
2025-11-20	6	Leadership
2025-12-04	7	Foreign fighters
2025-12-11	8	Election-related violence
2025-12-18	9	Escalation and restraint
2026-01-08	10	Local support and public reaction
2026-01-15	11	State responses: policies
2026-01-22	12	State responses: repression
2026-01-29	13	Addressing violence online
2026-02-05	14	Disengagement, deradicalisation (individual), demobilisation (organisational)

Narrowing the field

- there's a lot of political violence around...
- In this course, we will focus on
 - non-state
 - organised groups
 - in Germany and other (liberal) democratic contexts (with some exceptions)
- The course is arranged to cover a diverse array of cases within these parameters (we'll discuss 'assigned cases' momentarily)

- acquire both **substantive knowledge** of aspects of political violence and **critical knowledge** to evaluate research thereof
- gain familiarity with **methodological approaches** to studying political violence
- (further) develop the capacity to...
 - assess episodes and broader cycles of political violence, especially by identifying underlying factors and comparing across contexts
 - critically evaluate reporting, research, and policy on political violence, especially by evaluating the data and methods used

Notes of caution

Accounts of political violence can be alarming, disturbing, horrifying... — so some ground rules are necessary

- graphic (i.e., vivid, shocking) images and even accounts will be avoided in course materials. Exceptions only in cases of necessity and with forewarning
- any sympathies (towards any contenders) should be restrained in favour of sober consideration of cases and topics
- normative considerations are not the focus of this course. It is *what, who, when, where, how, why* — not so much *should*
 - generally, the course materials do not challenge the legitimacy of the state's **monopoly of violence**
- with concerns and questions, come talk with me

Assessment: related to BRD lecture

<i>Studiengang</i>	<i>Belegung</i>	<i>Leistungsnachweis(e)</i>	<i>Klausurinhalte</i>
<i>BA Hauptfach</i>	<i>VL (Vorlesung BRD) und GK (Grundkurs)</i>	<i>Klausur (90 Min.)</i>	<i>3/5 Wissensfragen und 1/3 Essayfrage</i>
<i>BA Nebenfach 60 ECTS</i>	<i>VL und GK</i>	<i>Klausur (90 Min.)</i>	<i>3/5 Wissensfragen und 1/3 Essayfrage</i>
Lehramt Unterrichtsfach	VL und GK	Klausur (90 Min.) & Referat	3/5 Wissensfragen und 1/3 Essayfrage
BA Nebenfach 30 ECTS	nur VL	Klausur (90 Min.)	3/5 Wissensfragen kein Essay
Lehramt Didaktikfach	nur VL	Klausur (60 Min.)	2/5 Wissensfragen kein Essay
<i>Austauschstudierende für VL</i>	<i>VL</i>	<i>Klausur (90 Min.)</i>	<i>3/5 Wissensfragen kein Essay</i>
Austauschstudierende für GK	GK	Festgelegt durch GK Dozent	N/A

Die Sprache der Essayfragen (Deutsch oder Englisch) richtet sich nach der Sprache des jeweiligen GKs. Unabhängig von der Sprache

der Fragestellung (oder Teil der Veranstaltung) können Studierende je nach Präferenz auf Deutsch oder Englisch antworten.



Kontakt für prüfungsrechtliche Fragen, Kursanmeldung, -wechsel, -abmeldung, Fragen zur Anmeldung zur Prüfung:

studienbuero@gsi.uni-muenchen.de

Assessment: within this course

	Participation	Presentation	Essay	Klausur
BA Hauptfach	X			X
BA Nebenfach (60 ECTS)	X			X
Lehramt Unterrichtsfach	X	X	X	X
BA Nebenfach (30 ECTS)	X			X (nur VL)
Lehramt Didaktikfach	X			X (nur VL, 60 Min., 2 Wissensfragen)
Austauschstudierende für VL	X			X (nur VL)
Austauschstudierende für GK	X	X	X	

Course assessment - *Participation*

- No examination in this course, BUT there is in '*Einführung Politisches System der BRD*'. There, you respond to an essay question from this course.
 - Exam on 3 February (Monday) at 14.00
 - 90-minutes written exam: response to 3 of 5 short-answer prompts from Prof. Bolleyer's lecture and to 1 of 3 essay prompts from this course
- attend class and actively participate
 - do required reading

Course assessment - *Presentation*

- Presentation

- short (max. 20 minutes) group (2-4 students) talk on a method for studying political violence
- A *method* is a system of data collection and analysis
 1. introduce method,
 2. explain its utility for studying political violence,
 3. [the crucial part] and *discuss one applied example*

Essay (*Hausarbeit*): Data report

- data report on a far-right phenomenon (e.g., voters, a party, protests, violence)
 - why a dataset? Helpful preparation for thinking about **validity, reliability**, etc. → relevant for quant. and qual.
- gather and present data, generate analytical insights
- 2000-3000 words (excluding citations)
- **17 January**: short synopsis due. **7 March**: full, final report due.
- consider working with data visualisation and analysis software!
- A rule: **no drawing any data from or citing Statista or other data curation services.**

submit all assignments by email: m.zeller@lmu.de

For the paper, and writing in general...

Crafting Papers for Publication

757

Table III. A semiotic checklist

-
1. This is what I am focusing on
 2. This is why it is relevant
 3. This is what is known/not known (and why it needs attention)
 4. This is my burning question
 5. This is how I aim to address the question (theoretically/empirically)
 6. This is what I did
 7. This is what I found
 8. This is what it means
 9. This is what I add
 10. This is why you should care
-

Patriotta, G. (2017). Crafting papers for publication: Novelty and convention in academic writing. *Journal of Management Studies*, 54(5), 747-759.

Further: tools of the research trade...

- qualitative data management: e.g., MAXQDA, ATLAS.ti
- quantitative (and qual.) data analysis software: e.g., R (and R Studio), Stata
- typesetting programmes: LaTeX (through [TexStudio](#)) and RMarkdown

Typical class meeting

- Opening question(s)/discussion point(s)
 - e.g., theoretical dilemma, typology forming, news item
- Summarising lecture on theory/findings related to week's topic
 - discussion points
- Short video relevant to topic
- Discussing the reading(s)
 - highlighting important points (esp. theory, research design)
- Presentation of further research relevant to week's topic
- Summative discussion: takeaways, new ideas, lingering questions

Throughout, we will use *cases* to link *theory* to *real-world events*

Colour scheme for course slides

- Why? To make **concepts** and **important points** easier to identity and review
- **concepts** (dark red) - building blocks of social science, important elements in every class session
- **discussion point** (indigo) - a question or prompt to discuss as a class (essential component of a *seminar*)
- **finding** (dark orange) - a noteworthy finding from one or more studies
- **important point** (red) - something particularly noteworthy
- **other colours** - variously trying to get **your attention**

Office hours and communication

- best to send an email
 - michael.zeller@gsi.uni-muenchen.de
 - m.zeller@lmu.de
- 11.00 - 12.00 on Wednesdays at GSI (Oettingenstr. 67) - Room H105
- or by appointment
- Please **use your LMU email address for communication**
 - this is important for the security of the university email system

Course website

- no use of Moodle
- we have a new, shiny, developing, purpose-built website::
<https://michaelzeller.de/course-pv/>
 - all readings available
 - slides available before class
 - in case of class cancellation, video lecture will be available

- The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) collects real-time data on political violence and protest events around the world: <https://acleddata.com/>.
- Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP): <https://ucdp.uu.se/>.
- ECPR Standing Group on Political Violence
- Journals:
 - Terrorism and Political Violence
 - Studies in Conflict & Terrorism
 - Perspectives on Terrorism
 - Journal for Deradicalization
 - International Journal of Conflict and Violence

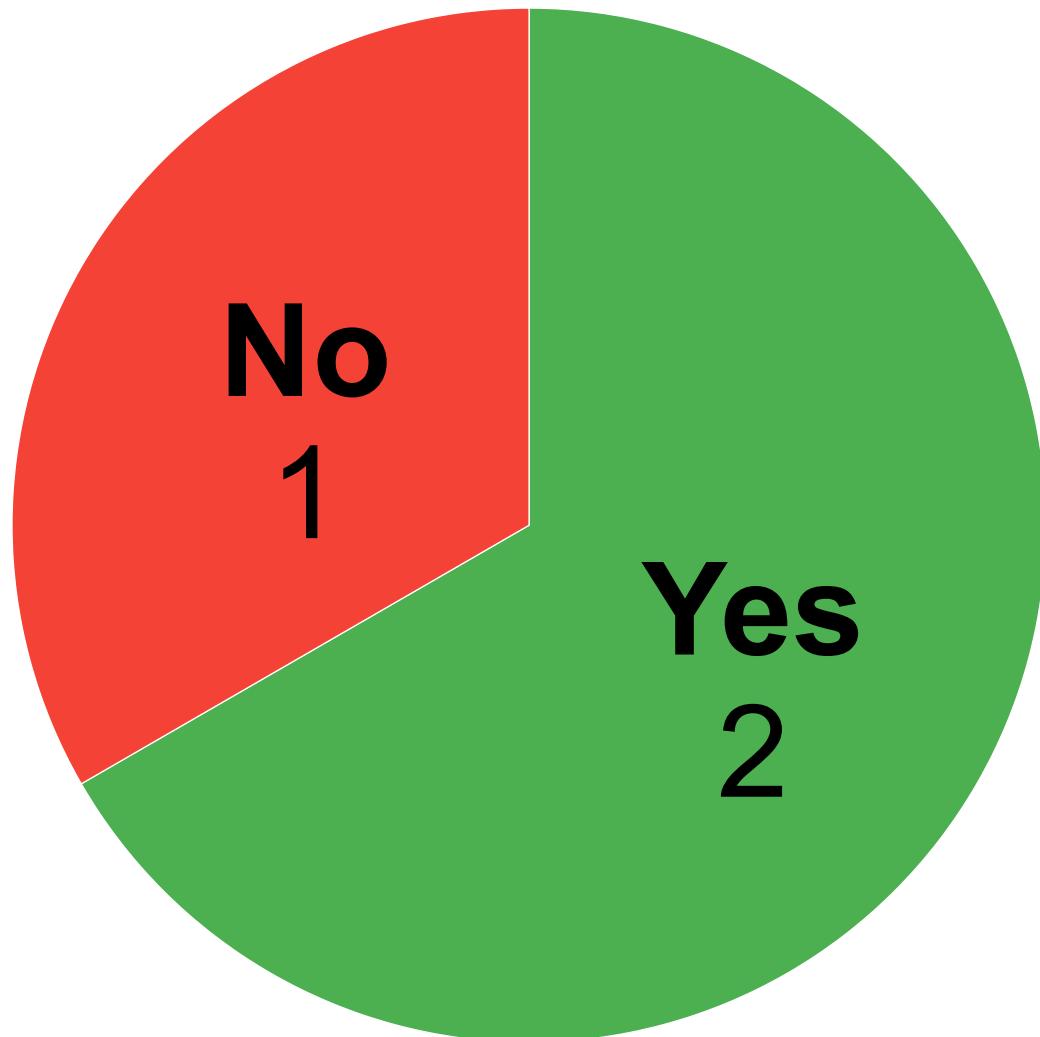
About me

- tell me if you have problems understanding me
 - there's an accent at work that I tragically cannot shake off
- Ph.D. in political science from Central European University (CEU)
 - specialisation in qualitative methods (QCA, [Bayesian] process tracing), but also quant. text analysis, network analysis
- researcher in funded projects on ...
 - violent/banned far-right groups and online content moderation
 - radicalisation, violent extremism, polarisation, and resilience
- current work: militant democracy; far-right activist networks; political violence (in 1970s Northern Ireland; in contemporary Italy); paths to female leadership in Asia; protest and polarisation

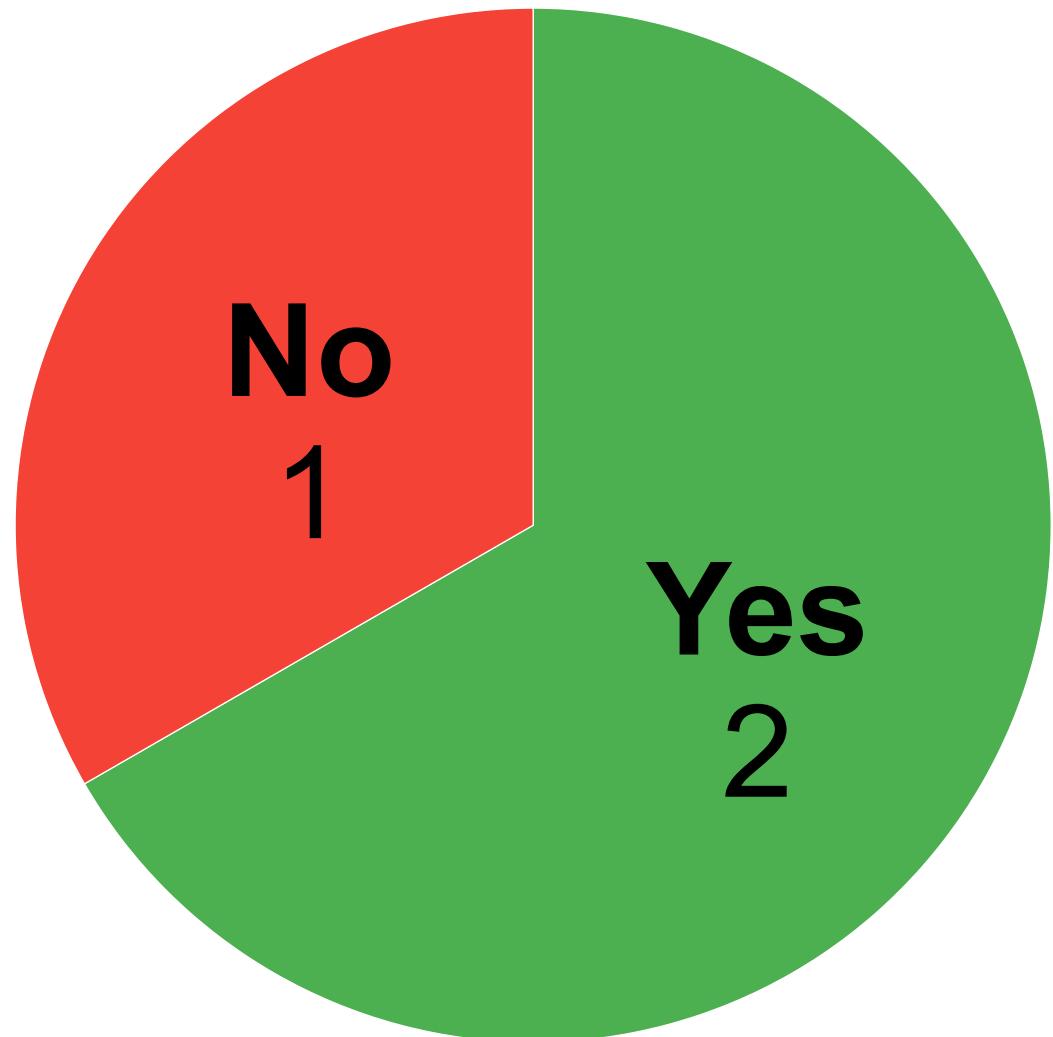
Q & A

About you! Poll results (Respondents: 3)

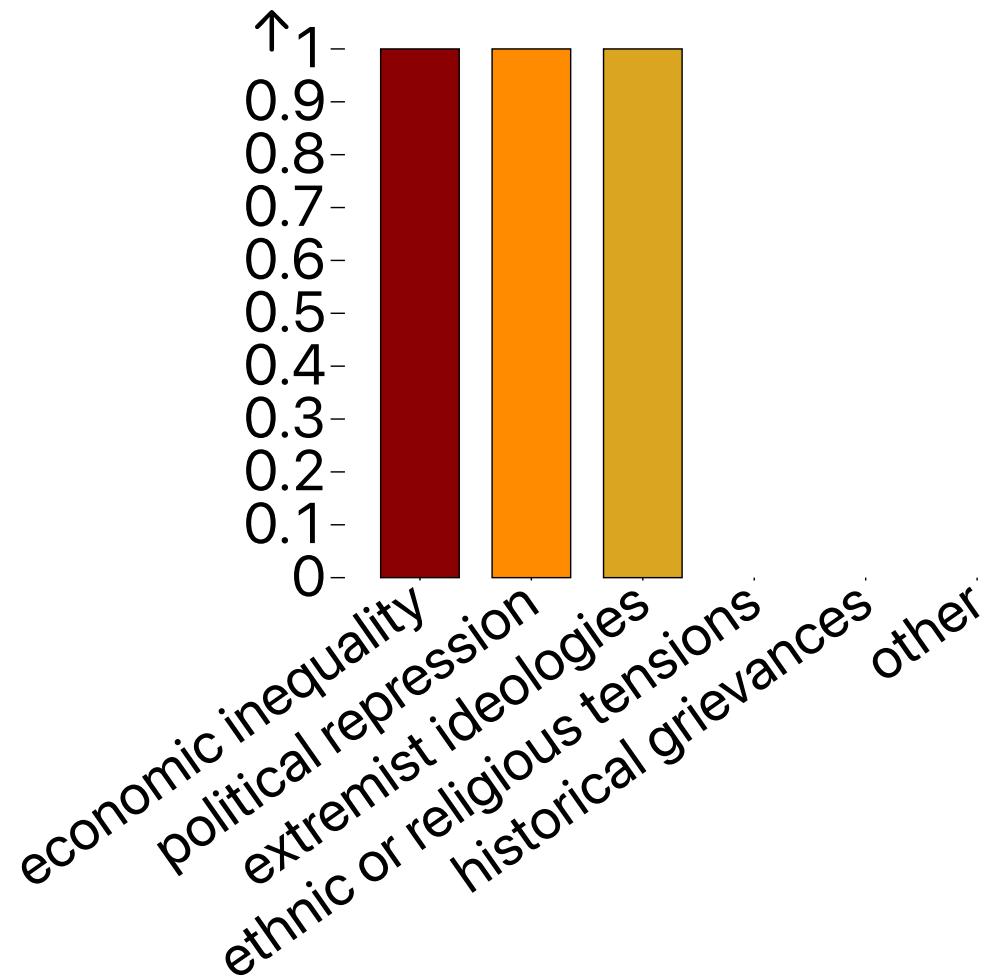
Prior methods class



Prior analytical software use



About you! Poll results



About you! Poll results

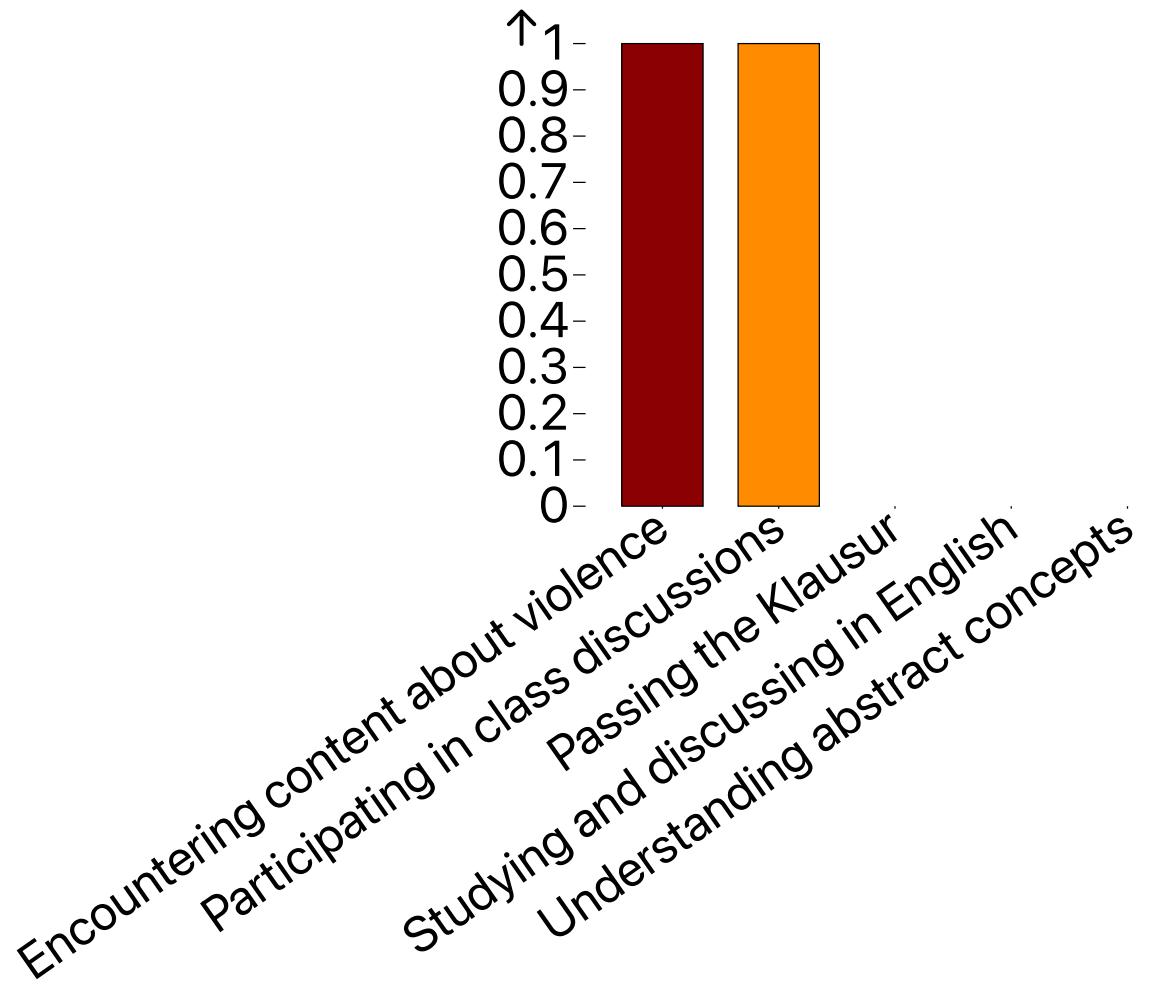
Any particular politically violent group you want to learn more about?

›Array(3) ["antifa", "The FARC in Colombia", "the group in Ireland that fought against the IRA?"]

About you! Student introductions

- Information about you, possibly including...
 - Expectations for this course
 - favourite joke
 - Study programme
 - favourite song
 - Country (place) of origin
 - top source for news
 - Background in education/research
 - secret skill
 - Academic/professional aspirations

About you! Poll results: biggest concern



Quick intro to concepts

Concept formation

- concepts are the building blocks of social science research
 - a term denoting an abstract idea

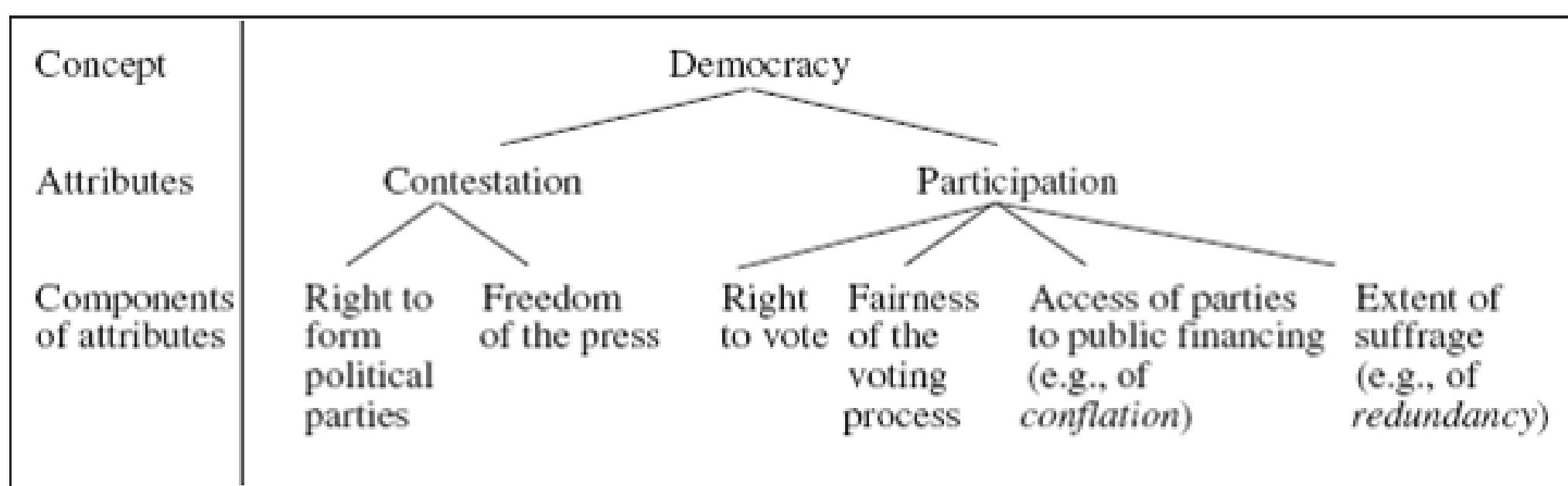


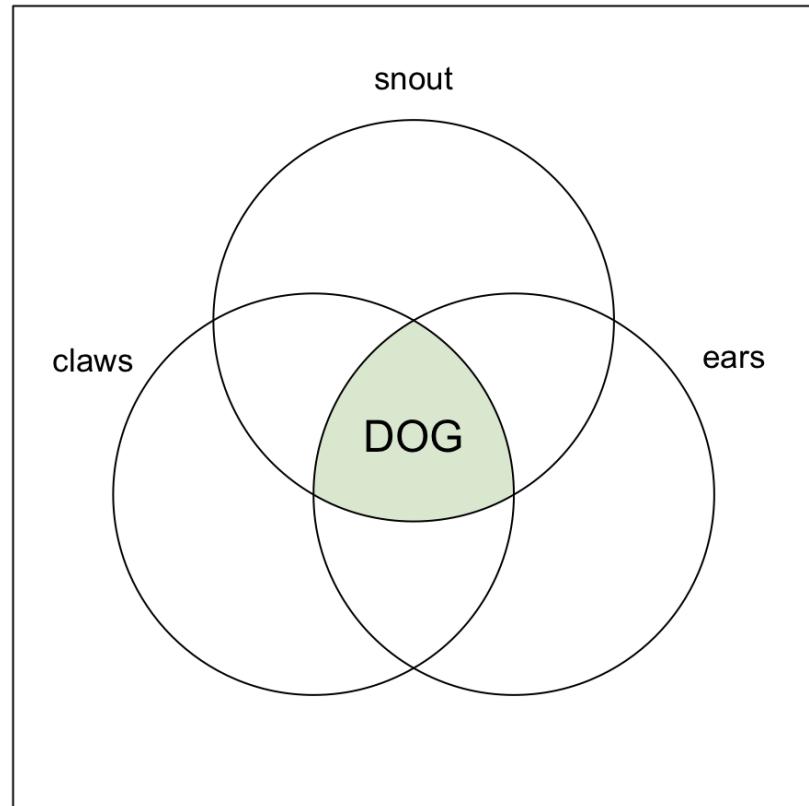
Figure 1. The logical structure of concepts.

Concept formation

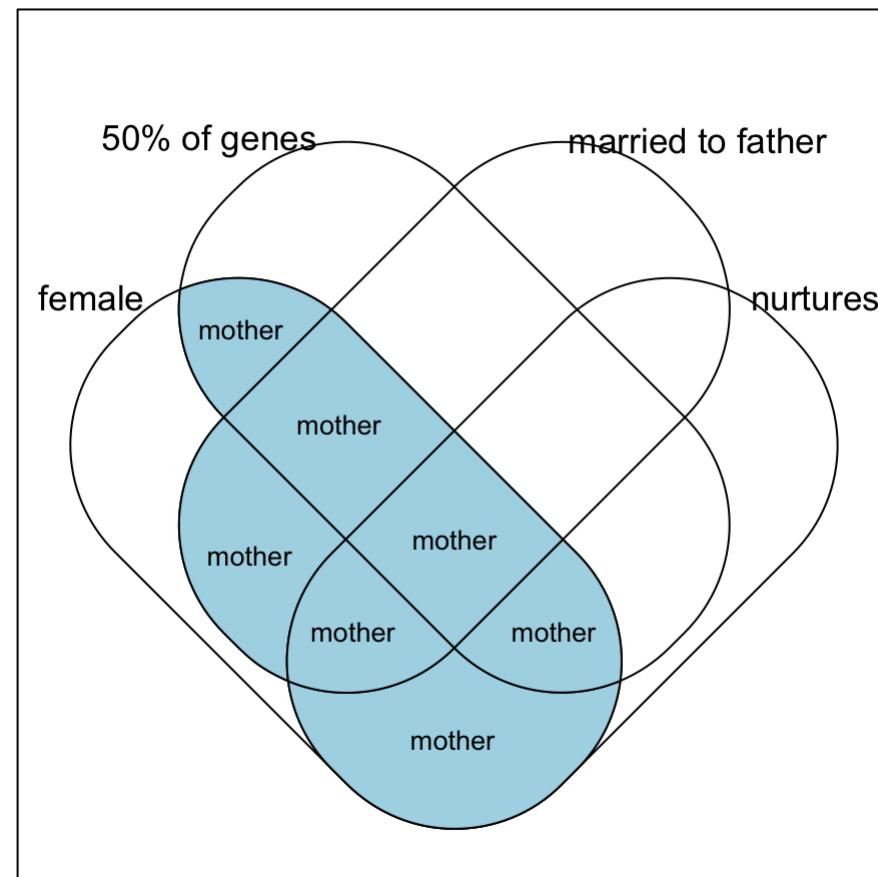
- identifying bounds of concepts
 - See Sartori (1970)
- broadly, three types of concepts in social science
 1. **classical**: all criteria are shared by all cases
 2. **radial**: some criteria are shared by all cases; others are not
 3. **family resemblance**: No criterion is shared by all cases

Visualising classical/radial concepts

Classical concept (all criteria)



Radial concept (all share 'female')



Family resemblance: no criterion shared by all (e.g., games)

Classical vs. radial (Collier and Mahon 1993)

FIGURE 4

Differentiation of Classical and Radial Categories

Classical Category: Dog

	Category	Components		
Primary Category	Dog	A	B	C
Secondary Categories	Retriever	A	B	C D
	Sheepdog	A	B	C E
	Spaniel	A	B	C F

Note: Differentiating characteristics of secondary categories are *in addition to* those of the primary category.

A, B, and C = Hypothetical set of general attributes of dogs

D, E, and F = Hypothetical attributes that differentiate specific types of dogs

Radial Category: Mother

	Category	Components				
Primary Category	Mother	A	B	C	D	E
Secondary Categories	Genetic mother	A	B			
	Birth mother	A		C		
	Nurturing mother	A			D	
	Stepmother	A			E	

Note: Differentiating characteristics of secondary categories are *contained within* the primary category.

A = Female

B = Provides 50% of genetic makeup

C = Gives birth to child

D = Provides nurturance

E = Married to father

Onto our topic: political violence (LMU)

- ‘patterns of violence’ framework
 - repertoires, targeting, frequency, techniques
- Ravndal (2015) RW terrorism in western Europe
 - dimensions as a heuristic for understanding politically violent groups, generally?



Patterns of Violence

borrowing a conceptual framework from armed conflict research
(Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2017)

a pattern of violence on the part of an armed organization (state force, rebel group, or militia) as the *relatively stable and recognizable configuration of violence in which it engages. This configuration consists of...*

Patterns of Violence

borrowing a conceptual framework from armed conflict research
(Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2017)

repertoire

targeting

frequency

technique

Patterns of Violence

borrowing a conceptual framework from armed conflict research
(Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2017)

targeting

frequency

technique

repertoire

- what forms of violence are used
 - beatings, stabbings, sexual violence, homicide, etc.

Patterns of Violence

borrowing a conceptual framework from armed conflict research
(Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2017)

repertoire

targeting

frequency

technique

borrowing a conceptual framework from armed conflict research
(Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2017)

repertoire

frequency

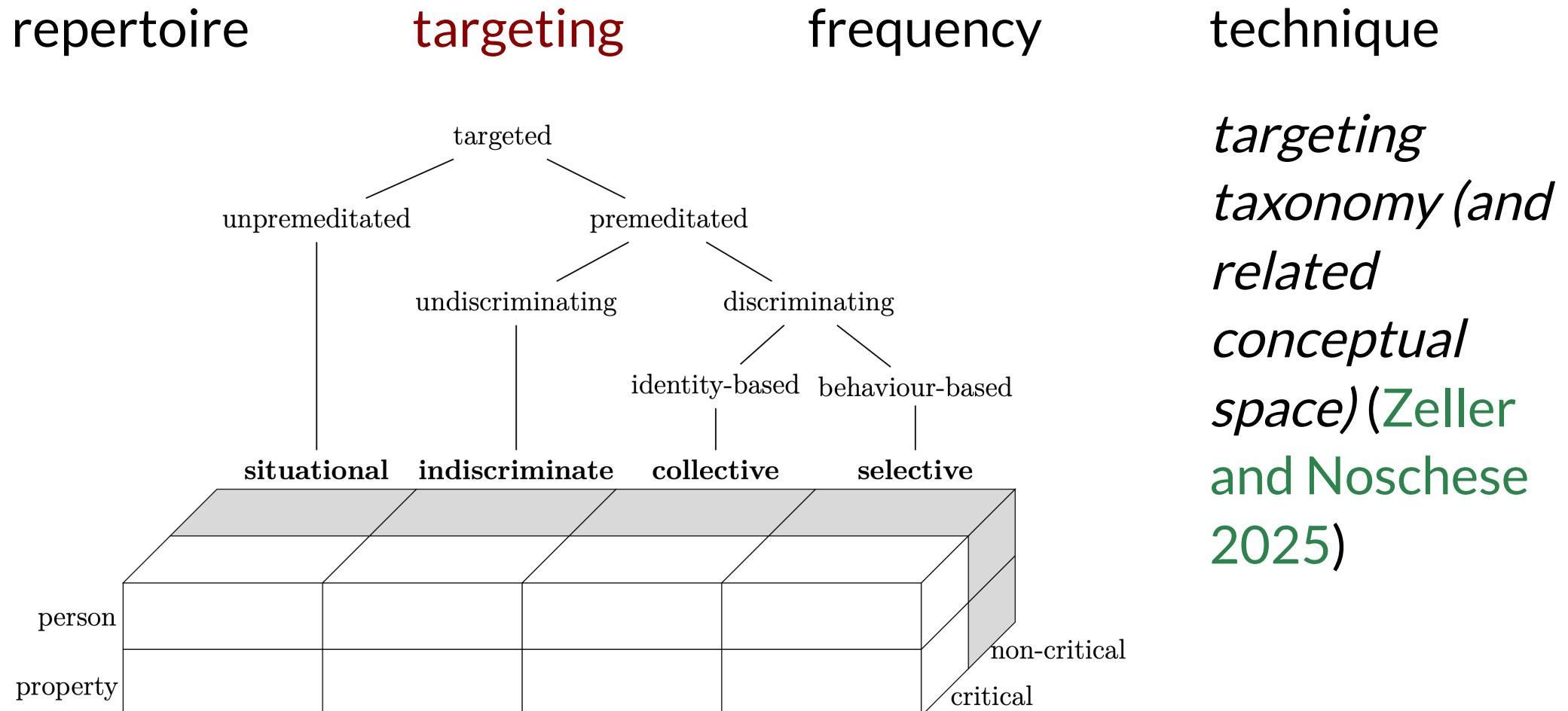
technique

targeting

- the social groups against whom actors regularly use violent repertoires
 - an ethnic group, political opponents, LBGTI persons, militants of rival organisations, residents of certain areas, etc.

Patterns of Violence

borrowing a conceptual framework from armed conflict research
(Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2017)



Patterns of Violence

borrowing a conceptual framework from armed conflict research
(Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2017)

repertoire

targeting

frequency

technique

Patterns of Violence



borrowing a conceptual framework from armed conflict research
(Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2017)

repertoire

targeting

technique

frequency

- **count**: number of attacks deploying a repertoire against
- **rates** (common in criminology research as well):
 - **incidence**: incidents per member of some referent population
 - **prevalence**: fraction of population that suffered an incident
 - **perpetration**: number of incidents or persons of the targeted group per member of the group of violent attackers

Patterns of Violence

borrowing a conceptual framework from armed conflict research
(Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2017)

repertoire targeting frequency technique

Patterns of Violence

borrowing a conceptual framework from armed conflict research
(Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2017)

repertoire targeting frequency

technique

- how the actor(s) carry out their violence
- techniques are about the **tools or instruments** used (e.g., clubs, knives, guns, bombs)

Patterns of Violence

Ravndal (2015) Europe RW terrorism

	Elite-sponsored groups	Subcultural networks	Lone actors
Organisational structure	Hierarchy		N/A
Leadership		Decentralized	N/A
Group membership	>100	<50	N/A
Known political strategy	Always	Sometimes	Sometimes
Affiliation to former right-wing regime	Yes	No	No
Sponsorship	Elites	Subculture	None
Significant access to military resources	Yes	No	No
International terrorism	Yes	No	No

These are variables and types with which to consider politically violent groups – **Thoughts? Can we apply this generally or is it specific to RW? Any omissions?**

What cases are you familiar
with?

What do you know about
them?

How can we categorise them?

Any questions, concerns, feedback for this class?

Anonymous feedback here:

<https://forms.gle/NfF1pCfYMbkAT3WP6>

Alternatively, please send me an email: m.zeller@lmu.de

References

- Collier, David, and James E. Mahon. 1993. "Conceptual 'Stretching' Revisited: Adapting Categories in Comparative Analysis." *American Political Science Review* 87 (4): 845–55. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2938818>.
- Gutiérrez-Sanín, Francisco, and Elisabeth Jean Wood. 2017. "What Should We Mean by 'Pattern of Political Violence'? Repertoire, Targeting, Frequency, and Technique." *Perspectives on Politics* 15 (1): 20–41. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592716004114>.
- Ravndal, Jacob Aasland. 2015. "Thugs or Terrorists? A Typology of Right-Wing Terrorism and Violence in Western Europe." *Journal for Deradicalization* 15 (3): 1–38.
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- Zeller, Michael C, and Pasquale Noschese. 2025. "Targeting Taxonomy and Patterns of Political Violence in Stable Societies: Evidence from the Far Right in Italy." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 0 (0): 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2025.2528059>.