

Conference report “Emotions and International Relations” 15.-17.12.21014

From December 15th-17th, 2014, Prof. Dr. Barbara Keys from the University of Melbourne and Prof. Dr. Jessica Gienow-Hecht from Freie Universität Berlin held an international conference on “Emotions and International Relations” in Melbourne (program available here: <http://www.historyofemotions.org.au/media/178001/emotionsir-program-2014.pdf>).

Day 1

Prof. Dr. Ute Frevert from the Max-Planck-Institute for Human Development (Berlin) opened the conference with a keynote address. In her talk Frevert argued that the politics of honour, shame, and humiliation are highly significant for the study of emotions in international relations. First, these particular emotions were prominent over a long period, starting in early modern times and ending, at least in Europe, after 1945. They thus tread a path through quite diverse structural settings, from the era of early modern state-building under the auspices of absolutist rule to the era of strong nationalism and nation-building in conditions of constitutional government and universal suffrage. Second, in the course of this development one can trace how the affective quality and intensity of honour and shame concepts increased. In the background of this development the state is personified by the monarch (and his or her family), and the nation identifies itself with that monarch (and his or her family). According to Frevert, this personification greatly enhanced emotional dynamics and played a vital role in international relations, especially during the era of high imperialism.

Day 2

The second conference day was opened by a theory panel. Frank Costigliola (University of Connecticut), Roland Bleiker (University of Queensland) and Megan Willis (Australian Catholic University) took historical, political science and psychological perspectives, respectively, in examining limits and possibilities of the “emotional turn“ for the humanities and social sciences. On the next panel „The Cold War“ three historians from the University of Melbourne delivered their papers: Kate Davison talked about „Loyalty, Trust and Homosexual Character Defects in Cold War National Security Policy“, Ai Kobayashi about „The Emotional Aftermath of the Pacific War: Early Postwar Diplomatic Relations between Australia and Japan“ and Emma Shortis about „'The One Remaining Pristine Continent': Popular Emotions and the Environmental Protection of Antarctica“. The day was concluded with a dinner at the University House.

Day 3

The third conference day was dedicated to “Humanitarianism and Human Rights”. Jessica Gienow-Hecht (FU Berlin) spoke about „'Saving Women and Children': Emotions, Gender and the Rhetoric of Humanitarian Intervention since the War of 1898“.; Vera Mackie (University of Wollongong) talked about „Performing Empathy and Solidarity in International Relations“ and Kate McGregor (University of Melbourne) concluded the first panel with

„Emotion, Memory and Indonesian Human Rights Activism: The 'Comfort Women' Survivors of the Japanese Occupation“. On the afternoon panel Tilman Pietz (FU Berlin) spoke about „Anger, Fear and Collective Guilt: Emotions and the German Greens Kosovo Intervention Party-Convention of 1999“, followed by Robert Brigham (Vassar College) who presented “Blood Speaks with a Terrible Voice: Clinton and the Rwandan Genocide“. The panel was finished with a talk by Roland Burke (La Trobe University) who spoke about „'They Think Such Things Don't Matter': Emotional Diplomacy in the UN Human Rights Program“.

The papers of the conference are going to be turned into a book. In order to continue the fruitful discussions about the role of emotions in international relations it is planned to have a follow-up conference at the FU Berlin in 2015/16.