Proposal

Ressortforschung

Back to the Future? – Countering the Misuse of Memory to Preserve Peace and Security in the OSCE Region

To the attention of:

Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
Directorate of Political Affairs
Bundesgasse 32
3003 Bern

Submitted by:

swisspeace
Steinengraben 22
4051 Basel
T +41 31 330 12 12
www.swisspeace.ch

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Schweizerische Friedensstiftung
Fondation suisse pour la paix
Fondazione svizzera per la pace
Swiss Peace Foundation

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1   Aim of the research project

This research project aims at addressing a gap in knowledge on how the (mis-)use of sites of commemoration and remembrance inflicts on peace and security in the region covered by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). In the spirit of the OSCE's "comprehensive approach to security", it tries to link the OSCE's Politico-Military and Human Dimensions. Based on the results of the research and in exchange with practitioners and organisations working in the field of memorialisation and heritage preservation from a number of contexts (e.g. Northern Ireland, Italy, Germany, Austria, Spain, Portugal, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Serbia and Switzerland), best practices, lessons learnt and policy recommendations will be developed and published in order to share the knowledge obtained during the project. The research results will be of practical use for state and non-state actors working in the field of memorialisation, preservation of heritage, democracy and human rights education, as well as for national and international policy makers working on preserving peace and security in the OSCE region (and potentially beyond).

The aim of the research project is to gain a better understanding of the:

— use of memorialisation, spaces of commemoration and sites of remembrance in the OSCE region, in particular on how they enhance positive transformative narratives based on the respect for democratic principles, human rights and the rule of law (i.e. the OSCE Human Dimension), or in contrary, strengthen nationalist and extremist tendencies. Case studies from different OSCE participating States will be used to illustrate the argument;

— ways of contesting misuse and manipulation of sites of remembrance and memory for extremist purposes and how to transform them into positive and conflict sensitive spaces of human rights and civic education, promoting tolerance and understanding for democratic processes and the importance of the rule of law (i.e. the OSCE Human Dimension);

— interaction and contribution of different actors to memorialisation, including human rights and peacebuilding organisations, educators, media, national authorities and international organizations, in order to enhance the transformation of sites used for nationalistic politicization and polarization into spaces for positive and conflict sensitive civic education.

2   Background and rationale

The OSCE region is experiencing a rise of nationalism[1] and populism. Populist politicians are winning elections by way of promoting nationalist, mystifying (and/ or wrong, i.e. not evidence-based, and often simplified) narratives of the past, dividing societies, jeopardizing social cohesion and thus peace and security on the local, the national and regional level for their own political gain. In the worst case, those democratically elected politicians capture the state system by eliminating checks and balances. They thus threaten democracy, the rule of law and human rights. Shrinking civil society and recently also shrinking multilateral space bear evidence of these developments, which endanger peace and security in the OSCE region (and beyond).

The OSCE region has experienced many violent conflicts in recent history, both "East" and "West" of Vienna (e.g. in the Western Balkans, in Northern Ireland), some of which are still ongoing (e.g. Ukraine) and/ or protracted (e.g. Transnistria, conflicts in the South Caucasus). Where peace was achieved, it remains fragile (e.g. in the Western Balkans with recent talk about exchanging territories between Serbia and Kosovo along ethnic lines; in Northern Ireland with the rise of nationalist rhetoric due to Brexit).

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[1] https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36130006, [06.12.2019].

Today, memorialisation is considered to be an important aspect of a holistic approach to Dealing with the Past, as for instance reflected in the United Nations Principles to Combat Impunity[2]. It contributes to social reconciliation and cohesion and to the respect and protection of human rights, thus preventing the re-emergence of violent conflict and safeguarding peace and security. Across the globe, various state and non-state actors have engaged in memorialisation initiatives to shed light on past human rights violations, advocate for trials against perpetrators, provide recognition to victims and promote human rights for the sake of preventing future atrocities. With their work, they can contribute to the rule of law, democratic form of governing and more inclusive societies.

While the transformative potential of such initiatives is widely recognized, memory and history are nonetheless contested and have in many instances been used to reinforce extreme nationalist versions of the past and to delegitimize and silence the narratives of others. In many contexts, political elites use memorials and commemorative events to shape national identities, which reinforce distinctiveness from a perceived other, and unity against perceived external and internal enemies.[3] Such narratives reinforce division, segregation, extremism, and exclusion and are therefore a destabilizing factor that endangers the culture and respect of human rights, also in the region of the OSCE, all the way from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

To date, there has not been enough research on this important topic. There is especially a lack of comparative studies on different experiences in this field, which could identify elements with the potential to be applied in other cases. Of specific interest are recent initiatives planning to transform sites that are being misused by right extremists and Neonazis, such as the house of birth of Adolf Hitler in Braunau in Austria, the home of Salazar in the village of Vimieiro in Portugal,[4] the monument in the Valle de los Caídos in Spain[5], the place of origin of Mussolini in Predappio in Italy[6], the House of Terror museum (Terror Háza Múzeum) in Budapest,[7] the Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk[8], the monuments of Gavrilo Princip in Bosnia and Herzegovina[9] and other contested memorial sites in the OSCE region.

Thanks to the mandate "Archives and Dealing with the Past", financed by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), swisspeace can rely on a large network of organisations and experts working in the field of memorialisation, human rights and democracy education, conflict transformation and Dealing with the Past in Europe (e.g. Documenta in Croatia, Centre for Dealing with the Past in Kosovo, Potocary Memorial in Bosnia Herzegovina, Stasi Archives and Museum, Gedenkstätte Hohenschönhausen in

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[2] Principle 3 of the "Updated Set of principles for the protection and promotion of human rights through action to combat impunity" (Diane Orentlicher), E/CN.4/2005/102/Add.1, 8 February 2005, states "A people's knowledge of the history of its oppression is part of its heritage and, as such, must be ensured by appropriate measures in fulfilment of the State's duty to preserve archives and other evidence concerning violations of human rights and humanitarian law and to facilitate knowledge of those violations. Such measures shall be aimed at preserving the collective memory from extinction and, in particular, at guarding against the development of revisionist and negationist arguments."; see also: *Julia Viebach*, "Principle 3. The Duty to Preserve Memory" in Frank Haldemann and Thomas Unger (eds.), *The United Nations Principles to Combat Impunity: A Commentary*, Oxford 2018, 71-78.

[3] Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origins of Nationalism, London 1983.

[4] http://entdecken-sie-algarve.com/nachrichten/heikle-widmung, [06.12.2019].

[5] https://derstandard.at/2000085984936/Zeichen-gegen-Faschismus-Spaniens-Regierung-will-Franco-exhumieren, https://www.nzz.ch/international/spanien-francos-opfer-warten-immer-noch-auf-gerechtigkeit-ld.1518269, https://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2019/11/PERRENOT/60929, [06.12.2019].

[6] https://www.luzernerzeitung.ch/international/italien-staedtchen-predappio-das-schwere-erbe-von-ex-diktator-benito-mussolini-ld.80618, [06.12.2019].

[7] See: http://www.terrorhaza.hu/en; Simone Benazzo, *Not All the Past Needs To Be Used,* Journal of Nationalism, Memory and Language Politics, Volume 11 Issue 2, p. 203 (available at: https://www.degruyter.com/downloadpdf/j/jnmlp.2017.11.issue-2/jnmlp-2017-0009/jnmlp-2017-0009.pdf).

[8] See Gerhard Gnauck, Poland's World War II museum opens amid controversy, Deutsche Welle, 23.03.2017, available at: https://www.dw.com/en/polands-world-war-ii-museum-opens-amid-controversy-a-38074880.

[9] E.g. in Bosnia and Herzegovina, see: Maja Slijepcevic, *Monuments and Counter-Monument Sights in Post-Conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Case Study of Gavrilo Princip's Monuments,* Sociology Mind 2016, 6, pp. 114-129, available at: https://file.scirp.org/pdf/SM_2016071113343627.pdf.

Germany, Accounts of the Conflict Archive and Prison Memory Project in Northern Ireland). The proposed project would allow swisspeace to enhance and enlarge its existing network and use it for exchange and consolidation of practices that proved useful.

3 Research questions

In light of the importance of memorialisation for Dealing with the Past and its increasing capture by populist and nationalist elites who pose a danger to fragile peace in many contexts of the OSCE region, this research project addresses the following questions:

⸻ Which memory spaces are currently being used and instrumentalised to reinforce nationalist, extremist, racist and other dividing narratives, and how?

⸻ How can such sites be contested, and reinterpreted? What are the experiences so far, positive and negative, to use them in a way which opens space for positive and conflict sensitive narratives and memory culture, which promotes human rights and civic democracy as well as social cohesion in order to counter extremist tendencies and preserve peace and security in the OSCE region?

⸻ How do different actors in the field of memorialisation interact, cooperate and collaborate in the OSCE region in order to exchange knowledge, build networks and use synergies? How to enhance their impact?

Based on the research results and knowledge gained throughout the project, concrete policy recommendations and operational steps will be developed.

4 Methodology and outputs

This research project will comprise desk-based research over a 9-month period as well as primary research through a survey. A Senior Researcher will coordinate the project whilst a Junior Researcher will conduct a survey with different international and national actors, such as documentation centres, museums, non-governmental organisations and networks, youth organisations, teacher organisations, educational material producers, sites of conscience, national and international organisations.

The results of the research will be presented and validated in a workshop which brings together experts working on memorialisation and the use of memorial sites as well as relevant representatives of the Swiss FDFA.

There will be two main outputs of this research project:

1. A report including:

    a. The results of the survey;

    b. Best practices and policy recommendations in the field of memorialisation and the use of memorial sites for promoting positive and conflict sensitive narratives, civic democracy and human rights education.

2. An exchange and validation workshop with 5 to 10 organisations working in the field of memory and representatives of the Swiss FDFA and the OSCE[10] to:

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[10] OSCE representatives would need to be self-funded, i.e. their workshop participation costs are not included in the budget.

a. Disseminate and discuss the research results (incl. at the 4th Global Action Against Mass Atrocity Crimes (GAAMAC) meeting in The Hague in November 2020, which will be organized by the Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities);

b. Discuss the draft report before finalization and publication;

c. Jointly reflect on how the research results can inform practical work, ongoing initiatives and policy;

d. Identify further research and operational support for practice needed.

5 Timetable

This research project will run from April to December 2020[11]. The following activities will be carried out in the foreseen period:

Activity	Period	Output
Desk-based research	April – June 2020	Research on existing initiatives; draft of the first part of the research paper and questionnaires
Interviews	July – August 2020	Interviews with selected persons from different organisations and institutions; systematization of interviews
Drafting of first version of the report	September – October 2020	First draft of report
Planning of exchange and validation workshop	August – October 2020	Collection of comments on the report; invitation to and organisation of workshop
Workshop	September/ October 2020	Exchange and validation workshop with different organisations in Basel, Bern or Geneva
*Presentation of preliminary results *Costs not included in budget.	November 2020	Presentation of preliminary results at the 4th international Global Action Against Mass Atrocity Crimes (GAAMAC) meeting in The Hague, organized by the Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities
Finalization and publication of report	December 2020	Report with the results of the research findings, examples of best practice and policy recommendations for practitioners, policy makers, memory and heritage sites, etc.

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[11] Please note that due to the unforeseeable consequences of the Corona virus crisis, adjustments might need to be made along the way.

6 Budget

This research project requires a budget of 59'950 CHF as shown in Annex I.

swisspeace assures an independent, dedicated and professional research methodology.

Bern, 11 December 2019

Laurent Goetschel

swisspeace, Director

Matthias Boss

swisspeace, Chief Operating Officer

Lisa Ott

Head Dealing with the Past Program