

Call for Papers: PhD and PostDoc Workshop

Bonn, October 8–9, 2025

Beyond the “Posts”: Defining the former Soviet sphere of influence in a post-colonial and post-imperial age

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About the workshop

Cultures of remembrance, nation-building, identity and victimhood

The collapse of the USSR paved the way for new approaches to historiography and memory in the states of the former communist bloc. Leaving behind and emancipating themselves from the hegemonic Soviet language and style of commemoration, the successor states began to test and establish their own formats for dealing with the past, heralding a new phase of diverse nation- and identity-building processes. Amidst these processes of defining national identity and uniqueness, it can be observed that many formerly Soviet countries participate in global commemoration trends, such as a fixation on victimhood (Lim: *Victimhood Nationalism*) or the borrowing of musealization elements associated with Holocaust commemoration (Radonić: *Holocaust template*). At the same time, post-colonial or post-imperial interpretations of the past become more important with many of the former Soviet countries now accentuating their own histories of resistance against Bolshevism and Tsarist Imperialism. These historical experiences, spanning from Central and Eastern Europe to the Caucasus, Western Asia and Central Asia, should be studied with a transnational and comparative approach and in relation to each other.

The workshop *Beyond the “Posts”: Defining the former Soviet sphere of influence in a post-colonial and post-imperial age*, a cooperation between the Department of Eastern European History at the University of Bonn and the Department for Eastern European History at the Helmut-Schmidt-University Hamburg, aims to highlight the relationship between memory culture, nation-building and postcolonialism/postimperialism in the former Soviet sphere of influence. The workshop will take place in Bonn.

The workshop is primarily aimed at **doctoral students** as well as **PostDocs** in history, cultural studies, memory studies, social sciences and beyond. Interdisciplinary approaches are particularly welcome.

Questions and Goals

Part of this investigation of memory and nationalism is also a fundamental question regarding interpretative approaches to Soviet history in Eastern European studies: Can postcolonial theory be applied to the post-Soviet space? How can “post-Soviet” be defined?

The key focus of the workshop is the analysis of **victimhood identities** and the memorialization of **Stalinist crimes and political repressions** during the Soviet Union.

One of the aims of the workshop is to discuss the possibilities and limits of applying postcolonial theory to nation-building processes in the successor states of the Soviet Union and to look at cultures of remembrance from a transnational perspective. In particular, we will look at which historical narratives are included in the canon of national identity and which narratives compete with each other. The focus will be on a comparative and intertwined perspective on the various approaches to coming to terms with Stalinism as well as the attribution of perpetrator and victim identities and their overlaps. At the same time, we want to explore the roles of civil society remembrance work and state-sponsored remembrance culture.

Topics, Application, Publication

Participants should send an abstract of their project (max. 300 words) to Melanie Hussinger and Hera Shokohi (beyondtheposts2025@gmail.com) until **August 1, 2025**.

Applicants will be informed about the status of their application by **August 15, 2025**.

Travel expenses **up to 100 €** will be reimbursed by the organizers. Due to our limited funding, we gladly appreciate it if you find opportunities for funding your workshop participation at your institution. We aim to publish select papers in a peer-reviewed volume. The workshop will take place at the University of Bonn on October 8 and 9, 2025.

Topics and questions we wish to cover in the workshop are the following:

- Official state-conceptualized memory narratives and their relationship to civil society
- The representation of Stalinism in memory cultures
- The question, whether Stalinist Soviet rule is portrayed as a colonial or imperial crime in memory cultures
- Victimization discourses and Victimhood Nationalism

- Competing memory narratives and national identities in the former Soviet sphere
- The framing and judgment of Stalinist crimes, as well as depictions of victims and perpetrators
- The application of post-colonial theory to the study of memory cultures in the former Soviet sphere of influence

We especially encourage researchers working on the history of the Caucasus or Central Asia to apply for the workshop.