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 imagina-
tion of the Past is weak; and wee lose (for example) of Cities wee have
seen, many particular Streets; and of Actions, many particular Circum-
stances. This decaying sense, when wee would express the thing itseif,
(I mean fancy itseife,., 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
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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.
The future of the transatlantic relationship is rarely out of the headlines in Europe or North America. Despite the closeness, the relationship faces as it has always done new and familiar challenges. This report offers views on the future of transatlantic relations from scholars who are at the start of their careers, with European and US perspectives on what the future holds in defence, economics, values, and relations with emerging powers.