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Interdisciplinary conference

Re-Thinking Post-Socialist War(s): Comparative Dimensions of the War in Ukraine (2014-2024)

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

Where: Justus Liebig University Giessen, Germany

When: 8-10 March 2024

Organizers: Justus Liebig University Giessen, UNDIPUS joint project, Charles University in Prague, IMS Research Centre “Ukraine in a Changing Europe”

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The end of February 2024 will mark ten years since the beginning of the war in Ukraine—heralded by an (almost) non-violent annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and culminating in an all-out war launched by Russia in February 2022. During this period, the war, which brought about massive destruction of human lives, ecosystems, and infrastructure, as well as large-scale displacement, became part and parcel not only of the global agenda in journalism, politics, culture, and academic research, but also a crucial factor in cultural production and identity formation.

Our interdisciplinary conference **“Re-Thinking Post-Socialist War(s): Comparative Dimensions of the War in Ukraine (2014-2024)”** aims at conceptualizing the repercussions of this highly traumatic event that changed the lives of millions of people in Ukraine and also became a game-changing factor on a global scale. It is a collaborative effort between the Justus Liebig University Giessen and the Charles University in Prague, which will be hosted at the **University of Giessen on 8-10 March 2024** as part of the joint project “UNDIPUS—(Un)Disciplined: Pluralizing Ukrainian Studies—Understanding the War in Ukraine” (funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research; subproject “After Masculinity: Female Perspectives on the War in Eastern Ukraine”). As the title suggests, rather than focusing on the war’s idiosyncrasy, we will instead juxtapose it to other typologically comparable military conflicts in order to grasp their convergences and divergences. Premising on that, we are also going to discuss the possible peacebuilding strategies and compare them to the relevant experiences observed in other countries and cultures.

The comparative stance underlying this endeavour is twofold. On the one hand, we approach the decade-long war in Ukraine as probably the most salient case of resolving post-socialist disputes with military means. Here, the conference zooms into the phenomenon of “post-socialist wars,” understood as military conflicts in various areas belonging to the socialist camp before 1989-1991, from Yugoslav wars to armed tensions in the Caucasus, or, typologically, from warmongering and swiftly frozen conflicts to protracted genocidal wars. In particular, we will focus on the ways in which the retreat of socialist practices and ideologemes opened space for overlapping layers of neoliberalism and nationalism, thus making affected polities less equal and more polarized.

On the other hand, we treat the war in Ukraine as an illuminating example of the wars legitimized—or explained—within anti-/post-/decolonial or postdependency frameworks (in post-socialist countries as well as in Africa or in the Middle East). From this perspective, the conference shall pinpoint the specific regimes of dealing with—or constructing—collective traumata, discourses of power, knowledge and resilience, as well as identity and cultural politics resulting from the identitarian (also nationalist) appropriations of post- and decolonial lines of thought—in Ukraine and elsewhere. Hereby, we will try to reconnect the post-socialist wars (and the war in Ukraine as a “post-socialist” one) to the war-induced discursive, behavioural, economic, and ethical practices born out of post-dependency conflicts outside of the post-socialist space. Another goal is to figure out the specific features of post-Soviet narrations on (post-)coloniality and their role for the dynamics of war(s).

Our **guiding questions** are (i) what enabled armed conflicts (and the war in Ukraine in particular) as legitimate tools for achieving (geo)political goals; (ii) how warfare (co-)produced certain social and cultural practices that transformed implicated actors and polities or (iii) which social, cultural, and economic factors possibly prefigured the emergence and the perpetuation of warfare; (iv) finally, how the post-socialist and post-dependency wars were framed—in warring countries and in third states; by victims and by aggressors—and how those framings, in turn, reshaped identities of the involved sides?

We welcome **applications** from researchers specializing in literary and cultural studies, philosophy, history, political studies, sociology, and other related disciplines, especially with a focus on postcolonial and gender studies, comparative history, and peace and conflict studies, who could contribute to the topics delineated above.

The list of **focal points** includes—but is not limited to—the following:

- Post-Soviet transition and wars: remapping Eastern Europe, recalibrating societies, redrawing futures;
- Regional and global security order(s): challenges and post-war arrangements;
- Deimperialization, decolonization, neo-colonialism: from theories to social and cultural practices;
- Nationalist appropriations and instrumentalizations of the postcolonial theory in times of war;
- Nation-building, (invented) historical and cultural traumata, identity clashes, and memory conflicts before and during the war;

- Post-socialist and postcolonial wars in the digital age (hybrid warfare, disinformation campaigns, mediatization and securitization strategies, etc.);
- (Self-)mobilization and demobilization and their effects on society, politics, and culture;
- Narratives of war & narratives of victory in literature, science, and media: economies of violence, suffering, and victimhood;
- Outcomes of post-socialist wars: lessons and limits of post-war reconciliation, re-centering, and detraumatization.

To take part in the conference, please send your application containing your name, academic degree and position, the topic and the short abstract of your talk (up to 400 words) until **October 20, 2023** to oleksandr.chertenko@slavistik.uni-giessen.de (Oleksandr Chertenko) and/or ukrainianstudies.ims@fsv.cuni.cz (Valeria Korablyova). Alternatively, a panel proposal with three to four paper presentations could be submitted, too. The applicants will be notified whether their applications are accepted by **November 10, 2023**. The organizers will be able to cover the traveling and accommodation costs of the contributors. We kindly ask you to indicate if you need such funding in your application. The **conference language** is English.

The organizers also envisage publishing a **post-conference open-access edited volume** with extended versions of selected papers.