

Call for Abstracts:

Multilateralism, international institutions and the ethics of war

Workshop at the University of Bern, 19-21 November 2026

International institutions and multilateralism no longer occupy the central place in the ethics of war that they once did in classic writings on war and peace. Whereas Immanuel Kant placed a strong federation of states at the core of his vision for perpetual peace, much of contemporary just war theory focuses primarily on the rights and responsibilities of individuals, with states and multilateral institutions as a derivative object of interest.

However, recent events such as the US attack on Iran without UN authorization, Ukraine's potential NATO membership as a key issue in prospective peace talks with Russia and US cuts to peace-keeping UN institutions bring questions of multilateralism back into sharp relief.

This workshop offers an opportunity to discuss new work on multilateralism, international institutions and the ethics of war. We welcome submissions on questions including but not limited to:

- What are the limits, if any, of the freedom of association among states?
- Is authorization by multilateral institutions a condition for a just war?
- Are states ever required or prohibited to join defence alliances?
- If there a duty to build and sustain just international institutions, then how may this duty be enforced?
- When, if ever, is it permissible for states to refuse cooperation with existing international institutions and alliances?
- If states fail to build and support strong international conflict resolution mechanisms, does this affect their right to defend against aggression?
- Any further questions that speak to the workshop theme

Workshop details

The workshop will be held on 19-21 November at the University of Bern (Switzerland). The workshop will be pre-read and we expect a full draft of the paper by mid-October. Selected speakers will be invited to act as commentators on one of the other papers. We will be able to cover accommodation and part (or, subject to funding, all) of the travel expenses.

Submission

If you are interested, please send a pdf or word document with your abstract of 750–1000 words to Ms Njango Njung'e (mary.njunge[at]students.unibe.ch). The document itself should not contain any identifying information; please include your name, email and institutional affiliation in the body of your email. Submission deadline is 15 May 2026.

Workshop organizers: Dr. Lisa Hecht (Bern), Dr. Adis Selimi (Saarland), Ms Njango Njung'e (Bern)