

# History as Politics

(Post) Violence, Redress and  
Reconciliation

Elazar Barkan

# Notable Historical Conflicts

- Ukraine – internal and with Russia – Holodomor as genocide
- Turkey Armenia – question of genocide
- East Asia and Japanese Colonialism; North Korean kidnapping; Textbooks; war shrines,
- FRY – the legacy of WWII, the Battle of Kosovo
- Various Holocaust commissions and issues
- Slavery
- Indigenous dispossession
- Spain – memory of the civil war
- Russia – memory of Stalin; WWII

# Historical Dialogue

- Scholars engage politics as part of a historical dialogue.
- Mainstream scholars counter nationalist myths as a methodology
- History has not yet become an established field in conflict prevention or peace building
- Conflict resolution should include historical study as root causes
- R2P has to incorporate historical dialogue

# Examples of Historical Commissions

## Latin America historical commissions

- *Guatemala* - Commission for Historical Clarification (CEH)
- *Argentina* - National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons
- *Chile* - The National Commission on Political Imprisonment and Torture

## Eastern & Central Europe

- The International Commission for the Evaluation of the crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania
- Ukrainian – Polish Commission 1993 – 2003
- Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes Against the Polish Nation (IPN)

# Historical Commissions cont...

## Europe

- Franco-German Commission for the Revision of School Textbooks
- German-Czech and German-Slovakian Historic Commission
- Spanish Historical Commission on Gold and Related Matters
- Bergier Commission, also known as the ICE ("Independent Commission of Experts"), in Switzerland

## US

- The Wilmington Race Riot Commission
- Tulsa Race Riot Commission
- Rosewood, FL.

**Holocaust Commissions** – over 40 commissions in different countries.

# Historical Dialogue and Accountability

Types of responses to the past	<u>Truth Commissions</u>	<u>Retributive</u>	<u>Restorative</u>	<u>Vengeful</u>	<u>Memory &amp; historical sites</u>	<u>Conflict Resolution</u>
<b>Perpetrator participation</b>	Imposed & voluntary	Imposed	Voluntary	None	Voluntary	Voluntary
<b>Examples</b>	South Africa Truth and Reconciliation Commission	Trials	Reparations	Rwanda – Public executions of perpetrators	Museums	
		International tribunals	Restitution of property	Personal or social revenge attacks	Memorial sites	
		International Criminal Court	Apologies as a form of atonement			
		Lustration	<b>Historical commissions</b>			
<b>Goal</b>		Punishment	Reconciliation	Punishment	Reconciliation	Reconciliation

# The Right to Redress – Formal Sources

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article XIII (1948);
- The Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power (1985);
- The revised draft Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human
- Rights Laws and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law (2005);
- The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1987) - also sets out in detail the right to reparation for survivors of torture, and payments have been made through a United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture.

# The Right to Redress - Aspirational

- Recognition that the world is unfair and inequality rules. This is a result of exploitation and past crimes.
- Historical redress, while increasing, is still the exception; it is symbolic, not structural.
- The demand for equality necessitates redress, in order to strive towards fairness.
- Cast in this light, redress is not a right to be implemented, but an aspiration to strive for.
- The morality of redress is determined relative to the ethical work the redress provides
- The material redress has to be in relation to the symbolic quest.