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History, Memory and Politics in Central and Eastern Europe - memory Games - Introduction

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Introduction

Georges Mink and Laure Neumayer

Enzo Traverso has recently remarked on the proliferation of memory issues. Quoting the title of a book by Régine Robin, *La mémoire saturée*, he writes of the ‘overabundant, saturated memory that is marking out [world] space’ (Robin, 2003; Traverso, 2005, p.11). We would observe instead that there have never been so many social science studies of memory, and that what has been saturated is not memory but the social sciences that study it. Nonetheless, memory issues are abundant; they take many shapes; many are recent and some quite unprecedented. And in European memory games, four strong trends, none of which have yet been explored in depth in the social sciences, may be identified. The first may be defined as ‘intensive reconciliationism’ and refers to international circulation of ‘grammars’ of reconciliation in the sense given to the concept of grammar by Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot (1991: 93). Reference is to a set of relations between former oppressors and victims that includes acts of crime confession, requests for pardon, and official consent to pardon, a model illustrating how a past made up of violent acts and inimical relations can be settled peaceably after exit from an authoritarian regime. Circulation of reconciliation grammars is made possible by modern technologies and the opening up of what were once compartmentalized geopolitical spaces.¹ In an overall context of increased criminalization of groups and individuals responsible for violence and an increased tendency to handle those issues in courts of law, what we actually see developing are ‘pardon policies’ (Lefranc, 2004, Wigura, 2011) and ‘apology diplomacy’ (Sémelin, 2008) together with an increasing number of bilateral and multilateral historian commissions (Bazin, 2007, Lefranc, 2006).

This trend stands in direct contrast to a second process, wherein conflictual memory is reactivated and memory-related representations used politically either to stigmatize or discredit a political opponent or, more broadly, to reopen a historical ‘case’ in hopes of changing the verdict (Mink and Neumayer, 2007, Mink and Bonnard, 2010, Blaive *et al.*, 2011). An example here are the claims made during European Union enlargement in 2004 with regard to populations expelled from the Sudeten area, eastern Poland and Silesia in the aftermath of the Second World War. The fact that expelled Germans or their descendants began publicly brandishing their memory, the strategy being to disconnect their situation from the defeat of the Nazi armies (a move that amounts to disconnecting the effects of the war from its causes), demonstrates that what from 1960 to 1990 seemed definitively stabilized power relations—stabilized by means of a moral or normative approach to the conflictual past—are in fact subject to context-determined fluctuation (Blaive and Mink, 2003, Neumayer, 2007a).

Third, in all European countries the number of legally and normatively framed ‘memory policies’ are increasing. These policies do not aim to improve bilateral relations or foster European integration but rather to mobilize the electorate of a given party or coalition around what may be described as symbolic yet bellicose identity demands, demands put forward in internal political arenas but also addressed to the world at large. This ‘net’ of laws is particularly tight-woven in France (Andrieu *et al.*, 2006, Nora and Chandernagor, 2008, Michel, 2010, Gensburger, 2010), where ‘competition among victims’ is said to have led to ‘memory wars’ (Chaumont, 1997, Blanchard and Veyrat-Masson, 2008, Lefranc and Mathieu, 2009). But the phenomenon is hardly restricted to French society. Often, in modern societies, those who govern are yielding to the temptation to ‘use the dead to govern the living.’ (Mink, 2010). For example, Poland's Law and Justice-led government in power from 2005 to 2007 forged the concept of ‘history policies’ to justify state intervention in interpretation of historical facts, and in 2009 the president of the Russian Federation, declaring history to be an attribute of national ‘sovereignty’, set up a ‘Presidential Commission to Counter Attempts to Falsify History to the Detriment of Russia's Interests’ for the purpose of countering symbolic European initiatives to establish an official equivalence between Stalinism and Nazism.²

The fourth and last development amounts to extracting or shifting memory games from the national framework to extra-national arenas, the aim being to combine various political resources for partisan competitions by making use of new international and above all European norms and the normative conditionality developed by the European Union and the Council of Europe (Mink, 2005, Mink, 2007, Neumayer, 2007a). The end of the Cold War radically changed the way European Union authorities handle history, redefining the economy of constraints and resources available to them in this area. In

the 1950s and 1970s respectively, the Council of Europe and the European Community and later Union began implementing a set of policies aimed at rendering explicit or bolstering a supposed 'European identity.' Reasoning by analogy with nation-state formation, those authorities considered the past a particularly valuable resource for the collective identification processes that are crucial to the constitution of a political community and the legitimizing of a supranational system of government (Shore, 2000, Str ath, 2002, D eloye, 2006, Geremek and Picht, 2007). But the end of the East-West confrontation and the reassessments of the past done in the former Eastern bloc changed the meaning of transnational memory policies, for the point now was not only to bring to the fore a shared history and values but also to find ways to meet the many demands for recognition and reparation of past crimes and injustices.

Three consecutive 'memory regimes' have been identified as being operative in post-1945 Western Europe, and it is important to present them briefly in order to understand the recent resurgence of memory issues.³ Immediately after the war and up to the 1970s, the dominant understanding was that the Germans alone were guilty of the atrocities committed during the Second World War, the corollary of this being the myth of resistance and the uncontested 'victim' status of Nazi-occupied countries. In the 1970s, what came to the fore was memory of the Holocaust as a symbol of the barbarity against which European unity had to be strengthened (Judt, 2002). More complex analyses have pointed up the difficulties that European Union authorities were encountering in their attempt to produce a 'narrative of origins' capable of functioning as a viable alternative to the 'national narratives' they were helping to deconstruct. According to some authors, the fragile foundations of the European political community mean that it is forced to oscillate between a short-term vision of history based on an enchanted narrative of the continental stability ensured by post-1945 interstate cooperation and commemorations of a grim past dominated by the Holocaust and conflict among nations (Rosoux, 2007, Rousso, 2009). The third phase began after the Cold War, when competing memory regimes originating in the eastern part of the continent began calling into question the afore-cited official representations of the past, producing a kind of 'memory gap' that can be seen at three levels. First there are the vast 'blanks' in Western European memory: thoroughgoing ignorance of at least some of the crimes committed in areas under communist control, populations expulsions and post-war border shifts, extremely violent episodes of World War II that occurred in the east. Second, in certain East European memories the massive repressions of the Stalinist period have a comparable (if not equivalent) status to the Holocaust, and this calls into question the Western postulate of the exceptional nature of the Nazis' extermination of the Jews. Lastly, there are sharply contrasting representations of the symbolic date of 1945: for Western Europeans it marked the return to democracy and prosperity, whereas in the East it is likely to mark 'the shift from one occupation to another' (Judt, 2005, Droit, 2007, Mink, 2008, Rousso, 2009, Traverso, 2009, Str ath and Pakier, 2010, Blaive *et al.*, 2011).

Despite (or perhaps because of) the EU's routine policy of encouraging reconciliation acts and arrangements (Neumayer, 2007b), Europe now encompasses memory issues that do not rotate around the 'axis' of Germany, though those issues are still dominant. The space of memory has not yet been stabilised in post-communist Europe, and its fault lines constitute memory veins that offer multiple resources. Memory of the pre-communist past is appealed to primarily through opposition to communism (patriotic acts and anti-communist resistance). Since 1989 the general tendency has been to check the pasts of zealous regime agents so as to remove anyone responsible for state crimes from positions of power, and to de-communise institutional structures while teaching the ill deeds of communism to the new generations. Policies are applied in various ways. On the institutional side, there are lustration laws for people and de-communisation laws for structures. The effects of these laws are reinforced by public socialisation and information policies and by the creation of archives for managing documents produced by repressive apparatuses of communist regimes. At the level of social relations, there are citizen interactions (victim associations), unregulated actions (organised leaks of lists of persons who collaborated with the political police), expert communities and their scientific studies, and interference in the historical field from journalist, judge, and MP 'intruders'. In no post-communist country today is there consensus on definitively closing the 'file' of the communist past. On the contrary, the impression is that the importance of that past for political life is growing with time precisely because its moral and socio-political consequences have not really been checked, resolved or overcome (Mayer, 2003, Lavabre and Mayer, 2006, Findor *et al.*, 2008, Combe, 2009).

This work focuses on such memory games, exploring how political and social actors see and ‘relate to’ certain historical events through the prism of how those same actors construct their identities, interests and strategies. Though the concepts ‘history’ and ‘memory’ should be distinguished from each other analytically, it is also important not to set up an opposition between the two as is commonly done. While history is a matter of science and memory of experience, memory-generated representations and historical studies do influence each other; memory understood as a set of representations of what seems to have occurred does affect academic accounts of what occurred (Blanchard and Veyrat-Masson, 2008, p.27)—as scrupulous historians working to produce accounts that comply with pre-established, corporation-shared rules are the first to acknowledge. All the chapters in this book share an extensive definition of memory as encompassing present political uses of history and the development of collective forms of remembering the past. Moving beyond factual or normative analyses of public policies around and political uses of memory, the authors focus on the many political and social processes that determine the chronology and characteristics of memory related policies and politics. In contrast to the narrow meaning of ‘transitional justice,’ where the priority is to analyze the preferences and tactics of a small circle of political and administrative elites, this book situates conflicts around painful histories within the ‘ordinary’ operating of post-communist societies, concentrating on games played by institutional actors (parties, elected officials, governments), mobilized social groups (former prisoners, groups making pilgrimages to battlefields or martyrdom sites, immigrants) and professional groups (historians and archivists, journalists).

Existing literature on ties between memory of the past and political and social developments in post-communist Europe has outlined a set of research avenues that this book purports to pursue—in two directions. First, some of that literature downplays the variety of actors who have appeared in the memory ‘field.’ Above all, it downplays their clear connections to partisan politics. By way of contrast, this book examines individuals and groups who have chosen to engage in political contests and use the symbolic past to confront their political competitors. Second, most studies of memory games in post-communist Europe adopt a national analytic framework, the assumption being that European Union political space is merely the environment of fundamentally endogenous processes. A few studies take into account the bilateral dimension of some memory policies, pointing out the impact of conflicts about the past on post-communist states’ foreign policy (Müller, 2002, Eder and Spohn, 2005, Onken, 2007). Other analyses focus on the way Central European government actors have complied—either willingly or under constraint—with European Union or Council of Europe injunctions in a context of normative conditionality favorable to eastward exportation of Western memory regimes (Bonnard and Meckl, 2007, Droit, 2007, Mink, 2010, Neumayer, 2010). Building on those ideas, this book tries to account for how memory issues get torn out of their national frameworks and exploited in several arenas, internal and external, to increase their political resource yield. The chapters by Fainberg, Bonnard, Perchoc, and Neumayer analyze in detail how reconciliation norms get circulated internationally by way of European organizations and NGOs. The geopolitical dimension of post-communist ‘wounded memories’ and ‘reconciliation policies’ is therefore a central concern of the research presented here.

In the new framework that emerged in post-Cold War Europe, opportunities and constraints have come into being that brought social memory issues to the fore and enabled the actors using them to be favourably heard. Moves to internationalize memory issues, meanwhile, make clear how paradigms aiming to explain *national* situations end in stalemate.

Three paradigms, linked in turn to the three disciplines of sociology, philosophy and history, have dominated social science study of memory⁴. The first belongs to sociological tradition. Maurice Halbwachs’ ideas on ‘social frames’ of memory and the production thereof (1994 [1925], 1997 [1950])—i.e. transmission of the memory tie and construction of collective social memory—were later critically refined by Roger Bastide (1960). The key concepts here are ‘collective memory,’ group memory and the social frames of memory. The primary concern is to identify the social conditions that allow for developing and transmitting memory representations that will create group cohesion. The second paradigm is Paul Ricoeur’s normative paradigm, which emphasizes the work of memory (*obliteration, overvaluing, labour*), infers good and bad uses of memory, and opposes the bad ones. This approach distinguishes between ‘clinical and ... therapeutic categories borrowed principally from

psychoanalysis' and 'forms of the manipulation or instrumentalization of memory' (Ricoeur, 2004, p.69)—what Ricoeur calls 'abuses of memory' (*blocked memory* and *forced memory*) and 'forgetting' (*omission, negligence* and *blindness*). Above all, there is the dimension that the author defines as 'explicitly ethico-political,' the only one he approves of: the 'duty of memory' (Ricoeur, 2004, p.69 [2000, p.83]). The third paradigm is used in the discipline of history and was diffused with great success by Pierre Nora by way of the ground-breaking collective work he edited, *Les lieux de mémoire* (1984 [translated into English as *Realms of Memory*, 1997]). This paradigm relates to places or 'realms' that people identify with and around which memory references develop. There are still strong proponents of all three of these paradigms, and all have elicited further developments: Marie-Claude Lavabre's renowned work (1996) is in line with Halbwachs' thought; Tzvetan Todorov (2004) has worked in the tradition of Ricoeur, while Etienne François and Hagen Schultze (2007) have used the '*lieux de mémoire*' notion in a way similar to Nora's.⁵

However, a great number of memory phenomena cannot be explained by any of these approaches because they (the approaches) are caught in the 'national framework' impasse. Our purpose is to apply a new, multidisciplinary approach that will enrich existing perspectives of political sociology of memory, an approach combining traditional political science concerns (contentious politics, uses of various resources in political competitions) with, on the one hand, a sociological approach to international relations focused on actors' games and empirical configurations of multi-level policy-making and on the other, a cognitive approach to public policy encompassing the emergence of new 'referentials', i.e. cognitive and normative frames that guide actors' behaviour (Muller, 2005). The thinking here is fueled by three alternative concepts—*historicizing strategies and actions*; *reactive memory*; *memory mines* or "*veins*"—previously developed and presented by Georges Mink in his introductions to collective works (Mink, 2007, Mink, 2010), concepts more useful for understanding the dynamics of today's memory games. Their relevance will be demonstrated in the following presentation by references to recent developments in the 'Katyń affair.'

The concept of *historicizing strategies*—that is, strategies for historicising conflict-generating heritages—is used in several chapters, particularly those by Matonyte, Jouhanneau, Zhurzhenko and Rousselet, to understand the behaviour of actors implicated in memory games. The aim of such strategies may be to produce consensus and therefore pacified social relations or, on the contrary, to reopen certain aspects of a repressed history, in which case the desired effect is distinction, symbolic recognition and/or integration into national narratives. It may also be to escape responsibility for crimes by 'erasing the traces of a criminal past' (Mink, 2007). This is a variant of symbolic politics: the underlying conviction is that certain *representations* of historical facts, internalised through formal or informal socialisation (schooling, family), have the collective mobilisation potential to enable the group making strategic use of them to obtain the political influence it desires.

History as fact established by scholars has always been used to legitimize or delegitimize. However, a recent wave of memory-centred social movements—sometimes qualified as 'revisionist' and always involving a 'revisiting' of the knowledge acquired by historical science—call into question the established legitimacy of certain memory representations, namely representations pertaining to the Second World War. This is due to a number of factors, including the end of the great ideological systems that allowed for the clear, seemingly immutable identifying of victims and persecutors, winners and losers, and the twofold temptation to equalize the victims on both sides and develop new historical categories and rankings. Moves to rewrite history are closely linked to subsequent generations' arrival on the scene and what is known as the 'archives revolution'.

But if we wish to make sense of the remarkable increase in historicising discourse, we need to go beyond the discipline of history. Historians have expressed amazement at the fragility of their field and recent incursions into their professional monopoly (Hartog and Revel, 2003) when what this new situation requires above all is the analytic insight of political scientists and sociologists. Behind the prolific talk about History—i.e., an account constructed in compliance with a number of pre-established rules ideally shared by all members of the historian corporation—the real issue is uses of historical representations and the new actors who develop and practice those uses. The idea of a past that returns—the belated return to certain painful pasts thought to have been 'obliterated'—raises more questions for a political specialist than a historian, as shown by the example of France's supposed 'forgetting' of Vichy for several decades after 1945. As Annie Collovald explains, 'This episode of French political history has always been present in the social uses of various actors—

historians and politicians— with an interest in how it was interpreted, because from the outset it constituted an intellectual and practical resource for defining their position and supporting their readings of national history’ (Collovald, 2006). This seems an obvious point, and we may ask if it is not due to the fact that forgetting, too, is a strategy, whether conscious or not (Robin, 2002), as is pointing a finger at certain actors for having tried to efface historical facts from social memory. The fact is that memory material that has been ‘forced into silence’ continues to be part of actors’ games even if, in the current situation, the only places it can survive are memory niches cultivated by particular, minority actors. Those forced to forget and those who force others to forget keep memory games going by using the constraint of silence to create a new space of interaction opportunities.

The history of the effects of the Katyń massacre offers a vivid example.⁶ The events were forced into oblivion by the lack of a memory site: Katyń was inaccessible almost until the end of the Soviet Union and the men killed there were excluded from official tributes to victims of the Second World War. This ‘obliteration’ strategy was thwarted by semi-underground remembrance actions carried out by the Poles under the very nose of the communist authorities. Sizeable candle-lit gatherings on All Saints’ Day around a symbolic grave for Katyń massacre victims in Warsaw’s Powązki cemetery amounted to a kind of guerilla battle between Warsaw inhabitants and the communist police throughout the 1980s. Several examples show that on the side of the victims and their descendants nothing has been forgotten. On the contrary, the rule is memory recuperation followed by action.

To fuel memory games and the development of institutional arrangements for handling post-conflict periods—all of which produce complex actor networks—actors are increasingly likely to use representations of the past, especially if there is disagreement about that past. This of course raises the question of how profitable such strategic choices are, but profitability is hard to measure because actors choose empirically as a function of the profit and rewards they think they can obtain. Their moves are aimed to procure them a better political position or an election victory, designate and stigmatize an enemy, strengthen client relations, consolidate identity, etc. Their choices will necessarily correspond to immediate contexts that increase the probability of their reaching those goals. This is therefore a sort of economy of memory governed by the law of supply and demand, an economy where inflationary use of memory representations can actually ‘backfire,’ reducing or indeed nullifying the sought-after ‘added value.’ How operational a historicizing strategy is depends on the ‘resonance’ it has for the memory of the targeted public.

This leads to our second concept: *reactive memory*. The underlying argument of this book is that the distinction widely accepted in sociology between historical and ‘live’ memory (Lavabre, 1994) is not sufficient. What we investigate here is *reactive memory*, in the sense that actors who promote historicising strategies mean to achieve political effects by *recycling* profitable memory material (profitable in that it is emotionally charged and socially inculcated) in reaction to uncertain or conditional situations. What is interesting in collective memory defined as the ‘point of intersection between a set of representations of the past shared by individuals (memories and acquired knowledge) and seemingly definitive accounts of history—i.e. historical memory (as distinct from the science of history)’ (Lavabre, 1994) is precisely that it can be reactivated and invested with current issues. This means that the past only counts if it is in some way relevant to the strategies of present-day actors. Here we encounter the typology recently applied in international relations studies (Rosoux, 2001), with its distinction between the *weight of the past*—the past that people were subjected to—and the *choice of a past*: the past used to political ends. This is a useful distinction, but it loses its effect when we recall that the reason people *choose* to focus on certain components of the past is precisely that they *weigh* so heavily. People choose a certain past in order to use it and to profit by doing so.

A return to the Katyń affair is instructive here. The airplane that crashed on 10 April 2010, killing the Polish president Lech Kaczyński, was on its way to Katyń.⁷ Several signs held up later at public meetings of the Kaczyński brothers’ political party dared establish a connection between the two events, calling them ‘Katyń 1’ and ‘Katyń 2,’ as if the very mention of the place-name should reopen a ‘wound in memory.’ The Katyń massacre, together with the Soviets’ lie about it and Soviet efforts to erase the facts, symbolizes successive layers of Polish-Russian historical conflict and lends itself to

virtually continuous exploitation by way of historicizing strategies, be they aimed at reconciliation or conflictual division. This time that painful bilateral Polish-Russian past was caught up in a complex diplomatic context, since the Russians had already begun sending positive reconciliation signs when the plane crashed. The fact is that reconciliation between the two countries would deprive the Russophobic segment of the Polish elite of their role as ‘doorkeeper’ to the European Union, and this in turn increases the ‘yield’ on referring to a dual case of Polish martyrdom. Abusively relating the two events, which are of quite different natures yet occurred in the same place—and in ‘enemy’ territory—is a way of playing on a certain type of sentiment, precisely the type of emotional ‘fire’ that historicizing strategies seek to stoke.

This example shows that analysis of memory issues in post-communist Europe requires a third conceptual perspective, and that perspective is taken in several chapters, particularly those by Kasperski, Zhurzhenko, and Fislis and Parot. *Reactive memory* is fueled by a particular type of memory ‘realm,’ what we are calling memory mines, veins, seams; i.e., stocks of memory representations that can be exploited in social and political games. Europe is rife with ‘*lieux de mémoire*’ (Nora, 1984, Brossat *et al.*, 1990, Nivat, 2007, François and Schultze, 2001 and 2007). According to Nora, these are places that enable feelings of identity and identification to crystallize. But they can also be reactivated for purposes of distinction. Reactivation proceeds either by dividing—i.e., reopening ‘wounds’ in the name of a need for distinction—or, on the contrary, preventing division by applying a vigorous therapy of reconciliation and pardon. In both cases, fossilised, fixed places of memory become live resource reservoirs, points of departure for new historicizing strategies whose purpose is to modify social reality and the settings in which those initiatives are staged. Because these ‘places’ are in fact dynamic, it might be preferable to speak of ‘veins’ or ‘*seams of memory*, a concept not inconsistent with that of ‘*lieux de mémoire*.’ The terms designate a symbol around which memory can rally, rather than a specific physical site. In the Polish-Ukrainian conflict of the 1940s there is Volhynia (a region where Poles were massacred) and the ‘Vistula action’, a synonym for the massacre and displacement of Ukrainians by Poles. Germans and Poles have their eyes trained on Silesia and Pomerania; Czechs and Germans on the Sudeten area; Poles on Katyń. However, legal documents such as the Beneš or Bierut decrees which provided the legal bases for population transfers at the end of the Second World War can also be rallying points for memory. For rightist parties in post-communist democracies, the ‘roundtable talks’ at the close of the communist period are an inexhaustible vein of *dissensus* resources, despite the fact that they are attached to no particular geographical site. The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact also functions as a reservoir of useful references for anti-Soviet actors, as is shown by Perchoc and Bonnard in this volume. Various actors draw the symbolic material needed to fuel political contests from just such ‘territorial or extra-territorial imaginaries’.

The end of communism in Europe and to an even greater extent the successive Council of Europe and European Union enlargements to include former communist countries reactivated multiple memory veins. Exploiting them—either for the first time or once again—became profitable. Central and Eastern European countries’ exit from Soviet-type regimes changed the memory referential, in the sense that two occasionally concomitant context resources—conditionality and geopolitical asymmetry—worked to intensify memory issues and historicizing strategies and actions. Conditionality and geopolitical asymmetry were used as resources for dominating memory. New ‘dominator/dominated’ configurations emerged in conjunction with mobilizations around memory, as is shown in the chapters by Perchoc, Bonnard, and Neumayer.

Moreover, the clash between the European Union on the one hand, with its normative reconciliation principle and temptation to force memory to ‘unite’ around the uniqueness of the Holocaust as an integral part of the ‘*acquis communautaire*’, and the new member-states that emerged from the collapse of the Eastern bloc on the other, with their determination to get the experience of Soviet totalitarianism incorporated into the foundations of European historical legitimacy, constitutes a geopolitical asymmetry that in turn facilitates the pursuit of memory games.

A crucial example here is the ‘betrayal at Yalta’ as the symbol of Western Europe’s abandonment of Eastern Europe to Soviet occupation. The ‘betrayal at Yalta’ is part of Eastern European *reactive*

memory, and recycling it has appeared profitable to Central European politicians (Mink, 2008). This memory game extends beyond a hunt for electoral gains and the effects of internal political competitions. It is 'part of the broader context of Eastern Europe's demand for recognition of its history. ... To many politicians and specific populations, European history seems to have been written in Western Europe, and Western Europeans seem to deliberately ignore the sufferings caused during the Second World War by events that those same Western Europeans know virtually nothing about' (Mink and Neumayer, 2009, p.86). Partisans of dogmatic 'history policy' have gone still further, mobilizing the argument of the West's 'debt' to the East to justify demands for memory 'readjustments' and reparations. To increase the profitability of this argument, they have emphasized the seeming opposition between today's 'norms' and historical 'values,' with the clear intention of making the West feel guilty. During the period that these countries were negotiating their entry into the European Union, the 'historical debt' argument was used in full to put maximum pressure on the EU (Neumayer, 2006).

The historicizing game of appropriating the victory against the Nazis (see, for example, the disagreement on what date marks the end of the war: 8 May for Western Europeans, 9 May for the Russians) played at the 60th anniversary commemoration ceremonies also shows how this anniversary remains a legitimization card in geopolitical competitions and can be used to stimulate identity reflexes—'Great Russia' or anti-Russian depending on the country. In this case, East-West memory asymmetry actually undermines party solidarity, as can be seen in conjunction with the 'Yalta resolution' drafted to commemorate the end of the war. President of the European Parliament's Socialist group Martin Schulz and his Estonian Socialist comrade Toomas Ilves had a heated exchange on the point, Schulz recalling that 'the Red Army made it possible to defeat Nazism and end the Shoah' while Ilves lamented the existence of 'two visions of History': 'Westerners did not suffer as we did behind the Iron Curtain.'⁸

The controversy around the equivalence between communism and Nazism—recognition that would justify the demand by many Central European political officials that the communist regime be officially defined in the same terms as the Nazi regime with all the legal consequences this would entail—offers yet another illustration of the complexity of demands for memory 'readjustment.' Since the early 1990s, having recourse to European Union normative authorities has had the effect of internationalizing the cause of de-communization, the aim being to prevent local excesses by applying a set of legal rights universalized by international conventions. It should be recalled that after 1989, each country pieced together its own legislation for excluding cadres of the former regime from its institutions and punishing persons responsible for 'crimes committed in the name of that regime.' As early as 1992, leftist (in many cases Communist) members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) decided to retaliate by neutralizing procedures for disqualifying collaborators of Central and Eastern Europe's communist regimes. This in turn meant that historicizing strategies connected with the criminalization of the communist past had to play on two fields: national and international. The period was one of competition among victims and a race to get painful pasts legally recognized and perpetrators punished.

The many later resurgences of this issue in both the EU Parliament and PACE show how persistent memory asymmetry allows for the pursuit of pressure strategies at the international scale. Indeed, the unity around memory policy postulated in all EU and Council of Europe documents is vulnerable to partisan splits inside European assemblies. Furthermore, the various parliamentary resolutions have not fully exhausted the memory vein of condemnation of the communist past, because their exclusively declarative nature means there have been no practical consequences to the official equating of the two totalitarian systems. This means that application laws can only be national and no universal or EU condemnation can be invoked to criminalize symbols of communism. In fact, partisans of the equivalence assertion need a universally agreed, normative condemnation of communism that they could align with the official condemnation of Nazism, whereas their adversaries are seeking at all costs to make communism a purely national issue and thereby disconnect the two scales (Mink, 2010).

This collection of case studies purports to improve our understanding of the recent proliferation of memory games in post-communist Europe by highlighting two interrelated factors: the growing importance of non-state actors in memory games (alongside state bodies and politicians) and the variety of resources available to them despite domestic and external constraints that may restrict their use; the multiplication of arenas for engaging in remembrance politics and devising memory policies, arenas where demands for material or symbolic compensation are made in accordance with norms produced by European organizations.

The volume is divided into three parts. Part I focuses on the role of new domestic political and social actors in memory games. Two chapters show how a variety of social groups involved in discussions about the past in specific national settings—the Bosnian former camp inmates studied by Jouhanneau and the Russian Orthodox Church analyzed by Rousselet—try to elaborate and impose memory norms into society. The remaining three chapters—Venken’s on the war memory of Soviet immigrants who settled in Belgium after World War II, Fisli and Parot’s on the pilgrimages to World War II memorials in Post-Soviet Russia, and Fainberg’s on the memorization of the Jewish genocide in Ukraine—explore memory-related practices that challenge traditional narratives about the past both because they touch upon topics hitherto ignored by state bodies and because what they have to say is not in line with the content of those narratives.

Although state actors are no longer the only players in memory games, they still play a crucial role and cannot be completely disregarded. Part II focuses on how political and administrative elites deal or fail to deal with the past. The first two chapters, Matonyte’s on Lithuania and Raimundo’s on Spain and Poland, highlight the internal diversity of elite conceptions of the former authoritarian regime, while Kasperski explores how a one-sided official historical narrative was imposed in Belarus. In the last chapter, Mink examines archivists and historians working for national memory institutes in Central European countries in order to illustrate the complex interplay between state bodies and sectors of civil society involved in memory issues.

The case studies in Part III handle ‘geopolitics of memory,’ illustrating the multi-level nature of contemporary memory games. Zhurzhenko’s study of Polish-Ukrainian border regions provides rare insights into memory policies at the local level. The last four chapters analyze memory games at the transnational level, with three top-down studies of the production and uses of international norms—Bonnard’s and Neumayer’s respective examinations of European standards for the protection of ethnic diversity and national minorities, Mouralis’s study of reunified Germany’s belated acceptance of international criminal law—and the bottom-up analysis by Perchoc of how the Baltic states use history to justify their foreign policy goals.

The European continent is everywhere marked by traces of earlier interstate and ethnic conflicts. All those conflicts can always be reactivated, despite the different ways they were resolved in the past. Given this reality, various interest groups, political parties or states are constantly developing memory resources and incorporating historicizing strategies into their action repertoires in the aim of ‘recycling’ representations of painful pasts for use in current political games. These mobilizations run up against a tendency toward reconciliation that originates in civil society (e.g., informal groups or NGOs) and/or in national and international institutions that circulate ‘good’ (i.e., normative and normative-toned) models for pacifying resentments. All these arrangements work to produce legitimacy or non-legitimacy; in other words, to indicate what is ‘good’ or ‘bad’ for a nation in the international context. We hope to have made it clear here how memory studies would benefit from being included in recent changes in approaches to geopolitics and foreign policy, but the opposite is also true, and the many signs that memory games are being ‘transnationalized’ call for this adjustment. Memory-related phenomena are not a central issue in foreign policy, but they do have significant weight and are becoming an auxiliary component of it.

As for the European Union, the change that took place in 2004 has only widened the gulf between West and East. The two halves of Europe do not share the same memory referential, and they are caught up in discordant time frames. Despite right-right, left-left transnational party alliances, we are only at the beginning of a long adjustment process that is as likely to regress as it is to progress. For the time being, ‘memory disunion’ constitutes a challenge to European Union construction, calling into question any excessive confidence in the virtue of political voluntarism.

We should not close without at least mentioning the question of a political science of memory. The point is to determine whether, despite the apparent heterogeneity of the phenomena involved, historicizing games of division and reconciliation might be a good indicator of the state of political regimes and of so-called universal, established rules for pacifying conflicts and enabling yesterday’s belligerents to live together in the present.

In studying social memory-related developments in Europe, we need to look beyond the fundamental tendency to move toward reconciliation and consensus, a tendency that developed in response to interethnic or interstate conflicts or authoritarian regimes related to the Second World War. It seems to us imperative to analyze the increasing number of *dissensus* games in countries engaged in constructing life after conflict. Experience shows that it is always possible to reactivate those conflicts, regardless of the various ways they were resolved in the past. Anyone wishing to push forward the construction of Europe and improve the way institutions handle post-conflict situations must reckon with all these phenomena, as they are constituent components of the axiological reality of European space. Until it is understood in Europe that the East’s memory games have specific content linked to the Second World War and Sovietisation, there can be no successful ‘Europeanisation’ of the histories of Europeans. This book aims to contribute to that broader endeavour.

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¹ The point here is to adapt the notion of ‘grammar’ so it can be used as a political construction that will endow the action of ‘beings and relations engaged in market ties’ with general meaning (Lefranc, 2006). Sandrine Lefranc was the first to apply the concept to Truth and Reconciliation Commissions. The notion refers to a language-like system of operating rules and rules governing relations between the set of actors implicated in reconciliation, as well as a whole range of representations (Lefranc, 2007).

² That same year, 2009, the European Parliament ruled that 23 August would henceforth be European Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Stalinism and Nazism.

³ We are using Johann Michel's definition of ‘memory regime’ as ‘the stabilized configuration of official public memory during a given historical period A memory regime resembles a cognitive framework; that is, a matrix of perceptions and representations of official public memory at a given period’ (Michel, 2010, p.16).

⁴ We have limited ourselves here to paradigms developed by French authors. There is a kind of ‘French touch’ to memory studies, and French thinkers’ contributions in this area are extensively used in the specialized literature.

⁵ Paul Ricoeur’s typology has even been applied in international relations, where a classification of former belligerents’ uses of the past has been developed based on his triptych of *obliteration*, *overvaluing*, and *labour* (Rosoux, 2001). The analysis is limited to bilateral relations and the generation that actually engaged in combat.

⁶ The forest around Katyń (in Russia) where the NKVD, on orders from Stalin and the CPSU Politburo, killed approximately 4,500 Polish army reserve officers in 1940 is the symbol of massacres of Polish elites perpetrated by the Soviet Union. In reality many more victims were put to death on several sites. Several thousand Polish POWs belonging to the country’s military elite were assassinated as they were transferred from the military camps of Kozielsk, Strobielsk and Ostashov and from various Soviet prisons.

⁷ The plane that crashed trying to land at the Smolensk military airport was carrying 96 persons highly representative of the Polish elite. In addition to the president and his wife, there were the four highest-ranking army officers and a number of important MPs, not to mention descendants of officers murdered in 1940 in the forest of Katyń. All were in fact traveling to Katyń to participate in a ceremony commemorating the 70th anniversary of the massacre.

⁸ Rafaële Rivais, ‘8 mai 1945: la « résolution Yalta » oppose les eurodéputés de l’Est et de l’Ouest,’ *Le Monde*, 6 May 2005.