Memory and Power in Post-War Europe

How has memory – collective and individual – influenced European politics after the Second World War and after 1989 in particular? How has the past been used in domestic struggles for power, and how have ‘historical lessons’ been applied in foreign policy? While there is now a burgeoning field of social and cultural memory studies, mostly focused on commemorations and monuments, this volume is the first to examine the connection between memory and politics directly. It investigates how memory is officially recast, personally reworked and often violently re-instilled after wars, and above all, the ways in which memory shapes present power constellations.

The chapters combine theoretical innovation in their approach to the study of memory with deeply historical, empirically based case studies of major European countries. The point of stressing memory is not to deny that interests shape policy, but, with Max Weber, to analyse the historically and ideologically conditioned formation and legitimation of these interests. The volume concludes with reflections on the ethics of memory, and the politics of truth, justice and forgetting after 1945 and 1989.

This ground-breaking book should be of interest to historians of contemporary Europe, political scientists, sociologists and anyone interested in how the political uses of the past have shaped – and continue to shape – the Europe in which we live now.

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Studies in the Presence of the Past

Edited by

Jan-Werner Müller

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For as at a great distance of place, that which wee look at, appears dimme, and without distinction of the smaller parts; and as Voyces grow weak, and inarticulate: so also after great distance of time, our imagination of the Past is weak; and wee lose (for example) of Cities wee have seen, many particular Streets; and of Actions, many particular Circumstances. This *decaying sense*, when wee would express the thing itself, (I mean *fancy itselfe,*), wee call *Imagination,* as I said before: But when we would express the *decay,* and signifie that the Sense is fading, old, and past, it is called *Memory.* So that *Imagination* and *Memory,* are but one thing . . .

Hobbes, *Leviathan*
Contents

List of contributors page ix
Acknowledgements xii

Introduction: the power of memory, the memory of power and the power over memory 1
JAN-WERNER MÜLLER

Part 1 Myth, memory and analogy in foreign policy

1 Memory of sovereignty and sovereignty over memory: Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine, 1939–1999 39
TIMOTHY SNYDER

2 Myth, memory and policy in France since 1945 59
ROBERT GILDEA

3 The power of memory and memories of power: the cultural parameters of German foreign policy-making since 1945 76
THOMAS BERGER

4 The past in the present: British imperial memories and the European question 100
ANNE DEIGHTON

5 Europe's post-Cold War remembrance of Russia: cui bono? 121
IVER B. NEUMANN

6 Memory, the media and NATO: information intervention in Bosnia-Hercegovina 137
MONROE E. PRICE

vii
Contents

Part 2 Memory and power in domestic affairs

7 The past is another country: myth and memory in post-war Europe
   TONY JUDT

8 The emergence and legacies of divided memory: Germany and the Holocaust after 1945
   JEFFREY HERF

9 Unimagined communities: the power of memory and the conflict in the former Yugoslavia
   ILANA R. BET-EL

10 Translating memories of war and co-belligerency into politics: the Italian post-war experience
    ILARIA POGGIOLINI

11 Institutionalising the past: shifting memories of nationhood in German education and immigration legislation
    DANIEL LEVY AND JULIAN B. DIERKES

12 Trials, purges and history lessons: treating a difficult past in post-communist Europe
    TIMOTHY GARTON ASH

Index
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At the Soviet War Memorial in Berlin's Treptower Park, residents lay flowers on the 75th anniversary of the surrender of Nazi Germany. Here, too, there is no large-scale event, and instead social distancing and protective masks during the coronavirus pandemic. When Vladimir Putin came to power he took a new tack, unofficially making Victory Day the nation's most important public holiday. From that point, the parade saw ever more soldiers participating, as well as the presentation of the country's most advanced military hardware. World War II memorials around the globe. RAF Bomber Command Memorial in London, UK. The sculpture depicts a Bomber Command crew and is dedicated to the 55,573 Allied aircrew killed in World War II.