
The Use of History in Democratization-processes

Symbols, Traditions, Education and Truth and Justice Policies in Europe

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If there is no usable past,
it can always be invented.

(Eric Hobsbawm)

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Abstract

This research analyzes the different ways history is used by states in democratization-processes, both in the short term transition to democracy as for the long term consolidation of democracy.

After an attempt to define certain key concepts (democracy, democratization, collective identity and collective memory), the thesis focuses on three policy-domains: (1) official symbols and traditions, (2) history-education and (3) truth- and justice-policies.

In all of the three domains, it analyzes how, when and why references to the past contribute to democratization-processes and how, when and why it proves to be detrimental for these processes. Avoiding simplifying generalizations, it looks into the role the past plays in creating national cohesion and solidarity (nation-building), the legitimation of democratic rule, and the promotion of democratic values.

By shedding a light on a sometimes forgotten, but therefore not less influential aspect of democratization-processes, this research hopes to contribute to the growing body of democratization-studies.

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