



International Conference

Dealing with the Past—Memory and Reconciliation after Regime Changes in the late 20th Century

Location: The event will be broadcast on the YouTube channel of the Federal Foundation for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Eastern Germany

Event period: 18 / 19 August 2021
Day 1: 15:00 – 19:30
Day 2: 10:00 – 15:30

Languages: German – English (Simultaneous interpretation will be available)

Livestream: August 18: <https://youtu.be/sk7PnWiMhOs>
August 19: <https://youtu.be/tS5B07udXzs>

Abstract:

The 20th century was an era of worldwide struggle between freedom and tyranny, democracy and dictatorship. After the Second World War, the East-West conflict decisively influenced world politics. Left-wing and right-wing dictatorships, authoritarian regimes and democratic states maintained complex relationships with each other. The upheavals in Europe, Latin America, Southeast Asia and parts of Africa with the end of colonial regimes and the end of the Cold War heralded a new era. It was associated with changes in the political systems of many countries of the world.

Following the end of dictatorships, armed conflicts, and wars, the affected countries and societies have to confront a wide range of challenges. On the one hand, they need to establish new political and social structures. On the other hand, all these societies are facing the important question of how to deal with their conflict-ridden past. In recent years, the term "transitional justice" has been established for this phenomenon. The conference "Dealing with the Past—Memory and Reconciliation after Regime Changes in the late 20th Century" is dedicated to an international comparative perspective on the historical and current questions of regime changes as well as to the collective processes of reconciliation that follow them.

The understanding of transitional justice differs greatly in many countries and cultures: while some countries actively engage in a process of social reconciliation and stabilization, others might pursue

to fall silent about the past or even denying it with the same goal. Which goal and which way of coming to terms with one's own past is chosen largely depends on the extent to which the regime change was also associated with a change of elite.

The conference addresses different approaches of transitional justice in an international perspective by discussing the following questions: Which forms took regime changes in different states? How did the political events of the period of upheaval shape personal biographies? Which turmoils and distortions are still noticeable today? What challenges and tasks do democratic societies face in dealing with their dictatorial past? What different paths have different countries taken in dealing with their recent, often violent past? What can we learn from each other's different experiences and what common paths can we follow?

Program

Wednesday, August 18, 2021

15:00 – 15:15 **Welcome Address and Introduction:** Dr Anna Kaminsky, Federal Foundation for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Eastern Germany, Berlin

15:15 – 16:00 **Keynote and discussion: A Brief History of Regime Changes in the late 20th Century**

Repressive state regimes can end in very different ways: reform processes from above can cause them, peaceful or violent revolutions, civil wars or armed conflicts. The form of the regime change is thereby formative for the development of new sustainable political structures and for the social reconciliation processes that is accepted by a majority of the population. The lecture will give an overview of the regime changes in different countries and compare them with each other: How did the regime changes take place in particular countries? Were they violent or peaceful? What effects did the course of the regime change have on the societies in these countries today?

Keynote by

Prof Dr Jan Eckel, University of Tübingen

Discussion moderated by Harald Asel, rbb Inforadio, Berlin

16:00 – 17:30 **Panel I: Times of upheaval: Regime Changes in an International Perspective**

The questions raised in the lecture will be discussed in more detail on the podium with a view to different geographical areas: How did the system changes of the second half of the 20th century take place in the different world regions? Which role did historical contexts, internal and external factors play? What strategies were chosen for a social new start? What approaches and principles globally existed for democratic and social reforms? What similarities and differences can we distinguish be-

tween the various regime changes in an international comparison, for example with regard to the aftermaths of the downfall of communism or the processes of decolonization? As how successful can the regime changes in the different regions and countries be classified from today's perspective?

Participants:

Prof Dr Aurel Croissant, Heidelberg University

Prof Dr Sabine Kurtenbach, GIGA Institute for Latin American Studies, Hamburg

Prof Dr Carola Lentz, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz

Prof Dr Gwendolyn Sasse, Centre for East European and International Studies, Berlin

Moderation: Harald Asel, rbb Inforadio, Berlin

17:30 – 18:00 *Break*

18:00 – 19:30 **Panel II: Broken System—Broken Society? International Perspectives on Experiences of Transformation**

The collapse of the political system not only manifests in the societies but also in the biographies of its people. For many of them, the experiences of upheaval meant deep personal cutbacks that often turned their previous life plans upside down—regardless of how their stance on the regime had previously been. The podium would like to look at the concrete experiences of people between new beginnings and changes, between personal hopes, disappointments and successes. Which influence did the regime changes have on the societies of the different countries? What did the collapse of a dictatorship and the establishment of a new political system mean for the individual? Were breaks in biographies a collective experience? What impact do these experiences have on contemporary society? How can we deal with them?

Participants:

Dr Ulrike Capdepón, University of Konstanz

Marina Frenk, Author, Berlin

Prof Dr Steffen Mau, Humboldt University of Berlin

Dr Khulu Mbatha, Special Advisor to the President of South Africa, Pretoria

Moderation: Michaela Kufner, Deutsche Welle, Berlin

Thursday, August 19, 2021

10:00 – 10:45 **Keynote and discussion: The Right to Truth: Right or Justice? Revenge or Reconciliation? Coming to Terms or Offsetting?**

With the end of dictatorship and tyranny, the countries chose different ways of dealing with the past. These include not only national or international court proceedings to punish perpetrators, but also different instruments and mechanisms aimed at establishing justice and reconciliation between the former conflict parties: amnesties, public access to files, lustration, rehabilitation and compensation of victims. The lecture compares different types of historical reappraisal processes and explains why the respective path was chosen. It discusses their political and legal aspects as well as the associated political truth and inquiry commissions conflicts and goals.

Keynote by

Dr Rainer Huhle, Nuremberg Human Rights Center

Discussion moderated by Tamina Kutscher, dekode.org, Hamburg

10:45 – 12:30 **Panel I: From the Shadow of the Past into the Light of Reappraisal**

Representatives of civil society initiatives and memorial sites as well as experts from different countries will meet on the podium. They will give an insight into different forms and aspects of the social and legal processes of coming to terms with the past as well as in the development of the culture of remembrance in their own countries. The aim is to take stock of the status quo of reconciliation with the past and of future expectations and challenges: How are we dealing with the process of reconciliation today? What effects from the coping processes can we see in these countries today? What dangers existed for the course of reconciliation? What results have been achieved? Which corrections had possibly been made? Similarities and differences between the countries are compared and pointed out.

Participants:

Dr Rosario Figari Layús, Justus Liebig University of Giessen

Prof Dr Axel Klausmeier, Berlin Wall Foundation

Dr Nikita Vasilyevich Petrov, International Memorial, Moscow

Prof Dr Jhy-Wey Shieh, Representative of Taiwan in Germany

Moderation: Tamina Kutscher, dekode.org, Hamburg

12:30 – 13:30 *Break*

13:30 – 15:30 **Panel II: No Ending in Dealing with the Past? Or: the Future of Dealing with the Past**

The concluding panel will summarize the findings of the international comparison and discuss how approaches from other countries could be transferred, but also where the limits of comparability lie. Furthermore, the panel will focus on the tasks and challenges that need to be addressed today: How, for example, do we deal with state prevention of the process of coming to terms with the past or the request for a 'clean break'? What lessons from history can we transfer to the present and what answers can our democratic societies give to the authoritarian temptations of the time? What function does historical reappraisal still have in democratic societies?

Participants:

Dr Radka Denemarková, Author, Prague

Prof Dr Luís Farinha, Aljube Museum Resistance and Freedom, Lisbon

Bartholomäus Grill, Journalist and author, Cape Town

Markus Meckel, Federal Foundation for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Eastern Germany, Berlin

Dr Meelis Maripuu, Estonian Institute of Historical Memory, Tallinn

Moderation: Dr Jacqueline Boysen, Journalist and author, Berlin