

# Collapse & Cruelty: The Brutalization of Capitalist Society at the End of the End of History

Call for Papers, *PERIPHERIE*, Issue 1/2026 (to be published in Sommer 2026)

One key characteristic of the current conjuncture of authoritarian capitalism is its brutalization: the expansion of increasingly violent means of exploitation, expropriation and domination, and a performance and normalization of cruelty and destruction on a global scale. Growing parts of society around the world enthusiastically support this. In parallel, human rights and democratic frameworks are under severe attack, both on national and international scale.

From the genocidal wars in Palestine, Sudan, and Congo to Europe's massive militarisation and persecution and dehumanisation of migrants at its border; from Donald Trump's nihilistic cruelty, to Javier Milei's chainsaw as a political slogan and Nayib Bukele's punitivist spectacle: the reproduction, display and exaltation of violence and cruelty are increasingly at the centre of the global authoritarian transformation. The era of soft power seems to be waning. Much as was the case with historic fascism, violence no longer needs justification by arguments, legal norms or international agreements. More and more governments give up on diplomacy and on seeking a political, democratic consensus. Practices such as online trolling, public humiliation and hate and revenge speech have become state policy. The paradigm of war, armed intervention, militarisation of borders and securitization have been adopted as primary forms of conflict resolution.

We are witnessing a moment of extreme brutality not only as a side-effect of authoritarian politics, but as a core dimension of it, evoking new modes of social fragmentation, and ideological anesthetisation, nihilism and disinhibition in the exercise of power. This qualitative shift in the (re)production and performance of violence not only deeply affects societal dynamics and the workings of international politics, it also poses important questions regarding our understanding of state power and state-society relations.

Has the symbiotic relationship between liberal democracy and capitalism – a model that had been expanding worldwide especially since the 1990s, famously coined as the end of history – ultimately come to an end? What is the novelty, if any, of this latest authoritarian turn compared to prior phases of capitalist violence? Should these transformations be seen as a conjunctural dispositif in a moment of acute capitalist crisis, or as a structural shift in the organization of capitalist state and society? Are we witnessing a shift towards a post-hegemonic governance of capitalism?

What – political, economic, social, affective, cultural – function does violence play for the current form of capitalism? How does it differ from prior moments – especially when seen from the postcolony, where violent forms of exploitation and domination were always the

order of the day? And what makes it so appealing to many people? How are the different forms and global manifestations of violence connected to each other? What role do (neo)colonial relations, practices and ideologies play? What specific accumulation strategies, new forms of labor exploitation, financial expropriation, or surplus appropriation can we identify behind the performance of cruelty and authority?

In a scenario where not only the far right, but also liberal political actors are actively dismantling the democratic framework, how can we envision meaningful defensive and offensive, transformative strategies?

All these questions are some of the approaches to the main issue addressed in this special issue: the centrality of brutalization, cruelty and violence in contemporary global authoritarianism.

In this context, we invite contributions that engage with:

- Questions regarding the transformation of the state and forms of domination;
- Trends in international relations and geopolitics;
- The role of coloniality, post- or neocolonial relations and practices;
- The (global) political economy of violence;
- Perspectives capital accumulation as well as class conflicts and class politics;
- Anthropological and sociological perspectives on fascistization, violence and brutalization;
- Questions regarding political strategy, especially counterstrategies.

Contributions on other topics related to the focus of this call are also welcome. Contributions using transnational perspectives and/or national case analyses are welcome. We also look forward to contributions that employ transdisciplinary approaches.

*The editorial deadline for articles is*  
2 January 2026.

Manuscripts, feedback on possible contributions, and further questions should be sent to [info@zeitschrift-peripherie.de](mailto:info@zeitschrift-peripherie.de). Further instructions for authors are available for download on our website at <https://www.zeitschrift-peripherie.de>.