

.V.Revisiting Dealing with the Past and Transitional Justice in the Balkans

This conference brings together scholars from diverse academic fields, and practitioners working from different thematic and theoretical paradigms, to explore approaches to dealing with the past and transitional justice in the Yugoslav successor states and beyond.

As a field of inquiry, analysis and practice, dealing with the past relates to peace and justice. It is contextual and embedded in social practices and imaginings for the future of society. How societies choose to deal with the past has consequences for conflict transformation in the present, as well as in the future. Frames for dealing with the past and accountability mechanisms in post-Yugoslav states have been shaped by various discourses on peace-building, institution-building, and aspirations for European Union membership. Dealing with the past has also incorporated diverse perspectives and actors from international and local contexts. Transitional justice shapes the regimes of war and peace as a prime vehicle for addressing harm caused in the past. There is a need to combine the instruments of 'retributive' and 'restorative' justice to enable societies to come to terms with the past and achieve closure; a necessary component for moving forward.

The conference revisits the frames and processes of dealing with the past in the post-Yugoslav successor states. It embarks on Foucauldian concept of 'history of the present' seeking a critical attitude and approach to analyse the postwar transitional justice mechanisms and the evolution of present-day practices for dealing with the past. It seeks to address several questions, including: Is it possible to identify novel paradigms and/or frameworks for dealing with the past? What is the potential of rule of law to respond to antagonistic narratives of the past? How has transitional justice shaped the transition from conflict to peace? How is the past portrayed? Who is commemorated and how? Are the representations of the past becoming more inclusive and less antagonistic? What is the role of the state and civil society in the process of dealing with the past and conflict transformation? How have transitional justice mechanisms shaped narratives of the 'troubled past' in Yugoslav successor states?