

International conference organised by



in collaboration with



1989 CONTESTED LEGACIES

THE CHALLENGES OF THE IDEOLOGICAL, INSTITUTIONAL AND (GEO)POLITICAL HERITAGE

26-27 September 2019

University of Warsaw, Pałac Tyszkiewiczów-Potockich, Sala Balowa
32 Krakowskie Przedmieście, Warsaw

The conference will be held in English

This conference is the second in a cycle of three conferences, entitled 1989-2019:
Beyond the Anniversary, Questioning 1989, held consecutively in Paris, Warsaw and Prague.

This conference aims at rethinking the legacy of 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), through the prism of its ongoing contestations, with a focus on the current trends and deliberate political efforts that challenge the major achievements of Velvet Revolutions, as well as the outcomes of the collapse of the Iron Curtain. 1989 launched a process that continues to this day. Three decades of transformations, crises and setbacks have noticeably changed the shape of Central and Eastern European societies.

Thirty years after popular democracies organized their first free elections, ideas and processes that question the liberal democracy model are back to the forefront. National-populists in Poland and Hungary call for establishing “illiberal democratic”, thereby challenging the “end of history” thesis, and the naive belief that democracy would be consolidated enough to withstand any backlash. In Romania, the Social-Democratic Party is suspected of decriminalising abuses of office and massive manipulations. Further East, Putin’s Russia is promoting an authoritarian governance model - misleadingly labelled “managed democracy” - in support of its relict superpower ambitions, thereby threatening peace and security in post-Cold War Europe.

These are but the most salient aspects of the current challenging of the very legacy of “the spirit of 1989”, and subsequent socio-cultural, institutional and strategic transformations that transitologists thought would durably shape Central and Eastern European politics. Against this backdrop, the scholarship on transiting countries needs to develop new prisms for investigating how the recent past (1989) is being (mis)used in contemporary (geo)political struggles.

1. The mnemonic games in Central and Eastern Europe

Mnemonic games – the political uses of memory – intend to produce narratives about the past that challenge the legacy of 1989 in CEE countries. The discourses of neo-conservative forces in particular contest the meaning of post-communist transformations in political, cultural and economic terms. Illustrative of this trend are memory politics, de-communisation policies discourses criticising neoliberal reforms and the opposition drawn between traditional and religious values and “Western” values such as secularism. To what extent do such discourses form a coherent narrative of post-communist transformations, and contribute to shaping and popularising “illiberal” ideologies? Whereas memory politics or historical policies have been widely analysed in recent years, the political role of current narratives *about* the past remains however understudied. Yet, they contribute to the (de-) legitimisation of political parties, ideas and/or discourses in a way deserving academic scrutiny.

2. A New Cold War? The legacy of 1989 in light of current geopolitical challenges

The events of 1989 led to dramatic changes in international politics, starting with the dismantling of the Warsaw Pact, the demise of the Soviet Union and the lifting of Cold War division lines, notably in Central and Eastern Europe. A new geopolitical situation took shape in which the CEE countries had to redefine their foreign policy priorities, with a majority of them seeking integration with the Euro-Atlantic community. The triumph of liberal democracy and the dismantling of the Moscow-led block have been perceived as the West’s victory in the Cold War. This vision is however increasingly being contested: from outside of the region - notably by Russia, which aims at coalescing like-minded authoritarian regimes that challenge Western domination over world affairs - but also from within, as evidenced by the growing popularity of anti-European and anti-Western discourses propagated by populists and extremists throughout Europe. Democratic peace clearly lost its self-evidence: this augurs ill of the chances for the continent to be spared a new Cold War.

3. Transformations of the State and its institutions: challenging the rule of law

Having triumphed for about two decades, in the past couple of years democracy seems to have started to lose ground. Some governments in CEE countries have implemented institutional reforms that challenge the liberal democratic legacy of 1989, ie. principles such as respect for the rule of law, civil and political rights, media freedoms, free and fair elections, the independence of the judiciary, etc. The constitutional reform in Hungary is described as illiberal, while the reform of the judiciary in Poland and Romania appears to be violating the rule of law. The European Union - even triggered article 7 against Poland for adopting reforms that undermine the independence of its judiciary.

Organising Committee of the conference:

Valentin Behr, Université libre de Bruxelles, University of Warsaw
Anaïs Marin, Centre for French Studies, University of Warsaw
Nicolas Maslowski, Centre for French Studies, University of Warsaw
Kinga Torbicka, Centre for French Studies, University of Warsaw

Scientific Board of the cycle:

Maciej Forycki, The Polish Academy of Science, Scientific Centre in Paris
Jérôme Heurtaux, French Research Centre in Humanities and Social Sciences, Prague
Nicolas Maslowski, Centre for French Studies, University of Warsaw
Paweł Rodak, Centre of Polish civilisation, Sorbonne University/University of Warsaw

THURSDAY, 26 SEPTEMBER 2019
1989 CONTESTED LEGACIES
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PROGRAM

9:30–10:00 Welcome address

Jérôme Heurtaux, French Research Center in Humanities and Social Sciences, Prague
Nicolas Maslowski, Centre for French Studies, University of Warsaw

10 :00–10:30 Introduction

Nicolas Maslowski, University of Warsaw
Towards the end of a cycle, 1989 contested legacies

10:30–12:00 *The mnemonic games in Central and Eastern Europe - part I*

Chair : George Diener, Institut Français

Valentin Behr, Université libre de Bruxelles, University of Warsaw
1989 and its aftermath according to Polish conservative intellectuals

Jérôme Heurtaux, Cefres, Prague
What do we know about 1989 in Poland? The historiographical, political and memory issues of an endless controversy

12:00–13:00 Lunch Break

13:00–14:30 *The mnemonic games in Central and Eastern Europe - part II*

Chair : Jérôme Heurtaux, Cefres, Prague

Sabine Volk, Jagiellonian University
Monday marches, once again: Contemporary political usages of the memory of the 1989 'Peaceful Revolution' by PEGIDA in Dresden

Pierre-Frédéric Weber, University of Szczecin
The twentieth century, a never-ending story? Lasting memorial asymmetries and conflicts in Europe in 2019

14:30–15:00 Coffee Break

15:00–17:00 *A New Cold War? The legacy of 1989 in light of current geopolitical challenges*

Chair : Nicolas Maslowski, University of Warsaw

Kinga Torbicka, University of Warsaw
Unpredictable security: US and Russia games on NATO's Eastern Flank : the example of Poland

Marek Madej, University of Warsaw
A New Cold War? The legacy of 1989 in light of current geopolitical challenges

Anaïs Marin, University of Warsaw
Spreading the seeds of doubt: the divisive effect of Russian 'sharp power' in Europe

Pavel Barša, Charles University, Prague
Liberal Democracy, or National Sovereignty? Janus-Faced Legacy of 1989

17:00–17:30 General Discussion

FRIDAY, 27 SEPTEMBER 2019
1989 CONTESTED LEGACIES
THE CHALLENGES OF THE IDEOLOGICAL, INSTITUTIONAL AND (GEO)POLITICAL HERITAGE
PROGRAM

9:00–10:30– Transformations of the State and its institutions: challenging the rule of law - part I

Chair : **Łukasz Zamecki**, University of Warsaw

Camille Dobler, Jagiellonian University
Polish MEPs and „Unia Antyeuropejska”: legitimization discourses on the rule of law in Poland in the European Parliament

Mikołaj Rakusa-Suszczewski, University of Warsaw
Constructing Memory: Polish Church Towards Round Table Agreements In 1989

Ionut Valentin Chiruta, University of Tartu
Transformations of the State and its institutions: challenging the rule of law

10:30–11:00 Coffee Break

11:00–12:30 Transformations of the State and its institutions: challenging the rule of law - part II

Chair : **Paweł Rodak**, Centre of Polish civilisation, Sorbonne University/University of Warsaw

Paul Blokker, University of Bologna
The Conservative Contestation of Liberal Constitutionalism in East-Central Europe

István Hegedűs, Hungarian Europe Society
Transition to Democracy: Still the Years of Miracle - What Happened to the Regime-change in Hungary?

Grzegorz Piotrowski, Europejskie Centrum Solidarności
Civil society in Poland- crisis or transition ?

12 :30–13 :00 General Discussion

13:00 Conclusion

Valentin Behr, Université libre de Bruxelles, University of Warsaw

Anaïs Marin, Centre for French Studies, University of Warsaw

Nicolas Maslowski, Centre for French Studies, University of Warsaw

Kinga Torbicka, Centre for French Studies, University of Warsaw

13:30–14:30 Lunch Break at Pałac Kazimierzowski, 26/28 Krakowskie Przedmieście