Reassessing the EU Memory Divide

Dereifying Collective Memory through a Memory Regimes Approach

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This article questions the persisting notion that the European Union's (EU) memory is fractured between East and West, a notion that contributes to the reification of states as legitimately embodying national collective memories. It does so by building on actor-centered examinations of the EU memory divide, which is manifested in a challenge to the EU's Holocaust-centered narrative by an antitotalitarian memory regime, defined as an institutionalized network of politically driven historiographic expertise. The article shows that the antitotalitarian memory regime reflects a political culture of remembrance centered on a "politics of certainty" that disregards open historiographic disputes and contests the EU's hitherto prevailing "politics of regret."

Keywords: European memory; memory politics; memory regimes; collective memory; expertise

Introduction

In recent decades, European integration has been partly justified by the need to overcome the legacy of Nazism, and by the twentieth century the European Union (EU) upheld a memory in which "the Holocaust was the culmination and proof of the ultimate decline of European civilization."[1] However, the late 2000s saw a string of EU resolutions and commemorations endorsing an antitotalitarian narrative that facilitates parallels between the terror unleashed by Nazism and communism, implicitly questioning the uniqueness of the Holocaust. One school of thought explains this appar-

ent deadlock as one between two collective memories, with states' foreign policy concerns assuming central roles. Early analysis pit Western Europe against new member states from central and eastern Europe (CEE) who are vying for European recognition of their historical legacy and full membership in the EU.[2] This argument was later refined by positing ontologically anxious states seeking to secure international recognition of their status and identity through memory battles.[3] Another, instrumentalist school has instead zoomed in on the domestic and international political actors driving antitotalitarianism, pointing to an important left-right dimension and relevant narrative frames but leaving the larger power configurations in which those actors are inserted relatively unexplored.[4]

This article proposes bridging these gaps through a sociology of expertise approach that emphasizes collective memory's embeddedness in political identities and institutions. First, it advocates going beyond the black box of the state as a representative of national memory. Second, it focuses not just on relevant actors and the narrative frames they adopt, but also on the expert networks and legitimation mechanisms behind the co-production of claims to represent collective memory. To do so, it operationalizes the concept of *memory regime* while distinguishing it from that of *collective memory*, which has often been reified and deployed on the implicit assumption that state-driven historical narratives reflect political consensus or even shared historical experience. This results in a tendency to legitimate those narratives at the expense of exploring the institutional and expert arrangements that sustain them and thus of revealing their wider political implications.

In contrast, the concept of *memory regime* can be thought of as a technology of expertise, a complex artifact sustained by alliances, compromises and material resources that strives for legitimacy in the public sphere.[5] Put differently, the application of this heuristic device is far more conducive to tracing back the origins and alliances behind seemingly organic collective memories and more in line with the sort of skepticism a memory politics research agenda should invite. It also leads to a threefold hypothesis:

First, the EU memory deadlock involves not regions or states articulating their official memories for foreign policy purposes, nor mere alliances of political actors. Instead, a comprehensive understanding of the forces at play requires us to frame it as a case of incompatible *memory regimes*. Their dissonance is not just narrative but also based on political culture.

The antitotalitarian memory regime is thus posited as an ensemble linking (liberal-)conservative political actors and nation-centric historiographic expertise, which is gradually institutionalized and thus capable of intermittently activating state apparatuses. By entrusting historians with the task of scientifically confirming preestablished narratives of Nazi-Communist equivalence, this regime counters the West's "politics of regret" and instead promotes a "politics of certainty."[6] If the first endorses a political culture of remembrance based on a universal "ethics of memory" that is prioritized over narrative uniformity, reflecting a shift "in interpretation from heroism to collaboration" and from "what others did to 'us'" to "what 'we' did to others," the latter externalizes national guilt and seeks to impose narrative uniformity through scholarly co-optation.[7]

Second, this clash of political cultures is best illustrated by their modalities of engagement with expertise. The EU's "politics of regret" grew out of the acknowledgment that interfering with scholarly autonomy can backfire, instead setting broad orientations to diffuse European values. In contrast, the antitotalitarian memory regime's "politics of certainty" represents a political culture of remembrance bent on legitimizing contested, conservative political identities through the co-optation of historians via state-sponsored National Memory Institutes (NMIs).

Finally, I argue that the concept of memory regime allows us to interpret recent developments in EU memory politics as signaling an ongoing advance of the antitotalitarian memory regime.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Instrumentalist approaches have been distinguished by their emphasis on the potential for political manipulation inherent to collective memory, explicitly countering tendencies to reify collective memory, based on the observation that narratives of the past are often formulated in connection to existing political identities, with explicit or implicit temporal references that have a programmatic quality.[8] Eric Hobsbawm's concept of "invented traditions," which emphasizes the elite-driven instrumentalization of the past for identity-building exercises, constitutes a landmark in this school of thought.[9] But instrumentalism has earlier roots in the sociology of memory. Halbwachs noted that collective memory is rarely left to its own

devices, as powerful actors invariably seek to formally store and interpret it.[10] Nora's rendition of collective memory as synonymous with identity sought to convey precisely the magnitude of the temptation the former poses to the latter, but it has also contributed to a lasting confusion.[11]

Collective memory has been left with an irresolvable contradiction. On the one hand, there is a literature that posits it as almost synonymous with (state) identity. This understanding hardly grapples with how elites deploy memory in struggles "for control or influence over the state and its resources," namely, by solidifying political identities through the manipulation of the past.[12] Jeffrey Olick's critique of static understandings of collective memory as taking identities for granted is useful here. He instead suggests focusing on memory's dynamic properties, whereby individual memories, their socially shared meanings and all manner of collective forces constantly interact and recombine.[13]

Scholars of memory politics therefore need to disentangle collective memory as a *process* from the various attempts to invoke the past as a means of identity production. "Collective memory" conveys an unending process of societal negotiation and thus cannot simultaneously convey the apparatus through which power coalitions attempt to control that same process. Far from suggesting that the terminology of "collective memory" should be discarded, this article merely points to the need for another concept, one that captures the alliances and institutional mechanisms through which communities interiorize a political identity as a natural and encompassing "collective memory."

The concept of *memory regime* does precisely this, encapsulating what Assmann describes as an "explicit, homogeneous and institutionalized" configuration of power.[14] First, the term "regime" suggests the organized and orderly exercise of power, shifting our focus to the institutionalized political control of memory processes.[15] Second, it already has a prominent place in the memory studies lexicon, albeit seldom defined, with some notable exceptions. Michael Bernhard and Jan Kubik argue that memory regimes organize remembrance of "a specific issue, event or process" and that involvement by the government and/or major political parties makes regimes official.[16] But their approach, which treats memory regimes as power configurations that emerge around discreet events, does not convey regimes' durability, precisely because they do not explicitly link them to the durable political identities that organize such events or processes

into larger historical narratives. Abdelmajid Hannoum has also presented a promising, "networked" rendition of memory regimes as "an ensemble of statements, images, monuments" that is "authorized, taught, celebrated and repeated."[17] However, the network Hannoum envisions deals more with narrative elements than with the coalitions and institutionalized mechanisms that constitute and sustain memory regimes.

For this article's purposes, neither definition truly grapples with the manner in which elites instill, safeguard and legitimate a given historical identity by controlling diffuse collective memory processes, which is why I have defined memory regimes as representing the synchronic capture of collective memory through a sociopolitical network entrusted with disciplining it toward specific identities, interests and agendas.[18] This definition treats memory regimes as an act of selection, by which politicians, journalists, academics or intellectuals institutionalize certain socially constructed memories at the expense of others and do so in ways that (de)legitimize specific social groups and their political identities. This act of selection mirrors prevailing power relations, inevitably advancing not just a historical narrative but also a *political culture of remembrance* that has important strategic, political and ethical implications.[19]

The concept of memory regime also allows us to confront complex epistemological challenges. The memory studies literature is often mute on the theoretical, conceptual or methodological tools that help us make sense of the practices and mechanisms by which elites control narratives of the past for identity-building processes. This is in large part because memory regimes are inherently created to naturalize their attendant identities in ways that obscure the actors and interests constituting and maintaining them. If the dictates of a memory regime are perceived as emanating from the lessons history organically teaches us, it is much simpler for its proponents to legitimate and propagate those dictates. This raises the question of how to unpack regimes of remembrance in ways that reveal their constitutive elements and their interests. Gil Eyal's rendition of expert networks, inspired by Actor-Network theory, is useful here.[20] Thinking of regimes of remembrance as networks shifts our attention away from the sort of bounded realities suggested by "collective memory." It instead redirects our curiosity toward how an ensemble of human, material and discursive devices is pieced together, how it captures and makes sense of chaotic collective memory processes, how it makes claims to legitimacy,

expertise and representativeness and ultimately how it produces stable political identities.

A memory regime's power thus lies neither in the supposedly ubiquitous social structure of collective memory nor in the power of an agent such as the state, nor in a coalition of dedicated memory entrepreneurs. As Michel Callon would put it, the power of any such element in a network—whether human (politicians, scholars, victims or perpetrators), material (archives, sites, museums) or discursive—can be traced back to its entanglement in a larger ensemble through which power and legitimacy circulates.[21] Hence, memory regimes can be fluid in their composition: No single element in the network is indispensable, although shifts have to be managed carefully to maintain its ability to conjure resonant cultural and historical frames. Granted, like any social structure, memory regimes are vulnerable to unpredictable political dynamics, generational and technological change or external shocks. Nonetheless, as *regimes* they will exhibit a rigidity and predictability markedly distinct from that of the collective memory processes of which they are an important, institutionalized part. Ultimately, a regime's resilience, durability and effectiveness will therefore be contingent on its proponents' ability to black-box the necessary choices, negotiations and exclusions that sustain a political identity, while allowing its representatives to "posture as if the past is incontestably unitary, as unitary as the social group they claim to represent and whose divisions they cannot admit."[22]

METHODS AND SOURCES

Applying an informal network analysis to diffuse collective memory processes calls for a certain parsimony, directing this analysis to some of the most obvious manifestations of claims to collective memory, so that its "workshops" may be identified. These manifestations are European Parliament resolutions on European memory, the Prague Declaration on European Memory and Conscience, mission statements of state-sponsored NMIs and official documents of the Platform of European Memory and Conscience. From these, prominent actors, institutions and material and discursive devices are traced and identified.

Interview subjects include sixteen historiographic experts and nineteen current and former members of the Platform and of NMIs from across the region. Historiographic experts were selected on the basis of scholarly, peer-reviewed publications of CEE historiographies and snowball sampling. Given the theoretical emphasis of this article, interviews are mostly used as background information to position NMIs within their national historiographic and political fields, as well as their role in transnational processes. They thus inform the article beyond what may be apparent from the included quotations.

The networks examined traverse national boundaries, hence the avoidance of a strict focus on regions or states. However, important trends emerge from national cases—most notably Poland—that hold up across the CEE region, with the Baltic countries offering an exception. These trends do not imply uniformity of CEE memory politics but rather parallel processes of institutionalization that are consequential to the formation of a transnational memory regime. The focus on Poland, the largest and most influential postcommunist country, is warranted by it hosting the earliest and largest NMI, whose model was replicated across the region. This NMI has also been pivotal to transnationalizing the antitotalitarian memory regime in EU institutions where Poland has considerable leveraging power.

To accommodate diverse trajectories, the article partially engages with the Baltic region, where memory politics have assumed greater foreign policy orientation. Given space limitations and the existence of a large literature on the subject, references to the Holocaust-centered memory regime are introduced for comparative purposes and focus mostly on questions of historiographic and mnemonic expertise.

THE EUROPEAN MEMORY DEADLOCK: STATE OF THE ART

While offering important insights, state-centric accounts of the EU memory debate tend to treat the state as a unitary actor that unproblematically embodies collective memory, neglecting the internal contestations and arrangements that lead to the formulation of foreign policy. Hence, the rise of antitotalitarianism is interpreted as an apposite correction to the EU's monolithic focus on the Holocaust: Benoît Challand argues that this focus

is symptomatic of Europe privileging a Western historical experience as a foundation for a pan-Europeanity.[23] Maria Mälksoo posits antitotalitarianism as a subaltern moment of "post-EU accession ideological decolonization" and a "human rights movement" challenging "the hegemonic mnemonic narrative of the pre-Eastern enlargement European Union with its exclusive denouncement of the Holocaust."[24] Annabelle Littoz-Monnet argues that these states also use memory to obtain symbolic acknowledgment of their full membership status in the EU.[25]

These approaches may be correct in ascertaining that *certain actors* wish to see the EU recognize their historical narratives in order to subvert a perceived subalternity toward the West. However, they also encourage the equation of collective memory with whatever mnemonic identity is propagated by actors transiently in control of states. And while much of transnational memory politics inevitably occur through the mediation of state mechanisms, statist terminology risks erasing important nuances within national memory politics: A state that consistently pursues a coherent historical narrative—i.e. Estonia or Lithuania—constitutes a very different "black box" from states such as Poland or Hungary where changes in political power have produced an "obvious lack of a coherent culture of memory."[26] Moreover, these early state-centric approaches disembed antitotalitarian narratives from their attendant political identities, identities that may be co-opting state mechanisms for partisan purposes. This leaves political cultures of remembrance, which are integral to memory regimes, relatively unexplored in favor of a narrative focus.

Recent contributions have paid far more attention to political culture, albeit without exploring their deeper institutional arrangements and partisan implications. Nikolay Koposov notes that in spite of similarities between the two regimes, namely in the fragmentation and victimization of the past, different political cultures feed the "polarity" of European memory. In his perspective, while the West's Holocaust-centered memory ambitioned to integrate Europe, encourage state repentance and counter ethnonational narratives, Eastern European countries have been busy constructing and legislating narratives of national victimhood while failing to fully integrate the memory of the Holocaust.[27] Peter Verovšek also underscores how East and West are at odds over not just memories but also over what they imply for the political present. While the West's historical imaginary warns against the perils of nationalism, the East's celebration

of 1989 underlies the importance of national sovereignty against foreign interference.[28]

In her laudable endeavor to harmonize political culture and international relations approaches, Jelena Subotić argues that postcommunist "states are anxious to be perceived as fully European by 'core' Western European states" and thus face a conundrum in the arena of memory: becoming part of the West comes with demands to face their role in the Holocaust; yet the Western Holocaust narrative implies national guilt and destabilizes their national identities, which are based on the rejection of communism. Unable to outright reject Holocaust uniqueness, these states used European arenas to perform "memory appropriation" of the Holocaust's symbolic repertoire—an argument previously made by Máté Zombory—and equate Nazism with communism to convey the latter's criminality. However, by framing postcommunist memory politics as "an integral part of the political strategy of postcommunist states," even while acknowledging the pertinence of the far right's rise to those policies, this argument places the spotlight on ontologically insecure states as the prominent explanatory factor.[29]

What most of these contributions share is the treatment of states as black boxes, glossing over the minutiae of alliances, arrangements and contingencies necessary to create the illusion of a "collective memory." This is perhaps to be expected given the empirical focus of many of the above studies on the Baltic nations where mainstream parties largely endorse official memory politics and hence these can more effectively coalesce in European arenas.[30] The presence of large ethnic Russian communities, coupled with Russia's ability to exert its soft power to edify an alternative memory regime, further facilitates the framing of collective memory in statist or national security terms.

Yet EU politics are crisscrossed by a multiplicity of stakeholders and lobbyists, reflecting considerably more than mere member states' preferences. The most significant landmarks of antitotalitarianism were erected in the European Parliament, where Baltic representatives have little weight and political factions, rather than states, are represented. Further underlining the need to relativize the weight of state security concerns in the emergence of the antitotalitarian memory regime is the failure to mention its most obvious stimulus—Russia—in the Prague Declaration (discussed below) or any of the 2009 debates or declarations.[31] In contrast,

Russia played a central role in similar debates in 2019 when Russia-EU tensions were unprecedentedly high.[32] If to this picture we add the vast literature on the long-standing domestic political instrumentalization of the past in practically all of CEE, it becomes clear that a fuller grasp of the EU memory debate calls for delving into the complex relations between domestic political identities and CEE memory regimes.[33]

Partly as a reaction to these shortcomings, instrumentalist approaches have called into question the notion that the "East-West" divide is propelled by the long-standing memory politics of postcommunist states.[34] Building from these contributions, I show that an exploration of the antitotalitarian memory regime reveals not just a left-right dimension but a complex alliance between conservative identity politics and co-opted historians that has successfully mobilized state resources for its purposes. These conservative identity politics are reflected not only in antitotalitarian narratives but in a dogged pursuit of what I call the "politics of certainty" due to their inspiration in Charles Wright Mills's "politics of truth" and their application in a context of mnemonic polarization. The politics of truth reflect the belief that "there is one social reality to be discovered, one set of facts that constitutes it and a single, unequivocally valid account of these facts."[35] They call upon the intellectual to maintain "an adequate definition of reality," finding "out as much of the truth" as possible and denying "publicly what he knows to be false."[36] However, unlike Mills's "politics of truth," the "politics of certainty" are not reflexive of an unconditional support for an intellectual class tasked with unearthing the "truth." Instead, they express the certainty of conservative political elites in domestically contested antitotalitarian narratives and their attempts to co-opt intellectuals in their legitimation.

THE ROOTS OF ANTITOTALITARIANISM

During the 1950s–60s Western-based scholars popularized the theory of totalitarianism as the dominant paradigm in assessing communist and fascist regimes, in line with Cold War era Western political discourses. The theory placed great weight on the coercive apparatuses of communist regimes, depicted as bent on institutionalizing terror through the ubiquitous activities of the secret police. By the late 1970s totalitarianism had retreated

into a marginal position in all the social sciences in Anglo-Saxon academia and a new dominant paradigm of social history had emerged that focused on the deeper socioeconomic roots of communist rule and legitimation.[37]

In the final years of the Cold War Germany witnessed a revival of totalitarian theories with a notorious historians' debate that saw liberal intellectuals attack the revisionist position.[38] However, it was the 1993 publication of Stephan Courtois' *Black Book of Communism*, an opus espousing the basic tenets of the antitotalitarian narrative, that inspired several postcommunist elites in their efforts to revitalize the theory. This was most explicit in the Baltics, where national identities were explicitly reformulated in alliance with historiographic expertise. In 2000 an Estonian version of the Black Book was published with a preface by President Lennart Meri and an additional chapter by Prime Minister (and historian) Mart Laar. Baltic States have moreover awarded state honors to renowned historians who embrace antitotalitarian narratives, such as Anne Applebaum, Robert Conquest, Stephane Courtois and Timothy Snyder. Baltic states additionally set up official commissions to investigate communist and Nazi crimes in 1998, encouraged by EU and NATO informal requirements to come to terms with the legacy of the Holocaust. The commissions persuaded several international personalities to supervise the work of local scholars. Resulting materials consisted mostly of fact collection based on archival research, doing little to subvert the dominant narrative of local victimhood and reinforcing local historians' belief in Nazi-Communist equivalence.[39] Rather than creating conditions for the emergence of autonomous, scientific work, the commissions strengthened a preexisting national perspective "while seeking the international (Western) stamp of approval."[40]

The Baltic experience proved instructive in how postcommunist elites can employ historiographic communities as sources of expertise and providers of "truth" through archival research.[41] Yet elsewhere antitotalitarian narratives were wedded to domestic politics, which can be partly traced back to communist-era dissident debates. Often social scientists by formation, dissident communities set the basis for postcommunist conservative political identities by imbuing anticommunist struggles with totalitarian terminology. At the time, the need to counter state propaganda glossed over significant divisions between liberal dissidents, who advocated human rights, consensual politics and civic patriotism, and conservative dissidents who privileged nation-centric narratives to lure broader sectors

of society. For both groups, totalitarian terminology helped mobilize the population via binary oppositions such as "us" vs. "them" and "truth" vs. "lies," although liberal dissidents deployed these with activist, rather than intellectual intent.[42]

The incompatibilities between conservative and liberal dissident renditions of totalitarianism would come to the fore in postcommunist politics, illustrating the partisan, rather than consensual nature of emerging memory regimes. The conservative interpretation morphed into an antitotalitarian political identity that envisioned "national memory" as a reservoir of resistance. In contrast, liberal dissidents were quick to show discomfort with the exculpatory tendencies of the ascendant memory regime. Adam Michnik argued that in Poland the "now widely held view that communism was nothing but the work of Soviet agents makes it impossible to understand the paths that people took to communism, the attractions of Communist ideology."[43] In a dialogue with Michnik, Czechoslovak dissident-turned-President Václav Havel made a similar call for a "politics of regret": "We are all in this together—those who directly, to a greater or lesser degree, created this regime, those who accepted it in silence and also all of us who subconsciously became accustomed to it."[44]

Yet (liberal-)conservative politicians found the dichotomizing categories of antitotalitarianism useful in struggles against internal and external opposition. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, former Polish Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński and former Romanian President Traian Băsescu effectively drove "a sharp line between themselves" and competitors in terms of their ability to provide truthful accounts of the past, believing, in spite of domestic contestation, that such accounts can or should "become the foundation of social and political life."[45] These "politics of certainty" responded partly to the return of former communist parties to power in the mid-1990s, most significantly in Poland and Hungary. Having been ousted in the first democratic elections, their quick reemergence convinced conservative sectors that the 1989 revolutions remained "unfinished" since the negotiated transitions had allowed a class of communist apparatchiks to retain power.[46] Conservatives deemed this resilient "communist" clique, operating from key positions in politics, media, the economy and the judiciary, responsible for hijacking democratization, often in cooperation with liberal intellectuals. In Poland the claim that the systemic change had been rigged by a secretive communist-liberal *Układ* (deal) has been

central to the political discourse of the Law and Justice party (PiS) since the campaign that made Kaczynski prime minister in 2006. "Restoring the truth about the past" became Kaczynski's quintessential rallying cry, blaming Poland's ills on "two centers of manipulation," the "communists" and former liberal dissidents who "were previously linked to communism via their families."[47]

The "politics of certainty" represented an attempt to reveal alleged continuities between former and current elites for domestic political purposes but also reflected a conservative frustration with the failures of lustration, the process of vetting former communist officials and collaborators occupying public posts. As envisioned by antitotalitarian narratives, lustration had been predicated on a sharp distinction between victims and perpetrators but invariably stumbled upon the recalcitrant blurriness of the social categories in which it operated: pervasive collaboration and dubious political trajectories of once unsuspected dissidents, most notably former Polish President/dissident Lech Wałęsa.[48] Since no party was impervious to collaboration with the former regime, and since the effects of lustration would eventually fade with generational change, symbolic alternatives gained traction. The diffusion of an official, scientifically sanctioned memory regime offered precisely such an alternative, heralding an electorally advantageous, long-term symbolic dominance over the left.

Institutionalizing the antitotalitarian memory regime: NMIs and the co-optation of historiography

The antitotalitarian memory regime took institutional shape in the form of formally state-supported NMIs which, in the context of growing popular fatigue with political elites' memory wars, offer conservatives the advantage of externalizing memory politics onto a seemingly scholarly body. But scholarly co-optation had to contend with CEE's diverse historiographic fields.

With the collapse of state socialism, the region's historiography saw an upsurge of a scholarship dedicated to an alleged ideology-free historical "truth." Partly, this resulted from decades of limited contact with Western academics and methodologies.[49] However, the totalitarian paradigm remained an exception, having been carried over by many dissidents. With the sudden opening of several archival sources containing descriptions of

the repressive communist apparatus, the theory found renewed legitimacy. Hence most CEE historians of communism still followed some tenets of totalitarian theory well into the 2000s, even if implicitly: a sharp distinction between state and society and a depiction of communism as alien to national traditions.[50]

But partial receptiveness to totalitarian theory did not automatically translate into conservative identity politics. Poland and Hungary saw important continuities with communist-era historiographic institutions, as these had been relatively lively and autonomous before 1989. In socialist Poland all periods except recent history were depoliticized and there was considerable methodological freedom and contacts with the West. As elsewhere in CEE, regime change brought innovation, but the historiography of communism saw a more thematic than methodological influx.[51] Nonetheless, Poland became home to the most diverse and decentralized historiographic scene, with many scholars establishing networks with English-, German- and French-speaking scholars.[52] The Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences has been another source of innovation, endorsing social and cultural history and promoting the rise of several prominent younger scholars.[53]

Yet Poland was also a regional trend-setter for state-sponsored antitotalitarian historiography, being home to the principal blueprint for NMIs, the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN). The process of setting up the institute offers an early indication that more than a mere historical research institution was at stake. Its founding act was voted by a coalition of former dissident forces in parliament after heated discussions with opponents on the left. A blurring of lines between memory and history is evident in its mission statement, which calls for the study of "patriotic traditions of the Polish Nation's struggles with its occupants" and "the preservation of remembrance" of its victims, as well as a prosecutorial remit to investigate and research the communist period and its crimes.

NMIs emerge around legislative elections and invariably with the support of conservative forces, witness to a political culture that envisions memory battles as a legitimate arena of party politics. Widely perceived by socialist parties as electoral tools against them, they are unable to shut them down and even attempts at reducing their funding lead to accusations of hiding "a dark past."[54] The IPN model inspires the appearance of similar NMIs: the Nation's Memory Institute in Slovakia (2002), the

Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes in Romania (2005), the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes in the Czech Republic (2007) and Slovenia's Study Centre for National Reconciliation (2008). More recently, the Hungarian government established the Committee of National Remembrance (2013) and the Veritas Institute (2014), which joined the preexisting House of Terror museum, established in 2002 ahead of an election that Orbán would lose to the socialists.

The "politics of certainty" are similarly palpable in NMIs' attempts to establish scientifically sanctioned, official historical narratives via generous allocations in the state budget. As with all NMIs, IPN's research sought as wide a target as possible, signaling its intent to ensure societal resonance for antitotalitarian narratives. Research results are propagated by the IPN's Public Education Office, which includes 280 employees in Warsaw plus eighteen regional branch offices that guarantee constant media attention. Its multiple activities pay particular attention to targeting the youth. Besides producing all manner of scientific and lay publications, IPN organizes lectures, debates and traveling street exhibits, signs agreements for its historians to contribute articles to various media, offers training, textbooks and multimedia materials for schoolteachers, founds "historical clubs" and organizes outdoor events.[55]

NMIs rely predominantly on a contingent of scholars that Michael Kopeček denominates as "therapeutic historians," and Gábor Gyáni as "conservative national historians."[56] Therapeutic historians are oriented toward their perceived constituency—the nation and the citizenry—rather than toward generating historical knowledge based on "scientific cognitive values." They only occasionally publish in scholarly venues, being far more concerned with the production of non-scholarly books, journals and magazines.[57] Dariusz Stola and Gyáni note that such historians are fundamentally engaged in symbolic politics, attempting to stir controversy around topics connected to memory while building an ideological, partisan profile in the public sphere.[58] In spite of a self-professed commitment to positivism and a belief in archives "speaking for themselves," they ultimately stand outside a "certain professional community that respects the same standards, knows the evidence, knows how to use it, how to tackle various types of theoretical and methodological challenges and how to integrate in international professional networks."[59] But given their preference for public education activities over scholarship, as well as media presence, such

criticisms have limited effect on the legitimacy of NMI historians among a public far removed from scholarly debates.

NMIs also co-opt unaligned and often younger historians. With post-communist academic institutions generally underfunded, institutions such as the IPN, which has developed into a veritable ministry of history with a budget four times that of the Polish Academy of Sciences, offer attractive career paths.[60] In the late 2000s the IPN could offer young researchers 30 percent higher pay than a comparable position in a Polish university, more prospects for upward mobility, more opportunities to publish as well as media visibility, albeit not necessarily on subjects of their choice.[61] Finally, IPN also hosts highly recognized scholars like Pawel Machciewicz, Andrzej Paczkowski or Krzysztof Persak, who fought against the institute's politicization while attempting to confront Poland's role in the Holocaust.

Scientific legitimation for the antitotalitarian memory regime is also achieved by granting NMI historians privileged access to an indisputable material manifestation of communist repression: the archives of the secret police. Such access boosts historians' certainty in their scientific author-ity and creates further incentives to research the extensively documented practices of the communist repressive apparatus, inevitably advancing a central tenet of totalitarian theory: that state-driven repression is the defining feature of communist rule and persistence. This step is also not unlike European Economic Community (EEC) efforts to open World War II-related archival sources in the 1970s and European Commission archives in 1984 to give material legitimation to the rising discipline of European integration.[62]

The centrality of secret police files (eighty km of archival material) to the IPN's activities is palpable in the institution's extensive output. Due to its large budget, it has flooded the market of recent history with large, subsidized volumes consisting mostly of archival materials. Some volumes focus on topics of marginal public or scholarly interest, indicat-ing institutional incentives to show measurable results in annual reports that are more typical of large, centralized, communist-era bureaucracies.[63]

Such mechanisms of scholarly co-optation may have taken cues from EC efforts to promote a European identity in the 1970s. Neverthe-less, there are important differences in political culture of remembrance between the two memory regimes. The modalities of historiographic engagement promoted by the European Commission were decentralized

and took place in what some have categorized as "weak" scholarly fields that tended toward depoliticization.[64] While universities and scholars were indeed agents of diffusion for "pro-European" values, such efforts privileged law and economics over historiography.[65] Rather than establishing a hierarchical institution with a clear ideological and conceptual preference, the European Commission promoted various forms of networking and exchange, such as the Liaison Committee of Historians in 1982, which helped establish the History of European Integration as a sub-discipline of history.[66] The liaison gradually affirmed its independence and now operates without the commission's support, indicating the transition of historiography from "more normative origins with substantial EU funding to the more recent professionalization … and declining interest by EU institutions."[67] The depoliticization of historiography has also coincided with a rise in EU attempts to promote the memory of the Holocaust. This separation of memory and historiography offers a stark contrast to its deliberate blurring in NMIs.

FROM POLITICIZATION TO EUROPEANIZATION

NMI governing boards are appointed by political rather than scholarly bodies, making them vulnerable to co-optation. The evolution of the IPN's research agenda offers a compelling example of long-term politicization. During its first mandate (1999–2005) its research axes included the "extermination of Jews in Polish territory," leading to fresh research on the thorny issue of the Jedwabne pogrom. Allaying initial fears of politicization and earning much public and scientific praise, IPN confirmed the "decisive role" of some forty locals and the passivity of the rest of the town's population in the murder of hundreds of local Jews. However, Kaczyński's 2005 electoral victory shifted the institute's priorities to the study of Poland's glorious past, martyrdom and anticommunist resistance, with the aforementioned research axis replaced by an injunction to investigate "Poles who saved Jews during World War II."[68] The shift represented a move away from scholarly autonomy: ten days after the nationalist-conservative director Janusz Kurtyka (2005–10) took office, Machcewicz, until then head of the Bureau of Public Education, resigned citing concerns over

the promotion of historians willing to pursue PiS's political agenda at the expense of maintaining academic standards.[69]

Under Kurtyka the IPN became a source of diffusion for antitotalitarian narratives, publishing a stunning 650 books privileging a chronical and factual style over context and comparison.[70] The IPN's research relied almost exclusively on secret police archives, without problematizing either their partial insights or intelligence-gathering incentives to exaggerate and manipulate facts. Following attempts at depoliticization under Łukasz Kamiński (2011–16), the appointment of nationalist Jarosław Szarek was preceded by his dismissal of the "politics of regret": Szarek rejected the IPN's previous conclusions on Jedwabne and claimed that the massacre had been perpetrated by Germans who had coerced a few Poles.[71]

In the latest promotion of the "politics of certainty," the PiS-controlled parliament approved in 2018 the controversial "Holocaust law." An amendment to the act establishing the IPN, the law makes claims of Polish co-responsibility for the Holocaust punishable by fines after civil litigation and seeks to defend the "good name of the Polish nation" against the usage of the term "Polish concentration camps."[72] Government official Stanislaw Żaryn claimed that it was necessary to reject "any claims suggesting" Poland "was implicated in the Holocaust," while accusing Germany of "doing its utmost to 'denationalize' its WWII-era wrongs" with methods reminiscent of "Russian propaganda."[73] Critics invoked the "politics of regret" to reproach what they saw as an attempt to obscure Poles' participation in the extermination of Jews.[74] Historians from the new Polish school of Holocaust history, which has produced internationally acclaimed research on Polish involvement in the Holocaust, rejected the law as a governmental attempt to regulate historical truth.[75]

The episode underlines how, in spite of its promotion as a regional collective memory in European arenas, the antitotalitarian memory regime remains an object of political contestation at home. In what follows, I argue that it is precisely because of resistance to their conservative identity politics and not as a result of societal consensus that an antitotalitarian network sought broader, European legitimacy by linking national, antitotalitarian memory regimes to an overarching transnational expert network. The diffusion of NMIs therefore created the institutional backbone for a transnational memory regime linking antitotalitarian narratives, conservative political elites, militant historiographic communities and communist-era

archives to create the semblance of a regionally consensual, scientifically validated collective memory.

As the earliest and largest NMI, the IPN played a pivotal role in deepening the expert networks and archival sources of legitimacy for antitotalitarian memory regimes throughout CEE. IPN hosted several study visits and networking events for politicians and historians from across the region, many of whom worked in archival institutions that later went on to morph into NMIs. Thus, the 2005 conference "The Communist Security Apparatus in East Central Europe 1944/45 to 1989" gathered 350 participants from across CEE in the IPN's Warsaw headquarters. Its aims were to set a common research agenda, facilitate cooperation between institutes responsible for security service files and raise public awareness of secret police activities during communism. Like other conferences that followed it, the talks in Warsaw were not strictly academic but were accompanied by screenings and exhibitions, with several institutes contributing their own exhibits and materials on communist-era secret police. Personal contacts often led to formalized bilateral agreements between NMIs and archival institutions in the region, some of which became NMIs. The Warsaw conference also ultimately led to the creation of the European Network of Official Authorities in Charge of the Secret Police Files in 2008, where many NMIs and archival institutions found a platform to deepen their expert network, namely by providing mutual access to files, promoting joint research and creating a knowledge pool of public education practices.[76]

The gradual emergence of a transnational, antitotalitarian memory regime offered NMIs and their political backers novel sources of legitimacy. First, Europeanization helped NMIs elaborate a "simplified antitotalitarian framework" that restrains internecine nationalistic narratives, since any meaningful excavation of the past beyond a simplified consensus would "immediately lead them to compete against each other."[77] Conservative elites could subsequently "provincialize" socialist and liberal resistance to their narratives at home by pointing to a growing regional consensus. Second, transnational cooperation boosts the antitotalitarian narrative's legitimacy by granting NMI historians privileged access to additional archival sources, sources allegedly revealing the "true" nature of communism.

In sum, European integration not only offered the possibility for new collective memories from CEE states to emerge and demand recognition

but also represented an extraordinary opportunity to create scientific and symbolic legitimacy for conservative identity politics. However, the latter had to grapple with the challenges posed by the EU's Holocaust-centered memory regime.

CHALLENGING THE WEST'S "POLITICS OF REGRET"

The first steps toward a common European memory consisted in building a European identity through documents such as the 1950 Schuman Declaration and the 1973 Declaration of European Identity, both of which underscored the need for member states to move beyond past enmities toward common values. The emphasis was not on narrative uniformity but on a compromise between cultural diversity and unity in the values of representative democracy and the rule of law, rejecting any equation of *demos* with *ethnos*.[78]

By the twenty-first century, the European Commission had institutionalized a Holocaust-centered memory regime not through history writing but via commemorations, declarations, museums and official sites. First, on January 27, 2005, the European Parliament approved a resolution on remembrance of the Holocaust, anti-Semitism and racism, paying heed to the fact that several member states celebrated Holocaust Memorial Day on that date. Second, in 2006 the EU created the European Citizenship program, whose Action 4, "Active European Remembrance," is largely dedicated to the preservation of Holocaust-related sites and archives. While the 2005 declaration upholds Holocaust uniqueness, the EU has encouraged its invocation in denouncing grievous crimes, presenting it "both as an event unlike any other, but also as the measure by which Europeans are called upon to respond to other events that echo, but can never be the same as, the Holocaust itself."[79] Again, the EU emphasized the values we draw from historical lessons, rather than attempting to impose broad narrative consensus.

The picture is more complex within EU member states, which in the first postwar decades neatly externalized local complicity with the Holocaust.[80] The 1960s witnessed a new generation of Germans accusing their parents of complicity with Nazism, sowing the seeds for a new "politics of regret."[81] After 1989, when anticommunist Cold War imperatives were

set aside, multiple national leaders in Western Europe assumed collective responsibility for past wrongs and organized public acts of apology. Countries such as Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Italy, Sweden and Switzerland all witnessed public debates that confronted collaboration with Nazi rule. The approval of laws protecting the memory of Nazi crimes in many of these countries similarly helped promote the Shoah as the official memory of the EU.[82]

However, the 2008 European Parliament proclamation of August 23 as the European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism dealt a blow to the "politics of regret." August 23 marks the day of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and implies the equal gravity of Nazism and communism. The proclamation fulfilled one of the objectives of the Prague Declaration on European Conscience and Communism, published earlier that year. It remains the most explicit ideological exposition of antitotalitarian narratives, describing communist and Nazi ideologies as inseparable from the extermination and deportation of "whole nations and groups of population."

It would be tempting to take the declaration's implicit claim to speak for the region's collective memory for granted, but by tracing back its promoters an altogether different picture emerges. Among the CEE political and scholarly elites signing it, we find prominent conservative politicians such as MEPs Vytautas Landsbergis (Lithuania), Jana Hybášková (Czech Republic) and László Tőkés (Romania), as well as numerous heads of NMIs. The text of the declaration reveals its rejection of the "politics of regret." There are no calls for national introspection for Nazi or communist crimes, but several subtle indictments against the West's indifference to the crimes of communism, which are neatly externalized.

The conservative "politics of certainty" surface in the declaration's policy prescriptions. The text calls for a single, overarching historical truth, to be established in cooperation with scholarly communities, even though that truth seems to be preemptively known to the signatories. Specifically, it blurs history and memory by arguing the "Communist past of Europe must be dealt with thoroughly both in the academy and among the general public," warning that "the ultimate reconciliation of all European peoples is not possible without a concentrated and in-depth effort to establish the truth and to restore the memory." It also calls for an "adjustment and overhaul of European history textbooks so that children

could learn and be warned about Communism and its crimes in the same way as they have been taught to assess the Nazi crimes." The declaration demands political support for NMIs through the creation of "an Institute of European Memory and Conscience" which would act as "a European research institute for totalitarianism studies, developing scientific and educational projects and providing support to networking of national research institutes specializing in the subject of totalitarian experience."[83]

The EU's politics of historiography offer a stark contrast. The EEC/EU developed institutional and informal mechanisms to involve multiple stakeholders, without explicitly tying historiography to memory building. Granted, this approach delivers consistent historical narratives by promoting Holocaust uniqueness and European unity as antidotes to continental warfare. But over time the European Commission, in line with developments in Western Europe, opted not to set strict research orientations, weary of potential accusations of political encroachment on an increasingly pluralized and professionalized academic community.[84] Instead, it offered incentives for critical engagement with its favored conceptual apparatus and research themes, namely, via financing operational and publishing costs, and rewarding sympathetic historians with (generally modest) grants, networking opportunities and visibility.[85]

But EU membership has allowed the "politics of certainty" to gradually seep in. In 2008 the EU presidency went for the first time to a postcommunist country, Slovenia, then under a right-leaning government. The presidency hosted the hearing "Crimes Committed by Totalitarian Regimes" that brought together conservative MEPs and historians from NMIs. Both groups presented articles that delved into topics of communist repression and victimhood within a strictly national framework, in spite of the hearing's declared comparative ambitions. Notably, Landsbergis's article lambasted the EU's "hypocrisy" and called for it to adopt "a more true and moral judgement of the greatest criminal tragedies of the 20th century."[86] In contrast, French center-right politician and European Commission Vice-President Jacques Barrot made an opening statement indirectly emphasizing the difference between the EU's consensus-based "politics of regret" and the unresolved debates about communism in CEE: "All countries … must find their own way of coming to terms with their past … and of achieving reconciliation. The EU cannot do this for them." Barrot went on to underscore the EU's lack of "authority to act in this area" and

its role as a facilitator "by encouraging discussion, fostering the sharing of experience and best practice."[87]

Crucially, Barrot took issue not with the antitotalitarian narrative but with the antitotalitarian regime's political culture of remembrance. The 2009 EP resolution on European conscience and totalitarianism offers further evidence of a network driven by partisan political identities bent on grafting historiography to memory. A first motion, spearheaded by the European People's Party, demanded the joint condemnation of Nazism and communism as well as a reference to the Prague Declaration, of which it repeats several proclamations verbatim. The motion moreover urged "all post-Communist states to carry out a moral and political assessment of their recent past and to provide the resources needed for academic research and the establishment of facts," while also calling for the establishment of a Platform of European Memory and Conscience (henceforth Platform) "which would provide support for networking and cooperation among national research institutes specializing in the subject of totalitarian history."[88]

Rather than engaging in a narrative discussion, the socialists rejected the draft's "politics of certainty." They argued that "official political interpretations of historical facts should not be imposed by means of majority decisions of parliaments" and that "no political body or political party has a monopoly on interpreting history and such bodies and parties cannot claim to be objective."[89] The final compromise would feature the above warnings against the instrumentalization of history but also a commitment to support the establishment of the Platform.[90]

Both the compromise and the discussion preceding it show that the struggle to redefine the EU's memory regime mobilizes not states but conservative political identities legitimized by larger networks of historiographic expertise. They also demonstrate that several actors—not restricted to the West—reject the antitotalitarian memory regime on the basis of its "politics of certainty" rather than its narratives. The resolution nevertheless signals a turning point in favor of the antitotalitarian memory regime, which begins to assume concrete institutional contours via the coordinated initiatives of (1) several EU presidencies; (2) an informal MEP group; (3) the Platform:

1. EU Council presidencies of CEE countries made full use of their agenda-setting prerogatives, organizing public hearings and conferences

to give momentum to antitotalitarian memory politics: events titled "Crimes Committed by Totalitarian Regimes" (Slovenian Presidency, 2008); "European Conscience and Crimes of Totalitarian Communism: 20 Years After" (Czech Presidency, 2009); "What do Young Europeans know about Totalitarianisms?" (Hungarian Presidency, 2009); and "Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Totalitarian Regimes" (Polish Presidency, 2011) all helped advance antitotalitarian narratives in seemingly state-led initiatives. However, these events invariably occurred under EU presidencies coordinated by conservative governments and included the presence of several leaders and historians of NMIs while failing to involve CEE scholars from autonomous research centers or universities.

2. In 2010, forty MEPs, overwhelmingly affiliated with postcommunist conservatism, established the informal group Reconciliation of European Histories. Their declared intent was to consolidate different historical narratives "into a united European memory of the past" and have Europe acknowledge postcommunist "captive nations" as having been excluded from "50 years of our true history."[91] MEPs from this group have worked in tandem with NMI leaderships to draft, promote and approve relevant EP declarations.

3. The Reconciliation Group relies on the scholarly expertise of the Platform, an umbrella organization of sixty-three organizations from twenty (mostly CEE) countries. NMIs dominate its activities and agenda, but it also welcomes foundations as well as victim and diaspora associations. The Platform has been funded by an international donor organization that is financed by the Visegrad states—the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia—and which promotes closer cooperation between non-governmental organizations within them, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Czech and Hungarian governments. It became a pivot in the articulation of MEP demands and at initiatives of EU presidencies eager for ideas to fill their agendas. The Platform thus became, in the words of its former managing director, "their think tank … their scholars, their legitimation for their political demands."[92]

The Platform also allows NMIs to network and exchange best practices—namely in secondary school teaching or the declassification of archives—and pool resources for EU funding applications, such as for the traveling exhibit "Totalitarianism in Europe: Fascism—Nazism—Communism" (2012–present). The initiative pooled photographs and documents

from NMI archives and successfully created a semblance of regional consensus by bringing the exhibit to museums, memorials, foundations, city halls, parliaments, cultural centers and universities across Europe. Underscoring its commitment to the "politics of certainty," the Platform has also relinquished potential alliances with organizations that share an interest in developing a European discourse on communism but are otherwise committed to the "politics of regret." After discussions with Platform leaders, representatives of the Federal Foundation for the Reappraisal of the SED (East German) Dictatorship were no longer invited to discussions following their criticism of the Platform's politicized and nonconsensual approach to history.[93] NMIs also struggled to obtain funding from the Active European Remembrance Fund, which largely relied on preexisting networks of organizations dedicated to advancing the frame of Holocaust uniqueness.[94] The picture is shifting, but with funding schemes privileging transnational projects, NMIs have often failed to secure partnerships with Western organizations.

EASTWARD SHIFT

Recent memory battles in the EU suggest an eastward shift away from the "politics of regret" and toward the political encroachment of scholarly autonomy characteristic of the "politics of certainty." The discussions preceding the inauguration of the House of European History in Brussels in 2017 are a case in point. The EP initially relied on the legitimacy afforded by a team of curators and an Academic Committee of historians. However, the EP was subjected to active lobbying from CEE MEPs to include Stalinism alongside National Socialism as part of Europe's totalitarian heritage. As a result, the final choice of experts echoed regional and ideological power balances, rather than expertise in the history of European integration. While in the final display earlier periods are dominated by left-wing historiographic paradigms highlighting modernization, nationalism, class conflict and colonialism, the post-1945 period, narrated by a team of curators and an academic committee dominated by East-Central Europeans, produced systematic comparisons between Nazism and Stalinism.[95] Contrary to the tenets of the "politics of regret," Europeans are overwhelmingly cast as victims, with even the German people defined in opposition to an abstract,

oppressive Nazi regime. The narrative is nuanced by some references to Holocaust uniqueness—if only in its industrial scale—and to differences between Stalinist and Nazi ideologies.[96] However, the Platform accused the House of European History of creating an "ideological, Neo-Marxist exhibition" and its president also took issue with its allegedly antinational culture of remembrance:

> the general impression is that the past is something wrong, dark and our role is to build a bright future and of course we are dedicated to note the dark points, of course we should remember, but there also parts of history we should be proud of ... I felt it was a kind of political construction … to stress how important it is to abandon nation states to create a new Europe.[97]

The deterioration of EU-Russia relations, at an all-time low since the invasion of Ukraine, has acted as an additional catalyst for this eastward shift. Russia sparked controversy in CEE by approving a memory law in 2014 that legitimizes the postwar Soviet occupation of eastern Europe and reacted angrily to recent attempts to remove Soviet war memorials in the Baltics, the Czech Republic and Poland.[98] When in 2019 the topic of European memory returned to the EP through the Polish-led resolution "on the importance of European Remembrance for the future of Europe," the antitotalitarian memory regime could lean on this novel geopolitical context.[99] Unlike the 2009 resolution, the 2019 resolution does not warn against the instrumentalization of history and instead references the Prague Declaration, a point conservative MEPs had attempted but failed to push through in 2009. The resolution also warns against the threat of Russian disinformation in historiographic disputes while stating that the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact "paved the way for the outbreak of the Second World War," a claim hitherto not explicitly made in EP declarations. References to the pact contrast with silence over contemporaneous events that would imply a "politics of regret," such as the 1938 Munich agreement, by which Western powers ceded parts of Czechoslovakia in an attempt to appease Hitler. The Russian reaction was swift and articulated from the highest echelons of power: Russian President Vladimir Putin accused Poland of having signed a comparable nonaggression pact with Hitler in 1934, of having participated in the partitioning of Czechoslovakia in 1938 and, aware of Poland's 2018 Holocaust law, of anti-Semitism. Through

its direct interpellation of the Polish state, Putin sparked a wave of cross-partisan indignation in Poland.[100]

CONCLUSION

An important dimension of the study of memory politics involves interrogating how societal processes of collective memory, characterized by struggle, contestation and instability, are institutionalized into a hard identity that projects sameness, permanence and homogeneity—a memory regime. This article has argued that the concept of collective memory is often misused as equivalent to memory regime, reifying the latter as emerging from a quasi-organic need to acknowledge the shared historical experience of a society. This mystification of collective memory thus paints a broad brush across the complex power and legitimation mechanisms sustaining memory regimes. The latter is better defined as an institutional and expert ensemble linking agencies and material and discursive devices, a definition that helps discern the wider political implications and political identities coproduced in and through collective memory processes. The usefulness of this distinction was illustrated via an analysis of the challenge to the EU memory divide as driven by an antitotalitarian memory regime, leading to three main conclusions:

First, the reification of collective memory leads to a treatment of the EU memory divide as one pitting a Western against an Eastern collective memory, with the latter actively promoted by postcommunist states eager to improve their international stature through symbolic recognition. In contrast, the application of the memory regime concept complicates the picture, revealing not only a left-right dimension, but also a conservative political identity project that links political elites, antitotalitarian narratives, therapeutic historians and archival sources from the repressive political apparatus of communist states. While this coalition often avails itself of state instruments, its source of power lies in its ability to create European and scientific legitimacy for antitotalitarian narratives by fomenting transnational networks of historians and archives. This expert network powerfully upholds the semblance of a neglected but regional collective memory, which political elites can then deploy to delegitimize domestic opponents: EU resolutions on totalitarianism have been invoked

in attempts to rehabilitate World War II-era ultranationalist movements, to criticize governmental inaction in the prosecution of communist crimes or to counter ethnic Russians' pro-Soviet memory regime in the Baltics.[101] In sum, the concept of memory regime points to the EU memory debate as an extension of domestic political competition onto European arenas with the purpose of accruing new sources of legitimacy for conservative political identity projects.

Second, the concept of memory regimes offers a more convincing explanation for differences in European political cultures of remembrance. The antitotalitarian memory regime has been termed populist or detached from liberal views of the past.[102] I instead suggested the concept of "politics of certainty" to underscore the centrality of historiographic co-optation to this particular political culture. This choice is precisely the result of applying the concept of memory regime, which reveals a family of transnationally aligned NMIs with origins in domestic political competition and engages in the co-optation of historiographic communities to scientifically validate predetermined narratives. In sum, if the West's "politics of regret" reflected a growing weariness of accusations of politicizing history and a rejection of the EU's role as an ultimate historical arbiter beyond facts supported by broad political and historiographic consensus, the "politics of certainty" advocate a regulatory role for the state, tasking NMIs with enunciating an official historiography of communism that is contested by political and scholarly communities alike.

Third, the focus on political cultures also shows an "eastward" shift in EU memory politics toward the "politics of certainty." This is palpable in the imposition of regional power balances on expert appointments to the House of European History, and glaring in the 2019 EP resolution, with its abandonment of warnings against politicizing history. The growing mnemonic and geopolitical tensions between Russia and the EU will likely further shift the gravitational center of EU memory politics toward antitotalitarian narratives.

These conclusions confirm the need to complement, rather than replace, state-centric approaches with instrumentalist ones that privilege domestic factors but which often do not reveal the larger power configurations in which they operate. State-centric accounts offer plausible descriptions of Baltic foreign policy in the memory sphere but cannot explain the origins of antitotalitarian narratives in the majority of CEE,

where a vast literature has demonstrated their linkage to domestic political elites concerned with the presence of former communists in the higher echelons of power. While instrumentalist accounts rightly point out this relevant left-right dimension, the memory regimes approach shows that precisely because of domestic political contestation and a precarious scholarly standing, political and scholarly promoters of antitotalitarian narratives have worked hard to institutionalize a pan-European memory regime that obscures their representativeness and legitimacy deficits. These groups and individuals nevertheless allied themselves with state actors who have supported them more or less consistently, whether Baltic states or friendly EU presidencies. Hence, both state-centric and instrumentalist perspectives need to remain in constant dialogue rather than grow in isolation, paying due attention to the more encompassing social forces in which they operate.

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