

# From Heaven to Earth

## European Identity and Historical Memory

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### Abstract

The article explores the role of memory politics in building European identity. Memory politics is considered a functioning system of interactions and communication between different actors with regard to the political uses of the past. Memory politics is one of the key instruments for shaping the macro-political identity of a community. Supranational identity plays only a subsidiary role; at the supranational level, it is impossible to form a stable frame of collective memory. At the same time, European Union institutions are able to act as influential mnemonic actors to develop and implement various strategies of pro-European memory politics. Today, the strategy of recognizing the exceptional role of the Holocaust as a pan-European tragedy is subject to a fundamental revision in the EU. Attempts to “equalize” the crimes of Nazism and Communism indicate the search for an alternative mnemonic strategy. At

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the European level this strategy ultimately leads not to unity, but to the disunity of European nations.

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When continued success gives way to a string of failures, self-confident triumphalism easily surrenders to pessimism and uncertainty. Such sentiment may overpower both large communities and institutional structures that looked omnipotent until recently. Today this is precisely what is happening to united Europe and its population of half a billion. Ivan Krastev came up with a remarkably graphic description of this feeling: “The disintegration train has left Brussels station ... It will doom the continent to disarray and global irrelevance” (Krastev, 2017, p. 2).

The European Union and the countries that join and leave it have a variety of internal and external challenges to contend with in the field of security, the economy, culture, identity, and democracy. Although of different origin, these challenges may overlap to bring about quite unexpected synergetic effects. Many onlookers have pointed to the unpreparedness of Europeans to provide a proper response to these challenges (Foa and Mounk, 2016; Lukyanov et al, 2017; Youngs and Manney, 2018), but answers will have to be found at some point. And it would be wrong to say that all of the future answers are doomed to turn out wrong. It is quite appropriate here to recall *Patmos*, by Friedrich Holderlin:

*“But where there is danger,  
A rescuing element grows as well.”*

In all likelihood the salvation of and a new start for the European project will come from an unexpected place, possibly even from those who today are called populists and Eurosceptics. De Gaulle’s slogan Europe of Nations (Crespy and Verschueren, 2009), which modern critics of the Brussels bureaucracy have brought into the limelight,

however hazy it may sound, is quite good for making an orderly retreat and regrouping forces without wasting the achievements of European integration, which are of world significance. For the Europeans (in the widest sense, including Russians, who have politically reoriented themselves to an alternative project of Greater Eurasia), it is essential to thoroughly and impartially review the entire accumulated experience of European integration. Of special significance are efforts to form a supranational identity and to look back for this purpose on the historical past of European countries and peoples.

The emergence of nation states is linked inseparably with the shaping of a special perception of the historical past by the citizens or a majority of residents in the territory where a nation is growing and maturing. The memory of the past becomes an integral part of the macropolitical identity of the emerging community. But how does this work in relation to supranational associations? Can memory politics—in other words, the politically motivated use of the historical past—produce an effective instrument of implementing an integration project, implying the delegation of a considerable share of national sovereignty to the supranational level? In this article the author considers the conceptual aspects of this group of problems, as well as the actual dynamics of memory politics within the European Union.

### **CONSTRUCTING UNITED EUROPE'S COLLECTIVE MEMORY**

As is known, Maurice Halbwachs's works constitute the basis of all modern collective memory studies. As he developed and critically reviewed Emil Durkheim's ideas of individualism and collectivism, Halbwachs identified the dependence of individual memories on the social group to which the given individual belongs and on the individual's status within this group. Halbwachs maintains that memory is not just socially determined, but it is a process reflecting the constantly changing representations of the past. Society (social group) establishes a framework of individual memories, which may undergo considerable aberrations depending on the perception of the past within the corresponding group. The collective memory of the past does not coincide with history, while the need for a written

history emerges precisely the moment social memory fades away or falls apart, when the social group that maintained that memory begins to leave the stage (Halbwachs, 1992). Historians and specialists on memory studies have repeatedly discussed this contrast of history and collective memory from different viewpoints, with the obvious sociologism of Halbwachs's postulate and the general vagueness of the term 'memory' being the main target of criticism (Safronova, 2018).

It is quite obvious though that the mechanisms of how the collective memory works which Halbwachs focused on are of tremendous importance to forming an individual identity and the identity of a larger community (group). However, in such a supranational association as the European Union the question arises whether collective European memory is possible in principle (Namer, 1993). Indeed, where is the group that is capable of creating an integral framework of collective European memory? This group (if it exists in reality) lacks a common language or a common nation state. The very localization of this group in space and time is a great problem.

There is no doubt that from the moment the European Coal and Steel Community was established (1951) and until now a certain group, which with a certain degree of abstraction can be called Eurocratic, was steadily consolidating itself. In the early 1990s Joseph Brodsky described the characteristic features, origin, and effects of the emergence of Eurocracy with acid sarcasm, which by no means sounds outdated at the end of the second decade of the 21st century (Brodsky, 1992). This is a group of people whose professional activity or whose close relatives are closely related to maintaining the operation of European integration institutions and the implementation of many EU projects in a variety of sectors. The Eurocratic group is socially stratified. It incorporates petty clerks and members of the transnational financial, economic, and political elite, who have many ties with representatives of such elites at the level of nation states. The group's composition, influence, resource base, and social and symbolic capital remained steadily on the ascent for decades. There is no doubt that strong affiliation with Eurocracy promotes group identity, which should be called Eurocratic too, but which serves as a natural basis

for enhancing a wider identity, associated with the idea of a United Europe.

By and large, as empirical studies by Eurobarometer indicate, the readiness for self-identification with Europe (to a smaller extent, with the European Union) is characteristic of most EU member-states, but this identity is purely subsidiary in relation to national identities (Westle and Segatti, 2016). Moreover, the national elites display far greater awareness of their “Europeanism” than mass groups (Deriglazova, 2018). In general, for an overwhelming majority of EU countries affiliation with the European Union and the norms, rules, advantages, and drawbacks it implies are a fact of life that is widely acknowledged but interpreted differently (Outhwaite, 2017). Self-identification exclusively with Europe is characteristic of a tiny minority of Europeans (Cotta, 2017).

By virtue of their calling and professional duties the representatives of the Eurocratic group can make a tangible contribution to pro-European memory politics. Whatever influence Eurocrats have, though, there is no reason to believe that this group is capable of forming a supranational framework of collective memory that might take the place of national historical narratives. There is no evidence for this theory in modern Europe. At the same time, no other social group capable of coping with this task is anywhere in sight on the European horizon.

Jurgen Habermas’ theory of communicative action might serve as an alternative to the search for a bearer of collective memory for one or another social group. Social communication and public discourses take center stage here, with the key role assigned to the European public sphere. Habermas maintains that the European public sphere is not a new social group for which its affiliation with Europe is primary, but rather communication between the EU countries’ civil societies on critically important socio-political issues that forms a common European discourse and makes possible the emergence of a sense of communion. Such communication is extremely important for shaping European institutions and legitimating the decisions they make. It is beyond doubt that the problem of historical memory plays

an important role in this communicative process (Triandafyllidou, Wodak, and Krzyzanowski, 2009; Risse, 2010).

The degree of influence of the European public sphere in the final count was destined to manifest itself as a significant political process for a united Europe. In 2003, when protests against the war in Iraq swept the leading EU countries, with Germany and France opposing the U.S. invasion, it seemed that supranational communication among civil societies was becoming a major political force. It was then that Jacques Derrida and Jurgen Habermas published their article “Our Renewal after the War: Europe’s Second Birth” to proclaim the unequivocal appearance of the supranational public sphere on the EU’s political scene, while the communication of civil society actors on the issues of Europe’s past, present, and future was proclaimed the main source of common European identity. Derrida and Habermas formulated an approach towards the interpretation of historical heritage as a mechanism for constructing European identity. In their opinion it is essential to intentionally select the individual components useful for bolstering Europe’s unity (Derrida and Habermas, 2003).

In considering European identity as a social construct Derrida and Habermas made a tangible contribution to the discussion of the main strategies of forming this identity (Kumar, 2003; Fligstein, 2008; Checkel and Katzenstein, 2009). One of them implies reliance on common history and socio-cultural basics of the identity being construed. The followers of this viewpoint proceed from the universalities of European culture and focus on the spatial and temporal dimensions of European identity. The other strategy of European identity is formed on the basis of a combination of purely political principles. The advocates of this approach as a rule associate European identity and EU identity as resting upon common institutions and political and legal principles.

The historical and cultural aspects of the idea of a united Europe drew the attention of philosophers and political thinkers long before the emergence of the first institutions and mechanisms of interstate integration on the European subcontinent. As Dutch scholar B. Strath points out, starting from the Middle Ages the image of the European community was created by means of isolation from the rest

of the world, from the “others,” while Christianity turned out the most powerful integrating factor (Stråth, 2002). In 1464, the Treaty on the Establishment of Peace Throughout Christendom, proposed by King George of Poděbrady, interpreted affiliation with Christianity as a reason for creating a league of European rulers and forming common European institutions (Treaty ..., 1964). However, the Reformation and religious wars caused a rupture of this bond. In the discourse of the Enlightenment, the term ‘Europe’ served as a neutral name for a common whole. Enlightenment philosophers proclaimed Western Europe the cradle of civilization and coined the term ‘Eastern Europe’ for its other half. This conceptual change of the map of Europe moved the backward, “barbaric” lands from the North to the East. The ambiguity of this is quite obvious: Eastern Europe was paradoxically included in the continent and placed outside its bounds.

Nevertheless, the image of the “other,” “external” is central to the culturalist version of European identity. It is impossible to imagine Europe without non-Europe. However, with the beginning of European integration the political dynamics were increasingly ahead of the well-established ideas of the historical and cultural basics of European identity. The increasing relativization of Europe’s historical and cultural bounds, related to dynamic processes within European culture and, in particular, to the political changes at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, brings to the forefront the interpretation of European identity as the political identity of the European Union.

As a rule, social groups are determined on the basis of a set of ideas the members of these groups are capable of perceiving positively. Such ideas may be expressed directly through modes of interaction and communication, or indirectly, by means of common symbols, codes, or signs. The group’s members feel that they have something to share, which forms an “imagined community” (Anderson, 2006). As far as the European Union is concerned, the point at issue is an interpretation of European identity as a special political identity, which is a result of and at the same time a prerequisite for interstate integration. At the same time, cultural diversity is an integral characteristic of the European Union, but this or that form of its selection and synthesis of

the historical narrative on the basis of this selection are fraught with conflicts and, in the final count, weakening of integration impulses. However, the actual state of affairs in the European Union over the past quarter of a century indicates that the factor of historical memory is too important for leading political actors to stop using it of their own accord.

### **THE ROLE OF THE HOLOCAUST IN THE EU'S MEMORY POLITICS**

Achieved at the end of the 19th century, the consolidation of European nations on the basis of an awareness of racial, ethnic, and religious identity, had another side to it: the cultivation of ideas of ethnic superiority, chauvinism, and racism. The tragedies of two world wars were the result. The memory of these tragedies makes the task of constructing European identity particularly complex, because it is necessary to identify everything that is capable of uniting current EU members and potential newcomers and eliminate everything that can split them.

Until the beginning of the early 2000s, memory politics had contributed to shaping European identity on the basis of political principles. That policy's key theme was the collective memory of the Holocaust. Its main task was to analyze the tragic experience of World War II and the Nazi crimes. On the basis of an awareness of the collective guilt and responsibility of European peoples (including the population of the territories the Nazis had occupied) for the Holocaust, it became possible to form a consolidating historical narrative (Assmann, 2006). The Holocaust should have become the bond that would keep the common European historical narrative of the 20th century as an integral whole.

Alas, this did not happen. The European Union's eastward expansion in 2004 entailed a string of political compromises. An integral European historical narrative, in which the Holocaust plays the central role, eventually became one of its victims. In 2004, the EU saw an influx of new members whose historical memory was greatly different from the European one (Assmann, 2013). When a number of post-Communist countries joined the EU, an alternative version



of memory politics markedly gained strength. That version put the emphasis on crimes committed by the totalitarian regimes against the people of these countries and played down the role of local forces in acts of genocide. The political elites of Central and Eastern European countries pressed for their own version of memory politics, obviously determined to underscore their equality in relations with the European Union's old-timers. Moreover, in their attempts to consolidate their equal status the elites and other mnemonic actors of Central and Eastern European countries have been consciously pushing for the transformation of approaches to the memory politics of the EU (Closa Montero, 2009; Mälksoo, 2009). As a result, some kind of mnemonical crossbreed is emerging, which Aleida Assman in the "New Discontent with Memorial Culture" presents as an ellipse with two focal points. One of the centers is the Holocaust and the other is the GULAG and mass terror during the Communist era. But glaring asymmetry remains between these historical events, which continues to split Europe (Assmann, 2013).

It goes without saying that the vision of European memory politics dynamics as a special ideological battle between "old" and "new" Europe is somewhat vulgarized. Alongside the general intention of portraying the given country in the newest version of European policy as a victim, and not the executioner or henchman, the efforts of Central and Eastern European elites stemmed from rather specific, in some cases situative, factors determined by the national political context. For instance, in formulating their own version of history memory politics, the political elites of Estonia were keen to provide a mnemonic basis not only for their efforts to secure rapid accession to NATO and the European Union, but also for their own policy towards the rights of the Russian-speaking population. This is not characteristic of all Baltic countries, but it is a specific action targeted at insulting the historical memory of a large share of non-Estonians. By and large the national framework of mobilization of historical memory remains the main one in Central and European countries (Clarke, 2014). However, moving the interpretations of historical events related to the national political agenda in these countries to the sphere of a pan-European

discussion of the past inevitably transforms the approaches to memory politics at the national level. Moreover, these approaches begin to exert considerable influence on international relations outside the European Union.

### **EUROPEAN SUPRANATIONAL IDENTITY: TRIAL BY POLITICS**

There are plenty of reasons to assert that in the countries of old Europe the supranational framework failed to gain the dominating positions. The failure of the European constitutional process, launched at the EU summit in December 2001, can be considered a landmark event in this sense. The drafting of an EU Constitution and preparations for the beginning of its ratification by parliaments or through national referendums in the most dramatic way transferred the debate over European identity from a purely academic dimension to the track of political struggle.

The European constitutional process was largely unprecedented, because the issue on the agenda was creation of a constitution for a space that lacked such prerequisites as territorial unity, a common language, and an integral civil society. As the drafting of the EU constitution continued, heated debate flared up over its preamble, which raised the issue of European identity (Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe, 2004, p. 9). The most acute polemics revolved around what eventually was completely omitted from the final version—mention of united Europe's Christian roots (Bogdandy, 2005). The decision to avoid this issue, which drew criticism from the Vatican and those EU countries where conservative Catholicism is still very strong, demonstrated the common internal contradiction of the discussion about European identity. The allusion made in the preamble to the cultural, religious, and humanist inheritance of Europe was an attempt to create a fictitious cultural basis for the European Union's political identity (Cerutti, 2005, p. 180). However, reasons of political expediency forced members of the constitutional convention to do so in the most abstract way.

The EU's constitutional process had certain chances of giving a fresh impetus to forming a pan-European identity and, respectively,

to the development of a pan-European culture of historical memory. In any case, until 2005 there had existed enough grounds for making certain analogies with the constitutional processes in the countries that suffered a loss in World War II. In West Germany and Italy new constitutions contributed to the most radical departure from the previous interpretations of national identity, in which cultural and political identity are close to the maximum extent, if not identical, because the core of the nation state is found in the pyramidal structure of power and the assimilation of previous cultures under the aegis of national culture. The constitutions of Italy and Germany are the brightest examples of the priority of political identity, based on the values of liberal democracy and clear guarantees of civil rights and freedoms. It is these political principles and values that serve as the basis of new “constitutional patriotism,” which is expected to ensure patriotism’s tight link with civil freedoms and the constitution (Sternberger, 1990).

Criticism of the EU draft constitution from the liberal positions of “constitutional patriotism” was focused on explaining the origin of political values and corresponding institutions through Europe’s cultural and historical heritage. Formulated in the constitutional preamble, this intention was criticized as a potentially dangerous historicist or culturalist delusion. From the standpoint of “constitutional patriotism,” common history and culture are not the main determinants of political identity (Cerutti, 2005). Also, critical arguments in the spirit of European “constitutional patriotism” were aimed at preventing accusations of attempts to create a European super-nation and weaken the role of the nation state. At the political level it is EU countries that continue to play the key role, and this prevents the EU’s conversion into a real federation.

Admittedly, the process of ratifying the EU Constitution produced discouraging results. The referendums in France (May 29, 2005) and the Netherlands (June 1, 2005) manifested the reluctance of a majority of those who cast their ballots in these key EU countries to support the EU Constitution. It would be right to say that the European community *a la* Habermas, which seemingly demonstrated its strength in 2003,

suffered a defeat in the decisive battle two years later. Although the EU signed a new treaty on reforming the system of governing the European Union at a summit in Lisbon in 2007, the failure of the constitutional project was the gravest political and psychological blow to the process of European integration. Whereas before 2005 European integration had been regarded as an indisputable success story, after the failure of the EU Constitution a string of setbacks followed (the financial crisis of 2008, the Greek debt crisis, the migration crisis, Brexit, Catalan separatism, and the growing strength of right-wing and left-wing populists and Eurosceptics). These provided enough arguments to say that the European Union experienced a systemic crisis.

### **FROM COMMON HISTORICAL NARRATIVE TO MNEMONIC DIVERGENCE**

The failure of the European Constitution was a serious incentive for EU organizations (in the first place, the European Commission and European Parliament) to step up activity in the spheres of identity and historical memory. Besides, as stated above, the European Union's expansion in 2004 resulted in the fundamental transformation of approaches to memory politics. In 2007-2013 the EU launched the Europe for Citizens program with the aim of securing the active involvement of citizens and NGOs in the promotion of European integration. One of the program's main tasks was formulated as the promotion of a sense of European identity on the basis of common values, history, and culture for the purpose of uniting people in different parts of Europe for the sake of studying the lessons of the past and building a future. Among the concrete guidelines for the program's implementation, special attention was paid to "active European remembrance." In particular, there were plans to sponsor projects for supporting the memory of concentration camps, deportations, and repression during the period of National Socialism and the era of Stalinism. The program unequivocally accommodated the doctrines of the EU's Eastern European newcomers in the field of memory politics. The gist of the arguments in favor of the planned costs was this: without remembering the crimes of totalitarian regimes, it is impossible to properly assess the meaning of such principles of European integration

as freedom, democracy, and respect for human rights, as well as to take an active part in European processes (European Commission, 2006).

Against this background, the European Parliament's resolution recognizing the Holocaust as a unique historical reference point (European Parliament Resolution, 2005) looked like nothing else than an attempt to compensate for the heavy bias towards memory politics formulated by the countries of New Europe. Four years later the European Parliament adopted a new resolution in favor of complementing the commemoration of the Holocaust with a Europe-wide Day of Remembrance for the victims of all totalitarian and authoritarian regimes (European Parliament, 2009). The proposed date was August 23, the day the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was signed. This was an obvious attempt to press for the version of memory politics Poland and the Baltic countries had campaigned for first and foremost. Also, that resolution was the indisputable contribution to the resumed geopolitical confrontation between Russia and the West, triggered by the EU's program of Eastern Partnership (2008).

It should be noted that the 2009 resolution contained glaring logical contradictions. On the one hand, the resolution rightly stated that it was not possible to achieve "fully objective interpretations of historical facts" and proclaimed that no political agency or political party had a monopoly on interpreting history even if it relied on a majority in parliament. On the other hand, the resolution contained a categorical statement that "Europe will not be united unless it is able to form a common view of its history, recognizes Nazism, Stalinism, and fascist and Communist regimes as a common legacy and brings about an honest and thorough debate on their crimes in the past century." Nazism was described as "the dominant historical experience of Western Europe," whereas Central and Eastern European countries have experienced both Communism and Nazism (European Parliament Resolution, 2009). As a matter of fact, while declaring that it was impossible to produce a unified interpretation of history, the authors of the resolution at once began to address the task of ideological demarcation of "right" and "wrong" interpretations of history.

One way or another, by gradually departing from the recognition of the key role of common European responsibility for the Holocaust and enhancing the policy of self-victimization and transfer of responsibility onto “external” totalitarian forces, the initiators of the alternative version of memory politics are laying the basis for new conflicts and even “wars of memory.” The basis for the conflict remains firstly because there are two historical memory frameworks (the “uniqueness of the Holocaust” vs. “Communism as an evil equal to Nazism”), and attempts to reconcile them eventually end in failure. These frameworks indicate that in forming different versions of European memory politics, a very sketchy and teleological vision of history remains, which implies a contrast between Europe’s “dark past” in the 20th century and the “bright today” of the European Union, which appears almost as an embodiment of Fukuyama’s “end of history” (Prutsch, 2013). Adhering to such a viewpoint inevitably overlooks other, very important components of the European historical heritage, such as imperialism and colonialism. It is still more important that the “dark past” is lent the status of a negative “EU origin myth,” which paves the way for the ideological instrumentalization and moralization of the past and eases the incentives to a critical study of stereotypes and “holy cows” of one’s own national history.

At the same time, at the level of many of the EU’s nation states, specific historical and political factors make it difficult to accept the equalization of the Nazi-Communism parallel. In particular, this is clearly seen in countries where left-of-center forces have been and remain influential political actors and the role of local Communist parties was not confined to the role of “the Kremlin’s agents of influence.” In Spain, for instance, the condemnation of Communism is perceived through the lens of a modern vision of the tragic experience of the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s and as a condemnation of the loser party, which according to many Spaniards deserves sympathy. In such countries as Croatia and Slovakia, on the contrary, problems emerge due to the unconditional condemnation of Nazism, because it was the Third Reich that sponsored the emergence of client states that, despite the complicity of the Pavelic and Tiso regimes in crimes

against humanity, are associated by many Croats and Slovaks with modern history's first experience of building a nation state.

## **CONCLUSION**

The case of the European Union is extremely important and indicative for studying the entire set of memory politics problems and its links with political and cultural identity. Firstly, this is an extraordinary case, because from the standpoint of the depth and diversity of integration processes, the European Union has no equals among other economic and political supranational associations. Also, the EU's case is extraordinary because it is highly likely that the current crisis could bring about a U-turn and return part of the powers to the level of national governments and parliaments, as well as the recognition of political, social, and economic disproportions between countries through the transition to a model of multi-speed integration (Piris, 2012; Fossum, 2015; Leruth and Lord, 2015; Martinico, 2015). The scale of the European project is favorable for the creation of a supranational identity, even more so, since at the early stages of Euro-integration the creation of a united Europe began to be linked at the official level with such matters as identity, common heritage, and cultural proximity (Declaration on European Identity, 1973). However, despite the systemic work in building a supranational identity of a united Europe, this identity remains auxiliary in relation to the identities pertaining to the nation state, a common language, culture, and historical heritage. Representatives of very different communities and social groups are prepared to declare their European identity as an auxiliary one. At the same time, the importance of public communication concerning the most important aspects of European identity and Europe's past and future are hard to overestimate, because it can and does exert strong influence on the making of political decisions, including those concerning memory politics.

In the European Union major actors capable of forming a memory politics strategy and influence its implementation operate both at the national and supranational levels. The EU's political governance institutions are actors that make a very important contribution to

pro-European memory politics. In their official documents, Brussels and Strasbourg determine common strategies and concrete actions concerning memory politics. EU institutions have significant resources and instruments at their disposal to implement measures capable of using the historical past for political purposes. However, while further actions will remain relatively autonomous, determining the basic political position of the EU's supranational agencies is related to achieving a balance of interests and approaches of affiliated member-states. The transformation of a European memory politics strategy is very indicative in this respect: whereas before the accession of Central and Eastern European countries to the EU the recognition of the unique role of the Holocaust tragedy was the basis of memory politics, after the expansion of the EU in 2004 a fundamental turn took place and the crimes of National Socialism began to be equalized with the crimes of the Communist regimes. Lastly, the "modified" version of common European memory politics has also begun to be used ever more actively for geopolitical purposes to create a new mental frontier that is expected to divide the European geographic and cultural space once again, forcing Russia out, but retaining all other post-Soviet countries included in the Eastern Partnership program.

In the process of regaining its well-familiar role of a significant "other" on the billboard of European memory politics, Russia lacked the opportunity to exert considerable influence on the transformation of that policy. Certain warnings from Russian intellectuals, a professional dialogue (in particular, within the framework of commissions where Russian historians discussed complex issues of the past with historians from Germany, Poland, Latvia, and some other EU countries), and the activity of State Duma and Federation Council members on the platform of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe were unable to act as a counterbalance to the systemic work that was conducted within EU agencies and in the public space of united Europe. It would rather be appropriate to say that the turn in the European memory politics had a strong influence on memory politics in Russia (Miller, 2016).



It goes without saying that the version of European memory politics that attaches the key role to the Holocaust tragedy and the vision of Nazism as the absolute evil is quite comparable with Russia's modern memory politics, in which the Great Victory over Hitler's Germany is the central element of the semantic structure of the country's past (Malinova, 2017). The alternative version of European memory politics, in which Nazism and Communism are interpreted as identical twins (the latter portrayed as a totalitarian ideology imposed from outside by the Soviet Union, and repressive practice) makes illusory the outlook for a rapprochement of models of the political interpretation of history.

However deep the current political divides between Moscow and Brussels can be, the historical narratives, in which the liberation of Auschwitz and the linkup on the Elbe are the most important symbolic benchmarks, retain their place as the basis for a dialogue on a joint future. If one of the parties keeps pressing with growing intensity for a narrative revolving around the joint parade by the Wehrmacht and the Red Army in Brest as the main symbol, the hard-going dialogue dies down and instead one hears two monologues, as neither speaker is interested in listening to and hearing each other.

In the current circumstances, Central European and Eastern European elites and the new cohorts of Eurocracy are keen to preserve the vector of the EU's memory politics aimed not so much at forming a supranational identity of united Europe as at adjusting the tragic experience of the 20th century history to the political targets of these forces. The counterarguments of this sort of memory politics in the final count are aimed at ruining the ideas of Europe's civilizational unity, of which Russian history and culture are an integral part. And they will stop no one. Changing the vector is possible, but this will most probably happen in the context of a wider transformation of the European project, reconsideration of its tasks, and the establishment of a considerably new balance between national and supranational.

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