

Instrumentalisation of the Past as a Means of Political Mobilisation: the Painful Experiences of Eastern Europe and the Balkans

Friday, 17 March 2017, University of Basel, Switzerland (9 - 21h)

Venue

For the academic workshop (09:00 - 18:30): Zunfthaus “Zum Hohen Dolder”, St. Alban-Vorstadt 35, 4052 Basel

For the panel discussion (19:30): Room 001, University of Basel, Kollegienhaus, St.Petersgraben 21, 4056 Basel

Programme

Throughout the post-communist region of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, historical memories are instrumentalised as a tool for political mobilisation and repression, often in a context of violent conflict and war. The planned conference investigates this issue in a transnational, comparative and interdisciplinary manner. Representatives from Ukraine, Russia, the Balkans, Central Europe and Georgia, together with colleagues from Switzerland and other Western European countries, will discuss the different forms of ‘history politics’ and nationalist mobilisation in the specific contexts of the armed conflicts in Ukraine, Georgia and the Balkans. Moreover, they will reflect on the role civil society and independent research can play to resist nationalist propaganda and warmongering.

The conference will be structured in a one-day workshop for practitioners and academic specialists of ‘memory politics’ (upon invitation), followed by a panel discussion in the evening (open to public).

The conference is jointly hosted by the Swiss Peace Foundation swisspeace and the University of Basel (Department of History).

09:00	Registration and welcome coffee for the academic workshop
09:30	Welcome address and introductory remarks (Prof. Benjamin Schenk, Basel University and Dr. Cécile Druey, swisspeace)
10:00	<p>Workshop 1: Russia (Moderation: Prof. Dr. Georgiy Kasianov)</p> <p>In Russia, the reenactment of World War II is part of the official political discourse. This workshop will look at the role that the instrumentalisation of the past, notably the re-enactment of World War II, plays in Russia’s present political discourse and its relations with the ‘Near Abroad’ (Ukraine). Further, it will reflect on what this means for civil society and the academia.</p>

	<p>Presentations</p> <p>“The Memory of World War II as a Battle Field and an Instrument of Identity Politics in Today Russia”, Prof. Dr. Alexey Miller, Central European University, Budapest (Hungary) and European University of St. Petersburg (Russia).</p> <p>“The Hybrid War of Memory: Russia’s Account of Stalinist Repression in the Aftermath of the Ukrainian Crisis”, PhD cand. Ekateryna Klimenko, Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw (Poland) and St. Petersburg State Institute of Culture and Arts, St. Petersburg (Russia).</p>
11:30	<p>Workshop 2: Ukraine (Moderation: Prof. Dr. André Liebich)</p> <p>The policies of ‘de-communisation’ and ‘de-sovietisation’, as well as the ideology of historical victimisation have marked Ukraine’s socio-political reality since 1991. These projects of mobilisation and counter-mobilisation have gained in strength during and after the Maidan revolution, and on the background of the conflict with Russia and with the separatist Donbas. The present workshop will look at these experiences from an interdisciplinary perspective, combining approaches of cultural studies, political psychology and sociology.</p> <p>Presentations</p> <p>“The Occupation of Memory”, Dr. Vasyl Cherepanyn, Kyiv Mohyla Academy and Visual Culture Research Center, Kiev (Ukraine).</p> <p>“Instrumentalised History and Social memory: a Psychological Analysis of Regional Policies in Ukraine”, Dr. Iryna Brunova-Kalisetska, Integration and Development Center for Information and Research, Kiev (Ukraine).</p> <p>“Memory and Conflict: Politics of History and its Societal Perception in Post-Maidan Ukraine”, PhD cand. Anna Chebotarova, Center for Urban History of East Central Europe, Lviv (Ukraine).</p>
13:00	Lunch break
14:00	<p>Workshop 3: the Balkans (Moderation: Prof. Dr. Benjamin Schenk)</p> <p>The Balkan states have witnessed extensive nationalist mobilisation and instrumentalisation of collective memory during conflict. However, they have also developed mechanisms to act against them. This workshop reflects on the post-conflict situation in Croatia and Serbia, and on the role of legal, political and socio-cultural arrangements to reach a change in perception and memory about the recent past.</p> <p>Presentations</p> <p>“Contested Histories, Politicised Memories: The Abuses of a Traumatic Past and the Challenges of Reconciliation in the former Yugoslavia”, PD Dr. Vjeran Pavlakovic, University of Rijeka, Rijeka (Croatia)</p>

	<p>“The Cultural Resources of the Contemporary Anti-fascist Resistance”, PhD cand. Aleksandra Sekulic, Center for Cultural Decontamination, Belgrade (Serbia)</p>
15:00	<p>Workshop 4: Georgia (Moderation: Dr. Cécile Druey)</p> <p>History, nation-building and territory played an important role in the conflicts of post-Soviet Georgia. This workshop looks at the ‘memory policies’ in Georgia, and of their roles in the Georgian-South Ossetian, Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian-Russian conflicts of 1991-1994 and 2008.</p> <p>Presentations “Instrumentalisation of the Past and the Construction of Memory Projects: Some Defining Causes of the Georgia-Abkhazian Conflict”, Prof. Dr. Malkhaz Toria, Ilia State University, Tbilisi (Georgia)</p>
16:00	<p>Comparative discussion (Moderation: Dr. Oksana Myshlovska)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How to deal with the communist past in the (post-) conflict situations of Eastern Europe and the Balkans (arts, political parties, academic achievements)? – What are the possibilities to build resistance against the instrumentalisation of historical memories and nationalist mobilisation, in civil society and independent research?
19:30	<p>Panel discussion “Instrumentalisation of the Past as a Means of Political Mobilisation: the Painful Experiences of Eastern Europe and the Balkans” (open to public)</p> <p>Venue: Room 001, University of Basel, Kollegienhaus, St.Petersgraben 21, 4056 Basel</p>
	<p>Joint dinner</p>