## International Summer School 2015:

**Societies in Transition. The Caucasus and the Balkans between Conflict and Reconciliation**

**CONFERENCE REPORT / 07.11.2015**

| **Organizers:** | Jena Center for Reconciliation Studies (JCRS) at Friedrich-Schiller-University Jena, Germany  
|                | The American Institute for Contemporary German Studies (AICGS) at Johns Hopkins University, USA  
|                | The School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University, USA |
| **Venue:**     | Friedrich-Schiller University Jena |
| **Date:**      | September 27 – October 4, 2015 |
| **Language:**  | English |
| **Target Group** | PhD candidates/ scholars who hold a first degree |
| **Disciplines:** | Theology, History, Law, Social and Political Sciences, Cultural and Religious Studies |
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Author of the report: Carolina Rehrmann, contact: carolina.rehrmann@uni-jena.de
INTRODUCTION

The attitude of the European Union towards the Ukraine crisis and vis-à-vis the Russian-Georgian conflict of 2008, the question of Turkey’s and the Southeast-European states’ EU-accession in the wider context of debates about European Identity, Foreign Policy and Borders cannot be considered in isolation from the post-Soviet political developments within the Balkan and the Caucasus region.

Since the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of Yugoslavia the Mediterranean and Black Sea regions are faced with multiple upheavals viewing successful and unsuccessful efforts for autonomy and bloody secessions whose roots reach far back into the 19th century.

With this in mind, our 2015 International Summer School focused on a wide range of questions concerning the challenges and prospects for reconciliation in the respective regions.

We were honored with the presence of accomplished scientific experts in the fields of reconciliation and conflict resolution and enchanted by the authenticity and deepness of our scientific debates not least due to the versatile academic and cultural backgrounds of our 14 student participants and the contribution of the JCRS’s staff.

The International Summer School 2015 has been undertaken as a joint project of the Friedrich-Schiller-University of Jena between the JCRS (Martin Leiner) and the Chair of International Relations at the Institute of Political Science (Raphael Biermann) in cooperation with the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies (Johns Hopkins University) and the School for Conflict Analysis & Resolution (George Mason University). It has been funded by the Thuringian Ministry for Education, Science and Culture and the Ernst-Abbe-Foundation. To the latter we are much obliged due to its short-date willingness for funding.

SUMMARY OF SCIENTIFIC CONTENT

KEY-NOTE-SPEECHES
First LILY GARDNER FELDMAN from the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies (Johns Hopkins University) gave as a profound analysis of “The EU, Germany and the Balkans: Motivations, Mechanisms and Measurements in the Promotion of a Path from Conflict to Reconciliation” where she critically reflected on the role of the EU as a player with rather pragmatic interests towards the Balkans and its neighboring countries. She traced the repeated EU-efforts and declarations on the status quo of the Balkan’s pathway towards Europe pointing also to its actual relevance in the refugees’ issue. In outlining the challenges and successes of the EU’s and especially Germany’s mediation role, she illustrated the different motivations and interests, policies and mechanisms for enhancing reconciliation and paving the way towards Europe on the level of the Acquis Communautaire, the political and
civil society sphere while also critically reflecting Europe’s internal debates on identity and diversity.

In his speech titled “Frozen Conflicts: The Challenge for Reconciliation 20 Years after Transition” CHRISTOT THESENAAR from the Faculty of Theology at the University of Stellenbosch first shed light on the concept of “frozen conflict” as an unstable and insecure situation, were conflict can erupt at any time. Then, he critically discussed reconciliation efforts and balances in South Africa referring to the present status as a state in limbo, were conflict fatigue, frustration with economic disparities and a lack of success in the implementation of justice, especially material compensation has blocked the way to sustainable reconciliation, encapsulating it in the phrase: “Despite the establishment and implementation of the TRC by the state in the aftermath of apartheid (for a period of two years), very few if any systematic, state-supported, civil-supported or religious supported processes derived from the TRC to implement the findings of the TRC in order to facilitate reconciliation and healing.”

In his thematically connected workshop titled “Dealing with the Past: Is Remembrance, Trauma and Memory an Obstacle or Catalyst for Reconciliation?” participants were divided into small discussion groups with the task of exchanging and evaluating information on national and personal memories which functioned as a small-level-simulation of broader debates on collective and individual memory. KORNELY KAKACHIA from Tbilisi State University in his presentation “Politics of Insecurity: Cross-border Conflict Dynamics and Security Challenges in Georgia” first illuminated the concept of borders and borderlands as a dense area that reflects en miniature structures of power and cultural hegemony, security concerns, territorial and economic interests and quarrels between larger regions. Then he applied his concept to the case of cross-border dynamics between Georgia, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Russia on the basis of a comparative analysis stating that a new understanding of the importance of cross-border cooperation could help in transforming foreign policy strategies of the respective countries in order to enhance mutual de-escalation and rapprochement.

PHILIPP TOLLIDAY from “St Barnabas’ Theological College” argued in his key-note speech “Reconciliation: A Negotiation Between Anamnesis and Amnesia” that “reconciliation is hardly a free-floating concept, but is surrounded by a teeming cluster of words, ideas, and practices such as justice, truth, history, amnesty, forgiveness, impunity, apology, harmony, consensus, vengeance and resentment” integrating his profound definition into the wider question of the “right remembrance” while steering the middle ground between anamnesis and amnesia in his case study on Australia’s past and attempts to construct a homogeneous imagined community despite a reality of very different and parallel narratives.

In his workshop titled “Feeling Foreign in a Familiar Land” he further delved into that issue seeking to shed light on the two competing histories between the autochthonous and allochthonous populations of Australia, while bringing up the question to what extend a unified history was achievable and desirable.

RAPHAEL BIERMANN from the Department of Political Science at Friedrich-Schiller University gave a speech on “Reconciliation in Former Yugoslavia” critically
assessing reconciliation efforts in the region today while attributing failures and interethnic tensions to a majority’s attitude of “collective denial of the past and deep distrust (...), coupled with continuing preferences for ‘othermaligning’ and ‘self-glorifying’ among all groups and exclusive thinking along ethnic lines”. Hinting to the problem of governments that pay lip service to reconciliation he illustrated the overall presence of mutually exclusive and degrading memorials despite of deviating official declarations. Thus, giving an outline of the conflict history while taking stock of the failure of mediation and rapprochement efforts of the international community he pointed at the need for a paradigm shift on the part of the mediators as well as on the part of the governing Balkan elites aimed at a profound societal transformations.

MARTIN LEINER from the Faculty of Theology at Friedrich-Schiller-University, organizer of the ISS and founder of the Jena Center for Reconciliation Studies, first presented an overview over the JCRS’ s sphere of activities, commitments and visions for the future highlighting the importance of interdisciplinary and comparative approaches to the field of reconciliation within the center’s “Hölderlin Approach”. This approach proceeds on the assumption that reconciliation occurs in the middle of conflict. That, as Martin posited, does not only hint to the fact that even within violent confrontations there are amicable encounters between individuals. Applied to the GDR-memory, for instance, it also means that even decades after the end of the dictatorship there is still a considerable backlog demand in reprocessing and accounting for the past. Ideological cleavages, stereotypes, negative emotions and actions against the former Outgroup can be reactivated at any point. Reconciliation in this deeper definition is more than peaceful coexistence, especially in regard to a lack in intergroup communication about the past – as within the inner German context. The insufficiency of a constructive, social dialogue about that divergent perspectives has led, he added, among others to the current hijacking of the former GDR-opposition by xenophobic and right wing-extremist groups for propaganda purposes against present governments by reactivating the traditional “Monday Demonstrations” of the GDR-opposition to polemize against refugees. One of the central challenges in dealing with the GDR-past will be to bring into dialogue about their perspectives victims, perpetrators and followers of the regime. A process like this, he concluded, would surely blur the traditional categories of the GDR-discourse.

Then MARIA PALME, project coordinator of the JCRS, within the scope of Martin’s overall subject “Reunification of Germany and Post-GDR Reconciliation: Thuringia and Beyond” stroke a balance of the debates, perspectives and topics in relation to coming to grips and accounting for the GDR-past and to representations of collective memory using the example of the federal state of Thuringia. Within the research of memory debate the importance of combining top-down and bottom up approaches and a profound understanding of the historical background for the correct interpretation and assessment of contemporary witnesses (oral history) was underlined.

PAATA ZAKARESHVILI, Georgia’s state Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality, focused on the security needs of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan in view
of the fragile peace, sporadic armed confrontation, political disparities, social fragmentation and issues of energy in the Caucasus region since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Appealing to the international community for active involvement into multilateral rapprochement efforts he also underlined Georgia’s aims and opportunities in strengthening cooperation in the region as a balancing force by enhancing its multilateral ties, mediating in the various conflicts, while also underpinning Georgia’s efforts to normalize its relations with Russia.

Eventually, KARINA V. KOROSTELINA from the School for Conflict Analysis & Resolution at George Mason University delivered a speech with the title “Facing Violent Past: Major Dilemmas and the Role of a Common History”. Within that scope the tackled the issue of history being perceived as heritage and as such connected to the social identity, the present and the imagined path to a community’s future. She underlined the importance of a critical reflection of one’s own past for intra- and intercommunal rapprochement citing important challenges, such as the dilemma of understanding the past in terms of either a “critical history that helps to improve the society” as opposed to a “monumental history that increases loyalty to the nation and submission to the ruling elite” or the difficulty of steering a middle course between remembering and forgetting.

STUDENT’S AND POSTDOC’S PRESENTATIONS

After and between our key-note speeches that had always been followed by vivid and profound discussions, our participants, coming from twelve different countries from Southeast Europe, Russia, and the Caucasus, presented their own planned or already undertaken fieldwork and theoretical analysis on reconciliation efforts in various regions as part of their PhDs or master theses. We divided them into four overarching themes of which the first was titled: “Stereotyping or Empathy: The Impact of Collective Memories on Interethnic Cooperation”; the second: “Confronting History: The Impact of Collective Memories on Interethnic Cooperation.”; the third: “External Actors as catalysts for rapprochement” and eventually: “Russia in the Post-Soviet Sphere: Challenges and Prospects”.

The wide interdisciplinary range of topics included critical analyses of the difficulties of tackling the past in the context of socio-emotional and political barriers, tendencies of distortion and shielding from inconvenient realities through the externalization of blame. Furthermore, challenges of implementing justice, providing closure, opening the way for intercommunal cooperation and the opportunities of third-party-mediation were critically debated. Eventually also the factor “Realpolitik” referring to mostly Russia's geostrategic interests and political impact in the post-Soviet region was presented and debated.

The first three presentations focused on intersubjectivity analyzing the role of contact, emotions and identity in paving the way for a collective coping with the past. MIRJANA RUPAR presented her topic „Facing history - the role of intergroup contact and intergroup emotions in the process of reconciliation” focusing on emotions and group contact between segregated groups. In underlining the necessity of emotional reprocessing, overcoming stereotypes and lacks of knowledge in order
to avoid monolithic generalizations about “the other” she outlined her planned field study in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the context of substantial ethnic segregation and competing collective memories.

NENA MOCNIK and VICKO MARELIC gave vivid presentations which we decided to label with the neologism “presormance” referring to a successful combination on scientific “presentation” and artistic “performance”. Since both have an academic and a theatrical background using drama and improvisation techniques for intercultural understanding, healing of trauma and reconciliation, they could draw on a wide range of practical working experience in presenting their research topics. Nena in her speech “I will not raise my child to kill your child”: The Impact of Collective Trauma in Women Survivors’ Families and its effects in (un)successful reconciliation processes in further generations” talked about the role of trauma in relation to women for either perpetuating or overcoming intergroup conflict drawing on her fieldwork with women (especially mothers) in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Vicko titled his presentation “Caves, Concerts and Comedy - Creative Conflict Resolution in the Alpen-Adria Region” analyzing the conflicting memory discourses and identities in the context of nationalist aspirations and drawing of boundaries on the Balkan of the 20th century with a focus on the East-Adriatic Borderland, civil society and political activities aiming at reconciliatory representation of the past. Eventually JOVANA VUKCEVIC’s presented her research project “Commodification of Collective Memory: Socialist Heritage between Disneyfication and Reconciliation” in which she planes to undertake a collective memory analysis of the post-soviet regions, especially of the Balkans by means of memorial places representing “Soviet Heritage” while showing how a trivialized, “disneyfied” past that is deprived of any “dangerous” or inconvenient content can today serve as a common positive reference point of identity.

Two presentations were concerned with the role of religion as strongly connected to ideas, identities and thus also to prospects of reconciliation. FERNANDO AVAKIAN spoke about “Salafist Groups in the North Caucasus: Changes in the Understanding of the Chechen Conflict” presenting his hypothesis on the deterioration of interethnic relations in the region because of rising Islamic fundamentalism. He stated that, whereas initial post-soviet efforts for separation were motivated by ethnic-nationalist aspirations today they are increasingly based on religious grounds influenced by the influx of former fighters from Afghanistan and connected to the wider Islamist discourse.

As opposed to this MARIA TOROPOVA in “The Role of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Process of Conflict Transformation in Eastern and Southeastern Europe (incl. South Caucasus)” showed that religion as institutionally represented by the Russian Orthodox Church can serve as a trans-ethnic and trans-national reference point while drawing theoretically on Habermas’ post-secular society, Nye’s soft power theory and the Orthodox’ “Symphony Theory”.

A series of presentations could be connected to the “preconditions for societal change” while focusing on the importance of eye level, respect and the role of education in inter- and intra-communal dialogue, problematizing challenges and
obstacles for the implementation of retributive and restorative justice in the context of strategic or socio-emotional resistance to accounting for the past and the danger of external actors being perceived as “interfering” into internal affairs by threatening the social cohesion.

In this sense MARIAT IMAEVA in her presentation “Deferring Human Rights - Humanitarian Exhumations as an Alternative Way of Dealing with Enforced Disappearances in Chechnya” underlined the importance of justice for the basic need of knowledge, accounting and closure while discussing the role of exhumations as an instrument of transitional justice in the context of the up to 5000 missing people of the Chechen conflict emphasizing the significance of certainty concerning the fate of the loved ones for dealing with grief and doing justice. Her research is based on ECHR-sentences following charges of Chechens and their possible impact on the local political actors.

MARINA ZAGAR discussed the concept of “Responsibility to Protect: Prosecution of Mass Atrocity Crimes and its Impact on Reconciliation and Peace” presenting the role of R2P as a normative guideline introduced by the United Nations in 2005 aiming at the liability of states to protect its population from human rights violations, esp. crimes against humanity. Thereby Marina focused on the actual effectiveness of the international court’s rulings on the one hand and on the other on the theoretical question of their (counter-) productiveness for a sustainable peace in general.

GEORGI VARDISHVILI, eventually, talked about “External Actors as Catalyst for Rapprochement” tracing the challenges and prospects for “peace education” in South Ossetia and Abkhazia in particular in cooperation with the European Union while flagging the practical obstacles such as recognition matters and admission restrictions that de-facto states face.

The following presentations were concerned with the EU, its strategies and its leverage power in connection to its image as role model, as “an ideal to reach” on the one hand, and the incentives for societal transformation out of economic advantages on the other. Can the prospect of association, respectively integration to the EU cause a real transformation in the countries in question or do the local governments of South-East Europe and the Caucasus rather pay lip service to the ideals of multiculturalism, diversity, tolerance and civic identity? While KATARINA MANOJLOVIC in her presentation on “The European Union and its Policy of Conflict Resolution in the Eastern Neighborhood- The Case of Georgia” judged the power of the EU concerning the conflict between Georgia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia in the wider context of the “European Neighborhood Policy” and the “Eastern Partnership” rather positively, LUTJONA LULA was skeptical in her presentation on the “The impact of the EU on Political Parties in Serbia and Albania: Turning Nationalists into Peace Intermediators?”, were she questioned the EU’s ideal power on party programs and practices in Albania and Serbia since their signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement that coincided with the prospect of accession.

Given Russia as the biggest player in the region with specific geostrategic, political and economic interests, what is its role for the settlement of the hot issues in the
Caucasus? To that effect, EKATERINA KLIMENKO in her presentation titled “Fostering Interethnic Tolerance”: An Efficient Reconciliation Strategy or (Re) Producing Racism?” was concerned with the obvious fraction between real and ideal in her critical analysis of legal documents of the Russian administration on reconciliation programs with regard to the Caucasus region. She aptly pointed at the contradiction of rapprochements efforts on the one hand and the maintenance of an ethnically exclusive discourse on the other.

Similarly, ESHGIN TANRIVERDI talked about his “Analysis of Russian Near Abroad Policy Towards the South Caucasus Conflicts on the Basis of the Ethic” while drawing on the philosophical conceptions of “ethical egoism” versus “utilitarianism” in a critical evaluation of Russia’s interests and strategies in the Caucasus Region applying the former to the Soviet Union’s maxim for acting, the latter to today’s Russia in its post-imperialistic quest for identity.

Eventually, ZAFAR SAYDALIEV focused on traits, interests and powers of the OSCE: Shedding light on “Third Party Mediation between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh: Mediation via the OSCE Minsk Group” he discussed the IO’s efforts and success in mediation while relating to the concepts of leverage power, bias and relationship between mediator and conflict parties shedding light on the risk that mediators may perpetuate conflicts while maintaining the very status quo of conflict as a raison d’être for themselves.

SOCIAL PROGRAM
To round out the academic discussion we had organized a rich cultural program, beginning with an opening celebration with life music at Schiller’s old Garden House in Jena. Two guided tours tackled the overarching issue of human rights violations and collective memory debates in regard to Germany: We undertook a fieldtrip to the concentration camp of Buchenwald guided by the historian Jan Litty, to whom we owe our special thanks. There Francesco Ferrari offered us a workshop on trauma processing based on the book by former Buchenwald inmate Gorge Semprun. In Berlin we visited the memorial site “Hohenschönhausen” discussing with a historian the delicate issue of collective GDR-memory in Germany today.

Last, but no least, we can remember wonderful formal and informal discussions, the jolly evening of Georgian vine tasting, learning the art of improvisation theater with Vicko Marelic and discussing the role of memory places and art while walking along the East Side Gallery in Berlin.