

Call for Papers

Military Institutions and Democratic Resilience

Panel at the 2nd International Congress on Political Theory

University of Passau, 5–7 October 2026; Convener: Dr Sven Altenburger (Frankfurt/Oxford)

The Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has brought renewed attention to military institutions in Western democracies. After a prolonged period during which many Western militaries were largely sidelined, they are now once more seen by many political actors and observers as important institutions. Yet current political and academic debates seldom address the more fundamental matters involved, such as the legitimate purposes and normatively adequate forms of military institutions in contemporary democracies.

Political theorists, who are best equipped to explore these issues, have on the whole devoted relatively little attention to military institutions in recent years. This forms a serious oversight given the political urgency of these issues. The overarching issue could be framed as how to structure military institutions that ensure legitimate defence and democratic resilience against external threats – while avoiding configurations that might erode democracy from within. This conference panel addresses these issues, debating the factual and desirable character and potential reform of military institutions in present and future democracies.

Papers are invited that engage with these issues, focussing on questions such as (but not limited to):

- How, if at all, can military institutions be normatively justified, particularly in relation to debates on *jus ante/inter bellum*?
- What constitutes the legitimate purposes and normatively adequate institutional design of military institutions within democratic polities?
- How should democracies balance the demands of effective military organisation with the requirements of democratic control?
- What recruitment policies can be normatively defended within democratic settings?
- What would a normatively defensible framework for military funding look like in a democracy, and how do questions of taxation, debt, and distributive justice intersect with it?
- What insights, if any, can political theorists draw from the history of political thought – for instance from the republican tradition – and from empirical research on civil–military relations?

Abstracts of no more than 300 words should be sent to altenburger@soz.uni-frankfurt.de by **15 December 2025**.