State Crimes in the Context of their Historical Reappraisal – an International Comparison

A PANEL DISCUSSION WITH UWE BERGMEIER, CAROL GLUCK AND ALEXANDER HASGALL. MODERATED BY THOMAS LUTZ

Thomas Lutz

In this discussion, with the help of my colleagues on the panel I would like to focus on the international perspective when dealing with the history of Nazi crimes. This is becoming increasingly important for memorial museums, as is apparent on two levels:

The first level concerns the exchange of ideas and information about the history and present-day importance of the Nazi crimes. There are numerous binational and international projects related to this. At the moment, for example, my colleague Klaus Hesse is preparing a major exhibition about the German occupation with NIOD,[1] the Dutch research institute on war and the Holocaust.

But there is only one international organisation that continuously works for an exchange between experts and political representatives, usually diplomats: the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA).[2] This organisation now has 33 members, and Germany has been a member since the Stockholm Conference in 2000.

I would like to give an example of the importance of the Alliance. For years there has been criticism of the Jasenovac Memorial in Croatia. Jasenovac was the biggest camp complex operated by the fascist Ustasha government in the formally independent state of Croatia. The most important issue is that the fate of the Serbian victims and the murdered Roma are not presented adequately there. Recently a French colleague from the Mémorial de la Shoah museum, a Dutch colleague from Anne Frank House and myself held consultations on behalf of the IHRA in Croatia to make it clear that there can only be an end to the persistent arguments about the memorial if all the victims' groups receive appropriate consideration and recognition. Discussions with the new ministers for culture and education showed that they were fully aware of the conflict. At the same time it became obvious that in the political sphere and in society as a whole – and in the context of the wars that occurred with the break-up of Yugoslavia in the 1990s – there are strong nationalist tendencies that are unwilling to face any challenge to their historical myths and that should be treated with consideration. I am convinced that an international dialogue which reacts sensitively to the situation on the ground but nonetheless advocates that the historical myths should no longer be circulated, or should actually be replaced by others, is the only way to achieve an open dialogue. At the moment there seems to be a small window of possibility in Croatia. We should not let the chance slip by.

Positive developments in the international dialogue are certainly possible in this region. Six years ago we could hardly have envisaged the success of at least one of the projects initiated by UNESCO, on which I collaborated as an advisor, in creating a joint

Panel discussion, from left to right: Thomas Lutz, Alexander Hasgall, Carol Gluck, Uwe Bergmeier

post-Yugoslavian exhibition about the Second World War for the national exhibitions in the Auschwitz Memorial. Today, historical experts from the Yugoslavian successor states have reached agreement about the history of the Second World War in relation to the victims' groups, the number of people killed and those responsible for the crimes. Unfortunately the politicians and public opinion lag behind in generally acknowledging the factual representation of the historical events.

This example shows that in Europe we can only achieve a common understanding of the history of the Second World War if we begin by comprehending the history of the different effects in the individual countries and regions. After that it makes sense to question our own specific picture of history in the international discourse.

Looking back, we recall that in Germany, too, persistent demands from abroad, particularly from survivors' organisations, played a major part in the evolution of the memorial museum landscape.

At least we can see that a one-dimensional understanding of the history of power in the 20th century imposed from above, in the way the European Parliament has acted with the House of European History in Brussels, is the wrong approach. It continues to spread historical myths and ultimately opens the floodgates to right-wing populist and nationalist interpretations.

In the following discussion we shall consider the second level I referred to earlier: the internationalisation of remembrance of criminal regimes and the exchange with colleagues who are concerned with different regimes that committed state crimes.

An international organisation for this purpose was already established back in 2003: the International Committee of Memorial Museums in Remembrance of Victims of Public Crimes (IC MEMO). Many of our colleagues who work at memorial museums for Nazi victims in other countries were involved in this. The then director of Wewelsburg District Museum, Wulff Brebeck, played an important role. From the start, the newly

founded organisation received considerable support from the umbrella organisation, the International Council of Museums (ICOM). The goal of IC MEMO is to ensure that the sustained professionalization of memorial museums as museums with special tasks occurs within a specialist discourse.

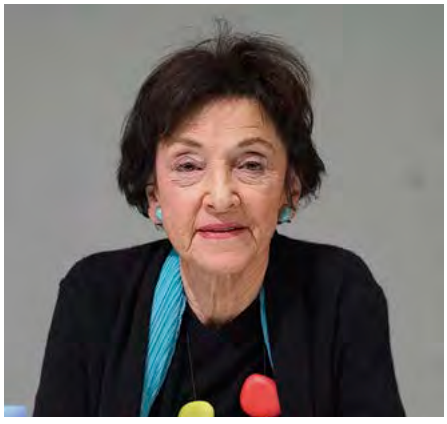
Since the committee has existed it has become evident that it did not lead to downplaying of Nazi crimes or those of other violent regimes. Everyone involved is well aware that history is so diverse that it would be wrong to compile "victim charts" of who has suffered more.

Because state systems of violence often had international impacts, it makes sense to work on understanding the crimes through an international network. There are also many similarities in the daily professional work of different memorial museums. This includes issues like the maintenance of sites and buildings, the tributes to different victims' groups, their recognition and restitution in the successor societies, or the punishment of the perpetrators.

Let me now introduce our first panel guest, Professor Carol Gluck, who teaches and researches at Columbia University in New York. Carol Gluck is the founder and director of the Committee on Global Thought, a programme based at Columbia University. In this function she has organised numerous seminars, events, and other types of discussion on memorial policy in global contexts. Carol Gluck is a professor of modern Japanese history and has published widely on this subject. She has also tried to persuade the Japanese government of the need to change its policy in relation to the history of the Second World War.

The Second World War lasted longer in Asia than in Europe – a fact that most Europeans are hardly aware of. As far as I know, the only museum that deals with this aspect is the new Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk in Poland. This brings me to my first question: How do the Japanese remember the Second World War?

Carol Gluck



First, let me say thank you also from the international community to Dr. Lutz. This museum and the Memorial Museums Department have been very important for those of us who work on the politics of memory in a global context. In 2014 Dr. Lutz came to New York on the occasion of the opening on the National September 11 Memorial Museum, which was charged with the delicate and politically difficult task of providing an account of the terrorist attacks. He brought the experience you have heard about tonight to bear on the 9/11 museum. I thank him for that.

As for Japan: Japanese remember the Second World War with two main stories. The first is a victims' story, in which the Japanese people were victims of their leaders who "embroiled" them in a catastrophic war. The second story is a shrunken chronology that begins with the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 and ends with the atomic bombings and surrender in 1945. This, of course, is the war the Americans fought against the Japanese. It is not World War Two, which began for Japan in 1937 with Japanese aggression and total war in China, following an earlier aggression in Manchuria in 1931. This shrunken chronology resulted

in the disappearance of the China War from the story, yet the China War had been the reason for the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in the first place. Because of the American occupation and postwar alliance, Japanese were able to continue to think of themselves as victims of their wartime leaders, who were now living in a new and peaceful world based on the acknowledgement of the wrongs of the Pacific War, 1941 to 1945. That story lasted as long as the Cold War and the dominance of the United States in Japanese foreign relations. With the rise of Asia, beginning in the 1980s, and particularly in the 1990s, the people and governments of China, South Korea and other places demanded that Japan finally confront its wartime aggressions and actions in Asia. That is the process that is still going on now.

Thomas Lutz
The Shoah is at the centre of remembrance of the Second World War in Europe. What are the most important themes in Japan in this context?

Carol Gluck
Struck by how often you mentioned Nazi "crimes", I realized that in Asia there is less talk about crimes than about wartime "atrocities" committed by Japanese in the countries of East and Southeast Asia. The issues are, first of all aggression and aggressive war; second, for Korea, an aggressive war on top of decades of brutal colonial rule. Then there are the atrocities: the Nanjing massacre; the former "comfort women" or sex slaves of the Imperial Japanese army; biological and chemical warfare; and more recently forced labour – an issue familiar to you – and other actions in China, Korea and elsewhere. Thus, it is the aggression and the atrocities that are central to wartime memory in Asia.

Thomas Lutz
You talk about a war of aggression. What does this mean for the remembrance of this war in Asia, and particularly for Japan and its neighbours? In Germany we have worked for reconciliation with the countries that suffered under the Nazi regime and the Wehrmacht. What is the attitude to this in Asia? And how can the process of rapprochement between peoples and nations be steered in the right direction?

Carol Gluck
I think it is important to understand the difference between the political chronology of West German memory of the war and the chronology of war memory in Asia. As I said earlier, the Japanese war stories constructed with the guidance of the United States were frozen in place for decades, only beginning to melt as the Cold War ended. At that point Japanese were forced to consider the Asian, rather than only the American parts of the war. The difference is stark when you compare the geopolitical forces for West German integration in Cold War Western Europe during the 1940s and 50s (NATO, economic integration, etc.) to the near absence of Asia in Japanese Cold War politics, which were dominated by the United States.
I think the more relevant comparison is between war memory in East Asia and Eastern Europe. You mentioned Southeastern Europe. The current memory politics relating to World War II in the countries of Eastern Europe – from the Baltics in the North to

the Balkans in the South – is as vexed and contested as the politics of war memory in East Asia today. The reason is simple: In Eastern Europe the end of the Cold war unfroze the war memory dictated under the Soviet regime, a counterpart to Japanese war memory maintained under the aegis of the United States. And so, since the 1990s in both Eastern Europe and East Asia, the war has become an ever more present past. One might well say that the postwar in Eastern Europe and East Asia did not begin until the Berlin Wall fell, the Soviet Union dissolved, and the Cold War ended.

As you remember, reconciliation was not immediate in Western Europe. It took a long time. In Asia there is now a great deal of talk about reconciliation, which is new, at least in using that term. Reconciliation in Asia will also take time, and it will be determined as it was in Western Europe to a good extent by politics, both domestic politics within the countries and international politics in the region.

Thomas Lutz
We are meeting here in a documentation centre and we have talked a lot about memorial museums. In Japan, too, there are museums devoted to the topic of the Second World War. The best known is the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. What do these museums mean for the understanding of history and for future generations?

Carol Gluck
As someone who spends even my holidays going to war museums, I can assure you that there is no museum in Japan, China, Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines etc., like the Topographie des Terrors. There is no museum that is capable of showing the full context of the war, arousing reflection in the visitors. Each country has extremely national, and many of them nationalistic, museums. This is another indication of where the process of war memory stands today in Asia. In Japan the most important museum is the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. Almost all the museums – there are several hundred museums relating to World War Two in Japan – have the word "peace" in their title and their message is almost always "Never again". Hiroshima is the biggest, with some 1.5 million visitors a year, international as well as Japanese. Yet the Hiroshima museum, too, reflects those early war stories. The theme, of course, is the horrors of nuclear war, but the museum presents both of Japan's original war stories: the victims' narrative (A-bomb survivors and Japan as a whole) and the narrative of the Pacific War. Some context is provided, but not enough. Even the peace museums do not do what the Topographie des Terrors does, and the peace museums that do try to give the context of Japanese empire and aggression have few visitors. But it is also true that the few war museums that actually celebrate war do not attract large audiences either, perhaps because they are not good museums that would be of interest to younger generations. So I think that there is a long way to go, before the museums in Asian countries will present the kind of context and historical inclusion that the Topographie des Terrors has embodied since it began. I'm sorry to report that.

Thomas Lutz
The next panel member I would like to introduce is Alexander Hasgall. He is head of the Council for Doctoral Education of the European University Association in Geneva and is a co-founder of the Working Group for Policy on the Past in Switzerland. Today,

however, we have invited him to join the panel because for around as long as the Memorial Museums Department of the Topography of Terror has existed he has been concerned with human rights compliance in various South American countries. The title of his doctoral thesis is "Regime of Recognition: Struggles for Truth and Justice in the Reappraisal of the Argentinian Military Dictatorship". So, unlike in Southeast Asia, the concern here is primarily a national conflict, a civil war, a dictatorship. People often talk about the "Argentinian military dictatorship", but the victims' side is dissatisfied with this term. Why?

Alexander Hasgall

I think the difficult questions of recognition that are raised in the Topography of Terror also played a major role in Argentina. So I am very glad to have the opportunity to discuss this topic here. The case of Argentina is interesting because the military takeover on 24 March 1976 did not originate from a foreign power but was a coup d'état. Internationally it was widely regarded as imposing order in the chaos in Argentina, which was torn apart by massive internal conflicts. The coup definitely had support from within Argentinian society. Around a year after the coup, aside from specifically destroying the left Peronist opposition, the goal was to change the economic system. As the well-known journalist Rodolfo Walsh, who was later murdered, wrote in an open letter to the ruling military leaders on the first anniversary of the coup, this resulted in a fall in real wages of around forty per cent. Aside from the military components, civil interests were also definitely affected by the dictatorship. This was barely discussed for a long time because the junta, which was brought to trial after the Falklands War defeat, dominated the discourse. But in the last ten to fifteen years the other question, about the extent to which civil interests played a role, came up increasingly often. The result is that the term "military dictatorship" is now being replaced by the term "civil military dictatorship". This poses the question of guilt and responsibility in a new way, although it does not diminish the responsibility of the military.

Thomas Lutz

After a "civil military dictatorship", how is it possible to ask this question about guilt and responsibility in the first place, and how can the victims be given a hearing?

Alexander Hasgall

The issue of transitional justice was characterised by the case of South Africa, with the re-examination of apartheid and the role of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. As we know, the idea of a truth, and particularly the Christian element that calls for the truth to be spoken out (St John's Gospel says, the truth will set you free), played a decisive role in South Africa. Maybe there was also hope that the victims could overcome their trauma by being given a voice. The past decades have shown that this process is very complex and the hope of conquering the trauma by uncovering the truth has rarely been fulfilled because it leads to new questions. Just talking is not enough, because we also have to consider material support such as reparations.

Particularly in Argentina this caused a big debate that resulted, among other things, in splitting the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, one of the foremost Argentinian human rights organisations. One grouping was prepared to accept reparation payments because they saw speeches as too "cheap" and thought material compensation was necessary, whereas others argued against being bought off. This shows that the goal of giving the victims a voice, their own subjectivity, involves both concrete support and symbolic actions, and it may also involve contradictory opinions. Ultimately, these processes are protracted and actually endless. There is no such thing as instant reappraisal; but at the same time societies have an interest in evolving further and leaving the past behind. There is a wide range of different dynamics in Latin America. Guatemala has a very good truth commission but it only had limited success in using its findings for educational purposes. A good report that has appeared now in several volumes clearly assigns the main responsibility for most crimes to the military. But the wider society has barely responded to it, and it does not prevent members of the military with shady backgrounds from pursuing political careers and getting elected. At the same time there are countries like Argentina and Chile that are working together and cooperating with foreign institutions like the Topography of Terror to develop a memorial culture and create their own momentum.

Thomas Lutz
What is the role of memorial museums in Argentina in this process?

Alexander Hasgall
There are very different kinds of memorial museums. This is due not only to the geographical size of the country but also to the wide variations and partly to internal conflicts between different organisations of family members and political organisations. Rather than one standard form of remembrance there are widely differing approaches, always related to the current political situation, which can change abruptly through a change of government. It also depends which role public opinion and the state play in remembrance. This can alter very greatly when there is fundamental political change. At the moment Argentina has a conservative government that wants to prioritise its own narrative and hopes this will help to revive the "two demons" theory, which was believed to have been laid to rest. The theory claims that before the military coup Argentina was in the deadly grip of left wing and right wing extremist forces and the putsch was ultimately a reaction to this situation.

Thomas Lutz
I would now like to introduce another panel member, Uwe Bergmeier. He spent time in Israel as a volunteer for Action Reconciliation Service for Peace and, after studying political science, he worked at the House of the Wannsee Conference training people for educational work on the history of Nazi crimes. At the same time he has been working on contemporary conflicts in Africa. He visited Sudan as part of his studies almost twenty years ago. From 2000 he worked in Uganda trying to help young people to escape from the spiral of violence of the civil war in the North. Since 2009 he has been the Programme Coordinator of the Civil Peace Service in Kenya implemented by the Association for Development Cooperation, a faith-based non-governmental

organisation located in Cologne, Germany. This brings us to the most recent conflict we want to discuss today. In the years 2007 and 2008 Kenya unexpectedly faced a de-facto violent civil war following disastrous presidential elections, with results that were unacceptable to most of the political actors. The German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ) and other development agencies realised that it was impossible simply to return to the usual practices of international cooperation. It was necessary first of all to provide support that would give the torn and broken society a chance for new cohesion.

In dealing with a topical conflict, what role does examining the history of the conflict play? Can it be dealt with at all?

Uwe Bergmeier

I am participating in this discussion not as a representative of a memorial museum or an academic institution but as someone who works as a specialist advisor in civil conflict in African countries, where the interpretation of remembrance as we practice it, with memorial museums and institutionalised commemoration, does not exist. My example is Kenya, the country where I work at present. This has confronted me with the crimes that followed the presidential elections in 2007–08, and how to deal with them in our work. It is not about genocide, but about a situation of internal, political, inter-ethnic crimes against human rights. I have been working for years with an agency of German foreign policy, the Civil Peace Service (CPS). For the past 18 years, specialists – this is not a student exchange or volunteer programme – have been working internationally in conflict regions, trying to foster possibilities with local groups ranging from conflict resolution and management to reconciliation processes following crimes. Whether and how this succeeds is a persistent bone of contention in our work. Is it the right thing anyway? As Germans, we go into a region, in my case Kenya, or before that, Northern Uganda, and try to start talking with perpetrators and victims' groups and to initiate dialogues – in fact, to create spaces for dialogue in the first place. The latter are crucial because none of these countries has an organised memorial museum or institutionalised commemoration for these topics.

This raises the question as to whether we need memorial museums or whether we have to think about other forms of remembrance in the memorial work in such countries which helps the people to deal with the past. I could give many examples. Take Northern Uganda: Sometimes commemorative work succeeds if we organise a discussion between victims of raids by the Lord's Resistance Army,[3] for example, between children they kidnapped and turned into child soldiers and murderers, and their former village communities and families when the kidnapped victims return to their home later. We do this on a very basic level of remembering, dealing with guilt and possible forgiveness. Once people open up and talk about a crime, a process of dialogue begins.

In Kenya, for example, in many cases this is still not possible today. Attempts at recovery are already overlaid by the next atrocity situation – and this is typical for African violent conflicts. This means that the so-called post-election violence in 2007

and 2008 has not been fully dealt with to this day. We could mention an international instrument, the International Criminal Court (ICC), which tried to tackle this topic on a legal level to identify perpetrators, but not in terms of the society as they understand it. This ended in disaster in 2005 because the Court, as an international judicial body invoking crimes against humanity, failed to bring to account local people who were politically responsible. This created further divisions in Kenyan society. In political terms the attempt at international examination of past crimes was seen as an inacceptable and arrogant intervention. Following this, Kenya reverted back to local forms of dealing with its own history of human rights abuses. It is an arduous process that is continuing slowly with international support but mainly influenced by its own civic players (such as civil society and religious institutions).

Thomas Lutz
Several years after it opened, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum resolved, after highly controversial discussions, that the demand of "Never again!" after the Shoah created an urgent need to take account of current conflicts as well. In 2007 it planned to focus public attention on the genocide in southern Sudan. You will be heading a project for an aid organisation in this region in future and will develop and support projects there. This makes me wonder whether the mission of "Never again!" after the Holocaust can really be productively linked with the goals of a current project. Or do we need other ways and means for this?

Uwe Bergmeier
In my opinion there is no simple link. In the African context of experience of violence we are dealing with a completely different culture of remembrance that is not necessarily institutionalised and certainly not desired by state authorities because it often contradicts the existing government's or regime's policies. Any intervention by the state makes dealing with the past crimes more complicated – if there is any reappraisal in the first place it is politically charged. In this respect the "Never again!" approach may be laudable as a vision, but as far as I know it has never been transformed into political agendas to support social processes in crisis states – such as South Sudan, for example. Instead, we should talk about possibilities of working on successive layers of crisis and traumata that are feasible for everyone in a country with such a history. There are around 2.2 million refugees outside and inside the country, poverty is rampant and the political institutions are extremely weak and corrupt. It is not even clear why people take flight and which root causes have to be tackled. Do they flee to escape armed civil war triggered by different militias, or because of poverty – or both? The refugees, as well as the families who stay behind, have existential problems in coping with this situation. Questions of remembrance, of working through earlier crimes, of the culprits, or of who is prepared to take responsibility, are very far away from the people there in their struggle for survival.

Thomas Lutz
The following question is for all three members of the panel: In what way does the German commemoration of Nazi crimes influence remembrance and commemoration in the countries you know well?

Plenary session of the International Task Force for Holocaust Remembrance, Education, and Research (ITF) at the U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C., 2003

Alexander Hasgall

The experiences of elucidating Nazi crimes play a major role in how people speak about the crimes. Terms such as "genocide" for the events in Argentina from 1976 to 1983 are widely used by many victims' groups and on the left. And the term "concentration camp" is often used for places where the military engaged in clandestine torture and murder. In other words, on the level of discourse Nazism plays a major role and this, in turn, generates a debate about uniqueness and diversity and has created difficulties with regard to concepts. On the subject of memorial policy: In Berlin symbolic signposts to the individual concentration camps stand on Wittenbergplatz; the same symbols stand in Buenos Aires. In other words, memorial symbols from the German context have been adopted one-to-one with the aim of giving the crime adequate recognition. At the same time, starting from the end of the dictatorship there were already independent forms of remembrance, for example those connected with the visual portrayal of people who had disappeared. They have their own impact internationally. So you can't answer the question with a simple Yes or No, but there is certainly an exchange and an examination on the meta level about how far the German discussion can be adopted for the crimes in Argentina, or not.

Carol Gluck

I think it is clear that in the 72 years since the end of the war the culture of war memory has changed, and a considerable part of that change developed out of West German memory culture. There is now something that I call a "global memory culture", much of which evolved in relation to Holocaust memory, in which Germany figured importantly. As Japan now faces the Asian parts of the war, Japanese have to do so in the context of a global memory culture that did not yet exist in the 1950s. One example is the change in notions of responsibility. In the 1950s it was easy enough to ascribe responsibility to the leaders: Hitler in Germany or the militarists in Japan. Over time the concept of responsibility changed to organizational guilt, then to "ordinary men", and finally to the complicity of the wider society in the development and acceptance

of fascism and war. These changes in the understanding of responsibility are now part of global memory culture that is partly a result of the process of remembering the Holocaust in Europe. There are many other examples, including the so-called politics of apology, where one head of state apologizes to victims of another state, a practice that did not exist on this scale in the 1950s. And in almost every concern – legal, social, political – I would say that the German working-through of war memory has had a decisive effect. And this effect will not disappear, precisely because these are now the expectations, the norms, and practices of the politics of a global memory culture understood around the world, having to do with World War Two but also with some of the other examples of memory we have spoken about here.

Uwe Bergmeier

Understanding memorial cultures is an important first step. I don't believe it is productive to transfer memorial cultures from Europe or Asia into other cultures. This means we have to invest far more time in looking at how societies deal with experiences of internal violence. What forms of reappraisal exist, up to and including reconciliation? Which approaches can be helpful and should be promoted by us, coming from outside? So far we haven't been very creative with methods for making remembrance more lively and effective in the sense of working towards reconciliation. Today, much more than ever, we need the exchange between the memorial museums – the educational and academic areas – with other memorial cultures in the world. In times of multicultural societies that have experienced traumata, it is necessary for all sides to listen and learn from each other – that is my message this evening. These debates automatically bring us to new methodical forms that trigger previously unforeseen reactions in other cultures. Beside this – and here we have a classical approach with the method that has already been mentioned several times today – if we want remembrance and reappraisal, both governmental and non-governmental players are needed. This interaction is crucial, and it applies equally to Europe and Africa, however hard it is sometimes to bring these two players together.

We also need the support of actors who are concerned with the "truth". Disclosure and the discussion about backgrounds in complicated conflicts is a highly decisive step. Over the years I have become very modest in relation to reappraisal and reconciliation processes. Discovering the "truth" and achieving agreement among the relevant parties is a big step. And one last point: Do we, as Europeans, have the right to foster this in Africa or Asia? In my opinion the answer is clearly "Yes", because the exchange using the competence we have in this area is productive for all sides. I always see this as an encouragement for people who leave their own country to work in the field of violent conflicts in other societies.

Thomas Lutz

The question that concerns all of us working on this topic is that of future challenges.

Carol Gluck

This is what I call bringing the past into the future. There are two increasingly pressing challenges. The first is the end of living memory. Based on what we know about the memory of the two World Wars, war memory retains considerable power to the

On the roof terrace of the U.S. Department of State, Washington D.C., in a break during the ITF plenary session, 2003

third generation. In Japan, the "children who don't know the war", as they are called, now constitute the majority of the population. Like younger generations in other countries, they don't know much about the war. But it is not the facts that are at issue. It is rather that for younger generations, there is little direct connection between the facts they learn, the objects they see, or the narratives they hear, and any political or civic imperative on their own part to act in the present to prevent wars or atrocities from happening in their time and place. If you follow along behind school groups at Auschwitz or Hiroshima, or indeed in any war museum, you will see that most of the students are paying attention. And polls show that they remember the objects (the piles of shoes in Auschwitz) and images (the melted clock stopped at 8.15 in Hiroshima), but the message of "Never again" remains abstract, remote, unconnected to their lives. Here we return to the question of responsibility. For the recognition of past state crimes cannot be the only objective of putting the past on display. In democratic states at least, the end-goal must be a sense of individual responsibility, civic responsibility, and political responsibility, to be activated and acted upon in the present.

The second challenge has, of course, to do with the politics of our time. Amid surging nationalism and right-wing populist politics, governments in many places are engaged in rewriting national history. Think, for example, of China, Russia, Hungary, India, and Turkey. For a number of them, particularly in East Asia and Eastern Europe, World War Two stands at the centre of national and nationalist memory, as in Poland, Ukraine, the Baltics, China, and Japan. In these cases one can scarcely say that the past is being wielded in the name of – or with the open processes of – a liberal society. In short, the history of war memory is not necessarily a progressive story. Not only can the lessons of the past fade but they can also change character so as to be almost unrecognizable. How, then, can museums adapt their work, their objects, their narratives in the face of the generational and political challenges? That is the question. As a message, "Never again" is simply not enough. And so the task before us, it seems to me, is how to relate bad pasts to better futures in ways that speak to audiences today and tomorrow.

Alexander Hasgall
The preconditions have changed in comparison to the 1990s and 2000s, with the emergence of a global memorial culture that evolved into a dominant narrative and in which practically everybody wanted to participate. This development has probably not reached Asia to the same extent. But meanwhile – as I already mentioned – a conservative government in Argentina has again begun questioning the positions on which agreement seemed to have been reached. Or in Germany, where we intermittently have a "welcome culture" towards migrants and refugees, but on the other hand, the AfD is gaining greater acceptance and aims to change public discourse in the field of memorial culture, among other things. Perhaps memory culture is less deeply rooted than we have assumed so far.

Carol Gluck
I think our definitions of memory cultures are different. The one you just mentioned is not the same as the one I am talking about, which relates to political norms and practices, such as the politics of apology. Indeed, few countries have the kind of memory culture that exists in Germany, where everyone is expected to have a certain view of a certain past. I think that is unusual. France has a strong memory culture too, but I doubt that many in France would make the statement you just made, which was that in the 1990s we thought we had it figured out.

Alexander Hasgall
If we consider such widely different cases as the Australian government's public apology to the Aborigines, the development of a specifically German memorial culture, Gacaca justice in Rwanda or the dozens of commissions for truth and reconciliation and of historians that have meanwhile emerged worldwide, then for some years we had the impression that a "global morality" (to use Elezar Barkan's term) or a "globalised remembrance" (the term of Daniel Levy and Natan Szneider) would become established. But maybe this was largely tied into an academic discourse and not focused enough on political interests.

Carol Gluck
I agree with you, that the idea of mixing all of the memoirs of all this bad past is over.

Thomas Lutz
After the reunification of Germany, the memorial museums for the victims of Nazi crimes received new and important support from the government. The struggle for recognition and for support through the policy that characterised the 1980s in West Germany was over. Official remembrance policy, however, is increasingly confined to rituals that have little appeal to young people. By now, thanks to the excellent scholarly research of the past three decades, we have far more precise information about Nazism. This means we can develop the work of historical education on a much sounder basis. On the other hand, because the biographical aspects of the history, and especially the survivors, are disappearing, the memorial museums are being told to look at other topics. Ten years ago the topic was human rights. Today the demand is for education towards democracy.

Participants in the German-Israeli Joint Venture on questions of different approaches to the history of the Shoah in the two countries. From left to right: Christian Staffa (Action Reconciliation Service for Peace), Shulamit Imber, Yariv Lapide (Yad Vashem), Elke Gryglewski (House of the Wannsee Conference – Memorial and Educational Site), Peter Koch (Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site), Monika Kingreen (Fritz Bauer Institute), Haim Gartner (Yad Vashem), Thomas Lutz, Tanja Ronen (Ghetto Fighter's House Museum), 2004

The present challenge I see for Germany is that we have to find ways of communicating what we have learned from working through the history to open-minded members of the general public. In doing so we should bear in mind that, more and more, the people who are interested in this history have experienced different types of socialisation. Their knowledge varies widely and they have their own specific relationships to the different spheres they live in. Educational work must react to this with much greater subtlety, and needs the corresponding financial support for this.

In the 1990s in Germany the eyewitnesses of the Nazi period and the survivors' organisations played a major role. Many of them have since passed away. But despite the growing distance in time we have interesting results: compared with 25 years ago there are many more film recordings and videos of eyewitnesses. We know far more about the different victims' groups and individual biographies and can make better use of the source material. But of course, the possibility of a personal encounter with a survivor is fading all the time. In particular, the lobby of the international survivors' organisations, which were outstandingly important for the development in the 1990s, is diminishing. On the other hand, memorial museums often have very close contact with family members of survivors from the second to the fourth generation, which was not the case some years ago.

When we talk about Argentina or Kenya there are obviously many more eyewitnesses because the events – especially in Kenya – occurred not so long ago.

Alexander Hasgall

Argentina is a special case because of the "disappeared" persons who were killed and ceased to exist from that time on. It is interesting that no victims' organisations existed in Argentina for a long time, and then they had huge problems about recognition because the survivors from the camps were often seen as possible traitors or collaborators. This is only improving slowly and it has taken a long time for the organisations of survivors from the camps to be acknowledged by other victims' groups. In Argentina, too, the eyewitnesses are already very old but now the children of "disappeared"

persons are beginning to ask questions. But they are not actually direct eyewitnesses of the crimes, which raises doubts about their role in victim organisations – and the role of relatives of victims as a whole.

Thomas Lutz
This brings us to what the history means for people who have a direct biographical connection with the events. What is the situation in Japan and Kenya?

Uwe Bergmeier
In Kenya the historical events of 2007–08, and the personal entanglements we have mentioned, still dominate the society so powerfully that their remembrance is very complicated. In Germany, the historical distance allows the challenges to be clearly addressed and followed up but this is very different in Kenya. Yet even in the Kenyan case, if debates occur about crimes within the society, it is due to testimonies by the victims and their courage to bear witness openly.

Carol Gluck
But these are different issues. I think you are right, Alexander, that all those cases were mixed in the memory discourse, and what we begin to see is that you cannot mix them. Because of the Holocaust, I think the German case is distinctive – not unique, but distinctive. In Japan and in East Asia, the war has become a raw issue again because it has been raised politically, but it is not about remembering what their grandfathers did, not in short, a biographical connection. In Japan it is a political and geopolitical issue, which seems also to be true in Eastern Europe.

The issue for younger citizens, I think, is how do you manage to convey more than one side of the picture: that your country did some bad things and other countries did too. At the moment war memory in these countries remains very one-sided, almost as if the war were yesterday, whether in Ukraine or in South Korea. Seeing only one side of national history easily fuels nationalism. And nationalistic memories of the past are a recipe for continued conflicts in the present. This seems to me slightly different, for example, to the memory of political violence in Kenya. So I think you do have to distinguish among different memory challenges. I will say that in Eastern Europe and East Asia the challenge is somehow to surmount the nationalistic memories that are being put forth by governments in Russia, Poland, China, Japan, etc. They are all rewriting history in a way that is neither biographical nor familial, but nationalistic.

Alexander Hasgall
I agree, but I would ask whether Germany isn't developing in this direction as well, particularly if we look at very young Germans who no longer have the biographical links of the second and third generation. And the discussions about whether refugees should visit memorial museums as part of an integration programme, debates about national narratives and identity, and how refugees should be integrated into that will be conducted more intensively in the future. Of course it is not the same thing, but there seems to be a convergence of the two levels of discourse.

Prevention acts as an important part of memorial policy. Every paradigm change should be aimed at helping to prevent crimes. Above all, until 2011 and the failure of

Visit to Majdanek Memorial and Museum during the international conference "Memorial Sites for the Victims of Nazism in the European Perspective. Spaces for Presenting and Experiencing History", to mark the 70th anniversary of the ceremonial opening of the Majdanek Memorial and Museum, 2014

the Arab Spring we had the feeling of having learned from the history and of having created an instrument, Transitional Justice, for dealing legally with crimes, and of having experience in developing memorial museums. Many people today have the impression that this doesn't work and that insight and knowledge of history doesn't do anything to stop someone like the Syrian dictator Assad, for instance.

Carol Gluck

"Never again" does not work. Not because similar events occur again and again, but because the meaning does not seem to sink in. To younger generations the message remains too abstract.

Thomas Lutz

In Germany's case, opening up to become a more democratic society after 1968, and the movement of history workshops and memorial museums, was very important. In this context there was growing public awareness about new groups of victims like Sinti and Roma, or homosexuals. At the same time it became clear that the victims of Nazism had also suffered discrimination in the postwar period. This shows that clarifying the history contributed very specifically to the recognition of marginal social groups. And because looking at history is always a reproduction of society, the recognition of other victims' groups made society open up even further. This development seems to be in reverse at the moment. We are faced with the question of which role the memorial museums can play in this process. How can and should the institutions use the historical knowledge, as well as the respect they have won through their work, to position themselves politically in current developments? I think that is the key question to ask. But how are things in other countries?

Uwe Bergmeier

Quite different, of course. When I arrived in Kenya less than ten years ago, a national crime had occurred that could not yet be fully analysed, and for which it was still far

Opening of the Topography of Terror Foundation's touring exhibition "Twarz Getta" (The Face of the Ghetto) in the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw, 2015. Photo: Kurt Blank-Markard

too early to evolve any kind of memorial culture. That was completely different from the German situation with its institutionalised remembrance. Nonetheless, we have to consider where there are links to remembrance of other historical events in the world. Certainly a common factor for all is the connection between intensive memorial culture and democratic, political culture as a living experience in each country.

For me it remains an open question, whether such a phenomenon as global remembrance exists, or can exist.

Carol Gluck

The question is: What is your goal? Thomas, you said the goal is a liberal open democratic society. But this may not be the goal for people in many parts of the world when they imagine their hopes for a better future. I was struck by the fact that it is a belief in Germany and some other places that a liberal open democratic society is the goal. But this is not always the case in societies where people want a better life. They want to survive, they want to be free of violence, they want peace in their daily life, they want enough to eat, and they want things to improve. A liberal, open democratic society is not necessarily a universal value.

Alexander Hasgall

As a historian I would ask whether working with the history always requires a specific goal, especially because this sometimes involves longer time periods. If we take the example of Guatemala, the results of the truth commission are not yet established within the society but there around 20 cases of crimes resulting in death every day, which makes an annual total of around 6000 deaths. In 30 years that amounts to 180,000 deaths, which corresponds to the number of people murdered during the civil war. The whole society is impacted by this violence. In this situation one can't automatically demand that the results of the truth commission should be recognised as a priority, although the violence itself is a consequence of this war. But it can't always just be about finding a topical occasion to justify our work. Possibly it matters a great

deal for the future, and that is why the active preservation and educational processing of knowledge about systems of violence is still enormously important.

Thomas Lutz
In Germany the most important starting goal of the work in memorial museums was to maintain the remembrance of the victims and to give them back their names. That is certainly not the main point for young people today. They are more concerned with knowing how the system functioned, and in asking how human beings could commit such crimes against other humans, and they are interested in continuities in the postwar society. Another thing that is definitively important for the future is that all the victims' groups find their due place in memorial policy, while on the other hand those responsible for the crimes are named, which is certainly painful for a society.

Alexander Hasgall
But this can lead to fresh difficulties when an overly close link is created with identity politics, and all the groups insist on being included in memorial policy with their own specific identity. I wonder whether this corresponds to a global development, at least in the United States and Europe, by which history and memory will become part of an exclusive, specific identity.

Carol Gluck
I think that is a very important point. One of the products of the memory boom, particularly from the 1990s on, is the role it plays in identity politics. Groups evoke memory as an identifying characteristic and as a political tool. I see the memory discourse as encouraging that connection. It might lead, for example, to the Turks in Germany centring on their Turkish identity, linking to a Turkish memory rather than to a German one. This is of importance today. There are many refugees who have never been part of another society, which makes the identity politics linked to memory very important to them. Or in a different example, in the United States where most Romani Americans have long considered themselves Americans, now their children want to identify themselves as Romani. When memory and identity are so strongly linked, they can hinder democracy because they end up eliminating common ground. Memory has not caused this situation, but memory has a responsibility, I think, in contemporary identity politics. Nor, of course, can you tell people that for them the future ought to be more important than the past.

Thomas Lutz
What does this mean for our work?

Carol Gluck
I think museums like this one and other museums can use the past in service of a future orientation. The point would be to suggest what we are doing or not doing now to prevent the suffering that might be about to happen. That is my memory mission. I am interested in creating citizens who feel responsible for their present and their future. But the question remains, how do we connect them to the past?

Uwe Bergmeier
Work on remembrance should encourage the formation of identity in nations and societies. I see identity as an important, positive category, for example when young Africans reflect on the identity of an independent nation. In other words, nation-building on the basis of values. In Kenya, for example, the discussion about the "Mau Mau" warriors who fought the battle for Kenyan independence from Britain from 1952 to 1964 only became a topic for national identity after fifty years and is now very important for political education in relation to the country's present-day problems.

Alexander Hasgall
Both things are possible. In Argentina before the military dictatorship, identity was based on the army and the struggle against Spanish colonial rule. The truth commission was introduced in 1983 and documented the human rights abuses. And that was suddenly supposed to be the basis of the Argentinians' narrative and identity. This even worked to a certain extent – the army no longer played its earlier role of creating identity in the same way. In other words, remembrance can provide the basis for a new, common identity. Museums naturally have an important role in the development of identity based on historical experiences. And in the process they have to deal with people who ignore or deny the past and those who want to use history to reinforce their particular brand of identity.

Uwe Bergmeier
We can also draw conclusions for our work from the "Mau Mau" example in the period from 1952 to 1964. There are fewer and fewer eyewitnesses, and consequently ever fewer direct encounters or confrontations, but this results in new political debates. At the moment the compensation that the surviving "Mau Mau" fighters are demanding from the British is a major topic due to time pressure, because only the people who were directly involved can receive payments. This is a matter, firstly, of the special recognition of freedom fighters. In the independent state of Kenya the "Mau Mau" warriors were seen for a long time as terrorists and rebels. Even the ethnic group they belonged to was divided about how to evaluate the armed struggle. Representatives of other ethnic groups, some of whom maintained better relationships with the British, stigmatised the fighters as criminals. The second point is the importance for the national identity of Kenyan society. Even if the pride and acceptance of the warriors take precedence today, the war of independence sheds light on the causes of conflicts such as those of 2007 and 2008, and up to the present day. Our aim is to update history, not to manipulate it for our own ends.

Carol Gluck
I would say that the first part about making claims for compensation against the British is itself a result of a global memory culture, because people could not make such claims against the former colonial power in earlier times. It is an example of a kind of process that we see now all over the world. As for the second part of it – the freedom fighters – we see everywhere that one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter. These are postcolonial issues and they create both a postcolonial memory and national identity.

Discussion during the annual conference of the International Committee of Memorial Museums in Remembrance of the Victims of Public Crimes (IC MEMO), in the Jewish Museum in Munich, 2015

Uwe Bergmeier
On this subject, in Germany there is ongoing discussion about reparation demands from the Herero descendants in today's Namibia. The German colonial regime committed systematic genocide against the Herero and Nama ethnic groups between 1904 and 1908. Clarification of compensation is an indicator of a "good" or "bad" reappraisal of the past in widely different situations where a crime has occurred.

Thomas Lutz
I would like to return to the point about which role the memorial museums play in these developments.

Uwe Bergmeier
Now, more than ever, the museums about genocides and crimes against human rights in Germany need the exchange of views with other international experiences and forms of re-examining the past in dealing with traumatisation, with personal and political restitutions and reconciliation processes and rituals, as well as a discussion about divisions within societies that still can't be overcome.

Carol Gluck
I agree with you, but it is not only Germany that needs that. Extra-national inclusions are helpful, because they counter both nationalism and divisive identity politics.

Thomas Lutz
I would like to thank the three panel members very sincerely for their contributions. During the discussion it has become clear that making international comparisons confronts us with a dilemma. To be able to judge the respective situation and compare it with others, it is necessary to have precise knowledge in each case of the history and its effects until the present day. Regrettably we could not provide that here. I hope it is clear that there are many connection points which make it meaningful to look at

the reappraisal of regimes of violence on a global scale. The goal is to create a new society in contrast to dictatorships and crimes against humanity, in which, above all, the former victims are given the chance to lead a good life.

Broadly speaking, two questions emerge from the critical examination of the Nazi period as crucial for the comparative evaluation of processes of reappraisal:

Are ALL the groups in the reappraisal process – with all the different possible kinds of persecution they have suffered – recognised by the state and by society? Do they receive concrete and material support to enable them to lead a better life? Is their history being worked through and dealt with in educational processes – including in museums and memorial centres? This is one form of honouring them. At the same time we should adopt a variety of perspectives in looking critically at other groups of people that acted at that time.

The second question – which is far more difficult for a society to work through – is to what extent the perpetrators were brought to account. Is information being provided about the particular types and methods of the crimes, and are the perpetrators being prevented from continuing to organise?

My study of criminal regimes until now unfortunately leads me to conclude that it was always the people who were victims of state crimes who had major problems in the successor societies. It is often the case that, at the very most, a small group of them managed to achieve participation in social and political power. It is also often the case that only a small layer of perpetrators were sentenced and ostracised, while the structures of protection continue to operate.

This is not a pessimistic view of the reappraisal of history – but it is a realistic one. After all, on the one hand it means that memorial museums cannot do the work alone and cannot create better human beings – as public opinion often demands or expects. Instead, these transformation processes must be achieved in cooperation with many institutions, particularly in the international sphere.

On the other hand, I am convinced that memorial museums are indispensable. They can make an important contribution by continually reminding us of the need to consider the victims of the history and honour them. The "witnesses in stone", the memorial museums, offer particularly good preconditions for this.

As we know, history is always conceived in relation to the present day. This means that consideration of the victims of the history of the Nazi period always involves a challenge to examine present-day developments. Günter Morsch aptly expressed this at the New Year's reception of the memorial museums in Berlin-Brandenburg as "giving a sharper focus to the historical consciousness of the threats and problems of present-day domestic and foreign policy".[4]

In any case, international cooperation can be very valuable. It can help by presenting different perspectives and recognising sociopolitical causes and current meanings. The international discourse makes it possible to question one's own viewpoint in a critical way. In particular, internal conflicts in states or binational conflicts, which always result from past crimes, are most likely be resolved on a factual, negotiable level with international assistance. But this only applies when the respective country is willing to accept it.

The panel discussion was edited for publication by Angelika Königseder.

Director Ivo Pejakovic elucidates the Jasenovac Memorial Centre in Croatia during an international seminar trip with participants from the region and from Germany, 2016

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1 NIOD: Institute voor Oorlogs-, Holocaust- en Genocidestudies in Amsterdam.

2 Until 2013 it was called the "Task Force for international Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research".

3 The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a notorious rebel group, has been militarily active for over 30 years in Northern Uganda (until 2006) and in the surrounding countries against the Museveni government. It recruits child soldiers by extremely brutal methods and carries out raids on the local population.

4 Günter Morsch: Grußwort zum Neujahrsempfang des Arbeitskreises der Berlin-Brandenburgischen NS-GEDENKSTÄTTEN (Blog: guenter-morsch.de [2. 3. 2018]) / Opening address to the Working Group of the Berlin-Brandenburg Memorials of the Nazi period on 2 February 2018.