

## The aggressor

### Self-perception and external perception of an actor between nations

Project description (February 2023)

In February 2022, Vladimir Putin's war of aggression against Ukraine saw the re-emergence of a familiar figure that many, at least in Europe, had thought had been overcome: the aggressor. International (criminal) law defines the '**crime of aggression**' as the threat or use of force between states (Article 5.1 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, 1998). The infamous Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles and the UN Charter (Art. 1 and 39) already contain the English and French versions of 'ag(g)ression', which the German version translates as 'attack' (*Angriff*). In the first-mentioned languages, 'aggressor' is used analogously in the sense of 'attacker' to objectively designate the person who crosses the border first. In German and similarly in Polish, '**aggressor**' primarily refers to a person who, unlike the attacker *per se*, acts against the law and against moral sensibilities; or even against (peaceful) human nature. Accordingly, the 'victim' rather than the 'attacked' is opposite to it.

As with the term 'genocide', which was originally also a technical term in international law, the discourse around 'aggressor' has become increasingly politicised and popularised. Just as parliaments in the 21st century are asking themselves whether they want to declare historical mass crimes a genocide or formulate laws of remembrance (Ledoux 2020), struggles over the interpretation of who should be considered an aggressor will continue to increase. In genocide research in particular, the category of individual or collective perpetrators has become part of a historiographical paradigm (Paul 2002; Welzer 2007). In contrast, the figure of the aggressor has so far hardly attracted any systematic historiographical interest.

Based on historical case studies, the planned project aims to comparatively research and systematise the perception and interpretation of specific enemy actors as aggressors. It examines the aggressor not as an actor under international law, but as an **ideal type** and **social figure** who **represents the enemy group** as an individual in **collective memory**. Aggressors serve not only **for separation of sovereign nation states** (on Serbia/Croatia Gödl 2007), but also within a country as an indicator of **past political fault lines** (on Spain/Catalonia García Agustín 2021). Their discursive construction and changing significance in the politics of memory are the subject of the project, which does not have to pass final judgement on aggressors in the sense of courts or truth commissions. Rather, the ongoing potential for subjective **outrage, separation and integration** is a reason for the planned research project.

Against this background, the project title 'The Aggressor' is deliberately ambiguous.

1. The **naming of the aggressor and the successful defence against him** has always been the legitimate goal of individuals as well as of collectives to whom violence is threatened and inflicted. Accordingly, the threat to one's own freedom by *per se* illegitimate aggressors, the (temporary) defeat and ultimately the victory over them form a **fundamental historiographical narrative** for all nations in their state development.
2. The planned studies should **analyse and expose historical images and patterns of argumentation** that hide or conceal the aggression of one's own nation. This is particularly important at a time when populists want to make their homeland great (again), whereby the greatness projected into the past is identified with foreign policy power.
3. Last but not least, the project aims to show empirically tangible as well as future theoretical and practical ways of 'overcoming' the aggressor in terms of remembrance politics. **Dialogic and agonistic forms of remembrance** suitable for conflict are to replace a past-political fixation on external images of the enemy. The research results will be made accessible to a broad public and thus contribute to European integration.

### The aggressor in historiography

Since the beginnings of historiography, one of its declared aims has been to glorify military conquests as a source of lasting fame. This could be expressed in epithets (William the Conqueror) or an entire genre of military knights of fortune could be labelled conquistadors. In the narratives of their peoples, their peers were portrayed as courageous, strong and radiant heroes, as they have been the subject of a special research area in Freiburg since 2012 (CRC 948: 'Heroes - Heroisations - Heroisms'). Its deconstructivist approach corresponds to developments in **academic historical research**, at least in Western Europe. Military hero narratives have had a difficult time there since the Second World War. German-Prussian militarism was completely discredited both politically and morally; all other countries on the continent had suffered humiliating defeats. The nation and its wartime self-assertion were of decreasing interest to researchers in comparison to social groups that were constituted on other levels, for example locally, regionally and trans-regionally, trans-nationally and, through European integration, supranationally. Women's and gender history deconstructed images of men that aim at conquest and subjugation. Event history and, above all, military history were considered outdated, especially when they focussed on a few great men. Instead, the war experience of ordinary soldiers and civilians took centre stage (e.g. Bachinger/Dornik 2013).

Thus, especially after the end of the Cold War, a '**post-heroic age**' seemed to develop that rejected nationalism because it was identified with violence against external enemies and internal minorities (Bröckling 2020). The post-heroic expectation was implicitly based on a model case of Germany, whose transformation was to continue in the rest of Europe, indeed worldwide, and win over the younger generations, above all thanks to school education (François et al. 2013). National resistance myths would be replaced by the integrating awareness that the (shared) guilt of the Holocaust obligated all Europeans to a peaceful project for the future (Flacke 2004). However, unlike in the West, the period of upheaval around 1990 in the Soviet Union and the satellite states under its control was perceived as a **phase of heroism**, of velvet revolutionaries and bold people who stood up to tanks and awakened memories of 1956 or 1968. Even before Putin's war in Ukraine turned national defence back into a patriotic duty full of sacrifice, numerous **debates about the past** demonstrated the desire for controversy, especially in those circles that wanted to defend national honour. In Germany, this was demonstrated by the controversies surrounding the Wehrmacht exhibition from 1995 onwards. Responsibility for a 'war of extermination', as the exhibition's theme was called, and for genocide had only hesitantly become core elements of school curricula since the 1970s. This is not surprising when one considers that the political, social and autobiographical processing of the German experience of the Second World War was long characterised by self-pity and grief over one's own 'fate'.

In general, only a few studies have investigated the question of how neighbouring peoples perceived the heroes of own national history – often in the opposite way, as aggressors from whom they suffered greatly. There are only a few studies on the interpretation of important power politicians in other states, for example on the Napoleon myth (Besslich 2007; Bodenstein 2012). The planned project compares a large number of aggressors and analyses their representations typologically in terms of their significance for the identity of collectives. The aggressor stands opposite these: He invades a country and its inhabitants. In fact, there is probably no nation that does not define itself to a considerable extent through its confrontation with aggressors: **unjustified and unlawful invasion, heroic defence, resistance filled with thirst for freedom, suffering of the victims**. The view of the – usually male – aggressor includes the gender perspective, e. g. on the nation 'raped' by him. As with positive heroes, the description of the aggressor follows ideas of martial masculinity, which here, however, are defined negatively: He is violent, unrestrained, measured and ruthless, taciturn, arbitrary and greedy, basically barbaric.

### **The aggressor as a figure in popular and political narratives of the past**

How were and are such historiographical representations reflected in the popular understanding of history? Martial conquerors are encountered in abundance in both trivial and highbrow literature, in

films and successful video strategy games, such as ‘Age of Empires’, which was developed over two decades. In contrast to the eclectically composed heroes there, it is still the **positively interpreted conquerors of their own nation** that characterise the self-image in numerous school textbooks and popular media, for example in many of the twenty episodes of the ZDF documentary series ‘Die Deutschen’ (‘The Germans’). How such national leader figures are constructed as heroes in school textbooks has also recently been analysed on an international comparative basis (Zajda et al. 2017).

The planned project is fundamentally based on the opposite perspective, namely **that of the victims of aggression**. For them, the aggressor is more than an enemy: he mobilises and motivates resistance, even hatred. Since he acts with pathological passion and senseless violence against human nature, he excludes himself from civilisation. Such individual psychological and biologicistic interpretations can be transferred to the collective to which the aggressor belongs: Wilhelm II, for example, represented the bloodthirsty Germans, who in turn were also regarded as barbaric Huns due to his infamous speech of 1900.

The project does not intend to clarify which of the opposing views is the historically correct one in the countless controversies surrounding remembrance. Rather, the research interest is focussed on **the afterlife and, above all, the current representation** of controversial historical actors in Europe. Their bi- and multilateral reception and instrumentalisation will be described, analysed and compared. All sub-projects take into account the numerous new forms of media mediation and deal with **current challenges**: following the transnational expansion and Europeanisation of remembrance policies in the context of the EU's eastward enlargement, **nationalism, sovereignism and populism** (again) dominate in some places today (Kaya 2020). These movements characterise memory conflicts in which the **figure of the aggressor is central**. On the one hand, it is a key to making traditional **nationalist myths** transparent and **defusing** them by analysing their narrative patterns (Maissen 2015; Couperus et al. 2022). On the other hand, the project aims to establish an early warning system, as it were, through its broad access in order to recognise **fault lines in the politics of the past** and bridge the corresponding gaps.

At the same time, it is clear how difficult it is to reconcile opposing views of history. The approaches of the League of Nations to free **textbooks** from enemy images were hardly sustainable (Verga 2007). The Georg Eckert Institute in Braunschweig has played a leading role in international comparative textbook research since it was founded in 1951. A specific focus is placed on conflicts within and between states, their treatment in terms of content and didactics and the identities that develop from them (Cajani et al. 2019). European integration favoured the formation of bilateral commissions and textbook projects for history teaching (Korostelina/Lässig 2013). While the original aim was to reach a consensus, today dissent tends to be presented objectively in an agonistic sense (Pingel 2008). However, joint textbooks (such as the Franco-German project) have only been used to a limited extent in the classroom or are waiting in vain for approval by the government, such as the contemporary history volume of the German-Polish series. When it comes to the already well-researched topic of **history museums**, Polish debates also demonstrate the intention to rally the current electorate behind the government in the memory of past aggression and to establish a defensive stance against eternal external enemies (Bogumił 2015; Heinemann 2017; Regente 2020; Radonić 2021; Jaeger 2020).

The example of Napoleon shows how difficult it is for even close friends of the EU to bring their perspectives closer together: in 2015, the French president prevented Belgium from minting European commemorative coins to commemorate the Battle of Waterloo, although for many other nations it was part of the wars of *liberation* – in other words, the national uprising and self-discovery that were characterised by the ideals of the French Revolution. Such examples may seem anecdotal, but they show the tenacity with which democratically elected and politically moderate state representatives defend their national heroes against being portrayed as aggressors. Even more so, extremists base their violent ‘defence’ against immigrants or Muslims on events such as the siege

of Vienna in 1683 by the Grand Vizier Kara Mustafa Pasha. The invocation of the Croatian Ante Pavelić, the Slovak Jozef Tiso, the Hungarian Miklós Horthy and the Romanian Ion Antonescu extends beyond the circle of extreme right-wing conspiracy theorists and into church circles in particular. Their **considerable popularity in conservative circles in their homeland contrasts with sharp rejection abroad** because they were involved in the murder of Jews, Sinti and Roma and took military action against neighbouring peoples.

The controversy surrounding Stepan Bandera, whom the current Russian government is including in a Nazi genealogy in Ukraine, is particularly pertinent. There, however, he symbolises the resistance against the Soviet Union, while not only Russians, but also Poles and Jews see him as responsible for many massacres. Vladimir Putin, who also pursues a revisionist foreign policy and politics of history (Bürger 2018; Kuposov 2018), joins these examples. For Ukraine and Western public opinion, he is an aggressor, while he dresses up his war as a prophylactic defence of Russia against Nazis and NATO and thus finds a following not only at home. Not even the British national hero Winston Churchill is immune to **conflicts of interpretation**. Since Jörg Friedrich's 'Der Brand' ('The Fire', 2002), it has become increasingly common in Germany for Churchill to be labelled a war criminal because of the bombing campaign - as was recently the case on the internet portal 'Zukunft braucht Erinnerung' ('Future Needs Remembrance'), which declares its dedication to raising awareness of Nazism, anti-Semitism and the Holocaust.

### **Alternative forms of remembrance**

Even where – as with Churchill – the use of violence appears to be legitimised in the historical context, it is understandable if its direct victims feel lasting grief and hatred. Collectives, on the other hand, can change their memory in such a way that it even runs counter to the individual memories of their relatives. The protest was correspondingly loud in 1985 when Federal President Richard von Weizsäcker declared 8 May to be Liberation Day – and no longer the day of Germany's defeat at the hands of its enemies. This example shows that even in the case of a regime that was criminal in every respect, it **takes time to reconcile historical images** until many of those directly involved are no longer alive. This is precisely why the project is also interested in the aggressors of a more distant past and their after-effects in academic and popular discourses. Their examples can show the conditions under which the potential for tension and division between opposing narratives could be reduced or overcome.

It is less about harmonising the depictions of specific aggressors and thus establishing a single, 'true' interpretation of the past. What is more important is an **awareness that one's own nation** and its representatives could be both over the centuries: **Victims, but also aggressors**. The nation is both a place of autonomous, free and, ideally, democratic self-organisation and a potential of political, military and economic power that inflicts violence on others. This awareness has increased in the 21st century far beyond academic circles thanks to research into the Holocaust as a pan-European project initiated and led by Germany. More recent post-colonial studies have also highlighted the unilateral aggression and unbounded, extreme violence to which 'inferior barbarians' fell victim in Namibia or Abyssinia, for example. Such patterns of argumentation and experiences were in turn reflected in intra-European conflicts and genocides. In this respect, **postcolonial approaches in particular allow a sharper view of the history of violence** and the resulting (memory) conflicts in Europe (Zimmerer 2011).

The accusatory memory of suffered aggression usually has all too good, because painful, reasons. At the same time, it can obscure the view: of black spots in one's own past as well as of the potential of a historiographical dialogue with the (former) enemy. Those who do not engage in a thoroughly **contentious dialogue** with alternative narratives of the painful shared past run the risk of absolutising their own position and identifying humiliating defeats of the past as the monocausal, identity-forming cause of problems in the present (Mock 2012). This is increasingly evident in the narratives of victims and about them since they have been given empathy and a voice in the 21st

century, which they had been denied in previous decades. A '**competition of victims**' (Chaumont 2001) has developed worldwide in recent decades and has long characterised the claims of interpretation in the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians (Bashir/Goldberg 2019) or, more recently, the comparison of the Holocaust and colonial crimes (Sznajder 2022).

As understandable as they may be in individual cases, disputes about victim prerogatives promise little return in the long term. Last but not least, they can legitimise implacable and politically extreme positions. Does the future belong to an **integrative memory** as a means of remorse, responsibility and reparation (Olick 2007) or a **defensive memory** that bundles pride, fear and defence to create an identity for the threatened homogeneous nation? Those who believe they can discover parallels in their present to 'unique' aggressions and humiliations they once suffered justify their own 'counter-aggressions' as self-defence and feed **chauvinism, xenophobia and fear** (Wodak 2015; Kaya/Cesari 2020). Not least for this reason, the project aims to **deal productively with the fundamentally unavoidable conflicts of remembrance**. As the aforementioned difficulties with binational textbook projects, for example, show, it would be illusory to hope that transnational, cosmopolitan or pan-European images of history could easily deconstruct, harmonise or even replace the deeply rooted ideas of mostly neighbouring enemies. However, postcolonial approaches such as '**multidirectional memory**' (Rothberg 2021) relate contradictory traumatic experiences to one another, even over great temporal and spatial distances, in order to make their instrumentalisation in the politics of the past more difficult and to achieve 'transnational, comparative justice'. An **agonistic** rather than antagonistic **way of remembering** (Mouffe 2012; Bull/Hansen 2016) accepts that representations of past conflicts are and will remain biased and emotionally charged. Nevertheless, the agonistic approach promises to bring opposing positions into such an exchange through self-reflection, diversity of perspectives and dialogue-based reasoning that museums, for example, do not evoke **emotions such as disgust or fear** (Cameron, Fiona 2003). To this end, (nationalist and party-political) argumentation patterns must be analysed and the respective narratives, for example on wars of aggression or expulsions, examined on the basis of common criteria. Here, the project can work closely with the new Heidelberg Research Training Group 'Ambivalent Enmity'.

### **Research questions and approach**

The primary research interest is not in entire peoples (e.g. in the form of 'hereditary enemies'), comprehensive movements (such as the migration of peoples) or aggression as a military event, but in **outstanding individual figures** who are individually responsible for aggression. This in no way excludes the possibility that they themselves are presented as typical **representatives of an aggressive national character**; and that the question arises for the collective to what extent it is morally, politically or even legally **liable** for the aggressions committed in its name and with its power resources (Olick 2007). The figure of the aggressor thus lends itself to comparisons that look at **all European historical regions** using suitable examples. It is undisputed that aggressors from Europe have used extreme violence to conquer territories and humiliate, enslave and kill natives in many parts of the world – from the crusades and conquistadors through the imperialist era to the post-colonial present. In accordance with the call for proposals, the project is nevertheless limited to '**Historical Narratives in Europe**'. There, the broad bi- and multilateral reappraisal of discourses on aggressors will be as costly as it is necessary in order to come to grips with the deep-rooted violations of memory politics through dialogue. At the same time, the project can provide fundamental insights for systematically addressing non-European experiences with European aggressors in a conceivable follow-up project.

The first aim is to draw up a **cartography of the current conflicts of memory surrounding aggressors** on our continent. These figures are often central to a specific national history and culture of remembrance, but are hardly known outside the countries concerned. The corresponding

narratives only arouse interest abroad when **their potential for violence** has manifested itself, such as with the collapse of **Yugoslavia** and the **USSR**. This dynamic must also be taken very seriously because the world of states will continue to be subject to change. Almost a third of the current European nation states only came into being after 1990. Inevitably, **the official and unofficial narratives have changed considerably**. Sometimes previously marginalised, exiled or suppressed views have now acquired public status. Tito, like Stalin, is an example of the changed perception that the former unifier of peoples could become an aggressor against some of them. Historical events such as the Ukrainian Holodomor can be completely re-evaluated and reinterpreted from unfortunate crop failures to systematic genocide.

In **Western Europe**, there are certainly comparable debates about the past. In many of today's countries, they reveal **internal fractures** in collective memory, particularly in the portrayal of aggressors. Outside France, the aforementioned image of Napoleon as an enemy competes with the positive image of an innovator who created new, reform-oriented territorial states in Germany, Italy and Switzerland and granted their inhabitants modern rights of freedom. While the Scots of the 18th century hoped for liberators in the Jacobites and still remember them as such today, the English fought against them as Catholic stooges of France. At the same time, most Spanish regions welcomed Philip of Bourbon as a legitimate ruler, but he had to conquer Catalonia militarily. The date of the capitulation, with which the historical rights of autonomy were lost, has been the Catalans' national day of remembrance since 1980. For its part, the neo-Bourbon myth is directed against Garibaldi, who cruelly subjugated southern Italy, whereas in the rest of Italy he is revered as a freedom fighter and unifier of the nation. Such cases also deserve consideration because no teleological development towards the current world of states should be suggested.

State-building wars and conflicts, such as in Yugoslavia and the USSR, are aimed at conquest and subjugation or liberation, depending on the perspective. Aggression in the context of **civil wars**, which took place for ideological, religious and similar reasons, is to be distinguished from this and is not part of the project. With its focus on the aggressor, the project primarily examines the aggressor against a (partial) state that it wants to appropriate. In the Second World War, this had murderous consequences for the Jewish populations, but the well-researched topic of the Holocaust is not at the centre of the interstate approach. This will contrast the aggressor in the interpretation of at least two countries (or regions). The comparison between the competing views of history will be made with different thrusts and on different levels.

1. The development and current state of **academic historiographies** in the countries concerned will be analysed in terms of what can be known about aggressors and how their evaluation has changed in different contexts.
2. The current state of academic research forms the framework when comparing the diverse **popular, often target group-specific narratives**, for example in non-fiction and schoolbooks, newspapers and electronic and social media, museums and special exhibitions as well as commemorative events (anniversaries), in literature, films, popular music, comics, re-enactment or gaming.
3. The instrumentalisation in **political discourse focuses on the 21st century** and uses the figure of the aggressor to examine the condescension and lack of empathy towards victims of one's own expansionist policies on the one hand and the identity-creating separation from timeless enemies of the country, the exclusion of treacherous 'fifth columns' within the country as well as migrant 'invaders' on the other.

The aggressors in question must either **be represented** as enemy images **in current political debates** or have characterised them to such an extent that their treatment yields fundamental insights. The actors can be treated bilaterally and comparatively, with a view to the aggressor state of the time and its victims; multilateral studies are particularly welcome. The **fundamental questions** addressed in the contributions include the following:

- How are aggressors from one's own or a foreign nation interpreted today in academia, in school lessons and in popular media, and how do their images shape ideas of the national self and the foreign other?
- What functions do the representations of aggressors fulfil in the present for political identity and unity within and against the outside world?
- How are aggressors constructed, what characterises them? Which elements are emphasised, which are new, and which are ignored?
- What motives are attributed to the aggressors, what motivates the resistance?
- To what extent do the aggressor and those who resist him represent collectives and especially nations with their characteristics?
- To what extent do the chosen narratives adapt to those that have emerged in other contexts (e.g. the victim narrative in genocides)?
- What role do different media formats play, such as tabloid newspapers; the uninhibited judgement in social media; the focused and strongly contemporary special exhibition compared to the permanent exhibition; the media that rely on illustrations such as television, illustrated books, comics or documentary films; the focus on 'action' in feature films or computer games?
- Which (regional) political camps or social groups systematically and successfully instrumentalise the images of the enemy?
- How have the judgements of aggressors in the country of the perpetrators and the country of the victims converged?
- What are the political and social prerequisites for a military hero to be reinterpreted as an aggressor in his own country, as is currently the case with actors of colonialism (Corning/Schuman 2022), but hardly ever with those whose interpretation is disputed between European nations?

While the external aggressor is constitutive for the self-representation of all historical collectives and can go hand in hand with self-victimisation, the view of one's own misdeeds usually remains distorted. The project therefore aims to raise awareness of how problematic one's own heroes can often be for one's neighbours, who in turn are accused of historical misdeeds. The **narrative and rhetorical strategies** used in the treatment of **aggressors from one's own (predecessor) state**, including Prussia for Germany, are therefore of particular interest.

- Are acts of aggression denied, ignored or relativised through comparisons with other crimes or justified as a reaction of self-defence after provocation?
- If acts of aggression are not denied, is co-responsibility of the victims decried or is their sensitivity considered inappropriate?
- Are acts of aggression 'offset' against other political, economic or cultural achievements?
- Is one's own aggressor pathologised and national liability for him rejected?
- Do victims exaggerate the aggression they have suffered and demonise foreign aggressors – possibly in order to distract attention from their own aggressors?

### **Methodological foundations**

Due to the call for proposals on 'Historical Narratives in Europe', the management team is focussing on academic **self-reflection on the nature and history of historiography**. The topics of aggression

and war connect states not only through the conflict, but also in the strategies of its representation in texts, images, films or museums (Aronsson/Elgenius 2014). The analysis of how specific aggressors were examined and depicted is based on the relevant **discourse and narrative theories** that have been applied in various contexts for almost half a century (Koschorke 2012; Strohmaier 2013). At the same time, the project explicitly pursues an **interdisciplinary approach**. This is guaranteed by the diverse profiles and experience of the management team, the different expertise of the twenty or so researchers involved and the broad selection of projects for qualification theses. Analysing **popular narratives** requires pedagogical, psychological, media and literary expertise as well as specialist knowledge from museum studies, including qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys of exhibition visitors, for example. Digital humanities methods make it possible to compile large amounts of text and data into complete and partial corpora for further analysis (web scraping) and to analyse and visualise them.

In addition to historical methods such as the history of emotions, models from sociology, political science and anthropology explain the **construction of identity and groups**, both on a small scale (extremist parties) and on a large scale (nations). Selective reception processes that form collective memories play a key role in this. In their numerous pioneering studies, Aleida and Jan Assmann in particular have categorised the forms of memory and demonstrated their connections with official and unofficial forms of historical politics (Assmann 1992; Assmann 2006). Canonisation, not least in school textbooks, remains subject to change, which can result from both historiographical revision and identitarian reorientations. Contrary memories are introduced by domestic minorities or fed by foreign experiences. When analysing such processes, various current approaches come into play, such as **'multidirectional'** or **'agonistic'** remembrance. The respective national audience should not see itself as a passive object of emotions, but as an active producer of its communicative and cultural memory, which can go beyond the national framework by engaging with competing memories. In a 'transnational politics of the past', history books, for example, especially if they are not written bilaterally, would have to supplement the depiction of national heroes with a foreign perspective on them.

The project work should be fruitful in the academic field and also have an impact on society in such a way that awareness of the nation's potential for aggression is increased and the paralysing fixation on past aggressors is overcome. With this aim in mind, the project utilises the ideas of **public history** in two ways: on the one hand, it examines the various fields of non-academic history communication, namely the museum (Porciani 2017); on the other hand, it aims to have an impact beyond the university sector and present its findings to the public. A dedicated website, podcasts and articles in print media provide information about the sub-projects and their relevance to the politics of the past. Designed to be interactive, the website, together with the project blog, facilitates exchange with those who think differently and thus demonstrates how an agonistic culture of remembrance can be realised. Last but not least, these forums document struggles over the definition of aggressors and their categorisation. The evaluation of such sources generated by the project itself will in turn flow into the synthesis of the research project, which is being prepared by members of the project management team.

Together with the House of European History in Brussels, a presentation is being prepared that can also be shown at other locations. The visual world of the aggressors will become visible through an online exhibition. Using case studies, it presents the contrasting perceptions of aggressors who are heroes elsewhere, not least in the arts and in film. With additional resources to be acquired, it would be conceivable to design a computer game that obeys a different logic to the numerous conquest games and uses the figure of the aggressor to recognise and defuse national conflict potentials. Historically conceived anti-war games already exist, e.g. the Polish '20 Days. This War of Mine' (2014). If a computer game about the aggressor can be developed from the project, the Steam platform (<https://store.steampowered.com/about/>) or cooperation with proven programmers (e.g. <http://www.thepixelhunt.com/fr/>) can be used for the conception; for the historiographical analysis



of computer games, the Working Group Humanities and Digital Games (<https://gespielt.hypotheses.org/>).

The expected benefits also include:

- an interdisciplinary and international network of relevant researchers that utilises existing structures (Max Weber Foundation, Central European University, etc.) and integrates all European historical regions;
- a website and a project-accompanying science blog for the rapid communication of research results;
- continuous appearance in regional, national and international media in which members of the project management board is already present, both in print (ZEIT, FAZ, NZZ, The Guardian, Gazeta Wyborcza) and electronically through broadcasts or podcasts (Radio Naukowe; Kultura Liberalna, Westdeutscher Rundfunk);
- One monograph each by the project leader ('Cultures of Defeat') and the junior researchers (dissertation, possibly second book);
- an English anthology with case studies, which the senior scholars in particular contribute in such a way that all European regions, the relevant memory conflicts and the various media approaches are covered;
- a collective, synthesising monograph by members of the project management team on the historical phenomenon of the 'aggressor' in international comparison.

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