

## 後冷戰紀念文化之歐洲化

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### 摘要

歐盟東向的擴張造成其地理中心之東移，也挑戰了歐盟過去在紀念文化上以大屠殺為基礎的共識。為重新定義歐盟的身分，各會員國持續投入記憶政治的場域。這部分主要包括歐洲議會的幾項決議：2005年設立納粹大屠殺受難者紀念日、2007年宣布成立歐洲歷史之家、並於2009年決議設立屬於全歐洲共同的紀念日，以紀念所有極權與獨裁政權的受害者。此外，歐洲各國與社會在紀念方面亦試圖推動各自的追求，通常從其戰爭或戰後的受害經驗出發。這些爭論突顯了作為聯盟重心之各歐盟機構與成員國之間日益緊繃的關係；亦指出過去分屬東西對立權力結構的各國與彼此之間的衝突。本文探討這些記憶政治的重要面向，指出歐洲在創造對過去更一致的理解時，所面臨的種種問題。

關鍵詞：記憶政治、歐洲化、大屠殺記憶、全球化、特殊性

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## **The Europeanization of Cultures of Remembrance in Post-Cold War Europe**

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### **Abstract**

The eastward expansion of the European Union has shifted its geographical centre to the East, and called into question the Union's previous commemorative consensus, which was based on the Holocaust. In order to redefine its identity, EU member states have continuously engaged in the politics of memory. This was done prominently through initiatives in the European Parliament, with the adoption of the Day of Remembrance of the Victims of National Socialism in 2005, the announcement of the establishment of a House of European History in 2007 and the adoption of a resolution for a Europe-wide Day of Remembrance of the Victims of All Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes in 2009. Besides, European states and societies have also attempted to promote their own remembrance agendas, usually based on wartime or post-war victimhood. These debates have accentuated growing tensions between EU institutions as the centre of gravitation of the Union and individual member states. They also point out the conflicts between member states which belonged to the formerly oppositional Eastern and Western power structures. By covering central aspects of this politics of memory, this article aims to discuss the problems posed by attempts of creating a more unified understanding of the past in Europe.

**Keywords: Politics of Memory, Europeanization, Holocaust-Remembrance,  
Cosmopolitanization, Particularism**

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## Introduction

In other parts of the world, European unification still serves as a role model for the peaceful economic and political integration of a growing group of previously rather antagonistic nation states. In Europe itself, the integration process has recently come under rather critical scrutiny and has even seen the emergence of pretty strong centrifugal counter-forces. However, at least during the two decades following the peaceful revolutions in Eastern Europe there had been active attempts to conceptualize the history of the continent in a more unified perspective to enhance the integration movement on the level of political and historical memory. These attempts became more serious after the conclusion of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 when actual political integration in old Western Europe started to materialize more concretely. This process was accelerated as a consequence of the disintegration of the former Soviet dominion in Eastern Europe, which eventually led to the accession of most of the former member states of the Soviet bloc to the expanding European Union, and German reunification in the centre of the continent.

The parallel process of moulding a common identity for this growing political entity also pointed beyond the boundaries of the European continent towards a “need to acquire legitimacy in global contexts,”<sup>1</sup> as German historian Lutz Niethammer has put it. This need became ever more acute around 2005 when the Union that was left struggling after the failure to inaugurate its constitution. This failure has further highlighted internal controversies over the war against Iraq in 2003 and the eastward enlargement of the European Union in 2004, and – last, but not least – during the on-going crisis of the common currency. To smooth these underlying difficulties, the European Parliament has encouraged or even initiated efforts for a more unified concept of the past of the European

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<sup>1</sup> Lutz Niethammer, “Das Haus der Europäischen Geschichte: Auf dem Weg zu einem europäischen Gedächtnis? Podiumsdiskussion der Referenten,” in Volkhard Knigge, Hans-Joachim Veen, Ulrich Mähler, and Franz-Josef Schlichting, eds., *Arbeit am europäischen Gedächtnis: Diktaturerfahrung und Demokratieentwicklung* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2011), p. 174.

Union member states. These efforts can be conceptualized as the Europeanization of various national cultures of remembrance of major events of mid-20<sup>th</sup> century European history across the continent. Generally accepted and politically promoted views and images of these parts of history still form the major vanishing point for the self-understanding of the majority of European countries and societies. This European dimension of politics of the past comprises former (war time) alliances, (military) conflicts and diverse (political and cultural) traditions, which are all part of a common, albeit not necessarily shared legacy.<sup>2</sup>

Under the impact of the end of the Cold War, the 1990s in Europe were characterized by the dissolution of previous political and historical certainties. Renewed attempts at reconciliation in Western Europe were made to overcome remaining animosities from World War II, resulting in an increased readiness to problematize national pasts of collaboration with the Nazi occupiers – Denmark, France and the Netherlands being obvious examples – and to acknowledge previously unrecognized or less recognized victims of that era, especially the readiness of Germany’s neighbours to open up to an understanding of German victimhood due to Allied air raids and post-war retaliations. In Eastern Europe the era rather saw attempts to get rid of communist supremacy over national histories and memories and, thus, to establish an awareness of victims of communist rule, which has been especially strong in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. In Poland, with the persistently strong influence of the Catholic Church, it had even been possible more than elsewhere to keep alive alternative memories and views of history during the communist era.<sup>3</sup> These various processes of revisiting mid-20<sup>th</sup> century history were then complicated by a growing awareness of the Holocaust as a historical event that took place across the continent and a significantly lesser degree of readiness to

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<sup>2</sup> Klaus Schönhoven, *Europa als Erinnerungsgemeinschaft. Abschiedsvorlesung an der Sozialwissenschaftlichen Fakultät der Universität Mannheim am 13. September 2007*, Series: Gesprächskreis Geschichte der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, No. 75 (Bonn: Historisches Forschungszentrum, 2007), p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Ned Lebow, “The Memory of Politics in Postwar Europe,” in Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner, and Claudio Fogu, eds., *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe* (London: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 20f.

face up to Eastern European collaboration in this genocide. In reunified Germany all of these trends culminated within the borders of a recreated nation-state.

My article will cover a couple of central aspects of these politics of memory to highlight the problems posed by the attempts to create a more unified European culture of remembrance. In doing so, I will assess the applicability of two concepts to analyse these processes, which have been developed not least with a view to the evolving European memoryscape, namely the cosmopolitanisation of memories<sup>4</sup> and the reflexive particularism<sup>5</sup> of memories. On a vertical axis, the former concept emphasizes new dynamics between the local, national, regional and global levels of memories, which have been brought into dialogue through the expansion and internationalization of memory discourses in general and of the Holocaust remembrance discourse in particular.<sup>6</sup> On a horizontal axis, it signifies how previously rigidly antagonistic cultures of remembrance, which were centred either on victims', bystanders' or perpetrators' memories, have been gradually opened up towards each other, partly due to the passing away of those who personally experienced World War II and its aftermath. Thus the memories of "the other" are increasingly taken into account within cultures of remembrance at national and transnational levels.

Largely as an effect of integration within the framework of the European Union, nowadays its citizens also articulate different forms of belonging to "Europe," which coexist alongside other identifications in local, regional or national terms. It may not be the dominant way of identification and also not entirely without limits and qualifications as Europe is not a given entity in societal discourse but rather at the same time a normative goal to strive for and a potential danger that one has to be aware of. However, Europe

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<sup>4</sup> Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, "Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory," *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2002, pp. 87-106.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Levy, Michael Heinlein, and Lars Breuer, "Reflexive Particularism and Europeanization: The Reconfiguration of the National," *Global Networks*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 2011, pp. 139-159.

<sup>6</sup> Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *Erinnerung im globalen Zeitalter: Der Holocaust* (Frankfurt on the Main: Suhrkamp, 2001).

clearly has become a commonly acknowledged point of reference.<sup>7</sup> Within this context, the concept of reflexive particularism points to a renegotiation of the national level of remembering the past, either by individuals or by representatives of (political) collectives. As memories from the viewpoint of individual nations are increasingly challenged by transnational arrangements – for example the political framework of the European Union – and by conflicts arising from competing claims to legitimacy, the national frame of reference needs to be adjusted to a certain degree to European norms and ideas, while at the same time not more than strictly necessary is given up of a country’s particular national perspective on its past. Aleida Assmann, one of the foremost scholars of communicative and cultural memory, has described the cosmopolitan and the particularistic tendencies as two different kinds of politics of memory, the first being characterized by an ethos of self-critical reflection, the second being based on an ethos of national pride.<sup>8</sup> These two dynamics of memory formation will be discussed in this article, using recent examples from across Europe. It will mainly be drawing on examples from member states of the European Union without claiming to essentialize European memories within that space or to limit the European memoryscape to that political framework.

## **Current Research on Europeanization of Cultures of Remembrance**

Existing research has already laid the foundation for this article to build on. Especially the member states of the European Union are currently trying to make their national cultures of remembrance more compatible with each other. As an initial result, researchers have pointed to a “developing self-reflexivity of national cultures of

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<sup>7</sup> Lars Breuer, “Europeanized Vernacular Memory: A Case Study from Germany and Poland,” in Lucy Bond and Jessica Rapson, eds., *The Transcultural Turn. Interrogating Memory Between and Beyond Borders* (Berlin / Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2014), p. 93.

<sup>8</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Auf dem Weg zu einer europäischen Gedächtniskultur?* (Vienna: Picus, 2012), p. 52.

remembrance,” which is oriented towards overcoming asymmetries in the diverse and antagonistic European memoryscape.<sup>9</sup> Taking Germany as an example, historian Wulf Kansteiner has identified a trend since the mid-1990s, by which a growing adoption of Holocaust remembrance as a part of historical identity went together with its growing importance on a European level while enhancing its acceptance within society at large.<sup>10</sup> Similar developments can be seen in England and France. However, due to being located on either side of the former Iron Curtain and its advanced stage of coming to terms with its Nazi past, Germany has been considered as especially well placed to promote a Europeanization of memories. Not least due to its central location in Europe and its centrality in the events of World Wars I and II, Germany has also been at the centre of various attempts at reconciliation of memories especially of World War II and its aftermath, most notably together with neighbors France, Poland, Czech Republic, and Denmark. Corresponding research and initiatives by states and from within civil society have usually been accompanied by calls for “dialogic remembrance” and an emphasis on reconstructing the various national pasts within a multicultural, transnational, or even continental framework.<sup>11</sup>

Within these processes, different discursive levels and groups of actors interact, which mostly happens asynchronously and according to different dynamics and logics. This refers not only to the rate at which the admission of own wrongdoing, for example collaboration with the Nazis, has become possible, but also to the competition between various groups of victims whose attempts to get heard within society are usually recognized in loose succession rather than simultaneously. What is more, Aleida Assmann has stated that there is a “fundamental lack of space,” especially for foreign memories within national cultures of remembrance because of the commemorative dominance of

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<sup>9</sup> Hubert Christian Ehalt, “Geschichte dialogisch erinnern. Vorwort,” in Aleida Assmann, *Auf dem Weg zu einer europäischen Gedächtniskultur?* (Vienna: Picus, 2012), p. 11ff.

<sup>10</sup> Wulf Kansteiner, *In pursuit of German memory: History, Television, and Politics after Auschwitz* (Athens, AL: Ohio University Press, 2006), p. 263, 279.

<sup>11</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Geschichte im Gedächtnis. Von der individuellen Erinnerung zur kollektiven Inszenierung* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2007), p. 193f.

own suffering,<sup>12</sup> which makes it even harder for non-nationals to claim any kind of victim status in a national culture of remembrance. Nevertheless, at least some Western and Central European states and societies have begun to move towards greater mutual recognition of each other's victimhood.

Historians Konrad Jarausch and Thomas Lindenberger have shown that schoolbook authors – especially in the above-mentioned countries – have in some cases already for decades been trying to deconstruct and, thus, to reduce national prejudices. These initiatives, however, are more targeted at long-term changes among new generations, which have been pretty successfully employed to improve Franco-German relations where jointly used schoolbooks have been co-authored by teachers and academics from both countries since the 1950s. Although similar initiatives between Germany and Poland have been going on since the early 1970s, their impact on German-Polish relations has been much less measurable in terms of an overall qualitative improvement. Here it is more a case of “agreement to disagreement” when it comes to jointly looking at the two countries mutual historical records of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Also with a view to research in general it can be said that genuinely transnational cultural and socio-historical studies with a European perspective have only started to increase over the last ten years.<sup>13</sup> What is more, particularly in Eastern Europe since the end of communist rule, a renewed nationalization of historical views and memories after 1990 has formed a counterweight to the beginning of institutional and normative integration on the European level since after 2000.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, the theory of totalitarianism – while being scientifically contentious – has resurfaced as a potential common denominator for cultures of remembrance in Europe within the context of the European Union's eastward extension. In this context, researchers and political representatives of Eastern European countries have repeatedly emphasized

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<sup>12</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Auf dem Weg zu einer europäischen Gedächtniskultur*, p. 52ff.

<sup>13</sup> Konrad H. Jarausch and Thomas Lindenberger, “Contours of a Critical History of Contemporary Europe: A Transnational Agenda,” in Konrad H. Jarausch and Thomas Lindenberger, eds., *Conflicted Memories: Europeanizing Contemporary Histories* (New York: Berghahn, 2007), p. 5f.

<sup>14</sup> Małgorzata Pakier and Bo Stråth, “Introduction: A European Memory?” In Małgorzata Pakier and Bo Stråth, eds., *A European Memory? Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance* (Oxford / New York: Berghahn, 2010), p. 14.

the necessity to at least re-evaluate, if not to rewrite contemporary history and memory of events of mid-20<sup>th</sup> century after the collapse of their formerly communist regimes.<sup>15</sup>

## Holocaust Remembrance in Eastern Europe: Contested Cosmopolitanization

Political Western Europe used to take pride in agreeing on the Shoah as the negative foundation of European unity. Although commonly referred to in commemorative activities relating to World War II, this agreement has not altogether ended all domestic controversies with regard to the war's legacy in the EU member states as the amount of collaboration in or resistance against the Holocaust or the Nazi occupation regime in general are still controversial issues. Nor has this agreement convinced the entire academic community in the respective member states and abroad. As one notable critic, US historian Peter Novick, has dryly formulated: "(T)here is something absurdly 'minimalist' about a moral consensus based on affirming that, indeed, murdering six million men, women, and children is an atrocious crime."<sup>16</sup> This consensus has nevertheless set a powerful cosmopolitan precedent for European politics of memory.

And the consensus has also given rise to a discursive competition for elevated victim status whenever other victim groups, like those from Eastern Europe, having suffered from both Nazi and Stalinist crimes, try to get attention for their firmly established particularistic role of double victims of events of 20<sup>th</sup> century history, or those hitherto neglected groups of victims in Western Europe try to step out of the overreaching shadow of the Holocaust.<sup>17</sup> These groups, or rather those who advocate their claims, try to employ

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<sup>15</sup> Emmanuel Droit, "Die Shoah: Von einem westeuropäischen zu einem transeuropäischen Erinnerungsort?" in Kirstin Buchinger, Claire Gantet, and Jakob Vogel, eds., *Europäische Erinnerungsräume* (Frankfurt on the Main / New York: Campus, 2009), p. 265.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Novick, "Comments on Aleida Assmann's lecture," *GHI Bulletin*, Vol. 21, No. 40, 2007, p. 31.

<sup>17</sup> Yvonne Robel, *Verhandlungssache Genozid. Zur Dynamik geschichtspolitischer Deutungskämpfe* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2013).

terms and formulations that relate to the Holocaust remembrance discourse by strategically employing key words such as “deportation,” “genocide” or, indeed, “Holocaust” when talking about their own suffering. This has repeatedly been an issue in the quest of Sinte and Romany people for recognition of their murderous persecution during the Nazi era. The problem for this group is that they have been subject to discrimination for centuries in various European societies and, thus, have had manifest difficulties to be acknowledged as victims of Nazi persecution as societies have been distinctly hesitant in granting them any kind of victim status. The other group that comes to mind are those parts of civilian populations, who had to suffer from air raids during World War II. Especially in Germany, it has become notorious that their suffering has been likened to that of Jewish Nazi victims. This associative closeness to the murder of the Jews of Europe on a rhetoric level is still widely seen as the royal road to recognition within the European Union or in the wider international community.

In 2003, it could quite rightly be claimed that the common (Western) European historical identity was mainly based on the negative legacy of Nazism and the Holocaust and that the creation of this identity was made possible through the blurring of once clear-cut separations of victims and perpetrators along national lines in Europe.<sup>18</sup> It was a distinctly cosmopolitan trend. By then, acknowledging the singularity of the Holocaust and a pledge to safeguard its remembrance had already become vital EU membership criteria in the wake of the 2000 Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust.<sup>19</sup> The forum, however, had been jointly initiated by the US, Britain and Sweden. Thus, due to the initiative of the US and also the active participation of Israel, this commemorative initiative was not necessarily everywhere considered a genuine European effort.<sup>20</sup> It

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<sup>18</sup> Matthias Maier and Thomas Risse, *Europeanization, Collective Identities and Public Discourses: Draft Final Report Submitted to the European Commission* (Florence: European University Institute and Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, 2003), p. 42.

<sup>19</sup> Günter Morsch, “...Eine umfassende Neubewertung der Europäischen Geschichte“? *Gedenkstättenrundbrief*, No. 157, 2010, p. 5. See also Heidemarie Uhl, “Conflicting cultures of memory in Europe: new borders between East and West?” *The Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 2009, p. 63.

<sup>20</sup> Klas-Göran Karlsson, “The Uses of History and the Third Wave of Europeanization,” in Malgorzata Pakier and Bo Stråth, eds., *A European Memory? Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance* (Oxford / New York: Berghahn, 2010), p. 43.

appeared like a globalized cosmopolitan vector of commemoration piercing through the sensitive layers of attempts at integration, which had been stretched over the fragmented European memoryscapes.

The Stockholm initiative was still mostly favourably received in Western Europe, but in Eastern Europe sizeable parts of the population in various countries were on the whole more reserved or even perceived it as outright Western imperialist politics of memory.<sup>21</sup> Apart from the origin of this specific commemorative initiative from Western countries, the higher rank that history has occupied in the public and political spheres of Eastern European countries after 1989 in comparison to Western Europe also contributed to their indignation over the Stockholm project.<sup>22</sup> This higher rank resulted in a heightened awareness towards history that has caused a greater sensitivity vis-à-vis outside influence when it comes to defining this history. The Eastern European resentment towards the Stockholm initiative also has to be understood within the context of a greater trend since the 1980s in – not only – European countries to introduce laws with the explicit purpose to tell the citizens of those countries what parts of the national past they were supposed to remember in what way.<sup>23</sup>

And although the commitment to safeguard Holocaust remembrance according to the European Union accession criteria adopted in the wake of the Stockholm conference was eventually officially endorsed by the new EU member states, actual practices show a more complex picture. In Hungary, a memorial – erected in early 2005 – for Jews, who had been shot and were then thrown into the river Danube by Hungarian fascists in Budapest in early 1945, was vandalized only two months after its inauguration.<sup>24</sup> Four pairs of cast-iron shoes – symbolising the dead – had been torn from the ground and then – in a bizarre

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<sup>21</sup> Emmanuel Droit, “Die Shoah: Von einem westeuropäischen zu einem transeuropäischen Erinnerungsort?” p. 265.

<sup>22</sup> Włodzimierz Borodziej, “Das Haus der Europäischen Geschichte – ein Erinnerungskonzept mit dem Mut zur Lücke,” in Volkhard Knigge, Hans-Joachim Veen, Ulrich Mähler, and Franz-Josef Schlichting, eds., *Arbeit am europäischen Gedächtnis: Diktaturerfahrung und Demokratieentwicklung* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2011), p. 143.

<sup>23</sup> Małgorzata Pakier and Bo Stråth, “Introduction: A European Memory?” p. 10.

<sup>24</sup> Eva Kovacs, “Das Gedächtnis der Shoah als Memoire croisee der verschiedenen politischen Systeme,” Eurozine, April 18, 2007, [http://www.eurozine.com/articles/article\\_2007-04-18-kovacs-de.html](http://www.eurozine.com/articles/article_2007-04-18-kovacs-de.html) (accessed January 14, 2017)

re-enactment of the mass killing – thrown after the commemorated victims into the river where they were rediscovered only during the summer of that year when water levels of the Danube began to drop again. While this might be considered an isolated event, it is unfortunately well in line with reports that the remembrance of the Holocaust in Hungary still exists within the overreaching shadow of communism.

A more complex way of dealing with the Nazi past has emerged in Latvia. There is an annual parade to honor Latvian former SS-Legionaries who fought for the Nazis and were involved in the murder of Latvian Jews. Today they are nevertheless mainly remembered as fighters for the freedom and independence of Latvia against the Red Army. And while the Latvian government in 2000 abolished the official “Day of Remembrance of the Legionaries” due to its controversial implications – possibly already with a view to future admission to the European Union – the parade still goes ahead every year despite strong international protests. In 2016, it led to the rather delicate situation that the Latvian government deported some of the non-Latvian protesters against the parade or even denied them entry to Latvia in the first place. This happened despite them being EU citizens, on grounds that the government had to “preserve public order and peace in Latvia,”<sup>25</sup> that is in order to protect a parade by a few veteran Nazi legionaries and their supporters. While the Latvian government officially managed to keep the common cosmopolitan understanding intact by abolishing the national Day of Remembrance, underneath the surface, there is obviously still a strong, aggressively particularistic potential, which goes well beyond a commonly accepted idea of renegotiation.

## **The Return of the Memory of Flight and Expulsion: Reflexive Particularism in Practice**

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<sup>25</sup> Parliamentary Archive of the German Bundestag, PA-DBT 3001 Deutscher Bundestag, 18. WP, DS 18/8503, May 19, 2016.

Although the issue of forced migration during the final phase and in the aftermath of World War II failed to gain much public attention across Europe ever since the second East-West détente began in the late 1960s, the history of forced population transfers and ethnic cleansing in 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe has nevertheless been deeply anchored in the particularistic collective memories of its societies.<sup>26</sup> Hungarian sociologist Eva Kovacs regards this part of European history as a meeting point for the separate memory traditions of Eastern and Western Europe which could be the origin of a new common European memory as many countries are somehow connected to this history in one or the other way.<sup>27</sup> So there seems to be some cosmopolitan potential in this past. On the other hand, it can justifiably be argued for the majority of European countries that the experience of expulsion has so far rather regularly been remembered within an exclusively or at least mainly national framework.<sup>28</sup> However, these national perspectives are increasingly reflected within bilateral or multilateral European contexts which seem to turn this part of history potentially into a classic example of reflexive particularism. In Germany but also in Europe at large, the recent discourse on national victimhood in connection with forced migration has resurfaced as a focus for public memory around the year 2000.<sup>29</sup>

Ten years after national reunification, with the zenith of Holocaust remembrance about to be reached and post-war restitution payments for victims officially coming to an end with the long-awaited compensation of former forced laborers, a renewed understanding rose within society that Germany had probably repented enough and was morally justified to highlight (again) the past suffering of its own population. This came also as a backlash against decades of official anti-fascism under communist one-party rule

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<sup>26</sup> Claus Leggewie, "Seven circles of European memory," Eurozine, December 20, 2010, <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2010-12-20-leggewie-en.html> (accessed January 14, 2017) See also Monika Flacke and Ulrike Schmiegelt, "Mythen der Nationen. Kampf der Erinnerungen. Über die Schwierigkeiten der Musealisierung europäischer Zwangsmigrationen," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, Vol. 51, No. 1, 2003, p. 58.

<sup>27</sup> Eva Kovacs, "Das Gedächtnis der Shoah als Memoire croisee der verschiedenen politischen Systeme," Eurozine.

<sup>28</sup> Burkhard Olschowsky, "Erinnerungslandschaft mit Brüchen," *Transit. Europäische Revue*, Vol. 18, No. 35, 2008, p. 27.

<sup>29</sup> Bill Niven, "German victimhood discourse in comparative perspective," in Eric Langenbacher, Bill Niven, and Ruth Wittlinger, eds., *Dynamics of Memory and Identity in Contemporary Europe* (New York / Oxford: Berghahn, 2012), p. 186.

in the GDR which had overemphasized the importance and meaning of communist victims of Nazi rule at the expense of virtually all other groups of victims. This renewed commemorative focus was also promoted as a project of generational reconciliation. The protest generation of “1968,” who had been groundbreakers for the remembrance of non-German victims of Nazi rule in the country, now – as they were about to go into retirement and lose their positions of influence in public office and media – tried to initiate compensatory remembrance of German victims – in some cases their own relatives – who can be said to have lost a good deal of their previous social, cultural and political capital over the impact of the “68ers.”

However, the ensuing debate on commemorative representation of this past soon turned controversial. But the centrist Grand coalition and centre-right governments after 2005 have become more and more vocal in their support for a “Visible Sign,” that is a monument and a permanent exhibition hall for Germany’s own victims of flight and expulsion from Eastern Europe during the final stages and after the end of World War II. Nevertheless, the eventual introduction of a national Day of Remembrance for these victims still had to be carefully negotiated between the advocates of the pre-eminence of remembrance of the Nazi past and those arguing for an emphasis on German victimhood.<sup>30</sup>

Originally, the influential German League of Expellees wanted the commemorative date to fall on 5 August, which was the day the so called “Charter of the German Expellees” had been signed in 1950. However, the charter had failed to mention in any clear terms the crimes of the Nazi regime as the root cause for the ensuing expulsions. That way it enabled Germans to claim an unconditional victim status, which barely reflected the impact of six years of murderous German expansion before those expulsions took place. What is more, a number of the signatories of the charter had themselves been actively involved with the Nazi regime and had, therefore, arguably not even conditional claim to

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<sup>30</sup> Marco Dräger, “Ein Hoch auf Flucht und Vertreibung? Zur Einführung des neuen Gedenktages für die Opfer von Flucht und Vertreibung am 20. Juni,” *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, Vol. 65, No. 25, 2015, pp. 49-54, <http://www.bpb.de/apuz/208013/zur-einfuehrung-des-neuen-gedenktages-am-20-juni?p=all> (accessed January 14, 2017)

victim status. Eventually, after a heated public debate, the commemorative date was shifted to 20 June, to coincide with the International Day of the Refugee. While taking into consideration the controversial status of the Charter, or rather of the League of Expellees as the main driving force behind the introduction of the remembrance date, the new date still has a tendency to overemphasize the aspect of victimhood. In common understanding, the figure of the refugee is the powerless victim of either unprovoked state aggression or because he or she got caught between the front lines of warring states. Both interpretations, however, neglect the historical circumstances of the German case. But the change of date nevertheless acknowledged the fact that keeping distance from the League of Expellees is still essential for any German commemorative initiative to gain majority approval at home and abroad and, thus, for a successful particularistic renegotiation of the culture of remembrance.

More recently, the League had again gained notoriety for stirring up controversies in the politics of memory especially with Poland over its controversial former chairperson, Erika Steinbach. She was born in 1943 in Nazi-occupied Poland as the daughter of a German Wehrmacht occupation officer with no family or other ties to the country whatsoever and thus utterly unacceptable for the Polish side as the representative for Germans who claimed to be innocent culturally rooted victims of expulsion from their long-established homes. And some of the League's members and others with political ties to it had founded the so called Prussian Trust in 2004 to press legal claims against Poland for the restitution of possessions of former expellees despite the two countries having settled reparation claims against each other already decades ago. The Polish government promptly reacted by threatening to pick up its own compensation claims against Germany again. Under these circumstances, the previous Schröder as well as the current Merkel administrations have swiftly refused to back the Trust's claims, also as a political reassurance towards Polish fears of resurging German revanchism. Thereby, successive German governments have officially taken the safer road to a Europeanized cosmopolitanisation of the memory of flight of expulsion instead of showing

particularistic insistence. The law suits were eventually dismissed by the European Court of Human Rights in 2008 what can be read as yet another indication of the cosmopolitanisation of interpretations of the past on the political European level.

## **Current Politics of Memory within the European Union**

One decisive aspect of the narration of a more integrated European culture of remembrance seems to be to avoid antagonising its strongest member nation, that is Germany. The reference to an anonymous “enemy” who was eventually overcome in World War II without mentioning Germany has increasingly become European practice since the 1990s. This practice can be seen as a consequence of the deepened stage of integration in the wake of the 1992 Maastricht Treaty. A milestone in this respect was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe on 8 May in 1995 when Queen Elizabeth II in her commemorative address in London no longer referred to Germany but to “Nazi persecutors” which had been defeated.<sup>31</sup> However, this was not always a straightforward, one-way development. In 1994, it was still unthinkable for the former Western Allies to invite Germany to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary the Allied invasion of Normandy, which had spelled the end to German military dominance in Western Europe during World War II. Then German chancellor Kohl (1930-2017) was deeply upset about this snub and was reconciled with an invitation from the French president Mitterrand (1916-1996) to attend the celebrations of France’s Bastille Day where German soldiers were included in the military parade.<sup>32</sup> Ten years later, German chancellor Schröder was finally invited to attend the Normandy anniversary. And he immediately seized the opportunity to aptly coin a formula embracing the newly found Western European

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<sup>31</sup> “Elizabeth II. eröffnet Feiern zum Kriegsende,” *Die WELT*, May 6-7, 1995, p. 5.

<sup>32</sup> Ilse Raaijmakers, “A European myth? The debate about Dutch-German commemorations of the Second World War in the Netherlands,” in Krijn Thijs and Rüdiger Haude, eds., *Grenzfälle: Transfer und Konflikt zwischen Deutschland, Belgien und den Niederlanden im 20. Jahrhundert* (Heidelberg: Synchron, 2013), p. 219f.

commemorative consensus when he declared the result of the war not “a victory over Germany,” but rather “a victory for Germany.”<sup>33</sup>

Further east it was not so harmonious around that time as only two years earlier chancellor Schröder had cancelled a visit to the Czech Republic because Prime Minister Zeman had publicly referred to ethnic Germans, who had been expelled from Czechoslovakia after World War II over their support for Nazi Germany, as “Hitler’s fifth column.”<sup>34</sup> Obviously, this kind of strongly particularistic language, which still insisted on a clear-cut separation of (German) perpetrators from (Czech) victims during World War II, was no longer deemed acceptable in unified Europe – even more so as there had been a role reversal included after 1945. However, on the whole, the growing reconciliatory attitude towards Germany has prevailed over time and is still present in current remembrance formulae, albeit usually only employed by representatives from the Western half of Europe. On the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe, for example, French president Hollande further developed German chancellor Schröder’s earlier statement, elaborating that the victory had been “not a victory of one nation over another but one of an ideal over a totalitarian ideology.”<sup>35</sup> Thereby, not only the geographical reference to Germany is dropped, as had already been the case in the Queen’s earlier address, but even the political denomination “Nazi” has been substituted with the vaguer reference to a “totalitarian ideology.” This conveniently includes a potential reference to communism, which would be counterfactual with regard to the Allied coalition of World War II if there was drawn an explicit connection to the Soviet Union, but implicitly it reflects the re-emergence of an “anti-totalitarian” memory consensus in Europe. This accommodating approach towards Germany has to be seen in the context of the dual function of European integration since 1989/90, which should not only keep Germany contained within a continental power structure but also create a framework to

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<sup>33</sup> Wulf Kansteiner, *In pursuit of German memory: History, Television, and Politics after Auschwitz*, p. 304.

<sup>34</sup> Richard Ned Lebow, “The Memory of Politics in Postwar Europe,” p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> “Gedenken an Kriegsende in Europa,” SPIEGEL Online, May 8, 2015, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/zweiter-weltkrieg-europa-gedenkt-dem-8-mai-1945-a-1032844.html> (accessed January 9, 2017)

enable its peaceful reunification.<sup>36</sup> The actual unification process of former East and West Germany back in 1989/90, however, happened in a very quick fashion and was accompanied by quite some apprehension in the political elites in Western Europe, the Soviet Union and among victims and survivors of Nazi rule in Europe.<sup>37</sup>

With regard to Holocaust remembrance, in 1996 Germany introduced 27 January – the date of the liberation of Auschwitz concentration camp – as a Day of Remembrance for the victims of National Socialism. Despite its origins in initiatives from socialist politicians in early post-unification Germany and from the former head of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, Ignatz Bubis (1927-1999), nowadays the “Holocaust Remembrance Day” is seen as the invention of Germany’s former federal president Roman Herzog (1934-2017). He had officially cited the imminent demise of the last survivors and witnesses of the Holocaust and other Nazi crimes as the main reason to create such a commemorative date. He had also pointed to the need to give Holocaust remembrance in Germany more binding public forms after the fierce controversies of the 1980s over the ways of dealing with the Nazi past.<sup>38</sup>

Holocaust Remembrance Day was subsequently adopted in other European countries like Great Britain and Italy as well as on EU level and in 2005 eventually even on global level. Within the European Union, its introduction had mainly been due to the efforts of the Council of Europe who saw this kind of commemorative mark as being in line with its role of furthering the importance of human rights in Europe. The Council had used the endorsement of a conference of European governments’ education ministers at its seat in Strasbourg in 2002 to declare 27 January a European Day of Remembrance, which was then first observed in 2005. This adoption by the European Union and the United Nations,

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<sup>36</sup> Ruth Wittlinger, “Shaking off the Past? The New Germany in the New Europe,” in Eric Langenbacher, Bill Niven, and Ruth Wittlinger, eds., *Dynamics of Memory and Identity in Contemporary Europe* (New York / Oxford: Berghahn, 2012), p. 197.

<sup>37</sup> Gisela Dachs, “Der nationale Traum als Trauma,” *Die ZEIT Online*, May 4, 1990, <http://www.zeit.de/1990/19/der-nationale-traum-als-trauma> (accessed January 9, 2017)

<sup>38</sup> Christoph Thonfeld, *Normalisierung des Außergewöhnlichen. Der Wandel der Erinnerungskultur des Zweiten Weltkriegs und des Holocaust in Deutschland 1990-2010* (Taipei: Sunny, 2015), p. 135f.

respectively, marked not only a textbook example of cosmopolitanisation of memory; it also was the first time when Germany became actually the pacemaker of remembrance of Nazi or war crimes for others. For much of the post-war era until the 1990s more often than not, it needed sustained efforts from within Germany's civil society or the academic community or the initiative of other – usually Western European – countries or the United States to set the pace of remembrance for official Germany and mainstream society's attitude towards its past, by trying to gradually expand the scope of public and conscious acknowledgement of Nazi crimes among ordinary Germans and political elites alike.

When it took effect in May 2004, the accession of seven former member states from the former Soviet sphere of influence to the expanding European Union was hailed as yet another sign of the end of the post-war era and the successful revision of the Cold War political order. This went together with renewed efforts at creating a common identity for the group of by then 25 European Union countries. In order to enhance this identity, the EU engaged in memory politics which included a new negative commemorative focus on the (Stalinist) Soviet Union as the “Other” of the emerging European Union, mostly promoted by politicians from Eastern Europe.<sup>39</sup> The ensuing debates have not only accentuated the growing tension between the central EU institutions and the individual member states. They have also pointed to conflicts between the states of the formerly oppositional eastern and western political blocs. And while it can hardly be doubted that there is a growing tendency in Europe to view World War II as a common European past,<sup>40</sup> it is also obvious that this does not equal a common European culture of remembrance. While there is a growing common understanding of the events of World War II and beyond, it is still rather controversial which ones form the core and which ones are peripheral and what kind of relationship exists between them and how they should be interpreted.

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<sup>39</sup> Nynke Klaske Hofstra, “Europeanization of the Collective Memory? Case Study of the Netherlands,” (Master thesis, University of Groningen, 2011), <https://www.mysciencework.com/publication/show/2883948/europeanization-of-the-collective-memory-case-study-of-the-netherlands> (accessed July 29, 2014), p. 28.

<sup>40</sup> Nynke Klaske Hofstra, “Europeanization of the Collective Memory? Case Study of the Netherlands,” p. 71.

Since 2008, the new member states from Eastern Europe have systematically begun to bring their own commemorative agenda to fruition within the European Union.<sup>41</sup> In June 2008, the so called “Prague Declaration on the Conscience of Europe and Communism” was drafted and signed, mostly by politicians and European parliamentarians from the Baltic states, Poland and Hungary, with the notable inclusion of the former German president Joachim Gauck among the initial signers.<sup>42</sup> This declaration argued for the equal remembrance of crimes of communism and equal, non-discriminatory recognition of its victims with frequent implicit or even explicit references to the recognition and remembrance of Nazi (war) crimes and their victims. This is most obvious in clause 9 of the Declaration’s demands, which calls for the “establishment of 23<sup>rd</sup> August, the day of signing of the Hitler-Stalin Pact, known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, as a day of remembrance of the victims of both Nazi and Communist totalitarian regimes, *in the same way Europe remembers the victims of the Holocaust on January 27<sup>th</sup>.*”<sup>43</sup> [Author’s emphasis] Originally proclaimed by the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic, the signatories carried their initiative into the European Parliament where a resolution on the introduction of the new Day of Remembrance was adopted in April 2009. This was politically the most visible attempt to achieve equality in terms of the importance, which is to be given to the remembrance of Nazi and communist crimes on a common European level.

Outside of Eastern Europe the memory of communist crimes is still not deeply rooted in cultures of remembrance, while below the political surface also within the former Soviet sphere of dominance the status of the communist legacy within each society is far from resolved or generally agreed upon. This is reflected in the fact that most EU-member countries until today do not pay much attention to the newly introduced remembrance date. Especially in the Western half of Europe, Sweden is actually the only country to officially

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<sup>41</sup> Heidemarie Uhl, “Conflicting cultures of memory in Europe: new borders between East and West?” p. 66.

<sup>42</sup> Kurt Nelhiebel, “Fallgruben politisch motivierten Erinnerns. Anmerkungen zum Gedenktag für die Opfer aller totalitären Regime,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, Vol. 62, No. 7/8, 2014, p. 620ff.

<sup>43</sup> “Prague Declaration on European Conscience and Communism,” Voltairenet, June 6, 2008, <http://www.voltairenet.org/article191922.html> (accessed April 18, 2017)

observe it. On the national level, for example the majority of members of the back then centre-right German government (after September 2009) certainly were not against the inclusion of the victims of Stalinism into the commemorative calendar. However, the perceived ambition of the mainly Eastern European advocates of this commemorative initiative led to the accusation within academia, civil society and parts of the political elite that their purpose was actually to level out the differences between the crimes of National Socialism and Soviet Communism, which triggered a huge controversy over politics of memory. On the one hand, the resolution of the European Parliament contained a reference to the singularity of the Holocaust, which still forms the cornerstone of the culture of remembrance in Germany. On the other hand, this reference was immediately relativized in the same sentence by pointing to the millions of other people who had been deported, imprisoned, tortured and murdered in 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe.<sup>44</sup> In this case, the attempt at cosmopolitanisation of remembrance on the European level clashed with the still existing national remembrance consensus, dating back to the old Federal Republic. And for the time being, the particularistic insistence of civil society could still prevail in Germany. Therefore, the government preferred to give the commemorative date of 23 August only low-profile recognition. The German Parliament dutifully acknowledged the resolution but did not establish a corresponding day of remembrance, let alone a national holiday.

Germany's rich experience with integrating a Western and an Eastern remembrance tradition – albeit controversially pushed through in the early 1990s following unification – had been decisive for the EU states to upgrade Germany's standing with regard to dealing with its past and to admit the country into the wider discursive framework of societies undergoing transitional justice.<sup>45</sup> Eventually and somewhat surprisingly, given the at times fierce debates about the future course and past legitimacy of Germany's two cultures of remembrance, the so called "Faulenbach formula" was adopted within German

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<sup>44</sup> Kurt Nelhiebel, "Fallgruben politisch motivierten Erinnerns. Anmerkungen zum Gedenktag für die Opfer aller totalitären Regime," p. 623.

<sup>45</sup> Anne K. Krüger, "Transitional Justice," Version: 1.0, Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte, January 25, 2013, [http://docupedia.de/zg/Transitional\\_Justice](http://docupedia.de/zg/Transitional_Justice) (accessed January 14, 2017), p. 10.

politics of memory.<sup>46</sup> It was named after the German historian who presided over an expert committee on the reconceptualization of the Sachsenhausen concentration camp and special camp memorial site. The committee came up with this formula in 1991 to establish an acceptable mode of “commemorative coexistence” between the cultures of remembrance of both, Nazi and Communist crimes, especially at those places which had seen both, crimes under Nazi rule before 1945 and those under Soviet occupation after 1945 or later during the Socialist Unity Party dictatorship in East Germany after 1949. The formula stipulates that “(n)either must the Nazi crimes be relativized by the crimes of Stalinism nor the crimes of Stalinism be minimized/trivialized by hinting at the Nazi crimes.”<sup>47</sup> Thus, the enormity of the scale of Nazi crimes compared to communist crimes in the German case is adequately represented, while communist crimes can also be remembered within their own right and without being implicitly or explicitly belittled by the comparison to Nazi crimes. This formula has by and large guided the revision of Germany’s post-Cold War culture of remembrance, which has evolved since the unification of former East and West Germany, and the refurbishment of those memorial sites with a “double past.”

But this fragile balance of commemorative coexistence has time and again been difficult to maintain. A factual predominance of the memory of Nazi crimes over those of the Stalinist era in the official sphere, in public commemorations and in terms of monuments has prevailed until around 2005,<sup>48</sup> while at the same time public funds and political decision making processes have increasingly shifted towards the commemoration of communist crimes in East Germany. This political shift has usually been justified by pointing to the comparatively high level of public awareness and the huge body of knowledge and scholarship that already existed with regards to Nazi crimes, whereas there was still a perceived greater need to catch up in both respects with regard to the former

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<sup>46</sup> Andrew Beattie, “Learning from the Germans? History and Memory in German and European Projects of Integration,” *PORTAL: Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 2007, p. 19.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas Lindenberger, “Governing Conflicted Memories: Some Remarks about the Regulation of History Politics in United Germany,” in Muriel Blaive, Christian Gerbel, and Thomas Lindenberger, eds., *Clashes in European Memory: Communist Repression and the Holocaust* (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2011), p. 78.

<sup>48</sup> Bill Niven, “German victimhood discourse in comparative perspective,” p. 190.

GDR. However, when it comes to the funding of and taking up of political responsibility for actual memorial sites, there has been a bias in favour of the former GDR and especially concerning sites of communist crimes right from 1990. It stemmed originally from newly unified Germany's government's perceived need to fundamentally overhaul the former East German memorial sites of Nazi crimes, which were found to largely promote highly ideologized Communist Party views. At the same time, old West Germany's memorial sites of Nazi crimes were mostly maintained on public or private shoestring budgets by members of civil society and the academic community who frequently volunteered to do the remembrance work while the central government did not show any urgency to improve this situation. After the change of government in 1998 this imbalance has been somewhat addressed without bringing about fundamental reorientation. Therefore, (West German) memorial sites of Nazi crimes still fear marginalization as public funding also translates into greater socio-cultural visibility and perception. They also warn that memory needs to be actively kept alive within society to retain the meaning that has been attached to it and that this purpose needs solid funding.

## **Europeanization of Cultural Memory: The House of European History**

To enhance efforts at integrating unified Europe's view of its past, commemorative initiatives are backed up with attempts at museumization. When Hans-Gert Pöttering was inaugurated as president of the European Parliament in 2007 – as it was Germany's turn to take over the presidency – he seized the opportunity to announce the idea to establish a House of European History as a place where “a memory of European history and the work of European unification is jointly cultivated” and “for the European identity to go on being

shaped.”<sup>49</sup> It is designed to give an integrated overview of the historical development of the continent, especially in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, although according to the majority of historians in Europe such an integrated view of history does hardly exist because of the strong national historiographic traditions of virtually all the member states of the European Union. To create it would at least need a lengthy controversial negotiation process and the result would likely resemble the “lowest common denominator (...) of a consensually negotiated reality.”<sup>50</sup> The initiative for the European House of History can be seen as a classical top-down attempt to codify cultural memory as it was decreed by the presidium of the European Parliament, which had obviously also made sure that its project would be on a sound financial footing from within the parliamentary budget right from the start, unlike other parallel or competing initiatives at museumization of the continent’s past.

In 2008, a committee of experts, which had been commissioned by the presidium, drafted “Conceptual Guidelines” for the project. The Guidelines should emphasize the European significance of the Holocaust, Western Europe’s unification, the reconciliation with its Eastern neighbours and their eventual admission to the Union. These and other topics will be presented on 4000m<sup>2</sup> of space – exactly half of what the German Historical Museum has available to showcase German history alone. But the House of European History should not only permanently exhibit an integrated European view of history in general and the immediate previous history of the European Union in particular. Pöttering also had in mind to make this House a centre to increase further understanding of and to enhance reconciliation over Europe’s violent past, especially that of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. That European unification serves as the teleological terminus for this history is only one of the problematic implications of this view of the continent’s past.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Committee of Experts. “House of European History: Conceptual Basis for a House of European History,” October 19, 2008, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004\\_2009/documents/dv/745/745721/745721\\_en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/dv/745/745721/745721_en.pdf) (accessed January 9, 2017), p. 5.

<sup>50</sup> Volkhard Knigge, “Das Haus der Europäischen Geschichte: Auf dem Weg zu einem europäischen Gedächtnis? Podiumsdiskussion der Referenten,” p. 178.

<sup>51</sup> Stefan Tröbst, “Eckstein einer EU-Geschichtspolitik? Das Museumsprojekt „Haus der Europäischen Geschichte“ in Brüssel,” *Deutschland Archiv Online*, October 26, 2012, <http://www.bpb.de/geschichte/zeitgeschichte/deutschlandarchiv/144616/eckstein-einer-eu-geschichtspolitik> (accessed January 9, 2017)

Immediate protests against this project came most notably from the by now notorious Eurosceptics from Great Britain – or rather England – who saw in it little more than a waste of taxpayers’ money. Besides the monetary concerns, Britain’s membership in the European Union has always been a highly pragmatic and domestically controversial issue. Be it Germany’s unification within the framework of a unifying Europe in 1990, the introduction of a common European currency in 2002 or the project of a common European constitution in 2005, the United Kingdom – at least, but by far not exclusively its political leadership – was hesitant, sceptical or negative about those initiatives. In this way, one could argue that Great Britain has never really arrived in unified Europe in the first place, despite its apparent reorientation in this direction after the farewell to its global empire in the first two decades after World War II.

Poland did not feel properly represented in the Guidelines for the planned permanent exhibition despite the fact that the head of the Academic Committee, which had authored those Guidelines, was a historian from Poland.<sup>52</sup> And the criticism was not only articulated in historical terms. Critics highlighted the Guidelines’ negligence of the role and influence of the Polish resistance movement against the Nazis during World War II, which – according to the Guidelines – had already ended in 1939, while in fact it went on during the entire duration of the war and has become major source of national identification for Poland again after 1989.<sup>53</sup> On top of that, in 2009 an official video of the European Union to celebrate the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its eastward extension and the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the peaceful revolutions in Eastern Europe again largely ignored the simultaneous anniversary of Poland’s coinciding milestones of the way towards democratization in the shape of its breakthrough semi-free elections in summer of 1989. This renewed negligence sparked

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<sup>52</sup> Claus Leggewie and Anne Lang, *Der Kampf um die europäische Erinnerung: Ein Schlachtfeld wird besichtigt* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2011), p. 184. On Britain’s scepticism against the EU’s attempt at creating a common European identity through a Europeanized approach to historiography, see also Conference Report: “Creating European Identity through History: Representations of the past in Contemporary European Politics,” September 9-10, 2015, H-Soz-Kult, December 16, 2015, <http://www.hsozkult.de/conferencereport/id/tagungsberichte-6287> (accessed January 9, 2017)

<sup>53</sup> Committee of Experts, “House of European History: Conceptual Basis for a House of European History,” p. 18.

fears that Poland's democratic achievements would largely be eclipsed by the celebrations of the anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.<sup>54</sup>

The negative commemorative focus on the former Soviet Union is also represented in the Conceptual Guidelines by highlighting the (negative) impact of the Russian Revolution in November 1917, the Great Terror of 1936/7 and the Cold War on Europe's development. Especially the first aspect, the revolution of 1917, cannot but surprise as an attempt of othering Russian/Soviet history and constructing a dichotomy between it and the commonly shared past of "Europe." When the 1917 revolution happened, it was an event of utmost importance – especially but not exclusively – for the various socialist labour movements across the continent, which brought together and activated millions of people. It was seen as an ominous warning by the majority, but it also served as an inspiration for a significant minority. And the ensuing creation of the Soviet Union in the same way has been a valid point of reference not only for these movements but also for other political actors and elites across Europe and beyond at least until the 1950s. To frame this part of history now as the complete "other" of "Europe" would likely result in a gross misrepresentation of decades of labour movement history. This has to be understood as a way to accommodate the political agenda of mostly Eastern European parliamentarians, which also shows on the level of cultural memory how the idea of European integration was implicitly designed to prevent the Soviet Union or later Russia from expanding<sup>55</sup> by creating US-backed economic and political infrastructures in Western Europe, hence also the tendency to lay the blame for the Cold War firmly on the Soviet Union.

As a role model to be emulated by the House of European History, Pöttering has singled out the much debated "House of Terror" in Budapest,<sup>56</sup> which has been established in the Hungarian capital to integrate the remembrance of the Nazi and Soviet crimes. That

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<sup>54</sup> Stefan Auer, "Contesting the origins of European liberty: The EU narrative of Franco-German reconciliation and the eclipse of 1989," Eurozine, September 10, 2010, <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2010-09-10-auer-en.html> (accessed January 9, 2017), p. 4.

<sup>55</sup> Ruth Wittlinger, "Shaking off the Past? The New Germany in the New Europe," p. 197.

<sup>56</sup> Stefan Tröbst, "Eckstein einer EU-Geschichtspolitik? Das Museumsprojekt „Haus der Europäischen Geschichte“ in Brüssel," Deutschland Archiv Online.

this is still rather done in a lopsided way across Eastern Europe today can be seen from the House of Terror's strong particularistic emphasis, which is laid on the post-war communist part. Critical observers contend that the museum "reveals a hierarchy of trauma and suffering," which attaches much more importance to the crimes of Stalinism after 1945 than to the murder of the Jews of Hungary during the final stages of World War II.<sup>57</sup> What is more, by claiming a continuity of totalitarian rule in Hungary from the war through to 1989 the significance of the caesura of 1945 is undermined, which also disregards the at least partial openness of Hungarian politics in the immediate post-war years until roughly 1948. This emphasis on victimhood under the impact of a communist dictatorship also follows a widespread tendency within Eastern European societies to reject and deny any kind of responsibility for the previous communist rule in their countries,<sup>58</sup> which is thereby conveniently externalized and declared the "Other."

On-going controversies over the content and the setting of priorities of the Guidelines led to their revision along a thematic structure, which was deemed to better represent the specificity of European history and its high degree of integration than a chronological structure was regarded as being able to. However, as this was a demand imposed "from above" upon the scientific advisory board, it threw an unfortunate light on the academic integrity of the Guidelines. Scientific criticism kept pouring out, also from the Parliament's president and project initiator Pöttering's home country Germany, while public complaints about repeated increases of the project's budget did not fall silent either. And despite the secure financing that has kept the project firmly on track, the opening date for the House of European History had to be postponed several times. Its opening had originally been planned for summer 2014<sup>59</sup> to coincide with the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of World War I, the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of World War II and the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the peaceful revolutions in Eastern Europe. Eventually, the permanent

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<sup>57</sup> Heidmarie Uhl, "Conflicting cultures of memory in Europe: new borders between East and West?" p. 59f.

<sup>58</sup> Bill Niven, "German victimhood discourse in comparative perspective," p. 184.

<sup>59</sup> Stefan Tröbst, "Eckstein einer EU-Geschichtspolitik? Das Museumsprojekt „Haus der Europäischen Geschichte“ in Brüssel," Deutschland Archiv Online.

exhibition of the House of European History was unveiled on 6 May 2017<sup>60</sup> to jointly observe the two Europe Days, commemorating the establishment of the Council of Europe (5 May 1949) and the date of the Schuman Declaration (9 May 1950), respectively, but, of course, also referring to the anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe on 8/9 May 1945.

## **Re-evaluating the Contested Legacy of Europe's Dictatorial Past**

Historian Eckart Conze has spoken of “two European zones of history”<sup>61</sup> when he tried to explain Germany's specific historical position in central Europe. According to Conze, due to its liminal status between East and West, the German case shows an “especially European development of memory.” Apart from the spatial implications, the German case also points to a specific temporal dynamic of cultures of remembrance across Europe. They show a tendency towards asynchrony, which makes it even more complicated to try to integrate them as they undergo transitions at different times and with different speed. Just how far the “two European zones of history” are still apart, has become especially obvious since the eastward extension of the European Union.

When the Latvian former EU-Commissioner Sandra Kalniete in her speech at the opening ceremony of the Leipzig book fair in March 2004 called Nazi Germany and the Stalinist Soviet Union “equally criminal,”<sup>62</sup> she caused a public outcry across Western Europe. The means of comparison between the two most destructive dictatorships of 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe have been extremely contentious basically ever since the two regimes

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<sup>60</sup> The official website of the project, House of European History, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/visiting/en/brussels/house-of-european-history> (accessed October 21, 2017)

<sup>61</sup> Eckart Conze, “Wie europäisch ist die nationale Erinnerung Deutschlands?” In Volkhard Knigge, Hans-Joachim Veen, Ulrich Mählert, and Franz-Josef Schlichting, eds., *Arbeit am europäischen Gedächtnis: Diktaturerfahrung und Demokratieentwicklung* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2011), p. 49ff.

<sup>62</sup> Emmanuel Droit, “Die Shoah: Von einem westeuropäischen zu einem transeuropäischen Erinnerungsort?” p. 259.

came into being and the end of the cold war has rather intensified this controversy, if anything. Within the European Union, the line of conflict over what are essentially different historical and moral evaluations runs mostly between the Western EU founding members on one side and the new members who joined in 2004 on the other. These different evaluations are at the core of the controversy over the insistence of Eastern European politicians to declare 23 August a Day of Remembrance for all victims of totalitarian regimes. Thus, the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Treaty is re-interpreted as a joint declaration of war of these two regimes against the rest of Europe. This re-interpretation is not only an attack on the long established thesis of the “sole guilt” of Germany for starting World War II,<sup>63</sup> but has also led to the call for recognition of Nazi and Communist crimes as a “common legacy” of Europe.<sup>64</sup> While the latter call in itself is a welcome and necessary move forward in terms of building up mutual historical understanding, the way the former attack has been politically embedded and effectively launched has raised considerable doubt about the sincerity of the proposal to establish this common legacy.

The way the commemorative initiative has been communicated has turned it into a clear attempt at supplanting the existing cosmopolitan understanding of the beginning of World War II with a different version, a version which is rather difficult to back up with conclusive historical evidence. The underlying idea, nevertheless, has also made its way into the Conceptual Guidelines for the House of European History where paragraph 61 says: “Hitler succeeded in unleashing the Second World War only after he had come to an arrangement with (...) Josef Stalin.”<sup>65</sup> While this is not wrong in terms of the chronological sequence of events, here it sounds like a mutual arrangement to equally share the guilt between the two dictators which does not acknowledge that the Soviet

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<sup>63</sup> Egbert Jahn, “Von der westeuropäischen Erinnerung an Auschwitz zur gesamteuropäischen Erinnerung an Auschwitz und den Archipel GULag – eine fällige gedenkpolitische Folge der Osterweiterung der EU,” (Frankfurter Montags-Vorlesungen, No. 16, Politische Streitfragen in zeitgeschichtlicher Perspektive, Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2012), p. 129.

<sup>64</sup> Heidemarie Uhl, “Conflicting cultures of memory in Europe: new borders between East and West?” p. 67.

<sup>65</sup> Committee of Experts, “House of European History: Conceptual Basis for a House of European History,” p. 17.

Union was back then nowhere near to wage war on a European scale. In the summer of 1939, the Soviet Union was rather faced alone with the superior fascist enemy after Britain and France had frozen out the Soviets from the renegotiation of the European security system at the Munich Conference in September 1938. When there and then the fate of the German settlement areas of Czechoslovakia had been sealed, the Czechoslovak government was not even consulted. And while Italy had the role of an arbiter in there, Western mistrust precluded any Soviet participation in the process. Germany, on the other hand, had repeatedly pushed the rest of Europe to the brink of war with its transgressions against the Versailles Peace Treaty and the Locarno Treaty on various occasions since the reintroduction of conscription in 1935, only to finally assert its efforts in 1939.

And the negative inclusion of the Soviet Union into a history of European integration is also regularly amplified within mainstream media and backed up from within the academic community. Notably recent research by US historian Timothy Snyder has shown an attempt at revising European 20<sup>th</sup> century history by reconceptualising territories in Eastern Europe as “spaces of violence” where atrocities have been committed by both, Nazi Germany and the Stalinist Soviet Union. These spaces have seen a succession of “totalitarian” brutality, which according to Snyder’s understanding no longer seems in need to be differentiated with regard to the origins and contexts of actions of those two regimes. They rather appear as a common source of “totalitarian” brutality, thereby firmly juxtaposing the Nazi and Soviet regimes.<sup>66</sup> This kind of decontextualized assessment of National Socialist and Stalinist crimes opens up the questionable possibility of a levelling re-evaluation of those crimes, which more often than not is conducted with a view to making them productive for a revisionist line of political reasoning where both regimes appear as one single unit of action. Interpreting the past in this way becomes a tool to influence politics (of memory) not only in the sense that the theory of totalitarianism, which had been largely abandoned within Western historiography since the 1970s, has

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<sup>66</sup> Gerhard Hanloser, “Der Holocaust und seine geschichtspolitischen Lehren in der Darstellung von Timothy Snyder,” *Sozial. Geschichte Online*, No. 19, 2016, p. 182ff, [https://duepublico.uni-duisburg-essen.de/servlets/DerivateServlet/Derivate-42082/07\\_Hanloser\\_Snyder.pdf](https://duepublico.uni-duisburg-essen.de/servlets/DerivateServlet/Derivate-42082/07_Hanloser_Snyder.pdf) (accessed October 21, 2017)

seen a comeback since the 1990s and now even seems to be on the way to be reinstalled as the political and methodological master narrative again.<sup>67</sup> As Snyder sees his role as historian very much as that of a public intellectual, he has also seized chances to offer his views on the recent political (and, at least indirectly, military) confrontation between Russia and Ukraine. There he identified Russia's position as an "antiliberal project," which is set to destroy the European Union in order to create a different world order.<sup>68</sup> In this way, the negative integrative function Russia and the Soviet Union have played for efforts at European integration throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century is prolonged into the present of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Due to the continued campaign of a group of Eastern European EU parliamentarians who have founded the "Platform of European Memory and Conscience," there are now even attempts to recast World War II as a confrontation between the two totalitarian regimes on one side and "Christian Europe" on the other, including a number of authoritarian or even outright fascist regimes like those of World War II Hungary or Romania.<sup>69</sup> And the platform was created not least with the intention to counter the European Network Remembrance and Solidarity, which was founded in 2005 with the explicit aim of reconciling conflicted memories in Europe. The Network was, likewise, an elite-driven project jointly initiated in Germany and Poland and was also directed towards eventually arriving at a common European culture of remembrance,<sup>70</sup> though with a more liberal and pluralistic outlook.

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<sup>67</sup> Günter Morsch, "...Eine umfassende Neubewertung der Europäischen Geschichte?" p. 6f.

<sup>68</sup> Timothy Snyder, "Russlands neokoloniales Projekt," FAZ Online, March 16, 2015, [http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/die-gegenwart/gastbeitrag-von-timothy-snyder-zu-putins-plaenen-13484611.html?printPagedArticle=true#pageIndex\\_2](http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/die-gegenwart/gastbeitrag-von-timothy-snyder-zu-putins-plaenen-13484611.html?printPagedArticle=true#pageIndex_2) (accessed December 31, 2016)

<sup>69</sup> Günter Morsch, "Das „neue Unbehagen an der Erinnerungskultur“ und die Politik mit der Erinnerung: zwei Seiten der gleichen Medaille," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, Vol. 63, No. 10, 2015, p. 844.

<sup>70</sup> Stefan Tröbst, "Halecki Revisited: Europe's Conflicting Cultures of Remembrance," in Małgorzata Pakier and Bo Stråth, eds., *A European Memory? Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance* (Oxford / New York: Berghahn, 2010), p.61.

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## Conclusion

The ambition of an integrated European culture of remembrance remains a work in progress with uncertain outcome as, after an initial phase of their cosmopolitanisation, more recently there have been strong tendencies towards more particularistic understandings of the past, especially in Eastern European countries. What is more, for most political or academic observers of these processes, it is also still unclear whether a more unified view of Europe's past would be a desirable result in the first place. There is rather growing consensus that a European space of memory, which is without a doubt in the making, could only be realized comprehensively by way of acknowledging the plurality of partly contrary collective memories in Europe. This acknowledgement necessarily has to be based on a renewed reflection of historical events and an involvement with the experiences of "the other".<sup>71</sup> The outcome could probably at best be a reflexively particularistic renegotiation of cultures of remembrance, which can partly create cosmopolitanized intersections. In order to achieve at least that, a "transnational habitus"<sup>72</sup> is needed to enable critical engagement with one's own and other countries' history and memory. The term originally stems from migration studies to signify how people who temporarily or permanently live in more than one country also participate in social and cultural patterns of more than one country. This indicates a growing cosmopolitan openness towards "the other" at home and abroad. Also ready awareness is required of the aspect that any reappraisal of Europe's past has to put up with the "fluid transitions and regionally specific shifts"<sup>73</sup> of European historical developments, which have been a main

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<sup>71</sup> Ulrike Liebert and Henrike Müller, "Zu einem europäischen Gedächtnisraum? Erinnerungskonflikte als Problem einer politischen Union Europas," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, Vol. 62, No. 4, 2012, p. 47.

<sup>72</sup> Heidemarie Uhl, "Das Haus der Europäischen Geschichte: Auf dem Weg zu einem europäischen Gedächtnis? Podiumsdiskussion der Referenten," p. 187.

<sup>73</sup> Lutz Raphael, "Ordnungsmuster der „Hochmoderne“? Die Theorie der Moderne und die Geschichte der europäischen Gesellschaften im 20. Jahrhundert," in Ute Schneider and Lutz Raphael, eds., *Dimensionen der Moderne: Festschrift für Christof Dipper* (Frankfurt on the Main: Peter Lang, 2008), p. 91.

feature ever since the breakthrough of modernity and will, thus, also likely keep on being reflected in different cultures of remembrance.

That holds true, as well, for the project of the House of European History, which is scheduled to open soon now. Despite all justified criticism, there is still a viable chance for the project to succeed as a “transnational education project (...) in terms of critical self-reflection,”<sup>74</sup> which also takes the destructive and not only the positive aspects of European history into account, as Volkhard Knigge, one of Germany’s foremost experts on commemoration and memorials, has aptly put it. He referred back to the late German historian and Buchenwald concentration camp survivor Eugen Kogon’s immediate post-World War II vision of a free competition of political systems in Europe. According to Kogon, that competition was supposed to be eventually overcome productively. This forms a rather sober contrast to the rigid ideological view of history that had characterized the memorial site, which the former communist East German regime had established at Buchenwald. Thus, Knigge warned against the recent tendencies to mythologize national pasts in a one-sided or uncritical fashion. He also reminded us that Europe – or European memory for that matter – in a temporal as well as in a spatial dimension is more than just (the memory of) the European Union.<sup>75</sup> Other critics have highlighted the potential character of the House of European History as a “house” rather than a “museum” of European History,<sup>76</sup> arguing that it should also be a place for research, debates and controversies to show Europe’s integrated view of its past as the work in progress it actually is.

Finally, the way in which countries in Eastern Europe have revitalized their nationhood after 1989, can mainly be seen as a reaction to the Soviet supremacy of the

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<sup>74</sup> Volkhard Knigge, “Das Haus der Europäischen Geschichte: Auf dem Weg zu einem europäischen Gedächtnis? Podiumsdiskussion der Referenten,” p. 179.

<sup>75</sup> Volkhard Knigge, “Forum oder Identitätsfabrik – Anmerkungen zum Haus der Europäischen Geschichte,” in Volkhard Knigge, Hans-Joachim Veen, Ulrich Mählert, and Franz-Josef Schlichting, eds., *Arbeit am europäischen Gedächtnis: Diktaturerfahrung und Demokratieentwicklung* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2011), p. 161ff.

<sup>76</sup> Marc Dietrich Ohse, “Das Haus der Europäischen Geschichte: Auf dem Weg zu einem europäischen Gedächtnis? Podiumsdiskussion der Referenten,” p. 183.

post-war decades and not only or not primarily as consciously directed against Western European countries individually or as a whole. As such, Eastern Europe's dealing with the past after 1989 has created a certain degree of incompatibility with a supranational unification project such as the European Union and, thus, triggered controversies at various levels; but it also did not stop the accession process to the EU as such. Taken together, it is hard to overlook the impact of both, cosmopolitanisation and reflexive particularism on the cultures of remembrance in most European states<sup>77</sup> and it remains to be seen what will eventually come out of it. Because if there is one thing we can learn from Great Britain's recently decided exit from the European Union, it surely is the basic reversibility and contingency of historical developments in general and of the economic, political and historical dimension of the European integration project in particular. With concrete reference to the European Union, the Brexit is going to have strong reverberations should it be the first step in a larger movement of disintegration across Europe. That could eventually lead to another reinterpretation of European history and its cultures of remembrance, which could likely also trigger a more fundamental process of divergent development among the states of Europe.<sup>78</sup> 

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<sup>77</sup> A similar argument brought forward with reference to the above mentioned article by Karlsson, in Małgorzata Pakier and Bo Stråth, "Introduction: A European Memory?" p.14.

<sup>78</sup> Egbert Jahn, "Von der westeuropäischen Erinnerung an Auschwitz zur gesamteuropäischen Erinnerung an Auschwitz und den Archipel GULag – eine fällige gedenkpolitische Folge der Osterweiterung der EU," p. 17.

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