

Report on the International Workshop:

Islamic Peace Ethics:

Legitimate and Illegitimate Violence in Contemporary Islamic Thought



16-17 October 2015, ithf, Hamburg, Germany

The workshop “Islamic Peace Ethics: Legitimate and Illegitimate Violence in Contemporary Islamic Thought” was held from 15th to 17th October 2015 in Hamburg, Germany. It was organized in the frame of an ongoing research project on contemporary Islamic peace ethics at Institute for Theology and Peace (Institut für Theologie und Frieden, ithf). Ithf is a research institute that studies since 1978 the theological and ethical aspects of peace and war from Catholic-Christian perspective. The institute views, however, researches on peace in other traditions a part of its task as a contribution to the interreligious dialogue and mutual understanding. In this regard ithf has had several research projects about peace and war in Jewish tradition. Recently, due to the increasing debates on Islam and violence, the institute has launched this underlying research project and workshop on peace and war in the Islamic thought.

More than twenty researchers from different countries including Indonesia, Pakistan, Iran, Germany, UK USA, and Belgium participated in this workshop. The presented papers discussed the peace and war in contemporary Islamic thought from different disciplines such as theology, philosophy, religious studies, cultural studies and political sciences. The workshop focused on the methodological aspects of the contemporary Islamic peace ethics. Rather than the positions, the methodology and structure of the arguments used by contemporary Muslim scholars for legitimization and delegitimization of violence were concerned. A main characteristic of the workshop was its diverse topics and approaches: it included papers discussing peace ethics of different groups and scholars representing both Sunni and Shia branches of Islam as well as different positions towards violence from pacifist and traditionalist to fundamentalist groups and scholars. This text is a very brief review about eighteen papers of the workshop¹ that can be categorized in two main groups: “methodologies and theories” and “case studies”.

One of the main methodological issues discussed in the workshop was the map of normative disciplines in the Islamic knowledge culture. Whereas some participants (Heydar Shadi, ithf) problematized the almost exclusive focus of current debates of Islamic peace ethics on legal tradition (*sharia-fiqh*) and argued for a more comprehensive approach through taking into

¹ For the titles of the papers see the program of the workshop at the end of the report.

consideration the non-*fiqh* and non-legal fields such as philosophical and mystical ethics, political philosophy (for example Farabi) or *adab* literature, some others (Sohail Hashmi, Mount Holyoke College, USA) argued that out of *fiqh* there can be found hardly a significant resource for peace ethics. Hashmi added that the *akhlaq* (moral) literature in Islamic tradition has concerned merely with individual conditions. The similarity of sharia in Islamic tradition with *halakhah* in Jewish tradition was pointed out and it was suggested that comparative studies can be helpful in this regard.

Another methodological topic was the problematizing of the theological-cultural approach of the workshop to (religious) violence. Some of the participants regarded this approach inadequate as culturalism (Mohammad Mahdi Mohajedi, Freie Universität, Berlin) and over-theologization (Heydar Shadi) of socio-political problems. Mojahedi argued that the post-Islamist discourse on peace and violence suffers from ‘the poverty of culturalism.’ In other words, whereas violence and peace are chiefly political phenomena (de-/legitimized in religious-majority societies retrospectively in religious terms), post-Islamists tend to explain them so as if they are ‘caused’ by certain readings of a religion. They tacitly or explicitly hold that Muslim perpetrators of violent acts would not carry them out absent a reading of Islam legitimating them. Mojahedi concluded his paper arguing for a post-secular in post-Islamist discourse on violence shift in order to re-politicize the question of peace/violence and transform it to a question about the conditions of peace/violence in Muslim-majority societies.

Some other presentations pointed out the difficulties of using the adjective “Islamic” in current debates on violent phenomena (Sybille Reinke de Buitrago, ifth and IFSH, Hamburg) Reinke de Buitrago maintained that the workshop title implies the question if Islam and/or Islamic thought can also have inherently forms of violence. While any religion can be used for legitimization of violence, parts of current political and public discourse portray Islam as violent – and thereby also Muslims. In political terms, she added, the inquiry into Islamic peace ethics can also be seen as a Western application of power. Thus, Islam and Muslims may be devalued and delimited, while the Western self is safeguarded. Reinke de Buitrago then remarked two conceptual themes; The first theme relates to the normative, in particular the plurality versus universality of norms. Should we take the world’s cultural and socio-political diversity as principle to guide us? Or, following those who are against relativizing culture and norms, should we maintain the dominant position of asserting our norms? The second and linked theme is the one of self-other constructions and processes of Othering. As identity is formed in difference to an ‘other’, self-other constructions are a normal part of human existence. Yet, hierarchical self-other constructions that lead to processes of Othering, and even dehumanization of the ‘other’, enable violence and are highly destructive. Western thinking about Islam often illustrates such hierarchical self-other

constructions and associated processes of Othering. When we inquire into Islamic peace ethics, we thus need to remain self-reflective and open to unknowns and alternatives to enable an understanding that does not reproduce Western biases. Insights generated in such a manner can aid a renewed dialogue with the ‘other’, and help to deal with self-other difference non-violently.

It was discussed that this kind of labeling and adopting a religious approach in peace/war studies can be indeed a part of the problem through serving bias and hostile *Othering* and producing further violence. Therefore, the theologization and Islamization of the violent phenomena can be regarded as epistemological violence. These approaches, accordingly, can be used for legitimizing the violence of the center and delegitimizing the defense of the oppressed. Some other participants, however, rejected the accusation of culturalism and over-theologization in the field for their hidden Marxist anthropology and sociology and criticized rather the under-theologization of the topic. Dirk Ansoerge (Professor of Catholic theology at Sankt Georgen Graduate School of Philosophy and Theology, Frankfurt a.M.) discussed in his paper whether it is essentialism to claim that some religions foster violence – and some do not. He asked; does it depend on the circumstances exclusively that religions either foster or deteriorate violence? Is it really impossible to identify a core message of religions in reference to violence? But how might an affirmative answer to these questions escape the allegation of essentialism?

Oliver Leaman (professor of philosophy at University of Kentucky, USA) analyzed different methodologies among contemporary Muslim scholars towards violence comparatively to deontologist and consequentialist approaches in philosophical ethics. There are, according to Leaman, roughly two perspectives in contemporary Islamic debate on violence, one being absolutist and one consequentialist. The absolutists tend to concentrate on particular *ayat* in the Qur'an and their accompanying *hadith* and use them to defend wide ethical principles that forbid, or permit, certain kinds of peaceful or violent behavior. This approach tends to defend the status quo, since it often rules out violence in the ways it is often used to bring about regime or radical change. The ethical principle involved here is that whatever the consequences there are certain things that must never be done, and that obviously restricts the aggressive actions from a moral point of view.

On the other side, Leaman added, are the consequentialists, who argue that Islam justifies radical steps in order to bring about the correct sort of objectives, those which are of course themselves justified by religion. Those ayats, which the absolutists appeal to are of course respected by the consequentialists, but they are put within a context which restricts their scope and does not interfere with a consequentialist ethics. According to Leaman, religions have the ability to make harmony between these two ethical schools. In the Islamic case, Leaman added, hadith literature has the best potentiality to realize this harmony.

Robert Gleave (professor of Arabistic in University of Exeter, UK) discussed the approaches of Shia and Salafies towards Prophetic example (Sunnah) in their justification of violence action. Referring to the point that the modern legal theorists of the Salafī and Shī‘ī *uṣūlī* tradition are inheritors of a long intellectual tradition of discussion, Gleave remarked that the growth of militant groups in the recent past has led to developments in the use of *sunna* to justify violent actions which modify or even categorically reject this tradition. In his lecture, Gleave discussed how the different notions of sunna and how the justification of violence seems to have released it, somewhat, from its roots as a justification method found in legal theory.

In the category of the „case studies“ arguments of some contemporary Muslim thinkers as well as some Islamic organizations were discussed. Non-violence philosophy of Jawdat Said, a Sufi and activist from Syria, was introduced and analyzed by Abdessamad Belhaj from Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium. Inspired by Gandhi, Mohamamd Iqbal and Malik Bin Nabi, Jawdat Said is, according to Belhaj, a leading voice for pacifism in Islamic context who has criticized both Islamist Seyed Qutb and secular regime of Asad. Belhaj pointed out that peace has been a marginal topic in the main Islamic intellectual fields namely fiqh and theology. According to Belhaj, Jawdat Said owes his pacifism neither to fiqh nor to theology but to sufism and philosophy. Charles M. Ramsey (Forman Christian College Lahore, Pakistan) introduced in his article “Blessed Boundaries: Javed Ahmad Ghamidi (b. 1952) and the limits of Sunnah in legitimize violence,” a reformist voice on Islam and violence from Pakistan. Ramsey discussed how Javad Ahmad Ghamidi rejects the legitimization of violence through Sunnah by limiting the authority of Sunnah to the religious matters but not the worldly and state matter. According to Ramsey, there is an established consensus that the exemplary way of the Prophet as recorded in *ḥadīth* is a foundational source for prescribing licit behaviour. However, there is disagreement amongst scholars regarding which facets of the Prophet’s example are applicable; is Sunnah limited to Prophetic testimony pertaining to matters of religion (*dīn*), or does this include matters of state (*dunya*) as well? While some groups such as clerics of the Deoband (*mamātī*) faction such as Abdul Aziz Ghazi, *khatib* of Lal Masjid in Islamabad, appeal to prophetic example in order to legitimize attacks not only of government forces but also of their dependents. Representatives of the Islahi School sternly disagree. A leading example of this position is Javed Ahmad Ghamidi (b. 1952), a student and then critic of the late Maulana Maududi (d. 1979). Unlike Ghazi, Ghamidi argues that Sunnah does not include the Prophet’s actions as a statesman.

Najia Mukhtar (School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), UK) discussed in her paper “Ideas on citizenship and violence against religious difference in contemporary Pakistan” a problematic in the argument of both religious extremist groups as well as moderate groups in

Pakistani context. Remarking that Pakistani Taliban targets religious Others for example Christians and Shi'as, Mukhtar analysed the responses of two contemporary Pakistani actors who actively critique religious violence: the 'moderate' Sunni scholar, Javed Ahmed Ghamidi and the Sufi scholar, Tahir-ul-Qadri. Specifically, she examined their notion of citizenship, constructed from Islamic source materials such as the Quran, *hadith*, and *fiqh*, to guarantee religious freedoms. However, *inclusive* citizenship that offers protection against violence to religious difference must also *exclude* certain types of religious difference, in order to be practicable. Both Ghamidi and Tahir-ul-Qadri argue for eliminating, through violent or coercive means, 'terrorists' and 'militants'. These actors are categorized as dissidents and rebels using the same Islamic source materials. Citizenship in (their versions of Islam) constitutes thus guarantees of protection from *illegitimate* violence against religious difference necessarily predicated on the *legitimate* violent suppression of rebel citizens. By extension, the rebel's struggle (*jihad*) is illegitimate, whilst the state's *jihad* against the rebel is deemed legitimate.

Asfa Widiyanto (State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN), Salatiga, Indonesia) introduced the argumentation of Habib Rizieq Syihab, an Islamist scholar from Indonesia, for religious violence using the concept of "commanding good and forbidding evil". According to Widiyanto, the founding fathers of FPI (most notably Habib Rizieq Syihab) thought that the government of Indonesia remains silent towards the cases of evil which spread throughout the country, and accordingly felt the necessity of "commanding good and forbidding evil", by organizing some necessary actions to stop evil in Indonesian society. Widiyanto focused on Syihab's book entitled *Hancurkan Liberalisme, Tegakkan Syariat Islam* (Destroy Liberalism, Enforce Islamic Law, 2011) and discussed subsequent problems: (a) How does Syihab justify the violence in the corpus of Islamic doctrines? (b) What are the rhetorical modes that Syihab employs in his book Destroy Liberalism, Enforce Islamic Law? (c) What agency does Syihab use in transmitting his idea of "commanding good and forbidding evil"? (d) To what extent is Syihab's Destroy Liberalism, Enforce Islamic Law appreciated in web 2.0? and (e) What are the socio-political factors which surround Habib Rizieq Syihab's idea on violence?

From Shia context the ideas of Seyyed Husain Fadlallah from Lebanon and Ayatollah Khomeini were discussed. Bianka Speidl (Exeter University, UK) analyzed in her paper "The Rhetoric of Power in Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah's al-Islam wa-mantiq al-quwwa" how rhetoric supports a theory of empowerment that conveys the call to action and justifies violence. She identified the rhetorical patterns and devices applied by Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah in his al-Islam wa-mantiq al-quwwa (Islam and the Logic of Power). Speidl examined the rhetorical strategies and the various rhetorical tools that Fadlallah's philosophy of power transmits. Fadlallah's writings, according to

Speidl, include arguments from scripture, necessity, virtue and instrumentality. Fadlallah has recourse to rhetorical questions, antinomy, metaphors and repetition as well to make his discourse convincing and effective. Moreover, he uses master narratives to frame his project of power in the Shia's salvation history. He supports his argument by Qur'anic references as an ultimate authority and quotes it widely to legitimize power and the use of force. Speidl concluded that Fadlallah's discourse constructs a religious ideology in which force is understood as virtuous, instrumental and inevitable. Each element of his rhetoric aimed mainly at reassuring the quietists that the quest for power is justified, and at mobilising the Shia to take action even if it implies violence.

Yahya Sabbaghchi (Sharif University, Tehran, Iran) presented a critical reading of the late Ayatollah Khomeini's view on the legitimacy of offensive jihad. Sabbaghchi argued that a holistic reading of the violence in the Koran rejects offensive jihad. According to Sabbaghchi, Allah introduces Islam as a global and pervasive religion and promises its prevail over other religions. In order to spread Islam, Muslims are encouraged to preach it. This has prepared a ground for some Islamic jurists and commentators to understand jihad verses in Quran as the heavenly way of spreading Islam. In his paper, Sabbaghchi explained some Qur'anic theoretical principles such as no compulsory in religion, the prophets' duty is just to communicate, emphasis on applying reason and proscribing of ignorant following, human dignity and authenticity of peace as the framework of jihad verses. Through consideration of this framework, he argued for the inconsistency of offensive war (*jihad ebtadaei*) with definite principles in Quran, concluding with the defensive jihad as the genuine meaning of jihad verses.

Regarding the Islamic groups and organizations two lectures were held: Sohail Hashmi discussed in his presentation the world order according to ISIS and al-Qaida. In his article "Enemies Near and Far: The World according to Al-Qaeda and ISIS", Hashmi explained how these Islamist-Jihadi groups view the world and how the targets of their jihad was shifted from the local rulers (the near enemy) to these rulers' foreign backers (the far enemy). Hashmi discussed the religious roots of the near enemy vs. far enemy debate, its impact on the radicals' strategy and tactics, and its implications for the continuing war against al-Qaeda and ISIS. Turan Kayaoglu (University of Washington I Tacoma, USA) discussed the attitudes of Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) towards war and peace. According to Kayaoglu, since its establishment in 1969, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has struggled to articulate an authoritative normative and political Islamic framework for intra-Muslim as well as global politics. In spite of some questions regarding the effectiveness of the 57-member body, the organization has emerged as visible global actor on a range of issues related to war and peace, such as human rights, conflict resolution, the dialogue of civilizations, and defamation of religions. Kayaoglu examined in his paper how the OIC articulates

and differentiates legitimate and illegitimate violence in Islam and international politics. For example, the organization referred the Palestinian struggle and liberation of Jerusalem as “jihad” in the 1970s and 1980s, but controversially dropped this reference in the 1990s. In 1999, it produced the OIC Convention on Combatting International Terrorism, and over the years, it has articulated a distinctive position in UN debates about defining and combatting terrorism. In each instance, the OIC negotiates among various legal systems—national, Islamic, international—in developing and offering a normative and political “Islamic” perspective. Kayaoglu argued that the OIC’s engagement with issues of violence has been inconsistent, shaped by broadly framed Islamic values, a highly deferential attitude towards sovereignty, and the political interests of its leading member states.

In a geographical case study, Simona E. Merati (Florida International University, Miami, USA) presented the diverse views on violence among Muslims in post-Soviet Russia. According to Merati, Islam has flourished in post-Soviet Russia revamping a long-professed faith and reconnecting with the global *ummah*. The combination of old traditions with new Islamic influences from abroad has enriched Russia’s Muslim communities, but has also created social friction. Particularly controversial is the (self)-positioning of Russia’s Muslims toward the state. Merati said that official Islamic institutions embrace the state-supported notion of Russian “traditional Islam” (indicating the forms of Islam historically practiced in Russia) and its belonging to a “Russian civilization”. Russian *muftis* reject the assumptions of Islam being a violent religion and of Muslims being enemies of the state. Some Muslim leaders and some prominent scholars of Islam emphasize Islamic *wasatiyyiah* (“moderateness”, *umerennost*) as preventive of social conflict, even in multi-religious societies. Conversely, other Muslim thinkers find inspiration in the Iranian revolution, reinterpreted through the lenses of Russian-Soviet history and traditional Russian messianism, to envision a new society based on “justice” (*al-Adalah, spravledivost*). Additionally, *jihadist* proclamations appear throughout the Islamic discourse, especially in areas of conflict (North Caucasus). Separatist groups like Imarat Kavkaz are close to international terrorism, Al-Qaeda, and the Islamic State, of which they share arguments and purposes.

In the only *jus in bellum* topic of the workshop, Seyed Hassan Eslami (University of Religions and Denominations, Qom, Iran) discussed the “Lying in the war” in Islamic tradition. According to Eslami, on the one hand it is believed that lying is a vice and forbidden from an Islamic viewpoint. On the other hand it is approved by all Muslim ethicists and jurists, or *fuqaha*, that the Muslim army can lie in the war. But the question is: how they can justify it? After reviewing briefly three main arguments for the permission of lying in war in the Islamic tradition he introduced a fourth position that problematized the possibility of lying in war, as in war context a

precondition of lying, namely trust, lacks by nature.

At the end of the workshop, the participants evaluated the meeting and offered some suggestions for improvement of the further activities. Focusing on the methodological and theoretical aspects of the topic as well as the diversity of topics, represented Islamic confessions, orientations, and countries were complimented and mentioned as positive characteristics of the workshop. Establishing “Islamic Peace Ethics: a Research Network”, planning for a comparative interreligious peace ethics seminar, as well as organizing meetings on special topics in the field for example non-violence, mass destruction weapon or terrorism were suggested. It was announced that an internet-portal will be created for the “Islamic Peace Ethics: A Research Network” and the papers of the workshop will be published in 2016 in the book series “Studies on Peace Ethics” (Studien zur Friedensethik) by ithf and Nomos publication to make the results of the workshop available for a wider range of readers.



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15-17 October 2015
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Thursday, 15.10.2015

Moderation: Heydar Shadi

- 18:00-19:00 Registration, welcome coffee
19:00-19:10 Welcome address, Prof. Heinz-Gerhard Justenhoven, director of ithf
19:10-20:15 Opening lecture (public): Prof. Dr. Sohail Hashmi, “Enemies Near and Far: The World according to Al-Qaeda and ISIS,” Mount Holyoke College, USA
20:15 Reception

Friday, 16.10.2015

- 09:00-09:30 Introduction, “Some methodological remarks on Islamic peace ethics,” Dr. des. Heydar Shadi, ithf, Hamburg, Germany
09:30-10:30 Lecture I: Prof. Dr. Dirk Ansorge, “Is it essentialism to claim that some religions foster violence – and some do not?,” Sankt Georgen Graduate School of Philosophy and Theology, Frankfurt a.M., Germany
10:30-11:00 Coffee Break
11:00-12:30 **Session I: *Methodology and theory of Islamic peace ethics*, Chair: Prof. Gerhard Beestermöller**
- Dr. des. Heydar Shadi, “The normative fields in the Islamic knowledge culture and the question of peace ethics,” ithf, Hamburg, Germany
Commentators: Dr. Belhaj Abdessamad
 - Dr. Sybille Reinke de Buitrago, “How Can We Talk about Islamic Peace Ethics? Conceptual Considerations on the Normative,” ithf and IFSH, Hamburg,

Germany

Commentators: Prof. Oliver Leaman, Dr. Bianka Speidl

- Prof. Dr. Oliver Leaman, “Moral philosophy and contemporary islamic controversies on peace and violence,” University of Kentucky, Lexington, USA

Commentators: Dr. Charles Ramsey, Dr. Belhaj Abdessamad

12:30-14:00 Lunch (at ithf)

14:00-15:30 **Session II: *contemporary Islamic peace ethics*, Chair: Prof. Udo Steinbach**

- Dr. Abdessamad Belhaj, “Jawdat Sa‘id and the philosophy of peace,” Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium

Commentators: Dr. Charles Ramsey, Dr. Asfa Widiyanto

- Najia Mukhtar, “Ideas on citizenship and violence against religious difference in contemporary Pakistan,” School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), UK

Commentators: Dr. Sybille Reinke de Buitrago, Dr. Turan kayakoglu

- Dr. Yahya Sabbaghchi, “Quranic Revision of Offensive War with emphasis on the views of the late ayatollah Khomeini,” Sharif University, Tehran, Iran

Commentators: Prof. Oliver Leaman, Dr. Bianka Speidl

15:30-16:00 Coffee break

16:00-17:30 **Session III: *contemporary Islamic peace ethics*, Chair: Prof. Ansoorge**

- Dr. Charles M. Ramsey, “Blessed Boundaries: Javed Ahmad Ghamidi (b. 1952) and the limits of Sunnah in legitimize violence,” Forman Christian College Lahore, Pakistan

Commentators: Dr. Turan Kayakoglu, Najia Mukhtar

- Dr. Bianka Speidl, “The Rhetoric of Power in Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah’s al-Islam wa-mantiq al-quwwa,” Exeter University, UK

Commentators: Dr. Simona Merati, Dr. Yahya Sabbaghchi

- Dr. Asfa Widiyanto, “Violence in contemporary Indonesian Islamist scholarship: Habib Rizieq Syihab and the 'enjoining good and forbidding evil',” State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Salatiga, Indonesia

Commentators: Najia Mukhtar

17:30-18:00 Coffee Break

18:00-19:00 Lecture II: Prof. Dr. Sohail Hashmi, “Finding Peace Ethics in Shari‘a,” Mount

Holyoke College, USA

19:00 Dinner, Restaurant Rheinische Republik: <http://www.rheinische-republik.de>

Saturday, 17.10.2015

09:00-09:45 Lecture III: Prof. Dr. Seyed Hassan Eslami, "Lying in the war: different ethical justifications," University of Religions and Denominations, Qom, Iran

09:45-10:30 Lecture IV: Prof. Dr. Mohammad Mahdi Mojahedi, "Religion-Based Justifications of Peace and Violence: A Post-Secular Critique of Culturalist Approaches," Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

10:30-11:00 Coffee break

11:00-12:00 **Session IV: *contemporary Islamic peace ethics*, chair: Dr. Bernhard Koch, ithf, Hamburg/ Goethe-University Frankfurt**

Commentators: Dr. Yahya Sabbaghchi, Dr. Asfa Widiyanto

- Dr. Turan Kayaoglu, "Constructing an Islamic framework of war and peace in international politics: the role of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation," University of Washington I Tacoma, USA

Commentators: Dr. Simona Merati

- Dr. Simona E. Merati, "Cooperation or revolution? Islamic narratives in contemporary Russia," Florida International University, Miami, USA

Commentators: Dr. Sybille reinke de Buitrago

12:00-13:30 Lunch, Restaurant Marinehof, <http://www.marinehof.de>

13:30-14:30 Lecture V: Prof. Dr. Robert Gleave, "Violence through Example – a comparison of the use of Sunna in Shi'i and Salafi justifications for violent action," University of Exeter, UK

14:30-15:30 Evaluation and planning of the publication and other future programs

15:30-16:00 Coffee and departure

Discussants:

1. Prof. Dr. Gerhard Beestermöller, Luxembourg School of Religion and Society, Luxembourg

2. Prof. Dr. Heinz-Gerhard Justenhoven, ithf, Hamburg, Germany

3. Dr. Bernhard Koch, ithf, Hamburg/ Goethe-University Frankfurt

4. Prof. Dr. Jamal Malik, Universität Erfurt, Erfurt, Germany

5. Prof. Dr. Udo Steinbach, Humboldt-Viadrina Governance Platform Governance Platform, Berlin,