

*Routledge Studies in Modern European History*

# 1989 AND THE WEST

WESTERN EUROPE SINCE  
THE END OF THE COLD WAR

Edited by  
Eleni Braat and Pepijn Corduwener



# 1989 and the West

Back in 1989, many anticipated that the end of the Cold War would usher in the 'end of history' characterized by the victory of democracy and capitalism. At the thirtieth anniversary of this momentous event, this book challenges this assumption. It studies the most recent era of contemporary European history in order to analyse the impact, consequences and legacy of the end of the Cold War for Western Europe. Bringing together leading scholars on the topic, the volume answers the question of how the end of the Cold War has affected Western Europe and reveals how it accelerated and reinforced processes that shaped the fragile (geo-)political and economic order of the continent today.

In four thematic sections, the book analyses the changing position of Germany in Europe; studies the transformation of neoliberal capitalism; answers the question how Western Europe faced the geopolitical challenges after the Berlin Wall came down; and investigates the crisis of representative democracy. As such, the book provides a comprehensive and novel historical perspective on Europe since the late 1980s.

**Eleni Braat and Pepijn Corduener** are Assistant Professors in History at Utrecht University, the Netherlands.

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*Edited by Eleni Braat and Pepijn Corduwener*

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of the Cold War

**Edited by Eleni Braat and  
Pepijn Corduwener**

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# Preface

Even in the midst of the tumultuous events of the year, it was obvious that 2016 would go into the books as a watershed in the contemporary history of the West. The Brexit referendum result and the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States not only had steep consequences for national politics in London and Washington, they also raised concerns in European capitals about the viability of European integration, put the future of NATO at the top of the agenda, led to alarmist concerns about the state of representative democracy, and were seen, at least by some, as the turning of the tide of neoliberal global capitalism. In short, these events put into jeopardy the post-1989 political and economic order that the West had advanced and that had seemingly won the Cold War. The ‘end of history,’ declared after the West had ‘won’ the Cold War, seemed definitely over.

Because so few people had predicted the events of that year, it quickly raised the question of what had made them possible. We, as editors of this volume, saw the events of 2016 as a motivation to look again at the aftermath and impact of the end of the Cold War in the West. Our aim has been to understand how the West could have gone from the victory narrative of the 1990s to the ‘return of history’ of the last few years, and how these two phases are related. It has been our conviction that a long-term historical perspective that looks beyond daily news headlines is essential to getting a grip on the multiple crises that are affecting Western Europe at the moment. We also believe that as these crises are multifaceted, they have multiple histories that all deserve to be taken into account, and that we should widely consider different themes, countries, and perspectives in our scholarly investigations.

These convictions underpin this book and have guided this research project, which we started three years ago, into the most recent epoch of Western Europe’s history. Yet this project has not been merely our own: many others have shared the efforts. Now that the project is complete, it is a pleasure to thank these people here.

This study into the legacy of the end of the Cold War developed as a workshop in Utrecht, the Netherlands, in April 2017. Scholars from all over Europe and the United States joined there in a cordial and inspiring atmosphere to talk about the position of Germany in Europe, geopolitical changes of the post-1989 era, the crisis of democracy, and developments in capitalism. We would like to take this opportunity to thank again all the participants of the workshop for their



thought-provoking debates and presentations, which were a great stimulus in further developing the ideas for this book. We are also deeply indebted to Utrecht University's Faculty of Humanities and History Department for their financial support, which enabled the convening of the workshop. The efforts of José van Aelst, Maarten Prak, Oscar Gelderblom, Tom Gerritsen, and Beatrice de Graaf have been decisive in this regard, and without them the workshop would not have been possible.

The book has been a collaborative effort, not just by all the authors involved, but also by a few other people who have been of key importance in finalising the manuscript. We would like to thank Annelien Zaal, who worked on the project as a student intern, and her supervisor, Leen Dorsman. We also would like to thank Annefloor Robijn, who has been of great help at the latest stage in making the index. Special thanks go to Puck Fletcher, who has done an incredibly good, flexible, and quick job as our copy-editor. Many thanks, finally, to Robert Langham, Dana Moss, and the Routledge team for their faith in the project and their continuing support.

Eleni Braat and Pepijn Corduwener

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# Introduction

## 1989 and the West: revisiting the Cold War victory narrative

*Eleni Braat and Pepijn Corduwener*

### **Toward a history of Western Europe since the end of the Cold War**

‘Now we are in a situation in which what belongs together will grow back together,’ the former chancellor of West Germany, Willy Brandt, said on November 10, 1989, the day after the Berlin Wall came down. His remarks naturally referred in the first place to the prospect of a unified Germany that had suddenly opened up. Yet in the context of the chain of remarkable events of the previous years—the announcement of perestroika, the election victory of Solidarity in Poland, the ‘Pan-European Picnic’ on the Austrian–Hungarian border—his words also captured the sentiment of the dawn of a new era that many felt at the time. An era in which not only Germany, but Europe as a whole, could suddenly ‘grow back together’ seemed to have begun.

While often portrayed in terms of a ‘unification,’ few people at the time expected that East and West would simply merge into one new political and economic model after they had been divided for decades. Rather, the prevalent mood at the time was that ‘the Cold War did not end, it was won,’ as the then-US president, George Bush Sr., stated. The end of the Cold War seemed to equal the victory of the West and should therefore mean nothing less than the conversion of Central and Eastern Europe to the Western model of liberal democracy and capitalism. In no place was this more obvious than in Germany itself, where the states of the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) simply acceded to the existing Federal Republic’s political institutions, and experts launched the ‘conversion’ of its economy based on West German capitalist principles.

This particular understanding of the end of the Cold War in terms of the victory of the West not only circulated among political leaders, but it also remained the dominant paradigm in scholarly perspectives on the topic. As a consequence, most scholarly attention has been devoted to developments in Eastern Europe since the late 1980s, where the impact of the collapse of communism and the end of East–West hostility was, of course, much more dramatic than in Western Europe.<sup>1</sup> The end of the Cold War changed national borders, parliamentary democracy was introduced, and Central and Eastern European countries eventually joined the two paradigmatic Western organizations, namely the European Union (EU) and the



North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Recent domestic and international developments have firmly relaunched the question of to what extent the West and its values of democracy and a liberal international order actually ‘won’ the Cold War,<sup>2</sup> while the fact that Eastern Europe witnessed momentous changes as a consequence of the end of the Cold War remains beyond doubt.

Scholars of Western Europe’s history since 1989 have described its development mostly in terms of continuity and success. Most famously and controversially, this strand of thinking has become associated with the ‘end of history’ thesis put forward by the American thinker, Francis Fukuyama, who posited that there was no longer a genuine alternative for Western-style liberal democracy and capitalism after communism collapsed.<sup>3</sup> These notions of continuity and victory also appeared, albeit more subtly, in the historiography of the 1990s and early 2000s. Serge Bernstein and Pierre Milza concluded that after 1989 Europe was becoming ‘conscious of one European identity.’<sup>4</sup> In his history of twentieth-century Europe, Richard Vinen concluded that Europe ‘united around the values of democracy’ once the Cold War was over.<sup>5</sup> Some historians even choose to ignore the ‘1989’ caesura altogether and instead talk of a ‘long twentieth century’ to emphasize the lack of structural consequences the fall of the Berlin Wall had in the West.<sup>6</sup> In any case, the peaceful resolution of the Cold War made evident that Europeans had learned how to tame the demons of its past, so that ‘the twenty-first century might yet belong to Europe.’<sup>7</sup>

This particular understanding of the place of 1989 in Western European history not only sees the West as the clear winner of the Cold War, but also seems to assume that the Western half of the continent was left fundamentally unaffected by the end of the Cold War. This book aims to problematize this reading of post-1989 history and argues that the end of the Cold War has been a formative event, not only for Eastern Europe, but for Western Europe as well. The Western political and economic model was far from static and was itself deeply affected by the end of the Cold War. The chapters in the book discuss a wide range of countries, phenomena, and developments of post-1989 Western European history that substantiate these claims, and the book as a whole has a methodological and theoretical focus that deserves to be discussed.

Methodologically, the approach of this book is emphatically *historical*. Given its contemporary nature, the research of the post-1989 world has been largely the terrain of political scientists. For historians, the subject matter obviously harbors major pitfalls. To research the history of such a recent period might entail the abandonment of some historical tools, such as some types of archival research, and, in particular, a most cherished asset, namely the ability to observe with the benefit of hindsight. Put simply, historians usually study developments of which they know the end. But ends are much less obvious in the study of such a contemporary topic as the consequences of 1989 for the West. It is for a large part, not even history. And yet, historians are equipped with skills that could make an important contribution to research on this topic. Historical research can avoid the problems of causality and endogeneity often associated with comparative

politics.<sup>8</sup> It can also make comparisons through time as well as through space. As such, historians are often more sensitive to historical continuities and discontinuities, which are of key importance in assessing the significance and impact of such a major event as the fall of the Berlin Wall.

This means that, in contrast to political science and international relations studies of contemporary Europe, which do not usually apply a long-term historical perspective but rather use history mostly as an illustration to explain present-day issues, this book starts from the assumption that only history can help us understand where Europe's contemporary challenges come from. In other words, what we do is to 'read history forward,' tracking the long-term consequences of reforms, actions, and decisions made by historical actors in the 1980s (and sometimes earlier) to see how they were affected by the end of the Cold War and how they have shaped contemporary Western Europe. This is in contrast to reading 'backward,' seeking potentially coincidental precedents for contemporary phenomena, as is often the case in political science research. This *longue durée* perspective of at least four decades allows us to highlight issues of causality that would remain under the surface otherwise. In practical terms it also means that the historical method, in terms of the study and analysis of historical material (archival or otherwise), is central to all the chapters of this volume.

Theoretically, this long historical perspective and concern with causality allows for a new understanding of the importance of 1989 in Western European history that has insufficiently been offered in historiography. This book puts forward the concept of the end of the Cold War as an accelerator of three distinctive (geo-)political and economic processes in Western Europe. These processes were already clearly underway in the 1980s, but were reinforced by the post-1989 victory mood at the end of the Cold War. The first was the consolidation of the Western system of security politics, which, after 1989, thanks to the missile crisis and major steps in European integration, confirmed the importance of the Atlantic military alliance and economic and political integration under the leadership of Brussels. The second development consisted of the belief in the superiority of Western Europe's neoliberal capitalist narrative, which was already on the rise in the 1980s but was boosted by the end of the Cold War. Finally, the end of the Cold War seemed to confirm the success of a 'restrained' model of liberal democracy, characterized by a distance between electorates and elected, as resistance against this model had been successfully suppressed in Cold War Europe.

Based on these central methodological and theoretical tenets, this book sheds new light on contemporary concerns about the viability and success of Western Europe's political and economic model.<sup>9</sup> The genuine historical perspective of the volume allows for greater understanding of the causal links between the processes that were accelerated by the end of the Cold War and present-day concerns about the viability of the political and economic model of Western Europe. The chapters of this book, therefore, not only problematize the notion of historical continuity, but also question the idea of an unproblematic Western victory. The sections within this book address this question in four spheres, questioning the

post-1989 era as the age of Germany, the age of neoliberalism, the age of multi-lateralism, and the age of democracy. This book shows how current-day concerns about the viability of the Western European model are neither new nor contingent, but rather deeply entangled with the course of Western European history at least since the 1980s.

In this introduction we first outline the three major processes accelerated by 1989, which, thanks to the end of the Cold War, played into the Western victory narrative in the 1990s. We then proceed to discuss questions that have come to the surface more recently about the viability and success of these three hallmarks of the Western success narrative. These three developments outline the structure of this book as they are the topics of the three sections that follow the initial section on Germany, which was, of course, at the epicenter of the changes brought about by the fall of the Berlin Wall. We conclude this introduction by mapping the chapters grouped in the four sections of this volume.

### **The end of the Cold War as accelerator**

The timing of the end of the Cold War proved to be crucial for Western Europe's history in the 1990s and beyond. It occurred at the end of the 1980s, a decade in which Western Europe had just briefly emerged from its most serious political and economic crisis since the end of World War II.<sup>10</sup> The first three decades after the war are generally referred to as *les trente glorieuses*, Europe's golden age of democracy, prosperity, and progress.<sup>11</sup> This success story ended rather abruptly in the mid-1970s. Many observers feared that parliamentary democracy was unable to integrate the many new social movements that increased their demands on the state and asked for recognition and participation.<sup>12</sup> The economic situation also deteriorated significantly over the course of the 1970s, in which the Keynesian paradigm lost appeal, and protests, strikes, and rising unemployment made a comeback.<sup>13</sup> The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, moreover, terminated the period of international détente, visible in the deployment of medium-range missiles, which raised the stakes in an international arms race between the Soviet Union and the West.

Western European political leaders did not remain passive in the face of these challenges, but carved out responses to the complex political, economic, and geopolitical situation of the late 1970s and early 1980s. These responses shaped the political constellation of the 1980s that was in place when the Wall came down, and which therefore had long repercussions for the 1990s and beyond. Indeed, each of these challenges was met with a particular response that, in turn, was reinforced by the buoyant mood of victory in the West. In particular, we can distinguish three such distinct political and economic processes.

The first process was geopolitical in nature. European integration, EU expansion, and NATO emerged as the answers to Europe's (geo-)political challenges of the 1970s and early 1980s. In this period, the European integration process had halted. Euroscepticism was on the rise and many questioned whether further cooperation was the answer to Europe's economic problems, resulting in

a situation that was labeled eurosclerosis.<sup>14</sup> It was only under the leadership of Jacques Delors, who was president of the European Commission from 1985 to 1995, and thanks to the enactment of the Single European Act (SEA) in 1986, that European integration got a major boost, both as a (geo-)political and economic project.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, the SEA is generally considered a stepping stone to the Maastricht Treaty, which established the European Union.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, Europe got its first experience of absorbing former dictatorships into its midst with the accessions of Greece, Spain, and Portugal to the European Community (EC) in the 1980s.<sup>17</sup>

The end of the Cold War occurred at a moment in which European integration and expansion were increasingly seen as solutions to Europe's problems. Equally important in this regard was the growing significance of NATO. The arms race of the 1980s and the American stationing of medium-range nuclear missiles across Europe had caused massive popular protests, but also underlined Europe's dependence on the American nuclear umbrella for its security. Therefore, notwithstanding future doubts on NATO's post-Cold War role, the alliance was recognized as the cornerstone of European security in the 1980s and subsequently credited for having won the Cold War.<sup>18</sup> To conclude, the principles of European foreign policy and security were firmly in place in the 1980s and offered Western Europe a blueprint on how to meet with the challenges posed by the events of 1989.

The second process catalyzed by 1989 was the growing self-confidence of the ideological movement that underpinned Europe's economic recovery in the 1980s. Rising unemployment figures and high inflation rates had undermined the Keynesian narrative of *les trente glorieuses* in the 1970s.<sup>19</sup> The economic recession terminated what Tony Judt has called the 'social democratic moment,' and ushered in the age of what we generally define as neoliberalism.<sup>20</sup> The neoliberal paradigm has most famously become associated with the reign of the two most prolific political leaders of the 1980s, Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. But also, on the European continent, faith in the free market had become more firmly established in the decade preceding the fall of the Berlin Wall. This applied not only to conservative politicians such as Helmut Kohl,<sup>21</sup> but also to socialists such as Bettino Craxi in Italy or even François Mitterrand in France, who all, in the words of historian Donald Sassoon, adopted 'neoliberal economic policies.'<sup>22</sup>

So if, in Ronald Reagan's terms, the West could win the Cold War because it was able to 'outspend' Moscow, this was supposedly only thanks to the vitality of free market capitalism, which, by the end of the 1980s, had taken on a very distinct neoliberal form.<sup>23</sup> By the time the Berlin Wall fell, state intervention and regulation had come to look increasingly suspicious.<sup>24</sup> The end of the Cold War buttressed the neoliberal narrative of deregulation, privatization, and free market capitalism. The historian Mark Mazower has even argued that the 'real victor' of 1989 was capitalism,<sup>25</sup> and this was indeed the view of many in the 1990s and early 2000s. In this regard, as with its geopolitical effects, the chronology of the end of the Cold War was crucial, as the politics of free market capitalism were a response to the economic problems of the 1970s.

Finally, next to European integration and capitalism, ‘democracy’ established itself as the third major ‘victor’ of 1989. Democracy now enjoyed ‘a global monopoly as the basis of legitimate rule.’<sup>26</sup> The number of democratic countries rose to historically unprecedented levels.<sup>27</sup> However, in Western Europe, it was not simply ‘democracy’ as such that the end of the Cold War seemed to have buttressed. Rather, a specific model of democracy had reasserted its dominance in the 1980s after being challenged by social and political movements in the decades before. Indeed, the 1960s and 1970s were a time of great social upheaval in which the particular forms of democracy that had evolved in Europe after 1945 came under attack.<sup>28</sup> This postwar notion of democracy, which centered not so much on popular participation but on what has been called the rule of ‘middle-class and middle-aged men in suits’<sup>29</sup> on parliaments, parties, and professional politicians, has been denoted a ‘directed democracy’<sup>30</sup> or a ‘restrained democracy.’<sup>31</sup> The challenges to this model, which advocated greater popular participation, led to a widespread sentiment that there was a ‘crisis of democracy’ in the West in the 1970s.<sup>32</sup>

Yet, by the 1980s, this ‘restrained’ democracy seemed to have recovered rather well from the challenge to its legitimacy. The social movements of the 1980s no longer questioned representative democracy as such, but only placed specific issues on the political agenda.<sup>33</sup> So in this regard, it is possible to speak of 1989 as a catalyst for a ‘directed’ model of democracy and the continued rule of professional politicians that stood at some distance from the electorate. In other words, 1989 seemed not only to be a victory for democracy, but also advanced a specific form of democracy that seemed particularly resilient in the 1980s, having overcome the challenges of previous decades.

The chapters in this book show how the end of the Cold War catalyzed these three processes that seemed, at the time, to prove the success of Western Europe’s geopolitical organization, the supremacy of its economic system, and the virtues of its model of democracy. However, all of these developments have been facing a backlash over the past few years, whereby the ‘victory’ of the West after 1989 has been increasingly questioned. In contrast to the scholarship of the 1990s and 2000s, concepts such as divergence, crisis, and conflict are on the rise in recent studies on the fate of European politics.<sup>34</sup> The election of Donald Trump, the Eurozone, and migration crises catalyzed questions over the viability of EU-integration and the future of NATO. The economic crisis, resistance against austerity politics, and growing concerns about inequality have started to jeopardize the post-1989 hegemony of neoliberalism. And new political movements, populist or otherwise, have raised alarmist concerns about the state of Western-style democracy.

### **The legacy of the end of the Cold War today**

The 1990s optimism about the supremacy of the Western European political and economic models of the 1980s has evaporated. Instead, the question of whether the West has really won the Cold War at all is now frequently asked, sometimes

alongside expressions of existentialist doubt as to whether ‘the West’ even still exists.<sup>35</sup> By deploying a long-term perspective, the chapters in this book embed these contemporary concerns into the trajectory of Western European history over the last four decades. They do so in the context of the three dimensions of the supposed Western success story catalyzed by the events of 1989, around which we have organized the structure of this book. We have preceded these three sections with a special section on Germany, which was not only at the heart of these developments, but whose recent history also provides a window into these (geo-)political and economic developments at large.

First, seen from today’s vantage point, the post-1989 era does not seem to be the ‘age of multilateralism’ that many believed it would be. Indeed, Europe’s geopolitical status, once seen as the epitome of a ‘postmodern’ world order, free of conflict,<sup>36</sup> looks more and more fragile. The EU seems to be increasingly divided, between North and South in terms of economic reforms, and between East and West regarding questions of migration and national sovereignty.<sup>37</sup> Parties of various ideological backgrounds question the European integration process, principally in countries that stood at the cradle of Europe’s integration.<sup>38</sup> At the same time, expansion of the EU with new members—so obviously desirable in the 1990s and early 2000s—has become almost an anathema. Brexit has even shown that there is a way out, despite its practical drawbacks. The cornerstone of the European Union’s foreign policy, namely to build a ‘ring of friendship’ around the EU’s borders, has met with bloodshed extending from Ukraine to Libya. This means that internal divisions and external threats all cast a different light on how deeply European unity, lauded in the aftermath of 1989, was actually rooted. It imposes on historians the imperative to understand how the current drive toward the disintegration of Europe’s political and security structure relates to the choices made at the end of the Cold War.

Second, belief in the superiority of free market capitalism as the dominant economic paradigm has endured a major setback in the last few years. Influential economists, anti-austerity movements, and left-wing governments have all questioned whether austerity, privatization, and welfare cuts are an answer to the great economic recession that has plagued large parts of Europe. Indeed, some hold that the economic crisis was caused in the first place by the massive deregulation of the financial markets, which was underpinned by the same neoliberal narrative that now prescribes austerity as a medicine. It is far from clear which, if any, economic narrative will surface as an alternative to the neoliberal one. Yet recent developments have surely eroded the confidence of free market capitalism and pointed to its pitfalls.<sup>39</sup>

Third, the virtues of the ‘directed’ model of democracy that seemed so resilient in the 1980s are increasingly questioned. With the benefit of hindsight, it is possible to see that the electoral advances of the *Lega Nord*, the *Front National*, and the *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* were no one-time successes of protest parties in the 1980s. Instead, they were the beginnings of a long wave of populist electoral victories that came fully to the surface in the 2000s.<sup>40</sup> Their electoral breakthroughs have come to epitomize the ‘crisis of political representation,’ in



which, rightly, the ‘rule of parties, parliaments and politicians’ is the main object of populist critique and contrasted with the ‘will of the people’ that these parties claim to embody.<sup>41</sup> As such, they undermine the underlying logic of post-1945 European democracy, namely that democracy belongs to professional politicians and that a certain distance between electorate and elected is beneficial or even essential.<sup>42</sup>

The recent uncertainties about the gains of the end of the Cold War have, paradoxically, also surfaced in the country where hopes were arguably highest in 1989: Germany. The country’s reunification in 1990 captured the atmosphere of optimism at the end of the Cold War. If any country symbolized the confidence of the Western model it was the Federal Republic, which absorbed the former German Democratic Republic into its political and economic system. Despite its many obvious achievements,<sup>43</sup> the history of almost three decades of German unity is also often told in terms of the crisis of the welfare state,<sup>44</sup> the persistent economic divide between the former Eastern and Western states,<sup>45</sup> continuing cultural gaps,<sup>46</sup> and even signs of nostalgia for the GDR period.<sup>47</sup> Additionally, German unification has raised qualms about Germany’s role in the new Europe, with voices concerned about the supposed lack of Berlin’s leadership contrasting with those arguing against the German-inspired austerity politics of the EU in the wake of the Eurozone crisis.<sup>48</sup>

Germany’s experience since 1989 also serves as a microcosmic view of the history of Western Europe as a whole since 1989, with its initially triumphant mood of Western superiority and the subsequent backlash, visible first in economic problems, and then in the rise of a strong populist movement. It is for this reason that Germany receives special attention in this book, in which these myriad ways in which the end of the Cold War affected the country are explored.

## **Outline**

Taken together, the erosion of the seeming securities of post-1989 Western Europe provides ample reason to reconsider how 1989 has impacted the West, and how the end of the Cold War contributed to the multiple crises that sweep across Western Europe today. Indeed, seen from the present-day vantage point, the political and economic models that the West offered to the East to unify Europe in 1989 were not perpetual values ushering in the ‘end of history.’ Instead, they appear to have been historically contingent notions that were prevalent at the end of the 1980s, which, thanks to the specific timing of the end of the Cold War, gained an enormous political significance and had profound (geo)political and economic consequences.

The first section, on Germany, shows the mixed legacy of the end of the Cold War in this country. In Chapter 1, the introduction to the section, Jacco Pekelder sketches the dual forces at work in post-1989 German history: fear, including within Germany itself, of the return of German power and identity politics that were so forcefully present in its earlier history; and caution for an overtly reluctant German leadership. Yet 1989 did not prove to be the zero hour of German

history that many people expected, and continuity with the previous decades of West Germany's civic tradition was very strong. The gap between expectation and reality is also the topic of Chapter 2 by Adam Seipp. Based on material from multiple archives, he demonstrates how the withdrawal of American troops from Germany, although desired by many for decades, raised concerns of a territorial, economic, and political nature when it eventually materialized in the 1990s. Yet, despite the fact that the troops left and military lands were converted, the enduring cultural legacy of the American presence in Germany remains tangible to this very day. German unification and the American withdrawal were part of large geopolitical shifts in the post-1989 landscape that marked the return of the 'German question' to the European agenda. In Chapter 3, Ubaldo Villani-Lubelli shows how Germany reluctantly adapted to its new role as Europe's political and economic hegemon, without greatly upsetting the balance of power of German foreign policy principles that had developed in the post-1945 era. In Chapter 4, the final contribution to this section, Christian Wicke seeks to understand what German unification meant for the question of German identity. Distinguishing between different notions of 'normality,' he shows how, despite its full acceptance in the West after 1989, and the globalization of Holocaust memory, Germany's national identity can never become fully 'normal' as a consequence of its Nazi past.

The second section discusses the triumph of neoliberalism after 1989. In Chapter 5, the introduction to this section, Annelien de Dijn points to three overarching questions that the section addresses. First, whether the post-1989 neoliberal embrace of free markets and competition impacted the East differently than the West. Second, whether an explanation of the post-1989 triumph of neoliberalism, rather than that of another system of ideas, is related to the adherence of local elites to neoliberalism and to past legacies, which determined how receptive policy-makers were to neoliberal prescriptions. And third, whether, when evaluating the success of neoliberalism since 1989, we should take into account both its economic doctrines and its political agenda. In Chapter 6, Philipp Ther views the decades between 1989 and the economic crisis of 2008 as the hegemony of neoliberalism. He analyzes why neoliberalism became so firmly established around 1989 by an innovative focus on different national perspectives and experiences and assesses the hegemony of neoliberalism from the perspective of its participation 'from below.' In Chapter 7, Bram Mellink and P.W. Zuidhof adhere to Ther's view that 'local contexts matter.' While they demonstrate a transnational neoliberal shift around the end of the Cold War from 'rollback' to 'roll-in' neoliberalism, they note that the local trajectories in which this political transformation occurred differed significantly from country to country. In particular, Mellink and Zuidhof point to the changing character of neoliberalism around the end of the Cold War, which was no longer only about pushing back the state from the market, but which introduced market principles and market measures within the state itself. In Chapter 8, Stefan Couperus and Dora Vrhoci assess East-West town twinning trajectories in Europe as a way to probe into the effects of 1989 on transnational collaboration between local communities. They show that town twinning



programs that started in the decades after World War II were more likely to persist on the basis of mutual friendship, solidarity, and rapprochement, unaffected by 1989. By contrast, town twinning programs that started around the end of the Cold War fostered mutual business and commercial opportunities.

The third section discusses the role of the European Community/European Union in the transformations of 1989. The three main chapters in this section, introduced by Federico Romero in Chapter 9, examine how the EC/EU conveyed a Western set of institutions, practices, norms, and ideas in post-1989 Europe and beyond. In Chapter 10, Cristina Blanco Sío-Lopez argues that the implementation of the EC's eastward enlargement, and the free movement of persons as part of the Schengen area, directly generated a lingering 'democratic deficit' that is clearly palpable today. She emphasizes how the end of the Cold War represents a missed opportunity to enhance and deepen the quality of democracy in these realms. In Chapter 11, Laurien Crump points to a second major missed opportunity for Western Europe around 1989, tracking the current Western European inability to deal with an increasingly assertive Russia toward the end of the Cold War. She analyzes how, in the 1990s, Western European integration soon overtook the initiative to strengthen the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), which included Russia. This led to a marginalization of Russia and to the current Western European fear of a 'new Cold War.' In Chapter 12, Frank Gerits reconstructs the EC's African policies and its self-representation between the 1970s and 1990s. He shows how the EC cautiously deployed 'soft power' as a way to promote democracy until the 1980s. Yet, around the end of the Cold War, these overtly normative goals changed into structural adjustment programs, with a focus on market efficiency and private finance.

The fourth and final section turns toward domestic politics, and, more specifically, the fate of democracy in Western Europe. In the introduction, Chapter 13, Ido de Haan weaves together the two most significant developments in this regard: the demise of the European left as a much undervalued aspect of the transformation of Western Europe's political landscape, inextricably linked to the collapse of communism; and the rise of the populist right. Populism is not only seen as 'corrective' of democracy, but also as a threat to democratic systems. This section connects the current populist wave to history, questioning to what extent it is part of a European tradition in which politicians claimed to speak on behalf of one homogenous and unified people.<sup>49</sup> In Chapter 14, Martin J. Bull discusses the fate of the European radical left. Starting from the collapse of communism, he shows how parties occupying the space to the left of social democracy have reinvented themselves and, at times, flourished across Europe since 1989. In Chapter 15, Dan Stone posits how the end of the Cold War accelerated the abandonment of the postwar antifascist consensus, which had already been in decline since the 1970s, and ushered in a current 'new age of irrationalism.' Stone's chapter started its life as the thought-provoking keynote lecture of the workshop that stood as the basis of this book. It was explicitly intended to trigger discussion among participants on the question of which historical precedents exist for the current populist wave in Europe, and how the end of the Cold War and the demise of the antifascist consensus relate to the rise of the populist right.

The historical *longue durée* perspective of the contributions has unveiled slow-moving processes and causal mechanisms across a wide range of countries, phenomena, and developments. The contributors of the four sections of the book convincingly show how the end of the Cold War, as an accelerator of developments that were already underway in the 1980s, had a profound impact on Western Europe, and they help us explain the current political and economic challenges that Europe faces today.

## Notes

- 1 McDermott and Stibbe, *The 1989 Revolutions*; Cox, *Reflexions on 1989*; Kenney, *The Burdens of Freedom*; Pridham and Vanhanen, *Democratization in Eastern Europe*.
- 2 Pappas, 'Populist Democracies'; Weaver, 'The Communist Legacy?'; Pankowski, *The Populist Radical Right in Poland*; Grigas, *Beyond Crimea*.
- 3 Fukuyama, *The End of History*.
- 4 Berstein and Milza, *Histoire de l'Europe*, vol. III, Conclusion.
- 5 Vinen, *A History in Fragments*, 630.
- 6 Di Scala, *Europe's Long Century*.
- 7 Judt, *Postwar*, 800.
- 8 Capoccia and Ziblatt, 'The Historical Turn.'
- 9 Mary Elise Sarotte notes that 'rather than bringing an end to the history that had culminated in the Cold War,' Bonn and Washington 'had perpetuated key parts of it' (Sarotte, *1989: The Struggle*; and Sarotte, *The Collapse*, 201). Following the same line of thought, Artemy Kalinovsky argues that the Russian invasion of Ukraine, allegations of Russian meddling in Donald Trump's election as US president, and challenges to NATO expansion are problems that have been 'decades in the making' and 'can all be traced back to differing interpretations of what happened in 1989/1991' (Kalinovsky, 'New Histories,' 150).
- 10 Kaelble, *The 1970s in Europe*.
- 11 See Conway, 'The Rise and Fall of Europe's Democratic Age'; Eichengreen, *The European Economy since 1945*, Chapters 4, 6, 7.
- 12 Müller, *Contesting Democracy*, Chapters 5–6.
- 13 Kalinovsky discerns a new school of Cold War historiography that emphasizes the role of transnational activism in the end of the Cold War, as opposed to the role of 'high politics' (Kalinovsky, 'New Histories'). Examples of this new school of Cold War historiography are Sarotte, *1989: The Struggle* and Sarotte, *The Collapse*.
- 14 Handley, 'Public Opinion and European Integration'; Griffiths, 'Under the Shadow of Stagflation.'
- 15 Ludlow, 'European Integration in the 1980s'; Varsori, 'The Re-launching of Europe.'
- 16 Geary, Germond, and Patel, 'The Maastricht Treaty.'
- 17 Preston, *Enlargement and Integration*.
- 18 Coker, 'NATO as a Postmodern Alliance.'
- 19 Eley, *Forging Democracy*, Chapter 23.
- 20 Judt, *Postwar*, Chapter 11.
- 21 Cole, 'Political Leadership in Western Europe.'
- 22 Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 396.
- 23 Swarts, *Constructing Neoliberalism*, Chapters 2–3.
- 24 Eichengreen, *The European Economy Since 1945*, Chapters 9, 11.
- 25 Mazower, *Dark Continent*, 405.
- 26 Dunn, *Setting the People Free*, 187.
- 27 Huntington, *The Third Wave*.
- 28 Horn, *The Spirit of '68*.
- 29 Conway, 'Democracy in Post-war Europe,' 60.

- 30 Stone, *Goodbye to All That?* 85.
- 31 Müller, *Contesting Democracy*, 4.
- 32 Crozier, Huntington, and Watanuki, *The Crisis of Democracy*.
- 33 Della Porta, *Social Movements*; Dalton and Kuechler, *Challenging the Political Order*.
- 34 Ther, *Europe Since 1989*; Stone, *Goodbye to All That?*
- 35 [www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jan/10/west-cold-war-capitalism-eastern-bloc-populism](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jan/10/west-cold-war-capitalism-eastern-bloc-populism).
- 36 Cooper, *The Breaking of Nations*.
- 37 See the special issue of the *Journal of European Integration*, 38, no. 3 (2016).
- 38 Fitzgibbon, Leruth, and Startin, *Euroscepticism*.
- 39 Dumenil and Lévy, *The Crisis of Neoliberalism*.
- 40 Mudde and Kaltwasser, *Populism in Europe and the Americas*.
- 41 Keane, *The Life and Death of Democracy*.
- 42 Mudde and Kaltwasser, 'Populism and Liberal Democracy.'
- 43 Wolfrum, *Die geglü ckte Demokratie*.
- 44 Ritter, *The Price of German Unity*.
- 45 Collier, 'A Splendid Failure.'
- 46 Probst, *Differenz in Einheit*.
- 47 Bastian, 'The *Enfant Terrible* of German Politics.'
- 48 Jones, 'Merkel's folly?'; Paterson, 'The Reluctant Hegemon?'
- 49 Müller, *What Is Populism?*

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**Part I**

**A new Germany in  
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# 1 Germany and Europe after 1989

## The spectre of the German question versus the resilience of self-restraint

*Jacco Pekelder*

Self-confidence [...] was something we did not want to feel for a long time. Indeed, we were not able to feel it [...]. This gave birth to a prevailing culture of reservation and self-restraint. But when, do I ask, would there have been more reason for healthy self-confidence than when democracy was being peacefully built in West Germany, the Peaceful Revolution was being pursued in the East and divisions were being brought down in Germany and throughout Europe?<sup>1</sup>

Federal President Joachim Gauck was speaking in January 2017, at the end of a term of office that he had used more than once to encourage the German people to take pride in the gradual rehabilitation of their country and its democratic reconstruction after World War II. After this exemplary turnaround, Germans could afford to be more self-confident and display more leadership on the world stage, Gauck persistently argued. In late January 2014, he had, for instance, called upon his country to take on greater responsibility in international politics, even if this meant sending the Bundeswehr (German Federal Defence Forces) abroad more often if that were really necessary. 'Has Germany shown enough initiative to ensure the future viability of the network of norms, friends and alliances which has after all brought us peace in freedom and democracy in prosperity?', Gauck asked his fellow citizens, clearly meaning it was time to do more.<sup>2</sup>

That over a quarter century after reunification a German federal president would still diagnose his country's foreign and security policies as having an excess of reservation and self-restraint, was not what many a professional observer of international politics had expected in 1989 or the early 1990s. Instead, at the time, many predicted a reunited Germany, soon to be unshackled from the controls of its occupying powers, would immediately refocus its foreign policy and break with its forty-year history of self-binding and self-weakening. Already, in late October 1989, ten days before the Berlin Wall would fall, Irish historian, journalist and politician, Conor Cruise O'Brien, in a controversial commentary in *The Times* of London, spoke of a resurgence of German nationalism that would lead to the proclamation of a 'Fourth Reich'. Instead of the black-red-gold flag of the Federal Republic, Germans would soon enough bring back the imperial banner, 'and possibly a Hohenzollern Kaiser to go with it'.<sup>3</sup>



Of course, O'Brien's wording was extreme, but the hyperbole was a mere amplification of the immense insecurity many felt at the time. In 1989, the very foundations under Europe's post-war order seemed to be crumbling. Especially, all arrangements involving Germany that had helped put an end to a cursed era of protracted warfare over Europe's centre suddenly seemed to be in flux again. Many feared German reunification would bring a new and uncertain quest for stability on the continent. It is to this era of uncertainty that this section on a new Germany in a new Europe now turns. Nobody knew for sure what a new Germany would look like, nor how it would further evolve. Politicians, publicists and academics exchanged their anxieties and hopes in complex debates that revived the age-old dilemmas of organizing Europe's centre in ways beneficial to continental peace and prosperity. This section studies these debates and dilemmas on three separate, albeit overlapping, levels of analysis.

The first level concerns Germany's international position, power and influence relative to its European neighbours and other states: how would these change? In Chapter 3, the Italian political scientist Ubaldo Villani-Lubelli (University of Salento) relates how Germany itself during and after reunification dealt with this problem of finding its new place in Europe and the world, and how others reacted to this. It is a story of how Germans themselves, and most of their neighbours, came to accept and, in many instances, as in the case of the author, even embrace a unique form of German leadership within and in the name of Europe.

At the second level we find Germany's constitutional make-up, its domestic politics, and its political culture: would Germans stick to West Germany's successful democracy or would elements of authoritarian rule that seemed to have survived under the GDR's 'Communism with a Prussian touch' again put their mark on German politics? Would Germans continue the internationalist, in some eyes even post-national, outlook on their country's place in the world, or would we, as O'Brien feared, witness a renaissance of German nationalism of old? In Chapter 4, German historian Christian Wicke (Utrecht University) confronts the twisted problem of Germany's national identity that ties these issues of political culture together.

Finally, on a level between the international and the domestic, there is the issue of Germany's allegiance to the post-war, American-led Western world: would it stay faithful to the West, i.e. to the 'Western' political and cultural norms, values and repertoires that West Germans had come to embrace with some ambivalence from the early 1950s onwards, or would it turn back to the curious combination of superiority and inwardness that had characterized parts of fin-de-siècle imperial Germany? In Chapter 2, the American historian Adam R. Seipp (Texas A&M University) tackles that issue by looking at the enormous transformations brought on by the departure of American occupation-cum-allied forces from West Germany after the end of the Cold War.

### **The German Question and international relations theory in the 1990s**

Basically, in 1989 and the early 1990s, it was the spectre of the 'German Question' that all commentators and politicians were running away from. For many this was

basically a question of 'high politics': it was all about integrating Germany – this big lump of territory in the middle of Europe with its sizable, highly educated, enormously industrious, and impressively cultured population of German speakers – into a new European states system in such a way that the stability of the Cold War could continue. Now that the old Cold War order, as seen from the West, of keeping the Americans in, the Russians out, and the Germans under, was ending, a new way of taming Europe's central power had to be found. Others pointed out that the German Question was also about Germany's internal make-up: they considered the constitution of the new Germany, underpinning its democracy and rule of law, highly relevant as well. In their view a stable democracy was far less likely to engage in 'normal' big power politics and was also far more likely to be trusted by its neighbours.<sup>4</sup>

In academia these different approaches to the German Question were represented by two opposing schools of thought in international relations theory: the neorealists and the constructivists. Their expectations of the future foreign policy of the new Germany widely varied. The neorealists – focusing on the level of state systems – foresaw a clear break with the Cold War era. They expected Europe to return to the structural multipolar instability that had been on display after Bismarck's creation of the German *Kaiserreich* in 1871. Without the constraints of Cold War bipolarity, the basic anarchy of the international state system would leave Germany no alternative but to return to the egotistical behaviour of a 'normal' European great power. To counter future instability in Europe the leading American neorealist, John Mearsheimer, even went as far as to proscribe the creation of a small but serious German nuclear force to deter the other great powers of the continent.<sup>5</sup>

The constructivists had a far more optimistic view. They regard a country's foreign policy, to a large extent, as an outcome of its political culture; it is a product of an ongoing negotiation within a society about its own identity and the narrative about the nation's history that supports this.<sup>6</sup> On the one hand, this narrative serves as a nation's frame of reference when it seeks to understand the outside world and its communications. On the other, its national identity translates to a role model that inspires a country's behaviour abroad.<sup>7</sup> In the eyes of constructivists, Germany's post-war political culture had produced a deeply ingrained foreign policy identity as a 'civilian power' (*Zivilmacht*) that was highly resistant to changes in the country's relative weight in the European state system. Hanns Maull, a political scientist at Trier University, produced the most elaborate version of this argument.<sup>8</sup> In contrast to a classical, power-centred state (*Machtsstaat*), such a civilian power stresses interdependency in international politics (for instance, though cross-border trade), tends towards multilateral cooperation, is averse to the use of military means, and is even striving to civilize the world by constantly furthering the institutionalization of international society and its founding norms and values.<sup>9</sup>

Much of what happened regarding Germany's foreign policy and international position after 1990 deeply questioned the certainties of neorealist thought and confirmed the constructivist view. The self-restraint, so typical of the Federal Republic during the Cold War, turned out to be highly resilient indeed. Already in

1990, the international agreements about reunification, amounting to Germany's acceptance of its Polish border and continued membership of NATO, proved the neorealists wrong. In fact, the restoration of Germany to full sovereignty did not alter the country's fundamental outlook on international politics at all. With the 1992 Maastricht Treaty on European Union it even intensified its commitment to European integration.<sup>10</sup> It was as if Gulliver made sure the Lilliputians had enough rope to tie him down.<sup>11</sup>

Of course, the constructivists had some difficulty in explaining the break with tradition in the field of security policy. During the 1990s Germany slowly adjusted its position towards international peacekeeping and enforcing operations to its new status of a big power with full sovereignty. This break, however, was not so much of its own accord, but mainly driven by pressure from its allies who, already during the Gulf War (1990–1991), were losing patience with Germany's unwillingness to offer more than financial support for their efforts to end the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait. The Kohl government started an incremental increase of German participation in UN missions, a process that, as Villani-Lubelli relates, also included a new interpretation of certain provisions in Germany's Basic Law by the Federal Constitutional Court in 1994.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, even after that, opposition in parliament and in the streets of Germany to *Bundeswehr* missions abroad remained strong; many Germans on the left still felt their country's dark past dictated an everlasting vacation from world politics, especially in military matters. Ultimately, the massacres in Yugoslavia turned at least the more influential thinkers and politicians on the left around. After the mass murder of Bosnian Muslim men and boys near Srebrenica in June 1995, Green Party leader Joschka Fischer, for instance, called for a rethink: because of the lessons learned from Germany's dark history, the left, in the face of genocide, should trade in their post-war motto of 'Never again war' for the superior 'Never again Auschwitz'.<sup>13</sup> This meant that, despite the change of course in security policy, the underlying principles were still in place; the constructivist view was still relevant and was confirmed once again, when, in 2002–2003, the Red–Green government of Social Democrat Chancellor Gerhard Schröder – with Fischer as foreign minister – openly protested against US intentions to wage war on Iraq.

### **Germany as Europe's hegemon**

Still, one should not forget that around the same time, the image of a strong but still fairly altruistic Germany was severely tested. On the one hand, Germany's power was diminished by the country's economic, financial and social problems, and the failure of the ruling political and economic elites to solve them. While the economies of the United States, Britain, the Netherlands and many other countries were booming, Germany came across as 'the sick man of Europe'. In Chapter 3, Villani-Lubelli shows how these problems resulted in domestic constraints on German foreign policy and threatened to undermine the values underpinning Germany's distinct foreign policy culture. In 2003, both aspects of

German politics led a number of British authors, who just a few years before had been highly impressed by the so-called ‘virtuous circle’ of Germany’s European Union (EU) policies, to register ‘a shifting of [the] tectonic plates’ of German and European politics that seemed to spell the breakdown of this German–European congruence.<sup>14</sup> On the other, Germany’s image of modesty and altruism faded. Schröder seemed to be considering a break with his country’s past course of embedding its foreign policies in multilateral organizations. Not only his stance towards the war in Iraq – below Scheipp provides the context for this shocking break with traditional *Deutsch–Amerikanische Freundschaft* (German–American Friendship) – but also his repeated and vocal defences of narrow German interests at European summits seemed to point in the direction of change. Echoing a topical debate among intellectuals about a necessary ‘normalization’ of Germany’s national identity, to be discussed at greater length below by Wicke, Schröder even talked about Germany being a ‘normal country’ and argued for a ‘German way’ in international politics.

The world financial and European monetary crisis of the late 2000s changed all that again. Within the European Union, Germany suddenly found itself in the driver’s seat and, albeit reluctantly, the respective governments of Angela Merkel took up the burden of saving the Euro.<sup>15</sup> Vilanni-Lubelli rightly contextualizes this development to the three longer-term developments of the EU’s eastern enlargement, the economic and political decline of France, and the United Kingdom’s gradual withdrawal from the EU. Next to these European developments, major shifts in world politics gave a boost to Germany’s stature as well. Belatedly we have entered the post-Cold War world: the rise of China, the return of Russia, and the demise of American influence and leadership are signs not to be missed. Combined with an ongoing incremental shift of focus in American foreign policy away from Europe (‘pivot to Asia’), the Trump presidency has orphaned the West. It is now looking to Germany for moral and political leadership.

In some areas the country seems willing and able to take on the challenge: Merkel’s abrupt embrace of renewable energy sources in reaction to the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster and the opening of borders during the 2015 refugee crisis best illustrate this. On foreign and security policy, however, Germany’s leadership seemed more feeble. On the one hand, from 2014, much of the European response towards Russia’s aggression against Ukraine was indeed orchestrated by Germany. Next to that, it has a long record of participating in UN and NATO missions abroad. And, finally, it is a driving force behind ‘pooling and sharing’ efforts among EU member states’ defence forces. On the other hand, though, it still lagged (and lags) far behind Great Britain or France in military matters, not to mention Russia, China or the United States. Despite serious efforts to rethink its strategy in these matters, illustrated by the publication in July 2016 of a ‘Whitebook’ on German security policy, the Federal Republic remained unable to provide its struggling military with the necessary budget. Germany’s defence spending was (and still is) far below the agreed NATO threshold of 2 per cent of GNP, something that has caused rising resentment on the other side of the Atlantic.<sup>16</sup>

Nevertheless, Berlin's emergent leadership has made a deep impression on many and has gained the admiration of some. It was a Polish foreign minister who, in 2011, astonished some when he proclaimed Germany to be 'Europe's indispensable nation'.<sup>17</sup> Others have, however, also worried that a 'New German Question' might be looming.<sup>18</sup> In their eyes, Germany's European neighbours will always be nervous when power accumulates in the centre of the continent, however democratic the Germans might have become. Foreign policy think-tanks and academics have taken up the debate on the issue of German hegemony again. Picking up on German historian Ludwig Delhio's typology of the German *Kaiserreich* as a semi-hegemony launched in the early 1950s, Hans Kundnani of the European Council of European Relations has, for instance, argued that the future holds a German 'geo-economic semi-hegemony'.<sup>19</sup> Concentrating more on 'Brussels', others have described Germany as a 'reluctant hegemon', a country that is highly aware of the anxieties of its neighbours and at the same time very much restricted in its freedom of manoeuvre by domestic constraints.<sup>20</sup> A third, somewhat more shallow' interpretation-cum-advice, suggests Germany might best develop into a 'servant leader', which would be the best way to at once deal with the spectre of Germany's past and stay true to the principles of its civilian power tradition.<sup>21</sup>

Most convincing, however, until now has been the analysis of Herfried Münkler in his 2015 book *Macht in der Mitte* (Power at the Centre). This political scientist from Berlin begins with the realization that, unlike earlier periods of German preponderance in Europe, this time the country has not actively sought to dominate the continent. Instead, structural developments leading to a new geopolitical constellation have pushed it towards a leadership that many outside of the country seem to support. On the domestic front, however, the electorate does not seem willing or prepared to take the burden of leadership.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, the 2017 national elections saw smouldering scepticism towards European integration producing a vocal parliamentary opposition. Next to that, many Germans still cling to an emotional pacifism and often flatly reject suggestions of strengthening their country's role in world political affairs.

Still, Münkler reasons, there is no way around leadership of Europe's central power – it is indeed Europe's indispensable nation. He agrees that, because of its past, others, as well as Germans themselves, will always be sceptical of German leadership. This makes Germany a 'vulnerable hegemon', but – and this a paradox – it is precisely this vulnerability that neutralizes the normal reflexive organization of counterpower by its neighbours.

Also and exactly in the face of European history EU member states will accept only a vulnerable hegemon, that they think they can slow down if necessary. And a hegemon that is aware of its own vulnerability and feels this with every step it takes, will as a rule not behave like a hegemon.<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, Münkler maintains, it is this same attitude of a vulnerable hegemon that also seems best suited to help Germans overcome the foreign policy culture of reservation and self-restraint that their troubled past has taught them. It turns

things on its head: exactly because of the Nazi past, Germans can tell themselves (just like Joschka Fischer did in the late 1990s), we have more seriously than others developed a culture of democracy with solid institutions. And exactly because of this positive history we can be trusted as leaders, by our neighbours and ourselves.

### **Germany's 1989 at three levels**

As this introduction has briefly indicated, Münkler's paradox mirrors the seeming contradictions of developments in the relationship between Germany and Europe after 1989. When the Soviet Empire in Europe crumbled and Germany reunified, old anxieties revived, and the solutions that kept them in check seemed doomed. Fairly quickly, however, it became clear that European economic integration and transatlantic security cooperation would continue to be the main instruments for stabilizing the continent. Even more: both the European Community/European Union and NATO broadened their missions as well as their membership. A Germany unbound by the international legal restrictions imposed on it after total surrender in 1945 did not withdraw, as neorealists had expected, into 'normal' great power behaviour. Instead, it remained loyal to the role model of a 'civilian Power' that, according to constructivists had become ingrained in its foreign political culture. In the long term, however, it was precisely this loyalty to the role model developed within the West German Federal Republic before 1989 that, by the late 2000s, had produced the trust and tranquillity that allowed its neighbours to accept, and even demand, German leadership.

In greater depth, the contributions below explain how it turned out that Germany's 1989 did not turn out to be the *tabula rasa* that some had feared. At the level of international politics, Villani-Lubelli, on the basis of a broad reading of political texts and political scientists' works, and in accordance with Münkler, analyses Germany as 'an inevitable hegemonic power aimed at maintaining European balance and political stability and the competitiveness of the EU in the global market'. It remains a question, however, how Germany (and Europe) will deal with the problems arising from the stubborn leadership avoidance reflex of many Germans, including those that support the new right-wing, populist Alternative für Deutschland Party, and the consequent frailty of political support for a more active role of their country on the world stage.

At the level of Germany's domestic political culture, working from sociological theories on nationalism and identity formation as well as from historiographical reflexions, Wicke poses the question as to what extent 1989 brought an ontological, territorial, ideological and historical normalization of Germany's national identity. On the first three fronts, normalization was largely realized, Wicke concludes, but historical normalization was still not completed, and probably never will be. Constructivists may sigh in relief after this confirmation. Still, it remains to be seen if leadership in Europe can be built on a foreign policy role model that still lacks consensus on a (in the end) positive historical narrative of the German nation.



Finally, at the level of Germany's allegiance to the post-war, American-led Western world, after 1989, as Seipp shows in a highly original approach to post-Cold War history, there has certainly been a rediscovery, to some degree, of German-ness after most American occupation forces left. Next to the detrimental effects in local and regional economies, the end of many everyday German-American encounters on and near US military bases also meant that a constituent element of (West) Germany's post-war transformation to an open society of the affluent West fell away. This might help explain why America and Germany have fallen out regularly since the Schröder era, and it seems that, in the process of conversion of enormous amounts of property from the control of foreign militaries to civilian use in post-Cold War Germany, Germans themselves also began to rethink their national identities, claiming German social models and asserting the sovereignty of the reunited German state, as Seipp argues.

In sum, on three levels, a re-examination of the significance of 1989 for Germany is presented, and, on all three of them, the balance leans less towards continuity and more, maybe more than expected, towards change. Between the lines, however, it is also clear that beneath the change, on a more profound level, there is also much continuity. Germany's historical culture, the way it is continually processing its troubled past, is still a strong constituent of its political, institutional, social and economic life, and is still one of the clearest determinants of its foreign and European policies. Even a prophet of the necessity of German leadership, such as former President Gauck, holds on to that.

## Notes

- 1 Speech by Federal President Joachim Gauck at the end of his term in office on the question 'What Should Our Country Be Like?' addressed in his inaugural speech of 23 March 2012 in Schloss Bellevue on 18 January 2017.
- 2 'Germany's Role in the World. Reflections on Responsibility, Norms and Alliances', Speech by Federal President Joachim Gauck at the opening of the Munich Security Conference on 31 January 2014 in Munich.
- 3 O'Brien, 'Beware, the Reich is Reviving'.
- 4 Gruner, *Die deutsche Frage in Europa 1800–1900*, 13–39.
- 5 Mearsheimer, 'Back to the Future. Instability in Europe after the Cold War'.
- 6 For an introduction to the theory: Adler, 'Constructivism and International Relations. Sources, Contributions, and Debates', 112–144.
- 7 For more on role theory: Thies and Breuning, 'Integrating Foreign Policy Analysis and International Relations through Role Theory', 1–4; and Harnisch, Frank and Maull, *Role Theory in International Relations Approaches and Analyses*.
- 8 Maull, 'Germany and Japan. The New Civilian Powers'.
- 9 Maull, 'German Foreign Policy, Post-Kosovo. Still a "Civilian Power"?'.
- 10 Crawford, 'The Normative Power of a Normal State'.
- 11 The comparison with Gulliver was first made in: Bulmer and Paterson, 'West Germany's Role in Europe. "Man-Mountain" or "Semi-Gulliver"?'.
- 12 Sperling, 'Germany and America, 1949–2012', 425–440.
- 13 This rethink began with an open letter to his fellows in the Green parliamentary party in Germany's Federal Diet: Joschka Fischer, 'Die Katastrophe in Bosnien und die Konsequenzen für unsere Partei BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN', Bonn, July 30, 1995. See also: "'Das wäre blutiger Zynismus". Joschka Fischer über die Kritik an seinem Bosnien-Papier und den Pazifismus der Grünen'.

- 14 Jeffery and Paterson, 'Germany and European Integration. A Shifting of Tectonic Plates'. See for the 'virtuous circle': Bulmer, Jeffery and Paterson, *Germany's European Diplomacy. Shaping the Regional Milieu*.
- 15 See for a concise overview: Padgett, Paterson and Zohlh ofer, 'Introduction', in *Developments in German Politics*.
- 16 Major and M lling, 'Von Lybien nach Syrien. Die Rolle des Milit rs in einer neuen deutschen Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitik'.
- 17 Sikorski, 'I Fear Germany's Power Less than Her Inactivity'.
- 18 Ash, 'The New German Question'.
- 19 Kundnani, *The Paradox of German Power*, 110.
- 20 Paterson, 'The Reluctant Hegemon? Germany Moves Centre Stage in the European Union'.
- 21 Mangasarian and Techau, *F hrungsmacht Deutschland*.
- 22 M nkler, *Macht in der Mitte. Die neuen Aufgaben Deutschlands in Europa*.
- 23 M nkler, *Macht in der Mitte. Die neuen Aufgaben Deutschlands in Europa*.

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## 2 The view from Benjamin Franklin Strasse

### American military bases and the politics of conversion in post-1989 Germany

*Adam R. Seipp*

#### Conversion and transformation in post-Cold War Germany

On the commuter train between Mannheim and Heidelberg, passengers going through Viernheim pass by rows and rows of densely clustered white buildings, squat and unassuming, along both sides of the road. Now they are derelict behind low-slung fences, but 15 years ago, these buildings housed nearly 10,000 American military personnel and their families. Germans came to work here every day, as did thousands of American civilian personnel supporting the military mission in Central Europe. This was Benjamin Franklin Village, one of the oldest and longest-lasting American military communities in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG).

Today it is undergoing a curious rebirth. Signs line the fences advertising a new living community called, appropriately, 'FRANKLIN.' The development's website promises organic agriculture, sustainable living, and a comfortable life beyond the urban bustle of the *Quadratstadt* (the Quadrate).

The transformation (=conversion) [*Umwandlung* (=Konversion)] of five million square meters of property, which was made free by the withdrawal of the US military, is an extraordinary opportunity for our city. It should be used in such a way as to benefit everyone in Mannheim.<sup>1</sup>

This is a chapter about conversion, the term universally used for the transfer of massive amounts of property in the Federal Republic of Germany from the control of foreign militaries to civilian use after the end of the Cold War. At one level, conversion was a legal process, a continuation and fulfillment of a set of agreements made between the protean Federal Republic and its occupiers-turned-allies after World War II. This chapter, however, looks at conversion as a sociocultural process, one in which Germans began to reassess the nature and meaning of their national community in the context of a dramatic set of changes in material and social circumstances after 1989. Because of the abrupt and dislocating nature of the conversion process, American bases became geographic and physical spaces onto which Germans could project visions of a new society that affirmed and strengthened the core components of the postwar welfare state. In addition,

conversion represented a literal and figurative break with the United States, a Cold War partner with whom Germans had a long and decidedly ambivalent relationship.<sup>2</sup> As the Americans departed from Germany, competing views of conversion argued that infrastructure built for the foreign military presence now needed to be put to use in building a new, post-Cold War society. The successes and failures of conversion stemmed largely from the tensions between these visions of the relationship between the state and society in a reunited Germany.

In his recent history of post-1989 Europe, Philipp Ther describes a process of co-transformation in East and West Germany, in which ‘the West has become partially like the East and the East has become partially like the West.’<sup>3</sup> The process of conversion is an excellent example of this idea at work. There were many places in West Germany in which the end of the Cold War was every bit as economically ruinous as it was in the East. While the federal government, both of West Germany and of the post-unification FRG, tried to mitigate the deleterious effects of conversion, much of the energy and impulse for it came from civil society groups, including labor unions and networks of activists, who used conversion as an opportunity to articulate a reenergized vision of a welfare state (*Sozialstaatlichkeit*).

This chapter is part of a wider book project that will argue that historians need to better integrate the history of foreign military forces, and particularly the Americans, into the history of the Federal Republic of Germany. Over the 40 years of the Cold War, about 22 million Americans lived and worked in the FRG as military personnel, dependants, or civilian employees.<sup>4</sup> To a remarkable degree, histories of the FRG tend to discuss the influence of the United States with very little reference to these actual Americans, who lived, worked, and prepared to fight in Central Europe during the postwar decades.<sup>5</sup> Just as the arrival and persistent presence of the Americans influenced German society and culture, so too did their departure.

This process of conversion in the West has, however, been largely absent from some of the standard histories of the unification process, and of contemporary German history more broadly. Gerhard Ritter’s magisterial study on the ‘crisis of the welfare state’ during and after unification looks briefly at the Soviet withdrawal from the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), but says nothing about the situation in the West.<sup>6</sup> While surveys of the period readily acknowledge the role played by the United States in diplomatically shaping the contours of unification and post-unification, the social history of American disengagement has yet to be written.<sup>7</sup> Studying the debates over conversion can be useful here because they offer a perspective on the post-1989 period in the West that was decidedly not a ‘straightforward triumphant story of historical continuity.’<sup>8</sup>

To write this history of sociocultural dimensions of the conversion, this article will use documents produced by and in German communities directly affected by the base closures, as well as archival documents from the labor union that represented the largest number of German workers employed by foreign militaries in the FRG, the *Gewerkschaft öffentliche Dienste, Transport, und Verkehr*, or ÖTV.

These discussions reveal a counter-narrative of 1989: a story of 1989, not as a victory, but as a moment of both anxiety and cautious optimism, during which Germans living in and around affected communities asserted a claim to state protection from economic and social forces far beyond their control.

This claim on the German social model went hand-in-hand with a forceful assertion of the sovereignty of the reunited German state. Sovereignty here refers to the ability of a state to project independent authority over a finite, legally demarcated territory. Absolute sovereignty, particularly in a modern state system with cross-cutting obligations and institutions, is a practical impossibility, but clearly, also an aspiration observed largely in the breach.<sup>9</sup> The presence of hundreds of thousands of foreign troops on the territory of a notionally sovereign state over a period of four decades made the Federal Republic a special, if not unique, case. In Detlef Junker's words, the sovereignty of the FRG was 'partly fiction and, if interpreted as wishful thinking, it was a promise that went unfulfilled until 1990.'<sup>10</sup> Here, in debates over conversion, we can see a sociocultural expression of the emerging political realities of the new post-Cold War order.

### **Hopes and anxieties of conversion during the Cold War**

The problem of conversion had international, national, and local contexts and needs to be understood as such. Internationally, it stemmed from the precipitous end of the Cold War and decisions, mostly taken in Washington, DC, over which Germans at any level had frustratingly little control. Within Germany, it fitted into the dramatic jump in unemployment and fall in per capita gross domestic product (GDP) that accompanied reunification, and became one factor in a broader discussion of structural blockage (*Reformstau*) in the German labor market and the wider economy in the 1990s.<sup>11</sup> At the local level, conversion became a site of contestation, and sometimes compromise, over the question of how to build a sustainable, socially just society. Conversion presented an opportunity not just to find new uses for land long lost to development, but also to correct the economic and environmental imbalances of a market-oriented society.

The problems of conversion were rooted in the history and geography of the American presence in Central Europe. American forces came to Germany in 1944–1945 and built a base network for Cold War defense in the 1950s. The legal framework for this building program was incredibly complex, but, as the FRG emerged into semi-sovereignty, and full sovereignty after 1955, it agreed with its NATO partners that, in the event that bases were no longer needed, the property would revert to the federal government.<sup>12</sup> The initial American building program angered many, particularly farmers who lost land to bulldozers and barracks. However, particularly in the early days of the Cold War, a clear majority of Germans saw the American and NATO presence as a guarantee of peace in a country that bore the scars of war. Also, the American policy of requisitioning land outside of towns and cities allowed thousands of Germans to return to houses and apartments from which they had been removed after 1945.<sup>13</sup>

The long-term presence of American and other NATO military personnel and civilians generated a series of conflicts that touched upon key elements of Germany's postwar history and the instantiation of a plural democracy in the FRG. The question of sovereignty proved vexing for a democracy that was also a Cold War frontline state and host to a massive foreign military presence. Generations of Germans grew up living alongside a foreign presence that often did not speak the language and that enjoyed a complicated range of privileges and legal protections that changed over time.

At the same time, the militarization of the FRG contrasted sharply with a deep skepticism about war within German society. This ambivalence, which stemmed in large part from the experience of World War II and postwar reeducation policies, was hard to square with the existence of a conscript *Bundeswehr* (defense force) and the presence of a nuclear-armed and apparently aggressive NATO force. These tensions burst forth in the early 1980s with enormous protests over the deployment of tactical nuclear missiles in Western Europe. Those opposed to the 'Euromissiles' often drew on the sovereignty issue to make their case, claiming that the FRG was still an occupied country.<sup>14</sup> As the largest, most modern, and best equipped of the NATO armies, the United States was a particular target for those who wanted a de-escalation of Cold War tension.

US Army Europe (USAREUR), headquartered in Heidelberg, oversaw the largest component of the American mission in Germany. The number of troops under its command hovered around a quarter of a million for much of the Cold War era.<sup>15</sup> American troop levels fell sharply in the 1970s as a ruinous war in Southeast Asia combined with an increasing unwillingness by the US Congress to endlessly support a mission in Europe led to a decline in USAREUR's overall position. The American force posture in the FRG in 1989 was, to some degree, the result of the substantial investments in military expansion and modernization of the 'Second Cold War' in the 1980s.

In 1986, more than 400,000 NATO troops, not including the *Bundeswehr*, served in the FRG. With them were 450,000 dependants and 50,000 foreign workers. Foreign military forces employed 110,000 German workers (Local Nationals, or LNs), who reported to work on almost 50,000 pieces of property with an area of about 150,000 hectares. While this represented six NATO militaries, 63 percent of military personnel were American and almost 70 percent of German employees worked for American forces.<sup>16</sup>

The American presence was not evenly distributed across the Federal Republic. While the Americans controlled hundreds of facilities across the FRG, they were concentrated in about 85 military communities across the south and west of the country.<sup>17</sup> These facilities were also highly concentrated geographically, with three federal states (*Bundesländer*) bearing the brunt of the potential economic dislocation: Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, and Rhineland-Pfalz.<sup>18</sup>

This concentration led in some cases to the development of military monocultures in base communities. The most dramatic examples were the large rural maneuver areas (*Truppenübungsplätze*) like Wildflecken, Hohenfels, and Grafenwöhr. The latter, in the Bavarian Oberpfalz, probably had the most extreme

reliance on the continued American presence in the area. More than 80 percent of the 4,500 German civilians who worked for the Americans in the Oberpfalz lived in the small communities around the maneuver area. The Americans were not only the biggest employer in the region, they kept up a thriving service economy and maintained a tight housing market.<sup>19</sup> While not as dramatic, many more developed communities similarly relied on the continued American presence. The rural area (*Landkreis*) around Kaiserslautern, home to US Army and Air Force units, derived around 40 percent of its GDP from direct spending by American forces, the highest percentage in Germany. Of the nine districts most reliant on foreign bases, eight were American garrison communities and seven were in Rhineland-Pfalz. The city (*Stadtkreis*) of Kaiserslautern was the fourth most dependent district, reflecting the region's centrality in American defense planning.<sup>20</sup>

To a remarkable degree, Germans anticipated the conditions that might follow the withdrawal of American forces decades before it happened. During the 1960s and early 1970s, troop levels dipped as the US Army took on a new role in Southeast Asia. At the same time, the Federal Republic experienced its first recession in 1966–1967 and the full employment era of the 'economic miracle' seemed less assured than ever before. Particularly in heavily militarized regions, local authorities began to seriously consider what a post-foreign-forces future might look like. Labor unions worked to ensure that their members would have some protection from any economic shocks that might stem from decisions made across the Atlantic. These measures had limited effects at the time, but much more profound results after 1989.

Subsequent efforts to bring industrial employment to the region around the massive US Army complex at Kaiserslautern in Rhineland-Pfalz yielded limited results.<sup>21</sup> The US Army began privatizing large parts of its civilian workforce in the 1970s, which substantially weakened the bargaining power of German labor unions. The legal framework for the employment of Germans by foreign militaries rested on a series of agreements made between 1951 and 1963 that governed working conditions and labor rights. While NATO members agreed to observe many German labor laws and practices, they had much more flexibility in laying off workers than any German institution or firm. Importantly, the critical principle of co-determination (*Mitbestimmung*) only applied in a limited way, and in most cases, foreign forces were not required to develop social plans (*Sozialpläne*) to ameliorate conditions for laid-off workers.<sup>22</sup> German observers from across the political spectrum had long expressed skepticism about the FRG's adherence to these agreements, which limited or modulated the sovereignty of the German state.<sup>23</sup>

Unions were well aware that the diminished American commitment in Germany likely presaged the end of employment security, even before the oil shocks of the early 1970s. In 1971, a coalition of unions negotiated an agreement with the coalition government in Bonn with the somewhat unwieldy name *Tarifvertrag zur sozialen Sicherung der Arbeitnehmer bei den Stationierungsstreitkräften im Gebiet der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Collective Agreement on the Social Security of those Employed by Military Forces Deployed in the Territory of the

FRG). This agreement promised supplementary federal support for long-service civilian employees laid off by foreign military forces in cases of troop reductions. In the early 1970s, this affected only a few hundred employees at most. This agreement proved costly two decades later when foreign forces withdrew in large numbers.<sup>24</sup>

### **The fall of the Berlin Wall and the process of conversion in Germany**

The tumultuous events of the Spring and Fall of 1989 evoked considerable anxiety in the FRG's base communities. Discussions about the likely future of the American presence began as soon as it became clear that a new geopolitical order was emerging. The Pentagon announced in early 1990 that military communities in Bad Tölz and Neu-Ulm would close soon and that a number of other garrisons could follow shortly. In February, USAREUR Commanding General Crosbie Saint addressed the annual meeting of command's Head Works Council. He told the anxious audience that, despite promising them the year before that there would be no reduction in the American presence, he could no longer make the same pledge after 'a year of great significance.'<sup>25</sup>

Perhaps the greatest challenge during this initial period was the uncertainty on all sides. The *Mannheimer Morgen* reported in January 1990 on a meeting between the base commander and a delegation of city officials. Brigadier General Jones told the audience that he 'did not have a crystal ball,' but that the jobs of the 3,200 LNs were safe for the moment. Troop reductions, however, were 'all but certain.'<sup>26</sup> For observers, subsequent events moved at a dizzying pace. As early as 1990, a series of ad hoc plans and initiatives emerged that proposed a mix of base closures, realignments, and relocations. The most salient point about these early initiatives is that they appeared arbitrary and unpredictable. Some larger garrison communities actually grew as smaller outposts closed and commands moved. A few months after the January meeting, for example, the garrison in Worms became part of the Mannheim command, with the loss of 120 German civilian jobs.<sup>27</sup> While this was good news for the people of Mannheim, it was an ominous sign of what was to come.

The Defense Base Realignment and Closure Act of 1990 (BRAC, for short) created a process of consultation with stakeholders at various levels to determine how and when bases should be closed. But BRAC only applied to facilities in the United States. In Germany, bases operated at the discretion of the Department of Defense. Initially, the Americans showed a willingness to work with local and state authorities, or community leaders, who generally urged that 'Economically depressed areas should be spared because there are few or no alternatives for those laid off. Densely populated and/or economically strong areas should suffer the impact first.'<sup>28</sup> In some cases, American base commanders worked out deals with local authorities to try to ameliorate the conditions of conversion. The Army air base in Mainz began leasing its increasingly empty runways to a local charter company and sold off surplus heavy equipment to a firm that was trying to build a



commercial facility.<sup>29</sup> As the pace of departure accelerated, however, cooperation broke down.

German interlocutors found the unpredictability of the process to be infuriating. The pace of events, complicated by the mobilization for Operation Desert Shield in Saudi Arabia during the late summer of 1990, simply moved too fast for anyone to develop a coherent set of policies or objectives. The head of the ÖTV, Monika Wulf-Mathies, wrote to the Director of Civilian Personnel at the Pentagon in late August to complain that:

Procedurally you asked for secrecy and cited the threats to moral [*sic*] and productivity which derive from rumors and speculation. You also mentioned that you had not yet informed American base commanders of future closings and reductions because plans were still fluid, [*sic*] were subject to change, especially with the sudden crisis with Iraq [...]. We note that even as we met, or a few hours earlier, details of base closings appeared in the German press. This suggests that secrecy is not feasible. We prefer the generous disclosure of plans, even if the plans are subject to change.<sup>30</sup>

The impending conversion of military sites put labor unions, and particularly the ÖTV, in a somewhat odd position. They could not speak out against disarmament, which had been a plank of the German labor movement for more than a decade. At the same time, conversion was clearly going to be bad for their members. The ÖTV was quite familiar with this problem, having grudgingly signed the pan-union Peace Note in 1980. Now, the union leadership felt sufficiently concerned that it issued a statement in September 1990 in which it applauded political developments in Eastern Europe and the end of the ‘massive armaments boom’ of the past decade. However, the leadership urged the slow and deliberate rollback of that wave of militarization because:

in today’s Federal Republic there are whole regions that depend on it economically. Disarmament must be accompanied by conversion programs so that structurally weak regions can solve their economic problems and convert to civilian production.<sup>31</sup>

Observers noted this dilemma, with the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* pointing out that the unions ‘had for years been in streets demanding peace and disarmament—a reduction in armed forces. Now that this is the case [union leaders] talk about it as a negative development.’<sup>32</sup>

The first round of cuts and closures provided little cause for optimism. One of the first facilities to close was the small 54th Area Support Group installation in the town of Rheinberg (North Rhine-Westphalia). The base had opened in 1988 and only employed a few hundred locals, but those who lost their jobs struggled to find other employment in the region. Rheinberg quickly became a cause célèbre among observers of the conversion process, featuring in numerous media reports about the coming crisis of conversion. The plight of this small community seemed



to offer a vision of a bleak future, one that required immediate action to remedy. As one ÖTV publication put it: ‘Tomorrow, Rheinberg could be everywhere. Today is our opportunity to help our colleagues.’<sup>33</sup>

Increasingly, the unions based their challenge to American labor practices on the claim that Germany needed to assert its sovereign rights as a state and to cast off the legal and diplomatic architecture of the Cold War. The fundamental divide between the Americans and the unions hinged on the fact that German workers did not enjoy the same rights of negotiation and codetermination if they worked for a foreign military. A 1980 cartoon in a union newspaper implicitly compared the situation to divided Berlin, depicting the entrance to an American base with a sign outside reading ‘You are now leaving the democratic sector of the Federal Republic of Germany.’<sup>34</sup>

This legacy of conflict over sovereignty, and the problematic position of the ÖTV on the issue of militarization, played a key role in the union’s response to the conversion question. In June 1991, Wulf-Mathies spoke at a demonstration in Heidelberg called ‘Yes to Disarmament! No to Unemployment!’ She declared that the agreements governing German labor ‘belong in the dustbin of history.’ She continued, ‘The time of occupation is over. The Federal Republic is a sovereign state.’<sup>35</sup> Her colleague Horst Buchnau told workers that ‘in order to compel the Americans to make social plans, like those provided by German employers, the Federal Republic will need its full sovereign rights.’<sup>36</sup> The drumbeat of demands for German sovereignty in labor and economic affairs served to underscore the fundamental reality of the situation for German workers and communities. There was little that anyone could do to stem the tide of force reduction or to make the process any more predictable. German communities depended on decisions being made in Washington.

The first wave of base closures, reductions, and reorganization ended in late 1995. During that time, 636 American military sites in Germany closed, went to ‘standby’ status, or were reduced to a skeleton crew. The Pentagon released 92,000 acres of property back to the German federal government, a figure roughly equivalent to the size of the small federal state of Bremen.<sup>37</sup> It is important to note that the Soviet (later Russian) presence in Germany, the 340,000 man *Westgruppe*, left the last of its 1,500 properties in 1994. The transfer of former Red Army property had little of the planning that the NATO allies had ostensibly carried out. It took, in some cases, as long as 15 years to complete, and left a legacy of environmental damage that cost millions of marks.<sup>38</sup>

### **Plans for the future: housing, environment, and employment**

Just as quickly as the Americans began to talk about leaving, German communities started to have conversations about what uses could be made of abandoned facilities. While there was a range of practical and legal issues involved in conversion, the three most pressing concerns were the possibility of using American bases for affordable housing, mitigating environmental risks, and dealing with the

loss of jobs that followed the American departure. These challenges were closely related, but also distinct.

The process for handing back property controlled by American forces mirrored the complexities of the requisitioning process decades before. Put simply, properties vacated by American forces legally reverted to the German Federal Assets Office (*Bundesvermögensamt*). The German government was legally responsible for all improvements made to these sites by the Americans. This complicated system was even more difficult to manage regarding sites where the Americans had requisitioned and expanded facilities that belonged to the German Army before 1945. In these cases, the German authorities argued that they should not have to pay for buildings that had existed before the Americans arrived. While by 1995 the total bill stood at \$3.4 billion, no one really expected that the Germans would pay.<sup>39</sup>

The *Bundesvermögensamt* then had the responsibility of deciding the fate of converted assets. The office gave priority to other German federal agencies, like Deutsche Telekom, which wanted parts of the former Army base in Mainz as a logistics center. However, most assets were transferred to state government, municipal authorities, or private companies. Affected states, most notably Rhineland-Pfalz, set up investment funds to help small communities and private firms purchase and develop this land.

The range of options under consideration can be seen in a 1992 exchange between the Office of the Minister-President of Rhineland-Pfalz and the ÖTV, who had enquired about current plans to convert American military property to civilian use. The response listed a range of ideas and suggestions put forth by business groups, civic organizations, and city governments. These included: the creation of a center for education about recycling and a large recycling facility in Birkenfeld; turning Holtzendorff-Kaserne in Kaiserslautern into a trade and industrial center; new facilities for adult education and training in Mainz; and a hotel and industrial park in Koblenz. In response to a query about Gemersheim, the state government admitted that it had not given the question much thought, since neither American nor *Bundeswehr* properties would be turned over until at least 1995.<sup>40</sup>

Debates over conversion took place at the same time as Germans were raising larger questions about the future of the NATO alliance, Germany's role in the world, and the United States' emerging place as the sole remaining superpower. As civil war raged in former Yugoslavia, the United States found itself in need of German bases to be used as staging areas for Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm in the Middle East. German base towns regularly rang out with protests, decrying both American labor practices and military adventurism. Such demonstrations exposed tensions in German society over the past and future role of the Americans in Europe. The City of Hanau apologized to the American garrison after Americans cars were spray-painted with 'No More Vietnam,' and 'No Blood for Oil.'<sup>41</sup> The Frankfurt branch of the center-right Christian Democratic Union (CDU) assured the American commander, Jay Garner, that 80 percent of Germans

still supported the Americans, and that the ‘so-called Peace Movement’ did not speak for the majority.<sup>42</sup>

In April 1990, the mayor of Mannheim told a public gathering that this was:

no time for anti-Americanism. Life with the Americans has been very good. We don’t wish to damage these relations—but the political situation now permits us to think about the transformation of the military zone.

The City’s Building and Environment Office then presented the beginning of a comprehensive plan to transform areas under American control. The report sketched out a vision of more than 5,500 apartments, 2,000 of which were concentrated in Benjamin Franklin Village. There could be extensive reforestation of the armored unit training area in the Käfertaler Wald, while the land around the airfield in Sandhofen might be turned back over to agriculture.<sup>43</sup>

Probably the most important goal of community-level planners in the wake of 1989 was the growth of affordable housing. In 1990, the city government of Mannheim estimated that nearly 6,000 new apartments could come online in the near future, with 2,000 in Benjamin Franklin Village alone. The report also projected that many areas to the north of the city could be reforested, vastly improving the quality of life of residents of the region.<sup>44</sup> Hans Heimerl, Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) delegate to the *Landtag* in Hessen and representing the base community of Hanau, told constituents in 1990 that converted bases should be turned into social housing for ‘asylum seekers, the homeless, and others who need places to live.’<sup>45</sup> An SPD parliamentarian in Baden-Württemberg wrote to the commander of Spinelli Barracks urging him to try to speed up the process of closure to allow the base to be converted to residential use. Siegfried Vergin included in his appeal a small but pointed reminder of the role that the Americans played in the history of the region and the country that also served to emphasize the need for the FRG to assert its post-Cold War sovereignty:

We have not forgotten the contribution that the American has made in building democracy in Germany. As democrats, however, we feel it is our duty to speak out publicly and often about matters that concern us and the issues that we hold to be politically important.<sup>46</sup>

From the beginning of the process, more dispassionate analysts cautioned against overoptimism. A widely cited Bank of Lichtenstein study of the German real estate market warned that even a 50 percent reduction in American troops would not yield more than a 10 percent increase in usable housing stock. Aside from the need to clean and repair American housing, the majority of units likely to be turned over quickly were in small and mid-sized communities, not in cities where they might push rental prices down.<sup>47</sup> In addition, the statistics on territory returned to the FRG were misleading, since about 50 percent of the total acreage represented the large Wildflecken Training Area in Franconia. This rural area hardly needed an injection of affordable housing, particularly after the Americans left.

Events in Mainz pointed to other potential complications facing communities that sought to develop housing schemes. The city claimed a housing shortage of nearly 12,000 units in 1990, and many in city government welcomed the news that the Americans would soon pull out of the complex in and around the city's heart. City leaders sought to create community engagement and worked with the government of Rhineland-Pfalz to borrow funds to buy the property from the federal government. Environmental groups fought to have several American areas demolished and reforested, delaying the development process. Then, the *Bundeswehr* expressed interest in a shooting range near the proposed housing development. Any continued activity on the range likely doomed the efforts to build housing nearby. Having poured considerable funds into the project, the city government found itself with little prospect of alleviating the housing shortage and with a long-term planning problem ahead. As one case study put it, the city 'may have missed a reachable goal searching for utopia.'<sup>48</sup>

Among the many divisive issues facing German and American planners after 1989, environmental concerns ranked near the top.<sup>49</sup> The rise of ecological consciousness, the antinuclear movement, and the Green Party in the Federal Republic became a major operational consideration for USAREUR in the 1980s. USAREUR knew that continuing to operate in Germany meant making concessions, however grudging, on environmental issues. This included such measures as hiring German foresters to manage woodlands on maneuver areas and working with cities like Mannheim to protect vulnerable drinking water sources from contamination.<sup>50</sup>

While the Americans promised transparency on cleanup issues, a December 1990 expose in the magazine *US News and World Report* found serious deficiencies in the remediation process. While the Office of the Secretary of Defense promised a German environmental group that they were unaware of any existing issues, there were at least ten seriously contaminated sites in Germany and probably many more. In an effort to stem the tide of bad news, base commanders in Europe had been ordered to 'not spend time looking for new problems.' An internal Pentagon document suggested that the cleanup bill in the FRG alone could top \$3 billion. Or, as an environmental attorney who had previously worked for the Army put it, 'We are screwing our friends big time.'<sup>51</sup>

The prospective cost of environmental cleanup posed a serious obstacle to conversion. Firms that proposed to develop barracks into apartment complexes faced huge bills to convert coal-fired heating units into gas systems that complied with German building codes. Investors blanched at the potentially unlimited liability associated with American sites. The *Bundesvermögensamt* estimated the value of Hahn Air Force Base (today Frankfurt-Hahn Airport) at DM 360 million. The property ultimately sold to a developer for DM 30 million because of the uncertainty over the cost of cleanup.<sup>52</sup>

The problems of environmental conversion dovetailed with concerns about unemployment. German communities and labor unions consistently articulated their demand that the Americans pay more of the financial costs of remediation, but with the proviso that this money should be spent on employing German

workers in cleanup efforts. At the very least, this would provide bridge support for workers who faced job losses. The *Wehrreport* described environmental problems in Karlsruhe, Gemersheim, and Heidelberg as ‘the tip of the iceberg,’ and insisted that any cleanup efforts involve German civilian workers and not American contractors.<sup>53</sup>

In 1992, a labor court in Bavaria ruled that American authorities in the resort community of Garmisch-Partenkirchen acted improperly by laying off eight skilled workers at the Army recreation facility without proper consultation. The Works Council accused the Americans of planning to bring in contract labor to manage the closure of the facility. Richard Gorman, the manager of the recreation center, summed up the frustrations, ambivalence, and contingency of this era of dynamic change when he told *Stars and Stripes*, ‘What some of these folks want is for the past to remain the same. It can’t. We won the Cold War. We have to pay the price.’<sup>54</sup>

### **Conclusion: the conversion, three decades on**

We are accustomed to thinking of 1989 as marking the beginning of a traumatic and difficult transition period in Eastern and East-Central Europe. Yet, as this chapter shows, there were a substantial number of communities in the far more prosperous and economically dynamic western part of Germany that suffered substantial dislocation because of the end of the Cold War. Towns and cities that had rebuilt around American garrisons after 1945 faced the prospect of very significant social and economic uncertainty, not helped by a complicated and seemingly arbitrary process of base closures managed almost entirely from Washington and without local input. In these towns, the economic benefits of proximity to a military base disappeared quickly. By examining the debates over how to fill the gap left by the departure of the Americans, I have argued that we can see German government and civil society actors articulating competing visions of what a post-Cold War, fully sovereign Federal Republic should aspire to be.

After almost three decades since 1989, the legacy of conversion must be seen as mixed. In communities where the handover of property went smoothly, where public and private partnerships flourished, and where the broader growth of the German economy, after the downturn of the early 1990s, brought sustained economic development, the process proved successful. There were also places where, despite anxieties at the time, base closures never materialized. Grafenwöhr, a source of much concern in the early 1990s, is still a training area today—as it has been since the Bavarian Army built a base there at the turn of the twentieth century. Not far away, the maneuver area at Wildflecken endured a very different fate.

In 1989, Wildflecken had essentially full employment and was bringing young people from other parts of the country to work in and around the American facility. A year after the Americans departed in 1994, unemployment stood at 22 percent.<sup>55</sup> A few years later, Bavarian Minister-President Edmund Stoiber lamented the collapse of the town’s ‘military monoculture.’<sup>56</sup> Today, the *Bundeswehr* houses a

simulation command and urban warfare training at Wildflecken, but the lively and lucrative days of the American and NATO facility are long gone. Today, much of the surrounding area is a biosphere reserve, but the long-hoped-for inflow of tourists has never materialized. Apartments built for American non-commissioned officers in the 1980s soon housed ethnic German migrants from the former Soviet Union, many of whom remain in the area 25 years later.<sup>57</sup>

The university town of Tübingen, on the other hand, is commonly cited as a success story in the conversion process. The city maintained tight control over the unoccupied French garrison, worked closely with private and public partners to manage development, and ultimately saw the creation of a highly desirable residential area in the city's *Südstadt*, which has won a number of prestigious design awards.<sup>58</sup> The city of Hanau pursued a dramatically different strategy with the Campo Pond Maneuver Area after the last American troops left in 2008. Working with the Munich zoo, the city arranged to transplant a small herd of rare Central Asian wild horses (Przewalski's horse). Today, a thriving group of endangered horses use the woodland paths carved by American tanks over several decades.<sup>59</sup>

It is difficult, using available sources, to get a sense of how the conversion debates changed public opinion. There is an intriguing clue buried in the large data sets compiled by the Allensbach Institute. Every few years, beginning in the mid-1950s, pollsters asked Germans if they would 'regret or rejoice' (*bedauern oder begrüßen*) at the news that the Americans would leave the country the next day. While the rate of those who indicated that they would be happy to see the Americans go had been climbing through the 1980s, it spiked after 1989 to 49 percent, the highest since polling began in 1956. Only 22 percent said that they would not like to see the Americans leave. Almost immediately, however, those numbers began to shift. By 1994, 38 percent said they would be sad to see the Americans leave, and 29 percent indicated that they would be happy at the prospect.<sup>60</sup> While it is impossible to draw a definitive conclusion from this poll, it seems entirely reasonable to think that some of this was due to the uncertainty and likely cost of a precipitous withdrawal.

A 2004 essay by two analysts at the Allensbach Institute considered data on public opinion in Germany on the war in Iraq. By that time, 79 percent of Germans expressed negative feelings about President George Bush. By contrast, Ronald Reagan only achieved a 38 percent negative rating at the height of the Euromissile debate in the early 1980s. The most substantial opposition to American policy came from young Germans. While the analysts cited the important legacies of World War II and the continued use conscription for manning the *Bundeswehr*, I would suggest that this substantial divergence has another root cause—a generation of Germans who grew up after 1989 and had far less regular contact with Americans.<sup>61</sup>

Ironically, a country that had grown increasingly accustomed to and proficient in the English language, not to mention American consumer culture, found itself drifting apart from its one-time Atlantic partner. English proficiency is perhaps one of the most enduring legacies of the American presence. Hundreds of thousands of Germans worked in English every day for over four decades, leaving a workforce well positioned to take advantage of the increasing hegemony of that language. When the Americans began their withdrawal after 1989, about a third



of the residents of former West Germany claimed to speak English well. Almost all Germans surveyed identified English as the most important foreign language to learn.<sup>62</sup> These numbers are not broken down by region, but there is at least anecdotal evidence that English learning was concentrated in the regions with large American, British, and Canadian soldiers.

This should not romanticize the German-American Cold War relationship, but it should suggest that the relationship was very important on both sides. Quotidian encounters shaped the dynamic between Germany and the United States every bit as much as policy-making or defense planning. Relations were not always good, but they were mutually constitutive and a crucial component of the broader transformation of Germany from its military, economic, and moral collapse after 1945 to a prosperous and peaceful democracy.

Today, Germany still plays a critical role in the American force posture around the world. As of March 2017, there are about 35,000 American military personnel in the country.<sup>63</sup> Their footprint is far smaller, with the majority based in and around Stuttgart, where several major commands remain. The huge Campbell Barracks complex in Heidelberg closed in 2013. The latest major round of base closures took place in 2015 and included long-standing facilities at Schweinfurt and Bamberg. A recent article in the *Economist* quotes a development official in Schweinfurt saying that ‘We don’t miss them, but we weren’t wanting them to leave either.’<sup>64</sup> The streets around the garrison will remain named after US states. The corner of California Strasse and Ohio Strasse will serve as an enduring reminder of the legacies of the American presence.

It is perhaps appropriate that the problems of conversion continue to overlap with other social questions in contemporary Germany. During the massive refugee crisis of the past half-decade, institutions of the German state have used former American facilities to house thousands of displaced persons from Africa and the Middle East. Patrick Henry Village near Heidelberg is, as of 2017, under the control of the state of Baden-Württemberg as a refugee center. Part of the conversion project in Mannheim’s trendy Franklin District is on hold while barracks, once used to house American soldiers, serve as a temporary home for those fleeing war and human catastrophe.<sup>65</sup>

While the period of crisis, in which the German economy was poorly prepared to absorb the job losses that came with base closures, has ended, there is no doubt that the human cost of ending relationships built over decades persists. In April 2005, the city council of Heidelberg convened a public meeting to inform citizens of the likely consequences of the American withdrawal. After hearing from planners and economic officials, a range of ordinary Heidelberger citizens got up to give their opinions. Hedwig Gieser, an 84-year-old retiree, summed up many of the tensions, anxieties, and ambiguities of the conversion process.

There are so many Germans who work [for the Americans] and they will probably lose their jobs. That is just awful. I have lived in Heidelberg since 1950, so I have seen everything right from the start. I think that I will miss the Americans.<sup>66</sup>

## Notes

- 1 MWSP Mannheim, 'Konversionsprozess.'
- 2 Gassert, 'The Spectre of Americanization: Western Europe in the American Century,' 182–200.
- 3 Ther, *Europe Since 1989: A History*, 260.
- 4 Estimates of the total size of the American presence vary widely. This figure is derived from the careful work of Dewey Browder. See Maulucci, 'Introduction.'
  1. A lower estimate can be found in Holshek, 'Legacies of the US Presence in Germany,' 149.
- 5 Three excellent examples of this are Conze, *Die Suche nach Sicherheit: Eine Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland von 1949 bis in die Gegenwart*; Herbert, *Geschichte Deutschlands im 20. Jahrhundert*; Wolfrum, *Die geglü ckte Demokratie: Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland von ihren Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*.
- 6 Ritter, *The Price of German Unity: Reunification and the Crisis of the Welfare State*.
- 7 There are many examples of this, but see particularly Conze, *Die Suche nach Sicherheit: Eine Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland von 1949 bis in die Gegenwart*, 709–712.
- 8 Braat and Corduener, '1989 and the West: Western Europe since the end of the Cold War'.
- 9 This is different from Peter Katzenstein's classic argument about the FRG's 'semi-sovereignty,' which focused on domestic constraints and not on the international context. See Green and Paterson, *Governance in Contemporary Germany: The Semisovereign State Revisited*, 8.
- 10 Junker, 'Politics, Security, Economics, Culture, and Society: Dimensions of Transatlantic Relations,' 9.
- 11 Conze, *Die Suche nach Sicherheit: Eine Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland von 1949 bis in die Gegenwart*, 786–803; see also the working paper, Vitols, 'Continuity and Change: Making Sense of the German Model.'
- 12 Grathwol and Moorhus, *Building for Peace: US Army Engineers in Europe, 1945–1991*, 67.
- 13 Arguments over the construction of Benjamin Franklin Village can be found in, among many others *Mannheimer Morgen*, 'Neue Hoffnung für ausquartierte Hausbesitzer.' One 1954 survey found that 63 percent of West Germans wanted foreign troops to remain, though most wanted their presence to last no more than ten additional years. Noelle and Neumann, *Jahrbuch der öffentlichen Meinung, 1947–1955*, 203.
- 14 Becker-Schaum et al., 'Introduction,' in *The Nuclear Crisis: The Arms Race, Cold War Anxiety, and the German Peace Movement of the 1980s*, 1–35.
- 15 Trauschweizer, *The Cold War Us Army: Building Deterrence for Limited War*, 242–243.
- 16 ÖTV Abteilung SSK. Report.
- 17 Seiler, *Die GIs: Amerikanische Soldaten in Deutschland*, 286.
- 18 In the interest of clarity and space, foreign forces in Berlin will not be considered in this chapter unless otherwise noted. Berlin remained under formal occupation by the four Allied Powers (Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and the United States) until the early 1990s, so budgeting and property rights in the city were generally distinct from considerations that applied elsewhere in the FRG. The small city-state of Bremen also hosted a sizable American presence, but was much less reliant on the Americans than the others listed. Surveys of the history of the American presence in the FRG include: Lemza, *American Military Communities in West Germany: Life in the Cold War Badlands*; and Leuerer, *Die Stationierung amerikanischer Streitkräfte in Deutschland: Militärgemeinden der U.S. Army seit 1945 als ziviles Element der Stationierungspolitik der Vereinigten Staaten*.
- 19 ÖTV Bezirksverwaltung Bayern. Report.



- 20 An exceptionally useful report on conversion issues is Klemmer and Cunningham, 'Restructuring the US Military Bases in Germany: Scope, Impacts, and Opportunities,' 34.
- 21 Gettmann, 'Truppenabbau bei den US-Streitkräften in Rheinland-Pfalz: Erfahrungen mit Konversion,' 136.
- 22 Seipp, "'We Have to Pay the Price": German Labor and the US Army, 1945–1989.'
- 23 There is substantial literature on this subject. Important texts include: Pehlke, *Die Souveränität der Bundesrepublik Deutschland im westlichen Bündnis: Historische und aktuelle Aspekte*; Rumpf, *Land ohne Souveränität: Kritische Betrachtungen zur Deutschlandpolitik von Adenauer bis Brandt*.
- 24 ÖTV, 'Tarifvertrag zur sozialen Sicherung.' This pamphlet is a later reprinting of the agreement, made available to union members in 1990 as the issue of lay-offs reemerged.
- 25 ÖTV Wehrreport, 'Kann keine Arbeitsplätze garantieren.'
- 26 *Mannheimer Morgen*, 'Truppenabbau so gut wie sicher.'
- 27 *Mannheimer Morgen*, 'US-Standort Worms wird "angegliedert".'
- 28 Wulf-Mathies, Letter to Cipolla.
- 29 Klemmer and Cunningham, 'Restructuring the US Military Bases in Germany: Scope, Impacts, and Opportunities,' 45.
- 30 Wulf-Mathies, Letter to Cipolla.
- 31 Erklärung des Hauptvorstandes der Gewerkschaft ÖTV zu den Auswirkung von Abrüstung und Truppenabbau auf die Beschäftigten bei den Streitkräften in Deutschland.
- 32 *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 'Truppenabbau: Gefahr für 15000 Arbeitsplätze.'
- 33 *Wehrreport*, 'Feindbild und Waffen abbauen, Arbeitsplätze erhalten.'
- 34 ÖTV Wehrreport, 'Und das sind Beispiele der Warnstreiks.'
- 35 Wulf-Mathies, 'Rede der ÖTV Vorsitzenden Monika Wulf-Mathies ... 08. Juni 1991.'
- 36 *Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung*, 'Zivilangestellte bangen um Arbeitsplätze.'
- 37 Klemmer and Cunningham, 'Restructuring,' 6, 17.
- 38 *Stern*, 'Abschied zweiter Klasse.'
- 39 Klemmer and Cunningham, 'Restructuring the US Military Bases in Germany: Scope, Impacts, and Opportunities,' 46.
- 40 Office of the MP, R-P. Letter to Muscheid and Wegmann (ÖTV).
- 41 Healy (Acting Community Commander Hanau). Letter to OB Martin.
- 42 *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 'CDU: "Kein anderer Weg".'
- 43 *Mannheimer Morgen*, 'Zivilisten greifen nach Militärgelände.'
- 44 *Ibid.*
- 45 *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 'Linderung der Wohnungsnot?'
- 46 *Wochenblatt*, 'Kasernengelände für den Wohnungsbau.'
- 47 Schmidt-Eenboom, 'Vorstellung der Alliierten zur Truppenreduzierung und ihre Auswirkung auf die Westpfalz.'
- 48 Klemmer and Cunningham, 'Restructuring the US Military Bases in Germany: Scope, Impacts, and Opportunities,' 63.
- 49 Mausbach, 'Nuclear Winter: Prophecies of Doom and Images of Desolation During the Second Cold War,' 28.
- 50 Cox, 'Ecology and the Big Guns of Graf'; *Mannheimer Morgen* 'Verschmutzes Wasser US-Militär muss bezahlen.'
- 51 Satchell, 'The Mess We've Left Behind.'
- 52 Klemmer and Cunningham, 'Restructuring the US Military Bases in Germany: Scope, Impacts, and Opportunities,' 47.
- 53 *ÖTV: Das Magazin*, 'Zeitbomben.'
- 54 Stars and Stripes 'AFRC Retracts Layoff Notices for 8 after Judge's Ruling.'
- 55 Kellerman, *475 Jahre Wildflecken, 1524–1999*, 114.
- 56 *Ibid.*, 2.
- 57 Seipp, *Strangers in the Wild Place: Refugees, Americans, and a German Town, 1945–1952*.

- 58 Uwe Rade, 'Konversion als Gewinnerthema.' An example of Tübingen as a positive example to other communities can be found in *Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung*, 'Gewinn oder Katastrophe: Was passiert, wenn die US-Army gehen sollte.'
- 59 Main-Echo, 'Fünf Urpferde in Hanau angekommen.'
- 60 Noelle-Neumann and Köcher, *Allensbacher Jahrbuch der Demoskopie, 1993–1997*, 1142. These data reflect respondents from the FRG and former West Germany. Data collected from the former GDR after 1991 show overwhelming support (76 percent) for an American withdrawal in 1991, falling to 48 percent by 1996.
- 61 Hausmann and Petersen, 'German Public Opinion on the Iraq Conflict: A Passing Crisis with the USA or a Lasting Departure?' 311–330.
- 62 Noelle-Neumann and Köcher, *Allensbacher Jahrbuch*, 224.
- 63 Lai et al., 'Is America's Military Big Enough?'
- 64 *The Economist*, 'Go Home, Yankee.'
- 65 See, for example, Heidelberg Konversion, 'Konversion in Heidelberg: Den Wandel gestalten.'
- 66 'Zwischen Entsetzung und Hoffnung,' *Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung*, April 13, 2005.

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### 3 The rise of a new power

#### Germany's political realism and global strategy

*Ubaldo Villani-Lubelli*

##### **Introduction: 1989, the new Germany**

On May 24, 1989, the West German Federal Republic celebrated its fortieth anniversary. This provisory state, created after the defeat in the Second World War, was now completely stabilized and had become an economic, monetary, and political-institutional model. In a special supplement for this anniversary the political scientist Karl Dietrich Bracher, in an article entitled '*Kein Anlaß zu Teuto-Pessimismus*' ('No Need for Teuto-Pessimism'), defined West Germany as a central power with strong ties to Western Europe.<sup>1</sup> It was not such a banal and obvious statement if we take into account the events that were about to shake the international political equilibrium. Bracher certainly could not have imagined either the fall of the Berlin Wall or the reunification of Germany, but it is noteworthy that even then it was normal to think of Germany as a central power—an expression that was to become more frequent in the 1990s.

Yet, despite the talk of becoming a 'central power' in Germany itself, the country's European partners feared what consequences the unification of Germany would have for political relations on the continent. In the unsettled months between the fall of the Berlin Wall and German reunification, the ghost of a 'Great Germany' and the long shadow of its past had reappeared in all their dramatic forms. The ten-point reunification plan that Helmut Kohl presented to the Bundestag on November 28, 1989, to outline his unification plans was perceived as a project that endangered the political stability on which postwar Europe was built.

In March 1990 the British prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, some months after the fall of the Berlin Wall and at a time when Germany was moving quickly toward reunification, organized a seminar with some historians to understand what form a future Europe might take. The seminar captured the uncertainty of the immediate post-Cold War period regarding the German position, stating that,

We could not expect a United Germany to think and act in exactly the same way as the Federal Republic which we had known for the last forty-five years. [...] The Germans would not necessarily think more dangerously, but they would think differently.<sup>2</sup>

Some months later there were still many uncertainties and fears in the United Kingdom regarding the process of reunification. On July 19, 1990, Nicholas Ridley, the secretary of state for industry, gave a famous interview to *The Spectator* in which, with a series of anti-German comments, he evoked a future in which Europe would be ‘germanized,’ comparing Chancellor Kohl to the Führer Adolf Hitler. Ridley had to resign and the predicted germanization was delayed.<sup>3</sup>

From a political and historical point of view it is important to emphasize that, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Germany was the only country uniting in a geographic area where many countries were splitting up, and consequently the German Federal Republic was acquiring a geopolitical centrality that it hadn’t had since before the Second World War. It is not by chance that the document that came out of the seminar organized by Prime Minister Thatcher referred to the Soviet Union as the only power capable of counterbalancing the influence of reunited Germany.<sup>4</sup>

From our present-day standpoint, the fears and anxieties in Western Europe surrounding Germany’s new role seem to have been misplaced. Despite its political and economic clout, Germany was able to find a peaceful position in an enlarged European Union (EU). As this article argues, a united Germany became the ‘central power’ of Europe, but used its political leverage in a way that combined political realism with a more global strategy. This was not only a consequence of unification, but also of other intertwined factors, such as the changing positions of the powers that feared a new Germany most in 1990: the United Kingdom and France. This article retraces how a unified Germany came to discover its new role as a center power and how this affected the European Union. First, it will focus on the events after 1989–1990 that changed the political development in Europe and the European integration process. Second, the emergence of a new German power and its specific features will be described, and, finally, it will be underlined how the role of Germany in Europe has changed and how Germany’s political leadership is of high importance in the current political system and governance of the European Union.

### **German reunification and the restarting of the European integration process**

The first decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall was characterized by quick steps toward ever closer European integration.<sup>5</sup> In the two-year period 1989–1991, the European states negotiated the monetary and political union in an attempt to satisfy the German request to fix very rigid parameters for the Central European Bank, so as to guarantee financial rigor and make it independent of political power, on the model of the Bundesbank. In any case it was not a hegemonic move. The reasons for the German demands were historic. They wanted to avoid returning to the conditions that had helped to give rise to National Socialism—the first period of inflation in the 1920s and the financial and monetary support given by the Reichsbank to the political economy oriented toward war.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore the history of the deutschmark and its introduction in 1948 (the last Western currency,



which rapidly found its place as the second reserve currency in the world after the dollar) had given the Federal Republic an incomparable economic stability within the European states.

The Treaty on European Union (the Maastricht Treaty) laid the foundations for a single currency, the euro, and significantly expanded cooperation between European countries in a number of new areas (European citizenship, common foreign and security policy, and closer cooperation between police and the judiciary in criminal matters). The single currency defined in the agreements established by the Maastricht Treaty was modeled on the deutschmark. In fact, Helmut Kohl, on December 13, 1991, after the long negotiations of the Maastricht Treaty, announced to the Bundestag that he was satisfied with the results and believed that the Treaty satisfied German requirements in all its most important points.<sup>7</sup> The paradox of the Maastricht Treaty is that it was born out of the necessity to bind and include reunified Germany in the European context, but through it the German Federal Republic imposed its own formula for stability and its own financial model on the rest of Europe. And yet, in one sense, Kohl did not hide his own disappointment about the Maastricht Treaty, which did not bring about the political union that Berlin wanted. Neither was it a credible option for the United Kingdom and France, who were only interested in containing Germany's economic and monetary strength, and certainly not in creating a real political union. In fact, the European integration process was being pushed forward by France from the beginning, but the political context following the fall of the Berlin Wall radically changed the balance that had been based on French supremacy.

However, while in economic terms Europe made quick steps toward closer integration, its political integration stalled after the early 1990s. This seems to have been largely a result of French and British reluctance for closer European political integration, because Germany itself was an important supporter of the political projects of the 1990s and 2000s. What is more, until the great international economic and financial crisis in 2008, European politics had been directed by a triangle of power between Paris, London, and Berlin, with the German Federal Republic as an important protagonist, not only of the Maastricht Treaty, but also in the Treaties of Amsterdam (1997) and Nice (2001), which tried to push forward the process of integration. The German government was one of the most important supporters of the project for the European Constitution Treaty, although it did not proceed after the referendums in France and the Netherlands in 2005. Chancellor Merkel was also among the principal promoters of the Berlin Declaration, which saved the Constitutional Treaty in the nonetheless reduced form that is the current Lisbon Treaty.<sup>8</sup>

In fact in the 1990s, the German Federal Republic's economic weakness and reluctance in foreign policy disappointed, at least partially, the forecast of German hegemony in Europe, giving way to the idea of a state, that is Germany, constantly looking for an appropriate international role. Germany's political assertiveness in the 1990s and 2000s contrasted with its meager economic performance in that period. Between the mid-1990s and the beginning of the international crisis, the German Federal Republic was considered the sick man of Europe.<sup>9</sup> In 2003,



Germany and France were the first EU member states to break the stability pact signed together with the Maastricht Treaty, which Germany had promoted in the first place (in the case of Germany, in the expectation of a thorough reform of the social system, which became known as Agenda 2010). The political scene changed radically at the beginning of the international economic and financial crisis, after which Germany's hegemonic power over Europe, which had been feared since 1989–1990, took off.

To summarize, Germany's new role in the 1990s and 2000s seemed to be relatively limited. The fall of the Berlin Wall did not constitute a major break with West Germany's foreign and European policy during the Cold War.<sup>10</sup> Instead, the country was itself plagued by economic stagnation that impeded a renewed assertiveness on the international stage. However, from the late 2000s onward, we have witnessed a change from a leadership position that was based on the principle of leading from behind, to a much more proactive role that involves directly managing crises by making often difficult and unpopular decisions.<sup>11</sup> What determined this radical transformation of Germany's role in Europe was a series of three external factors, independent of specific actions undertaken by the German Federal Republic: the European Union's eastern enlargement, the economic and political decline of France, and the United Kingdom's gradual withdrawal from the European Union.

### **Germany's transformation from 2005 onward: three factors in reshaping Germany's international role**

The first factor in reshaping Germany's international role was the European Union's eastern enlargement, which took place in two separate phases in 2004 and 2007. This was certainly a decisive factor for a nation like Germany, which had historically looked to the east. The eastern enlargement confirmed Germany's position as the main tie between the countries of Eastern Europe and the rest of the EU countries. It also allowed the country to play an important mediating role in the difficult relationship between Russia and the other countries of the ex-Soviet Union. Germany's sphere of influence in Eastern Europe is very strong, not only from an economic and political point of view, but also from a cultural one.

The change that has taken place is huge: from two frontier states (as was the case when they were divided), a reunited Germany has become the center of the European Union and, for the first time in history, is in a context of peace and cooperation with all its bordering states. The enlargement brought fully to the surface the Federal Republic's new position as '*Macht in der Mitte*' (power in the middle), as the German political scientist Herfried Münkler defines it.<sup>12</sup> According to him the task of the German Federal Republic, in as far as it is the *Macht in der Mitte*, consists of keeping Europe together by thwarting growing anti-European and destabilizing forces, smoothing out the diverging interests of the member states in various questions, and managing compensation processes. This task of keeping Europe together falls to a 'power in the middle' whose mistakes are rarely tolerated.<sup>13</sup> In this political framework, it is important to remember the *Kerneuropa* document because

it is in that 1994 document that the role of Germany was delineated in relation to the fundamental German interest in eastern enlargement in order for it to have the opportunity to become the '*ruhige Mitte*' (settled center) of Europe.<sup>14</sup>

The second cause of Germany's new role was the stagnation of France, which, while remaining the second largest economy in the Eurozone, continued to gradually lose importance and political weight between 2005 and 2017. France is a country that has gradually lost its pro-European spirit (I'm referring to the referendum of 2005 but also to the national sovereignty rhetoric), and its weakness has been a negative factor contributing to the upsetting of political balance in Europe. It is surely important that the European Union should have a France capable of counterbalancing German influence in Europe.<sup>15</sup>

There are, of course, current political processes that could change France's position in the European Union. In particular, Macron's election success could give a new and unexpected impulse to Franco-German cooperation. It is maybe premature to talk about a rebirth of the Franco-German axis, but there are good indications of a renewal of the Franco-German engine. On January 22, 2018, the French National Assembly and the German Bundestag solemnly renewed the Elysée Treaty (1963), drawing up, on the occasion of the fifty-fifth anniversary, a new version of the same treaty.

The most important question is what the Franco-German axis can achieve. While Macron embraces a more flexible EU and an important U-turn in Europe, the German position until now has been much more realistic and less ambitious, aimed above all at not further altering the political balance in individual European countries. Europe cannot progress without France and Germany, but agreement in Paris and Berlin may not be sufficient. Not by chance, the finance ministers from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, and Sweden have written an open letter to underline the fact that discussions about reform of the European Monetary Union should take place in an inclusive format.<sup>16</sup> No EU reform can be carried out exclusively by France and Germany. However, the most politically important fact is that the election of Macron has begun a whole new phase for France. Macron is trying to make France a truly pro-European country. This is the great innovation introduced by the French president, in radical discontinuity with a French political tradition characterized by the defense of its national sovereignty.

The final factor behind Germany's increased international assertiveness is the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU. For many years the United Kingdom was a member state *sui generis*, to whom numerous concessions were made, for example in terms of opt-out clauses.<sup>17</sup> The United Kingdom has always refused to accept one of the main principles of the European treaties, that of an *ever closer union*. I'm referring not only to the refusal to be part of the Eurozone and Schengen zone, but also in particular to the protocol of the 'Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union' in which it is clarified that the EU cannot overturn domestic law in the United Kingdom.

The British 'withdrawal' from Europe is not new and did not begin with Brexit. The political developments after 1989–1990 marked the beginning of a constant

and increasing withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European integration process that came to a head with Brexit. But, thanks to Brexit, the ambiguity of the United Kingdom's position in Europe has finally drawn to a close. The implications of Britain's withdrawal are nonetheless serious, because the United Kingdom has always been an important counterbalance to German political and economic influence. It is interesting to note that, as early as 1990, Nicholas Ridley, in the interview cited earlier, underlined that the United Kingdom 'always played the balance of power in Europe. It has always been Britain's role to keep these various powers balanced, and never has it been more necessary than now, with Germany so uppity.'<sup>18</sup>

With Brexit, the German Federal Republic became the uncontested leader in Europe, as German activity in foreign policy and international diplomacy clearly shows. However, at the same time, the Federal Republic will be losing an important partner in the United Kingdom, particularly in military, intelligence, and security matters, in which areas Germany is not strong enough to cope alone, at least not yet. This gap will need to be filled by cooperation with other partners.

### **From the 'sick man of Europe' to a role model: political and institutional stability in the German Federal Republic in the 2000s**

An additional, but internal factor, regarding Germany's new position is its political and institutional stability. The German political institutions have held up well, despite the considerable international instability that has had economic and social repercussions on German society. If we add to this Germany's excellent economic performance—characterized by a very high level of exports, low unemployment, stable growth, and the ability to attract young people from other European countries as well as to integrate immigrants—the German Republic, with its social model as a reference point, has established itself as the most successful system in Europe.

It also needs to be taken into account that the only leader to survive the long economic and financial crisis was Angela Merkel. Governments and leaders have changed in every other European country, while in Germany Merkel has been governing since 2005. This has obviously given Germany a continuity of political direction in the euro crisis that other countries could not enjoy.

If Germany today is in a better economic and social position compared to the rest of Europe, the reasons can be found in a process that began immediately after 1989–1990, in a long-term economic policy that has always been the mark of German governments, whatever their political color. The new competitiveness and strength of the economy of the German Federal Republic is the fruit of an extraordinary collective endeavor. Germany went into the monetary union weakened by a costly unification and an overvalued deutschmark, and just a decade ago was going through a serious crisis and was among the worst performers in Europe for economic growth. The combination of a rapid and costly reunification and the introduction of the single European currency had brought the German economy

to its knees. Today, however, the situation is very different and the country is growing fast.

With impressive rapidity, Germany has gone from being the sick man of Europe to being its model economy. Germany made its economic reforms during Gerhard Schröder's red-green coalition (1998–2005). Between 2003 and 2005 the Social Democrat chancellor, with his Agenda 2010, implemented a long-term reform program with the aim of saving the German welfare state. It was the greatest reform of the German welfare system since the Second World War. While the French Socialists were introducing the 35-hour week and a minor revival in salary rises, the German Social Democrats were liberalizing the job market and increasing pressure on the unemployed to look for work. Added to the increase in exports, these reforms easily explain the success of the German model. In fact, there are many reasons for Germany's success: economic rigor, financial stability, structural reform, and exports.

Recent political events in Germany, following the elections of September 24, 2017, seem to have partly undermined political stability there. However, without being too influenced by current political processes, it is very difficult to predict long-term effects. In any case, with the building of the fourth Merkel government, both the political-institutional system and the party system seem to have overcome the post-electoral crisis.

### **The features of German power: political realism and global strategy**

While observers expected Germany to emerge as Europe's principal power right after 1990, it has taken the country almost 15 years to take up this position on the European stage.<sup>19</sup> Since the late 2000s, Germany has finally become a 'hegemon.' It is possible to identify three main interpretations in this regard, which have some points in common. The first characterization of German power emphasizes the reluctance of the Federal Republic to assume a leadership role after the loss of the traditional European vocation that characterized German policies from Konrad Adenauer (1949–1963) to Helmut Kohl (1982–1998) and Gerhard Schröder (1998–2005).<sup>20</sup> The second attributes to Germany a hegemony that takes the form, on the one hand, as an economic semi-hegemony, and, on the other, as a conscious geopolitical hegemony.<sup>21</sup> There is also a third interpretation of German power, albeit a minority one, put forward recently by Beverly Crawford, Herfried Münkler, and Angelo Bolaffi, who interpret Germany's role in Europe in a positive way as the center of political stability in Europe.<sup>22</sup>

The analysis of Germany's role in Europe that I present here fits in with this last interpretation. In my opinion, Germany's role in Europe should be rewritten, keeping in mind its historical-political evolution and tracing its essential traits in order to better understand its strategies for the creation of a European institutional and political order. Contrary to the conclusions of some of the scientific literature, and despite the objective difficulties of placing itself in the role of leader, Germany is accepted and widely recognized by its European partners, and

is emerging as an inevitable hegemonic power aimed at maintaining European balance and political stability, and the competitiveness of the EU in the global market. In fact, two fundamental characteristics of the new German power can be detected: political realism and global strategy.

Regarding political realism, Germany now seems to play a much more assertive role in the political restructuring of the European Union than it did during the institutional reforms of the 1990s and early 2000s. After the recent multiple crises, many people argue that the European Union obviously needs extensive reform of its own institutional structure and governance.<sup>23</sup> Nonetheless, it is evident in the present changing political context that such a prospect has no chance of being realized in the medium to short term. Even though there is no lack of proposals for the reform of European institutions, the nation-states remain the holders of political power in the European Union. It will become neither a federation (or confederation), nor a superstate, but will stay a *Staatenverbund* of sovereign states that grant small shares or parts of their sovereignty, only and exclusively on certain matters, on the basis of the needs of the historical and political context.

There is no hiding the facts that the German government has more than once defended its intergovernmental system<sup>24</sup> and desires a multi-speed Europe—as emerged from the Rome Declaration of March 25, 2017, or the Benelux countries that preceded the Bratislava summit,<sup>25</sup> both of which are further confirmation of the prevalence of such an intergovernmental system. From the point of view of the political-institutional structure of the European Union, German realism has meant that excessively ambitious plans for the reform of European institutions have been avoided. Besides, after the failure of the constitutional treaty following the referendums in France and Holland in 2005, the German government promoted a less ambitious and more realistic plan, which, as has already been mentioned, became the present Treaty of Lisbon. Even in the present turbulent political environment, in which it would be extremely risky to think of modifying the treaties, the desire for a multi-speed Europe is a symptom of political realism.

The multi-speed Europe that Germany is now proposing is not in fact a new idea, but a real return to the 1990s, going back to the aforementioned *Kerneuropa* project, theorized by Wolfgang Schäuble and Karl Lamers in 1994. The project then proposed economic integration, differentiated in as far as there was a belief that not all countries had the necessary requisites to be able to join the single currency from the beginning. The document on *Kerneuropa* underlined that the European Union, because of its continuing enlargement, risked going astray institutionally and politically, since the interests of the member states would become ever more divergent. It therefore proposed a core group, represented by Germany, France, Belgium, Holland, and Luxembourg, to which would later be added Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom. The project, fiercely criticized, was not realized, and the *Kerneuropa* concept has long been taboo. I believe that, in the foreseeable future, the *Kerneuropa* project could be looked at again, and adapted to suit the new historical-political context. Clearly the countries that should be part of a ‘core Europe’ would be different (and more numerous) compared to 1994, but there would remain a pro-European force at its center, which could only be Germany.

There are naturally many reasons for Germany's central role, from economic and demographic strength to political stability, however, there is one aspect that I believe is essential, but to which not enough importance is given. I am referring to Germany's global strategy. Germany has not only taken the lead in pointing to the direction of future reforms in Europe, but has also developed a 'global strategy' that has changed its global position and standing, and allowed the country to develop the ability to foresee and interpret sociopolitical phenomena taking place. This came to the fore in three different yet interconnected developments: the refugee crisis; foreign policy and the engagement to reinforce multilateral international cooperation; and investment in military defense.

The three factors are strictly interconnected and it would be a mistake to treat them separately, because in all cases they concern the international role to which Germany aspires. The country slowly shed its reluctance for military engagement. This process had already started in the 1990s; while others feared German reunification, Germany immediately showed itself to be a '*Zivilmacht*' (civil power), starting a process of normalization from 'tamed power' to 'normalized power.'<sup>26</sup> This meant that, for the first time since the Second World War, the German army began to take on international responsibilities, as happened in the international missions in Kosovo.<sup>27</sup> This would have been unthinkable a few years earlier and would also have had consequences in internal political debate. Germany's commitment gave the opposition and the liberals (the latter being part of the government coalition) the chance to ask the Constitutional Court if participation in international peace-keeping and security operations outside of Federal territory was in compliance with Article 87 of the Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*), which permitted the use of the armed forces only for defense. At the same time, Article 24 laid down that the German Federal Republic could transfer rights of sovereignty to international organizations. In the 1994 sentence, the constitutional judges established that the German army's involvement in the activities of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was licit, but that any future military actions should first be put to a vote in parliament.

Since September 11, 2001, the Federal Republic has acquired ever greater international influence and responsibility. After all, at a time of globalization, the principles of German political policy have been declared to be multilateralism and international cooperation. The new international context has led, then, to a greater independence of action for the German government. This trend continued in the 2000s, when Germany repeatedly asserted its independence on the international stage. This occurred, for instance, during the war in Iraq, which the Schröder government decided not to support—a significant historical watershed. This was followed in 2011 by another example of the German government's independence, when Angela Merkel and Guido Westerwelle's cabinet decided not to become involved in the war in Libya. In both cases Berlin had shown that it had its own position and strategy. Furthermore, one of the most important signs of this new international dimension was the Iran negotiations, during which Germany played a significant role, together with the five permanent members of the Security Council (the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, and China) and the European Union.

The positions taken by the German government on the crisis between Russia and Ukraine, and on refugees are the latest demonstrations of Berlin's strategic independence. In recent years, the war between Russia and Ukraine, and the gradual international disengagement of the United States (which began during Barack Obama's presidency and was completed after the election of Donald Trump) have also changed the balance of power in Europe and in the global context, giving Germany a key role. The German Federal Republic was guiding Europe through very delicate international crises. In the case of the Crimea, the German chancellor has taken the diplomatic route, and in the case of refugees she has surprisingly opened the way for a revision of the Treaty of Dublin and a political turnaround in the European Union's migration policies. Germany has not only understood the totally new and complicated nature of the problem of immigration, but has also initiated a complex multilateral undertaking, as shown by Berlin's keenness to conclude an agreement with Turkey. Other examples of this are the German government's taking on of the presidency of the G20 ('Shaping an interconnected world' was the German presidency's motto) and Angela Merkel's important visit to Africa in October 2016, during which Chancellor Merkel underlined the importance of taking a wider view in dealing with the immigration crisis and international security:

I am convinced that our safety depends on situations geographically far removed from us. For this reason we sign climate agreements, for this reason we set targets for world development like Agenda 2030. I will give you an example. In the Lake Chad area there are enormous problems with drought which contribute to its considerable political instability. This does not mean that anyone who finds themselves in difficulty there can come to Europe as a refugee, but it does mean that we should be interested in whether or not the 11 million people there have hope in life. If Lake Chad should go down still further in the end the only option for these people is Boko Haram or some other local terrorist organization. For me it is a question of operating a policy of prevention.<sup>28</sup>

It is clear, then, that migration, since it is a global phenomenon, has assumed planetary proportions, producing, on the one hand, the effect of bringing closer that which is geographically distant, and, on the other hand, the fragmentation of individual territories. Richard Hass has rightly highlighted that:

Today's circumstances call for an updated operating system—call it World Order 2.0—that includes not only the rights of sovereign states but also those states' obligations to others. [...] It stems from a need to expand and adapt the traditional principles of international order for a highly interconnected world.<sup>29</sup>

The problems national governments have to deal with regarding immigration processes require global and supranational solutions, with grave economic and social implications.



The German government's decision to be investing 2 percent of gross national product (GNP) on military defense by 2024 can be interpreted with this in mind.<sup>30</sup> Reaching such a goal means strengthening international organizations like NATO, the UN, and also the EU. Investment in defense does not only mean military strength, but also investing in humanitarian aid and diplomacy.<sup>31</sup> The German Federal Republic has understood the role of the military in the success of foreign policy and the protection of European democratic order.

In an important speech on the principles of German foreign policy, the then German foreign minister, Sigmar Gabriel, affirmed the importance for Germany (and consequently for Europe) of undertaking an independent foreign policy:

But the world is [...] far more uncomfortable than we thought at the end of the last century and at the beginning of the 21st century. And now we realize that even with great economic prosperity in our country there is no convenient place on the sidelines of international politics for us. Neither for us Germans nor for us Europeans. We have to realize: Either we try to shape ourselves in this world or we are shaped by the rest of the world. Value orientation, as it is often used by us Germans for our foreign policy, will alone not be enough to assert itself in this world characterized by economic, political and military egoisms.<sup>32</sup>

Gabriel's words show that, despite the theory of Mangasarian and Techau on its presumed 'strategic frivolousness,'<sup>33</sup> Germany's realism and global strategy—established by the process of normalization after 1989—put aside false hypocrisy and attempts to counterbalance economic and political interests with moral values. It coincides with and has had an influence on the global strategy of the European Union since Germany needs the European Union in order to put its strategies into practice.<sup>34</sup>

### **Conclusion: the changing position of Germany in Europe**

The European Union is a treaty-based entity established to enforce cooperation among member states, and since it is a multilevel system it does not allow any form of dominion by one state over another. According to Crawford,

Decisions are taken through complex voting procedures established to ensure that no one state will dominate the process. From the beginning, all members were 'embedded' within the institution, beholden to its rules and norms.<sup>35</sup>

So, the EU is a part of the framework for a constant process of interstate bargaining that has given strong centrality to the member states.

If, in 2004, Jeremy Rifkin could praise—in a naive way—the 'European dream' as a valid alternative to the American dream, the crises that have struck the EU in recent years (economic-financial, political, and humanitarian) have called into question a European *governance*, the limits of which have been exposed.<sup>36</sup>

Rightly, the executive director of the Transatlantic Academy in Washington, Stephen F. Szabo, has recently underlined Europe's lack of leadership. Szabo describes vividly the establishing of a technocratic leadership, while at the same time noting that, 'the emergence of charismatic strong men (and women) is a sign of the disruption of old norms and beliefs and of a crisis in the status quo.'<sup>37</sup> In this context, however, a *leadership* with singular characteristics has emerged. In Szabo's words, 'today we see a leaderless EU coordinated to a limited degree by Germany's Angela Merkel, a transactional leader if ever there was one.'<sup>38</sup> As has recently been pointed out by Nathalie Tocci, the EU obviously lacks a global strategy. In fact, she recently argued that:

Strategic autonomy is the ability of the Union to decide autonomously and have the means to act upon its decisions. While it ought not to be confined to the military domain, it is evident that it is in this area that the EU's strategic autonomy has not yet been realised.<sup>39</sup>

The European Union, with its present institutional structure strictly conditioned by national governments, and in which the intergovernmental method prevails over the community method, necessarily requires a form of state member leadership. Albeit in the framework of a system based on consensus, the weight of one specific state impacts considerably on the decision-making that is achieved thanks to the ability of the government of that state to bring others round to their point of view. In the specific case of Germany we can briefly give two contrasting examples: the first, during the final phase of the Greek crisis (summer 2015) in which Germany managed to persuade the majority of the member states to accept its position; and the second, the refugee crisis in which Germany did not succeed, in as far as their proposed quota system did not come into force.

In conclusion, the European Union as *Staatenverbund* definitely needs leader countries to bear the burden of often difficult choices, and to play a real and benevolent hegemonic role, not in the sense of 'dominion,' but in the sense of having the ability to think strategically about the future and the strength to show the direction to be taken on the various questions that will arise.<sup>40</sup>

Some recent political phenomena are going Germany's way. In fact, Macron's election is a decisive factor. The French president is not only a convinced pro-European politician but also a 'friend' of Germany. He has adopted the German government's global strategy policy (in particular regarding investments in Africa, climate change, and the EU's international role in the world scenario) and he wants to make radical reforms to European institutions. Even if these reforms have not found immediate consensus in Germany, they will be a fundamental starting point for any future reform in the EU. The renewal of the aforementioned Elysée Treaty and the Franco-German economists' working group for the reform of European governance are the most relevant manifestations of the new cooperation between Germany and France.<sup>41</sup> It is not by chance that the first visit of Chancellor Merkel, Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, and Minister of Finance Olaf Scholz was in Paris. Moreover, the building of a 'Grand Coalition,' which

was formalized in March 2018, is a crucial factor concerning the German role in Europe because it represents the continuity of positions taken by the German government since the 2000s. The coalition contract signed by the Union parties (Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Christian Social Union (CSU)) and the Social Democratic Party (SPD) also shows a strong focus on the ongoing political-institutional processes, in particular regarding Germany's intention to make greater contributions to the EU budget after Brexit.

Finally, Germany has never been so appreciated internationally. According to the Anholt-GfK Nation Brands Index, Germany occupies first place in the worldwide ranking. Germany scores very favorably in all six categories examined in the 2017 ranking, especially in the areas of government, people, and culture.<sup>42</sup>

No country other than Germany is strong and stable enough to bear the responsibility of a leadership role in Europe. Germany is firmly anchored in the heart of the European Union and involved in the alliance of NATO and in the United Nations. It is economically strong and networked with the world like no other country. Standing alone, it would not be strong enough or large enough from an economic and military point of view to be a great global hegemon. But thanks to its political realism and its global strategy, Germany is capable of bringing European influence to bear on the global scene, and is, therefore, the only country that can play the role of leader in the European Union and make the EU a strong and authoritative global player. In 2015, on the occasion of the Potsdam Conference, the former foreign minister, Frank Walter Steinmeier (now president of the German Federal Republic), emphasized that in 1945 Germany was the object of international world ordering. Now Germany has become subject of this ordering, and, at the same time, a co-protagonist of international world order. 'We should accept this role! Not because we seek it, but because we have it because she grew with us,' Steinmeier concluded.<sup>43</sup> The destiny of Europe is once again dependent on Germany, but this time it is a historic opportunity. Coalitions are vital in Europe and so it is Germany that needs to develop a more structured process of coalition building.

The need for leadership will be even greater in a European Union that is entering a partially new multi-speed Europe phase. We have thought for too long that some states, because of their political strength and tradition, were indispensable. This epoch is ending. There will no longer be member states without whom it is impossible to carry on the integration process.

## Notes

- 1 Bracher, 'Kein Anlaß zu Teuto-Pessimismus.'
- 2 Margaret Thatcher Foundation, 'Cold War: Chequers Seminar on Germany.'
- 3 *The Spectator*, 'Germany Calling': 'This is all a German racket designed to take over the whole of Europe. It has to be thwarted. This rushed take-over by the Germans on the worst possible basis, with the French behaving like poodles to the Germans, is absolutely intolerable [...] The deutschmark is always going to be the strongest currency, because of their habits [...].'

- 4 Margaret Thatcher Foundation, 'Cold War: Chequers Seminar on Germany': 'We would want to involve the Soviet Union institutionally in discussions of Europe's future security through the CSCE [Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe], not least because in the long term (and assuming continued development in the direction of democracy) the Soviet Union would be the only European power capable of balancing Germany.'
- 5 The scientific literature on the topic is huge, I'm referring only to the recent special issue of *The Journals of European Integration History* 19, no. 1 (2013), in particular: Geary, Germond and Patel, 'The Maastricht Treaty: Negotiations and Consequences in Historical Perspective – Introduction'; and Ludlow, 'European Integration in the 1980s on the Way to Maastricht?'
- 6 Cf. Herbert, *Geschichte Deutschland im 20. Jahrhundert*, 259–267, 305–392; Herbert, *Das Dritte Reich*, 43–50; Kohl, *Erinnerungen 1990–1994*, 505.
- 7 Kohl, Helmut, 'Rede von Helmut Kohl über die Ergebnisse des Europäischen Rates in Maastricht (Bonn, 13. Dezember 1991).'
- 8 See Neuss, *Standortbestimmung Deutschlands in Europa*; Lang, Mushaben, and Wendler underline the importance of the way in which the European integration process influenced Germany's role in Europe and in German domestic politics. See Lang, Mushaben and Wendler, *German Unification as a Catalyst for Change: Linking Political Transformation at the Domestic and International Levels*; Wendler, *Recalibrating Germany's Role in Europe: Framing Leadership as Responsibility*.
- 9 *The Economist*, 'The Sick Man of the Euro'; see also Sinn, *Ist Deutschland noch zu retten?*
- 10 The academic research has centered on the question of the relationship between the continuity and discontinuity of Germany's role in Europe: Crawford, 'German power and "embedded hegemony" in Europe'; Leithner, *Shaping German Foreign Policy: History, Memory, and National Interest*; Gross, *The Europeanization of National Foreign Policy: Continuity and Change in European Crisis Management*; Harnisch, 'Change and Continuity in Post-Unification German Foreign Policy.'
- 11 Wendler, 'Recalibrating Germany's Role in Europe: Framing Leadership as Responsibility'; Crawford and Olsen, 'The Puzzle of Persistence and Power: Explaining Germany's Normative Foreign Policy' have defined German leadership as normative.
- 12 Münkler, *Macht in der Mitte. Die neuen Aufgaben Deutschlands in Europa*.
- 13 Münkler, *Macht in der Mitte. Die neuen Aufgaben Deutschlands in Europa*.
- 14 Schäuble and Lamers, 'Überlegungen zur europäischen Politik ...': 'Deutschland hat also ein fundamentales Interesse an der Osterweiterung der Union [...] Nur wenn es gelingt, das nach 1945 errichtete neue System zur Regelung von Konflikten, zum Interessenausgleich, zur wechselseitigen Förderung und zur Selbstbehauptung nach außen weiter zu entwickeln und auf mittelosteuropäische Nachbarn Deutschlands zu übertragen, hat Deutschland die Chance, zur ruhigen Mitte Europas zu werden. Dieses deutsche Interesse an Stabilität ist grundsätzlich mit dem Europas identisch.'
- 15 *The Spectator*, 'Germany Calling.'
- 16 'Finance ministers from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, and Sweden underline their shared views and values in the discussion on the architecture of the EMU.'
- 17 Certain European Union countries have what are known as 'opt-outs,' which are a means of ensuring that when a given country does not wish to join the others in a particular field of EU policy, it can opt out, thus avoiding an overall stalemate. In the case of the United Kingdom, opt-outs include: the Schengen agreement, the economic and monetary union, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, and, finally, the areas of freedom, security, and justice.
- 18 *The Spectator*, 'Germany Calling.' For a historical overview see Ratti, *A Not-So-Special Relationship. The US, The UK and German Unification, 1945–1990*.

- 19 See also Steinmeier, 'Ordnung stiften in einer non-polaren Welt,' 130: 'Wir sind vom Objekt der Ordnung wieder zum Subjekt, zu einem Mitgestalter von Ordnung, geworden. Und mein Plädoyer ist: Diese Rolle sollten wir annehmen! Nicht weil wir sie suchen, sondern weil wir sie haben; weil sie uns zugewachsen ist.'
- 20 Paterson, 'The Reluctant Hegemon? Germany Moves Centre Stage in the European Union'; Patterson, 'Does Germany Still Have a European Vocation?'; Bullmer, 'Germany and the Eurozone Crisis: Between Hegemony and Domestic Politics,'; Schweiger, 'The "Reluctant Hegemon": Germany in the EU's Post Crisis Constellation'; Krönig, 'Germany in Europe – The Unwilling Hegemon'; Mangasarian and Techau, 'Führungsmacht Deutschland. Strategie ohne Angst und Anmaßung.'
- 21 Beck, *Das deutsche Europa*; Kundnani, *The Paradox of German Power*; Rusconi, *Egemonia vulnerabile. La Germania e la sindrome Bismarck*.
- 22 Crawford, *German Power and 'Embedded Hegemony' in Europe*; Bolaffi, *Cuore Tedesco. Il modello Germania, l'Italia e la crisi europea*; Münkler, *Macht in der Mitte. Die neuen Aufgaben Deutschlands in Europa*. See also Mützenich, 'Deutschland – Vom Trittbrettfahrer zur Führungsmacht wider Willen?'
- 23 See Center for Economic Policy Research, 'Reconciling Risk Sharing with Market Discipline: A Constructive Approach to Euro Area Reform.'
- 24 Merkel, 'Rede von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel anlässlich der Eröffnung des 61. akademischen Jahres des Europakollegs Brügge': 'Manchmal erscheint es mir so, als ob sich die Vertreter im Europäischen Parlament und in der Europäischen Kommission als die einzig wahren Verteidiger der Gemeinschaftsmethode verstehen. Sie sehen sich manchmal im Widerspruch zu den Anhängern der sogenannten intergouvernementalen Methode, also der rein zwischenstaatlichen Methode der Zusammenarbeit'; Schäuble, 'Das geht den Menschen auf die Nerven': 'Jetzt ist nicht die Zeit für Visionen. [...] Es geht jetzt um Schnelligkeit und Pragmatismus [...] Wenn nicht alle 27 von Anfang an mitziehen, dann starten halt einige wenige. Und wenn die Kommission nicht mittut, dann nehmen wir die Sache selbst in die Hand, lösen die Probleme eben zwischen den Regierungen. Dieser intergouvernementale Ansatz hat sich in der Euro-Krise bewährt.'
- 25 'Benelux vision on the future of Europe' claims that (a) the treaties remain a solid base for future cooperation and that (b) the EU should apply measures to enhance cooperation, in order to set up different integration processes aimed at being effective instruments to manage current social and political phenomena in different ways.
- 26 Paterson and Bulmer, 'Germany and the European Union: From "Tamed Power" to "Normalized Power".' See also Lang, Mushaben and Wendler, 'German Unification as a Catalyst for Change: Linking Political Transformation at the Domestic and International Levels.'
- 27 Haftendorn, 'Einsatz im Kosovo 1999. Das vereinte Deutschland und die Welt.'
- 28 Merkel, 'Mitleid ist nicht mein Motiv.'
- 29 Hass, 'World Order 2.0. The Case for Sovereign Obligation.'
- 30 It is important to note that the 'Annual report from the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces of the German Bundestag' underlines the necessity for more financial investment for the Bundeswehr.
- 31 See 'Interview with Nathalie Tocci on the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy': 'The EUGS [European Union Global Strategy] calls upon member states to take greater responsibility for their security and live up to their commitments to solidarity and mutual assistance enshrined in the Treaties. To the extent that defence is part of security, there is an appeal to member states to acquire and maintain those capabilities necessary for the protection of their security—capabilities which can often only be developed through collaborative efforts. Whether these capabilities are then used in the context of EU, NATO, UN or other multinational efforts is a second order question and the EUGS does not take a stand on this. As such, the approach taken in the EUGS is different from, but perfectly compatible with NATO, given that 24 of its members are part of both the EU and NATO.'

- 32 Gabriel, 'Europa in einer unbequemen Welt': 'Wir müssen einsehen: Entweder wir versuchen selbst in dieser Welt zu gestalten oder wir werden vom Rest der Welt gestaltet. Werteorientierung, wie sie gern von uns Deutschen für unsere Außenpolitik in Anspruch genommen wird, wird allein jedenfalls nicht ausreichen, um sich in dieser von wirtschaftlichen, politischen und militärischen Egoismen geprägten Welt zu behaupten.' See also the 'White Paper on Germany Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr.'
- 33 Magasarian and Techau, 'Germany's Strategic Frivolousness.' See also Kirchick, 'Germany Puts Germany First.'
- 34 Crawford and Olsen point out that 'Germany has also exercised normative power in global institutions,' in particular regarding climate change. See Crawford and Olsen, 'The Puzzle of Persistence and Power: Explaining Germany's Normative Foreign Policy.'
- 35 Crawford, 'German Power and "Embedded Hegemony" in Europe.' See also Judt, 'Europe vs. America,' 38. He has rightly underlined that 'the European Union is what it is: the largely unintended product of decades of negotiations by West European politicians seeking to uphold and advance their national and sectoral interests. That's part of its problem: it is a compromise on a continental scale, designed by literally hundreds of committees.'
- 36 Rifkin, *The European Dream. How Europe's Vision of the Future is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream*, 225; Cf. Reid, *The United States of Europe. The New Superpower and the End of American Supremacy*; Ash, *Free World: America, Europe, and the Surprising Future*. See also Judt, 'Europe vs. America,' 37–41.
- 37 Szabo, 'Europe's Leadership Deficit,' 17–28.
- 38 Szabo, 'Europe's Leadership Deficit,' 21
- 39 'Interview with Nathalie Tocci on the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy.'
- 40 Ulrich and Lau, 'Im Westen was Neues.' Ulrich and Lau have rightly pointed out that Germany is in a completely new position compared to the past. The consequence of this will be a change in German foreign policy regarding the principle of 'leading from behind': 'Deutschland bleibt, mehr als andere Akteure, auf den Fortbestand der liberalen internationalen Ordnung angewiesen [...] Weil der bisherige Garant dieser Ordnung immer mehr ausfällt, stellt sich die Frage nach dem deutschen Beitrag radikal neu.'
- 41 See Centre for Economic Policy Research, 'Reconciling Risk Sharing with Market Discipline: A Constructive Approach to Euro Area Reform.'
- 42 'Anholt-GfK Nation Brands Index.'
- 43 Steinmeier, 'Ordnung stiften in einer non-polaren Welt,' 123–133.

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## 4 Reunification and national identity in Germany

### A return to normality?

*Christian Wicke*

If capitalism was among the winners of the Cold War, certainly nationalism was also. Western-style democracy and nationalism seemed to be forming a symbiotic relationship as the countries east of the Iron Curtain redefined their political systems. Germany, which was in many ways within the epicentre of the tectonic shifts in geopolitics that occurred around 1990 between Eastern and Western Europe, appeared to undergo a dramatic transformation. The divided country's reunification process, following the sudden fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989, was a typical nationalist occurrence, adhering to the ideal that 'state' and 'nation' should be congruent.<sup>1</sup> But despite the suddenness of this huge change, perhaps the discontinuities of Germany's public nationalism before and after reunification were not that great. The Federal Republic had experienced long-term efforts by domestic elites in culture and politics to normalize the country's national identity, and these efforts transcended this historical turning point.

National identity is a plastic phrase that became fashionable towards the end of the last century; it can mean so many things.<sup>2</sup> To put it simply, here national identity refers to the representations of a nation by individuals, groups, and institutions, as it is almost impossible for historians to discover the 'inner truth' of their protagonists. The process of articulating particular images and imaginings of a nation is transnational, with influences from both within and outside the respective nation. Further, there is never only just *one* national identity, but rather a great diversity of official, public, and private images of nationhood, with some being more dominant or persistent than others. National identity is therefore not to be seen as conceptually distinct from nationalism, which comprises the virtually endless ideas and actions by individuals that secure the existence of nations, both intentionally as well as unintentionally. Like Michael Billig, I would see nationalism as an everyday phenomenon occurring 'here' and 'now,' and ensuring the maintenance and reconstruction of nations as 'imagined communities.'<sup>3</sup> In this sense, most people in the early twenty-first century are nationalists, socialized in a world of nations in which nationalism has become normal.

Post-war Germany, however, has always struggled to achieve any kind of 'normal' nationalism; not only because of the geopolitical structures that held sway over Europe during the Cold War era, but also because the memory of Nazism tainted the representation of Germany internationally and domestically.

Many in the Federal Republic have actively resisted the normalization of its national identity. Some have even argued that Germans should reject the idea of national identity altogether. This idea was most famously put forward by the German intellectual and philosopher Jürgen Habermas, who had a strong aversion to any kind of nationalism. Habermas believed that ‘a bond, rooted in convictions of universalist, constitutional principles, has unfortunately only evolved in the Kulturturnung of the Germans after—and because of—Auschwitz.’<sup>4</sup> He was concerned that Germany would return to normality and felt that his country should rather become part of some kind of ‘post-national constellation,’ following a purely ‘constitutional patriotism.’<sup>5</sup> Therefore he was opposed to reunification.<sup>6</sup> Today, almost 30 years later, one may wonder if his concern was justified, since it still remains doubtful if the new German nation-state, with its reunified capital Berlin, really has reached a condition of normality.

This chapter suggests a four-fold typology of normalities of nationalism—ontological normality, territorial normality, ideological normality, and historical normality—through which we can understand the processes of normalization in German national identity since the end of the Cold War as part of a longer trend. These four normalities are strongly intertwined as they do not operate separately in practice. I am using them here to theorize nationalism as a socially constructed human condition that has transcended the end of the Cold War. I will relate this theory to the narratives of Germany’s peculiar historical trajectories (*Sonderwege*) outside the West, as well as to the role of Germany in the history of nationalism studies.

Building upon this typology of nationalisms, this chapter argues that the German mainstream and political leaders have articulated an ‘ontological normality’ of nationalism, which holds that state and society naturally would have to be organized as a nation. In 1990, Germany also became a nation-state, and thus achieved ‘territorial normality.’ The reunification process occurred within the European and transatlantic frameworks, that is the West, which allowed the Germans to also achieve a kind of ‘ideological normality.’ Thus, from these three perspectives the trend towards normality is clearly visible. However, while from these three perspectives German national identity can be considered to have been ‘normalized,’ in a fourth way, the parallel attempts by parts of the political and intellectual elite to move Germany’s historical culture out of ‘Hitler’s shadow’ and thus achieve ‘historical normality’ have not yet been successful. Before and after reunification, nationalist politicians and historians narrated Nazism as an overall positive series of national events, and simultaneously mirrored and thus relativized against the other, totalitarian history of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Nevertheless, the Holocaust remains a crucial feature in representations of Germany’s national identity.

By discussing the events of 1989/1990 against the question of the normalization of Germany’s national identity, I argue that ontological, territorial, and ideological normality has been achieved, but that historical normality remains difficult to attain for the German people, who might, therefore, always seem somewhat odd

in the world of nations. There cannot be any absolute normality as long as there remains a wide recognition, domestically and internationally, of the Holocaust as a unique crime for which the German nation was primarily responsible.

### **Ontological normality: the nation in German history**

In sociology, 'normality' is usually associated with the cultures of social control that developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Michel Foucault, writing on the history of the prison, saw 'the judges of normality everywhere'; he saw them embodied in certain professionals, such as teachers, doctors, judges, educators, and social workers, who oversaw that social norms were maintained and implemented by distinguishing supposedly normal people from allegedly abnormal people.<sup>7</sup> The 'order of things,'<sup>8</sup> according to Foucault, is discursively constructed and institutionalized by society and as society; normality is thus not natural but social and historical.

Even scholars of nationalism, not usually considered constructivists, emphasize the artificial character of nations, and for decades have sought to disenchant the ideas of national mythology and the normality of nations that were so destructive in the twentieth century.<sup>9</sup> As Elie Kedourie critically remarked before nationalism studies became a popular field in the faculties, the idea of self-determination promoted the belief 'that humanity is naturally divided into nations, that nations are known by certain characteristics that can be ascertained, and that the only legitimate type of government is national self-government.'<sup>10</sup> Nationalism, thus, manifests itself as an ideology suggesting that nations and their representations are normal. To quote Ernest Gellner,

Man must have a nationality as he must have a nose and two ears; a deficiency in any of these particulars is not inconceivable and does from time to time occur, but only as a result of some disaster, and it is itself a disaster of a kind.<sup>11</sup>

Nationalism is often viewed by scholars as a transitory force that 'invents nations where they do not exist,' as Gellner once wrote.<sup>12</sup> This understanding of nationalism as transient was at least the view of the groundbreaking scholars of nationalism in the 1980s, including Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm. They viewed nationalism as an essentially modern phenomenon, being part of the process of modernization that created nation-states in Europe in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries. In this sense, nationalism in the West had for a long time been considered a historical phenomenon, having lost its political edge after 1945 and been 'unfrozen' with the demise of the Soviet Union.<sup>13</sup>

However, viewing nationalism in the West as a largely transitory force that is primarily historical is too restrictive.<sup>14</sup> If we wish to understand the development of nationalism as 'one of the most powerful, if not *the* most powerful belief-system of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries' (and apparently also the

twenty-first), when questioning the legitimacy of the nation has come to constitute an immoral breach of a taboo,<sup>15</sup> an approach taken by Billig will be helpful. As mentioned above, the social psychologist reminded us of the importance of studying nationalism in contemporary Western nation-states, and not just as a historical phenomenon, but instead as a ‘normal’ or ‘natural’ way of thinking, an ideological consciousness in everyday life.<sup>16</sup> This ‘normal’ nationalism was forged by the lack of self-reflection that is inherent in nationalism, the ‘unimaginative repetition’ of singing the national anthem, waving the national flag during a football game, passing by a national monument on the way home, or having a day off work because it is a national holiday.<sup>17</sup>

Billig consequently called us to study what I view as ‘normal nationalism.’ Normal nationalism, in contrast to ‘modern nationalism’ as a transitory force, is a post-establishment type of nationalism. It exists when the transition from a pre-national (or sometimes also post-national) lifeworld to a national lifeworld appears to be complete.<sup>18</sup> In modern nationalism the invention of tradition boomed; in normal nationalism invented tradition is being managed.<sup>19</sup> Modern nationalism has been a process of connecting individual and collective identities; in normal nationalism, the individual and the nation cannot remain independent beings any more.<sup>20</sup> In modern nationalism, national narratives have functioned as epistemological narratives, assisting nations to become; while in normal nationalism, national narratives have functioned as ontological narratives, assisting nations to be.<sup>21</sup> It seems to me that modern nationalism happens when time is out of joint, that is during fundamentally transformative periods for societies, whereas normal nationalism quite effectively organizes our lifeworld in times when a nation’s demand to exist is fulfilled. This can happen more than once in the chronology of a nation, which means that modern nationalism is relatively independent from static periods in world history.

The problem with post-war Germany has been that, until recently, modern and normal nationalism had entered into a complex relationship. As much as there has been a large and ongoing debate in nationalism studies over ‘when is the nation,’<sup>22</sup> there is no agreement on the exact point in time when the construction of the German nation was realized. Ideas of German nationhood already existed in medieval times,<sup>23</sup> but nationalism as a mass phenomenon seems to be much more recent.<sup>24</sup> Ute Planert suggests there was a national *Sattelzeit* around 1800, during which modern nationalism in German-speaking regions emerged.<sup>25</sup> As the writing of nationalism from below remains a challenging exercise,<sup>26</sup> it also remains difficult to define the moment when the German masses became thoroughly nationalized. During the first German unification of 1871, under conservative Protestant and Prussian hegemonies, national identity was still highly contested, territorially and ideologically, and modern nationalism was required to forge national unity. This institutionalization of the ontological normality of the nation was achieved in large parts of Germany, probably before the First World War, when nationalism had become a mass ideology. By the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, wide sections of German society, including the working classes, had developed such a strong identification with their consolidated nation-state that normal

nationalism could thrive.<sup>27</sup> Destroying much more than just the vulnerable democracy of the Weimar Republic, the subsequent development of German nationalism had catastrophic consequences for the world and for the Germans themselves.

The Second World War and the Holocaust occasioned critical scholarship of German nationalism. However, a sense of national identity persisted, with the representatives of the GDR and the Federal Republic both claiming to be the 'better Germany' between 1949 and 1989. The West German government was legally obliged to commit to the somewhat utopian vision of reunification, and numerous efforts were made, especially by the conservative movement, to suggest that the territorial division of the nation was not the 'end of history.'

German national identity was constantly challenged. Years after the establishment of the Federal Republic, and most effectively with the establishment of new social movements after 1968, a more critical historical and political culture became visible in West Germany, with the public analysing the causes of the two world wars, Nazism, and the Holocaust more critically than their relatively silent leaders during the formative period of the new state.<sup>28</sup> The legitimacy of the German nation was thus challenged significantly from within. Interestingly, however, intellectual leaders of post-nationalism, such as Jürgen Habermas, could not help but think and historicize in national categories in the years before reunification.<sup>29</sup> The conceptual tradition of the German *Kulturnation* continued to function either as a placeholder for, as mutually constitutive to, or as a counter-project to the German nation-state. In any case it implied a historicist assumption of the German nation as a continuous cultural unit in the chaos of history.<sup>30</sup>

In 1989/1990, when unification was suddenly on the agenda, a sense of ontological normality was strong both among the West German leaders and the ordinary people of East Germany—that Germans were one nation and Berlin was their capital was self-evident to them.<sup>31</sup> However, the decades-long division of Germany as two states meant that it required modern nationalism to realize territorial normality. That is the imagination of a reunited nation-state, followed by the invention of repetitive national celebrations (e.g. the Day of German Unity on October 3), and the construction of new forms of historicism legitimizing this new condition, in which the GDR was represented as another aberration from the historical trajectory towards normality.<sup>32</sup> This ontological normality thus became institutionalized, real, and territorially normal with the reunification of Germany in October 1990. Risking a 'sleeping beauty' account of the history of German nationalism, I would probably argue that a great degree of ontological normality endured the Cold War era, since a common sense of who was German and who was not, prevailed and could be mobilized when the opportunity for constructing a new nation-state emerged.

### **The reunification of Germany and territorial normality**

Most nationalisms make claims to the nation-state. The ontological normality of an imagined national community is usually not sufficient if the boundaries of the nation differ from the territorial realities of the state. This was the situation



of Germany after the Second World War. Yet in becoming a nation-state on October 3, 1990, the *Provisorium* of the Federal Republic entered a state of territorial normality that would assist in consolidating the ontological normality of the nation. Many thought that what was happening between November 1989 and October 1990 had been overdue. What Willy Brandt had said many years before, 'what belongs together now grows together,' seemed to become reality. Berlin (capital of the nation-state from 1871 to 1945, and capital of the GDR from 1949 to 1990) became the capital of the new German nation-state, not Bonn (the 'provisional' capital of the Federal Republic from 1949 to 1990) or Frankfurt (the short-lived capital during the 1848 revolutions). The Federal Republic was a product of the Cold War period. It was only meant to last as such until the reunification of the nation could be achieved. The Federal Republic during the country's division has thus sometimes been described as following a 'new *Sonderweg*.'<sup>33</sup> However over the years, the Federal Republic had itself become increasingly historically and territorially normal, that is as a state without nation-statehood or a state as a proto-nation.<sup>34</sup> This is rather interesting; normality is destructible and has rivals, even if its contingency is somewhat limited by the omnipresent ideal of the nation-state. For those interested in alternatives to nationalism, it is worth studying the history of future expectations in Cold War Germany.<sup>35</sup> To be sure, German identity during the period of division remained relatively strong in both East and West. Nevertheless, the divided country with its uniquely dark history provided fertile ground for experimentation in unconventional forms of historical culture, as well as post-national governance.

Legally there were two options for reunification, the dissolution of both the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the GDR for a new state, or the quasi-annexation of the GDR. The second option was eventually realized and in 1990 the Federal Republic expanded over GDR territory. During the reunification process, the Federal Republican government eventually came to recognize the Oder-Neisse line as the permanent border with Poland. Few Germans today would contest this territorial normality. However, in recent years, the German media has paid increasing attention to the so-called *Reichsbürger*, a group of right-wing extremists who do not accept the Federal Republic as a legitimate state. They believe in the legal continuity of the German state, with the borders of 1937 and before. A recent theatre performance in Berlin ridiculed the strange world of this sect-like group, and the mainstream German population has perceived such political convictions as absurd, but the German police is taking this terrorist threat very seriously.<sup>36</sup> Such exceptional minorities, thus, stand for an abnormal understanding of German history that ultimately confirms the territorial and ideological normality prefabricated during the era of the Bonn Republic: the West German state expanded to the East.<sup>37</sup>

### **Ideological normality: Germany's belonging to the West**

To appear completely normal, nationalism often had to be dressed in Western outfits. Efforts had been taken not only to nationalize, but also to Westernize society;

nationalization and Westernization were often strongly intertwined processes.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, good and 'normal' nationalism in the post-war era has been associated with 'Western nationalism,' following a liberal, civic, and political trajectory, and bad nationalism with 'Eastern nationalism,' following an illiberal, ethnic, and cultural trajectory. Germany's allocation within this ideal typology is debatable. Before 1945, German national identity was often articulated in opposition to the West.<sup>39</sup> Only thereafter did political and intellectual elites make great efforts to 'Westernize' German national identity. The reunification was in this sense a confirmation of this trend, as it confirmed Germany's place within the Western geopolitical framework.

The comparison between 'abnormal' Eastern and 'normal' Western nationalism go a long way back. Differences between the French *Staatsnation* and the German *Kulturnation* were already constructed in Friedrich Meinecke's work in the early twentieth century.<sup>40</sup> At that time, however, being Western was not necessarily seen as positive by German intellectuals. Until the Second World War, conservative nationalists presented German *Kultur* as superior to Western *Zivilisation*.<sup>41</sup> Such distinctions foreshadowed a relatively established typology that corresponds with the various *Sonderweg* theses that developed after Nazism, when the idea transpired around the world that something fundamental had been wrong with the Germans and their history, and that their belonging to the West was becoming a geopolitical rather than only a philosophical question. Indeed, Hans Kohn, one of earliest and most important scholars of nationalism, in 1944 distinguished between civic nationalism, which he found to be Western, and ethnic nationalism, which he found to be Eastern. Germany he situated within the latter type.<sup>42</sup> Kohn continued to support the cultural *Sonderweg* thesis that something had gone wrong with 'the German mind' in history when romantics had evoked the idea of a *Volksgeist* under the assumption that 'a nation could never be based upon a constitution protecting individual rights but only upon indigenous customs'—a dangerous intellectual stimulus that would pave the way towards Nazism.<sup>43</sup> This dichotomy between Eastern and Western nationalism has been challenged, revised, and improved by scholars towards the end of the twentieth century,<sup>44</sup> but some prominent voices in the field, such as Liah Greenfeld, have also fostered this ideal typology in support of a negative, intellectual *Sonderweg* in Germany's peculiar history, which was different to other Western nations that had taken a more civic shape.<sup>45</sup>

During the post-war decades in the Federal Republic, two distinct models were discussed among intellectual and political elites: the nation-state and the post-national state.<sup>46</sup> Yet there was a loose consensus among them that Germany should belong to the West. The conservative-liberal notion of 'the West' was associated with representations of the Enlightenment, Christianity, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and European integration. 'The West,' in the conservative sense, was something really existing and was understood in opposition to 'the East,' whereas the Habermasian notion of 'the West' stood against the internal non-Western traditions that Germans still have yet to overcome completely. Habermas suspected a '*deutschnational eingefärbte Natophilosophie*,'

a commitment to NATO and the German nation, but not to the Enlightenment and cosmopolitan principles that he associated with the West.<sup>47</sup> He fundamentally disagreed with the German conservatives who conceptualized German nationalism as not being principally in conflict with Western traditions, but rather as intrinsically related to them. The Habermasian notion of ‘the West’ comprised some kind of universality that was capable of being valid outside the national framework.<sup>48</sup>

Western principles were, in the Habermasian view, embodied in the Federal Republican constitution, with the inclusion of individual and human rights, the principle of *Rechtsstaat*, and, to some extent, secularism. Habermas insisted that patriotism should be to the constitution rather than to the nation. He argued that in order for Germans to belong to the West, they should accept that, after Auschwitz, there must never be a national identity in Germany that would legitimize reunification.<sup>49</sup> According to this philosophy, Germans had no right to normality anymore.

In the 1990s, constitutional patriotism (*Verfassungspatriotismus*), as advocated by Habermas, lost its popularity, whereas liberal nationalism (as recommended, for example, by Yael Tamir and David Miller) became very attractive. Reflecting the spirit of the time, serious scholars believed in the positive potential of nationalism to promote solidarity within the welfare state and processes of democratization. They believed that the dangerous elements of nationalism could be tamed under the hegemony of ‘liberal’ values such as freedom, tolerance, and individualism. In the liberal nationalist account, irrational mythology could thus become useful for Western democracies.<sup>50</sup> This reconciliation of national and liberal traditions, rather than their complete divorce *à la* Habermas, has so far been pursued relatively successfully in the new German nation-state, which today holds a leadership position in the capitalist West.

And yet, this liberal nationalism was not an invention of the 1990s. Many traditions of the capitalist welfare system and the Basic Law that came to fruition in post-war Western Germany have continued to operate in the new Federal Republic, which remains firmly embedded in the Western frameworks of the European Union (EU) and NATO. This outcome was envisaged by the second chancellor of unification, Helmut Kohl, who suggested throughout the 1980s that the Western system of the Federal Republic constituted only a partial normality, and that complete normality would require the event of reunification within Western frameworks as well as the overcoming of Germany’s negative historical culture (which I shall discuss further below). In this view, the Germans in the GDR were forced into an abnormal historical trajectory, beyond their will and destiny, of becoming part of the Western nation-state. Here the correlation between ideological and territorial normality became especially apparent.

The strategic implications of ideological normality, however, remain somewhat problematic. Hans Kundnani, for example, sees the German role within the West after 1990 as somewhat paradoxical. Germany’s economic power did not correspond with its relatively weak military power. Kundnani points to efforts to break with the tradition of the *Bundeswehr* (armed forces) and to act only domestically in scenarios of defence as early as 1991 with the Gulf War. This must be seen as part of the national quest for normality, but a good number

of German thinkers and politicians still sought to prevent it. With Germany's participation in the war in Yugoslavia, Green Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer used his nation's dark past to legitimize military intervention, that is to prevent genocide! For a moment, therefore, the absence of historical normality played positively into the ideological normalization of Germany as a Western military force, which the Social Democratic Chancellor Gerhard Schröder also desired. Germany subsequently became an important player within the changing West; the new nation-state fostered European unity by standing with France against the Anglo-American alliance in the second Iraq War.<sup>51</sup>

Today it seems as if the pre-manufactured architecture from the Cold War era is crumbling, which will further put into question what is Western and, thus, what is normal. The historicist assumption that everyone would eventually become Western is being revised, as the future of the European Union does not look as bright any more as it did in the early 1990s, and the increasing 'Disneyfication' of US politics under the controversial President Donald Trump fails to make Western identity more appealing. Thus, the happy end of German history, which Heinrich August Winkler traced along a 'long road west,' might not last forever.<sup>52</sup> Joschka Fischer is prophesying that the Germans 'will be on their own,'<sup>53</sup> and *Bundeswehr* strategists are calling to prepare for a decline of the West.<sup>54</sup>

### **Historical normality? Nationalized pasts and contested identity**

While ontological, territorial, and to a wide degree, also ideological normalization have been successful, German national identity is still lacking historical normality. The Second World War, Nazism, and the Holocaust are still very 'hot history' in Germany, which remains *Weltmeister der Vergangenheitsbewältigung*.<sup>55</sup> While it is hard to think of any nation that does not have some dark heritage, German national identity has been special during the second half of the twentieth century, as it has drawn strongly on a "cathartic memorial culture" due to the expectation that, by facing the darkest part of its history, the nation may be able to cope with the burden of its past and to shape a better future.<sup>56</sup> The Nazi past, which had previously been seen by some intellectuals and politicians as an obstacle to a conventional national identity, in recent years has hardly impeded this reconciliation, if we associate with 'democracy' the originally Western, capitalist, and representative parliamentary system that has expanded eastwards. In Germany during the Cold War era, the existence of the nation was perceived as being at stake, with some dreaming of a post-national and others of a re-national future. The question of whether Germany is becoming a normal country has been extensively discussed since the national unification of 1990.<sup>57</sup>

As Dirk Moses explained, there was no consensus over the way 1945 should be historicized among the post-war intellectuals in the Federal Republic who had experienced Nazism when they were young, and who all identified with the West. There were differences of opinion between the rather conservative 'German Germans,' who emphasized positive continuities in German history that would legitimize a normal national identity, and the more left-liberal 'non-German

Germans,' who called for a radical break with the national traditions of the past.<sup>58</sup> The German Germans seem to have won this historical battle, even if their vision could not be entirely realized. German historian Michael Geyer (a teacher in the United States), for example, was tired of 'the post-fascist exceptionalism of the old Federal Republic' with its negative nationalism (George Orwell), and felt that left-wing intellectuals in Germany should realize that nationalism and democracy can go well together.<sup>59</sup>

These divisions were reflected in Germany's historiography. This has been so since the 1960s and the outbreak of the Fischer controversy. The notable German historian Fritz Fischer advanced the thesis that the German nation was responsible for the First and Second World Wars. He was then denied public funding to travel to the United States to spread this view. This caused domestic and international furore.<sup>60</sup> Germans at that time began to undermine the moral integrity of their ancestors, whom many of their compatriots felt to be a thorn in their flesh. A divide developed between more left-liberal intellectuals, who found it important to trace the origins of the Nazi horror in German history, and more conservative-liberal intellectuals, who sought to relativize the Nazi episode against the wrongdoings of other nations and the otherwise positive past of the German nation. A counter-narrative developed, arguing that something had been going wrong with the Germans for quite a long time: various *Sonderweg* theses emerged, maintaining that, in comparison to other Western countries, Germany had not been normal. To put it in very simple terms, historians diagnosed that the dual revolutions of industrialism and Enlightenment capitalism and liberalism had combined in a healthy way elsewhere, while the German mind had disconnected these two forces and industrialized rapidly by the end of the nineteenth century without managing to develop a liberal political culture.<sup>61</sup> Teleological trajectories were drawn from Luther to Hitler, from Herder to Hitler, and from Bismarck to Hitler.<sup>62</sup> The history wars of the 1980s centred on the questioning of the *Sonderweg* paradigm and the notion of the Holocaust's singularity.<sup>63</sup> It was the culmination of conflicting narratives of the past that had been internalized by political and intellectual elites from the early years of the Federal Republic, and it was a conservative reaction to the critical historical culture of the post-1968 era.<sup>64</sup>

The history wars would have been inconceivable without the polarizing political climate under Chancellor Helmut Kohl's leadership (1982–1996). Kohl, who formed alliances with conservative historians, most notably his advisor Michael Stürmer, was responsible for a series of political acts and scandals concerning history, which have been relatively well researched and documented. The divide between those public voices who sought to relativize the Nazi past through the narration of positive continuities and those who sought to maintain the break of 1945 as the most foundational experience for German democracy was widest during this period. Conservative efforts to draw a line under the Nazi past, to finally 'walk out of Hitler's shadow' and thus to instill a more 'positive' national identity have been successful to some extent, for example through the construction of national history museums and monuments, and the reinterpretation of heritage.<sup>65</sup> However, while this movement began to relegitimize German nationalism through

the promotion of what Kohl called 'historical consciousness,' 1945 remained the key moment in Germany's national mythology.<sup>66</sup> Unexpectedly, the mission to re-nationalize society seems to have rather amplified what they sought to minimize. It was a catch-22: if normalization required re-nationalization through history, it could not really be removed from Hitler's shadow. The image of the Germans thus remained shady and complete normality could not be achieved.

As the authors of this volume discuss the effects of 1989, I should emphasize that Germany's history-politics over the last three decades cannot be understood without the geopolitical contextualization of the Cold War and its legacy. In the 1980s, Ernst Nolte triggered the vibrant debate over the singularity of the Holocaust with his view that there had been a 'causal nexus' between the Soviet Gulag, which existed first, and Auschwitz. Around the same time, Kohl compared Gorbachev to Goebbels and accused the GDR of keeping political prisoners in 'concentration camps.' After reunification, Germans were confronted with two dictatorships in their national history. It transpired that important elements of the historical culture of reunified Germany had already been established in the old Federal Republic. Kohl's visit to Buchenwald in 1991, where he commemorated not only the victims of the concentration camp but also of the Soviet Special Camp No. 2 (1945–1950), epitomizes the problematic doubling of German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* between Nazism and communism. Historians who had previously been critical of conservative revisionism in the *Historikerstreit* debates have called for further critical enquiry into the atrocities of the GDR, which should not be impeded by the apologetic tendencies of the left.<sup>67</sup> Paradoxically, this comparative doubling could itself be interpreted as a fruitful effort towards historical normalization, as it relativizes Nazism against the effects of another ideology. This suggests that some degree of normalization in German history has succeeded.

Intellectual debates, however, suggest that the question of historical normality remains subject to dispute after 1990. For example, the controversy over the work by Daniel Goldhagen from 1996, who held that ordinary Germans were responsible for the Holocaust,<sup>68</sup> sent a strong signal that the German history wars were to continue after reunification. In 1998, Martin Walser caused furore when he called on Germans to develop a more positive historical culture.<sup>69</sup> And ongoing investigations into the negative continuities between Nazi and Federal Republican institutions, such as a study of the activities and ideology of the foreign ministry during the Nazi period,<sup>70</sup> suggest that the German nation cannot expect complete normality in the new century. The very recent trials of Holocaust perpetrators remind us that the last individuals who actually experienced this terrible era are now very old and few.<sup>71</sup> But sites of former concentration camps, and, most powerfully, the relatively new Holocaust monument in the centre of the German capital, remain physically present and continue to shape the historical culture of reunified Germany.

It is too early to interpret the current revival of extreme conservatism in the politics of the German mainstream, as manifested in the 2017 federal elections when *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) gained seats in parliament, as a sign of



further historical normalization of German nationalism. Björn Höcke's peculiar view of the Holocaust memorial in Berlin as 'a monument of shame' caused strong domestic and international reactions against such revisionist efforts of historical normalization.<sup>72</sup> The responsive memory activism of artists was remarkable.<sup>73</sup> The European context almost 30 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, however, suggests indeed that right-wing nationalism and fascism are re-establishing themselves within the mainstream, and it will be important to watch the role of German citizens in these transnational movements.

Young Germans are still confronted in a special way by the dark heritage of their nation, not only in the built environment but also in the education system. The Holocaust as an international crime concerning the global community has not only informed national identities, but also allowed for the construction of a cosmopolitan memory of past events that transcends such national identities.<sup>74</sup> However, the internationalization of Holocaust remembrance, for example, in school education around the world, does not necessarily overthrow the dominant understanding of it as a particularly German phenomenon, as a recent study found. Since the 1970s, there have indeed been efforts to free the history of the Holocaust from methodological and emotional nationalisms by moving towards a more human rights-oriented narrative.<sup>75</sup> Subsequently, responsibility for the Holocaust has been increasingly recognized as being shared by non-Germans. Nevertheless, no other country's national identity, perhaps with the exception of Israel's, has been affected so strongly by its genocidal past. In Germany there remains a consensus that the Holocaust must be part of the school curriculum, even if its significance in comparison to other 'dark episodes' of the past does not remain unchallenged, as historian Wolf Kaiser points out. According to Kaiser, German school teachers perceive teaching this subject as a moral duty, more than any other historical topic, as 'they must insist on the special responsibility people living in Germany have.'<sup>76</sup> History, Falk Pingel remarks, is still taught predominantly as national history rather than as a 'history of humankind,' and the pedagogy of Holocaust remembrance is dependent on historical and political cultures that usually do not transcend national boundaries. In those countries that were occupied by Nazi Germany, the genocide has been taught and remembered differently from how it has been taught within Germany, where the years up to 1945 cannot be historicized as a period of 'heroism, resistance, and the suffering of the majority of the population.'<sup>77</sup> In some Central and Eastern European nations the political turning point of 1990 led to a further decline of Holocaust remembrance, as both communism and Nazism could subsequently be represented as dialectic forces in an age of ideologies that killed millions.<sup>78</sup> In school textbooks for some countries, the suffering of the Jews became neglected.<sup>79</sup> In other countries, however, the Holocaust is taught as a warning, something that could also happen again elsewhere, as a critique of racist politics more generally, and, in a number of places, as a way to undermine Western morality.<sup>80</sup> Sometimes schoolbooks use the Holocaust to condemn other genocidal moments and attacks of their own nation.<sup>81</sup> Thus, if Holocaust memory is becoming globalized,<sup>82</sup> it nevertheless remains doubtful to what extent it will affect other nations' identities.



While historical cultures in divided Germany were predominantly shaped by alliances between politicians and professional historians, they have, since unification, been increasingly shaped by actors outside the history departments, including film, video games, and other media.<sup>83</sup> The treatment of the Nazi past is therefore experiencing interesting changes beyond any historical realism. The often surreal and counterfactual portrayals of German Nazis seem to affirm a sense of historical abnormality. Unselfconscious dealings with the Nazi past, such as Gavriel Rosenfeld's recent film *Hi Hitler!*, should therefore not be interpreted as historical normalization.<sup>84</sup>

### **Conclusion: 1990 as a return to normality?**

Nationalism, to borrow an expression from correspondence I had with Tom Nairn a few years ago, is 'over the hump.' New nation-states mushroom all the time, but in the world today nationalism is a dominant ideology that does not so much aim any more at the construction of new nations, but rather at their maintenance and adaptation to new circumstances. Nationalism has become ontologically normal. And Germans, in overcoming their post-national tendencies that were visible in the Cold War era, have conformed to this trend. Reunification has not only led to a territorial normalization of Germany, that is the (re)construction of the nation-state, but also rendered void the alternative visions that had grown strong during the 'provisional' condition of double statehood.

In Germany, both peculiarities, the territorial and the historical, were intrinsically related: the singularity of the Holocaust provided for an exceptionally intensive and wide-reaching discussion on the deeper reasons for this human catastrophe, and it undermined the legitimacy of conventional forms of nationalism. The conservative efforts to realize this nation-state within the transatlantic and European frameworks of the West have allowed the Germans to become *almost* normal again. Almost because, in the Federal Republic, the 'dark side' of national history, which played an increasingly visible role in public debates towards the end of the Cold War, has not subsequently gone away. Despite great efforts by historians and politicians in Germany to normalize national history, that is by relativizing the Nazi past and 'restoring' overall positive continuities, the break of 1945 has remained foundational to the identity of the Federal Republic, as has the break of 1989/1990 that restored 'normal' nationalism in other ways. 1945 remains a kind of holy grail for the Germans. Even if the democratization of historical cultures led to a situation in which all nations discovered their dark past and developed a sophisticated culture of transitional justice, it remains doubtful to what degree the unique crimes committed by the German nation would ever fade from a discursive and international memory regime, with competing interests in the future role of Germany. If, until now, normality has required being a Western nation-state with a relatively positive past, it will be exciting to see how long this remains the case. Belonging to the West might not necessarily be something that the masses around the world will hold as a virtue for much longer, while national identities remain strong at the

beginning of the twenty-first century. Perhaps they will grow even stronger, or become uglier, while adapting to highly urbanized, globalizing, and digital societies.

Eric Hobsbawm, in a critical piece about nationalism, once reflected that ‘Historians are to nationalism what poppy-growers in Pakistan are to heroin-addicts: we supply the essential raw material for the market.’<sup>85</sup> He rightly pointed to the intimate relationship between history and nationalism. Nations have a dire need for supposedly reliable narrations of the past.<sup>86</sup> Following Hobsbawm’s analogy, most contemporaries are like heroin addicts: most of us are nationalists, and the demand for public history as national history has been booming. But there seems to be no evidence that constructions of national identity cannot go beyond the conception of the nation as a brand that requires positive advertising through self-congratulatory narratives of the past. The German case could be paradigmatic. It remains doubtful, however, to what extent Germany’s public nationalism corresponds to the private nationalism of German families, where memories of Nazism are perhaps articulated in a less critical manner.<sup>87</sup>

## Notes

- 1 Wicke, *Helmut Kohl’s Quest for Normality*, 46–49.
- 2 Niethammer, *Kollektive Identität: Heimliche Quellen einer unheimlichen Konjunktur*.
- 3 Billig, *Banal Nationalism*; Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.
- 4 Habermas, ‘Eine Art Schadensabwicklung.’
- 5 For the concept, see also Müller, *Constitutional Patriotism*.
- 6 Habermas, *Die Normalität einer Berliner Republik. Kleine Politische Schriften VIII*.
- 7 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*.
- 8 Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences*.
- 9 See Wicke, ‘Constructivism in the History of Nationalism since 1945.’
- 10 Kedourie, *Nationalism*: 9.
- 11 Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 6.
- 12 Gellner, *Thought and Change*, 169.
- 13 Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*.
- 14 Gellner, *Thought and Change*, 168.
- 15 Elias, *Studien über die Deutschen: Machkämpfe and Habitusentwicklung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, 194–195.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 10.
- 17 Billig, *Banal Nationalism*.
- 18 For the concept of ‘lifeworld,’ see Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, 108–109.
- 19 Think, for example, of the Scottish kilt that was invented by an Englishman in the eighteenth century and subsequently became part of the standard image of the Scottish people. See Trevor-Roper, ‘The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland.’ Or, in a German context, think of the many Bismarck towers that mushroomed across the country after the death of the heroic chancellor of unification during the consolidation phase of the first German nation-state. Germans today walk pass these well-maintained towers on their hikes during the summer holidays, or Sunday walks in the park.
- 20 Elias, *Studien über die Deutschen: Machkämpfe and Habitusentwicklung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, 196–197.

- 21 Somers, 'Narrativity, Narrative Identity, and Social Action: Rethinking English Working-Class Formation,' 603; Hearn, 'Narrative, Agency, and Mood: On the Social Construction of National History in Scotland.'
- 22 Ichijo and Uzelac, *When Is the Nation? Towards an Understanding of Theories of Nationalism*.
- 23 Hirschi, *The Origins of Nationalism: An Alternative History from Ancient Rome to Early Modern Germany*.
- 24 Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany, from the Napoleonic Wars Through the Third Reich*.
- 25 Planert, 'Wann beginnt der "moderne" deutsche Nationalismus? Plädoyer für eine nationale Sattelzeit,' 25–59.
- 26 Van Ginderachter and Beyen, *Nationhood from Below: Europe in the Long Nineteenth Century*.
- 27 Van der Linden, 'The National Integration of European Working-Classes (1871–1914)'; Berger, 'British and German Socialists Between Class and National Solidarity,' 31–63.
- 28 Cf. e.g. Mausbach, 'Wende um 360 Grad? Nationalsozialismus und Judenvernichtung in "der zweiten Gründungsphase" der Bundesrepublik,' 15–47.
- 29 Habermas wrote of the *Kulturnation* (cultural nation) of the Germans. Habermas, 'Eine Art Schadensabwicklung.'
- 30 Historism: I am following Stefan Berger's suggestion to distinguish between 'historism' and 'historicism.' Berger, 'Stefan Berger responds to Ulrich Muhlack,' 21–33, especially 28 f.
- 31 I am grateful for the helpful correspondence I had with Bärbel Bohley in 2008.
- 32 Jäckel, 'Die Doppelte Vergangenheit.'
- 33 Berger, *The Search for Normality: National Identity and Historical Consciousness Since 1800*, 176 ff.
- 34 Schweigler, *National Consciousness in Divided Germany*.
- 35 Hölscher, *Die Entdeckung der Zukunft*.
- 36 Schwengsbier, 'Die absurde Welt der Reichsbürger.'
- 37 For the concept of prefabrication as related to the new order post-1989, see Sarotte, *1989: The Struggle to Create a Post-Cold War Europe*.
- 38 See e.g.: Figes, *Natasha's Dance: A Cultural History of Russia*; Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1909*.
- 39 Mann, *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*; Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes. Umriss einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte*.
- 40 Meinecke, *Weltbürgertum und Nationalstaat. Studien zur Genesis des deutschen Nationalstaates*.
- 41 See: Mann, *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*; and Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes. Umriss einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte*.
- 42 Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in Its Origins and Background*.
- 43 Kohn, *The Mind of Germany: The Education of a Nation*.
- 44 See e.g. Brown, 'Are There Any Good and Bad Nationalisms?'
- 45 Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*.
- 46 Moses, *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past*.
- 47 Habermas, 'Eine Art Schadensabwicklung. Die apologetischen Tendenzen in der deutschen Zeitgeschichtsschreibung.'
- 48 For reasons of space, I cannot discuss the problematic tension here between universality and Westernness. Cf. Nolte, 'Westen ist Überall.'
- 49 Habermas, 'Staatsbürgerschaft und nationale Identität.'
- 50 Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism*; Miller, *On Nationality*.
- 51 Cf. Kundnani, *The Paradox of German Power*. See also Harnisch and Longhurst, 'Understanding Germany: The Limits of "Normalization", and the Prevalence of Strategic Culture,' 49–60.

- 52 Winkler, *Germany: The Long Road West*.
- 53 Fischer, 'Wir sind auf uns allein gestellt.'
- 54 Von Hammerstein, 'Denken auf Vorrat.'
- 55 Lorenz, "'Hete" Geschiedenis: Over de Temperatuur van de contemporaine Duitse geschiedenis.'
- 56 Kaiser, 'Teaching about Perpetrators of the Holocaust in Germany.'
- 57 See, for example, Taberner and Cooke, *German Culture, Politics and Literature into the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Normalization*.
- 58 Moses, *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past*.
- 59 Geyer, *The Power of Intellectuals in Contemporary Germany*, 317.
- 60 Moses, *The Politics of Illusion: The Fischer Controversy in German Historiography*.
- 61 Kocka, 'German History before Hitler: The Debate about the German Sonderweg.'
- 62 For the cultural Sonderweg see e.g. Watson, *The German Genius: Europe's Third Renaissance, the Second Scientific Revolution and the Twentieth Century*. For early cultural Sonderweg explanations of Nazism, in which Protestantism ('from Luther to Hitler') also played a role, see e.g.: Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology*; Viereck, *Metapolitics: from Wagner and the German Romantics to Hitler*; Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany*. The slogan 'from Herder to Hitler' is borrowed from Dahmen, *Die Nationale Idee von Herder bis Hitler*.
- 63 Augstein et al., *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler?: Original Documents of the Historikerstreit, the Controversy Concerning the Singularity of the Holocaust*.
- 64 See Wicke, 'Between Eternal and German Spirit: Kohl's Politics of Historical Memory in Biographical Perspective.'
- 65 Kattago, *Ambiguous Memory: The Nazi Past and German National Identity*.
- 66 Wicke and Wellings, 'History Wars in Germany and Australia: National Museums and the Re-Legitimation of Nationhood.'
- 67 Gathmann, 'Von einem Schlusstrich kann keine Rede sein'; Gathmann, 'Die DDR war vom Anfang bis zum Ende eine Diktatur.'
- 68 Eley, *The Goldhagen Effect: History, Memory, Nazism—Facing the German Past*.
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## **Part II**

# **Neoliberalism in and beyond the nation-state**



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## 5 Neoliberalism after 1989

*Annelien de Dijn*

On May 8, 1989, Nobel Prize winning economist Friedrich Hayek turned 90. To mark the occasion, the American business magazine *Forbes* sent a journalist for an in-depth interview. Hayek, who generally tended toward the curmudgeonly, sounded remarkably upbeat during the interview. The future of capitalism, he told *Forbes*, was looking bright. Around the world, people had soured on socialist planning and embraced free markets. This was particularly true for the younger generation. Unemployed youngsters from Algiers to Rangoon did not clamor for collectivism or a welfare state, but for the freedom to buy and sell. Of course, many countries still suffered under the yoke of communism. But Hayek believed that the West would eventually win that battle, even if the fight was by no means over as yet. ‘Communism has ended,’ he remarked, while pulling his blanket further over his lap.<sup>1</sup>

Hayek, as we now know, was right. Indeed, the victory of free markets over communism came even more quickly than he might have expected when he gave his interview to *Forbes*. On November 9, 1989, six months after Hayek’s ninetyeth birthday, the Iron Curtain came down. On that day, a spokesman for East Berlin’s Communist Party announced that citizens of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) would be free to cross the country’s borders. East and West Berliners immediately flocked to the Berlin Wall, the concrete barrier separating East and West, where they started chanting ‘Tor auf!’ (‘Open the gate!’). After some hesitation, the border guards let the crowds through, thus opening the gates to the West. A year later, in 1990, the Wall itself was demolished. The Cold War was now officially over, and a new era began: the era of neoliberalism.<sup>2</sup>

The goal of this section is to throw new light on the triumph of neoliberalism after 1989. More specifically, the chapters in this section address three distinct but interrelated questions. The first question they aim to answer is what it means to say that neoliberalism prevailed after the Cold War; as we shall see, this meant something different in the West from in the former Eastern bloc. Second, contributors to this section examine the various causes of the triumph of neoliberalism after 1989. How should we understand the victory of neoliberalism in the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall? Why did neoliberalism emerge victorious after 1989, rather than another system of ideas, such as, democratic socialism? And third, this section explores how we should evaluate the success of neoliberalism. Looking

back 30 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, should we celebrate the ways in which neoliberalism has changed our world—or is the triumph of neoliberalism cause for regret?

Before we go on to examine these questions in greater depth, a more conceptual issue needs to be addressed: what do we mean when we talk about neoliberalism? It is sometimes suggested that neoliberalism does not really exist; that it is a term of abuse rather than a moniker describing a specific phenomenon or well-circumscribed ideological movement.<sup>3</sup> There is undoubtedly some truth to this charge. In the popular media, in particular, the term ‘neoliberalism’ is often used to vilify rather than to describe; in addition, journalists and activists tend to use it to designate such a wide range of phenomena that it is in danger of losing all analytic value. Even in more scholarly literature, the term is often used as a catchphrase or slogan rather than a carefully circumscribed concept. But that does not mean, of course, that the notion of ‘neoliberalism’ is necessarily empty of meaning. Here, we use the concept to pick out a specific ideological movement based on a staunch belief in the economic and political benefits of free markets and competition.

Neoliberalism in this sense of the word, we argue, emerged in the 1930s and 1940s; its most influential ideologues were associated with Chicago University and the anti-communist think tank, the Mont Pelerin Society.<sup>4</sup> Its main tenets were summarized by the economist Milton Friedman—who was, apart from Hayek, the most prominent standard-bearer of neoliberalism—in a 1951 essay entitled ‘Neo-Liberalism and its Prospects.’ As Friedman here argued, neoliberalism was a ‘new faith,’ different both from the ‘collectivism’ predominant in his own day and age, and from the absolute Victorian belief in *laissez-faire*. Unlike collectivists, Friedman explained, neoliberal intellectuals understood that nationalization and planning could not solve economic problems like mass unemployment and poverty. However, they also rejected the naive belief of Victorian liberals that state power should simply be restricted as much as possible. Instead, they saw a positive role for the state, albeit a very specific one; it should ‘establish conditions favorable to competition and prevent monopoly.’<sup>5</sup>

In short, a belief in free markets (rather than *laissez-faire* as such) was (and has remained) essential to neoliberalism. This core idea was based in turn on the assumption that competition was essential for economic prosperity. But that was not the only reason why neoliberal luminaries such as Friedman supported free markets. Just as important, in his view, was that free markets were necessary for preserving ‘a maximum of individual freedom and liberty.’ Only the existence of ‘a free private market,’ Friedman explained, could protect citizens against the potentially totalitarian power of the state. Collectivism, by contrast, would necessarily empower the state, ‘and there is much reason to believe,’ Friedman emphasized, ‘that the power will sooner or later get into the hands of those who will use it for evil purposes.’<sup>6</sup> In short, according to Friedman and other proselytizers of neoliberalism such as Friedrich Hayek, free markets were essential to both the economic *and* political survival of Western democracies.

That bring us to our first question. What role does 1989 play in the story of neoliberalism? Most scholars agree that neoliberalism triumphed after 1989. But what exactly does that mean? The answer to that question, as the contributors to this section make clear, varies depending on the regional context. In the West, neoliberalism had been gaining ground since the 1980s, when many countries, notably the United States and Britain, had adopted neoliberal policies to combat the stagflation crisis of the 1970s. But, as Bram Mellink and P. W. Zuidhof argue in Chapter 7, 1989 did mark a new phase in the history of neoliberalism in the West. Before the fall of the Berlin Wall, neoliberal policy-makers were mostly focused on rolling back state power, for instance by privatizing nationalized industries or sectors such as energy. But after 1989, the goal increasingly became to transform the very working of the state itself; thus, neoliberalism entered a new phase described by Mellink and Zuidhof as *roll-in* liberalism (in contrast to the *rollback* neoliberalism of the pre-1989 phase).

But 1989 heralded even more profound changes in the former Eastern bloc, where many countries transitioned from communism to full-blown neoliberalism. In that sense, 1989 marks the beginning of the global hegemony of neoliberalism, as Philipp Ther shows in Chapter 6. In addition, as Stefan Couperus and Dora Vrhoci indicate in Chapter 8, 1989 was also a watershed in the relationship between East and West. They illustrate this by focusing on a relatively unexplored phenomenon: urban twinning. Before and during the Cold War, Couperus and Vrhoci show, twinning initiatives typically had a humanitarian intention. But after 1989, town twinning came to be increasingly characterized by more commercial motives, thereby underscoring a more general turn to a market-oriented attitude in urban governance and policy-making (even though, as Couperus and Vrhoci note as well, this trend was far from universal).

It is clear therefore that 1989 was indeed a watershed moment in the history of neoliberalism. Less clear, however, is how we are to explain the triumph of neoliberalism after 1989. Why did neoliberalism become triumphant in the former Eastern bloc, rather than another set of ideas, such as democratic socialism? And how should we understand the success of roll-in neoliberalism in the West? That is the second set of questions addressed by this section. To a certain extent, these questions can be answered by applying the framework developed by researchers such as Mark Blyth to explain the emergence of neoliberalism in the 1970s and 1980s in the United States and Western Europe. As Blyth has argued, in moments of crisis, a situation of uncertainty is created and this encourages historical agents to explore and adopt new ideas. In other words, crisis triggers ideational change, and in particular changes in the ideas espoused by experts and expert policy-makers, which in turn must be seen as the key causal factor in explaining changes in political and economic policies and institutions.<sup>7</sup>

Blyth's perspective goes a long way to explaining why there were such dramatic changes in policy-making in both the East and the West after 1989—the end of the Cold War, after all, was nothing if not a moment of major crisis. But at the same time, this perspective leaves a number of important questions unanswered. More specifically, it remains unclear why the crisis of 1989 would have resulted

in the victory of neoliberalism rather than any rival, ‘third way’ ideologies. In Chapter 6, Ther offers important new perspectives, as do Mellink and Zuidhof in Chapter 7. The victory of neoliberalism, both these chapters show, cannot simply be explained by virtue of its being a more effective or successful policy in economic terms than rival policy prescriptions. For instance, as Ther reminds us, the ‘shock therapy’ in post-communist Europe ended up causing human catastrophe in several countries and was in many ways a dismal failure.

Instead, Ther and Mellink and Zuidhof argue that neoliberalism prevailed after 1989 because its main tenets could be translated into terms that were attractive to local elites. As Ther shows, in the former communist world, neoliberalism was promoted by using narratives resembling those pioneered by Soviet policy-makers; neoliberal policy-makers talked about the need to make sacrifices in the here-and-now for the sake of future betterment—much like communist ideologues had done in the pre-1989 period. Similarly, Mellink and Zuidhof emphasize that roll-in liberalism in the Netherlands was, somewhat ironically, defended as necessary for the preservation of the welfare state—a goal that could count on broad local support. The contributions to this section furthermore make clear that because of this embrace of neoliberalism by local elites, the turn to neoliberalism was fairly resistant to the failure to achieve the promised results. Local elites continued to cling to neoliberal prescriptions even in the East, as Ther shows, where the failure of neoliberal shock therapy was most obvious, because the psychological cost of admitting mistakes would have been too great.

But in addition to neoliberal communication strategies, other factors need to be taken into account to explain the success of neoliberalism after 1989. Past legacies also played an important role in determining how receptive policy-makers were to neoliberal policy prescriptions. As Couperus and Vrhoci show in their examination of town twinning practices, bilateral relationships between towns were less likely to be affected by the turn to new, neoliberal practices when they had a robust pre-1989 history, whereas newer initiatives were more easily influenced by the rise of neoliberal attitudes among municipal policy-makers. As Couperus and Vrhoci make clear, town twinning programs that started after 1944 to promote mutual friendship, solidarity, and rapprochement were less likely to become ‘commercialized’ than programs initiated during the heyday of neoliberalism.

That brings us to our third and final question: how should we evaluate the triumph of neoliberalism after 1989? Over the past decade, this question has generated substantial debate, first and foremost among economic experts. Whereas the economic benefits of neoliberal policies were long unquestioned, today the extent to which neoliberal policies can be said to have encouraged prosperity has come increasingly under scrutiny. Even economists connected to the International Monetary Fund (IMF)—traditionally seen as one of the main institutional backers of neoliberal policies—now seem to question the efficacy of unbridled competition and free markets. Thus, in June 2016, *Finance and Development* (the IMF’s main journal) published an article about the impact of neoliberalism, suggestively entitled ‘Neoliberalism: Oversold?’ The tone was moderate but clearly critical. Based on an assessment of the impact of two widely implemented



policies (removing restrictions on the movement of capital across a country's borders, and fiscal consolidation, sometimes called 'austerity'), the article's authors concluded that neoliberalism had 'not delivered as expected.' In particular, by increasing inequality neoliberal policies had harmed durable economic growth.<sup>8</sup>

In short, it seems fair to say that today neoliberalism is 'in crisis'—even though neoliberal policies continue to remain in place both globally and locally.<sup>9</sup> But, as the contributors to this section remind us, there is another side to this debate as well. As we discussed earlier, neoliberal policies boosting free markets and competition were originally defended as instrumental not just for economic prosperity, but for the very survival of democracy as well. From this perspective, neoliberalism might equally be seen to fall short of its promise. Again, this was perhaps first discernible in the former Eastern bloc, where, as Ther points out, even before the 2008 crisis rising social tensions caused by neoliberalism had led to a political counterreaction, most notably the rise of populism and nationalism. More recent developments, notably the election of Donald Trump and Brexit, have made it even clearer that this counterreaction cannot be dismissed as an example of 'Eastern' exceptionalism. Compared to the by now mature debate about neoliberalism's economic effects, however, debate about neoliberalism's impact on politics has only just begun. It is therefore all the more important to remind ourselves of the fact that neoliberalism was explicitly invented to serve a political agenda as much as an economic one.

In sum, the contributors to this section make a valuable and original contribution to the history of neoliberalism. They show that 1989 must be seen as a watershed moment in the history of neoliberalism, even though the neoliberal embrace of free markets and competition impacted the former Eastern bloc differently from the United States and Western Europe. They argue that the embrace of neoliberal policy proposals by local elites goes a long way to explaining the triumph of neoliberalism after 1989, even when it failed to deliver promised results. And finally, the contributors to this section remind us that neoliberalism should be understood not just as a set of economic doctrines, but that free markets and competition were also propagated as being indispensable for democracy—and that, hence, we should also take account of its political effects when taking stock of the impact neoliberalism has had in the three decades since its triumph in 1989.

## Notes

- 1 Ebenstein, *Friedrich Hayek*, 315.
- 2 The literature on 1989 as a watershed moment in history is by now overwhelming. For a synoptic view, see Engel, *The Fall of the Berlin Wall*.
- 3 Boas and Gans-Morse, 'Neoliberalism.'
- 4 For a good account of the intellectual origins of neoliberalism, see Jackson, 'At the Origins of Neo-Liberalism.'
- 5 Friedman, 'Neo-Liberalism and Its Prospects.'
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 Blyth, *Great Transformations*.
- 8 Ostry, Loungani, and Furceri, 'Neoliberalism: Oversold?'
- 9 See, for instance, Lévy and Duménil, *The Crisis of Neoliberalism*.

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## 6 The year 1989 and the global hegemony of neoliberalism<sup>1</sup>

*Philipp Ther*

While ‘Reagonomics’ and ‘Thatcherism’ are clearly things of the past, it is more difficult to historicize neoliberalism. Historians are skating on thin ice when they analyze processes and actors that are still impacting on the present—there are sound reasons for historians focusing on completed processes and deceased persons. Yet neoliberal ideology and its application in various countries call for analysis because of the profound effect it has had on the world since the 1980s. Since the global crisis of 2008, there have been clear signs that neoliberalism has passed its zenith, even though it continues to be a significant force.<sup>2</sup> This is especially evident in the post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, including united Germany.

In this chapter, then, I will aim to historicize neoliberalism beyond political polemics, not normatively but analytically. I have taken my cue from research on nationalism, my original field of study, which pioneered this approach. The volumes published almost simultaneously by Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner in 1983 showed that the terms *nationalism* and *nationalist* do not have to be insults but can be reference points for scholarly analysis.<sup>3</sup> Historians need to do something similar with neoliberalism, which has not only transformed post-communist Europe but also Western Europe, other parts of the world, and the United States in particular. The main pillars of this ideology and the elements defining it are an idealization of unrestrained, free markets in the belief that they create an equilibrium for all sorts of market imbalances, an irrational faith in the rationality of market agents, and a libertarian antipathy toward the state. On the practical side, neoliberalism is based upon a standard economic recipe consisting of austerity, privatization, liberalization, deregulation, and foreign direct investment, which was codified in the ‘Washington Consensus’ in 1989.

As the earlier intellectual history of neoliberalism has been far better researched than its political implementation, I will focus on the latter topic here. The concrete question I will seek to answer is why neoliberalism became so firmly established around 1989, especially in post-communist Europe. European critics of free market capitalism often attribute the rise of neoliberalism to the influence of the United States and global finance organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. But local elites were also significantly involved in pressing through radical reforms. Poland was the front-runner when it came to

adopting neoliberalism in Eastern Europe, and therefore deserves special attention. The Federal Republic of Germany also played an important role. For this reason, the article will regularly return to Germany's transformation. The examples of Poland, and, already in the 1980s, of Chile, demonstrate that countries on the semi-periphery of the global economy—'emerging markets' in the argot of neoliberalism—served as experimentation sites for neoliberal economic policies. But, in turn, developments in post-communist Europe and in Latin America had a substantial impact on the West, which became 'co-transformed.' The post-communist transformation, or transition (in the United States this term is more common; *transformation* was introduced by David Stark, and German and Eastern European social scientists, to stress the social and institutional dimension of the changes), was generally expected to end in democracy and capitalism;<sup>4</sup> a teleology that was a commonplace among transitologists beyond Francis Fukuyama's 'end of history.' In view of the recent authoritarian turn in Hungary and other countries, these past expectations and dogmata need to be historicized as well.

It should be stated at the outset that this chapter is an attempt to stimulate historical research into neoliberalism. Possibilities for future research will be more closely considered at the end. As the chapter also attempts to give an introductory overview, it will not consider all countries and fields of literature equally. As well as past writings by economists and reform politicians, I consulted media sources for my case studies on Germany and Eastern Europe, as neoliberalism was a discursive phenomenon as well. But focusing on that part of Europe alone is not sufficient to understand the practice of neoliberal policy. Chile served as an experimental field for radical reforms even before 1989, and was closely observed by Poland and other (post)-communist countries at the time. In order to understand the Chilean case (without being a specialist in Latin American history), I explored archival material held by the World Bank.

### **What is neoliberalism?**

Neoliberalism is based on an ideal of free, autonomous, self-balancing markets and rationally acting market players. A cornerstone of this doctrine was to reduce the role of government, initially in the economy, but, by the late 1990s, also in health insurance and pension systems—key areas of welfare and social security. Unlike Marxism, classical liberalism, or Christian social ethics, no political movement or party aligned itself openly with neoliberalism, or what Joseph Stiglitz labels 'market fundamentalism.'<sup>5</sup> Neither is there any canon of writings or set of historically evolved values, as in classical liberalism or Marxism. Moreover, the economists and politicians who can be considered pioneers of neoliberalism have rebuked this term since the 1980s. Yet in the early postwar period they rather used the term in an affirmative way.<sup>6</sup> Critics and scholars of neoliberalism are therefore aiming at a moving target. As a result, in the public debates on neoliberalism there is too much shooting and too little analysis going on. A second difficulty arises when it comes to differentiating neoliberalism from classical liberalism and, in

economics, distinguishing it from the neoclassical school.<sup>7</sup> A third problem is the cleavage between neoliberal rhetoric and politics, which is symptomatic of the inherent conflicts within the ideology.

Defining neoliberalism is further complicated by its adaptability. And that is precisely one of its essential strengths. Neoliberalism managed to attain a global hegemony from the late 1980s onward partly because it proved so flexible and adaptable to very different contexts. In this respect, it is similar to modern nationalism, the ideology that arguably had the biggest impact on European history in the ‘long’ nineteenth century and until the end of World War II. Nationalism also proved ideologically variable, thriving in extremely diverse contexts, from ‘small’ nations to large empires. At the ideological core of neoliberalism is an idealization of the market as a regulator and last judgment over the exchange of material and even immaterial goods. Despite its pivotal function, ‘the market’ (also referred to in the plural as ‘the markets’) is rarely defined in any precise terms. The image of the market drawn by Milton Friedman and Margaret Thatcher, the leading intellectual and political pioneers of neoliberalism, was based on the historical ideal of small-town marketplaces where basic goods were traded face-to-face.<sup>8</sup> The central theory was that the market could best unfold its productive powers if ‘unfettered’ and free from state intervention.

Government was consequently viewed with skepticism. Advocates of neoliberalism wanted to see the body politic reduced to merely ensuring the rule of law and protecting and promoting private property—another central value of neoliberalism—and business activities. This goal (which was often contradicted in the implementation of neoliberal policies) and the maxim of greater efficiency led to the demand for privatization: initially of state enterprises such as postal services, telecommunications, and railways (insofar as they were still government-run at all), and including the huge state sector in the post-communist countries; and eventually, from the late 1990s, privatization of formerly key areas of government responsibility such as pensions and health care. Pruned back like this, governments were not expected to stimulate demand as they had been under Keynesianism. Instead, independent central banks and monetary policies were to indirectly steer the economy. Further neoliberal touchstones were external and internal liberalization and the deregulation of national and international financial markets. Neoliberalism is built upon older ideas of modernization. However, rather than being fed by internal resources and by the respective national governments, as in state socialism or the model of import substitution industrialization (ISI) that was widely practiced in decolonized countries (and, until Pinochet’s coup of 1973, in Chile), modernization was to be propelled by global markets and international finance, and hence external resources. Ultimately, neoliberalism is based on a specific concept of society as consisting of rationally and autonomously operating citizens who increase overall prosperity by their individual pursuit of economic profit.

Internationalism is another hallmark of neoliberalism (though some of its main proponents like Margaret Thatcher and former Czech president Václav Klaus

utilized a strong dose of ethnic nationalism in their election campaigns). It is based on a transnational expert culture, dominated by economists, and the power of international financial organizations such as the IMF and the World Bank. The larger a country's foreign debts and the greater its dependence on policy-based aid programs, the deeper the influence of the international financial organizations on it. Another striking characteristic is the frequent referencing of external models, and radical reforms in other countries or parts of the world. In this respect, neoliberalism is both a result of and a driving force behind globalization.<sup>9</sup>

The historical development of neoliberalism occurred in five phases. The formative phase was the longest, lasting from the early postwar period (with some roots in interwar times) to the late 1970s. During this time, neoliberalism was propelled by experts outside the political and academic mainstream. But these intellectual pioneers of neoliberalism formed networks spanning organizations such as the Mont Pelerin Society, various conservative foundations, and think tanks that eventually turned public opinion around.<sup>10</sup> In the mid-1970s, acceptance of neoliberalism started to grow, initially among economists. In 1979 neoliberalism made its first major impact on government policy in the United Kingdom and the United States. Through the breakdown of state socialism and the fall of the Berlin Wall it attained global hegemony. Shortly before the turn of the millennium, a fifth phase of radicalization began that culminated in the crisis of 2008 (in Europe the worst of the crisis came in 2009). It is still hard to characterize the subsequent years. On the one hand, criticism of neoliberalism in the West and the success of alternative paths of modernization (in the sense of Shmuel Eisenstadt's 'multiple modernities'), such as the Chinese path, seem to have broken neoliberalism's global hegemony.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, in some Eastern and Southern European countries, more reforms have been introduced after 2008 that still contain neoliberal elements. Several commentators, including Joseph Stiglitz, have criticized this failure to break with the system after the most severe financial and economic crisis since 1929. The aftereffects of neoliberalism are evident in rising social tensions, increased social and regional imbalance, and political counterreactions, most notably populism and nationalism. In view of this, neoliberalism can be regarded not only as economic policy, but also in terms of social and cultural history.

While historical research has hitherto concentrated on intellectual history,<sup>12</sup> several prominent authors specializing in related social science fields have considered the implementation and social effects of neoliberalism. In the political science field, the most notable include Mitchell A. Orenstein and the author-duo Dorothee Bohle and Béla Greskovits.<sup>13</sup> In economics, Joseph Stiglitz and Paul Krugman are prominent critics of the triad of privatization, liberalization, and deregulation.<sup>14</sup> Research into 'varieties of capitalism' examines the relationship between the state and the economy, economic structures, and the business sector.<sup>15</sup> Ethnologist Elizabeth Dunn has highlighted the effect of the neoliberal order on society by a bottom-up analysis in her book on privatization in Poland.<sup>16</sup> A number of interesting studies have also been written on Chile, which was regarded internationally as a model of neoliberal reforms until 1990.<sup>17</sup> Contemporary

history should perhaps orientate more toward social anthropology and ethnology, as the economic and political changes resulting from radical reforms have already been comprehensively analyzed by political scientists and economists on a macro level. By contrast, historians could focus on specific social groups and milieus, local case studies, and individual enterprises, from major combines to former agricultural cooperatives. This would also transcend the dominant neoliberal view of the world—from above, from the desks of experts who would hardly be affected by the reform recipes they are prescribing.

### **The formative phase of neoliberalism**

The intellectual origins of neoliberalism lie in the interwar period. The prefix ‘neo-’ originally denoted a criticism of classical liberalism following the world economic crisis of the 1930s. In the postwar period, the Mont Pelerin Society played the leading role in developing neoliberal theory. This enigmatic, lodge-like society was a transatlantic network of renowned economists, intellectuals, political advisors, and, periodically, well-known politicians. The founding fathers included Friedrich August von Hayek and Ludwig von Mises (as representatives of the Austrian School, which, however, had little influence in Austria), Wilhelm Röpke (an economist who had a strong impact on postwar West Germany and the Netherlands), French conservative Raymond Aron, Hungarian-British socio-philosopher Michael Polanyi (brother of the more prominent expert on capitalism, Karl Polanyi), and, for a brief time, Walter Lippmann, the public intellectual and political advisor who coined the term Cold War.

Founded in 1947, the Mont Pelerin Society was in many respects a product of the East–West conflict. It opposed communist planned economy and any socialist influence or state dirigisme on the Western home fronts. At the Society’s first meeting, at the Swiss village of Mont Pelerin, near Vevey on Lake Geneva, after which it was named, the members called for more free enterprise, free competition, prices determined by market economy, and governments that should meddle as little as possible in the economy.<sup>18</sup> In these early years, the term ‘neoliberalism’ carried positive connotations. This is illustrated by an essay published in 1951 by Milton Friedman, later the president of the Society, entitled ‘Neoliberalism and its Prospects.’<sup>19</sup> The areas of intersection with politics, which also mark neoliberalism’s ‘field’ (in Bourdieu’s sense), are particularly interesting. Some prominent European parliamentarians and politicians were periodically associated with the Society, including Ludwig Erhard and Luigi Einaudi (the second president of Italy and founder of the publishing house of the same name). But Hayek was against well-known politicians playing too active a part, fearing it would jeopardize the network’s supposed non-partisanship. This was to change under the aegis of Milton Friedman, who became president of the Mont Pelerin Society in 1970 and rose to become a close economic advisor to Ronald Reagan. In this capacity, Friedman was instrumental in increasing the influence of neoliberalism on politics and disseminating it beyond university departments of economy to policy makers.



Despite its prominent membership, the Mont Pelerin Society, or the Chicago School of Economics, did not make a major impression on public opinion for the first three decades after the war. Right up until the 1970s, the ‘neoclassical synthesis,’ popularized by Paul Samuelson, dominated economic thought. As the term synthesis suggests, this approach to political economy incorporated Keynesian elements.<sup>20</sup> The United States continued to follow the path set by the New Deal, and the welfare state was consolidated under President Lyndon B. Johnson.<sup>21</sup> The task of rebuilding Western Europe after World War II virtually demanded dirigiste governments. The welfare state was also expanded in the light of communist criticism of the West as an exploiter of the working classes. The global economy, including exchange rates, was regulated by the Bretton-Woods system.<sup>22</sup>

But this postwar political and economic order collapsed in the early 1970s. The United States de facto canceled Bretton Woods in 1971. The oil crisis ended the *trente glorieuses* and sent inflation spiraling. Industrial mass production had been increasing global competition for some time; this anticipated the switch from demand- to supply-oriented economic policy. Keynesianism failed to provide solutions for the economic crisis of the 1970s—partly because of social and cultural changes. Western industrial societies could no longer be so easily steered; the civil rights movements and the student protests were signs of a growing tendency toward grassroots action, and larger sections of society started to openly question the state’s seemingly unassailable authority in continental Europe.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, the foundations of the West’s social security systems, designed for conditions of full employment, were shaken by rising unemployment and the growing number of social benefit claimants.

### **The rise of neoliberalism**

‘Stagflation’ after the oil crisis and growing budget deficits forced the Keynesians in the United States, the United Kingdom, and, a little later, in continental Europe, onto the defensive. It was a powerful argument for many economists, most notably of the Chicago School, to rely on free market forces rather than the state to regulate the economy. What exactly this implied was rarely defined in a positive sense, but *ex negativo*, as a criticism of government and its supposedly excessive power. The ‘Chicago Boys’ around Milton Friedman played a key role in causing this paradigm shift. Precisely because the concept of the market remained rather vague, it served as a good rhetorical device that chimed with the public and specialists alike. As Daniel Stedman Jones has shown, conservative think tanks and foundations such as the William Volker Fund, the American Enterprise Institute, the Heritage Foundation, the Cato Institute, and the Institute of Economic Affairs in Britain, played a central role in institutionalizing and disseminating neoliberal doctrines.<sup>24</sup>

Corporate sponsors financed international conferences, specialist and media publications, and many professorial chairs, including Hayek’s at the University of Chicago.<sup>25</sup> An early example of neoliberal communication strategy was a ten-part series, titled ‘Free to Choose,’ that Friedman produced for the US public television company PBS in 1980. The first episode opens up to the cool sounds of fusion music and a magnificent sunrise over Manhattan, and was named ‘The Power of

the Market.<sup>26</sup> Over the course of the series, Friedman propagated the basics of Reagonomics: minimal government and low taxation, liberalization and deregulation of the markets, and maximal freedom for enterprise.

To some extent, Reagan's politics deviated from Friedman's demand for austerity. The military rearmament following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was like a stimulus package for the economy; the upswing was largely financed by increasing public debt. These deviations were partly due to neoliberalism's inherent conflicts—the role of the central bank as a government institution was a constant source of controversy within the Chicago School—and partly to the inevitable process of adjustment that each ideology undergoes when adapted to everyday politics. After a few years, the systemic crises of neoliberalism struck. Following the deregulation of the financial sector, the 'savings and loan crisis' hit hundreds of banks in the United States in 1985. Contrary to the neoliberal rule book, the government channeled over \$100 billion into stemming the wave of bankruptcies. On 19 October 1987—Black Monday—the stock market boom ended as Wall Street posted its highest daily loss ever of –22 percent. Yet these difficulties, and growing government debt, did not prompt a change in economic policy. George Bush, Reagan's long-time vice president, won an easy victory against his Democratic challenger at the presidential elections in 1988.

In the United Kingdom, the Conservatives won two successive elections in the 1980s, despite Margaret Thatcher's highly controversial campaign against the unions, and despite the privatization of the railways and other government enterprises. The 'Iron Lady' also had luck on her side. During her first term, she won the Falklands War with resolute military action; later she was helped by the Labour Party's left-wing course. With her motto 'There is no alternative' (abbreviated to TINA), Margaret Thatcher, more than any other politician, stood for an anti-political mode of argumentation in favor of neoliberal reforms and cuts.<sup>27</sup>

As well as the United States and the United Kingdom, the semi-developed country Chile played a major role in spreading neoliberalism. In 1973 the military coup by Augusto Pinochet put an end to Salvador Allende's socialist experiments. These had included the nationalization of much of the country's industry and the introduction of a comprehensive land reform to benefit agricultural workers and small farmers. Under Pinochet the pendulum swung the other way. In 1975 he introduced a neoliberal economic policy, influenced by Chicago School writings and advisors. Following Chile's opening to import trade and foreign investment, public debt grew.<sup>28</sup> The Latin American debt crisis of 1982 ensued, which Pinochet took as an opportunity to further radicalize his economic policy, selling off the postal service, railways, and even the waterworks. Only the country's lucrative copper mines, source of a substantial part of the national export income, remained in public ownership, demonstrating the flexibility of neoliberal policy. In 1985, Finance Minister Hernán Büchi introduced huge cuts in public spending, slashing social benefits, public servant salaries, and jobs in public services. At the same time, he lowered taxation of high incomes, hoping to create a trickle-down effect. However, 40 percent of Chileans fell below the poverty line, disproving the effectiveness of this policy.<sup>29</sup>

Pinochet's economic policy remains controversial in retrospect. On the one hand, once the debt crisis had been overcome, a phase of high growth began that lasted until the Asian crisis in the late 1990s. On the other hand, the deepened social divide hindered growth. The supposed 'growth miracle' under Pinochet also seems questionable in the light of temporal continuities. True, Chile experienced a boom starting in 1984, though somewhat relativized by the economy's low, post-crisis starting point. But it gained renewed momentum in 1990 after Pinochet lost a referendum on extending his presidency for another term and was forced to surrender much of his power.

The boom of the following nine years could then equally be attributed to the economic policy of the Christian and Social Democrats. Finance Minister Alejandro Foxley was influenced by Christian social ethics. He criticized the neoliberal reforms, calling for a 'social equilibrium'—the very wording was provocative at the time—and prioritized the fight against poverty.<sup>30</sup> His measures to help disadvantaged sections of society, and increase the purchasing power of the broad mass of the population, propelled and sustained the upswing. However, he did not reverse any of the preceding privatizations or impose many new regulations on the Chilean economy, but continued to rely on foreign investors. In this respect, there was a certain amount of continuity. But regardless of whether one attributes the upswing to the international economy in the second half of the 1980s, to Büchi, or to Foxley, developmental dictatorship does not hold up as a direct, causal explanation.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, the Chilean case was vaunted globally as a neoliberal success story like the Polish 'shock therapy' in the 1990s. This illustrates the significance of the communicative aspect of neoliberalism.

Eastern Europe countries, especially Poland, looked to Chile with great interest, because, until the fall of 1989, it had seemed possible to open the economy under the helm of the communists and General Wojciech Jaruzelski, who had declared martial law and forbidden the trade union movement *Solidarność* in 1981. Had this scenario been realized, the Polish general might have become something like a European equivalent to Pinochet—the two countries also had high foreign debt and an indisputable need for economic reforms in common. Things turned out differently, of course, as state socialism rapidly declined in the fall of 1989. In the following year, Jaruzelski, like General Pinochet, was forced to resign, though the latter remained commander-in-chief of the Chilean army. The democratic *transición* contributed to Chile's success story, as it seemed to corroborate the claim that neoliberal economic reforms and democratization were complementary bedfellows. As Chile's principal creditor, the United States was pleased to observe the country's economic upswing and keen to see other Latin American countries follow similar strategies.

### **The global 1989**

It was in this context that the World Bank, the IMF, the US Finance Ministry, and top-level members of the US Congress devised the Washington Consensus in 1989. The first point in the Consensus Decalogue (it was set out in the form of

ten commandments) is the economic stabilization of countries with high inflation and national debt by means of strict austerity policies. Other main points included the triad of liberalization, deregulation, and privatization. Foreign direct investments, and hence global financial capitalism, were also factored in.<sup>32</sup> By naming it a ‘consensus,’ the authors placed critics in the role of deviants. It aimed, then, to set a global course, in the very same year when the revolutions in Eastern Europe occurred.<sup>33</sup>

With the global rise of neoliberalism, and the long period of Republican domination in the United States, the term gained increasingly negative connotations. Liberal and left-wing critics objected to President Reagan’s social and economic policies and attacked his economic advisors. Regardless of how one stands on Reagonomics, Thatcherism, and their long-term consequences, the United States and the United Kingdom certainly recovered from their long recessions in the early 1980s. Inflation fell and the economies picked up, propelling a general value change toward more outspoken individualism, the pursuit of profit (embodied by the archetypal ‘yuppie’), and free enterprise. The Western European welfare states appeared stolid and conservative in comparison.

Even more so than in politics, there was a distinct paradigm shift within the economics departments of universities and research institutes. In these specialist circles, neoclassical economics and neoliberalism gained incontestable preeminence. A core set of common views evolved, albeit with sub-disciplinary variants, principal among which was the tendency to quantify the world, by measurements such as gross domestic product (GDP), and the equilibrium theory, or the assumption that the markets would generate an equilibrium between supply and demand without any government intervention. The growing force of faith in the market was epitomized by the para-religious formula of the ‘invisible hand’ of the markets, attributed to Adam Smith.<sup>34</sup> As the memory of 1929’s Black Friday faded, faith in the rationality of market participants spread, only partly grounded in reason, but philosophically supported by the much-discussed rational choice theories of the 1980s. Another concept, borrowed from the laws of nature, was the ‘trickle-down’ premise that tax breaks for the wealthy and for businesses would prompt further investment and thus benefit the middle and lower classes. The Chicago Boys accepted, and even embraced, the fact that this policy was likely to increase social inequality. Of course, the Chicago School should not be lumped together indiscriminately as it was made up of various thinkers and Nobel Prize winners, but over the postwar period, Milton Friedman and the Mont Pelerin Society radicalized their views. While in the 1950s Friedman still supported some state regulation of the economy—for instance, in the case of legislation against monopolies and cartels—his standpoint grew increasingly libertarian over the years until he demonized any kind of government intervention.

Another key factor for the global hegemony of neoliberalism was the decline of state socialism. The perestroika, initiated by Gorbachev, involved a strategy of gradual reforms within the framework of the existing system. But from 1988 onward, it was clear that perestroika was aggravating the problems inherent to state socialism.<sup>35</sup> In Poland, the economic crisis was so severe that the government

decided to compromise with the opposition. This resulted in the Round Table and the elections of 1989, and all the changes they triggered for the Eastern bloc. The failure of perestroika increasingly turned opinion throughout the Eastern bloc toward radical reforms. As far back as 1988, the Polish weekly, *Polityka*, reported on the growing influence of ‘eastern Thatcherites.’<sup>36</sup> One of its proponents was Leszek Balcerowicz, who was appointed finance minister of the first post-communist government in 1989. Balcerowicz faced a desperate situation: the liberalization of prices for agricultural products that had been enacted by the reform communists had caused inflation to soar. The major combines made overall losses that could no longer be covered by the state budget. And to make matters worse, Poland had huge foreign debts.

The other state-socialist countries, apart from Czechoslovakia, were not in a much better state. The Soviet Union had the highest budget deficit, and was made bankrupt by its consumer-spending program, coupled with declining revenues for natural resource exports.<sup>37</sup> This led to rising inflation, which had already spiraled out of control in Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia’s economic, and soon political, collapse was particularly significant as it was the chief proponent of a ‘third way.’

The decline of the Eastern bloc elicited a strong response in the West, and especially in the United States. In early 1989, the magazine *The New Yorker* declared that ‘the contest between capitalism and socialism is over: capitalism has won.’<sup>38</sup> In Spring that year, Francis Fukuyama published his high-profile thesis on the ‘end of history,’ asserting that no other order than a combination of free market economy and democracy would be feasible in future. The Washington Consensus, which was originally devised for Latin America, eventually served as a blueprint for economic policy in various post-communist countries,<sup>39</sup> even those that initially hesitated to introduce radical reforms. As indicated above, this hegemony was the result of the interaction between Western and Eastern European crisis and reform discourses. More light is shed on neoliberalism’s hegemony if one views the Cold War not just as a conflict and a confrontation but also as a system of communication channels.

Indeed, it would be wrong to attribute neoliberalism in Chile, or in Eastern European countries after 1989, solely to the dominance of the United States and international financial organizations. Western advisors certainly played an important role for certain stretches, such as the Harvard economist Jeffrey Sachs, who was engaged as an economic advisor in Poland. But, as the examples of Balcerowicz, Klaus, and Yegor Gaidar in Russia show, local reform elites willingly adopted neoliberal ideology. One reason was that it then seemed to be the most promising alternative within the aforementioned inner-Western system rivalry of the late 1980s. The ‘third way’ that some proposed remained too abstract, and the post-communist countries could not afford to combine free market economy with a lavish welfare state, as former West Germany did. The recipes in the Washington Consensus, by contrast, entailed a package of very concrete measures and, most importantly, a vision for the future, albeit on the condition of traversing a ‘valley of tears’ first. This basic idea chimed so broadly in post-communist Europe not least because it was familiar: it echoed postwar communist demands for sacrifice in the present for the sake of a better future.

## Neoliberalism in practice in the 1990s

The model neoliberal reform country in Europe was initially Poland. The basic idea of the ten-part Balcerowicz Plan was a big bang: if subsidies for food, energy, rent, and many basic consumer items were stopped, prices for all products liberalized, unprofitable large industries privatized, and the borders opened to foreign companies, the Polish economy would reach an equilibrium after a short, painful period of adjustment and start to grow again. Balcerowicz assumed these reforms would result in a drop in the gross national product (GNP) of about 5 percent, and a mild rise in unemployment.

In 1990 and 1991, the gross national product of Poland de facto fell by 18 percent and industrial production by almost a third; inflation was not as easily controlled as thought. Furthermore, employees saw their purchasing power diminish due to the country's laws on wage restrictions (which contradicted the neoliberal principle of deregulation). The resultant drop in demand deepened the crisis. By 1992, 2.3 million Poles, or 13.5 percent of the working population, were already unemployed.<sup>40</sup> These economic and social problems did not fundamentally change the consensus on reforms. The left wing of the *Solidarność* movement had been absorbed into the government (including the charismatic Labor Minister Jacek Kuroń), and left-liberal intellectuals such as Adam Michnik quite openly propagated the view that swift and irreversible reforms were the best recipe, as the broad masses did not understand economic policy anyway.<sup>41</sup> Czechoslovakia and Hungary proceeded with slightly greater caution. Nevertheless, the Czechoslovak finance minister, and later Czech premier, Václav Klaus, for one, declared his support for Margaret Thatcher and 'market economy without attributes.'<sup>42</sup> Such neoliberal speech acts by Klaus, Balcerowicz, Gaidar, and many other reform politicians served, on the one hand, to reassure their nations of their mission, and, on the other, to push them forward in the competition for international investors.<sup>43</sup>

Although Germany indulged less in neoliberal rhetoric, East Germany went through a shock therapy at least as radical as Poland's. The first shock was monetary union in July 1990. Aside from a few exceptions (savings upward of a certain amount and company debts), East German marks were exchanged 1:1 for deutschmarks—a very high, politically motivated rate. The second shock came from rapid liberalization. When the former GDR joined the Federal Republic of Germany and, with it, the European Community, all trade barriers were removed, as recommended by the Washington Consensus. The East German economy could not cope with the sudden competitive pressure. A third peculiarity of German transformation was its radical approach to privatization, which disregarded fundamental market principles of supply and demand. For a time, 12,354 companies, with over 4 million employees between them, were administrated by the *Treuhand* trust agency (the East German privatization agency). With so many companies on sale at once, their value necessarily plummeted. For this reason, the trust agency made a loss of DM 270 billion; almost a third of the companies were eventually liquidated because they could not be sold.<sup>44</sup> The result of this neoliberal reform strategy was a drop in industrial production to 27 percent of its pre-1989 level.<sup>45</sup>



No other European country experienced anything like such a drastic decline. The German government reacted with welfare packages: the losers of the transformation were paid off with unemployment benefit, job creation schemes, and early retirement programs. The economist Hans-Werner Sinn, who had warned of the risks of currency union, summed up the economic policy in East Germany as ‘insolvency with special social benefits.’<sup>46</sup>

Despite the many differences, the examples of Poland and East Germany both show that the shock therapy of radical reforms did not necessarily prepare the ground for later economic success, as is often claimed, at least not in the sense of a direct causal explanation.<sup>47</sup> Other factors, such as the pragmatic policies of the post-communists (especially in Poland), also made significant contributions. After coming to power in 1993, they had worked toward modifying reforms; for instance, slowing down the privatization of major industry for many years. This pragmatism obviously did not do much harm. The Chilean ‘success story’ should be viewed with a similarly questioning eye, as here, too, no direct causal link between radical reforms and the later upswing can be maintained. But it would be equally wrong to draw the opposite conclusion. Those Eastern European countries that hesitated or refused to introduce reforms, because they were governed by post-communists, performed worse economically.

Another factor that is hard to quantify, and is therefore often overlooked by economists, is human capital.<sup>48</sup> This was particularly strong in Poland. Due to the scarcity that had prevailed under state socialism and the relatively large scope for private and shadow economies, millions of Poles learned to operate and trade in a free market even before the country gained a free market economy. The East German middle class, in contrast, was weakened by unification with West Germany, on the one hand because of the overpowering competition from West Germany and, on the other, because of emigration. Some 1.4 million East Germans had left their homes by 1994. In Czechoslovakia (which had a similar population size and there can be compared well also on this level), about the same number of businesses were established up to the country’s dissolution in 1993.<sup>49</sup>

The course of transformation in the Russian Federation should give advocates of shock therapy food for thought as well.<sup>50</sup> In the 1990s, Russia experienced an economic decline as dramatic as that of the United States during the world economic crisis in the 1930s.<sup>51</sup> The main problem besetting the successor states of the Soviet Union was the weakness of the state on all levels. In 1994–1995 the Russian government, under ailing President Yeltsin, devolved the auctioning of state-owned enterprises to Russian banks, which increased government loans in return—officially, this was privatization by means of a ‘loans for shares program.’ The banks were largely controlled by oligarchs, who had a direct influence on government and insider knowledge of the companies. As a consequence of this privatization of the privatization process, the companies were sold far below their value. Mikhail Khodorkovsky, for example, paid a mere US \$350 million for the oil and gas corporation Yukos; two years later it had a market value of US \$9 billion.<sup>52</sup> The lack of revenues and low taxpayer morale knocked the Russian national budget off balance; in 1998, in



the aftermath of the Asian crisis, Russia was pushed briefly to the verge of economic collapse. Privatization fraud and rampant corruption are often perceived as cultural peculiarities of the Soviet Union and its successor states, along with the tendency toward nepotism and the non-monetary exchange of privileges, as previously practiced under socialism. But pointing the finger at the socialist past (a popular means of diverting political attention in the 1990s) is not enough. These problems were also the result of conflicts inherent within neoliberalism in practice. Libertarian skepticism of 'big government' did not factor in the realities of Russia and post-communist Europe. In the successor states of the Soviet Union, the weakness of the state was the main problem.

Transformation did not run smoothly even in supposedly model and pioneer countries. Hungary was plunged into a budget and debt crisis in 1994–1995, and forced to impose a strict austerity program to overcome it. That resulted in 30 percent of the population slipping below the poverty line. The Czech Republic was shaken by a banking crisis in 1996, which led to a recession and the fall of Václav Klaus. The brief post-unification boom in East Germany petered out; after the mid-1990s, the five new German states failed to close the economic gap with West Germany. In Russia, life expectancy fell by three years during the 1990s to 64 for women and only 60 for men, a level below many developing countries.<sup>53</sup>

The Asian and the Russian crises of 1997–1998 were together the first large-scale, transnational, financial crunch of neoliberalism. It was a corollary of the deregulation of the international financial markets, speculative investments with exaggerated profit expectations, and growing foreign debts.<sup>54</sup> All these disruptions prior to the crash in 2008–2009 raise the question of why the neoliberal order still came to be so widely established. There was a psychological reason for nations clinging to neoliberalism, especially in Eastern Europe. The cold water of radical reforms seemed so deep and intimidating that neoliberal teachings and their prospects for the future appeared to be a life buoy that the new elites held on to with all their might—partly because there were no convincing alternatives. Moreover, countries that had hesitated to introduce radical reforms in the early 1990s, like Romania and Bulgaria, fell into even greater decline, suffering several jumps in inflation, and were ultimately forced to impose the usual package of austerity measures, privatization, liberalization, and deregulation.

In the end, global dynamics played a decisive role once again. The neoliberal quantification of the world reached unprecedented dimensions in the mid-1990s. In early 1994, *The Economist* launched a weekly column entitled the 'Emerging Market Index,' the very name of which is remarkable, as it equated entire countries and societies with markets. In 1995 the conservative Heritage Foundation started the 'Index of Economic Freedom,' the World Economic Forum established the 'Global Competitiveness Index,' and the Canadian Fraser Institute founded the 'Index of Economic Freedom.' After the turn of the millennium, the World Bank was proud to announce the 'Ease of Doing Business Index,' which was followed in 2006 by the Property Rights Alliance and their 'International Property Rights Index,' and hundreds of other neoliberal reports, yearbooks, and investor guides repeating the very same message, which Karl Marx might have summed up as an

'Exploitation of the Working Class Index.' These indices, all invented by private think tanks, research institutions, or international financial organizations, created an arena for international competition between countries for the freest market economy and lowest taxation rates. Neoliberal indexing reached a climax in the new millennium in the discourse surrounding 'tiger states.' They included various East Asian countries and Ireland, as well as Slovakia and the Baltic states, so went much beyond just Eastern Europe.

After German unification, the former GDR disappeared from the radar of economic indices and much of English-language transitology. But in 1999 *The Economist* described Germany as the 'sick man of the euro.'<sup>55</sup> This intensified the newly sparked debate about Germany's 'reform gridlock,' the German public increasingly looking toward East-Central Europe, where economies were far more dynamic than in East Germany.

Beginning in the late 1990s, neoliberalism gained a new twist. The focus of privatization shifted from state-run businesses to key areas of government responsibility such as pensions and healthcare. As Mitchell A. Orenstein has shown, one post-communist country after the next introduced privately financed pension systems.<sup>56</sup> Another indication of the second wave of neoliberalism was the debate about streamlined, lower tax rates, known as 'flat tax.' Post-communist countries adopted flat tax rates in the hope of improving taxpayer morale and attracting more foreign investment. Slovakia was the 'pioneer' in the European Union (EU). In 2004 it introduced a fixed income, which had value-added, turnover and business taxes all at a uniform 19 percent (and was soon rewarded by international media and economic think tanks with the label of a 'Tiger' country, in this case the 'Tatra Tiger').<sup>57</sup> Here, again, the semantics are remarkable: the flat tax was called *rovná daň*, meaning 'equal tax,' suggesting a promise of equality. But while the higher earners benefited from tax reforms, the lower-middle class and the poor lost purchasing power. Moreover, the state lost tax revenue and sociopolitical leeway because of it; the ratio of government expenditure for social spending to GDP fell from 19.5 percent to 16 percent (compared to an average of 26 percent in Western Europe).<sup>58</sup>

The idea was that if the unemployed and poor could not live on their welfare payments, they would be motivated to search harder for jobs. This was one of the key policy recommendations made by the IMF since the mid-1990s; Western credits were only given under the condition of severe social cuts.<sup>59</sup> It remains a mystery how these negative incentives were supposed to work in regions such as eastern Slovakia, where, in some counties, unemployment rose to 30 percent in the late 1990s and it was impossible to find a job. The same questions could be asked for the 'rest of the West' (as opposed to self-congratulatory book titles such as the 'West and the rest') in central and northern England, the Rust Belt in the United States (since the mid 1980s "Rust Belt" is a widely used term for the former heartland of US industry stretching from the Great Lakes to the East Coast), and many deindustrialized regions in continental Europe. The mystery may be explained by the fact that the economic experts who invented and implemented these kinds of policies would never have been personally affected by the welfare reforms they proposed.

Social expenditure, however, is not a definitive marker of how strictly a country follows neoliberal principles. Neoliberal reforms brought unintended consequences: quite often social expenditure went up due to unemployment benefits, early retirement schemes, or food stamp programs. That pushed up the quota of state expenditure in relation to the GDP, contrary to the dogma of a lean state. This is also true for the United States, where government expenditure in relation to GDP did not fall during the presidency of Ronald Reagan. It did so in the 1990s under Bill Clinton, but that was mostly due to higher growth rates and more cutbacks on social and infrastructure spending.<sup>60</sup> The economic and social consequences of neoliberal reforms can therefore only be assessed from a long-term perspective. An often cited indicator is the Gini index for measuring income distribution between the rich and poor, or relative social inequality (as distinct from inequality in the distribution of wealth). By the Gini index, Germany's income inequality grew between 2005 and 2010 from 25 to 30 points—from a Scandinavian to an Eastern European level.<sup>61</sup> The obvious explanation is Germany's labor market and pension reforms, which were enacted by the Social Democrat/Green coalition government in 2001–2005. Another important variable is regional divergence, which greatly increased in all post-communist and Western countries, and which shapes their electoral landscapes (a discussion of these effects on Western democracies will follow below in the next section).

The extent to which societies can tolerate regional and social divisions depends on their political traditions and cultural values. No flat tax was introduced in Germany, not only because the finance ministry had reservations, but also because it conflicted with a sense of fairness among much of the population. Nonetheless, German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder's 'Agenda 2010' entailed the most radical social reforms since the war. His center-left government put an end to unlimited entitlement to unemployment benefit, introducing entitlement based on need (like, e.g., the food stamp programs in the United States). Social insurance payments were henceforth determined by the claimants' personal assets, not the amount they had paid in contributions to the social security system. The welfare state was restricted to guaranteeing subsistence level incomes.<sup>62</sup> The reforms (which were named after the Social Democrat Volkswagen manager Peter Hartz) also entailed the creation of a low-pay sector that shrank incomes to the level of average wages in Poland. Germany abandoned the idea of rapidly Westernizing the former GDR, instead adjusting the income levels of its 'jobseekers'—unemployed were no longer supposed to exist—to those of its neighbors in the east. This process of discussing and adopting Eastern European reform policies can be regarded as 'co-transformation.'<sup>63</sup> The idea of a low-pay sector stemmed originally from Milton Friedman. In the United States, however, it was not pursued beyond initial trials in some Rust Belt states. British Prime Minister Tony Blair's social reforms and the concept of 'New Labour' were another significant influence on Gerhard Schröder. Germany's co-transformation must, then, be seen in a global context, influenced by the West as well as the East, and the feedback effects from the 'emerging markets.' Germany's Hartz reforms are controversial because of their ambivalence: while unemployment was almost halved in just one decade, social inequality rose to higher levels than in post-communist countries such as Slovakia and Hungary.<sup>64</sup>

Another key element of the second, more radical phase of global neoliberalism was financial deregulation on a national and international level. To be sure, this had already been a part of Reagonomics and Thatcherism, but in the late 1990s deregulation got a new twist. In the United States, the Financial Services Modernization Act of 1999 abandoned the separation of private, customer-oriented deposit banking and investment banking. Initially this seemed to work well, profits in the financial sector increased tremendously and reached 40 percent of all corporate profits made in the United States in the years 2001–2003.<sup>65</sup> But the profits, as is well known, were made and reinvested in ever more speculative ways. In the United States, the deregulation resulted in a real estate bubble and the subprime crisis. On an international level there was speculative overinvestment as well, particularly in Eastern Europe, where their own bubble was in the making.

### **Consequences of the crisis of 2008**

In Eastern Europe, and on a global level, the crisis of 2008 marked a critical turning point. In Latvia, Lithuania, and Ukraine, the economies contracted by 15 percent, and more, Hungary and Romania were also in deep recession.<sup>66</sup> Poland alone managed largely to avert a recession. Bohle and Greskovits have shown that the economies that had been most open to speculative capital from the West were hardest hit by the crisis.<sup>67</sup> After the burst of the US real estate bubble in 2007 and the Lehman Brothers' subsequent bankruptcy, the flow of capital to Eastern Europe suddenly stopped, leaving some countries on the brink of economic collapse. In the light of the crisis, two types of state became apparent: those that had channeled foreign direct investments (FDIs) primarily into manufacturing industries—Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and, to some extent, Hungary—and those that had channeled FDIs predominantly into the finance and real estate sector. In the latter, comparable again with the United States (or Spain and Ireland in Western Europe), bubbles had formed that burst in 2008.

Eastern Europe suffered from the additional problem that international banks dished out a huge number of these loans in foreign currency. This is an old instrument of states and large corporations to get credit for lower interest rates and to reduce the risk of currency fluctuations. However, for private customers, taking credit in foreign currency can be very risky, which is why most national banking laws prohibited that practice in the postwar period. After the turn of the millennium, during the heyday of neoliberalism, Eastern Europe served once more as an experimental field for neoliberal policies. Foreign and subsequently national banks enticed private borrowers with low interest rates for loans in Swiss francs, Japanese yen or other hard currencies, but played down the exchange risk. Everything looked fine as long as the Polish *złoty*, the Hungarian forint, and other local currencies, were stable, but as a result of the global financial crisis, the value of Eastern European currencies plummeted in 2009. Millions of borrowers, including some 250,000 Austrians, were virtually ruined (in this regard, Austria is another example for the co-transformation of Western European countries). In many cases, the loans became more expensive

than the properties they had been used to buy. The countries where foreign currency loans exceeded 50 percent of total lending (Latvia, Romania, Hungary, Ukraine) could only be saved from economic collapse by the IMF and ‘rescue packages’ costing billions. The property bubble and high-risk lending—Stiglitz coined the term ‘predatory lending’ for similar practices in the United States<sup>68</sup>—also had tremendous political repercussions. They generally delegitimized the Western order, and allowed political leaders like Victor Orbán to present themselves as saviors of the nations that were struggling against foreign banks and investors (such as the demonized George Soros).

It is interesting to note how everyday language adapted to neoliberalism and its effects. In Polish, for instance, the term *Frankowicze*, with its root in the Swiss currency, francs, was invented for the aforementioned borrowers. Other terms derived from the neoliberal order that have entered everyday language include *Śmieciówki*, translatable as ‘trash contracts,’ for short-term, badly paid jobs. The vocabulary and semantics of neoliberalism could, then, be a rewarding subject for contemporary-historical research; one could start with *Hartzler*, the abbreviation for recipients of Hartz IV benefits in Germany, and go on to consider *lo spread*, the Italian designation for the interest rate difference between Italian and German government bonds, which rapidly grew after 2010 due to the crisis, and was taken as grounds for various tax rises and social cuts.

Neoliberalism has been attended by a long series of financial, banking, and budget crises, from Black Monday on Wall Street in 1987, to the Asian and ruble crisis in 1997–1998, the bursting of the dotcom bubble in 2001, and the major economic crisis of 2008. Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and other countries responded by largely reversing pension privatization, and flat tax systems were restricted or abolished in a number of countries.

However, as Stiglitz has pointed out, the crisis of 2008 did not lead to a clear break with neoliberalism. President Obama and other Western governments prevented a repetition of the world economic crisis of the 1930s by pumping hundreds of billions of dollars and euros into the financial system. Stocked up with rescue packages administered by the IMF and the EU, Eastern Europe resumed lending and taking foreign direct investments after a short breather, analogous to developments in other ‘emerging markets’ in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. This continuation of neoliberal policies in the ‘rescued’ post-communist countries of Eastern Europe came at a high cost. Although the economies in Latvia, Lithuania, and Romania started to grow again in 2010 or 2011, these countries lost between 7 and 10 percent of their populations within a few years to labor migration. Ireland is a parallel case in Western Europe, though part of the population losses there are compensated for by Eastern European immigrants. This depletion of human resources is hard to reverse and will have long-term negative consequences on these countries.

Poland and Slovakia, which responded like Germany and Austria with Keynesian measures, generally rode out the crisis better than countries that continued to pursue a strictly neoliberal course. Here, too, critics of neoliberalism began to be paid more heed. Stiglitz explicitly criticized ‘market

fundamentalism,’ or belief in self-regulating and balancing markets; faith in the rationality of market participants; and the idealization of private property.<sup>69</sup> Jeffrey Sachs, in the early 1990s an advocate of shock therapies, has devoted his efforts toward fighting global poverty and has called for an end to the austerity policies in Southern Europe and Greece.<sup>70</sup> This indirectly vindicated European policy following the EU expansion in 2004–2005. Since then, the European Union has transferred hundreds of billions of euros to the new member states. Poland alone received €40 billion in transfer funds between 2007 and 2013, helping to reduce social inequality.

In Southern Europe, the European Union has pursued a different policy. Here, the economic situation in 2009 made it impossible to finance the countries’ large national budget deficits on credit. The mistrust of international and national creditors made borrowing ever more expensive for Greece, Italy, Spain, and Portugal, culminating in the euro crisis. In keeping with neoliberal logic, and because urgent action was needed, the southern EU states resorted to strict austerity policies—step one according to the Washington Consensus. In 2010–2011, the technocratic governments installed in Italy and Greece tried to liberalize the domestic labor markets (external liberalization had already occurred when they joined the European Union) and reform their social insurance systems. But the austerity measures demanded by the European Commission and the German government created a downward economic spiral, and any positive effects were canceled out by soaring interest rates for government bonds in the first two years of the euro crisis. In overall terms, the Southern European path of austerity without comprehensive reforms or investment has proved the worst variant of crisis management. The recession in Italy—Greece is in many respects a special case—lasted longer and was more severe than those in Czechoslovakia and Poland after 1989.

If a policy is consistently promoted as having no alternative, that is, with apolitical and technocratic arguments, it provokes populist counterreactions. Right-wing populists in Eastern and Western Europe have successfully claimed that there is an alternative (however elusive it may be), and have offered an array of protective promises—more protection from globalization and international economic competition, from labor market competition, from crime (based on a stance against migrants and refugees)—and have pledged to keep up national values. The claim to represent the will of the ‘true people’ is based on an ethno-nationally defined demos, which is why xenophobic nationalism is a cornerstone of right-wing populism.

The connection between neoliberalism and right-wing populism can be shown long before the Brexit referendum and the election of Donald Trump in 2016. Following the aforementioned second wave of reforms in Poland in 1997–2001 and a renewed rise in unemployment, over 30 percent of the Polish electorate voted for populist parties at the next parliamentary elections. The year 2001 also marked the rise of the Law and Justice Party (PiS), which eventually won an absolute majority in 2015. One year later, in 2016, the populists demonstrated their power in the core of the Western world: the United Kingdom and the United States. The Brexit referendum was as much a vote against the neoliberal order and the City of London



as against the EU. The leave campaign had its best results in the many regions and towns that had suffered from the economic changes since the times of Margaret Thatcher. The victory of Donald Trump occurred on a similar basis. He gained the crucial swing states by attracting the disgruntled, white lower-middle class in the Rust Belt of the United States. They make up the section of the population that has lost most economically since the 1980s. One indication is the reduced life expectancy of middle-aged men—a hitherto unprecedented occurrence in a developed industrial country.<sup>71</sup> These social and political consequences of liberalization and deregulation should be factored into critical neoliberalism research just as much as the connection between neoliberalism and populism.

### **Researching neoliberalism from a contemporary history perspective**

Neoliberalism's potency is based not least on its internationalism. All the many reforms considered here were authorized on the basis of external models and by international experts and organizations. For this reason, it should be analyzed as a communicative phenomenon, and as a symptom and motor of globalization. In recent decades, social democrats, by contrast, have mostly focused their welfare policies on the individual nation, and even specific sections of society within that.

Neoliberalism had various outcomes, depending on one's perspective. Some countries, such as Poland, seized the opportunities that arose after 1989, especially for their urban centers. Meanwhile, in rural and old industrial regions, the negative effects predominate, as in Chile and the United States. Historians should integrate these different perspectives and experiences into their research, and also into their methodology. Comparison between various groups, such as different social groups and milieus or families, is a useful tool. The post-communist transformations have rarely been viewed 'from below' in the social sciences (except by anthropologists and ethnologists like Elizabeth Dunn), which is why this perspective offers great potential.

Finally, I would like to profile five areas that could be fertile ground for historical research into neoliberalism. Neoliberalism first began as a history of economic thought. Interest in this intellectual history has noticeably grown since the crisis of 2008. Daniel Stedman Jones and Angus Burgin have concentrated primarily on the formative phase of neoliberalism since the 1950s, but taken their narratives in different directions. Stedman Jones dedicates a lot of attention to the transfer of ideas between Britain and the United States; Burgin looks more closely at political history and Friedman's influence on the Republicans.<sup>72</sup> The anthology edited by Mirowski and Plehwe covers network studies of the Mont Pelerin Society as well as neoliberal fields of action in various countries. Beyond its articles on Chile and Peru, relatively little is known about the Chicago Boys' reception in other parts of the world, and even less about feedback effects on the centers of neoliberal thought.

Recent research shows exchanges of neoliberal ideas on a global level and how neoliberal Chile under Pinochet was perceived as a model in the late Soviet



Union and in the Russian Federation of the 1990s.<sup>73</sup> This focus is all the more valid since the idea of developmental dictatorships seems to prevail today in the post-communist world. Nevertheless, the main problem of these studies is that they all are implicitly built upon the belief, which was shared by Milton Friedman himself, that (economic) ideas can transform the world. However, even if one shares this assumption about the power of ideas, it still requires further study to understand how and why the main components of neoliberal ideology were transferred and adapted (rather than spread or diffused) to various countries and their publics. In the 1990s one can observe a paradox: lively public debates about radical reforms and shock therapy (*neoliberalism* was not yet a very common term, certainly not in Eastern Europe) tended to soften the impact of this ideology or strengthen resistance. This is true, for example, in post-1989 Poland or the Czech Republic, or Southern Europe after 2011. By contrast, countries that hardly had any public debates about the course of economic reform in the 1990s, such as Russia, Ukraine, or Latvia, became more neoliberal in terms of social inequality and other indicators.

A second potential focus for neoliberalism research is the ideology's implementation in various contexts, from Chile and other countries of Latin America to Eastern Europe.<sup>74</sup> The records of international financial organizations such as the IMF are partially accessible online and allow a deep insight into how specific policy recommendations were communicated and put through.<sup>75</sup> However, the models and policies of the IMF, the World Bank, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) were rarely adopted verbatim, but adapted and developed for each respective country.<sup>76</sup> Hence, national archives, debates on specific policies in the media, the recollections of major reform politicians, and other ego-documents are valuable sources as well. As the major economic reform policies centering on privatization have been relatively well researched, historians could now concentrate on more narrowly defined topics. One possibility would be case studies of individual companies and their staff members.<sup>77</sup>

As I have tried to show, neoliberal policy is based on a specific mode of political communication. Since the days of Margaret Thatcher, reforms were presented to the public as the only possible alternative for action and thus justified by apolitical and technocratic arguments. It would be fruitful to trace these argumentation and communication strategies by studying media sources. This could also shed light on right-wing populism, which may be regarded as the political flip side of neoliberalism.<sup>78</sup> Aspects of neoliberal discourse that could be explored are its internationalism and frequent references to external models.

When it came to communicating neoliberal principles to the public in each country, modernization narratives played an important role. Neoliberal reforms were frequently justified by arguing that the country in question was at risk of being left behind and had to catch up, or needed to 'return' to Europe—a recurring theme in the 1990s in the eastern half of the continent. All these linguistic images are based on linear concepts of backwardness and progress, following a modernist template of historical development. The spread of neoliberal values was

also the work of international think tanks and media corporations. The Heritage Foundation and Rupert Murdoch's media empire are two well-known examples waiting to be addressed by contemporary historical research. This would indeed dovetail with the up-and-coming field of research on international organizations.

A fourth path of enquiry could focus on the effects of neoliberal policies. Here, it is imperative to differentiate *within* each country—between the generations, social classes, and groups, right down to individual households. In post-communist countries, upwardly and downwardly mobile individuals are frequently members of the same family, and cross-border labor migration has scattered the members of countless family groups. The people affected should not be regarded as passive objects of the neoliberal order, but as bearers of change. Authors such as the East German cultural sociologist Wolfgang Engler have pointed out how so-called 'transformation losers' took creative approaches to dealing with mass unemployment, precarious employment contracts, and other difficult social circumstances.<sup>79</sup> This behavior can be labeled as 'self-transformation'—though approaches to dealing with the consequences of radical economic reforms varied greatly, from open or subversive resistance to overeager conformity.<sup>80</sup> More recently, this approach has been taken up by scholars who use a Foucauldian view, focusing on self-management and self-optimization.<sup>81</sup> However, it is not easy to boil down this theoretical superstructure to actual empirical research and case studies on real, living *hominum economici*. For historians this area of research would require a combination of traditional archival sources with ego-documents and oral histories. The interviews should be conducted very soon, in view of the increasing age of those people who were living their political or professional lives in the 1980s.

Often neoliberalism is viewed as a plot devised and imposed from above. But it also relied on participation from below, as the property bubble in the United States and the almost simultaneous Eastern European bubble—with its special component of foreign currency loans—prove. On the one hand, there are indeed the banks and their 'predatory lending,' but, on the other, there are the borrowers who disregarded the risks and took a gamble on future developments. The partial continuation of neoliberalism after 2008 shows that it is a system that functions by its own logic and generates path dependencies. The present political tendency toward illiberalism in the Western world might also be seen as a counterreaction against neoliberalism.

## Notes

- 1 This chapter is based on my own book, *The Europe since 1989: A History*, where neoliberalism is used as the guiding term that has defined an historical epoch since the late 1980s.
- 2 See the self-critical article by the IMF using the previously avoided term *neoliberalism*. Ostry, Loungani, and Furceri, 'Neoliberalism: Oversold?'
- 3 See Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*; Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*.
- 4 Stark's criticism of the (neoliberal) transition paradigm and his arguments for the term *transformation* are condensed in Stark, 'Recombinant Property in East European Capitalism.'

- 5 See on this term, and his criticism of the belief in the rationality of the markets, Stiglitz, *Freefall: America, Free Markets, and the Sinking of the World Economy*, xiii, 12–15, 248–253.
- 6 One example is Friedman, who published an affirmative essay entitled ‘Neoliberalism and Its Prospects.’ Cf. Burgin, *The Great Persuasion: Reinventing Free Markets since the Depression*, 170. On the relatively well-researched field of the intellectual history of neoliberalism, see also: Stedman Jones, *Masters of the Universe: Hayek, Friedman, and the Birth of Neoliberal Politics*; Mirowski and Plehwe, *The Road from Mont Pèlerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective*.
- 7 The radical left critique of neoliberalism also attacks the main tenets of neoclassical economic thinking, such as the idea that markets reach an equilibrium by themselves. Although there are many reasons to criticize these and other mainstream economic ideas (as Stiglitz did in his aforementioned book), there is a risk that too many schools and periods of economic thinking are then subsumed under the label of neoliberalism. This may be misleading, as Joanna Bockman’s much cited book shows: Bockman, *Markets in the Name of Socialism. The Left-Wing Origins of Neoliberalism*. When reform-oriented, socialist economists in Yugoslavia, Poland, or other Eastern European countries were reflecting upon markets, they certainly did not want to destroy socialism and replace it with unrestrained market economies. The more basic problem with studies on neoliberalism is that most of them are oriented toward explaining its hegemony and thereby use it like a telos of history. This brings a danger of over-explanation or over-causalization, that is, that too many factors are brought in to explain the seemingly clear result.
- 8 Friedman and Thatcher were influenced by their own life experiences: both grew up in the interwar period as the children of small-shop owners.
- 9 For an introduction, see Osterhammel and Petersson, *Geschichte der Globalisierung: Dimensionen, Prozesse, Epochen*; see also the first part of the anthology by Conrad, Eckert, and Freitag, *Globalgeschichte: Theorien, Ansätze, Themen*.
- 10 Cf. Mirowski and Plehwe, *The Road from Mont Pèlerin*; Stedman Jones, *Masters of the Universe*, 154–172.
- 11 See, for example, for the Western debate on China, Bell, *The China Model: Political Meritocracy and the Limits of Democracy*.
- 12 In addition to the abovementioned English-language works (which are notable mainly for their studies of cultural transfers and networks), see also an instructive special issue of the journal *Zeithistorische Forschungen*, 12, no. 3 (2015), entitled ‘Vermarktlichung. Zeithistorische Perspektiven auf ein umkämpftes Feld.’ So far the only history of neoliberalism to bear the name was written by a geographer, but it is built on a limited number of sources, secondary literature, and economic data: Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*.
- 13 For space-saving reasons only one work by each of these authors is named here. See Orenstein, *Privatizing Pensions: The Transnational Campaign for Social Security Reform*; Bohle and Greskovits, *Capitalist Diversity on Europe’s Periphery*.
- 14 See: Stiglitz, *Freefall*; Krugman, *The Return of Depression Economics and the Crisis of 2008*.
- 15 Major contributions to this field of research include: Hall and Soskice, *Varieties of Capitalism: The Institutional Foundation of Comparative Advantage*; King, ‘Postcommunist Divergence: A Comparative Analysis of the Transition to Capitalism in Poland and Russia’; also, recently published in German, Kocka, *Geschichte des Kapitalismus*. The term *neoliberalism* is shunned by most economists, but Kotz has used it for his book *The Rise and Fall of Neoliberal Capitalism*.
- 16 See Dunn, *Privatizing Poland: Baby Food, Big Business, and the Remaking of Labor*. On the political consequences, see Ost, *The Defeat of Solidarity: Anger and Politics in Postcommunist Europe*.

- 17 For a comparative perspective on this, see Kurtz, *Free Market Democracy and the Chilean and Mexican Countryside*.
- 18 Mirowski and Plehwe, *The Road from Mont Pèlerin*, 14. Initially, the Society's four core demands included more state regulation, but, from the 1970s on, this point was pushed into the background and eventually became a negative signifier. The introduction by Mirowski and Plehwe is also a convincing example of historical network analysis.
- 19 An interesting point for economists who today dismiss the term as polemical. In some respects, they are thus denying their own heritage. On Friedman's essay, see Burgin, *The Great Persuasion*, 170.
- 20 On the history of economic thought and the diverse schools of thought, see Samuels, Biddle, and Davis, *A Companion to the History of Economic Thought*.
- 21 See Patel, *The New Deal: A Global History*. However, as David Kotz has shown, profits in the corporate sector began to diminish from the 1960s until the early 1980s. This motivated large American corporations to support other models of economic governance, in particular neoliberal economists and their networks. See Kotz, *Neoliberal Capitalism*, 67–84, 88.
- 22 Friedman criticized this as too tight a corset. On neoliberal opinion on international exchange and financial markets, see Schmelzer, *Freiheit für Wechselkurse und Kapital: Die Ursprünge neoliberaler Währungspolitik und die Mont Pèlerin Society*.
- 23 On the economic and cultural changes of the 1970s, see, for example, Jarausch, *Das Ende der Zuversicht? Die siebziger Jahre als Geschichte*.
- 24 See Jones, *Masters of the Universe*, 154–172. A key role was also played by the Nobel Prize in Economics, which was awarded to Hayek in 1974 and to Friedman in 1976. On the tendency toward neoliberalism in the decisions of the Nobel Prize committee, see Offer and Söderberg, *The Nobel Factor: The Prize in Economics, Social Democracy, and the Market Turn*.
- 25 Cf. Burgin, *The Great Persuasion*, 101, 166, 173. On Hayek's career, see also Offer and Söderberg, *The Nobel Factor*, 14.
- 26 For an analysis, see Brandes, "'Free to Choose': Die Popularisierung des Neoliberalismus in Milton Friedmans Fernsehserie (1980/90)." The TV series can be viewed online at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=f1Fj5tzuYBE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f1Fj5tzuYBE). In 1990 Friedman produced a five-part follow-up series, in which he traveled to Eastern Europe and prescribed radical reform programs to Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland.
- 27 On Thatcherism, see: James, *Europe Reborn: A History 1914–2000*; Geppert, *Thatchers Conservative Revolution: Der Richtungswandel der britischen Tories 1975–1979*.
- 28 On the role of the Chicago School here, see Fischer, 'The Influence of Neoliberals in Chile before, during, and after Pinochet.' On neoliberalism in Latin America in general, see Brands, *Latin America's Cold War: An International History*, 223–255.
- 29 The rural population was particularly badly hit. See Kurtz, *Free Market Democracy and the Chilean and Mexican Countryside*. On Chilean workers, see Winn, *Victims of the Chilean Miracle: Workers and Neoliberalism in the Pinochet Era, 1973–2002*. The minimum wage was also reduced by a quarter. Cf. Marcel and Solimano, 'Developmentalism, Socialism, and Free Market Reform: Three Decades of Income Distribution in Chile,' World Bank, Working Policy Research Paper no. 1188.
- 30 Foxley, a renowned economist and long-time director of CIEPLAN (then Corporación de Investigaciones Económicas para Latinoamérica), expressed these views during the election campaign and in talks with experts and the World Bank. See the various documents in the World Bank Archive's holdings on Chile, particularly an eleven-page manifesto of 1988 and the transcript of a discussion during a visit to the World Bank in 1989, in World Bank Archive, World Bank File 16435 (Chile—Lending, Economy and Program (LEAP)—General—Volume 2), the annex to the World Bank Report of 18 October 1988; and World Bank File 16436 (Chile—Lending, Economy and Program

- (LEAP)—General—Volume 3), report of 20 October 1989 [all World Bank files quoted here are not paginated].
- 31 On criticism of economic policy under Pinochet, see: Ffrench-Davis, *Economic Reforms in Chile: From Dictatorship to Democracy*, 51–106; Ffrench-Davis, *Chile entre el neoliberalismo y el crecimiento con equidad Cuarenta años de políticas económicas y sus lecciones para el future*.
  - 32 The actual author of the consensus paper was the economist John Williamson. For the original text, see Williamson, *Latin American Adjustment: How Much Has Happened*. On global financial capitalism, see Abdelal, *Capital Rules: The Construction of Global Finance*.
  - 33 See Lawson, Armbruster, and Cox, *The Global 1989: Continuity and Change in World Politics*.
  - 34 For criticism of this superficial reference to Smith, cf. Jones, *Masters of the Universe*, 102.
  - 35 One of the first economists to recognize this fact was Anders Åslund of Sweden, who later served many years as a (neoliberal) advisor to the Russian Federation. See Åslund, *Gorbachev's Struggle for Economic Reform: The Soviet Reform Process, 1985–1988*.
  - 36 Borkowski, 'Sprzedać, oddać, wydzierzać,' 1, 4. On the supporters of radical reforms, cf. Borodziej, *Geschichte Polens im 20. Jahrhundert*, 376–380. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are the author's own.
  - 37 See Easter, *Capital, Coercion, and Postcommunist States*, 23–50. On the economic development of Czechoslovakia and its attempts at state-socialist reforms, see Pullmann, *Konec experimentu. Představba a pad komunismu v Československu*.
  - 38 Heilbroner, 'The Triumph of Capitalism,' 98.
  - 39 See Dragos Aligica and Evans, *The Neoliberal Revolution in Eastern Europe: Economic Ideas in the Transition from Communism*.
  - 40 Cf. the data for 'Countries by Indicator' in *iiw Handbook of Statistics 2012*: Central, East and Southeast Europe, Table II/1.7.
  - 41 Cf. Michnik, 'Ten straszny Balcerowicz,' 10. Balcerowicz expressed a similar opinion: see Balcerowicz, *Socialism, Capitalism, Transformation*, 307.
  - 42 See Znoj, 'Vaclav Havel, His Idea of Civil Society, and the Czech Liberal Tradition,' 134.
  - 43 Ther, *Europe since 1989*, 123–125. On the concept of 'speech acts,' see Quentin Skinner, 'Conventions and the Understanding of Speech Acts,' *The Philosophical Quarterly* 20, 79 (April 1970), pp. 118–138.
  - 44 See Böick, *Die Treuhandanstalt 1990–1994*.
  - 45 Cf. Norkus, *On Baltic Slovenia and Adriatic Lithuania*, 80.
  - 46 In German: 'eine Konkursverwaltung mit Sozialplan.' Cited from Sinn and Sinn, *Kaltstart: Volkswirtschaftliche Aspekte der deutschen Vereinigung*, vii.
  - 47 The skepticism of contemporary observers would also seem to contradict this. In 1991 especially, there were widespread doubts about the course that had been taken, albeit for different reasons. Some criticized the downward spiral triggered by austerity, while the IMF felt that the economy measures did not go far enough. See, IMF Staff Report of July 8, 1992, accessible in the World Bank Archive. See World Bank Archive, World Bank File 30029780 (Poland—Privatization—Volume 2).
  - 48 On this term, see Becker, *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, with Special Reference to Education*. Nowadays, leftist critics even denounce this term as neoliberal, but one should consider that human capital is about the long-term formation of social resources, which requires well-functioning state institutions.
  - 49 On business formations, cf. Berend, *From the Soviet Bloc to the European Union*, 61; Ther, *Europe since 1989*, 190–192, 202.
  - 50 See a recent pledge by Shleifer and Treisman, 'Normal Countries: The East 25 Years after Communism.'
  - 51 Cf. Åslund, *Building Capitalism: The Transformation of the Former Soviet Bloc*, 118.
  - 52 Robinson, 'The Context of Russia's Political Economy,' 34.

- 53 On these figures, based on World Bank statistics, see Ther, *Europe since 1989*, 167.
- 54 On the Asian crisis, see Stiglitz, *Freefall*, xiv–xv.
- 55 N. N., ‘The Sick Man of the Euro.’
- 56 Orenstein, *Privatizing Pensions*.
- 57 Cf. Reynolds, ‘Once a Backwater, Slovakia Surges.’ For an example from German print media, see Schwarz, ‘Vom Siebenschläfer zum Tiger der Karpaten.’
- 58 On the ratio of government expenditures to GDP, cf. Segert, *Transformationen in Osteuropa im 20. Jahrhundert*, 233. There are, however, considerable differences within Eastern Europe. The Baltic states, Romania, and Bulgaria, for instance, spend far less on social benefits than Hungary and Slovenia.
- 59 Neoliberal argumentation and rhetoric can be found in a number of country reports and recommendations on Slovakia (which is taken here as an exemplary case; similar recommendations were given to other post-communist countries as well). See IMF, Slovak Republic: Selected Issues and Statistical Appendix (IMF Staff Country Report No. 00/115, Washington 2000), [www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2000/cr00115.pdf](http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2000/cr00115.pdf) (cf. in this report pp. 49–50 demanding further cuts to unemployment benefits, and p. 34 on the praise for cuts that had already been implemented). Similar demands and recommendations were given in the IMF report of 2001, see IMF, Slovak Republic: Selected Issues and Statistical Appendix (IMF Country Report No. 01/129, Washington 2001), 14, online: [www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2001/cr01129.pdf](http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2001/cr01129.pdf) (05.09.2017). The World Bank paid more attention to the social impact of welfare cuts, especially for the Roma minority. Nevertheless, it broadly followed the economic policy and credit conditionality of the IMF. See, for example, The World Bank, Memorandum of the President of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Finance Corporation to the Executive Directors on a Country Assistance Strategy for the Slovak Republic (Report No.20232-SK, Washington 2001), <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/631971468781508455/pdf/multi-page.pdf> (23.08.2017). I would like to thank Lukas Schweighofer, M.A., a former student of mine, for his insight into the policies of the IMF and the World Bank on Slovakia.
- 60 See Kotz, *Neoliberal Capitalism*, p. 38. Kotz stresses that the expenditures were redirected from social programs and infrastructure (where the spending was cut almost in half between 1979 and 2007) to defense and security.
- 61 Cf. on the social inequality in Germany and other post-communist countries Ther, *Europe since 1989*, 150. The data are based on Eurostat statistics and the United Nations Human Development Report 2009.
- 62 On the consequences of Hartz IV, see: Dörre et al., *Bewährungsproben für die Unterschicht? Soziale Folgen aktivierender Arbeitsmarktpolitik*; Butterwegge, *Hartz IV und die Folgen: Auf dem Weg in eine andere Republik?*
- 63 For empirical backup, mostly based on media sources, see Ther, *Europe since 1989*, 259–272.
- 64 For an international comparison of Gini index statistics, see Ther, *Europe since 1989*, 162.
- 65 On the deregulation of the financial sector and its profits, see Kotz, *Neoliberal Capitalism*, 17 and 33.
- 66 All economic data on the post-communist countries in this article is based on the CD-ROM supplement to *wiiw Handbook of Statistics 2012*.
- 67 See Bohle and Greskovits, *Capitalist Diversity*, 225.
- 68 Stiglitz, *Freefall*, 175–176.
- 69 Stiglitz, *Freefall*, 12–15, 248–253.
- 70 See Sachs, ‘Deutschland ist für die Misere mitverantwortlich,’ 2.
- 71 See Tavernise, ‘Disparity in Life Spans of the Rich and Poor is Growing.’
- 72 See Jones, *Masters of the Universe*, 134–179. The chapter on the impact of neoliberal policies on housing policy in the United States and the United Kingdom is also interesting (see 273–328). On Friedman’s activity as an advisor to Reagan, see Burgin, *The Great Persuasion*, 206–207.



- 73 See Rupprecht, 'Formula Pinochet. Chilean Lessons for Russian Liberal Reformers during the Soviet Collapse, 1970–2000.'
- 74 On Chile, see: Winn, *Victims*; Kurtz, *Free Market*. On Eastern Europe, see, for example, Ther, *Europe since 1989*.
- 75 See, for example, the materials about Slovakia cited in n. 55 of this chapter. The boxes in the non-digital archive in Washington, DC, are accessible upon request and contain many IMF archive materials that cannot be found online.
- 76 See, for example, Kučera, 'Making Standards Work: Semantics of Economic Reform in Czechoslovakia, 1985–1992.' On the application of neoliberal concepts in Eastern Europe, see also Aligica and Evans, *The Neoliberal Revolution*. This is also why it makes sense to take into account the many *varieties* of neoliberalism. See Ban, *Ruling Ideas. How Global Neoliberalism Goes Local*, 3–32.
- 77 In 2016, Philipp Ther (with Ulf Brunnbauer) launched a comparative research project 'Transformation from Below' on two major shipyards in Poland and Croatia. See [https://iog.univie.ac.at/fileadmin/user\\_upload/iog/forschung/Project\\_description\\_Transformations\\_from\\_BelowNEU.pdf](https://iog.univie.ac.at/fileadmin/user_upload/iog/forschung/Project_description_Transformations_from_BelowNEU.pdf).
- 78 There is research on the relationship between neoliberalism and democracy. Some scholars, like Wendy Brown, take up an older line of critique against capitalism and claim that neoliberalism is damaging or even destroying democracy. See Brown, *Undoing the Demos. Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*. It might be added to her book that indeed the phenomenon of the economic oligarch in post-communist Europe is preceded by the development toward a plutocracy (or, in an even worse variant, a kleptocracy). Nevertheless, small- and medium-scale entrepreneurs in particular were a major beacon for building up parliamentary democracies, independent media, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in post-1989 Poland, Czech Republic, and Slovakia. Especially in Poland, the recent slide toward authoritarianism was due to mistakes by the previous conservative-liberal government, but, much like the revolutions of 1989, was also a matter of contingency. The Law and Justice party won its absolute parliamentary majority on the basis of less than 38 percent of all cast votes.
- 79 Engler, *Die Ostdeutschen als Avantgarde*.
- 80 These subjects have hitherto been the domain of ethnologists and social anthropologists. See, for example: Verdery, *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?*; Buchowski, *Rethinking Transformation: An Anthropological Perspective on Postsocialism*; Burawoy and Verdery, *Uncertain Transition: Ethnographies of Change in the Postsocialist World*; Dunn, *Privatizing Poland*; Hann, *Postsocialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia*.
- 81 See, for example, Makovicky, *Neoliberalism, Personhood, and Postsocialism*; Dardot and Laval, *La nouvelle raison du monde*.

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# 7 Market government

## Neoliberalism and the transformative power of 1989

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### Introduction

The fall of the Wall in 1989 has had an unmistakable effect on the political and ideological landscape in Europe and elsewhere. One only needs to refer to Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* to see how it sparked a sense of implosion of long-worn ideological oppositions, while at the same time spurring a clear triumphalism within Western liberal thought.<sup>1</sup> While 1989 never delivered the promised end of history, it continues to constitute a formative moment in the history of modern political thought. This chapter seeks to examine the effect of 1989 in one particular corner of liberal political thought and practice: its effect on the history of neoliberalism, specifically in Western Europe.

The ambition to trace the effects of 1989 on Western European neoliberal political thought and practice immediately raises various difficulties. The first set of difficulties derives from the very notion of neoliberalism itself, for the concept tends to elude easy definition and refers to an incongruous set of policy recipes and ideological positions. It is variously associated with the liberalization, deregulation, and privatization policies of Reagan and Thatcher, with Reagan's embrace of supply-side economics and political experiments in Chile.<sup>2</sup> It signals the demise of Keynesian macroeconomic policy and the upsurge of Milton Friedman's monetarist policies.<sup>3</sup> Neoliberalism has become synonymous with the rollback of the welfare state and the erosion of any kind of social policy. It also stands for a rollout of market-based or market-like social policies, such as the introduction of school voucher systems and market-based solutions in health-care.<sup>4</sup> Intellectually, neoliberalism could be seen as having many fathers (most of them indeed male), most notably Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman, although both only rarely and hesitantly self-identified as leaders of the neoliberal movement. The word *neoliberalism*, although used by its advocates in the past, since the late 1970s has served primarily to criticize the market.<sup>5</sup> However, the most fundamental aspect that has made neoliberalism so highly elusive, and that continues to confound scholars to this day, is that it has proved difficult to identify exactly what distinguishes the 'more markets, less state' formula of neoliberalism from pre-existing liberal ideological formations, most notably economic classical liberalism, economic liberalism, and libertarianism. Neoliberalism is thus often

imputed a political and intellectual integrity that it hardly lives up to and that requires further historical unpacking.

The second set of difficulties concerns the fact that existing accounts of the effects of 1989 mostly assume an unambiguous relationship between the collapse of Eastern European communism, the downfall of Western European social democracy, and the subsequent rise of neoliberalism. This relationship is all but self-evident. As Cornel Ban recently argued, social democrats adhered to a mixture of social liberalism and Keynesian policy interventions far before the Berlin Wall was even built.<sup>6</sup> Apart from a shared Marxist legacy, which most Western European social democrats had dismissed since the 1930s, they had little to do with Eastern European socialists. Therefore, the eventual ‘neoliberalization’ of Western European political thought after 1989 is hardly a simple effect of the downfall of Eastern European socialism and requires further examination.

Our exploration of the effects of 1989 on neoliberal thought in the Western world therefore starts with a brief analysis of the concept of neoliberalism. We will demonstrate that neoliberal ideology, though often associated with the retreat of the state, privatization, cuts on social benefits, and austerity politics, presupposes an active, interventionist state that sets the parameters for the market rather than allowing it to run its course. Some of the ideological underpinnings of this particular relationship between state and market were first developed during the economic crisis of the 1930s, when the failures of laissez-faire liberalism seemed paramount. The first section of this chapter exposes these historical roots and thus sheds light on some of the key ideological assumptions behind neoliberal thought, which are crucial for our understanding of the neoliberal reforms of the 1980s.

To survey the possible effects of 1989 on the development of neoliberalism we visit two sites in the Western world. The second section of the essay focuses on a telling post-1989 moment in the history of America. We study the post-1989 discourse of one particular policy think tank, the Cato Institute, as an example of how the fall of the Wall created a sense of market triumphalism among American neoliberals and neoconservatives in the early 1990s.

While one would expect a similar sense of neoliberal triumphalism in Western Europe after the Berlin Wall came down and the Cold War was seemingly won, the contrast could hardly be starker. To understand a distinctly Western European response to the fall of the Wall, the third and fourth sections focus on a Dutch government think tank in the 1980s and 1990s respectively. The case of the Netherlands provides a striking contrast to the United States. On the one hand, the proportion of public expenditure on the public sector in the Netherlands dropped from being at the level of Sweden in 1980, to the level of the United Kingdom in 2000.<sup>7</sup> Welfare retrenchment in the Netherlands dwarfed the austerity programs of comparable OECD countries, and *Time Magazine* dubbed Ruud Lubbers—the Dutch prime minister throughout the 1980s—‘Ruud Shock,’ due to his rigorous socioeconomic reforms.<sup>8</sup> All of this seems very much in line with the market triumphalism that allegedly characterized the post-1989 era. However, on the other hand, explicit forms of market triumphalism were almost completely absent in

Dutch political circles; Lubbers himself became known as a ‘no-nonsense’ politician in national politics, and austerity reforms passed parliament without the overt ideological contestation that characterized the Anglo-American experience.

While these two cases from the United States and the Netherlands can hardly be taken as representative of the attitude in Western Europe at large, there emerges, despite their seemingly unmistakable differences, one important similarity in the transformation of neoliberalism at the time. Drawing on Jamie Peck’s distinction between ‘rollback’ and ‘rollout’ neoliberalism, we will argue that 1989, in both cases, acted as a catalyst for the transformation of neoliberalism toward new forms of market government that rather resemble a novel type of ‘roll-in’ neoliberalism. This ‘neoliberal transformation’ of the 1990s, however, can only be properly understood by taking the longer history of neoliberalism, as well as its various local trajectories, into account.<sup>9</sup>

### Neoliberalism: the intertwining of market and state

As the 1970s ended, politicians and policy elites became enmeshed in a fierce battle of ideas. Controversial right-wing politicians, most notably Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, symbolized a new political era, described by the American historian Daniel Rodgers as the ‘age of fracture.’<sup>10</sup> As Thatcher and Reagan battled against labor unions, criticized welfare arrangements, and announced extensive cuts on social benefits, a new political language came into vogue. Fundamental academic debates on the effects of societal structures on human behavior, so characteristic of *les trente glorieuses* and the rise of the social sciences, were increasingly replaced by actor-centered approaches. Microeconomics replaced macroeconomics, structure was replaced by agency, and faith in the market mechanism reemerged, as the stagflation crisis of the late 1970s and the subsequent crisis of the welfare state unfolded. It is this combination of a shifting political language, market-oriented institutional change, and the rise of a new generation of politicians that most people commonly associate with the emergence of neoliberalism.

This particular depiction of neoliberalism is not without consequences. First, it depicts neoliberalism as a new political era, subsequent to the heyday of the welfare state. The rise of market-oriented reforms thus appears as a logical, if not necessary, response to the economic crisis of the 1970s. Second, it relates the demise of the welfare state to a withdrawal of state influence and a renewed confidence in the market, equating the neoliberal agenda with privatization, budget cuts, and austerity measures. Finally, through its emphasis on these economic measures, it depicts neoliberalism as both a worldview and historical phase in which politicians and policy elites seem to limit their attention to economic issues, and economic issues alone. This understanding has also been key to criticism of neoliberal thought, namely the idea that neoliberals confine their understanding of humankind to that of *homo economicus*. However, this particular understanding of neoliberalism mistakes a particular phase in the history of neoliberalism, its



rollback phase, for the history of neoliberalism at large, and consequently fails to grasp some of the key assumptions underpinning much neoliberal thought.

Neoliberal thought did not first develop in response to the crisis of the welfare state, but, rather, was tied up with the welfare state's emergence. The Wall Street crash of 1929, together with the rise of mass unemployment during the 1930s, contributed to an unprecedented ideological crisis of liberalism. 'From the wreckage of liberalism, nothing can be saved but its values,' Karl Mannheim stated shortly after the outbreak of the Second World War.<sup>11</sup> Even devoted liberals such as Friedrich Hayek grudgingly conceded that 'probably nothing has done so much harm to the liberal cause as [...] the principle of laissez-faire.'<sup>12</sup> Contemporaries asserted that the stumbling block for the pre-1929 economy had been the rise of monopolies and cartels, which had curtailed free competition and produced a series of economic booms and busts. Despite the agreement on its causes, expert opinion differed on how to prevent similar crises in the future. Social democrats and social liberals held unrestrained capitalism accountable, arguing that the market should be curtailed by the state, and that the state should also provide basic socioeconomic security to its citizens.<sup>13</sup> By adopting a program of economic state intervention to realize full employment, accompanied by state-provided social security, advocates of the so-called 'welfare state' hoped to avert in the future the conditions that had caused the crash of 1929.

A group of self-proclaimed 'neoliberals,' who also held that the principle of laissez-faire was untenable for the future, adopted a different view on the relation between market and state. As the crisis of 1929 and the subsequent rise of totalitarian states had been caused by the rise of monopolies and cartels, they argued, the concentration of economic power in the hands of the state should be prevented at all costs, as a political and economic state monopoly would be even more dangerous than the classical liberal night-watchman state. According to some of these neoliberals, the principle of free competition—and free competition alone—was able to secure individual freedom, as it prevented the concentration of power in the hands of the few.<sup>14</sup> As the free market had clearly been unable to guard itself against monopolies and cartels in an era in which it had been allowed to run its course, neoliberals proposed that the state should foster the market by combatting monopolies and cartels, thereby securing its ability to produce economic growth and democratic freedom through the principle of competition. Their particular focus on creating a competitive order, or as Hayek called it, 'planning for competition,' set neoliberals apart from classical liberalism and laissez-faire.<sup>15</sup>

Despite this shared agenda, neoliberals did not necessarily agree on the nature of monopolies and cartels, or the way in which they should be combatted. Early neoliberals, most notably those belonging to the continental European *Freiburger Schule*, shared the Marxist assumption that free markets have a tendency toward monopolies and cartels, and believed therefore that the state should actively intervene to prevent power concentrations in the economy.<sup>16</sup> This line of thought has continued over the years and left deep institutional footprints—the appointment of a European Commissioner for Competition, for instance.<sup>17</sup> Other neoliberals, most notably those of the American Chicago School, asserted that monopolies

and cartels were a *product* of intervention by the state, and therefore prescribed economic non-intervention.<sup>18</sup> In adopting this line of non-intervention, they came close to the previously dominant policy of *laissez-faire*, in which the abstinence of the state in the economy is the norm.

Despite clear resemblances between *laissez-faire* liberalism and neoliberalism, both branches of liberal thought differ fundamentally. Whereas classical liberalism separates state, market, and society, neoliberalism emphasizes the intertwinement between market and state. According to neoliberals—and despite their differing views concerning the extent of state intervention—economic freedom underpins individual freedom, meaning that democratic government relies on the mechanism of free competition. This also implies that neoliberalism does not confine itself to *homo economicus*, as other aspects of economic life (according to neoliberal theory) are dependent on, and therefore inseparable from, the market.<sup>19</sup> Neoliberals thus forged new connections between state, market, and democracy, and the resulting new branch of liberalism was heavily influenced by the battle against totalitarianism, which early neoliberals equated with the battle against the welfare state.<sup>20</sup> These old connections would resurface as the ‘rollback’ phase of neoliberalism commenced with the ascension of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Some insight into the ideological roots of neoliberalism might help us to understand why this rollback phase, which was basically confined to privatization and austerity programs, was immediately accompanied by a sense of democratic crisis, a renewed interest in civic responsibilities, and shrill warnings against the ‘totalitarian’ pitfalls of welfare politics.

### **Transforming market government in the United States: markets against states**

The election of Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom and Ronald Reagan in the United States was to inaugurate a new phase in the history of neoliberalism. As stated above, this period was marked by a combination of great ideological shifts as well as momentous changes in policy. The Thatcher and Reagan administrations, seemingly directly, translated intellectual input from economists like Hayek and Friedman into new and far-reaching policies. Propelled by the global economic downturn of the 1970s and the legwork of international networks, these neoliberal policies were by no means confined to the United Kingdom and the United States, but gained appeal all around the world.<sup>21</sup> The global set of free market reforms of the 1980s are today considered to represent the heyday of neoliberalism.

Following Jamie Peck and Adam Tickell, this period is now commonly referred to as the phase of ‘rollback neoliberalism.’<sup>22</sup> Policy measures adopted during this period of ‘shallow neoliberalism,’ generally abide by the simple adage of ‘more markets, less state.’<sup>23</sup> This is reflected, for instance, in the regulatory agendas of Thatcher and Reagan that aimed to liberate markets from state intervention through deregulation, liberalization, and privatization. Policy-makers swapped macroeconomic Keynesian interventions for monetarist policy precepts, aiming

to regulate money supply rather than striving for the full employment of production.<sup>24</sup> Other measures were directed at rolling back the welfare state through the reduction of a host of social protections, budget cuts, and limits put on forms of social organization, such as labor unions. Internationally, too, the Washington Consensus represented a shift away from government aid and toward a focus on trade liberalization and market policies imposed by structural adjustments.<sup>25</sup> In contrast to the era of early neoliberalism discussed above, in which market and state were seen as intertwined, neoliberalism now merely represented a rolling back of the state at the expense of the market.

When the Berlin Wall came down in 1989, the rollback phase of neoliberalism was well underway in the Western world, if not reaching its peak. This is an important factor for any assessment of the effect of 1989 on neoliberalism. Given this context, it is indeed tempting to see 1989 as both confirmation of and a victory for rollback neoliberalism, and as ushering in a neoliberal end of history. Indeed, it is not hard to see how 1989 further reinforced the embedding of rollback neoliberalism on a global scale. The age of economic globalization brought a further entrenchment of rollback neoliberalism during the 1990s and well into the 2000s. But even though 1989 represented a clear victory for rollback neoliberalism, its market triumphalism also appears to have invited a novel mutation of neoliberalism.

The relation between this new form of neoliberalism and the rollback neoliberalism that preceded it is illustrated by looking at a set of publications from the Cato Institute, an American conservative policy think tank with a clear libertarian bent. It presents an interesting example of how the market triumphalism of 1989 need not merely entrench rollback neoliberalism but could also give way to ideological renewal. Quite unlike the mixed-economy discourse in Western Europe, the political economic discourse of conservative institutions such as Cato is traditionally cast in stark Cold War binaries that oppose markets to central planning, capitalism to socialism, and democracy to authoritarianism. A typical move in such circles is to equate any form of government intervention in markets—take, for example, Obama’s system of healthcare insurance—with socialism.<sup>26</sup> How did such a discourse with a near dichotomous opposition between markets and states change when one of the two ideological antagonists collapsed?

A short time after 1989, Cato’s presidents, Edward H. Crane and David Boaz, put together a volume titled *Market Liberalism: A Paradigm for the 21st Century*, which could be considered Cato’s perspective on the post-1989 world.<sup>27</sup> As the title indicates, for Cato, 1989 inaugurated a new paradigm, dubbed ‘market liberalism.’ According to the authors, a new form of liberalism was ‘sweeping the world, from Eastern Europe to Latin America, to Asia,’ and the volume aimed to discuss ‘how to bring the market-liberal revolution to the United States.’<sup>28</sup> The editors presented the fall of the Berlin Wall as ‘the most significant change of the late twentieth century,’ and argued that it represented a powerful confirmation of a ‘collapse of the statist vision.’<sup>29</sup> But, much to Cato’s dismay, the fact that markets and economic growth had been on a steady rise meant that governments were growing too. Notwithstanding ‘a few tentative steps toward deregulation in 1978

and tax reduction in 1981,' the authors charged that 'the free-market revolution in the United States has failed to stop the inexorable growth of the omnivorous federal government.'<sup>30</sup> The revolutionary power of 1989 thus inspired Cato to develop the market liberal vision as part of a renewed attack on the government. Without calling it as such, the libertarians of Cato used the momentum of 1989 to put the erstwhile neoliberal project of the 1980s on a new footing.

What characterized the new, twenty-first-century paradigm of market liberalism that Boaz and Crane unwittingly promoted as a new phase of neoliberalism? Market liberalism, according to them, was a post-1989 variety of conservatism, libertarianism, and classical liberalism. The latter tended to be backward looking, as classical liberals presented the free market, liberty, and the ideas of individual rights or limited government as passive guarantees for liberalism. In contrast, by superimposing the idea of free markets onto liberalism, the Cato authors presented their own market-oriented set of assumptions as a 'forward-looking philosophy, comfortable with a changing world, tolerant, and enthusiastic about the market process and individual liberty.'<sup>31</sup> They thus mobilized market principles in order to combat the status quo, in which the government was perceived as the standard solution to social problems, instead of its cause. Only markets could plausibly provide sufficient checks on the ever-encroaching power of government. With this notion of market liberalism, the Cato scholars positioned the market as the only viable political principle to be leveled against government overreach and statism. Where rollback neoliberalism focused on rolling back the state in order to liberate markets, the events of 1989 stimulated the Cato Institute to design a stepped-up version of market liberalism that subtly inverted this logic by rolling out the market *against* the state and coercive government.

With Cato's idea of market liberalism, 1989 market triumphalism not only served to confirm and continue attempts at rolling back the state, but in fact rolled *into* government as its guiding principle. *Market Liberalism* contains numerous essays that continue to make ordinary rollback arguments, but also includes contributions that advocate roll-in measures to actively limit coercive government. One such example is a chapter by Edward Crane on the political process. The political system, according to Crane, had become ever more closed, only 'to protect the status quo.'<sup>32</sup> To open the political system up again, Crane turned to market principles, arguing for term limits as well as the removal of campaign contribution limits. Note how both arguments were predicated on market principles. The idea behind term limits for Congress is that an increased degree of competition for seats in Congress would prevent the emergence of career politicians that 'end up not telling the government what the people want, but instead lobbying the people to support more government.'<sup>33</sup> Crane made a similar market argument for the removal of limits on campaign contributions. Just like innovative entrepreneurs could break into the market, politicians with novel ideas should be allowed to garner the resources to break the two-party cartel and enter the political stage: 'Americans have a right to expect as dynamic a political system as they do an economic system.'<sup>34</sup> As this example shows, market liberalism no longer represented a simple rollback, that is simply more markets and less state, but instead

advocated market principles to be rolled *into* the state so as to limit government from the inside out.

Another contribution to the book, this time on education policy and aptly titled ‘The Learning Revolution,’ once more referred to ‘the collapse of the Soviet empire’ to underpin the need for rolling market principles into government. According to its author, there was an urgent need for ‘commercializing (not just privatizing) the economy of academia, the biggest and probably the last great socialist empire on earth.’<sup>35</sup> In order to ‘[break] up the socialist monopoly of the government-controlled education system,’ merely privatizing the education system through school choice and voucher systems was not enough, as this would only entail a redistribution of public money over different non-profit organizations. Instead, the author advocated a system of micro-choice, micro-vouchers, and family learning accounts that would enable families to purchase ‘learning products and services,’ and would ‘create a true, wide-open, location-free, competitive market for learning.’<sup>36</sup> The switch proposed in the article was not just a rollback of government but signified a further rolling-in of market principles to education policy in an attempt to further limit the reach of government. This logic of roll-in is neatly summarized by Cato’s president David Boaz:

In every sector of the economy, competition produces better results than bureaucracy and monopoly. (Not just the economy, in fact; liberalism involves competition in political and intellectual life as well as economic life.) That’s why the public schools don’t work very well. They offer about as much scope for flexibility, innovation, consumer responsiveness, and experimentation as did Soviet factories.<sup>37</sup>

This passage acutely illustrates how, at Cato, 1989 helped to elevate neoliberalism to a new level. Cato’s market liberalism was no longer merely about shifting the boundaries between the market and the state, reminiscent of how the Cold War represented a territorial battle between capitalism and socialism. In Cato’s case, neoliberalism’s next level was to roll market principles into all corners of political and intellectual life. The state itself, whether it governed education, health-care, social policy, international relations, or the economy, should be liberated by market principles from any traces of ‘socialism,’ and this should happen from within. In this way, Cato’s market liberalism is exemplary of how 1989 helped provoke a switch from plain rollback neoliberalism to an intensified form of roll-in neoliberalism.

### **State-led response to rollout neoliberalism: the Netherlands during the 1980s**

While the fall of the Wall no doubt encouraged some form of market triumphalism in Western Europe, one did not immediately see raving pleas such as those encountered at the Cato Institute. In the Netherlands, for instance, the response was

much more reserved. A quick review of *Economische en Statistische Berichten* (ESB), a major professional economic policy journal in the Netherlands, shows no indication that 1989 prompted a renewed debate over the role of markets and government. In the immediate aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall, articles discussed the promises and pitfalls of applying shock therapy in Eastern Europe, but none of them related this back to Dutch policies. Instead of opening new ideological terrains, 1989 was at best a catalyst in an ongoing debate about the puzzles posed by the increasing dominance of markets and globalization. The effect of 1989, if any, should therefore be read against the longer development of neoliberal practices and thought in the Netherlands.

Much research today emphasizes that the ascendance of neoliberal policies follows distinct and diverse national trajectories. While seemingly similar neoliberal policy measures get adopted around the globe, the precise dissemination and embedding of these policies is highly local and follows closely existing national policy traditions.<sup>38</sup> Any account of how the events of 1989 may have had an effect in Western Europe should thus always be read against the background of ongoing developments in the various national policy contexts. To get a more exact sense, therefore, of how 1989 may have served as a catalyst in the political trajectory of neoliberalism in the Netherlands, we will trace the development of governmental thought about the state and the market from the late 1970s up until the early 2000s, as expressed by the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR). The Dutch government established the WRR in 1972 as an independent scientific think tank that would provide policy advice to the state. Since its establishment, the council has consisted of a small number of high-profile members drawn from the academic field and, together with a scientific staff, has published two to three reports a year and a large number of preliminary studies. One of the foremost bodies of government policy, the WRR constitutes an interesting source of governmental self-reflection on policy.

When reviewing the development of market-state discourse at the WRR in the decade preceding 1989, three aspects stand out: first the types of questions that were taken up by the WRR; second the hesitance of the WRR to embrace roll-back policies; and, third, the alternative ways in which the WRR envisioned more room for markets. During the period running up to the events of 1989, one can identify four main types of questions or problems that were evidently of national economic policy concern. The first of these was an ongoing concern with declining economic growth and its consequences for unemployment, as represented in reports on industrial policy in 1980, economic growth in 1987, and issues surrounding unemployment and labor market policies in 1987 and 1990.<sup>39</sup> The second, related, topic that was important at the time was that of economic planning, which runs through some of the reports and was addressed separately in a study on the future of economic planning.<sup>40</sup> A third major theme during the 1980s was the supposed 'crisis of the welfare state,' which was raised in reports on welfare policy in 1982 and social security in 1985.<sup>41</sup> A fourth theme, which emerged during the second half of the 1980s, relates to questions about European integration.<sup>42</sup>



In all four cases, the WRR asks what policy adjustments are required. These four policy questions are, on the one hand, typical for a period of rollback neoliberalism, which typically featured a concern for declining economic growth and the crisis of the welfare state. However, the reports also contain many concerns that are more specific to the Dutch debate, such as the limitations of state-led economic planning, the disappointing performance of the Dutch economy throughout the 1980s, and the demise of the Dutch welfare state. If anything, the WRR during this period was busy formulating a response to the onset of rollback neoliberalism in the Netherlands, one that was decidedly local in nature.

The response to these issues by the WRR thus differed strikingly from, for instance, the approach of the American Cato Institute. While the Netherlands was going through a phase of economic restructuring that was in many ways comparable to that of other Western European states or the United States, it is remarkable to witness the hesitant and measured nature of the Dutch response to these changes. Especially when compared to the outspoken ‘more markets, less state’ rhetoric associated with rollback neoliberalism in the United States and the United Kingdom—the accounts of the WRR hardly matched up. Take, for example, its response to the question of economic growth. In an immediate response to the decline in growth of the late 1970s, the WRR published a report in 1980 entitled *The Place and Future of Dutch Industry*, which examined how the state could stimulate economic growth through structural industrial policies.<sup>43</sup> These policies were directed at developing strategic manufacturing sectors of the economy, such as the automobile industry, shipbuilding, machinery, or electronics. Industrial policy as a form of government policy steering certain sectors within the economy is typically considered a hallmark of embedded liberalism.<sup>44</sup> At a time when, in the United States, industrial policy came abruptly into disrepute, the Netherlands firmly clung to it to solve its problems of economic decline. A further example of the WRR’s difference in response can be seen in a 1983 report entitled *Planning as Undertaking*, in which the WRR was considering the future tenability of economic planning.<sup>45</sup> Containing numerous references to Hayek and the public choice theorist, James Buchanan, the report reflected the demise of planning, but nonetheless argued for a modernization of planning practices by making planning more entrepreneurial, rather than abolishing it altogether. In a 1987 report, *Room for Growth*, the WRR considered whether there were structural limitations that prevented the economy from returning to its golden age of growth. The report argued that such a return to growth is both feasible and desirable, but that this was precluded because of societal constraints put on the market mechanism. It therefore claimed:

Structural relations in the economic process do not preclude a simultaneous realizing of objectives with regard to employment, levels of consumption, balance of payment equilibria, reduction of government deficits, and some aspects of the environment. In practice these generally accepted objectives are less realized than what is possible in theory. The limitations of the market mechanism and the intertwinement of the public and private sector are



in part to blame that decentralized decisions lead to suboptimal outcomes. According to the Council, better results can be reached when the decisions of economic actors are better adjusted.<sup>46</sup>

One would expect this to result in a resounding plea for more markets and less state. Instead, the WRR concluded: ‘This [...] requires policy coordination. To achieve policy coordination, one could turn to institutionalized consultation between social partners [i.e. labor and employers’ organizations] and the government.’<sup>47</sup>

At a time otherwise known for its rollback neoliberalism, the Dutch response was, not entirely unsurprisingly, founded in consultation and state policy. While economies in the 1980s were undergoing major restructuring, the policy response of the WRR was still beholden to the idea of embedded liberalism and hardly showed any signs of rollback neoliberalism. A similar attitude underpinned the WRR’s perspective on European integration. In a report aptly titled *Uncompleted European Integration*, the council repeated well-known arguments in favor of market integration, assumedly required to defend Europe against increased competition in the world economy. European integration was especially necessary to regain effective public control over the economy: ‘Put boldly these developments require a rapid completion of a common market on which substantial public interventions can be effective.’<sup>48</sup> Quite paradoxically, at a time that is associated with rollback of the state, the WRR responded with policy options that would give the state a renewed control over the economy.

In the end, while the WRR appeared hesitant to embrace the precepts of rollback neoliberalism, it was all but oblivious to the lure of the market. This became most evident in the council’s publications on the future of the welfare state. In the 1982 report, *Revaluing Welfare Policy*, which focused on making welfare policy more efficient and effective, market measures only featured in the background. However, a report of 1985, entitled *Safeguards for Social Security*, sought to revalue social security policy in the light of changing social and economic conditions. This required, according to the report, a new balance between solidarity and individual freedom. While the report advocated a basic income scheme, it simultaneously aimed at a social security system more finely attuned to the needs of flexible labor markets, implicitly advocating a form of neoliberal ‘flexicurity,’ *avant la lettre*.

From the late 1980s, one witnesses a reluctant emergence of more of these new types of market-oriented policy solutions. These arrangements featured most explicitly in reports on labor market policy of that period. The 1987 report entitled *Activating Labor Market Policy* marked a shift in how the question of unemployment was approached. It abandoned more traditional approaches that focused on cyclical and structural causes of unemployment. Instead, policy shifted to a focus on better preparing the unemployed for the labor market through training, intermediation programs, and other ways of making labor more flexible. This way, the report championed a neoliberalization of labor market policy, in which the burden of unemployment policy turned into the responsibility of the individual, at the

expense of addressing structural causes of unemployment. In addition, the policies appear to have adopted the notion of a flexible labor market as the norm to which labor has to adjust. Furthermore, the policies insisted on market measures and market solutions as a means of procuring labor market retraining, intermediation, or reintegration. As a report on labor market policy from 1990 summarized the WRR's new position: 'it is recommended that market principles will direct the organization of training.'<sup>49</sup> Hence, toward the end of the 1980s, market principles hesitantly started to make their way into the policy vocabulary of the WRR in the Netherlands. Up to that point, policy discourse at the WRR in the Netherlands had been primarily concerned with the typical questions accompanying the rollback phase of neoliberalism. These included declining economic growth, unemployment, and the sustainability of the welfare state. It had also been concerned with a number of more unique questions pertaining to Dutch national economic traditions, for instance, questions about planning or European integration. In finding answers to these questions, the WRR did not straightforwardly advocate the liberation of markets or the rolling back of the state. Instead, the council sustained its confidence in the state to remain in charge of controlling a political prerogative over the market. In those scant instances where market principles were called upon for policy purposes, these remain—in contrast to the examples drawn from Cato—firmly state-led, and directed at achieving public goals.

### **Neoliberalism rolling in: the Netherlands during the 1990s**

Whereas Dutch socioeconomic debates throughout the 1980s focused primarily on the relation between market and state, the year 1990 marked the onset of a decade in which the distinction between market and state seemed to dissolve. In the preceding years, the Lubbers administration had initiated an extensive privatization program, which included the Dutch postal services (1986), telecommunications (1989), and the only state-owned retail bank of the Netherlands (1986).<sup>50</sup> Although privatization programs were also extended to the railway sector and social housing, the 1990s primarily stood out as the decade in which the market mechanism was deliberately applied *within* the public sector. Policy-makers now applied the classical Hayekian creed of 'planning for competition' *within* state bureaucracy: neoliberalism 'rolled in.'

This striking shift was not an immediate effect of the fall of the Berlin Wall, nor was it accompanied by the optimistic pro-market rhetoric that we saw from the Cato Institute in the United States at the time. In its 1990 report *A Workable Perspective*, dedicated to labor market reforms, the WRR recommended that the Dutch government reconsider 'the rules and institutions developed to protect [citizens] from the unrestrained effects of the market mechanism.'<sup>51</sup> The council argued that a shift in state policy was inevitable, given the low participation of Dutch citizens (especially women) in the labor market, which the WRR ascribed to the absence of the laws of supply and demand. These recommendations were neoliberal in nature but were not sold with pro-market rhetoric. Rather, the council

developed a problem-oriented approach closer to Margaret Thatcher's famous statement 'there is no alternative.'

Whereas the WRR's proposals in *A Workable Perspective* were very much in line with its earlier rollback approach, the position of the council started to shift in the middle of the 1990s. When the WRR published its report, *Interest and Policy*, in 1994, the council argued that cutting back on social benefits was in itself insufficient to preserve the Dutch welfare state; new measures, most notably the introduction of various kinds of market incentives (*marktwerking*) and state-fostered competition were required.<sup>52</sup> Note that the council presented these market incentives in line with the preservation of the welfare state, and did not oppose the market to the state. In one of its subsequent reports, in which the WRR observed the rise of an 'entrepreneurial society,' the council went as far as to argue that the distinction between state and market itself was unproductive and outdated:

The Entrepreneurial Society does not require a choice between state and market, but a synthesis of both: the state establishes the framework, sets priorities, discusses the results, takes care of public debate, acts as referee, et cetera. The market plays the game.<sup>53</sup>

The proposed synthesis between state and market provides a fascinating insight into the ways in which the WRR conceptualized the harmonious relationship between market and state. The authors of *The Entrepreneurial Society* predicted a social order in which citizens would no longer experience work as a 'scourge' or duty. Instead, the council predicted that future generations would experience work as 'the framework in which people can establish their ideas as well as their lives.'<sup>54</sup> As a result, the distinction between work and leisure time would dissolve, while 'human capital' would 'mitigate power concentrations within the labor market.'<sup>55</sup> While these assertions (underpinned by a belief in the leveling effects of markets, for which the WRR did not provide evidence) are striking in themselves, they also expose the council's assumptions regarding the relationship between market and state. Not only did the council propose a synthesis between market and state, it also stated that the market should 'play the game,' while the government aligned itself with the market mechanism. Rather than emphasizing the key role of the state in planning for a competitive order in the economy, the authors of *The Entrepreneurial Society* reversed the relation between market and state: the state should use the principle of free competition to its own advantage.

Such optimism concerning the blessings of the market was apparently short-lived. When the WRR published *Safeguarding the Public Interest* in 2000, the authors adopted a much more modest tone, claiming that 'privatization is not a competition [between] state [and] market,' while the private sector was not confined to the market, and depended on more coordinating mechanisms than competition alone.<sup>56</sup> The report focused on market management, rather than on the magic of markets as such. It suggested that although the market remained of key importance, the state should confine itself to its role as market manager when

aiming to safeguard public interest. Reflecting on the ideological change of the last two decades, the council therefore concluded:

A new mix between the government and market as coordination mechanisms ... had emerged. To put it differently, a renegotiation of public and private responsibilities took place. In foreign countries, this transition was accompanied by unrest (Thatcher, Reagan). In the Netherlands, a debate seemed almost absent. [...] However, this does not necessarily signify absence of change. Silently, impressive transitions have been made in various domains, such as the shift of responsibilities with regard to public utilities in the previous decade.<sup>57</sup>

This reflection on the recent past aptly summarizes the WRR's stance toward neoliberal interventions throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The council advocated pro-market reforms of the labor market, encouraged the introduction of market incentives in the public sector, and aimed at a form of governance in which the state set the boundaries while the market played the game, underlining the roll-in phase of neoliberalism. However, rather than opposing state and market, the WRR aimed to remove the boundaries between both, and presented the introduction of market incentives in line with the preservation of the welfare state. Initially developed in response to the disappointing performance of the Dutch economy during the 1980s, the council pursued this approach during the 1990s when the Dutch economy performed significantly better, arguing that the satisfactory development of the Dutch economy provided no more than a 'breathing space' from fierce international competition.<sup>58</sup> In this sense, market-oriented reforms acted both as utopia and scourge.

## Conclusion

'Triumphalism?' was the title of the editorial that opened *Socialism and Democracy's* first issue of the new decade in January 1990. The editors of the Dutch social democratic journal briefly reflected on the recent political events across the Iron Curtain and observed that the fall of the Berlin Wall was predominantly celebrated as a triumph of liberalism over socialism at home.<sup>59</sup> Such sentiments should not cause social democrats to lose faith, the editors argued, but only underlined the urgency of a social democratic answer to 'neo-conservative' calls for privatization and deregulation—an answer that should not depart from the assumption that the market had outmatched the state.

The editorial of *Socialism and Democracy* unknowingly provided a reasonably accurate outline of the neoliberal approach that would take root in Dutch policy circles in the decade that followed, an approach that departed from 'roll-back' policies, such as austerity measures and privatization in the 1980s, but stopped short of market triumphalism like that of the American think tank, the Cato Institute. The Dutch government policy think tank, the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR), however, shared with the Cato Institute a very

deliberate push toward forms of neoliberal market government. While aiming at a synthesis between market and state, it defended its position by arguing that the introduction of market principles *inside* the state was key to the preservation of the welfare state. Rather than opposing market and state, the WRR aimed at a mutually beneficial relationship between the two. In so doing, it succeeded in depoliticizing welfare reforms, while simultaneously pushing an agenda that was, in many respects, in line with the reforms of Thatcher and Reagan, as the council itself observed.<sup>60</sup> Thus, the WRR became a key player in translating neoliberal ideological ideas into policy proposals that, because of their consensual and depoliticized tone, suited the complex Dutch multiparty system. This depoliticized approach, in which the boundaries between state and market were downplayed or denied, is characteristic of the roll-in phase of neoliberalism in the Netherlands.

This chapter hence argues that, around 1989, a transition took place in neoliberalism and that the fall of the Wall coincided with a transition from rollback neoliberalism to roll-in neoliberalism. After 1989, we can observe a decided change in neoliberalism, which is no longer only about pushing back the state, but entails the introduction of market principles and market measures within the state. This is not to claim that roll-in neoliberalism was an immediate consequence of the fall of the Berlin Wall or any of its side effects. While the fall of the Wall may be an attractive marker for this transformation in neoliberalism, and may have been exploited by some as its inspiration, this transition is part of a much larger transformation in neoliberal thought and practice. Like Cornel Ban, we dismiss any direct linkage between the fall of socialism in Eastern Europe and the demise of social-democratic resistance against neoliberalism.<sup>61</sup> Apart from some explicit references to the demise of socialism and expressions of market triumphalism like the ones observed at the Cato Institute, these have been largely absent in Western European political discourse, as our examples from the Netherlands show. We have not encountered much evidence of large ideological shifts provoked by the fall of the Wall. If anything, our case studies show that the most important neoliberal transformations occur at the level of concrete policy interventions.

Underlining this warning against ideological oversimplification, it is also important to point out that the effects of 1989 did not develop in a historical vacuum. As this chapter has demonstrated, the emergence of neoliberal thought and practice dates back to the economic crisis of the 1930s. Key assumptions of these earlier strands of neoliberal thought—most notably the belief that the market mechanism contained state power, the belief that competition secured human freedom, and the idea that totalitarianism was an effect of power concentration—played an important role during the roll-in phase of neoliberalism, but were originally developed in the aftermath of the Wall Street crash. As Mark Blyth has claimed in *Great Transformations*, ideas play a key role in politics, especially in times of political crises, but this does not necessarily imply that ideas that come to play a major role during a crisis are always new.<sup>62</sup> Quite often, journalists, politicians, and policy-makers adapt and reapply ideas in a new context. Although 1989 certainly acted as a catalyst in the dissemination and applicability of neoliberal thought, it certainly did not produce a neoliberal shift by itself.

Therefore, we have aimed to demonstrate that local contexts matter. While a neoliberal shift practically affected all countries around the globe, the local trajectories in which these political transformations occurred differed significantly. While our limited comparison does not allow for too-sweeping conclusions, the differences between the Cato Institute's market triumphalism and the cautious, depoliticizing tone of the Dutch WRR are nevertheless telling. Even while neoliberalism was undergoing a major transformation around 1989, our case studies show that the exact shape and form of these transformations were highly localized and dependent on historical and political contexts. As such, our findings fit well with recent literature on neoliberalism in the Netherlands, for instance, which emphasizes the consensual nature of the Dutch neoliberal transformation, especially when compared to that of the United Kingdom or the United States.<sup>63</sup> Another striking local difference was the political motives for the move to roll-in neoliberalism. Where the Cato discourse clearly reflected anti-statist sentiments, the WRR in the Netherlands, on the other hand, defended neoliberal proposals by emphasizing that market incentives were necessary for preserving the welfare state. The changeover to roll-in neoliberalism hence had different implications in different political contexts.

While it would be an overstatement to claim that 1989 was the immediate cause of the transformation in neoliberalism from rollback to roll-in neoliberalism, it has been an important catalyst in the process. On an ideological level—as seen in the examples offered by the Cato Institute—the fall of the Wall helped further undermine the market/state opposition and legitimized the infusion of the state with market principles. In policy practice, furthermore, the fall of the Wall quietly prompted renewed and reinvigorated attempts at reforming the state after the image of the market.

## Notes

- 1 Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*.
- 2 See, for example: Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*; Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*.
- 3 Hay, 'The Normalizing Role of Rationalist Assumptions in the Institutional Embedding of Neoliberalism,' 5078.
- 4 Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason*, 22–23.
- 5 Boas and Gans-Morse, 'Neoliberalism: From New Liberal Philosophy to Anti-Liberal Slogan.'
- 6 Ban, 'Was 1989 the End of Social Democracy?'
- 7 WRR, *De Verzorgingsstaat Herwogen*, 78; Green-Pedersen, *The Politics of Justification*; Siegel, 'Jenseits der Expansion?' 54–89.
- 8 Hellema, *Nederland en de Jaren Zeventig*, 289.
- 9 Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason*, 22–23.
- 10 Rodgers, *Age of Fracture*.
- 11 Mannheim, *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction Studies in Modern Social Structure*, 364.
- 12 Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, 18.
- 13 See for instance: Beveridge, 'Social Insurance and Allied Services (The Beveridge Report),' 6; Commissie-Van Rhijn (Londen), 'Sociale Zekerheid. Rapport van de

- Commissie, *Ingesteld bij Beschikking van den Minister van Sociale Zaken van 26 Maart 1943, Met de Opdracht Algemeene Richtlijnen vast te Stellen voor de Toekomstige Ontwikkeling der Sociale Verzekering in Nederland*, ' 14.
- 14 Röpke, *Civitas Humana*, 15.
  - 15 Hayek, *Road to Serfdom*, 43.
  - 16 Lemke, "'The Birth of Bio-Politics": Michel Foucault's Lecture at the Collège de France on Neo-Liberal Governmentality,' 192–193.
  - 17 Gerber, 'Constitutionalizing the Economy: German Neo-Liberalism, Competition Law and the "New" Europe.'
  - 18 Van Horn, 'Reinventing Monopoly and the Role of Corporations: The Roots of Chicago Law and Economics.'
  - 19 Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1978–1979*, 82.
  - 20 Mellink, 'Politici Zonder Partij. Sociale Zekerheid en de Geboorte van het Neoliberalisme in Nederland (1945–1958).'
  - 21 Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*.
  - 22 This distinction was first introduced in Peck and Tickell, 'Neoliberalizing Space.'
  - 23 Peck and Tickell, 'Neoliberalizing Space,' 384.
  - 24 Hay, 'The Normalizing Role of Rationalist Assumptions,' 507–508.
  - 25 Saad-Filho, 'Growth, Poverty and Inequality: From Washington Consensus to Inclusive Growth.'
  - 26 Cannon, 'ObamaCare: "Everything That's Wrong with the European-style Democratic Socialist State."'
  - 27 Boaz and Crane, *Market Liberalism: A Paradigm for the 21st Century*.
  - 28 *Ibid.*, inside flap.
  - 29 Boaz and Crane, 'Introduction: The Collapse of the Statist Vision,' in *Market Liberalism: A Paradigm for the 21st Century*, 2 and 1 respectively.
  - 30 *Ibid.*, 2.
  - 31 *Ibid.*, 9.
  - 32 Crane, 'Reclaiming the Political Process,' *ibid.*, 53.
  - 33 *Ibid.*, 56–57.
  - 34 *Ibid.*, 62. The quote continues: 'Contribution limitations have been passed in to law for the same self-serving reasons that corporations lobby for protectionist bills of their own, complete with all the "public interest" rhetoric,' *ibid.*, 62–63.
  - 35 Perelman, 'The Learning Revolution,' *ibid.*, 159.
  - 36 *Ibid.*, 167.
  - 37 Boaz, 'Reviving the Inner City,' *ibid.*, 197.
  - 38 See, for example: Fourcade-Gourinchas and Babb, 'The Rebirth of the Liberal Creed: Paths to Neoliberalism in Four Countries'; Prasad, *The Politics of Free Markets: The Rise of Neoliberal Economic Policies in Britain, France, Germany, and the United States*; Swarts, *Constructing Neoliberalism: Economic Transformation in Anglo-American Democracies*; Cornel, *Ruling Ideas: How Global Neoliberalism Goes Local*.
  - 39 WRR, *Plaats en Toekomst van de Nederlandse Industrie*; WRR, *Ruimte voor Groei: Kansen en Bedreigingen voor de Nederlandse Economie in de Komende Tien Jaar*; WRR, *Activerend Arbeidsmarktbeleid; Een Werkend Perspectief: Arbeidsmarktparticipatie in de Jaren '90*.
  - 40 Den Hoed, Salet, and Van der Sluijs, *Planning Als Onderneming*.
  - 41 WRR, *Herwaardering van Welzijnsbeleid; Waarborgen voor Zekerheid*.
  - 42 *De Onvoltooide Europese Integratie*.
  - 43 All translations of Dutch reports are the authors' own.
  - 44 Blyth, *Great Transformations: Economic Ideas and Institutional Change in the Twentieth Century*; Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 10–11.
  - 45 Den Hoed, Salet, and Van der Sluijs. *Planning als Onderneming*.
  - 46 WRR, *Ruimte voor Groei: Kansen en Bedreigingen voor de Nederlandse Economie in de Komende Tien Jaar*, 15–16.



- 47 *Ibid.*, 16.  
48 *De Onvoltooide Europese Integratie*, 20.  
49 *Een Werkend Perspectief: Arbeidsmarktparticipatie in de Jaren '90*, 13.  
50 Stellinga, *Dertig Jaar Privatisering, Verzelfstandiging en Marktwerking*, 33 and 35.  
51 WRR, *een Werkend Perspectief: Arbeidsmarktparticipatie in de Jaren '90*, 127.  
52 *Belang en Beleid: Naar een Verantwoorde Uitvoering van de Werknemersverzekeringen*, 81.  
53 *De Ondernemende Samenleving*, 9.  
54 *Ibid.*, 50.  
55 *Ibid.*, 9.  
56 WRR, *Het Borgen van Publiek Belang*, 11.  
57 *Ibid.*, 17.  
58 Gelok and De Jong, *Volatilisering in de Economie*, 9.  
59 Koch, 'Triomfalisme?' 2.  
60 WRR, *Het Borgen van Publiek Belang*, 17.  
61 Ban, 'Was 1989 the End of Social Democracy?'  
62 Blyth, *Great Transformations*, 35–37.  
63 Oudenampsen, 'Opkomst en Ondergang van de Derde Weg. Het Raadsel van de Missende Veren,' 34.

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## 8 A profitable friendship, still? Town twinning between Eastern and Western European cities before and after 1989

*Stefan Couperus and Dora Vrhoci*

### **Introduction**

Since the end of World War II, towns and cities across Europe have established institutionalized, border-crossing, bilateral relationships, usually referred to as town twinning. Twinned towns have since engaged with the mutual exchange of people, knowledge, and postwar urban experiences in the domains of administration, religion, science, education, sports, arts, culture, and business.<sup>1</sup> Today almost 40,000 cities are involved in twinning programs in Europe.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter examines town twinning schemes that have emerged between urban communities in Eastern and Western Europe since the end of World War II. Whether spurred by larger European platforms of intercity collaboration or initiated by local communities themselves, many connections between cities in Western Europe and cities within the Soviet bloc (and Yugoslavia) were established from the 1940s onward, with a manifest increase just before and after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Many of these collaborative schemes still exist in the present day.

This chapter will question how the fall of communism in Europe has impacted East–West town twinning practices. Given that ‘1989’ coincided with some fundamental changes in urban governance with the introduction of New Public Management (NPM) at the local level and what scholars have called the emergence of entrepreneurial or neoliberal urbanism, it is interesting to see if, and to what extent, border-crossing, intercity collaborations were affected by the disappearance of the Iron Curtain. One might expect that the end of the Cold War and the concomitant removal of political or economic impediments would open up new avenues of collaboration for twinned towns on both sides of the former divide. Yet, as will be illustrated in this chapter, these new opportunities did not exclusively result in a single mode of entrepreneurial intra-European town twinning or ever closer entanglements between cities in the (former) East and West. Adopting a loose historical institutionalist reading of postwar town twinning history, we will distinguish between a number of trajectories that East–West town twinning in Europe has undergone and discuss the extent to which 1989 proved to be a critical juncture or not. By doing so, town twinning presents itself as a promising angle with which to probe into the effects of 1989 on transnational urban collaboration.

Historiography mainly emphasizes the reconciliatory and integrative capacities of postwar town twinning projects in Europe, whereas more contemporary studies assess the significance and practices of town twinning against the backdrop of developmental aid, neoliberalism, sub-state diplomacy, and shifting geographies of globalization. As a result, town twinning as a historical and transnational phenomenon tends to be analyzed in separate episodes of time, without looking at the longer histories many of these partnerships have had. Grand geopolitical or economic shifts seem to have prompted a proliferation of bilateral exchanges between cities across Europe and the globe within a particular time span, which are then superseded by another ‘wave’ of town twinning with a different rationale. This reading, too, is manifest in the historical studies on East–West twinings in Europe.

What seems to be missing in general is an assessment of European twinning practices across time periods.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, we only have a limited understanding of how and why town twinning has developed in the long run, and what has prompted changes in its praxis. Engaging with long(er)-term (institutional) continuities and changes allows for a greater historical-conceptual understanding of town twinning in Europe, which transcends individual case histories and cuts across preconceived periods, that is: the first postwar decades of ‘association’ and ‘friendship’; the following period of reciprocity and exchange during the Cold War; and the commercial or neoliberal period, in which twinning was geared toward generating beneficial schemes for local businesses after 1989.<sup>4</sup>

Taking our cue from recent literature on particular twinned town arrangements that pre-date the fall of the Berlin Wall, this chapter will chart how East–West town twinning practices changed after 1989, against the backdrop of the emergence of neoliberal urbanism. We do not (a priori) accept a chronological typology from community-driven incentives of solidarity and friendship across the Iron Curtain to an ever more utilitarian mode of bilateralism under the aegis of neoliberalism. Rather, we present the multitude of coexisting trajectories of town twinning before and after 1989.

In order to understand how ‘1989’ affected East–West town twinning practices, we first need to give a brief account of the conceptual meanings, the historical development, and the main interpretative frameworks in the scholarship of town twinning in Europe. Then a short historical account on the development of East–West town twinning during the Cold War will be given, followed by an empirical analysis of how twinning arrangements developed after 1989. Finally, the conclusion will discuss how we might be able to explain the different coexisting trajectories of East–West town twinning, and why it is worthwhile to look into sub-state, transnational urbanism over a longer period of time to understand the effect of 1989 on local communities in the (former) East and the West.

### **Conceptualizing and historicizing town twinning in Europe**

In order to understand the development of town twinning between the East and the West, we need a concise conceptual and historical understanding of what town

twinning entailed in Cold War Europe. This section will offer this context by first presenting a conceptual outline of town twinning and then articulating the development of postwar European town twinning and the subsequent interpretative frameworks that scholarship has offered to understand its practices and aims.

Myriad activities and endeavors have been ranked under the generic header of town twinning. Consequently, scholarly definitions of the term range from very general to more case-specific ones, emphasizing still the ‘the multidimensional and varied character of the phenomenon.’<sup>5</sup> However, all seem to adhere to some minimum definition of town twinning, amounting to the notion of regular exchange between towns in different countries. Yet, the nature, medium, and means of the exchange might vary, ranging from grassroots cultural or social exchanges between citizens—financially and administratively supported by municipal authorities—to top-down utilitarian or functional cooperation in the realms of trade, public administration, or services. Andreas Langenohl proposes a functional two-tier definition that articulates, first, a relationship of exchange between cities, involving ‘municipal citizens, political representatives, and [...] stakeholders in other realms of society,’ but, second, also emphasizes the necessity of the ‘voluntary participation of citizens in such exchange.’<sup>6</sup> Geographically, two types of town twinning in Europe have recently been conceptualized, that is border towns ‘directly neighboring each other’ that share historical origins, and partnerships between more remote European cities.<sup>7</sup>

Town twinning within the postwar European framework is generally interpreted by historians as part of two distinct, yet often empirically overlapping, political and urban developments. First, town twinning is considered one of many consolidations of inter-municipal exchange geared toward circulating and sharing knowledge of and best practices in service delivery, administration, and the exploitation of urban utilities. Increasingly streamlined through international conferences, transnational organizations, and systemic exchanges of specific, technical knowledge through professional networks since the late nineteenth century, various intra-European town twinning projects added to this set of practices.<sup>8</sup>

Second, various studies see European town twinning as part of European integration narratives and practices, starting with Franco-German endeavors of intercity reconciliation during the interwar period. Also, some British towns connected with bombed-out French towns in the 1920s.<sup>9</sup> After World War II these interwar experiences sustained an emerging narrative of a ‘Locarno from below,’ offering an alternative to the failed, state-driven attempts to ameliorate Franco-German relations in 1925. This narrative epitomizes cities as key players in the postwar promotion of peace, friendship, and European unity, which still resonates in contemporary European integration discourse at large.<sup>10</sup> A prominent official of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) claims that ‘twinning is an essential part of the European project.’<sup>11</sup> A recent study, based on contemporary empirical analysis of intra-European twinning practices in the late twentieth century, affirms positive effects on European Union (EU) support through town twinning.<sup>12</sup>

Both interpretative frameworks of European town twinning, however, may be challenged by a third, more contemporary reading. Rather than being a vehicle for functional exchanges of urban knowledge and experience, or a promotor of the European project, town twinning became subject to, or was even a catalyst for, neoliberal urbanism following the fall of European communism.

Though the formal arrangements and rules of town twinning were, in essence, unaffected by the end of European communism, the goals, functions, and incentives of town twinning were in many cases increasingly informed by neoliberal, entrepreneurial logics, as will become clear in the next sections. Some months before the fall of the Berlin Wall, David Harvey had already conceptualized this as urban ‘entrepreneurialism,’ affecting the governance and political economy of late capitalist cities through public–private partnerships.<sup>13</sup>

This entrepreneurial turn has been at the heart of critical inquiries into the ‘neoliberalization’ of urban governance and society for the last three decades or so. The conceptual boundaries and studied geographies of urban entrepreneurialism have been stretched beyond initial understandings of how ‘Western cities’ or the ‘Global North’ have prioritized market-driven solutions to public problems, and recently scholars have begun to contextualize and differentiate varying—and sometimes contradictory—trajectories of neoliberal, entrepreneurial urban governance across the globe.<sup>14</sup> However, the intersection (and coincidence) of town twinning between Eastern and Western European cities, the end of European communism and the emergence of neoliberal, urban entrepreneurialism, and the ways in which they are interrelated, have not been articulated as such. Before the intersection of neoliberalism (or entrepreneurialism for that matter) and town twinning will be illustrated, we will first show how East–West town twinning schemes developed during the Cold War in Europe.

### **Town twinning in Cold War Europe**

The idea that transnational collaborations would promote European integration and collaboration—the ‘Locarno from below’ motive—was key to the emergence of intercity networks in the 1950s and 1960s, mostly in the guise of so-called ‘town twinning chains.’ These chains were initiated and promoted by the Council of European Municipalities (from 1984 onward, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions) and French–German endeavors.<sup>15</sup> This first wave of postwar town twinning centered primarily on re-establishing relationships between French, German, Italian, Dutch, and Belgian cities. Another pacifist platform, the *Monde Bilingue*, rendered twinning programs between British and French cities during the 1950s and established a few transatlantic connections too. In general, these initiatives were underpinned by a firm belief in the capacity of transborder connections between cities and local communities, though highly ceremonial and symbolic in nature, to promote European integration. Yet, competing twinning programs, inspired by diverging ideological and geographical aspirations, amounted to what Antoine Vion calls a ‘twinning war’ in the late 1950s, which, in essence, revolved around a juxtaposition between initiatives more open



to collaboration with communist cities in Eastern Europe and those expressing anti-communist sentiments and looking for partners within the West only.<sup>16</sup>

At least one twinning program between East and West preceded anti-communist and Cold War rhetoric and was established before geopolitical alliances became an impediment for doing so: the town twinning project between Coventry and Stalingrad (since 1961, Volgograd) was established in 1944, before the end of World War II.<sup>17</sup> The project was initiated by women's groups from Coventry who expressed sympathy for the devastated Russian city. The aim of reaching out to Stalingrad was to 'try and create relationships' between the two cities, which soon established them as symbols of solidarity between the East and the West.<sup>18</sup> The images of a war-wrecked city and memories of wartime destruction—Coventry was severely bombed in 1940, Stalingrad in late 1942—tied the local communities of these cities together, remaining dominant tropes running through the tale of the Coventry–Stalingrad/Volgograd twinning project throughout the second half of the twentieth century, according to one observer even during 'the darkest days of the cold war.'<sup>19</sup> Volgograd and Coventry have remained twinned to this day, including grand celebrations at their twinning anniversaries.<sup>20</sup>

During the 1950s, amidst fanning Cold War antagonism, a great number of British–Russian and French–Russian city pairings were established, again showing that (primarily Western) attempts were made by local authorities to open a non-political, civic dialogue with Soviet communities.<sup>21</sup> French communists played a big part in the proliferation of twinings between French and Soviet cities from 1957 onward, when they founded the *Fédération Mondiale des Villes Jumelées-Cités Unis*. On the Soviet side, an Association for Relations between Soviet and Foreign Cities was established to coordinate and stimulate twinning programs with 'peace supporters' in the West.<sup>22</sup>

In his focus on town twinning in Cold War Britain, primarily during the period between the end of World War II and the economic crisis of the mid-1970s, Nick Clark observes that East–West twinning projects were largely organized as exchange programs between students, workers, and sports clubs.<sup>23</sup> The programs' aim was to foster cooperation between Eastern and Western European cities that could survive disagreements between national governments and provide them with mutual security from totalitarian communism.<sup>24</sup>

In strong contrast to civic enthusiasm for town twinning, Western local authorities saw twinning projects with 'sister cities' from Eastern Europe as a threat of a possible penetration of communist influence through the exchange programs.<sup>25</sup> Vice versa, communist authorities remained reluctant to approve twinning schemes with Western cities, particularly in the German Democratic Republic (GDR).<sup>26</sup> Despite the perceived possibility of communist or capitalist penetration and espionage against the backdrop of the polar atmosphere of the Cold War, Clarke nevertheless identifies several continuities in town twinning during this period, such as desires on the part of local authority members and officers for 'peace, understanding, knowledge, know-how, and local welfare.'<sup>27</sup>

By the late 1980s, amidst the emerging détente between Gorbachev's Soviet Union and the West, town twinning within Western Europe consolidated as cities

developed local ‘foreign policies’ in the 1980s, primarily within the framework of umbrella organizations such as the CEMR.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, reluctance to perpetuate or establish twinning programs diminished on both sides of the Iron Curtain. The GDR allowed local authorities to engage in twinning activities, albeit heavily monitored, and existing town twinning schemes were substantiated with regular communal exchanges in the realm of education, sport, and culture.<sup>29</sup> In addition, the European Economic Community, urged by the CEMR, propelled new incentives for East–West town twinning a few months prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall, offering financial support to visiting and host cities alike.<sup>30</sup> As such, prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall, East–West town twinning practices took place in a more open and inviting atmosphere, which mainly revolved around an extended message of ‘Locarno from below’—generating mutual understanding and friendship at the civic level. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, new incentives, aspirations, and goals came to the fore.

### **Town twinning in Europe after 1989**

The fall of European communism and the dissolution of the Soviet Union obviously prompted considerations of whether and how existing twinning arrangements between Eastern and Western European cities should continue. The transition from communism to a new capitalist society proved troublesome in many Eastern European cities. Public authorities and local businesses and industries from Western cities supported various local aid programs in the domains of healthcare, education, and culture throughout the 1990s, while keeping a keen eye on investment opportunities for local businesses in the newly emerging markets, a clear expression of the emerging entrepreneurial outlook in urban governance.

In general, studies on the transformation of European town twinning after the fall of communism witness a shift from predominantly cultural, humanitarian, and civic undertakings to increasingly more functional, project-based, or potentially commercially beneficial exchanges, primarily incited by Western local authorities in the late 1990s and 2000s.<sup>31</sup> Other authors have witnessed a similar shift from an ‘associative phase,’ which is mainly about establishing friendship ties, to a ‘reciprocal phase,’ centering, for instance, on mutual exchanges between schools and cultural organizations, to, ultimately, a ‘commercial phase.’ This last phase implies the redirection of twinning programs by local authorities in favor of local businesses (importing and exporting consumer goods) and city branding for tourism, in line with the entrepreneurial turn in urban governance since the 1990s.<sup>32</sup>

Within the context of newly emerging markets in Central and Eastern Europe and the adaptation of former communist cities to liberal democracy and a Europeanizing and globalizing market economy, a great number of new East–West twin town arrangements were established. Particular impetus to advance and expand twinning activities between European cities previously divided by the Iron Curtain was given through the CEMR-organized conference in Poznan in 1993, and by an additional conference in the same city in the same year about Central European town twinning.<sup>33</sup> In general, the European Commission saw

town twinning as an important instrument to promote the idea of ‘Europe for citizens.’ These initiatives and attitudes rendered a new East–West ‘twinning boom,’ the second after the Western European one of the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>34</sup> Key to defining the role of municipalities within this twinning boom was an emerging notion of ‘municipal foreign policy,’ the idea that local communities and authorities had their own transnational sphere of trans-border exchange and dialogue alongside state-driven international relations.<sup>35</sup> Consequently, Western municipal actors, in close collaboration with local organized interests, rather than individual citizens or voluntary associations, increasingly invested in establishing a network of foreign partners, particularly in emerging markets in Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, as recent studies have shown, many cities in EU member states nowadays use twinning as a means to organize subnational influence in supranational policy-making.<sup>37</sup>

One might argue that this post-1989 town twinning boom is a clear effect of the coincidence of the end of European communism, the expansion of the EU, and the emergence of neoliberal urbanism and urban entrepreneurialism. Newly emerging markets, as will become clear below, were indeed an incentive for establishing new town twinning programs, but also for the redirection of existing ones. However, not all existing East–West town twinning practices were redirected in the same way or to the same extent, if at all. The ‘old’ motives of exchanging functional urban knowledge and experience, as well as fostering friendship and mutual understanding (‘Locarno from below’), in some cases remained central to town twinning practices. In the remainder of this analysis, we will present some of these diverging trajectories of East–West town twinning after 1989.

A substantial number of East–West twinned towns have witnessed a rather straightforward embrace of urban entrepreneurialism. The twinning project between Bristol (United Kingdom) and Tbilisi (Georgia) exemplifies this, showing the changing nature of town twinning in relation to the geopolitical changes resulting from the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Initiated in the late 1980s, the project began as a cultural program based on student exchanges and similar activities that supported cultural interaction between the citizens of the sister cities.<sup>38</sup> In 1991 Georgia gained independence, after which interaction between the two cities gradually declined as a civil war, ignited by interethnic conflicts, started in Georgia. In 1995, Tbilisi requested assistance with reconstruction from Bristol, following the Georgian Civil War.<sup>39</sup> Bristol responded positively: Georgia was viewed as an emerging state needing help to establish a functioning local government after the fall of the communist regime. Yet, this gesture of friendship was accompanied by a clear redirection of twinning goals. Bristol clearly articulated that assistance in the (physical) reconstruction of Tbilisi would go hand-in-hand with commercial opportunities and benefits for Bristol businesses, for instance with regard to the wine trade.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, Tbilisi, and Georgia in general, was framed as an exotic tourist destination that exhibited natural and cultural richness that Bristolians could visit and enjoy.<sup>41</sup> From an institutional change perspective, this example shows how twinning was initially geared toward establishing civic friendship ties, whereas the new post-civil war context in Georgia incited a clear

redirection toward more commercialized and entrepreneurial goals from both parties: Tbilisi being a gateway to an emerging market for Bristolian enterprise, Bristol being a gateway to attracting British tourists.

Siarhei Liubimau identifies similar trends in town twinning projects in Central and Eastern Europe, arguing that the transformation of political borders after 1989 presented an opportunity for populations to express their newly acquired autonomy—and agency for that matter.<sup>42</sup> Part of this autonomy was translated into a growing awareness about the roles of cities and municipalities in generating international trade and business.<sup>43</sup> Focusing on transborder cooperation between German and Polish cities during the 1990s, Liubimau demonstrates how twin cities Görlitz and Zgorzelec, until 1945 two united parts of one city, reconceptualized cultural events, such as the European Capital of Culture (ECC) designation in 2010, as instruments of promotion through which their local communities and enterprises could gain specific competitive advantages. In Liubimau's view, the cities perceived the cultural event and the possibility of acquiring the ECC status as an opportunity to gain economic growth, foster social modernization, build a common cultural identity, pacify existing cleavages, and promote the international image of their urban units.<sup>44</sup> As such, the ECC served as an attempt to enhance place-specific competitive advantages and transformed the already established bond between the sister cities into a tool for gaining economic and social benefits.<sup>45</sup> This is another example of how town twinning became infused with entrepreneurial outlooks after the fall of communism and the advancement of European integration.

Yet, not all examples of the entrepreneurial turn in twinning schemes show the same sort of positive, mutual enthusiasm. Another twinning example on the German–Polish border reveals a somewhat more ambiguous shift toward the commercialization of relationships. Ulf Matthiesen and Hans-Joachim Bürkne identify the German–Polish border as crucial for the interference between ‘the East’ and ‘the West.’<sup>46</sup> They define the newly shaped border area as a space where ‘different pathways of modernization and transformation directly bump into each other, implying different pathways of institutional capacity-building encounter each other in an unprecedented way.’<sup>47</sup> This collision of pathways has not been perceived in similar terms on both sides of the border. The example of the twinning project between Guben (Germany) and Gubin (Poland), basically a single urban area separated by the national border, shows exactly that. As curiosity and interest in establishing ‘a window to the West’ grew on the Polish side following the first rapprochement in the 1980s, citizens of Guben started to express fears about what increased mobility between the two towns could result in. German entrepreneurs, shopkeepers, and tradesmen believed that the intensification of post-Cold War relations between the two towns worked very much in favor of Polish interests, whereas local business interests were inadequately protected from economic threats from ‘the East’ by the local authorities.<sup>48</sup>

Another instance of the commercialization of town twinning practices comes to the fore in Ljubljana and its sister cities across Western and Eastern Europe. Before Slovenia's independence in 1991, Ljubljana had close connections with

capital cities of the constituent republics of Yugoslavia. Its status as a regional center also allowed Ljubljana to foster twinning and cooperation partnerships with foreign cities during the 1980s. Some of these twinning projects include partnerships with Bratislava (Slovakia), Parma and Pesaro (Italy), and Leverkusen and Wiesbaden (West Germany). These projects initially relied on intercultural exchange between the cities, based on Ljubljana's status as a regional center within Yugoslavia and the city's aspiration to 'internationalize.' Yet, the increased accessibility of Western partners during the process of Slovenia's accession to the European Union prompted Ljubljana to 'invest' more interest into its Western European partners. Ljubljana framed its sister-city networks as a means to advance cross-border regionalization, foreign trade, and tourism, with an emphasis on establishing a firmer connection with capital cities of EU Member States by the end of the 1990s.<sup>49</sup>

Against the backdrop of emerging entrepreneurial urbanism and, somewhat later, the eastbound expansion of the EU, these illustrations allow for interpreting the end of European communism as a critical juncture for East–West town twinning. Articulations of friendship, brotherhood, and civic rapprochement that spurred the genesis of town twinning before 1989 were superseded by new practices that stressed commercial possibilities for local enterprises. One important observation needs to be added to this though. All of these examples relate to East–West town twinning schemes that originated in the mid- or late-1980s, implying that the institutional genesis and the critical juncture of town twinning were not separated by long time spans. The lack of longevity, and thus of historically rooted practices, might explain why commercial incentives became predominant rather quickly.

Another trajectory of post-1989 town twinning presents a rather different picture and is far from exemplifying a conversion from 'Locarno from below' to 'entrepreneurialism.' For this trajectory it is hard to articulate '1989' as a critical juncture. The twinning program between Coventry and Volgograd (1944) proves insightful here. The mutual civic support of the mid-1940s, continued throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in the guise of cultural collaborations and exchanges. Even recently, as the relationship between Britain and Russia deteriorated, the twinned towns seemed to have reaffirmed their entanglement by exchanging symbolic gifts, producing a film documentary, and composing a 'twin song,' which was performed by the youth orchestras of both cities.<sup>50</sup> As such, the bond between the civic communities of Coventry and Volgograd remained at the heart of twinning activities, keeping geopolitical considerations, but also municipal entrepreneurialism largely out of the equation. Moreover, whereas other British cities cut off ties with Russian—and other—twinned cities for political and economic reasons, Coventry sought to perpetuate its interconnectedness with 'the citizens of Volgograd,' as Coventry's mayor stated in 2014.<sup>51</sup>

A similar continuity is visible in the town twinning project between Saint Petersburg (Russia) and Milan (Italy).<sup>52</sup> The project between Milan and Saint Petersburg (at that time Leningrad) started in 1967, and symbolically connected the two cities. The twinning project primarily included promotion and exchange

of knowledge in the spheres of visual arts, literature, and language learning. The period after 1989 witnessed an increased number of cultural events, such as joint exhibitions and film festivals, shared between the cities. On the whole, the project largely remained focused on cultural exchange, despite the new possibilities for entrepreneurial initiatives.<sup>53</sup>

In 2017 Manchester (UK) and Saint Petersburg celebrated the fifty-fifth anniversary of their city partnership. Established in 1962, Manchester's partnership with Saint Petersburg makes it the city's 'oldest formal city link.'<sup>54</sup> The relationship between the cities has been established with the aim of fostering 'civic, cultural, educational and scientific cooperation.'<sup>55</sup> As in the case of its partnership with Milan, the cultural dimension of the twinning project between Saint Petersburg and Manchester included joint organization between museums, student exchanges, and fostering friendship and solidarity within the postwar context. While the connection between the cities served as a 'channel' through which the British and Soviet governments could project humanity during the postwar years, the civic dimension of the twinning project remains at its base to the present day.<sup>56</sup>

These examples show how the emergence of urban entrepreneurialism after 1989 was not decisive for the development of all town twinning programs. Rather they show how institutional drift—the continuation of an institutional practice under changed circumstances—is an apt way to describe the post-1989 development of some town twinning practices. Saliently, all of the above examples involve partnerships that have deeper historical roots than the ones straightforwardly taking the entrepreneurial turn. It seems that these older twinning schemes have been more conducive to perpetuating customs and traditions in the vein of the 'Locarno from below' motive.

Yet, some instances of town twinning are at odds with explaining the continuity or change in town twinning practices after 1989 along the lines of the duration of their existence. The twinning program between the Dutch university town of Groningen and the maritime city of Murmansk in Russia, for example, illustrates how civic relations remained relevant amidst a parallel shift toward entrepreneurial twinning activities. Initiated by a local peace movement, and amplified by Groningen's local authorities and the university, Dutch delegations succeeded in convincing (local) Soviet leaders to engage in a twinning program in the late 1980s. Due to internal struggles in the Dutch twinning organization, exchanges were mostly initiated by the University of Groningen at first. From the mid-1990s onward, a number of exchanges between schools and cultural associations, aid programs (from the side of Groningen), and visits were arranged, coordinated by a local office in Murmansk and a Dutch foundation, both sponsored by the Dutch municipality of Groningen. However, formal contacts between officials from both sides remained very limited; twinning was a civic undertaking involving local voluntary associations well into the twenty-first century.<sup>57</sup> However, the last decade has witnessed a clear addition to the regular cultural and social activities between both communities.<sup>58</sup> Local Dutch investors and businessmen, supported by municipal officials, started looking into investment opportunities in



Murmansk. Two seemingly separate sets of practices have since developed within the twinning program: one still entailing exchanges geared toward the promotion of human rights, education, cultural life, and health; and one that centers on internationalizing local trade and business (particularly from the Dutch side) by means of public-private partnerships. The latter exchanges have recently focused on transport, sustainable energy production, chemical industry, dredging work, and tourism.<sup>59</sup>

As this twinning program originates from the late 1980s, it is still possible to see how '1989' was a critical juncture, in the sense that in its formative stage the civic-cultural practices gradually bifurcated into two almost distinct sets of practices within the same hybrid, collaborative scheme. As such, the 'Locarno from below'-infused activities were not superseded by entrepreneurial ones, but rather two coexisting trajectories, making use of the same institutional framework and rules, developed after 1989.

However, another example of post-1989 change, involving a twinning program that was founded in the early 1960s, reveals how not all 'older' schemes were highly path-dependent. What started off as one of many friendship projects between East and West in 1961 between Brno (Czech Republic) and Rennes (France), transformed into a shared, cross-border environmental policy (e.g. communal waste reduction and the handling of biodegradable waste) initiated by local authorities and local businesses in the last two decades.<sup>60</sup> Here 'policy learning,' as was key to the inter-municipal, functional exchanges in Europe since the late nineteenth century, has amounted to policy co-creation, a process in which exchange of knowledge, experience, and skills has resulted in a shared, cross-border urban policy. This might be seen as an effect of '1989' and the opening up—and ultimately removal—of intra-European borders, thus allowing for interpreting the end of communism as a critical juncture that changed many, but not all, pathways of town twinning.

## **Conclusion**

Recent studies have attested to the variety of connections and entanglements that existed across the Iron Curtain throughout the Cold War.<sup>61</sup> One channel through which ideological or political cleavages were transcended—or circumvented—was shaped by bilateral contacts between towns and cities on both sides of the virtual, political, and sometimes physical divide.<sup>62</sup> East-West town twinning schemes were at the very heart of those contacts.

The fall of European communism and the concomitant opening up of borders and a shared European market put town twinning, as a practice of transnational collaboration between local communities, in a different light, also taking into account the proliferation of urban entrepreneurialism, meaning the emergence of an international, market-oriented attitude in urban governance, local economies, and urban policy-making in general. Yet, these changed circumstances under which East-West town twinning operated, did not result in the convergence of town twinning to a single 'entrepreneurial' practice under the aegis of neoliberal



urbanism. Whereas many town twinning schemes were redirected and commercialized after '1989,' others remained essentially unchanged or turned into functional, policy-driven, or hybrid variants.

Looking at our examples, a phasing typology (e.g. from associative, to reciprocative, to commercial) in the development of town twinning in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries is thus problematic in capturing the change in East–West twinings in Europe altogether. This implies that a linear postwar narrative that starts with Cold War sub-state solidarity and friendship, and culminates in post-1989 neoliberal entrepreneurialism is too simplistic and reifying. The dual narrative that has underpinned postwar European town twinning since its inception (i.e. functional exchange of knowledge and fostering friendship ties *à la* 'Locarno from below') may continue to be recognized in many instances.

If we want to explain how '1989' produced diverging trajectories of East–West town twinning, a few observations may be made. Exceptions noted, town twinning programs that started in the 25 years after 1944 on the basis of mutual friendship, solidarity, and rapprochement ('Locarno from below'), and that have endured Cold War antagonisms, seem less likely to become 'commercialized' town twinning schemes. They are best described by institutional drift: the practices, customs, and rules remain largely unaffected by the new circumstances after 1989. In contrast, and still taking into account hybrid variants (e.g. Groningen–Murmansk, Brno–Rennes), twinning schemes that started during the era of Cold War thaw and *glasnost* in the 1980s, show a remarkable institutional conversion. Here the 'Locarno from below' motive is at best a subtext for fostering mutual business and commercial opportunities after 1989. Twinning arrangements increasingly involved expectations of economic reciprocity and benefit that were inconceivable before the fall of communism in Europe. Existing town twinning frameworks, most notably—and predominantly—in Western twin cities, were redeployed to foster economic opportunities for local stakeholders. Institutional change in these cases amounts to conversion; the initial goals, effects, and incentives of twinning were transformed under the aegis of urban entrepreneurialism in Europe.

However, some reservation needs to be made in pointing to these different trajectories of postwar East–West town twinning and the related historical-institutionalist explanations. Empirical evidence shows that 'Locarno from below' and 'entrepreneurialism' are not mutually exclusive in post-1989 town twinning practices. More in-depth archival and empirical research might reveal that these and other motives have been constitutive throughout the post-1989 decades, although very limitedly in some cases. Follow-up research needs to inquire into the conditions, contexts, and circumstances under which East–West town twinning practices and experiences have been affected by 1989. Studying the impact of the fall of European communism and the emergence of neoliberal logic in public administration and political economy through the lens of intercity collaborations is imperative to understand how and why 1989 created a new European landscape of interconnected local communities and actors.

## Notes

- 1 Pfundheller, *Städtepartnerschaften*.
- 2 The data excludes Russia. [www.twinning.org/uploads/assets/news/Number%20of%20twinning%20in%20Europe%20in%202010.pdf](http://www.twinning.org/uploads/assets/news/Number%20of%20twinning%20in%20Europe%20in%202010.pdf) (accessed June 30, 2017).
- 3 One study presents a longer-term perspective on German and British twinning projects that do not encapsulate East–West entanglements: Grosspietsch, ‘More than Food.’
- 4 Grosspietsch, ‘More than Food,’ 1290–1291.
- 5 Jańczak, ‘Town Twinning,’ 490.
- 6 Langenohl, ‘The Merits,’ 558.
- 7 Joenniemi and Jańczak, ‘Theorizing.’
- 8 See, among others: Saunier, ‘Taking Up’; Saunier, ‘Sketches’; Saunier, ‘Changing’; Saunier and Ewen, *Another Global City*; Hietala, *Services*; Gaspari, ‘Cities against States?’; Couperus, ‘Research in Urban History.’
- 9 Gildart and Howell, *Dictionary*, 78.
- 10 On this see: Langenohl, *Town Twinning*, 14–34.
- 11 Grosspietsch, ‘More than Food,’ 1295.
- 12 Tausendpfund and Schäfer, ‘Town Twinning.’
- 13 Harvey, ‘From Managerialism,’ 6.
- 14 Peck et al., ‘Neoliberal Urbanism Redux?’
- 15 Vion, ‘Europe from the Bottom Up’; Zelinsky, ‘The Twinning of the World.’
- 16 Vion, ‘Europe from the Bottom Up,’ 637.
- 17 Richardson, *Twentieth-Century Coventry*, 325; Gould and Gould, *Coventry*, 122; Baker, ‘A Tale of Two Cities.’
- 18 Gould and Gould, *Coventry*, 122.
- 19 Richardson, *Twentieth-Century Coventry*, 325.
- 20 Goebel, ‘Commemorative Cosmopolis.’
- 21 Oudenaren, *Detente in Europe*, 292.
- 22 Oudenaren, *Detente in Europe*, 292.
- 23 Clarke, ‘Town Twinning in Cold-War Britain.’
- 24 Clarke, ‘Town Twinning in Cold-War Britain,’ 175.
- 25 Clarke, ‘Town Twinning in Cold-War Britain,’ 180.
- 26 Herrschel and Newman, *Cities as International Actors*, 138.
- 27 Clarke, ‘Town Twinning in Cold-War Britain,’ 187.
- 28 Grosspietsch, ‘More than Food,’ 1288.
- 29 Herrschel and Newman, *Cities as International Actors*, 138.
- 30 Sadioglu and Dede, *Theoretical Foundations*, 92.
- 31 Kern, ‘Transnationale Städtenetzwerke,’ 107.
- 32 Grosspietsch, ‘More than Food,’ 1290–1291. Also see: O’Toole, *Sister Cities in Australia*; Cremer, De Bruin, and Dupuis, ‘International Sister-Cities’; Jayne et al., ‘Twin Cities.’
- 33 Council of Europe, *Congress of Local*.
- 34 Grosspietsch, ‘More than Food,’ 1287.
- 35 This wide idea of international relations was promoted in international relations (IR) theory of the early 1970s. See for instance: Keohane and Nye, Jr., ‘Transnational Relations.’
- 36 The data excludes Russia. [www.twinning.org/uploads/assets/news/Number%20of%20twinning%20in%20Europe%20in%202010.pdf](http://www.twinning.org/uploads/assets/news/Number%20of%20twinning%20in%20Europe%20in%202010.pdf) (accessed June 30, 2017).
- 37 Payre, ‘The Importance of Being Connected’; Kern and Bulkeley, ‘Cities, Europeanization.’
- 38 Clarke, ‘In What Sense “Spaces of Neoliberalism”?’
- 39 Clarke, ‘Globalising Care?’ 123.
- 40 Clarke, ‘Globalising Care?’ 123.
- 41 Clarke, ‘In What Sense “Spaces of Neoliberalism”?’ 504.

- 42 Liubimau, 'Place-Promotion.'
- 43 Liubimau, 'Place-Promotion,' 216, 224.
- 44 Liubimau, 'Place-Promotion,' 223.
- 45 Liubimau, 'Place-Promotion,' 225.
- 46 Ulf Matthiesen and Hans-Joachim Bürkner, 'Antagonistic Structures in Border Areas: Local Milieux and Local Politics in the Polish-German Twin City Gubin/Guben,' *GeoJournal* 54, no. 1 (2001): 43–50.
- 47 Matthiesen and Bürkner, 'Antagonistic Structures,' 43.
- 48 Matthiesen and Bürkner, 'Antagonistic Structures,' 48.
- 49 Pichler-Milanović, 'Ljubljana,' 337–338.
- 50 Danks, 'I Love Volgograd.'
- 51 *Coventry Telegraph*, January 13, 2014.
- 52 The project was suspended in 2012, on the initiative of Milan, due to the anti-homosexual rhetoric of the Russian government.
- 53 Nikolaeva, 'Kul'turnye svjazi Sankt-Peterburga i Italii.'
- 54 'Manchester Sends Sympathies to Sister City Saint Petersburg after Terror Attack,' Manchester City Council, April 4, 2017, [www.manchester.gov.uk/news/article/7656/manchester\\_sends\\_sympathies\\_to\\_sister\\_city\\_st\\_petersburg\\_after\\_terror\\_attack](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/news/article/7656/manchester_sends_sympathies_to_sister_city_st_petersburg_after_terror_attack) (accessed on June 30, 2018).
- 55 Danks, 'Manchester and Leningrad,' 233.
- 56 Danks, 'Manchester and Leningrad,' 234.
- 57 Feiken et al., *10 jaar stedenband*, 87.
- 58 Despite this, there is a salient continuity of the 'friendship' discourse in the annual reports of the Groningen–Murmansk partnership, despite recent restrictions imposed on the twinning activities by the central Russian government. Cf. *Jaarverslag Stedenband Groningen Murmansk*, 2017; n.n. 15 Jaar Stedenband Groningen–Moermansk (Groningen: 2004); Feiken et al., *10 jaar stedenband*.
- 59 [www.groningenmoermansk.nl/nl/projects.html](http://www.groningenmoermansk.nl/nl/projects.html) (accessed on June 30, 2018).
- 60 Hůlková et al., *Current Trends*, 32; Vion, 'Jumelages européens.'
- 61 For a recent inquiry and overview see Mikkonen and Koivunen, *Beyond the Divide*.
- 62 Mikkonen and Koivunen, *Beyond the Divide*, 197.

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## **Part III**

# **Remaking Europe after 1989**



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## 9 The pitfalls of Western triumphalism

*Federico Romero*

As 1989 fades into history, its legacies appear less glorious than we anticipated, surely less auspicious than we—ever so prone to imprudent wishful thinking—had assumed. The enduring consequences of a major economic crisis feed widespread popular discontent. Together with the increasing fracturing of Europe along multiple fault lines, they nurture a ubiquitous sense of insecurity. This complex societal malaise obviously recasts the promises of 1989 under a far less rosy light.

These current predicaments would be more than enough reason for a serious analytical reconsideration, in spite of the deeply ingrained sanctification of that eventful year in our institutional and public memory. The group of historians who gathered for this book, though, has an even more pertinent and scholarly minded purpose for revisiting 1989. They might be inspired by current uncertainties and anxieties. Yet, their agenda is far more solidly shaped by historical questions that for too long a time were not raised. The Cold War ‘victory narrative’ of Western triumph naturalized a discourse of European liberation and unification that does not really withstand serious historical scrutiny. Yet, historians have just started exploring the continent’s most recent history, questioning its mythologies, and reconceptualizing our analytical categories.<sup>1</sup>

As Eleni Braat and Pepijn Corduwener argue in their introduction, ‘1989 and the West: revisiting the Cold War victory narrative,’ Europe was not so much unified as incorporated in pre-existing Western structures—literally so in the case of Germany. It was also defined by the specific understanding of liberal democracy that had been constructed by, and for, the Cold War Western ideology. Most evidently, its economy was reshaped by the market doctrines the West had embraced as its defining feature in the 1980s.

Philipp Ther’s exploration of economic and social history over the last 30 years revolves around the intriguing notion of ‘co-transformation,’ as he traces the ways in which the neoliberal remoulding of Central and Eastern Europe came back to haunt, if not to shape, this century’s transformations in Germany and especially in Southern Europe.<sup>2</sup> Here, instead, the focus is on the first, powerful wave of change that engulfed Central and Eastern Europe in the 1990s. Within that time-frame, *Westernized* looks to be perhaps a more appropriate term than *unified* for the Europe that was built in the aftermath of 1989.

The critical perspective outlined by this volume's editors opens up highly promising paths of inquiry that the chapters in this book pursue in various guises. The following three chapters in this section deal in particular—though not exclusively—with the role the European Community/European Union (EC/EU) had in those transformations, particularly the ways in which they projected a distinctly Western set of institutions, practices, norms, and ideas in post-1989 Europe and beyond.

Two of the chapters—Cristina Blanco Sío-López's 'The Future that Once Was' (Chapter 10) and Laurien Crump's 'A Missed Opportunity for a New Europe?' (Chapter 11)—openly argue that alternative options that were discarded, or not even considered, might have produced better results. The notion of a missed opportunity is an ambivalent and very tricky one. The historian (or any other analyst, for that matter) cannot really assess all the variables that would eventually have come into play had a different path been chosen at the beginning. Nor can they presume that the alternative path would have smoothly developed in the guise its champions envisioned from the start. And yet, reasoning about missed opportunities can be extremely useful. As a rhetorical device and a mental exercise, it avoids (and exposes) the inevitability trap. It illuminates context and conditions. Above all, it provides insights on the assumptions that channelled and eventually prompted actual decisions.

Laurien Crump's chapter does so most effectively (see Chapter 11). She contrasts the eastward expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the EU, i.e. the combined Western formula for the new European order, with the seemingly more 'logical development' of a shared solution, a negotiated, comprehensive pan-European security system. She contends that 'the end of the Cold War retrospectively offered a window of opportunity through "a common European home," embodied by the [Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe] CSCE, which was shut in the face of Russia.'<sup>3</sup> The predictable, lamentable result was the marginalization of a resentful Russia rather than its integration in an inclusive Europe, the deep division of the continent, and the ensuing hostile confrontation in Ukraine and several other testing grounds.

Crump aptly starts her story with the origins and early development of the CSCE. Usually studied (and celebrated) as a springboard for human rights struggles inside the Soviet bloc, it actually originated as a proposal by the Soviets and their allies in order to bridge the East–West divide, include the neutrals, and build a pan-European security framework. It was the original imprint and chosen structure for Gorbachev's *common European home*, his formula for a 'pan-European architecture to transcend the Iron Curtain' and usher in post-Cold War interdependence.<sup>4</sup> In the hectic atmosphere of 1989–1990, the notion of a continental association, comprising (and eventually superseding) the two alliances and the non-aligned, inhabited the still fluid post-Cold War visions not only of Gorbachev but of several European leaders—most especially François Mitterrand, but also Václav Havel, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, and Margaret Thatcher—who were trying to imagine a reunited Germany in new scenarios of continental balance and cooperation.

This prospect, though, was rapidly made moot. As the socialist regimes crumbled, Helmut Kohl seized the initiative with his unification plan that, by incorporating East Germany in the Federal Republic, set a template for the larger, future shape of a Europe unified in, and by, Western institutions. In March 1990, East German voters endorsed this approach, making it irreversible. And the United States stepped in with an unequivocal, decisive choice for the centrality of NATO in post-Cold War Europe. ‘We prevailed, they didn’t,’ stated president George H. W. Bush with the unabashed conceit of the victor who frames the contours of the peace to come on foundations defined by the previous conflict’s battle lines.<sup>5</sup>

Crump then discusses the no less crucial influence of the EC’s successful thrust to establish itself as *the* institution that defines and organizes Europe, by means of its Single Market and monetary unification projects, its own transformation in a European Union and, above all, its policy of eastward expansion by means of associating the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and, eventually, incorporating them in the EU. Moving almost in tandem with NATO expansion, this massive enlargement of the EU elbowed the CSCE (now institutionalized in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) out to the rarefied function of a diplomatic forum, or to a purely technical role. In spite of the admonishments of all those who warned of the risks inherent in an estranged Russia pushed out to the margins—among them the very architect of containment, George F. Kennan—the Europe that came into being at the turn of the century owed its shape to a logic of anti-Russian containment far more than to visions of cooperation. That such logic actually performed as a self-fulfilling prophecy has in the meantime become sadly undeniable.<sup>6</sup>

Crump had to compress a complex story into a short chapter. Thus, some nuances are missing and a few corners are abruptly cut. The utter collapse of the structures that should have buttressed one side of the envisioned pan-European cooperative order is, in my opinion, overlooked. With the Warsaw Pact disbanded and the Soviet Union disintegrated, any semblance of symmetry was gone, leaving a profound void that the champions of a Western solution would all too easily occupy. And this in part derived from the firm desire by the new governments of Central and Eastern Europe to escape any post-Soviet space, to join the institutions that defined the West, and to draw a firm line of separation between themselves and Russia. If they did not have direct agency at the macro level of geostrategic diplomacy, as Crump rightly maintains, they certainly had the power—by means of their resolute applications—to force the EU and NATO to a stark choice. Either incorporate them or let them drift in a space of risky uncertainty. The latter was an option few were prepared to consider, especially in view of the West’s utter failure at preventing, or at least containing, the conflicts in former Yugoslavia.

The question, then, is, was there really a ‘window of opportunity’? Not one as wide and promising as Crump implies, in my view. At the very least because those in the West who were open to more balanced and collaborative solutions soon found themselves without the necessary interlocutors, and therefore gave way to the expansionists who preferred a rejected and isolated Russia to an engaged one.

The making of post-1989 Europe was, in other words, a more drawn-out process, which was not finally settled until the late-1990s decision for NATO expansion, and we still miss too many pieces of that puzzle to reach well-rounded, balanced conclusions.

Yet, Crump's thought-provoking chapter goes a long way in illuminating that process, highlighting its early turning points and questioning some of its key premises. In particular she brings to the foreground the triumphalist assumptions Western institutions and politicians carried over from the 1980s, only to see them further magnified by the peculiar circumstances of 1989. The United States, and not a few Europeans, had already framed Gorbachev's early openings as a result of NATO's unwavering strength. They would read the events of 1989–1990 as mere confirmation that the determining factor that brought the Cold War to an end had been Western unity and resolve, thus projecting it almost automatically as the defining factor for the order to come. The EC, meanwhile, was permeated by the notion that its enlargement provided the most effective foreign policy tool, the key pillar to sustain its ambition to represent, to *be*, the whole of Europe, particularly as its ongoing internal remaking—with the Single Market and the monetary union plan—seemed to project it towards an ambitious global role.

This is also the starting point of Cristina Blanco Sío-López's chapter, 'The Future that Once Was' (Chapter 10). She uses interviews with some of the main EU officials that had been tasked with planning and negotiating association, and then access, by the Central and Eastern European countries. In this way, she traces the arc of expectations (better seen retrospectively as delusions) that eventually turned into enlargement fatigue if not outright disillusion. Pressured by the Central and Eastern European Countries themselves, that obviously insisted on access, and by the fear of a backlash leading to the sort of frightening destabilization observed in former Yugoslavia, between 1992 and 1994 the EU opted for the enlargement goal along a predetermined path marked by strict conditionality criteria. It might be, as Philip Ther argues, that the ensuing massive EU spending in candidate countries actually helped bridge regional divides, temper neoliberal harshness, contain inequality, and provide infrastructure that helped attract foreign direct investments (FDIs).<sup>7</sup> Cristina Blanco Sío-López does not delve into these policy areas, nor into an assessment of their effectiveness. She dwells instead on the 'discursive wall,' the entire process erected between EU institutions and citizens.<sup>8</sup> Her argument revolves on the technocratic thrust and character of the process, which marginalized issues of representation and solidarity, did not balance out the transitional sacrifices with a shared sense of democratic participation, and ultimately opened a path to the current disillusionment with integration as such. Instead of addressing the democratic deficit, EU enlargement choices actually reproduced it at a new expanded level, as the long-drawn-out process of accession consumed much of the initial optimism and confidence. Expanding the Union, she argues, actually eroded the very concept of community it was supposed to sustain and enhance.

In Chapter 12, 'The Reluctant Soft Power,' Frank Gerits relocates us to Africa, here seen as the ground on which to assess the EC's hesitant efforts at deploying

soft power for the sake of the promotion of democracy. The chapter reconstructs the various stages of the EC's African policies and the EC's self-representation from the 1970s to the 1990s. Trade and aid policy considerations intersect with analytical concerns for the best development strategies, but also with half-hearted desires to exercise a normative role for the growth of democratic institutions and practices in the African countries. Gerits connects the EC's reluctance to actively promote democracy, even in the heady aftermath of 1989, with its 'fear of acquiring an interventionist reputation,'<sup>9</sup> obviously rooted in the colonialist past and Cold War interventionist politics. Yet the chapter foregrounds the 1980s shift to structural adjustment programs, with a focus on market efficiency and private finance, and notes the EC officials' growing scepticism on the 'Africans' ability to adapt.'<sup>10</sup> It was their increasing pessimism on their interlocutors' response to European (and Western) policies that undermined any putative desire for an active European normative role. One wonders, though, if the 1980s choices did not operate at an even more basic level. The harsh structural adjustment programs implied, after all, that African countries needed discipline more than help, rules more than example. Was this not also a symptom of a diminishing interest connected to the abating of broad Cold War fears? Gerits concludes that, in the 1990s, 'African democracy was not a key interest for the Community.' Had this not always been the case?

Thus, these chapters show—in different but connected ways—how the notion that the post-Cold War peace was to be shaped by the same tools and dynamics that had allegedly 'won' the Cold War operated as the central, if shortsighted, compass that guided Western leaders and institutions throughout the 1990s.

## Notes

- 1 See in particular Ther, *Europe since 1989*; also Stone, *Goodbye to All That?*
- 2 Ther, *Europe since 1989*.
- 3 Crump, 'A Missed Opportunity for a New Europe?' p. 188–206.
- 4 Crump, 'A Missed Opportunity for a New Europe?' p. 188–206.
- 5 Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 253.
- 6 Odd Arne Westad also emphasizes, in his recent book *The Cold War: A World History*, how the Western marginalization of Russia constituted a major, eventful mishandling of the post-Cold War possibilities for a more balanced and cooperative order.
- 7 Ther, *Europe since 1989*, 144–160.
- 8 Cristina Blanco Sío-López's chapter, 'The Future that Once Was,' p. 169–187.
- 9 Frank Gerits, 'The Reluctant Soft Power,' p. 207–227.
- 10 Frank Gerits, 'The Reluctant Soft Power,' p. 207–227.

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## 10 The future that once was 1989, the EU's eastward enlargement, and democracy's missed chances

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The way the European Community (EC) institutions approached and tackled the radical post-Cold War changes of the 1990s was at the root of a lingering 'democratic deficit,' the amplified effects of which we still experience today. In European integration terms, a 'democratic deficit' entails a systemic lack of democratic legitimacy and accountability on behalf of the EC institutions (the European Union (EU) from 1993). This chapter particularly examines how the chosen specific modalities for an eventual EC eastward enlargement had an impact in the generation of such deficit. I posit that the end of the Cold War represented a missed chance for the consolidation of an East–West integrated and increasingly deepened quality of democracy, especially taking into account the European Commission's investments and efforts, but also the investments and efforts of the overall institutional structure of the EU. First of all, this chapter will study the roads not taken concerning the EU's decision about eastward enlargement and their long-lasting influence on the unfolding of phenomena such as 'enlargement fatigue' and 'integration fatigue,' which developed in parallel to the EU's democratic deficit.<sup>1</sup> Second, it will address the 'EU Communication Strategy on Enlargement' and the ensuing 'discursive wall' that arose between EU citizens and institutions, analyzing such cleavage as a key root cause of the indicated democratic deficit.

This chapter will emphasize the notorious semantic charge of EU communication strategies, the power and influence of which was no less significant than hard power identity-building and boundary-making devices. I will focus on processes in which the European Commission configured and selected particularly charged discursive utterances relating to ways of interpreting a radically changing reality. These narratives were coupled with very specific methods of diffusing meanings of '1989' to reconnect with citizens and to gain their approval to move forward with the EU's eastward enlargement process. Indeed, this management of public perception for outreach and political legitimization purposes via the 'EU's Communication Strategy on Enlargement' acted increasingly as a metaphorical wall between citizens and institutions.<sup>2</sup> This communicative barrier mitigated citizens' engagement with the so-called 'reunification of Europe' after the 1989 turning point. I postulate that this was a lost opportunity to overcome the EU's democratic deficit and to actually implement the EU's full commitment to the

principles of solidarity, cohesion, and peace. In addition, this barrier was accentuated via the Commission instilling of artificial time perceptions in its communication strategy on enlargement (e.g. explaining the ‘big bang’ enlargement of 2004 with the contextual sentiments of ‘a new beginning’ taken from 1989), which contributed to further distancing EU citizens and institutions beyond the fundamental cleavage of a democratic deficit.

The EU’s eastward enlargement process constituted a fundamental historical turning point and a geopolitical game changer in the European integration process. Certainly, this EU policy directly touches upon the key issue of the ‘final frontiers’ of the European integration process. In this respect, it offers insights about the evolving historical meanings of key concepts such as Community membership and the memory of belonging to a common polity. Enlargement policy was also a catalyst of structural change in the post-1989 period; it triggered new configurations of power balance within the European Community and EU institutions, new bargaining cooperation schemes, and new agenda-setting priorities, including a willing redress of neighborhood policy orientations toward dialogue, diplomacy, and positive cross-border socioeconomic interdependences. These were the opportunities in 1989. However, the present offers a picture dominated by instrumental frontiers of inclusion and exclusion: a proliferation of backsliding phenomena in the east of the continent, and the co-option of democratic principles to disrupt the so-called ‘European social model’ in the West.<sup>3</sup> For this reason, this case study of the EU’s eastward enlargement policy helps to shed light on an East–West conversation that the policy-making actors of the time neglected to unfold, and that damaged changing and creatively diverse proposals for democratic political culture coming from both sides of the continent.

In the initial period between 1989 and 1993, two approaches to an eventual Community accession of the Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs) dominated the debate within the European Commission: working on the prospect of an enlargement toward the CEECs versus providing a mere association agreement to candidate countries. From 1994 onward, the CEECs’ new political elites would repeatedly announce that they had been imprisoned in a ‘perpetual waiting room’ due to the long process of EU accession negotiations. Later, between 2001 and 2004, the choice of technocratic perspectives over political dialogue would imprint an indelible mark on public perception and opinion on European integration. It entailed an increasing sense of stagnation and an unclear vision for a common future.

In this regard, this chapter will also tackle issues of institutional self-containment and reassertion on behalf of the European Commission in relation to the inception of a long-standing cleavage: namely the ‘accession’ vs. ‘association’ dilemma in EU enlargement policy, which was especially salient in the period 1989–93. This dichotomy was based on the existence of two intra-institutional schools of thought: one that considered the CEECs’ accession as politically and economically risky and therefore non-advisable, and another one that purported that enlargement was the only long-term solution for pan-European political stability and further socioeconomic development.

In 2004, EU enlargement policy seemed to have reached a structural overload in terms of the effectiveness of its policy procedure, which was mainly based on elements of monitoring and conditionality. As a matter of fact, the limits of its operability as set by the relevant EU institutions (in this case, the European Commission DG1A in the early nineties, and the DG Enlargement from 1999) could be explained by the fact that this policy procedure constituted a too narrow response to the former inner contradictions of a Cold War, bipolar geopolitical paradigm within the continent, without taking into account new, binding, global power structures and interconnections in the post-Cold War era. More particularly, the scheme based on finding a post-Cold War placement for former Soviet satellites in the CEECs progressively ran out of compelling energy when other complex issues came into place, such as the enlargement toward Cyprus (implying a complex policy dialogue with Turkey as a candidate country), or the abandonment of the EU enlargement option for Ukraine (related to increasing difficulties in the policy dialogue with post-Soviet Russia). Since the early nineties, the foreign policy role of the European Commission became central due to the coordination of aid to the CEECs (e.g. PHARE, one of the three pre-accession instruments financed by the European Union to assist the applicant countries of Central and Eastern Europe in their preparations for joining the European Union), the trouble-free reunification of Germany, the automatic EC integration of Germany, and the negotiation of the Community's accession agreements with the CEECs. In this sense, the *supranational* boost given to the Commission by the direct mandate of the Community member states in 1989 was centered on the functions of verifying compliance with the requirements of conditionality through a series of new instruments (regular reports, monitoring, screening, etc.).<sup>4</sup> This would also imply a need to follow more closely the internal evolution of applicant states. Such closer monitoring was also explained by the heterogeneity of candidate countries' profiles signing the Europe Agreements in the nineties. Despite an initial reluctance to the CEECs' post-1989 applications for EU membership, these were eventually carried forward because of the following interrelated factors: the EU's need to legitimize its public international reputation with a positive reversal of image after the war in former Yugoslavia;<sup>5</sup> and the EU's willingness to stabilize relations with Russia, both during the delicate troop-removal operations in the Baltic States in 1994,<sup>6</sup> and later on, amid the deep Russian economic crisis of 1998,<sup>7</sup> which was contemporary to the outbreak of the Kosovo conflict.

In this context, the Commission was seeking to adapt its communication strategy toward its citizens in order to remain legitimate and accountable in its enlargement policy-making. Pat Cox, the former president of the European Parliament, even considered that communicating enlargement to the citizenry was 'the last brick of the Berlin Wall.'<sup>8</sup> As the Commission was in charge of formulating the main messages on the enlargement process, this constituted a power of ample dimensions that ran in parallel to its new and unprecedented foreign relations influence, thus also accelerating the post-1989 path of change from a supranational perspective.

The main primary sources for this study come from the Historical Archives of the European Union and the Archives of the DG Enlargement of the European Commission. Other relevant sources include a set of personally authored oral history interviews with key decision-makers at the European institutions (e.g. former presidents of the European Parliament and former DG Enlargement directors) on the risks, opportunities, and conclusions concerning the EU's eastward enlargement process in the nineties.<sup>9</sup> From a methodological point of view, oral history interviews entail an inherent difficulty to transmit the insights and implications of a given historical event because of their subjective nature, which is more prominent than in other source types. However, it is the inclusive function of this particular medium that offers unparalleled insights for the analyzed case. I made use of two different types of oral history interviews for this contribution: open-ended interviews, which consist of asking a key respondent about their insights about certain events and ideas and using such propositions as a basis for further enquiry, and focused interviews, which follow the same set of questions in all interviews to be able to compare the results afterward, departing from the same parameters. In the focused interview all the questions should be carefully worded so that the interviewer appears genuinely naïve about the topic to allow the respondent to provide a fresh commentary about it.<sup>10</sup> In both cases, I will compare oral history interviews with written sources of corroboratory evidence.

As well as the most authoritative figures, the oral sources referenced in this piece also include alternative voices, such as middle management officials and advisors, to widen the perimeter of knowledge on these specific areas within the European integration process.<sup>11</sup> A number of respondents agreed to share their testimonies, but requested anonymity due to the very recent nature of the events.

### **‘The time of a great illusion’?<sup>12</sup> The impact of 1989 on the enlargement option for the future of the Community**

The 2004 ‘big bang’ EU enlargement was a direct consequence of 1989. It resulted in an increase in the diversity and complexity of EU membership as it brought in states from Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe. This historical process has been increasingly viewed as an integral part of the Union's development and heralded by its key players as the EU's most successful foreign policy tool in establishing stability in its neighborhood. However, its missed chances would result in what we now refer to as a degradation of the quality of democracy. This lack of attention to these unfolding democratic aspects of the EU's eastward enlargement process, originating in the early 1990s, would have a remarkable influence on the way the four freedoms were applied, as well as on the evolution of the ‘Single Market,’ upcoming enlargement processes, the Economic and Monetary Union, and the Constitutional Treaty in the making. This chapter aims to clarify their inception in order to offer possible scenario-design responses in hindsight.

Ulrich Sedelmaier and Helen Wallace have also indicated that the European Commission was credited, in the immediate post-1989 period, with having played

an influential role in the EU decision-making process and with furthering the cause of Eastern enlargement. Although the Commission, as the guardian of the treaties, would be committed to the expansion of the Community organization to the successfully socialized Central and Eastern European countries,<sup>13</sup> this approach was also consistent with rationalist expectations such as institutional projections and self-preservation. Indeed, Eastern enlargement appeared to be a welcome opportunity to expand the tasks and resources of the Commission.<sup>14</sup>

Right after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, this tendency became linked to the cause of enhanced cooperation of the EC with the CEECs. As the director of Directorate B in Charge of Candidate Countries at the DG Enlargement of the European Commission affirmed, ‘history was giving us a second chance and this time we could not look in any direction but that of the future.’<sup>15</sup>

According to Karen Henderson, ‘when 1989 heralded the collapse of communism in Europe, the division of the continent came finally to an end.’<sup>16</sup> The repeated ideal of creating ‘a truly united Europe embracing both East and West’ seemed to become a reality. Within the new democracies in the CEECs, the prospect of joining the EC symbolized the ultimate achievement of returning to Europe. But the initial excitement was tempered by the gradual realization that membership was far more than a symbol. As a matter of fact,

It involved not only freedom, democracy and the expectation of growing economic prosperity, but also demanding and painstaking work in harmonising diverse aspects to the detailed regulations prescribed by the Union’s existing members.<sup>17</sup>

From this perspective, the tangential relation between enlargement and democratization contributed to solidifying the perception of simultaneous transition to democracy and EC accession as two sides of the same coin.<sup>18</sup> It is also important to remark that the implementation of the enlargement policy went beyond mere democratization and economic transition processes. Surely it also implied a dimension of social dialogue, as well as a shift in mentalities, principles, values, and norms. This chapter delves into these more intangible heritage questions while connecting them to structural developments. Against this backdrop, the incentive created for accelerating internal reforms to advance the negotiations for accession was different to previous southern enlargement cases (e.g. Spain or Portugal), implying a heavier monitoring of the CEECs. Also the recovery of historical memory seemed to differ, distancing itself from a previous focus on an aspiring notion of reconciliation, as indicated by Marcelino Oreja, former Secretary General of the Council of Europe:

One form of reconciliation was recovering the European spirit: A reconciliation of countries that had been ripped from the heart of Europe because of their antidemocratic systems—against the wishes of their people—and are conciliation with the countries that shared their ideals, their history, their culture.<sup>19</sup>

The historical significance of the context of the nineties lies also in the fact that, as Manuel Castells reminds us:

Communism and the Soviet Union, and the reactions opposed to them observable around the world marked the different societies, internationally, during the last century. However, that powerful empire and its mythology disintegrated in few years, in one of the most extraordinary examples of unexpected historical change. This is the end of a historical era.<sup>20</sup>

The same interpretation of the nineties as a time of new beginnings was also shared by Marinella Neri Gualdesi, who affirmed that the nineties marked the present at its creation. In this context, the only thing that seemed obvious was the growing power of the attraction of the EU, which was supposed to represent a picture of hope. As a matter of fact, the Community of Twelve was considered during the nineties to be the main factor of stability in Europe and a model of reconciliation and economic prosperity. This transformed it into an object of attraction for the eastern part of the continent, while it also started rediscovering its own sense of belonging to Europe.

The retrospective analysis of EU institutional players echoes these scholarly considerations. Certainly, these analyses frequently allude to the game-changing character of accession negotiations for the balance of power in the continent, with their focus on a pan-European cooperation perspective tempered by the difficulties of an actual political and socioeconomic convergence between East and West. This is indicated by the director of the Negotiations and Pre-accession Directorate of the DG Enlargement:

The nineties were a real break, you have a shift in terms of the security architecture in Europe, which had also led, in the last decade, to the fact that the United States is the only remaining superpower and that was a total change. But I also think that the nineties were an extremely important phase in the European construction in which we faced major challenges. But, above all, the nineties were the time of moving forward through contradiction.<sup>21</sup>

This same *zeitgeist* perception was also shared by the Head of the Unit of Economic Assistance for the CEECs and Chief Assistant for Enlargement Policies at the DG Enlargement of the European Commission, who affirmed that the decade of the nineties:

Had political leaders with a great European vision and this favoured the step forward towards enlargement. The capability to reach agreements and to prioritise consensus-building, as well as the generosity showed, for example, with German reunification is unheard of nowadays. In any case, the concept that best defines the decade of the nineties is illusion, illusion because it starts with a gift of History, like the end of the division of the Cold War. I think that all those who were working at the EU at that time perceived that the nineties were the time of a great illusion.<sup>22</sup>



This initial feeling of a ‘great illusion’ pervaded the working atmosphere of the DG External Relations of the Commission (DG 1A) in the early nineties and made possible the proposal of the Central and Eastern European neighbors’ accession. This was also rhetorically convenient—as indicated by the very same Commission key players—due to a need to find a counterpart to the EU’s failure in stabilizing former Yugoslavia. Nonetheless, as the process went along in the mid-nineties, this fuelling energy started losing credibility and the ‘making History’ claim of enlargement’s East–West reconciliation discourse died as a priority of the Commission’s foreign policy agenda. This shift had fundamental consequences in the ever-growing feeling of enlargement fatigue.<sup>23</sup>

### **Self-containment, reassertion, and the inception of a long-standing cleavage: accession vs. association dilemmas, 1989–93**

It is important to bear in mind that it was the CEECs that raised the issue of accession to the EC and constantly kept pushing the Community for an explicit commitment to this goal. Although the Commission had already proposed the negotiation of association agreements in February 1990, it sought to avoid any reference to future accession, which reflected the limited impact of pro-enlargement European Commission officials in these early moments after 1989.

In its communication to the Council in 1990, the Commission stated clearly that the associations ‘in no way represent a sort of membership antechamber: Membership will not be excluded when the time comes, but this is a totally separated question.’<sup>24</sup> Eventually, the Commission agreed to a formula mentioning the future membership of the CEECs, but only went so far as to ‘recognize membership as a form of association, but not as the Community’s final objective.’<sup>25</sup> In this respect, it is pertinent to refer to the words of the chief economic adviser of the DG Enlargement at the Commission, who asserted that:

We were not thinking in terms of enlargement at the beginning of the transition, even if we knew that these countries would eventually join us. We had a sort of moral duty with the reunification of Europe. But we have done this for our own interest, our economic interest based on the certainty that Enlargement would be cheaper than any kind of association agreement and would benefit our image before the CEECs and before the international community. I do not think that we have done this only for political, historical or cultural reasons.<sup>26</sup>

The other kind of association agreements he was referring to are those of 1989, described by the director of the Negotiations and Pre-accession Directorate of the DG Enlargement:

In 1989 I actually wrote that the model we should follow with regards to the CEECs was that of the OEEC. I thought we should just create some kind of currency union with them. You should bear in mind that we were confronted

with German unification at that time. And, regarding the main arguments to enlarge, I remember also at that time, very curiously, there was a huge fear, especially as far as infrastructure was concerned but, also regarding everything else, that the CEECs would become an American culture.<sup>27</sup>

This view contrasts with the opinion of the former director general of the DG Enlargement of the European Commission, who defended the option of EU accession for the CEECs since the beginning and explained some of its related ‘making History claims’:

There is no reunification of Europe because Europe has never been united. There were only hegemonic unions, like those carried out by Hitler or by the Roman Empire, always imposing a partial view over a totality. That is why the EU is a complete success because it is the counterpart of the European traumatic past, and those countries which enter the European club enter also democracy, a social rule of law and the opportunities of stabilisation.<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, the head of the Unit of Economic Assistance for the CEECs and chief assistant for Enlargement Policies at the DG Enlargement of the European Commission indicates that:

the real aim of Enlargement was to overcome, definitely, the History of Europe, which has been the history of confrontation and war. In any case, at the political level, we could say no to the CEECs. There was no other choice, except going back to the past and closing the gates of History.<sup>29</sup>

After the EC had been cautious not to commit itself to CEEC membership in the association negotiations, the Conclusions of the Presidency at the Lisbon European Council in June 1992 definitely started to change that initial trend and would put the issue of CEEC enlargement firmly on the agenda. Hence, the Commission’s report to the European Council, created by the First Task Force on Eastern Enlargement, stated that:

The principle of a Union open to European states that aspire to full participation and who fulfil the conditions for membership is a fundamental element of the European construction and the integration of these new democracies into the European family represents a historic opportunity.<sup>30</sup>

The former president of the First Task Force on Enlargement at the DG External Relations of the European Commission was a believer in the need to fulfill the ‘historical debt’ Western Europe ‘owed’ to the CEECs (‘which,’ he says, ‘were cast aside from progress and prosperity’). He stated that,

For the new democracies, Europe remains a powerful idea, signifying the fundamental values and aspirations that people kept alive after long years of

oppression, because Europe is about values. Enlargement is a challenge the Community cannot refuse. The other countries of Europe are looking to us to guarantee stability, peace and prosperity and for the opportunity to play their part in the integration of Europe.<sup>31</sup>

Very significantly, the Commission paper to the Lisbon Summit in June 1992, ‘talked almost in a matter of fact way about accession as if it was already agreed as a common objective.’<sup>32</sup> This also reflected the individual views of its author, the former president, but always taking into account that ‘widening must not be at the expense of deepening, because enlargement must not mean a dilution of the Community’s achievements.’<sup>33</sup>

Conversely, and despite the continuous references to the unity of Europe, this relevant document of 1992 also showcased the explicit decision not to define what ‘Europe’ was, in a way that makes it difficult to know what the matrix was to which the CEECs wanted to return. This document also considered that the meaning of ‘Europe’ could not just be gathered in a simple formula and should be revised by each new generation. Therefore the Commission expressed that establishing the frontiers of the EU, whose limits would be redefined in the coming years, was neither possible nor opportune at that point.<sup>34</sup>

Helen Sjursen also pointed out in this respect that,

the EU had to promise that the CEECs could eventually become member states, because this would provide them with a reward for continuing with reforms even as those reforms caused hardship. But, in any case, the sense of duty and responsibility of Western Europe towards the other half of Europe was always underlined.<sup>35</sup>

In 1993, the timid and tentative insinuations of the 1992 European Council Document and of the Commission Report *Europe and the Challenge of Enlargement* totally changed the time perception of the enlargement process. Due to the formulation of the so-called Copenhagen criteria during the Copenhagen European Council, 1993 remained in the imaginary of pro-enlargement EU officials as an essential turning point where the reunification of the European continent was foreseen in a not too distant future. According to the director of Directorate B in Charge of Candidate Countries at the DG Enlargement of the European Commission,

It was in 1993 when we knew that Eastward enlargement was born as a real commitment for the European Union. It was the beginning of everything, a point of no return, desired for many people who have spent years of their lives establishing contacts with Eastern Europe but also for those who opposed the probable cost or the conflicts that the process could bring. In sum, 1993 was the moment. Before, you had just good willingness confronted with much reluctance towards an unrealistic expectation. However, it was not a compromise without conditions. And the conditions had to be respected and reforms thoroughly applied.<sup>36</sup>

In this regard, it is important to remark on the role of some Commission officials who held diplomatic jobs and functions in the CEECs in explaining many cases in which their sense of personal compromise with the countries involved enhanced their engagement for positive outcomes in the negotiations toward their actual accession. Certainly, their past diplomatic experience in the CEECs was a tempering factor during intermittent negotiation stalemates. In the end, eastward enlargement became a reality ‘because of these individuals with a clear political vision of the future of Europe, a Europe which would be the opposite to the divisions and conflicts of the past,’ as remarked by the director general of the DG Enlargement of the European Commission.<sup>37</sup>

As Manuel Marín (former vice-president of the European Commission) indicated, at the beginning of the nineties,

people started to talk about the ‘peace dividends’ and to say that we were entering a new era, that the future would be completely different. [...] It seemed as if we had managed to find a solution for planet Earth. The old system of Cold War international relations disappeared, the old disputes were replaced, but we realized that the former ideological confrontation was beginning to be a conflict of identity.<sup>38</sup>

Nevertheless, the decade of the nineties, as shown in the following sections, would become more of a bridge between eras than an actual new beginning.

### **The lingering public opinion of the enlargement ‘permanent waiting room’ from 1994 onward**

The year 1994 marked a turning point in the Commission’s acceleration of the enlargement option in order to prevent a destabilization of the CEECs similar to that being experienced in the Balkans. This was explained by the director of Directorate B in Charge of Candidate Countries at the DG Enlargement of the European Commission thus:

The new emphasis on accession and the will to make the process irreversible came also from the fear to see that the CEECs could become a ‘second ex-Yugoslavia.’ At that time we did believe that if we did not compromise to accession, the alternative for the CEECs could be political disintegration and ethnic conflict. It was one of the most powerful reasons to give a green light to the eastward enlargement process and the main motor of the Balladur Pact.<sup>39</sup>

The expression ‘future accession’ reinforced the sense of postponed promise linked to the disappointment of the new elites of the CEEC being placed in a permanent waiting room. Actually, at the level of public opinion in the candidate countries, the disappointment with the real results of democratization and marketization had risen considerably<sup>40</sup> within the ‘scenario for disenchantment’<sup>41</sup> increasingly present in the CEECs.

Competition for EU entry and the strategies followed to pursue such an aim were another particular characteristic of the challenges of eastward enlargement. EU membership was widely regarded as ‘the’ crucial factor for economic prosperity but ‘it was perceived as having promised the most and having delivered the least.’<sup>42</sup>

As a matter of fact, the social perception of European citizens regarding the self-proclaimed ‘reunification of Europe’ materialized as an ‘invisible turning point,’<sup>43</sup> despite the fact that this crucial change implied a differential increase in the diversity and complexity of the Community framework. However, despite the fact that the EU’s enlargement policy was institutionally presented as the most successful foreign policy instrument for the consolidation of the stability of the changing borders of the Union, its implementation modalities led to the much-criticized ‘enlargement fatigue.’ This is explained by the cumulated and never resolved tensions created by the accession procedures. As a matter of fact, this is a lingering threat for new (Southern and Eastern) EC/EU member states, which constantly risk leaving the European ‘core’ to reintegrate a second-class periphery whenever the Community enters a new critical period.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, despite being characterized by a ‘rectifying revolution,’<sup>45</sup> this enlargement wave did not enjoy a high degree of impact or visibility in pan-European public debate. For that reason, the citizens of the candidate countries perceived it as an invisible historical turning point.<sup>46</sup> As a result, the candidate countries that engaged in the accession negotiations perceived and vividly criticized the absence of a great strategy of future-oriented integration.<sup>47</sup> This had a direct impact in creating a sense of the purposelessness of painstaking transitional sacrifices and investments, as shown by Karen Henderson.<sup>48</sup> This engagement dimension of enlargement was also severely diluted because of the oversized management and technocratic approach applied within the Commission to the European integration principles from 2001 onward.<sup>49</sup> Such trends resulted in an emphasis on conditionality, pragmatism, and expertise in the evolving EU accession modalities, leading to a general perception of stagnation in the negotiations in the candidate countries.

In this sense, it could be argued that the limited reactions against recurrent ‘regression hazards’<sup>50</sup>—namely, risks of political regime relapse (e.g. Mečiar in Slovakia in 1994)—were a root cause of current hybrid regimes (e.g. Hungary and Poland<sup>51</sup>). This pattern has been particularly resonant in the south and the east of the continent, in countries where the residuals of dictatorship were not sufficiently tackled during their democratization processes and, thus, they continue to suffer from authoritarian and totalitarian revivals. Today some of these cases are crystallizing into ever-increasing ‘illiberal democracies.’ In this contentious context, the notion of enlargement fatigue became especially salient. One key factor for this mounting feeling was the criticism by further enlargement opponents of the lack of verification of whether existing EU institutions and policies were operationally capable of integrating (politically and economically) new member states into the Union. In this respect, Torreblanca affirmed that enlargement fatigue is not directly related to economic costs since enlargement turned out to be remarkably profitable (above all for the EU’s founding members); nor to the intra-European

migratory flows (even smaller than might have been expected); nor to the slowdown in the decision-making process (since none of the Council, the Commission, or the European Parliament has had an institutional blockage due to enlargement). What the EU experienced in such circumstances is more like a process of an ‘integration fatigue,’ which had transversal consequences for a series of policies, among which enlargement policy was one.<sup>52</sup> This process of ‘integration fatigue’ also had an impact on the lack of definition of the meaning of democracy in the European Union. This resulted in many key policy-making actors in Europe progressively drifting away from a commitment to enhance the quality of democracy as a good governance principle in itself.

## Conclusions

The fact that the EU’s eastward enlargement policy was too narrow a response to the challenges that arose from the end of the bipolar geopolitical paradigm of the Cold War is directly related to the ever-growing cleavage between voters and elected officials in the EU. This is explained by the unclear political definition of whether EU enlargement policy is a mere catalyst for change to be applied in very particular contexts (e.g. transitions to democracy) or a policy destination.

It is also important to note how the perceptions of the European public—both in candidate countries and in the EU member states—were notably disconnected from the EU institutional narratives. At the same time, EU institutional actors were disengaged from then present societal needs, priorities, and concerns. The post-1989 East–West debate included a new identity conflict related to the idea of enlargement policy as a legitimating strategy in the light of the then stark critiques to the so-called democratic deficit. This debate became increasingly centered on demands for democratic transparency and accountability on behalf of the citizenship. Against this backdrop, the management of public perceptions became a major concern and one that completely differentiated the post-1989 enlargement talks from previous Community enlargements. It was clear that with all the simultaneous widening and deepening dynamics in motion (e.g. the consolidation of a single market; new foundational treaties; and plans for a monetary union, which never became an economic one), there was also a need for a new EU Communication Strategy on Enlargement.

However, an economic union could only be sustained by a technocratic elite that believed in an integration project, while an increasingly political union could only survive with the direct support of its citizens. The main problem of the EU Communication Strategy on Enlargement was its contextual detachment. It attempted to transmit the ethos and collective time perception of the period immediately after the fall of the Berlin Wall by entailing a focus on reconciliation, reunification, and a new beginning, for the whole duration of accession negotiations. However, it was the duration of the accession negotiations that made it difficult to keep alive the feeling of *momentum* from 1989 up to 2004. This was caused by the fact that the post-1989 context entailed radically different political and socioeconomic priorities. The shift in the interests of contemporary EU

citizens, who were increasingly subject to the crises that derived from a stagnating global economic model, further aggravated this challenge.

In this regard, the EC's choices constituted a relevant paradox. They pertained to two different time periods but were seemingly disconnected from an institutional awareness of its power of influence at the Community level. Before 2001, the Commission privileged the institutional communication and debate of EC intra-units. Afterward, the Commission started focusing on an outreach dimension toward the citizenship. Nonetheless, in this last phase of the EU's eastward enlargement process from 2001 to 2004, the Commission no longer enjoyed an influential foreign policy and monitoring role, as had been the case at the beginning of the nineties. Indeed, such a calculation mismatch had important consequences: this misguided strategic shift took place at a time when many of the officials in charge of this policy, who were linked to past diplomatic positions in the CEECs, were no longer in charge and, therefore, there was no sense of memory or historic responsibility linked to policy-making in the enlargement realm, but rather an overbearing technocratic and managerial focus to just achieve objectives in due time.

Another cause of cumulative fatigue, apart from Schimmelfennig's premise of 'rhetorical entrapment,'<sup>53</sup> seems to have consisted in the difficulty of delimiting the axiological contours of the European integration process and in specifying the Community's eventual final frontiers (both geographically and in 'inclusive identity' terms). On the one hand, it was the lack of a clear self-definition in the EU's integration objectives and final geographical/ontological borders that seemingly propelled the overall process in post-World War II Europe. Conversely, this was also the cause of a most conflictive reaction in the long run: social disengagement with the European project based on an increasingly denounced lack of 'quality of democracy,'<sup>54</sup> especially since the profound social tragedies and consolidated intra-European asymmetries related to the sovereign debt crisis in 2008. This reaction was partly engendered by the fact that the European integration scope was not becoming visibly clearer for the European public in the last phases of the eastward enlargement process post-2004, when uncertainty about the future started to delimit the genuinely democratic potential of the post-1989 'widening' and 'deepening' options. As well as this, the Commission's option to attempt to consolidate a 'pan-European' identity based on a top-down institutional creation—in which historical turning points were discursively instilled and politically generated—contributed to the fact that the EU's 2004 enlargement was lived by citizens in old and new member states as an invisible historical turning point. This was also due to the asymmetry between the new contextual preoccupations of citizens in EU and new member states in 2004 (e.g. mainly socioeconomic concerns and much fewer worries of a political nature), and to the loss of the 'reunification of Europe' as a valid priority and demand of public opinion.

The studied 'roads not taken' help us illustrate the contentious long-term effects of not engaging strongly enough with a sustainable quality of democracy. They can be summarized as follows: the lack of an EU institutional commitment to fight against an ever-increasing democratic deficit before it reached an 'event



horizon,' resulting in some of today's challenges to the quality of democracy in the EU; the fact that the Commission did not strengthen its policy-making communication toward citizens when it enjoyed a far-reaching foreign policy role; and the mismatch between the Commission's underpinning of an enlargement communication strategy based on the reinforced instillment of time perceptions recalling new beginnings—typical of the 1989 period—while citizens' priorities from 2004 onward were already centered on socioeconomic and welfare policies and sustainability preoccupations.

In contrast a key question arises: how could the EU make a goal-oriented policy—implying an increasingly technical methodology and precise conditionality criteria—compatible with a longed-for collective expectation of inclusion, recognition, welfare, and reconciliation? Indeed, these apparent ideals seem to constitute the appeal of the EU's widening for any potential candidate country's citizens and residents. In this regard, there is an even more challenging dilemma: how could the EU reconcile club logic with the guarantee of eradicating instrumental inner discriminations and any notion of second-class citizenship? In sum, how could it prevent reinforced harmonization, via the adoption of the *acquis communautaire* and the incorporation of standardized Community practices, which could result in forms of second-class citizenship for new members instead of promoting an unfolding of convergence and cohesion opportunities? This key question is linked to the radically critical view of European integration as a form of colonial exploitation in disguise, in a way in which formerly 'incompatible' third countries (due to divergent regulations) would need to undergo harmonization to become fully profitable areas of influence for 'core Europe' member states.

In short, the EU can be a political and economic community, a community of laws, principles, and norms. It can be a community of interests, but it is also a community of values and of common, interactive memories capable of binding key players to the implementation of mutual solidarity, to the aspiration of a shared inclusive identity, and to the enhancement of coordinated international cooperation and integration.

From a research viewpoint, a very important perspective in these realms is still largely missing and unexplored: going back to the basic principles of European integration, we currently observe the abandonment of 'peace' as a key normative and policy implementation pillar. This dissociation between the peace principle and EU policy-making has caused a major cleavage in the relation between citizens and institutions. This is also related to the lack of understanding of peace as more than the mere presence of security and the absence of conflict. New research in this area of European integration history could well move toward the stability, sustainability, welfare, and policy innovation dimensions of peace studies to bridge this gap. From this perspective, further sources to be consulted could include the human rights and European integration holdings as part of the Barbara Sloan EU Delegation Collection (BSEUDC), currently hosted at the University of Pittsburgh Archives. This collection enhances the incipient research connections between European integration and the consolidation of memories of belonging to a common polity.

Other questions of interest for this field of research could be: how could historical EU enlargement experiences be useful for the design and implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy and further EU enlargements to the Western Balkans in a way that prevents conflict, hybrid regimes, and instability while fostering sustainable democracy-building cooperation? What are the neglected solidarity and diversity dimensions of European integration? And are narratives on 'shared values' in the EU and beyond sufficient to mediate countervailing factors of exclusion?

In conclusion, in so far as EU enlargement policy focused on responding to the open questions related to the rearticulation of the geopolitical, social, and mental frames of reference inherited by the Cold War and its uncertain aftermath, it is understandable that the same formula would be very difficult to apply to any reality beyond this framework (e.g. new and very divergent challenges with other post-communist countries, such as those in the Western Balkans and in the members of the current EU's Eastern partnership). Indeed, once the 'return to Europe' agenda is exhausted, there would be a need for a new, meaningful, and compelling driving force for the EU's role in the global arena. Perhaps it is high time to go back to the notion of 'community' itself.

## Notes

- 1 Norris, *Democratic Deficit*; Torreblanca, 'Una España confusa,' 52.
- 2 Document adopting the official Communication Strategy for Enlargement. DG Enlargement. European Commission Document COM (2002) 350 Final. Strategy launched in May 2000.
- 3 Cianetti et al., 'Rethinking'; Blokker, 'EU Democratic Oversight.'
- 4 Hill, *The Actors*, 142.
- 5 Blanco Sío-López, Christina, Interview with the director of the Directorate B in charge of Candidate Countries. DG Enlargement. European Commission. Brussels, 1 December 2005.
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- 7 COREU/Sec/1478/98 Telegram. *An Interesting and Candid Discussion on Kosovo and Russia with a Walk-on Appearance on Albania*. Brussels, Belgium, 1998.
- 8 'We Have Removed the Last Brick in the Berlin Wall, Says Cox,' *Irish Times*, 21 October 2002.
- 9 Some of these interviewees agreed to fully disclose their names. Other interviewees signed privacy agreements to merely disclose their position.
- 10 Yin, *Case Study Research*, 84–5.
- 11 Cuesta Bustillo, 'Metodología,' 3.
- 12 Blanco Sío-López, Cristina, Interview with the head of Unit of Economic Assistance for the CEECs and chief assistant for Enlargement Policies at the DG Enlargement of the European Commission. Brussels, 6 February 2004.
- 13 Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs).
- 14 Sedelmeier and Wallace, 'Policies.'
- 15 Blanco Sío-López, Cristina, Interview with the director of Directorate B in charge of Candidate Countries at the DG Enlargement of the European Commission. Brussels, 1 December 2005.
- 16 Henderson, K. (ed.) (1999). *Back to Europe. Central and Eastern Europe and the European Union*. London: UCL, p. vii.

- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Blanco Sío-López, Cristina, Interview with José María Gil-Robles, former President of the European Parliament. Madrid, 9 March 2010.
- 19 Blanco Sío-López, Cristina, Interview with Marcelino Oreja, former Secretary General of the Council of Europe. Madrid, 24 March 2010.
- 20 Castells, *The Information Age*, 26; Grabbe, 'Six Lessons.'
- 21 Blanco Sío-López, Cristina, Interview with the director of the Negotiations and Pre-accession Directorate of the DG Enlargement. Brussels, 2 February 2004.
- 22 Blanco Sío-López, Cristina, Interview with the head of Unit of Economic Assistance for the CEECs and chief assistant for Enlargement Policies at the DG Enlargement of the European Commission. Brussels, 6 February 2004.
- 23 Devrim, D. and Schulz, E. (2009), "Enlargement Fatigue in the European Union: From Enlargement to Many Unions". Real Instituto Elcano Working Papers. WP 13/2009. March 10, 2009.
- 24 'Europe Agreement,' 5185, 2 February 1990, 2, accessed 4 January 2019, [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-94-7\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-94-7_en.htm).
- 25 Torreblanca, *The European Community*, 40–1.
- 26 Blanco Sío-López, Cristina, Interview with the chief economic adviser of the DG Enlargement of the European Commission. Brussels, 29 January 2004.
- 27 Blanco Sío-López, Cristina, Interview with the director of the Negotiations and Pre-accession Directorate of the DG Enlargement. Brussels, 2 February 2004.
- 28 Blanco Sío-López, Cristina, Interview with the former director general of the DG Enlargement and Chief Negotiator with the Central and Eastern European Candidate Countries at the European Commission. Brussels, 4 February 2004.
- 29 Blanco Sío-López, Cristina, Interview with the head of Unit of Economic Assistance for the CEECs and chief assistant for Enlargement Policies at the DG Enlargement of the European Commission. Brussels, 6 February 2004.
- 30 Commission's Report to the European Council celebrated in Lisbon on 26 and 27 June 1992, elaborated by the First Task Force on Eastern Enlargement, entitled 'The Challenge of Enlargement,' *Bulletin of the European Communities*, Supplement 3/92, p. 9.
- 31 Text provided by the former president of the First Task Force on Enlargement at the DG External Relations of the European Commission, during the personal interview held with him. Brussels, 2 February 2004.
- 32 Mayhew, *Recreating Europe*, 25.
- 33 Commission's Report to the European Council celebrated in Lisbon in June 1992, elaborated by the First Task Force on Eastern Enlargement, entitled 'The Challenge of Enlargement.' The whole text is available in Commission of the European Communities, 'Europe and the Challenge of Enlargement.' *Bulletin of the European Communities*, Supplement 3/92, p. 11.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Sjursen, 'Why expand?' 12.
- 36 Blanco Sío-López, Cristina, Interview with the director of the Directorate B in charge of Candidate Countries at the DG Enlargement of the European Commission. Brussels, 1 December 2005.
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- 40 Nagle and Mahr, *Democracy and Democratization*, 62.

- 41 Kolankiewicz, 'Consensus and Competition,' 477.  
42 Nagle and Mahr, *Democracy and Democratization*, 50.  
43 Blanco Sío-López, 'Reconditioning,' 30.  
44 Blanco Sío-López, 'Reconditioning,' 31.  
45 Habermas, 'What Does Socialism Mean Today?'  
46 Jovanovic, 'Eastern Enlargement of the EU,' 830; Tsoukalis, *The Unhappy State*.  
47 Baldwin, 'The Costs and Benefits.'  
48 Henderson, *Back to Europe*.  
49 Watson, 'Politics'; Armingeon and Guthmann, 'Democracy in Crisis?'  
50 Blanco Sío-López, 'Reconditioning,' 28.  
51 Kelemen, 'Europe's Other Democratic Deficit.'  
52 Torreblanca, 'Una España Confusa,' 52.  
53 Schimmelfennig, 'The Community Trap.'  
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# 11 A missed opportunity for a new Europe?

The end of the Cold War and its consequences  
for Western European relations with Russia<sup>1</sup>

*Laurien Crump*

On November 21, 1990, the heads of all 32 European nations, apart from Albania but including a *united* Germany and the Soviet Union, as well as the United States and Canada, officially sealed the end of the Cold War and formulated their vision of Europe's post-Cold War future in the Charter of Paris for a New Europe. Eastern and Western European politicians alike agreed to 'a new quality of political dialogue and cooperation' through 'development of the structures of the CSCE [Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe].' The CSCE was regarded as the starting point for 'a new perception of security in Europe and a new dimension in our relations.' It was considered instrumental to a 'Europe whole and free,' which 'is calling for a new beginning.'<sup>2</sup> This seemed a logical development. Since its foundation in November 1972, the CSCE had after all succeeded in uniting all its members (the whole of Europe except Albania, and including the USSR, the United States and Canada) in a multilateral dialogue. This dialogue had withstood the test of severe international crises and had overcome many Cold War divisions. It seemed the obvious way to bridge the gap between East and West *after* the Cold War and furnish their relations with a new beginning.

Soon, however, 1989 was no longer heralded as 'a new *beginning*' that promised to cater for a 'Europe whole and free,' but as the *end* of history, in which liberal democracy had prevailed and the new Russia had,<sup>3</sup> by implication, become irrelevant. The CSCE had lost its appeal too, and was eclipsed by the impetus of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) expansion and European integration, which offered the former Warsaw Pact countries an opportunity to become part of the victorious liberal democratic narrative. The institutions that had catered for a divided Europe—NATO and the European Union (EU)—now sought to unite Europe. Russia alone was excluded from this current. The perceived 'triumph of liberal democracy' thus contributed to the current divisions in Europe. Although some scholars are very sensitive to the fact that 'Russia was left on the periphery of the new Europe,'<sup>4</sup> this idea has not yet entered the mainstream literature, which tends to put the blame on Russia.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the CSCE is nowhere researched as a viable alternative for a new Europe.

This chapter seeks to analyze whether the CSCE embodied a serious alternative for a new Europe at the end of the Cold War, why it failed to materialize, and



what the consequences of this missed opportunity were for Western European relations with Russia. It thus zooms in on: the opportunities the CSCE offered from 1989 to 1991, just before and after the fall of the Berlin Wall; the way it was eclipsed by the Maastricht Treaty and NATO expansion in the 1990s; and how the abandonment of the pan-European project impacted on the current crisis in Ukraine. Regarding the Ukraine crisis as a *symptom* of a divided Europe rather than the *cause* of the current European security crisis,<sup>6</sup> I hypothesize that the end of the Cold War retrospectively offered an opportunity for ‘a common European home,’ embodied by the CSCE, which was eventually not seized at the expense of Russia. The Western European failure to construe a new Europe along pan-European lines—as the Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, the French president, François Mitterrand, and the (West) German foreign minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, had hoped at the end of the Cold War—is an important feature in Europe’s return to a situation that ‘is two steps from another Cuban Missile Crisis and three steps from World War III.’<sup>7</sup>

This is a far cry from the Western triumphalism of the early 1990s, in which one question remained not only unanswered, but also unasked, namely: what to do with Russia? It is now high time to ask that question by researching whether, and if so, how Western Europe contributed to an ever more divided Europe. The emphasis will not solely be placed on NATO, as is usually the case, but also on the role of the European Community (EC), which is often overlooked in this respect. Dutch archival sources, published international primary sources, and interviews will be used to trace the history of the CSCE and Gorbachev’s idea of a ‘common European home,’ the role of the EC in shaping the future of Europe, and finally the impact of NATO expansion on Western European relations with Russia. The other Warsaw Pact countries will be accorded little attention, which reflects their relative lack of agency in terms of foreign politics at the end of the Cold War: most of them were primarily involved in managing their huge domestic changes. In order to analyze the missed opportunities of the West, we have to look at Western relations with the Soviet Union, which will therefore be the focus in this chapter. This will also illustrate to what extent the Soviets were willing to shape a stable post-Cold War order, from which they were eventually excluded. This raises important questions about the missed opportunities for a Europe including Russia directly after the Cold War, and the ways in which these can be remedied today.

### **A common European home?**

The 1975 Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, and then the Charter of Paris for a New Europe, adopted at an OSCE summit in November 1990, opened up the possibility of overcoming the artificial alienation of Russia from Europe caused by ideological confrontation and the preceding decades of the Cold War.<sup>8</sup>

Mikhail Gorbachev

The CSCE consisted of all 33 European countries (apart from Albania), the United States, and Canada. As such it was the most inclusive conference in Europe since the Congress of Vienna in 1814–1815, and it has facilitated a continuous dialogue between East and West since its foundation in 1972. It was the only inclusive and unconditional security structure that could cater to a unified Europe, *including* Russia. Moreover, it was in this framework that the Soviets developed their ideas for a ‘common European home,’ long before Gorbachev came to power. The concept of a united Europe, including the Soviet Union, had already been mentioned by Soviet foreign minister, Andrei Gromyko, in 1972 to convince French president, Georges Pompidou, of the merits of a European Security Conference.<sup>9</sup> In most of the literature the CSCE has nevertheless become a Western success story, which underpins the Western triumphalist narrative on the end of the Cold War. Concentrating on the Western introduction of human rights into the process, many historians argue that the commitment to human rights through the CSCE facilitated Eastern European dissidence, and led, either directly or indirectly, to the collapse of the Soviet bloc.<sup>10</sup>

The other side of the story is not often told, but is at least as important in explaining the peaceful end of the Cold War. The CSCE was in fact an Eastern European initiative and it was the driving force behind several Soviet reforms. Soviet records show that the Soviets regarded the CSCE, which they called the ‘pan-European process,’ as the way to ‘return to Europe’ and to bridge the divide between East and West.<sup>11</sup> The Soviets were prepared to make major concessions so long as they could join this process. The CSCE did indeed seem successful on that score. The conference in Madrid from 1981 to 1983 was initially under pressure because of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the Polish crisis of 1980–1981, but it ultimately served as ‘a safety valve for the hot pot of international relations,’ as the Soviet head of delegation, Yuri Kashlev, called it.<sup>12</sup> According to his American colleague, Max Kampelman, it was ‘a major stage-setter for the East–West progress that followed.’<sup>13</sup>

By offering a continuous platform for multilateral negotiations, the CSCE cushioned the international tensions and was even instrumental in constructive progress on both human rights (a Western demand) and a disarmament conference (an Eastern European demand). It also paved the way for the very successful CSCE meeting in Vienna from 1986 to 1989, in which the Soviet delegation proposed to hold a conference on human rights in Moscow, much to the astonishment of the Western participants. The Western participants were still very much at a loss as to how to interpret the ‘new political thinking’ of Mikhail Gorbachev, who had succeeded Leonid Brezhnev as general secretary in 1985, and his foreign minister, Eduard Shevardnadze.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the CSCE provided the neutral and non-aligned countries in Europe with an unprecedented stake in European foreign policy. Their participation often reduced tensions and was conducive to constructive compromises.

In 1985 Gorbachev publicly proclaimed the desire to build a united Europe that would include Russia, through the concept of a ‘common European home.’ Russia’s ambition to ‘return to Europe’ was initially received with scepticism in

the West and was regarded as implicit Soviet propaganda for a European security structure under Soviet tutelage.<sup>15</sup> The British prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, denounced its 'utopian dimension,' and the West German chancellor, Helmut Kohl, 'interpreted it as a new attempt to destabilize NATO.'<sup>16</sup> Hans-Dietrich Genscher nevertheless thought Gorbachev was serious about overcoming Cold War divisions in 1986,<sup>17</sup> and the phrase also reverberated in France, where it resembled the Gaullist idea of a 'Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals.' In the late 1980s, when Gorbachev's ambition for a normalization of relations with the West proved genuine, his phrase generated new interest in Western Europe and the United States. By that time, Gorbachev had already made major concessions on human rights and conventional as well as nuclear disarmament, while also denouncing the Brezhnev doctrine to show that he was serious about Russia's ambitions to become part of a united Europe.<sup>18</sup>

The idea of a 'common European home' had, indeed, become the cornerstone of Soviet foreign policy, and it explains the Soviet willingness to make concessions both within the CSCE process and beyond. Gorbachev's famous speech to the United Nations' General Assembly on December 7, 1988, should also be understood in this vein: his announcement of huge unilateral troop reductions and his claim 'to de-ideologize interstate relations' were both means to achieve integration into a greater Europe within the 'framework of the pan-European process'—that is, the CSCE.<sup>19</sup> This speech was very well received by Western European leaders, who began to believe that Gorbachev's attempted rapprochement was genuine. Gorbachev was still more explicit about this in a slightly less well-known speech, namely his speech to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg on July 6, 1989, in which 'Europe as a common home' was the central concept. In this speech he repeatedly referred to the CSCE as 'the groundwork laid down through our common efforts,' while stressing that both 'the Soviet Union and the United States are a natural part of the European international and political structure.' This was emphatically not a rhetorical ploy to monopolize European international relations, but a serious attempt to propose a new pan-European architecture to transcend the Iron Curtain. When Gorbachev concluded that 'it is in such a Europe that we visualize our own future,' he clearly emphasized the Soviet ambition to integrate into a greater Europe four months before the fall of the Berlin Wall.<sup>20</sup>

At this stage Gorbachev's vision appeared to be far less utopian than Thatcher had fathomed. First, the architecture for Gorbachev's 'common European home' was already there, namely the CSCE. The way to implement it remained vague, but the CSCE's potential to serve as the new European security structure was central to Gorbachev's idea. Second, in the wake of the first peaceful revolutions in Eastern Europe in the first half of 1989, Gorbachev's ideas for a new, common European security structure gained urgency. Third, after Gorbachev's very successful first official visit to the Federal Republic of Germany in June 1989, Russia's return to Europe seemed considerably more likely. On June 13, 1989, the German chancellor, Helmut Kohl, and Gorbachev even issued a joint declaration in which they strove to 'build a Europe of peace and cooperation and

to build a European order, the Common European Home, where the United States and Canada will have their place.<sup>21</sup> This gave a particular impetus to the French president, François Mitterrand, who did not want his relations with Gorbachev to be eclipsed by the ‘political *coup de foudre*’ between Gorbachev and Kohl.<sup>22</sup> The French president thus quickly embraced the Soviet proposal to breathe new life into the CSCE and to advance the convention of a new CSCE summit by two years. It was agreed to organize a CSCE summit meeting in Paris in November 1990, which would be the first sequel of the groundbreaking summit in Helsinki in 1975. Mitterrand confirmed that a reinvigorated CSCE was essential to ‘overcome the divisions that separate European nations and truly establish confidence among them.’<sup>23</sup> Both French and Soviet diplomats thought they could position themselves at the vanguard of historical developments by combining efforts to transform the CSCE process into a CSCE structure.

The fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989, fundamentally thwarted this ambition. Gorbachev’s idea of a common European home was eclipsed by the reality of a physically undivided Germany. The initiative was now seized by Helmut Kohl, whose ‘ten-point plan for German unity,’ announced on November 28, 1989, unpleasantly surprised Gorbachev. The German question suddenly overshadowed the European one, and Gorbachev’s preference for unifying Europe *before* unifying Germany was turned upside down. Moreover, Kohl’s seventh point stressed that ‘the European Community should not end at the Elbe,’ but could also ‘introduce the economies of the reform-oriented states of Central and South-Eastern Europe to the EC.’ With European integration through the EC singled out as the instrument for unifying Europe, Kohl’s eighth point about ‘the CSCE process [as] part of the core of this pan-European architecture’ seemed to have little substance.<sup>24</sup> It is even considered by some a pure tactical ploy in order to keep Gorbachev on board with German reunification.<sup>25</sup> Reaching out to Gorbachev by ‘imagining a common institution for the coordination of West–East economic cooperation, as well as the establishment of a pan-European environmental council,’<sup>26</sup> Kohl’s point was nevertheless clear: there was ‘no place for Russia’ in the new Europe.<sup>27</sup>

The French were not enchanted by Kohl’s ten points either. Mitterrand even initiated an emergency meeting with Gorbachev in Kiev on December 9, 1989. The Soviet and French presidents agreed to ‘check’ the Germans on the one hand, and to accelerate building new all-European structures on the other. Gorbachev reiterated his idea of building a common European home by breathing new life into the CSCE, and thus creating some kind of ‘Alliance of alliances,’ which included both NATO and the Warsaw Pact, like the CSCE did.<sup>28</sup> In a speech on New Year’s Eve of 1989, Mitterrand even called for ‘a European Confederation from the Atlantic to the Urals,’ which would include the European Community, and embrace the Eastern and Central European countries, as well as Russia. Rather than enlarging the EC according to Kohl’s proposal and excluding Russia, Mitterrand hoped to avoid further EC enlargement by absorbing it into a larger structure. His proposal also served another French ambition, to exclude the United States from a European security structure, and it thus went even further than Gorbachev’s.

Despite Mitterrand's plans, the Washington–Bonn axis seemed more up to speed with history than the Moscow–Paris axis. In early February 1990, Genscher and James Baker agreed to a 'two–four' mechanism in which both Germanys, together with the four allied powers, would negotiate on the unification of Germany. In order to avoid antagonizing the Soviets they declared in a joint press conference that 'there was no interest to extend NATO to the East.'<sup>29</sup> Baker also stressed this when he visited Moscow a couple of days later. Meanwhile, Gorbachev once again emphasized his vision of a common European home while specifying that Germany should remain neutral so long as the pan-European structures were built. Thus he hoped to reverse the order of uniting Europe, including Russia, before at least accepting a united Germany into NATO. In a conversation between Baker and Gorbachev on February 9, 1990, Baker nevertheless stated, 'I think that the idea of using the CSCE process [in terms of negotiating German reunification] is also difficult to realize since it would be too cumbersome.' At the same time, he assured Gorbachev that if the United States retained a presence in Germany under the NATO framework, it would be important for the USSR and other European countries to have guarantees that 'not an inch of NATO's present military jurisdiction will spread in an eastern direction.'<sup>30</sup>

However, Gorbachev had placed too much trust in the power of the US secretary of state. Since George W. Bush Sr. had become the new American president in January 1989 there had been a considerable shift in American foreign policy, which resulted in attaching less importance to relations and negotiations with Moscow. The reasons for this so-called 'Bush pause' were two-fold. First, Washington did not know how to respond to Gorbachev, a Soviet head of state willing to agree on nuclear arms reduction and conventional troop reductions in Europe, and second the Republican party's right wing was constantly looking over the shoulder of Bush, who was still trying to emerge from under the shadow of Reagan.<sup>31</sup> Baker's reassurance to Gorbachev was therefore out of step with Bush. Later that month, the American president remarked to Baker and Kohl that 'What worries me is talk that Germany must not stay in NATO. To hell with that! We prevailed, they didn't. We can't let the Soviets clutch victory from the jaws of defeat.'<sup>32</sup> Bush's triumphalism seems to have put the United States one step behind other international actors, by taking too long to recognize 'what a historic period the world was passing through,'<sup>33</sup> and often failing to engage with Gorbachev. At the same time, Baker clearly voiced the American concern that 'the real risk to NATO is CSCE.'<sup>34</sup>

Gorbachev's ideas for the future of Europe again seemed to be eclipsed by the question of the future of (East) Germany, even though Western and Eastern European politicians alike became increasingly attracted to Gorbachev's 'common European home' as a means to keep Germany in check. Both the Czechoslovakian president, Vaclav Havel, and the Polish prime minister, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, believed that 'a pan-European organization along CSCE lines' could 'supersede both Cold War alliances.'<sup>35</sup> Even Margaret Thatcher no longer considered it 'utopian,' but signalled to her foreign minister, Douglas Hurd, that British efforts should be directed at 'building a wider European association, embracing [...] the

East European countries, and in the long term the Soviet Union,' linked to 'a strengthened CSCE.'<sup>36</sup> No fan of German unification, Thatcher too thought that building a new Europe should gain priority.

The way in which Germany unified nevertheless adumbrated the future unification of Europe. After East Germany joined the *deutschemark* on July 1, 1990, it effectively legislated its own dissolution as a state by voting to join West Germany on October 3, 1990. At that stage the fate of Europe did not seem to be sealed. Moreover, the Moscow–Paris axis seemed to bear fruit. The CSCE summit, which Mitterrand and Gorbachev had agreed four months before the collapse of the Berlin Wall, took place in Paris from November 19–21, 1990—a month after the reunification of Germany. The contents of the CSCE summit had, however, already been predetermined at the NATO summit in July 1990 in London, where it was proposed both that the CSCE 'should become more prominent in Europe's future' and 'that the CSCE summit in Paris decide how the CSCE can be institutionalised to provide a forum for wider political dialogue in a further united Europe.'<sup>37</sup> Thus the future of post-Cold War Europe was partly sealed within the familiar NATO-framework, a Cold War institution *par excellence*. The Western European actors also missed an opportunity to go it alone vis-à-vis the United States, despite the generally warm relations with Gorbachev. The way in which the contents of the impending CSCE summit were pre-concocted within NATO adumbrated the future marginalization of Russia.

During the meeting in Paris all 34 heads of state duly agreed on the Charter of Paris for a New Europe. At a crucial juncture in history, which should have been as momentous as the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975, a convincing and alluring vision of a 'new Europe' was put on paper. Eastern and Western European politicians alike agreed to 'a new quality of political dialogue and cooperation' through 'development of the structures of the CSCE,'<sup>38</sup> as had been anticipated in the preceding NATO summit. Moreover, the participants decided on the establishment of a Council of Foreign Ministers, a secretariat in Prague, and a follow-up meeting in Helsinki in 1992. Commitment to the ten principles—including human rights and sovereignty—of the Helsinki Final Act was reinforced and plans to deepen cooperation on economics, politics, culture, disarmament, and the environment were formulated. Gorbachev's vision of a common European home, as he had depicted during his speech to the European Council in July 1989, seemed to have materialized. Meanwhile, the Paris Charter sealed the end of the Cold War by stating that 'the era of confrontation and division has ended.'<sup>39</sup> It thus marked the end of the Cold War as well as a new beginning.

At the time, some scholars judged the CSCE 'the natural framework in the continued search for a peaceful order in Europe.'<sup>40</sup> Its structure did not only include NATO and Warsaw Pact countries—two alliances that both began to be considered obsolete—but also the neutral European countries that had played a crucial role in maintaining the multilateral dialogue in Europe through the CSCE, as well as the United States and the USSR. It was considered unwise to exclude the latter from a united Europe, since, '[i]n the long run, nothing would be more destabilizing than an excluded and frustrated Soviet Union, which marginalization under



humiliating circumstances could drive to revenge.<sup>41</sup> In practice the pan-European process had become institutionalized on Western terms. Even though Gorbachev had presided over the end of the Cold War, the West would preside over the new beginning.

### **‘Cold Peace’**

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, the Helsinki process stalled and people stopped mentioning the Charter for a New Europe. European integration came to centre exclusively on the European Union and a policy of drawing the countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet republics into it. Europe increasingly came to mean Western Europe, in effect denying Russia the status of a European nation. New barriers replaced the old: less obvious, perhaps, but entirely real.<sup>42</sup>

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Gorbachev’s vision for a common European home led a parallel existence to the much better known trajectory of European integration, which was already well underway before the fall of the Berlin Wall. As Piers Ludlow successfully shows in a recent chapter, the European enlargement with former dictatorships—Greece in 1979 and Portugal and Spain in 1982—made the European Community particularly suited to also including the former communist dictatorships and thus to expanding eastwards, too. The EC’s integration process had already acquired an ‘astonishing burst of speed’<sup>43</sup> in 1985–1986, before the fall of the Berlin Wall. A notable difference is, however, that Greece, Portugal, and Spain were not part of a greater sphere of influence. Now two different visions of Europe were at stake: Gorbachev’s vision of a ‘greater Europe,’ and the EC’s vision of a ‘wider Europe.’<sup>44</sup>

The European Community moreover had an altogether different vision of the CSCE from Gorbachev’s. Instead of viewing it as a vehicle for the transformation of Europe, the EC, emboldened by the Single European Act in 1987, increasingly regarded the CSCE as an instrument for raising its own profile and presenting the EC as the harbinger of democracy and human rights, even though many of the neutral countries participating in the CSCE embodied the same values. Moreover, the CSCE again became a great driving force for European political cooperation, as it had been in the early 1970s.<sup>45</sup> Between 1986 and 1989, while Gorbachev was campaigning for his common European home, there were endless debates within the EC about the way the EC was represented within the CSCE, and whether it could act as a single actor. A heated debate about the wish of the EC twelve to allow the EC president two name tags during the CSCE—one with his own name and one as a EC representative—even led to a clash with the United States, who thought the EC members were increasingly bypassing NATO within the CSCE.<sup>46</sup> Despite the EC members’ denial on this score, this was undeniably true: from 1987 onwards the EC members had fixed rules about the way they would operate within the EC process. Claiming to represent a free and undivided Europe,



they both pressurized and reached out to the Eastern European countries in the CSCE, while ignoring the existence of the Soviet Union. The EC members self-consciously represented the *real* Europe during the CSCE process.

In the common speech of the EC members, which concluded the CSCE Vienna conference in 1989, the president of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, explained at large how ‘the community for us continues to be the cornerstone of our common future’ or even ‘a common destiny,’ which is ‘fundamental’ for ‘the stability of Europe.’<sup>47</sup> The CSCE was accordingly used as a platform to promote the EC. Even though the EC could not fill the security vacuum in Eastern and Central Europe in the way the CSCE potentially could, it did emphatically represent itself as the future Europe on a normative basis. Despite their self-assertion on a normative level, the EC members were quite happy to leave the security aspect to NATO, and thus subject to American influence. At the same time, they appropriated the future of Europe in a way that left no room for the Soviet Union, and little independent room for the Eastern European countries. In a speech in Bruges a month before the collapse of the Berlin Wall, Delors even emphasized that the EC served as the instrument for his variant of the ‘common European home,’ namely ‘the relaunch of European construction.’

This institutional structure which enables each member country, whatever its size or strength, to have its say, to make its contribution to the construction of the common house, what a reference it provides for the Eastern European nations!<sup>48</sup>

Emphasizing that the EC was ‘not closing the door for other European countries,’ Delors appropriated the rhetoric of Gorbachev’s common European home *before* the end of the Cold War to underline that the EC was the end goal for a large part of the other half of Europe, too.<sup>49</sup> The CSCE was clearly not the priority in Western Europe. The centrality of the European Community in point seven of Kohl’s ten-point plan was fully in line with the inclination of the EC. Although Kohl’s failure to inform the other EC members in advance of his ten-point plan did little to endear him to his Western European colleagues, his commitment to the EC was hardly original. The hostility to Kohl at the ensuing EC meeting in Strasbourg was, therefore, more tactical than substantial.<sup>50</sup> Despite Mitterrand’s subsequent launch of his ‘European federation,’ Kohl and Mitterrand had already agreed two months after the Strasbourg meeting on the need for further European unity.<sup>51</sup> As Ludlow puts it, ‘[m]ore Europe not less was the instinctive policy solution reached for by Europe’s political elites in 1989–90.’<sup>52</sup>

While Ludlow rightly concludes that the ambitions of the EC and Gorbachev’s ‘common European home’ were mutually exclusive, he overlooks that both Gorbachev and the EC used the CSCE to achieve their purpose, albeit in very different ways. Despite the seeming overlap between Gorbachev’s vision of Europe and Mitterrand’s, the two were very different in one important respect: whereas Gorbachev thought his vision would make the EC redundant, Mitterrand’s vision was primarily a way to offer the Eastern European countries an alternative to

the EC, which he initially did not want to expand eastwards. Mitterrand's vision was, accordingly, not received very favourably by the newly liberated countries in Eastern Europe, but rather seen as a 'crime against hope.'<sup>53</sup> For them, too, the EC came to be seen as the harbinger of freedom and human rights.

Seen from this light, the Charter of Paris can be read very differently. Despite its rhetoric about a future for a 'new Europe' it focuses very much on the central values of the 'old Europe': the resounding phrases about human rights, freedom of elections, and other political freedoms are literally copied from earlier EC speeches within the CSCE process. Rather than transforming Europe, as Gorbachev wanted, it thus confirmed the intention that the Western European status quo would now also apply to Eastern Europe. The 'prefab solution,' as Mary Sarotte calls it, of integrating Eastern Europe into Western structure was already there.<sup>54</sup> The further institutionalization of the CSCE, which was also promised in the Paris Charter, served to safeguard these Western values, rather than prioritizing the CSCE to the EC in terms of European cooperation. In fact, close reading of the Paris Charter reveals more thought about CSCE as an institution than about the shape of the 'new Europe,' thus stultifying the CSCE instead of transforming Europe.

When all Eastern European structures began to dissolve in the year after the Paris Charter—first the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and the Warsaw Pact, and then the Soviet Union itself—the prefab solution became increasingly easy to implement, since it had nothing to compete with. Although the Warsaw Pact's final communiqué still proposed the 'formation of all-European security structures,'<sup>55</sup> the moribund alliance no longer had a stake in the matter. The symmetry that could have provided the common European home with its foundation had evaporated. As Mitterrand told Gorbachev, when he referred to a 'Greater Europe based on two piers': 'for the time being there is one, as to the other in which we are certainly interested, that is where your problem is.'<sup>56</sup>

Meanwhile, the CSCE was the first organization to meet the challenge of the collapse of the Soviet Union. In January 1992 it expanded to include all former Soviet republics, including those in the Caucasus and Central Asia.<sup>57</sup> It was thus a significant step ahead of the EC, which only declared itself prepared for the admission of the formerly neutral Austria, Sweden, and Finland, despite the above-mentioned rhetoric. With the motto 'widening must not come at the expense of deepening,'<sup>58</sup> the Maastricht Treaty of February 1992 transformed the EC into the European Union, without inviting the Eastern European members that it seemed to have courted. The CSCE's apparent unconditionality was the mirror image of the conditionality of the EU. The further integration of Western Europe—in depth, rather than in width—nevertheless stood in stark contrast to the simultaneous disintegration of Eastern Europe.

In the CSCE, widening had in the meantime come at the expense of deepening: the admission of Central Asian and Caucasian republics went so far beyond the shared perception of Europe that it seemed to dilute rather than unify Europe. At the same time, the CSCE was facing an altogether new challenge as it suddenly had to respond to the war in Yugoslavia, which was one of its members. During a

follow-up meeting in Helsinki in March to July 1992, which was supposed to echo the successful 1975 Helsinki summit, the CSCE members became less optimistic about the future of the new Europe than they had been in Paris in November 1990. In a report called 'The Challenges of Change,' the member states underlined that '[t]he CSCE has been instrumental in promoting changes; now it must adapt to the task of managing them.'<sup>59</sup> The war in Yugoslavia was, however, difficult to manage for an organization that was designed to build bridges between nations rather than preside over their collapse. With no instrument to enforce security, the CSCE proved powerless. Its transformation from an agent of change, as it had been during the Cold War, to its manager also undermined the organization's prestige. The follow-up meeting in Helsinki in 1992, which was meant to breathe new life into the Helsinki process, in fact buried it by bureaucratizing the CSCE further. At the ensuing CSCE summit in Budapest in 1994 it was accordingly decided to change the CSCE into the *Organization for Security and Cooperation (OSCE)* in Europe, which it was called from January 1, 1995, onwards. The transformation from a process to an organization, with a fixed number of civil servants at the new secretariat in Vienna, inadvertently stifled the dynamic qualities of the CSCE process, as many of its participants testify.<sup>60</sup>

In 1994 the Dutch and German foreign ministers, Pieter Kooijmans and Klaus Kinkel, attempted to remedy the reduced importance of the OSCE by introducing the 'OSCE first' concept, which meant that the OSCE would have 'a primary responsibility in solving the problems in its own security space,' while functioning 'more as a clearing house or nerve centre, where intelligence, analysis, normative frameworks and security dialogue come together in a much more coherent way.'<sup>61</sup> According to the Dutch ambassador Johannes Landman,

it is crucial to bear in mind that in dealing with most of the (potential) conflict situations in the OSCE region, the Russian Federation needs to be positively engaged. [...] The European Union and United States would do well, therefore, to constructively consider some of the Russian concerns about the development of the OSCE.<sup>62</sup>

The Americans thwarted this initiative instead, clearly prioritizing the importance of NATO, and the EU allowed this to happen. German ambassador, Wilhelm Höynck, then secretary general of the OSCE, considered this the real 'missed opportunity' after the Cold War, since it could have served to integrate the Russians in the European security system.<sup>63</sup>

The Russians nevertheless still hoped to be included in the pan-European process by strengthening the CSCE. In 1995 Yuri Kashlev, the head of the CSCE delegation under Gorbachev, emphasized during the twentieth anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act in Geneva that unlike in the West, 'we in Moscow, attach particular importance [to] the development, above all within the OSCE framework, of a common and comprehensive security model for Europe of the twenty-first century.'<sup>64</sup> The Russian head of the delegation, Ambassador Vladimir Shustov, even referred to a 'strengthened OSCE' as 'one of the cornerstones of our foreign

policy.’ He presciently added that ‘[t]oday we face challenges and threats to European security which are probably no less, but rather more serious than in the days when that security was underpinned by rigid confrontation of two military-political blocs,’ such as a ‘revival of extremism in the form of aggressive nationalism, religious, ethnic and other displays of intolerance, terrorism, organized crime and uncontrolled migration.’ He therefore reinforced the Russian ambition for the ‘development of a new security model for Europe [...], including the adoption of [...] a European Security Charter.’<sup>65</sup> The Russians got what they wanted on paper. At the OSCE’s Istanbul summit in November 1999 all participants signed the OSCE’s Charter for European Security, in which they solemnly pledged to ‘contribute to the formation of a common and indivisible security space.’<sup>66</sup>

This charter was, however, a pale substitute for a new European security model. In terms of European security not much had been resolved since the end of the Cold War. The post-Cold War settlement seemed distinctively ‘unfinished.’<sup>67</sup> As Richard Sakwa argues, the Cold War was succeeded by a ‘cold peace,’ which is ‘an unstable geopolitical truce in which the fundamental problems of a post-conflict international order have not been resolved.’ In some ways, a cold peace is even more unpredictable and dangerous than the Cold War:

A Cold War accepts the logic of conflict in the international system and between certain protagonists in particular, a cold peace reproduces the behavioural patterns of a Cold War but suppresses acceptance of the logic of behaviour.<sup>68</sup>

Although the CSCE had been created to replace the logic of Cold War conflict with the logic of a pan-European dialogue, the OSCE did not play a similar role. The conflict was denied and one of its roots—the uncomfortable role of an increasingly isolated Russia—was simply ignored.

### **New Cold War?**

The leaders of NATO, with the United States taking the leading role, decided to expand the bloc to include the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, citing security considerations to justify the decision. Security, however, is needed only if there is a threat, so who was threatening whom? Who was threatening Poland, Hungary or the Czech Republic, countries that rushed to be first in the queue to join NATO? If there was such a threat, why did they not sound the alarm, convene emergency meetings of the institutions of the then Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Council of Europe or, come to that, the UN Security Council?<sup>69</sup>

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As with the Paris Charter, so too the European Security Charter seemed to represent a parallel reality. European security was by no means indivisible. Eight months before the European Security Charter, Poland, the Czech Republic, and

Hungary were admitted to NATO. Possibly inflamed by post-Cold War triumphalism, the American president, Bill Clinton, had turned NATO expansion into his pet project since 1996, arguing that ‘a grey zone of insecurity must not reemerge in Europe.’<sup>70</sup> Clinton’s ambition for NATO expansion was branded a ‘policy error of historic proportions’ by senior American statesmen.<sup>71</sup> Moreover it was severely criticized by the then 93-year-old George Kennan, the famous architect of Cold War containment:

I think it is the beginning of a new Cold War. [...] I think the Russians will gradually react quite adversely and it will affect their policies. I think it is a tragic mistake. There was no reason for this whatsoever. No one was threatening anybody else. This expansion would make the Founding Fathers of this country turn over in their graves. [...] Of course there is going to be a bad reaction from Russia, and then [the NATO expanders] will say that we always told you that is how the Russians are—but this is just wrong.<sup>72</sup>

Like Gorbachev, Kennan did not understand what threat NATO was reacting to by expanding. Russia was groundlessly cast in the position of a potential aggressor, something that soon became a self-fulfilling prophecy, as Kennan had predicted. The architect of Cold War containment saw neither the benefit of nor the need for this kind of ‘mild containment.’<sup>73</sup> With NATO accession paving the way for joining the European Union, ‘Europe’ had become an exclusive concept, rather than the inclusive one that Gorbachev had campaigned for. The ideas behind Gorbachev’s ‘common European home’ paved the way for the end of the Cold War by bridging the gap between East and West, but were then discarded on the rubbish heap of history. Indeed in 1990, the renowned security expert, Ole Wæver, tried to outline a potential future in terms of security versus economics and politics, concluding that the Soviet Union would play a large role in the CSCE while being confined to the ‘periphery of the periphery’ on the economic and political level, due to the Western-centric EC.<sup>74</sup> While he was overestimating the longevity of the Soviet Union in his first point, his second point certainly rings true. Russia was indeed left ‘at the periphery of the new Europe,’<sup>75</sup> after contributing greatly to the transformation of Europe in the late 1980s. Nor did the Western European countries use the end of the Cold War as an opportunity to free themselves of American influence: they too preferred ‘NATO first.’

Both Gorbachev’s common European home and the CSCE embodied models of a greater Europe could have transcended the Cold War division with an altogether new way of European cooperation. These models were not defeated after the end of the Cold War, but were already made redundant *before* the Cold War ended. In the 1980s, the European Community had shown itself so successful in integrating the former Southern European dictatorships that its expansionist tendency had already received a boost during the Cold War. Perhaps we should therefore not ask how the end of the Cold War affected Western Europe, but how Western Europe affected the end of the Cold War. It did at the very least contribute by leaving the post-Cold War settlement ‘unfinished,’ as it remains to the

present day. Although the OSCE could neither substitute nor compete with the EC in economic terms, the EC and later the EU could have put the 'OSCE first' as the 'nerve centre' for pan-European cooperation. Instead, the EC already claimed to represent the *real* Europe before the end of the Cold War, leaving little scope for a new Europe including Russia. Helmut Kohl's ten-point plan and the NATO summit in July 1989 put two more nails in the coffin of any idea of *pan*-European cooperation. The contours of the New Europe were, as such, determined by the Old Europe.

While Gorbachev was hoping to unite Europe through the CSCE, the EC countries succeeded in strengthening the EC through the CSCE. When Comecon (the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance), the Warsaw Pact, and the Soviet Union all collapsed within the space of a few months, the triumph of liberal democracy indeed seemed undisputed. History, accordingly, seemed to side with Western Europe, and the gradual absorption of Eastern Europe into Western (European) structures seemed vindicated. This was not a hard-fought battle in the post-Cold War space, but an easy conquest, facilitated by the soundless collapse of the former adversary. This in itself affected the West in a very important way: the qualities that were crucial in overcoming Cold War divisions—sensitivity, empathy, and a desire for dialogue—were replaced with a teleological sense of siding with history.<sup>76</sup> The Western model had prevailed and Russia had become irrelevant. Europe had become free, but certainly not whole.

The ensuing cold peace was in that respect more dangerous than the Cold War. Although the CSCE could hardly have replaced NATO and the European Union, it could have continued to function as the central mechanism for a pan-European dialogue. Instead, the OSCE became an increasingly bureaucratic organization that was eclipsed by NATO on security issues and by the EU on normative terms. Gorbachev's common European home was perhaps a little too utopian, but Russia's intended return to Europe should at least have been taken seriously. Instead, Russia was often bypassed within the OSCE—even concerning security issues at its own borders—and it was relegated to the margins of Europe at best. This was by no means inevitable, but it testifies to the way in which the end of the Cold War was viewed by Western Europe. This was not a moment of transformation at all, but confirmed something Western Europeans had known all along: the Western system was simply superior. It had not only won the Cold War, judging from the collapse of the USSR, the Warsaw Pact, and Comecon, but it also occupied the moral and political high ground. While the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union seemingly collapsed through their own weaknesses, NATO and the EU expanded through their own strengths.

Thus, the increased symmetry between two systems during the Cold War was replaced by an increasing asymmetry, in which the Western order embraced virtually all the former Warsaw Pact and Comecon members, apart from Russia itself. As Richard Sakwa convincingly argues, this laid 'the groundwork of the Ukrainian conflict,' since at the end of the Cold War 'one side declared victory while the other was certainly not ready to "embrace defeat."' <sup>77</sup> The Ukraine crisis is, as such, the symptom of a much more profound pattern, in which the end of

the Cold War amplified the asymmetry of an ever-increasing Western European model and of a diminishing Russian sphere of influence.<sup>78</sup> To some Western European politicians, the Ukraine crisis has accordingly served as a wake-up call to revive the pan-European dialogue that paved the way for the end of the Cold War. In December 2016 the Italian, Austrian, and German foreign ministers argued to raise the OSCE from its slumbers and breathe new life into a pan-European dialogue. They proposed to create new forms of dialogue and restore the OSCE to ‘the heart of multilateral diplomacy’ in Europe.<sup>79</sup> If this call is heard, the tide of an impending ‘new Cold War’ could still be turned. A pale echo of Gorbachev’s ‘common European home,’ this would at least enable a moderate return of Russia to Europe. In that case, some of the ambitions of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe could be fulfilled at last, and the missed opportunity could be seized after all.

## Notes

- 1 I would like to thank Leon Grundmann for suggesting some very useful readings.
- 2 OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, ‘Charter of Paris for a New Europe.’
- 3 Fukuyama, ‘The End of History?’ 3–18.
- 4 Sakwa, *Frontline Ukraine*; Sarotte, 1989: *The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe*; Hill, *No Place for Russia*.
- 5 Legvold, *Return to Cold War*; Lucas, *The New Cold War Threat to Russia and the West*.
- 6 Cf. Nünlist et al., *The Road to the Charter of Paris: Historical Narratives and Lessons for the OSCE Today*.
- 7 Sakwa, *Frontline Ukraine*, 47.
- 8 Gorbachev, *The New Russia*, 362.
- 9 Rey, ‘Europe Is Our Common Home,’ 34.
- 10 E.g.: Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect*; Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War*.
- 11 See Crump, ‘Paving the Way to Peace in Europe.’
- 12 Kashlev, ‘The CSCE in the Soviet Union’s Perspective.’
- 13 Max Kampelman, cited in Heraclides, *Security and Co-operation in Europe: The Human Dimension, 1972–1992*, 69.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 85–98.
- 15 Rey, ‘Europe Is Our Common Home,’ 51.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 53.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 51.
- 18 Ikenberry, ‘The Restructuring of the International System after the Cold War,’ in Leffler and Westad, *The Cambridge History of the Cold War Volume III: Endings*, 539.
- 19 ‘Address by Mikhail Gorbachev at the United Nations General Assembly, 7 December 1988.’
- 20 ‘Address by Mikhail Gorbachev to the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 6 July 1989).’
- 21 Cited in Rey, ‘Europe Is Our Common Home,’ 54.
- 22 Grachev, ‘From the Common European Home to European Confederation,’ 215.
- 23 Bozo, ‘Mitterrand’s Vision and the End of the Cold War,’ 286.
- 24 ‘Helmut Kohl’s Ten-Point Plan for German Unity.’
- 25 Nünlist et al., *The Road to Paris*, 13.
- 26 ‘Helmut Kohl’s Ten-Point Plan for German Unity.’
- 27 Cf. Hill, *No Place for Russia*.
- 28 Grachev, ‘From the Common European Home to European Confederation,’ 217.
- 29 Sarotte, 1989, 105.



- 30 'Document No. 119: Record of Conversation between Mikhail Gorbachev and James Baker.'
- 31 Blanton, 'U.S. Policy and the Revolutions of 1989,' 49–98, 66–71.
- 32 Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 253; Van Hoef, 'Friendship in World Politics,' 62–82.
- 33 Hoffmann, '1989: The Lost Year.'
- 34 Baker quoted in 'Deal or No Deal?' 31.
- 35 Nünlist et al., *The Road to the Charter of Paris*, 14.
- 36 Thatcher cited in Sarotte, *1989*, 106.
- 37 'Declaration on a Transformed North Atlantic Alliance Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council ("The London Declaration")', London, 6 July 1990.'
- 38 Gorbachev, 'Europe as a Common Home.'
- 39 OSCE, 'Charter of Paris for a New Europe, 1990.'
- 40 Birnbaum and Peters, 'The CSCE: A Reassessment of Its Role in the 1980s,' 319.
- 41 Francois Heisbourg, 'From a Common European Home to a European Security System,' 48.
- 42 Gorbachev, *The New Russia*, 362.
- 43 Ludlow, 'Not a Wholly New Europe: How the Integration Framework Shaped the End of the Cold War in Europe,' 139.
- 44 See for this distinction Sakwa, *Frontline Ukraine*, 26.
- 45 Romano, *From Détente in Europe to European Détente*.
- 46 Archive Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DMFA), Dossier CPE 1504, cpe mad 30, 13.1.89.
- 47 DMFA, File 8897.
- 48 CVCE. 'Address given by Jacques Delors (Bruges, 17 October 1989).'
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 Ludlow, 'Not a Wholly New Europe,' 146.
- 51 Küsters and Hofmann, *Deutsche Einheit*, 682–90.
- 52 Ludlow, 'Not a Wholly New Europe,' 143.
- 53 Mastny, *Helsinki*, 240.
- 54 Sarotte, *1989*, 119.
- 55 Mastny, *Helsinki*, 239.
- 56 Grachev, 'From the Common European Home to European Confederation,' 219.
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## 12 The reluctant soft power

### 1989 and the European Community's hesitant turn towards normative power in Africa<sup>1</sup>

*Frank Gerits*

#### **Introduction: the contingency of 1989**

'The concrete engagement of the European Union in the world is deeply marked by our continent's tragic experience of extreme nationalism,' stated the president of the European Commission (EC), José Manuel Barroso, as he accepted the Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of the European Union (EU) in 2012. He continued:

It is inspired by our desire to avoid the same mistakes being made again. That is the foundation of our multilateral approach for a globalisation based on the twin principles of global solidarity and global responsibility;

That is what inspires our engagement with our neighbouring countries and international partners.<sup>2</sup>

Here was the vision of an EU that had learnt from its mistakes, had been able to unite the continent in 1989, and from 1945 onwards had promoted democracy, free trade, and human rights beyond its borders. Barroso stressed EU soft power, the ability of one nation to attract other nations to its cultural values and consequently adopt its way of thinking. It is distinct from hard power where others are coerced through offers of compensation, through bargaining and negotiating, or by making threats. In the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy, which the high representative, Federica Mogherini, presented in 2016, the EU is described as 'the best in this field' of soft power.<sup>3</sup>

This narrative of the EU's foreign policy as a promoter of European values switched into high gear after 1989 when Joseph Nye's concept of soft power was popularized because it seemed to make sense of the sudden end of the Cold War. Rejecting Paul Kennedy's *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, which argued US power was declining, Nye wrote about how the United States was wielding another form of power that enabled it to attract others to its way of thinking via the export of popular culture. In the 1990s historians who studied US propaganda agreed that the promotion of American ideas and culture had helped topple regimes in Eastern Europe.<sup>4</sup> This triumphalist assessment was mirrored by Francis Fukuyama's *End of History*, making 1989 an almost mythical moment when Europe united behind the values of democracy. Samuel Huntington even

discerned a 'third wave' of democratization that extended to Africa in the 1990s. This understanding of the 1990s led Ian Manners in 2002 to reject Hedley Bull's argument that the EU had to invest more in military power if it wanted to be an actor in international affairs. Manners, in contrast, defines the EU as a 'promoter of norms which displace the state as a centre of concern.'<sup>5</sup>

To many historians of Africa, however, the causal link between the transition in Eastern Europe and the reinvigoration of an African civil society where calls for democracy became louder after 1989 is problematic. Admittedly, the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe resonated across Africa. Robert Mugabe, the authoritarian leader of Zimbabwe, and Mobutu Sese Seko in Congo lost sleep over their own positions when they saw the Romanian president, Nicolae Ceauşescu, being dragged through the streets. Nonetheless, historians such as Paul Nugent doubt there is a causal link. Chris Saunders points out that the first democratic election in Namibia, after the withdrawal of South African troops, had already been held at the end of the first week of November 1989, a process initiated long before the fall of the Berlin Wall. Saunders thus rejects the idea that the democratization of Eastern Europe at the end of the Cold War kindled democratic change in Africa.<sup>6</sup>

The differences between historians of Europe's 1989 and Africa's 1989 raise two questions about the African and the European sides of 1989, and the European Community's policy to spread its democratic values. How did Community officials assess their African interlocutors? And what image did the Community want to project towards Africa? An answer requires an analysis of the European Economic Community's (EEC's) public diplomacy, 'an international actor's attempt to conduct its foreign policy by engaging with foreign publics,' which also includes cultural diplomacy, an interaction with the public that relies on exhibitions, art, and theatre.<sup>7</sup> What is overlooked by scholars of 1989 is how Africa's history of intervention and the changing perception among the Community's development experts of African actors influenced the Community's strategy towards Africa. An examination of an important instrument that was relied upon to communicate the Community's views and values, a periodical called *The Courier*, suggests that the momentous events of 1989 actually lessened the Community's incentive to act as an overtly normative power.

First called *Courrier de l'Association*, from 1973 it was published in English as *Association News*. Following the signing of Lomé in February 1975, with issue 30 it was renamed *Le Courier ACP-CEE*, *The Courier* in English. The periodical was conceived in 1963 as a means to keep former trainees, scholarship holders, and seminar participants of the Directorate-General for Development and Cooperation—also known as DG8, the eighth directorate of the European Community—up-to-date on the implementation of Yaoundé I. Like other European information services, such as the Belgian information service Inbel, which produced *Interstages*, the Community tried to maintain some form of influence over its trainees. In 1970, after the signing of Yaoundé II, editors Aymery de Briey and Pierre Bolomey redesigned *The Courier*, attracted new staff members,



and increased circulation to 80,000. Although the free publication started showing up at African second-hand markets where a broader readership could be reached, the periodical kept employing a difficult jargon aimed at development experts.<sup>8</sup>

Historians have yet to address the Community's commitment to democracy as it relates to Africa after 1989. For one, a lack of archival sources complicates research. African archives are often scarce while EU archives are not yet fully accessible. What's more, for students of European integration the question seems irrelevant: it is assumed that the EEC through aid and trade conventions with newly independent African countries perpetuated its colonial relationship. In the period between the Schuman Declaration of 1957 that created the European Coal and Steel Community and the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 that turned the European Communities into the EU, a string of aid and trade conventions were concluded with former European colonies, such as the Conventions of Yaoundé in 1963, renewed in 1971, and Lomé in 1975, which was renewed in 1981, 1985, and 1989. Historians have criticized the notion that the EEC was a project solely sustained by the ambition to bring peace to Europe by pointing towards the Community's imperial origins. Many of the EU's founding fathers, such as Paul Henri Spaak, were explicit about their plan to utilize the Community as a means to maintain colonial possessions in Africa.<sup>9</sup> Other scholars have cast doubt on the precise nature of Yaoundé and Lomé. On the one hand, realists argue that association enabled France in particular to off-load the costs of maintaining a sphere of influence in Africa to its European partners.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, the political economy approach highlights the impact of unequal economic relations upon negotiations.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, constructivist literature traces how ideas about European identity shaped the Community's Africa involvement.<sup>12</sup>

The liberal school of thought argues that those ties were infused with new meaning because the conditions of the Yaoundé and Lomé conventions were a tool to further European values.<sup>13</sup> Legal scholars like Karin Arts agree, while critics consider the Community's policy to present the Yaoundé and Lomé conventions as agreements that also enshrined values as hypocritical. However, neither the argument that democracy has 'become little more than the rhetoric of politicians and treaties, just as it was during the Cold War,' nor the argument of gradual improvement captures the historical contingencies.<sup>14</sup> In light of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement of 2000 that presented regional integration as a panacea for Africa's problems, the question of the EU's normative power has returned to the fore.<sup>15</sup>

To capture the impact of 1989 on the relationship between the Community and the African continent, this chapter charts how the DG8 altered its public diplomacy strategy under the influence of changing ideas about development aid. What is analyzed here in three parts are the changing concerns about the Community's reputation among *Courrier* officials in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. When taken together the decisions made in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s suggest a weakened resolve among Community officials to exploit the EEC's 'normative power' in the immediate aftermath of 1989.



### **Increased communication in support of partnership (1970–1980)**

The debate over the role of the Community's public diplomacy and economic assistance in the spread of democracy did not start with the fall of the Berlin Wall. Rather its roots lie in the 1970s. The oil crisis increased the bargaining power of African countries with their commodity-driven economies while strengthening the position of the New International Economic Order (NIEO), a group of countries that wanted to improve the economic position of the Global South. In the 1960s, by contrast, many officials within the Community still viewed African countries as weak, while newly elected African leaders, such as Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, and West African intellectuals, such as Kenyan political scientist Ali Mazrui, cast the Yaoundé Convention as a neocolonial ploy.<sup>16</sup> By January 1970, the editorial team of the redesigned *Courier* therefore claimed that a lack of information produced this suspicion of the Community's motives and vowed to combat 'misinformation.'<sup>17</sup>

#### *Exchanging a colonial reputation for a Lomé Partnership*

Africans who had completed training in all kinds of sectors with the help of DG8 were given a platform in the magazine, in a section called 'African voices.' They spoke only in uplifting terms. One trainee, a Senegalese journalist called Niaky Barry, declared that *The Courier* provided Africans with a medium to share their knowledge. It allowed a trainee, Barry claimed, to act as a 'griot,' a travelling poet, musician, and storyteller in West Africa.<sup>18</sup> The section 'African voices' was also relied upon to take away the disgruntlement among the African audience about the sluggish pace of modernization. An opinion piece by a representative of the Congolese prime minister, Cyrille Adoula, acknowledged that the task at hand was difficult, but that the problems the Community faced 'had always been met by a solution.'<sup>19</sup> The challenging nature of the Community's work was further underscored by reprinting the inspection reports of the European Development Fund (EDF). The amount that was invested to build a road from Sambava to Andapa in north-east Madagascar, the EDF's investment of 5,526,600 franc Malgache, and the cost of a programme to stimulate palm oil production in Ivory Coast were all detailed.<sup>20</sup> The pie charts, tables, and models served to highlight the technocratic expertise entailed in the task of modernization.

The introduction of 'African voices' and the message of technocratic expertise were part of a broader strategy—proposed by the president of the European Commission, socialist Sicco Mansholt—to improve the Community's reputation in the developing parts of the world. At the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) of 1972 in Santiago, Mansholt spoke about the special Afro-European relationship to calm down the Latin American countries who were unhappy about the Community's investments in Africa. The European summit in Copenhagen of December 14 and 15, 1973, put out a declaration on the European identity in which the nine expressed the intention to utilize their Africa policy to reinforce 'peace, stability, and progress.'<sup>21</sup>

The United Kingdom's accession to the Community allowed for a more fundamental step in this process aimed at improving the EEC's reputation. The Lomé Convention of February 28, 1975, expanded the associated states beyond Africa to include the Caribbean and Pacific States (ACP); created *Système de Stabilisation des Recettes d'Exportation* (STABEX), a system to stabilize the agricultural export earnings of the ACP countries; and introduced the partnership principle, where the EEC committed to engaging African countries as equal partners in their development process.<sup>22</sup>

As of February 1975, *Association News* was renamed, in French, *Le Courier ACP-CEE*, enshrining this new partnership narrative.<sup>23</sup> Already in the issue of March–April 1974, as Lomé negotiations were drawing to a close, Olusola Sanu—Nigeria's EEC ambassador—stated that African countries wanted to be 'masters of their own development plans,' but he was not 'anxious' about 'any agreement that subordinates Africa to Europe.' Ivory Coast ambassador to Brussels, Siaka Goulibaly, claimed the 'English-speaking countries' that had been 'so apt to criticise' him in the past, had been forced to acknowledge the advantages of association. His plea to rally around Lomé because it could also accelerate the 'unity of Africa' was meant to urge British Africa to agree with the more optimistic interpretation of association in French West Africa.<sup>24</sup> *The Courier* thus employed Africans as a mouthpiece for the Community's policy. Michel Anhouey, Gabonese planning minister and chairman of the ACP Council of Ministers in 1979, called the second Lomé convention a 'fine example of the political resolve of the ACP and EEC partners' and 'a new style of relations between developed and developing countries.' His remarks were tailored to the partnership image, writing about Lomé II in 1981 as 'another feather in the cap of ACP EEC cooperation.'<sup>25</sup>

*The Courier* further sought to solidify the partnership edifice by identifying the Community's policies with Africa's broader political concerns. The EEC development commissioner, Claude Cheysson, for instance, not only highlighted that the Community's efforts had helped 77 countries via its food aid programme, he also urged readers to adopt the definition of 'development' put forward by Ivory Coast leader, Félix Houphouët-Boigny. Development was 'about man and his traditions, about human dignity and culture,' a notion from which Cheysson distilled the importance of technocratic cooperation. The reprint of a speech by French president, Giscard d'Estaing, sought to connect even more directly the Community's decisions with African aspirations, since 'Cooperation,' in d'Estaing's words, was an 'act of liberation.' His use of the term *libération* was a calculated move, since many of the ACP countries were preoccupied with the liberation of southern Africa in the 1970s.<sup>26</sup>

### ***The African response to Lomé's partnership narrative***

Mirroring the changes surrounding Lomé, African leaders were working to extend the ACP's function beyond that of a meeting to discuss the implementation of European aid programmes. When it came to the issue of human rights, African

leaders stressed that the ACP was merely a forum to discuss economic aid. The exception, however, was apartheid.<sup>27</sup> Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, who had toured Europe in May and June 1977 to discuss the situation in South Africa, gave a speech at the opening of the ACP meeting in Lusaka on December 8, 1977. His talk was considered 'historic' by contemporary commentators because he highlighted his pan-African agenda by pleading for 'cooperation to get concessions from the economic giants of the world.'<sup>28</sup>

The British accession to the EEC in 1973 had made it possible for Kaunda to use ACP meetings to put pressure on the United Kingdom. As 'the administering power of the rebel colony,' Kaunda criticized the white minority regime of Ian Smith in Rhodesia for invading Mozambique in 1976, while arguing that the continued existence of white minority regimes in Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Namibia prevented Africa from participating 'meaningfully' in any type of 'economic cooperation.' Moreover, while EEC civil servants found the task of approving ACP statements that condemned apartheid, such as the one voted on December 15, 1977, tedious and unnecessary, they did help transform South African apartheid from a British foreign policy issue into a Community problem. As a result, on September 20, 1977, a Community-wide Code of Conduct was introduced for subsidiaries of EC firms operating in South Africa. It constituted the only concrete foreign policy towards South Africa within the framework of the European Political Community (EPC) and listed a set of provisions that companies could voluntarily adhere to, such as the recognition of black labour unions, a minimum wage, freedom of movement for the workers, and desegregation in the workplace.<sup>29</sup>

Kaunda's speech resonated so strongly because he used the partnership narrative to turn the ACP into a Third World forum. He suggested the ACP could be used as a launch pad for an African common market, arguing it was paradoxical that the ACP did not form a 'preferential trade group, let alone a common market' but instead established a trade agreement with the EEC.<sup>30</sup> By the 1970s, the African discourse about the EEC had shifted away from neocolonial exploitation. Instead, European aid became a resource that was highly sought after and was viewed as a new way to forge a productive North-South dialogue. In December 1977 the Zambian minister of economic and technical cooperation, Peter Matoka, stressed that the country's 'developmental opportunities' were not to be 'diluted, compromised or sacrificed on the altar of the Community's commitments to the rest of the world.'<sup>31</sup>

What is more, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) even assisted its member states with getting the best deal. It sought to attain a degree of influence by providing 'guidelines and directives' for the renegotiation of the Lomé Treaty between 1978 and 1980, which was seen as a 'real test for the future of the North-South Dialogue.' In the OAU report, Lomé was considered a success, particularly in the light of the failure of the fifth session of the UNCTAD and Lomé II's emphasis on the responsibility of the beneficiary country.<sup>32</sup> OAU secretary general, Edem Kodjo, travelled to Brussels in May 1979 to offer support to the ACP Group, while EDF officials were invited for informal meetings at the OAU

headquarters in Addis Ababa. The OAU report in 1980 echoed the equal partnership narrative that the Community tried to project when Lomé II was presented as an important step in the establishment of the NIEO as the pages celebrated the ‘basis of equality among the partners.’<sup>33</sup>

An examination of the public diplomacy dimension of the Community’s development policy suggests that the stark positions marking the debate over Lomé’s effects—creating a genuine partnership or a means to project power—are essentially interlinked.<sup>34</sup> Lomé’s partnership principle emerged to maintain European influence on the continent, while at the same time the narrative of partnership enabled African leaders to utilize the Euro-African relationship for their own ends. In the 1970s, the DG8 presented itself as a development agency and viewed Africans as a sceptical target audience that needed to be convinced. That concern for the particularities of the African experience only increased in the 1980s as the high hopes of the NIEO came crashing down.

### **Cultural cooperation in the service of efficiency (1980–1989)**

In the 1980s, the bold NIEO proposals were being overtaken by intense discussions about the structural adjustment programmes (SAP) executed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank that were designed to weaken the state’s involvement in the economy. By downsizing the state and keeping deficits under control, it was argued that economic growth could be encouraged. As a result, ‘efficiency’ became an increasingly more important factor in development politics. Member states used ‘efficiency’ strategically in their tussles with the European Commission. Particularly the UK prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, who demanded what she believed to be fairer methods of allocating aid among the associates in order to limit the British contribution to the EDF and get more funding for the Commonwealth. Conversely, developing countries had a hard time adjusting to the constraints SAPs imposed. ‘Hopelessness and rejectionism,’ Hans Schipulle, spokesman of the Federal German Ministry of Economic Cooperation wrote, ‘have replaced the optimism of Havana,’ where the Non-Aligned Movement had met in September 1979.<sup>35</sup>

However, sceptical development economists such as Tony Killick questioned the feasibility of measuring ‘efficiency.’<sup>36</sup> In a dossier *The Courier* published in July–August 1983 they showcased different ways to measure efficiency, leading them to the conclusion that a more thorough study of African particularities was required for success. Testimonies by people like Allan Mau, chairman of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development, and World Bank director general of operations, Mervyn L. Weiner, brought home to readers that development had an unpredictable cultural side that required management.<sup>37</sup>

By the mid-1980s *The Courier* began to showcase experts who relied on cultural relations as a tool to increase efficiency and facilitate economic development for DG8. A special dossier on cultural relations in the November–December 1986 issue stressed that development from Lomé III onwards had to be rooted in the

'ACP's own cultural and social values.'<sup>38</sup> Cultural relations had to tackle the problem of 'cultural lag.' Anke Niehof, of the Directorate-General for International Cooperation at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, used the term in an article to talk about what she called the 'gap between ideology and practice' in development. Specific aspects of a society's culture or group did not keep pace with global cultural change, complicating economic aid. Echoing Margaret Mead's *Cultural Patterns and Technical Change*, a book that remained popular in the 1970s, Niehof pleaded for more empathy when implementing new technology. Mead found it necessary to protect the mental health of a population when technical experts introduced changes. Similarly, development experts had to be careful, Niehof argued, since they did not know what it felt like to have an African oral tradition crushed by mass communication technology. She located the problem of the 'cultural lag' not primarily within African societies, but within the development planning agencies where personnel had been 'trained and recruited in the years during which the assumption that development was a matter of economics and technology was unquestioned.'<sup>39</sup> To prove the EDF paid attention, *Courier* editor, Marie-Hélène Birindelli, interviewed Leopold Senghor, the main intellectual of the Negritude movement, which argued African and European culture had to develop together.<sup>40</sup> To make everyday development programmes successful, Senghor believed a 'programme of cultural development' was needed.<sup>41</sup>

In that light, European unification was—paradoxically enough—held up as a highly problematic example for Africa in the pages of *The Courier* in 1988. In Lomé II, regional integration had been encouraged by setting up a fund to strengthen the ACP regional organization, and by increasing the connection between landlocked and island countries. However, the magazine made clear that regional integration had to be adapted before it could work in an African context. Rolf Hofmeier, of the Institut für Afrika Kunde, voiced what he felt was a 'serious crisis' of regional cooperation in Africa. Like Birindelli, he argued that this crisis had resulted from the Community's inability to understand that African states' immediate concerns about food supply came before what he claimed were the long-term positive effects of encouraging regional trade.<sup>42</sup> Nonetheless, the dossier on regional cooperation included a contribution on the 'dividends of integration,' which nudged the ACP countries to revitalize their integration schemes. The Commission of the European Communities had ordered a study of the effects of Europe's integration and the results, while 'difficult to quantify,' were deemed to be important. Technological innovation had increased, the article claimed, while economies of scale kept costs down and had given European companies a stronger position in the world market, all demands made by African intellectuals in the context of the North–South dialogue.<sup>43</sup>

The extent to which economic aid could be used to effect a change in African political and cultural structures was exemplified by the Scott-Hopkins Report of September 23, 1982, which condemned apartheid. In January 1980, the Political Affairs Committee of the European Parliament appointed British European Democrat, Sir James Scott, to act as a rapporteur for a committee inquiry on Southern Africa. This increased influence of parliament was on display in *The*

*Courier*, which printed a report of the ACP-EEC Joint Assembly in Greece in September 1986, where there was a 'persistent questioning by European parliamentarians of policies and conditions in some ACP States.'<sup>44</sup> Rather than convincing the National Party in South Africa to adjust its policies with a public relations campaign or attempting to export European values via aid programmes, the report's solution was more narrowly economic. The Lomé Convention would have to be used to create greater economic prosperity in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Angola, and Namibia to reduce the Community's dependence on supplies of raw materials from South Africa.<sup>45</sup>

Nonetheless, the notion that development could only be effective if it was coupled with a profound understanding of local cultures, something public diplomacy could communicate, developed only gradually. In the early 1980s cultural diplomacy was still relied upon as a facilitator for the partnership, exemplified by *The Courier's* reporting on the Chasle Report. At a meeting of the EEC-Africa Joint Committee in Bordeaux in January 1979, Emile Wijntuin of Suriname was asked to prepare a report on cultural cooperation, but after he had to resign from his position as speaker, Raymond Chasle of Mauritius took over. Karin Arts argues that the Chasle Report's intention was to bring a sociocultural dimension into Lomé.<sup>46</sup> *The Courier's* coverage on the report, however, was limited. It focused on the return of African works of art. Additionally, a cultural databank had to be created 'comprising all the archives on the ACP countries.' In this way a 'zone of solidarity between the EEC and the ACP countries' was created 'based on equality.'<sup>47</sup> The efforts of the ACP states to construct museums to build up collections and to give local populations access were presented as the focus of the plan.

In short, the efficiency narrative slowly fostered a new role for cultural diplomacy, which became a tool to more effectively administer the economic medicine required, contrary to its role in the 1970s when it functioned as a means to build a partnership. DG8 presented itself as an efficient development agency that took African concerns into account. Key in the EDF's attempt to tailor its programs more precisely to African needs in the 1980s, was the fact that Africans were not blamed for their inability to adjust to modernity schemes. Cultural sensitivity on the part of the Community was important to effectively introduce technical change.

### **1989 and the recasting of SAPs and African responsibility in the 1990s**

DG8 civil servant, Bryan Rose, recalls how surprised he had been when he heard of the fall of the Berlin Wall as he turned on the radio on the November 10, 1989. On a mission in Pretoria to explore the possibilities of increased cooperation, he, like many of his colleagues, believed a new chapter in Europe's relationship with Africa would open up, in which democracy and human rights would become essential.<sup>48</sup>

Enthusiasm about 1989 led many of the Community's initiatives to be rephrased in a democratic vocabulary. In a report on the Lomé IV Convention, produced by the EC Directorate-General for Information, Communication, and



Culture and published in March 1990, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) no longer emerged as a platform for partnership. Rather it became an important 'step on the road to democracy.' However, Lomé IV, which had been signed in December 1989, did not include the term democracy. 'Decentralized cooperation' or 'participatory development' was reinterpreted as a reference to democracy and presented as Lomé's 'longer-term innovation.'<sup>49</sup> Likewise, the first issue of *The Courier* that was published after November 1989 did not even address the changes that had taken place in East Germany. It only mentioned Berlin within the context of the Berlin Conference of 1884.<sup>50</sup> *The Courier* even tempered expectations that had been raised by Lomé. A Belgian professor, Paule Bouvier, wrote that there were limits to what the Convention could achieve. 'Glorified by some as models for North–South relations,' it was the political will and the know-how of the economic operations that actually determined the success of policy.<sup>51</sup>

This delay in acknowledging the importance of democracy for the EEC–Africa relationship stands in sharp contrast to European leaders' statements in 1989. On November 19, 1989, François Mitterrand invited the nine EEC members for a special Euro summit in Paris to discuss the ways in which the fall of the Berlin Wall ten days before had affected the European project. Press statements emphasized how democracy had finally prevailed and provided a lodestar for Europe's future foreign policy.<sup>52</sup> How to explain this contradiction in the Community's public relations?

### *A non-interventionist conception of development in 1989*

Many analysts argue that November 1989 led to the introduction of 'political conditionality,' respect for human rights, and a commitment to good governance.<sup>53</sup> In the course of the 1990s these criteria acquired a more expansive definition within the EEC lexicon.<sup>54</sup> In June 1990, the British and French governments announced they would link political pluralism with economic performance, while the Dublin European Council from 25 to 26 June 1990 on human rights and good governance in Africa expressed concerns about the debt situation in relation to human rights.<sup>55</sup> EU proposals ensuring that 'the Convention asserts the principles of democracy'—as a press release of 1995 stated—were designed to 'make European Union support for ACP development more effective.'<sup>56</sup>

However, 'political conditionality' was not a direct product of November 1989. Instead, European speeches and the pages of *The Courier* focused on an African concern: the continuation of aid. African politicians did not fear increased European meddling by a confident Community, but rather isolationism by a Community obsessed with the creation of the internal market in 1992. In his speech on February 2, 1990, South African president, Frederik Willem de Klerk, announced the beginning of a negotiated settlement with the African National Congress (ANC), referring to the changes that were produced by the Cold War. He warned that the EEC would be turning inwards rather than helping Africans with the changes.<sup>57</sup> In March–April 1990 European Council president, Michel Rocard, therefore, reassured the ACP countries that they would still



receive sizable donations from the development fund even though the reconstruction of Eastern Europe was emerging as a major challenge.<sup>58</sup> The French minister of cooperation, Jacques Pelletier, stressed that 'Africa has everything to gain from an increasingly united Europe,' because it would lead to greater economic growth and therefore an increased financial transfer to the continent.<sup>59</sup>

European values, particularly democracy and human rights, should not be openly exported to Africa according to the European Commission. During a *Courier* interview in May/June 1990, the development commissioner, Manuel Marin, rejected a more dynamic role for the EEC in African democratization. The argument that Marin's public statements somehow signalled the introduction of political conditionality in EEC development directly contradicts Marin's own explanation in *The Courier*. He made the case for a 'non-interventionist concept of development,' and wanted to limit the Community's role in human rights promotion to saying "Watch it, that's not right," tactfully and carefully at a given moment, without being accused of interventionism or trying to meddle in people's internal affairs.' Rather than as the promoter of democracy, Marin spoke of the EEC as a 'moderator,' an entity that could help African countries in their relationship with the IMF and the World Bank.<sup>60</sup> In *The Courier*'s 1991 issue on democracy and human rights, Marin wrote that growth models could no longer be designed along purely economic lines, but also needed to be linked to models of society. Human rights were, in his view, a *conditio sine qua non* for development, but at the same time could not be imposed from the outside.<sup>61</sup>

When *The Courier* published a series of special issues on democracy, regional cooperation, and human rights in the 1990s, they were not meant as a promotion of those ideas. Rather, they were offered as an explanation for when SAPs did not yield the promised results. Editor Dominique Davide argued in the special issue on democracy in 1991 that the link between democracy and economic growth was 'an obvious one' since it allowed people to make the best choices and therefore benefitted the most optimal forms of development.<sup>62</sup> The issue on regional integration in 1993, for instance, described how the theory of SAPs encouraged the integration of markets, reducing distortions and opening up economies. The SAP failed in Africa, *The Courier* argued, because it was often introduced in narrow national settings.<sup>63</sup> In its 1993 issue on African democracies, the European official responsible for supporting structural adjustment warned that democratic reform could make structural reform more difficult. Democracy heightened 'great economic expectations,' but SAPs would struggle to meet 'the immediate' demands for economic growth because of austerity measures. There was even some nostalgia for authoritarian regimes, such as the Pinochet regime and its Chilean success story, since those regimes have 'more means of coercion available to them than democratic ones.'<sup>64</sup>

This tendency to explain every shortcoming of the SAPs as the result of bad governance, as a consequence of not adopting European values, has its origins in Amartya Sen's *Poverty and Famines*, published in 1981, which connected efficiency with 'good governance' in his study of the Bengal famine.<sup>65</sup> These notions seeped into the thinking of the World Bank, which published *Sub-Saharan Africa:*

*From Crisis to Sustained Growth* in 1989. European solutions were promoted in special issues of *The Courier*, but not as part of an optimistic, triumphalist story that touted the global applicability of European values as a normative power. Rather, the ability of Africans to adapt was directly and openly questioned and EEC officials doubted their own ability to turn the tide. In the summer of 1990 an opinion poll carried out among African and Malagasy opinion-leaders indicated that the Community only took 'third place behind bilateral cooperation and the UN,' a defeat for Europe's standing in Africa.<sup>66</sup>

### ***Renewed doubts about Africans after 1990***

By 1992, instead of promoting European ideas, *The Courier* saw the need to invest more time in promoting an optimistic image of Africa and combatting the so-called 'poor image put out by the world media.' Its approach was problematic, however. A dossier entitled 'A fresh look at Africa' included articles by Africans who criticized Africa and as such were part of the vocal group of Afro-pessimist intellectuals of the 1990s. Afro-pessimists made the case for 'African exceptionalism,' which linked the problems of poverty, ill health, and violent conflict to an essential, ahistorical nature of Africa. Africa's situation was reduced to the apparently inherent characteristics of Europeans and Africans.<sup>67</sup> The issue of May–June 1991, which welcomed Namibia into the Lomé Convention, featured an interview with the World Bank vice-president for the Africa region, Edward V. K. Jaycox, who wanted to combat this 'afro-pessimism.' He argued that SAPs had allowed African leadership to get a better grip on their own problems, while only hurting civil servants who received wages that were too high.<sup>68</sup>

Regionalism was considered too complex a solution for Africans.<sup>69</sup> In the 1993 issue on regional cooperation, the director of the Africa Institute for Policy Analysis at Cambridge, Bax Nomvete, openly questioned whether Africans had been too optimistic. 'Have they,' he wondered, 'overestimated their desire for union and underestimated the obstacles strewn across their path?' Rolf Langhammer, of the Kiel Institute of World Economics, agreed and further pointed out the weakness of the continent, claiming Africa had never succeeded in having all three fundamental conditions of success, those being sustained political commitment, regular growth of the national economy, and no economic subregional disparity.<sup>70</sup> The ACP-EEC Cultural Foundation Seminar, on which *The Courier* reported in March–April 1989, had concluded that human rights could not be implemented in Africa because of obstacles that were of a 'historical, ideological and psychological order.' Asking Africans to overcome these 'mental barriers' was considered 'an almost impossible leap.'<sup>71</sup>

This complicated stance on European democratic values also comes out of the ambiguous policy towards post-apartheid South Africa. The Community had always been reluctant to establish a formal relationship with apartheid South Africa because of other African regimes in the Lomé Treaty area. When apartheid collapsed, EU policies towards South Africa were realigned, but South Africa was

not allowed to immediately join the Lomé Treaty and the sanctions against the country were phased out slowly. A cooperation agreement was signed between the EU and South Africa in October 1994. Similarly, Dieter Frisch, director general for Development, only invited Namibia, which had been occupied by South Africa until 1988, to join the Lomé Treaty area after elections were held.<sup>72</sup> The two partners agreed to promote cooperation, especially in the economic field, by increasing the investments on behalf of the EEC in South Africa, and by the EEC assisting the development of South Africa. The deepening of economic ties would also benefit majority rule. That relationship between the EEC's economic power and the fight against apartheid contrasted with the Scott-Hopkins Report, which had recommended developing South Africa's neighbouring countries to avoid strengthening apartheid.<sup>73</sup>

The changing ideas about the African appetite for democracy and Europe's role in Africa proved to be fertile ground for myth-making. In 1995 Marin suddenly argued that the 'democracy clause' had already been a standard part of agreements concluded with Latin America and Eastern Europe. His statement ignored the restraint he had preached, neither was it in line with the pace at which European treaties had changed.<sup>74</sup> The Lomé Convention of December 1989 did not include an explicit reference to democracy, but the Maastricht Treaty of December 1991 referred to the promotion of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. As Konstantinos Margaritis writes, article 177 (2) TEC was formulated for this purpose, and introduced the principle of consolidating democracy, respect for human rights, and the rule of law into the Common Foreign and Security Policy. Moreover, the development cooperation process was linked to democracy and the rule of law by characterizing the consolidation of democracy as a 'general objective.'<sup>75</sup>

In short, in the course of the 1990s, the anxieties that had emerged in the immediate aftermath of 1989 about the appropriate role of the Community were replaced by a new dual role for European values: making a case for SAPs and shifting blame to Africans, who were considered incapable of incorporating European solutions. Long-standing anxieties about the Community's interventionist reputation—which had already driven *The Courier's* communication strategy in the 1970s and 1980s—were reinforced in the 1990s because public debates about the interventionist nature of the Cold War in Africa gained traction.

### **Conclusion: the reluctant soft power**

While a declassification of sources is required to gain a more nuanced understanding of the EEC's integral approach to Africa in the aftermath of 1989, an examination of *The Courier* suggests the DG8 acted as a reluctant soft power. That hesitance to convince African regimes via public diplomacy to become more democratic in the months immediately following November 9, 1989, stemmed from the fear of acquiring an interventionist reputation. Scholars like Ian Manners, who cast the Community as a normative power, ignore the legacy of colonial and

Cold War interventions that constrained the Community's attempts to improve its reputation in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>76</sup>

From the vantage point of public diplomacy, it becomes clear that two developments in particular made the Community reluctant to act as an overtly normative power in the 1990s. First, debates about Cold War interventionism in Africa highlighted the lessons learned in the 1970s about the need for a partnership narrative. The Community did not want to come across as a replacement of the Cold War powers whose ideological competition had ravaged Southern Africa. Second, renewed resistance to SAPs emphasized the insights the 1980s had produced among Community officials about the importance of understanding the particularities of the culture in which assistance was offered. In *The Courier's* reporting, Africa transformed into a place inhospitable to Europe's solutions. The reason for failure in development was no longer poorly designed development decisions, but Africans unable to do the work required of successful development.

The combination of Afro-pessimism in the 1990s and a non-interventionist conception of development was aptly expressed by EC president, Jacques Delors, in March 1991. He pointed out how important it was to solve 'North-South issues' by redoubling the efforts to 'create the economic conditions' for stability. But when he raised the topic of democracy, he talked about ensuring that European institutions remained legitimate in the eyes of its citizens.<sup>77</sup> African democracy was not a key interest for the Community.

## Notes

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- 60 Birinde, ‘Meeting Point: Manuel Marin Vice President of the Commission: A Non-Interventionist Concept of Development,’ 6; Dimier, *The Invention of a European Development Aid Bureaucracy*, 147.
- 61 Manuel Marin, ‘Democracy Cannot be Imposed from the Outside,’ *The Courier*, no. 128 (July–August 1991): 50–51.
- 62 David, ‘Human Rights, Democracy and Development,’ 3.
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## **Part IV**

# **Democracy between triumph and crisis since 1989**



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## 13 Restrained democracy and its radical alternatives after 1989

### The threefold crisis of democracy in the ‘Former West’

*Ido de Haan*

By all means, the fall of the Berlin Wall was a triumph of democracy. After 1989, it was repeatedly confirmed that liberal democracy was ‘the only game in town.’ As argued in the first editorial of the *Journal of Democracy*, newly established in 1990: ‘The resurgence of democracy may be attributed in part to the failure of its rivals.’<sup>1</sup> Not only were liberal democracy’s ideological contenders—fascism and communism—defeated, but the bloodless revolution of 1989 demonstrated that ‘the people’ were able to take their fate into their own hands, and to claim popular sovereignty in the face of authoritarian leaders and repressive state power. Even more, the transitions from dictatorship to democracy in Eastern Europe witnessed the emergence (or re-emergence to some, after 1848, 1918, and 1968) of the powers of spontaneous self-organization in civil society. The experiments in democratic deliberation in the Polish Round Table Talks, the Czechoslovak Civic Forum, and other forms of direct democracy were proof that the revolution of 1989 was not just a ‘gewissermaßen rückspulende Revolution [...] die den Weg frei macht, um versäumte Entwicklungen *nachzuholen*,’ as Jürgen Habermas had argued. The wave of democratization in Eastern Europe not only caught up with the development of democracy in the West, but actually contributed to the innovation of democracy beyond the confirmation of the uncontested dominance of liberal democracy.<sup>2</sup>

By now, little of that optimism is left. In their introduction, Eleni Braat and Pepijn Corduwener reconfirm Habermas’s conservative estimate, arguing that ‘1989 seemed not only the victory of democracy,’ but that it cemented the reputation of a ‘restrained’ liberal democracy after decades in which this model of democracy had been subjected to severe criticism.<sup>3</sup> Yet they also observe that this particular type of democracy is currently challenged anew, because of its inherent limitations, and by the emergence of populism.

These observations raise two sets of questions. The first concerns issues of historical analysis: how is the perceived crisis of democracy related to the demise of communism? Did 1989 demarcate not just a high point, but also a turning point in the triumphal march of democracy? If the crisis tendencies of Western democracy are the result of more enduring tensions, what then has been the impact of 1989 on

the longer-term dissolution of ‘restrained’ democracy? Has it hastened its demise, or slowed it down? Or has it only made manifest what was already on the cards due to other factors, and unrelated to the fall of the Berlin Wall?

A second set of questions is largely evaluative: if democracy has been in decline since 1989, how bad is it now? The two contributors to this section come to very different answers to this question. According to Dan Stone (Chapter 15), the victory of democracy is about to be undone. In fact, the situation is so serious that ‘we need to start using the term “fascism” again.’ The postwar consensus in support of democracy has been abandoned, and in its place, fascism has returned: ‘What we see now is a xenophobic, protectionist ideology which combines notions of national rebirth with a desire to isolate the nation from outside forces.’<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, Martin J. Bull (Chapter 14) argues that the fall of communism did not mean the end of radical left-wing politics. The final conclusion of his contribution is that ‘[t]he revolutions of 1989, in short, did not end radical politics but acted as a catalyst to its reshaping, a process that was further influenced by the economic shock of 2008 that is still reverberating today.’<sup>5</sup> Noteworthy in this respect is not only the implication that pre-1989 communism was a form of ‘radical politics,’ but also that its continuation does not evoke the kind of alarmism Stone voices about fascism. It demonstrates a remarkable irony: despite decades of Cold War anti-communism, the true enemy of democracy still appears to be fascism. Soviet communism turned out to be a dead end, but it is part of a political family some of whose other members seem to have thrived since 1989. It would be unimaginable if Stone had concluded that, although genocidal Nazism is definitely something of the past, there are felicitous signs that Italian fascism is very much alive—which it actually is, much to Stone’s and my concern. Yet Bull’s undeniable relief that radical leftist politics survived the demise of communism reflects an understanding of democracy as somehow dependent upon progressive activism. Bull’s analysis is more optimistic than Stone’s because he identifies social and political forces that might be able to counter the turn to fascism.

I propose here to analyze in more detail the notion shared by the editors and the contributors to this section that democracy is actually in crisis. I agree it is, yet there is hardly a moment in history when democracy was not in crisis. Like Tolstoy’s depiction of the unhappy family in the opening sentence of *Anna Karenina*, every crisis of democracy is a crisis in its own way. I would argue that the current crisis is more complicated than a failure of the European demos to address the fascist challenge—as Stone suggests—yet also, that progressive radical politics is less robust than Bull’s argument seems to imply. In fact, or so I will argue, there is not just one crisis of ‘restrained’ democracy, but actually at least three modes in which Western political systems are in disarray, which do not necessarily stem from the same source and did not come about in 1989, yet definitely gained a new momentum after the fall of the Berlin Wall. In a way, 1989 did create a ‘Former West’ in which some of the disintegrative tendencies of the period before were reinforced. Even if some of these tendencies are very unsettling, it is important not to dismiss the critical social and political counterforces to these tendencies.

## **The self-inflicted debilitation of parliamentary democracy**

A first aspect of the current crisis of democracy regards parliamentary democracy. Parliaments were once the core institution of ‘restrained’ democracies. The civil (and sometimes less civil) display of political disagreement and its resolution, after due debate, in a parliamentary vote, presented an intricately formalized mode of political conflict that gave a procedural legitimacy to political decisions. Also, the power of parliamentary veto, notably the potential for a vote of no confidence, is a democratic check on executive power.<sup>6</sup> To a certain extent, parliamentary power always had to compete with other powerful institutions: sometimes in terms of a formal separation of powers, but often—in a more informal mode—representation of, deliberation about, and calibrating between interests also took place within parties and corporatist organizations, in the media and forums of public opinion, and in the back rooms of the bureaucracy. But even then, parliament remained the locus of sovereignty, not just with the final authority to turn political opinion into binding law, but also with the power to have its agenda decide the pace of political decision-making. The legitimating functions of parliamentary debate and control were based on at least the illusion of parliamentary sovereignty.

Since the 1980s, parliamentary sovereignty has proven to be an illusion and little more than that, first of all because of a growing resentment against state power as such, but also because of an increased suspicion that a parliamentary state is unable to deal effectively with the problems of a globalized society. Put in positive terms, this has been interpreted as a shift from government to governance.<sup>7</sup> More critically, it has involved a radical, and in many ways deliberate, devolution of parliamentary power, with the result that parliaments no longer set the pace of the political process, but have become subject to a politics of *fait accompli*, only able to rubber-stamp decisions forged by forces they can no longer control. This has been going on since the rise of neoliberalism in the late 1970s, but the fall of the Berlin Wall and the European integration it set in motion has reinforced this tendency. The end of the Cold War was a ‘momentous, unanticipated change,’ yet immediately came to be seen as utterly unavoidable.<sup>8</sup> Also, the ensuing integration of East Germany into the German Federal Republic, of former Eastern European countries into the European Community, and the latter’s further integration into the European Union and the Euro were largely experienced as self-propelling processes that received a blessing from the parliaments of each of the member states, but whose dynamic seemed to be determined elsewhere, if anywhere.

Much of this was clearly a rhetorical device of the national governments, which not only looked for excuses for their own gridlock, but actively turned the EU into the scapegoat for decisions they wanted to take anyhow. The neoliberal destruction of the welfare state and its concomitant austerity policies were hugely unpopular in the many countries that implemented such policies, and could only have been sold to a reluctant electorate by means of a self-inflicted debilitation of parliamentary control, nurturing Euroscepticism in order to avoid suspicions against domestic malfeasance.<sup>9</sup> Also, the solution of the Eurocrisis was largely left to the formally independent European Central Bank and the informal, yet

equally inscrutable, Eurogroup. Tellingly, the instances of protest against and actual obstruction of European integration were put beyond parliamentary control: whether these were the referenda in France and the Netherlands against the constitution, the Dutch referendum against a European treaty with Ukraine, or Brexit, in each of these instances, parliaments deliberately stepped aside and dodged the hard decisions.

### **The changing landscape of party democracy**

A second aspect of the crisis of democracy involves elections and parties. This narrative of crisis is often told in demographic terms as the disappearance of a clearly delineated constituency, resulting in an electorally destabilized party system. As it was authoritatively analyzed by Peter Mair, electorates in Western democracies have become less loyal, both in their allegiance to specific parties, but also to the electoral system as a whole. Party membership has declined, voter volatility has gone up, and voter turnout has gone down. As a result, parties have become increasingly dependent on the state, both in terms of their financial means and in their functionality. While parties struggle to justify their existence as interpreters of the popular will, their function is increasingly reduced to the recruitment of political personnel.<sup>10</sup> In combination with the loss of parliamentary efficacy, such parties and the political personnel they select struggle to justify their role. If party politicians neither represent the will of the people, nor are able to satisfy the needs of the people, what are they good for, other than securing their own jobs and income? Such sentiments seemed to form the basis of what the political scientists Roberto Stefan Foa and Yasha Mounk coined the ‘deconsolidation of democracy’: ‘Even as democracy has come to be the only form of government widely viewed as legitimate, it has lost the trust of many citizens who no longer believe that democracy can deliver on their most pressing needs and preferences.’<sup>11</sup>

Some of these findings have been contested, or their impact has been interpreted in a different light. Political scientists like Pippa Norris argue that such pessimistic accounts are examples of ‘fact-free hyperbole’: even if citizens are disappointed with established parties, their decision to vote for another party, or even to refrain from voting altogether, are clear indications of political interest, trust, or—if their trust does not entail current electoral options—at least political agency.<sup>12</sup> In a discussion of the alarmist articles of Foa and Mounk, Amy C. Alexander and Christian Welzel argue that a lack of trust in dysfunctional democracies actually indicates a strong commitment to democracy, while others contest the indicators, or the value Foa and Mounk assign to them, as proof of the undoing of party politics.<sup>13</sup>

Even if these comments are valid, and despite variations between countries, the trends toward declining party membership, greater voter volatility, and lower voter turnout are by and large indisputable. Maybe party and electoral politics as such are not in decline, but established parties and party systems are definitely under pressure. This is certainly the case for the two major parties of postwar

Western democracy, social and Christian democracy. In all of Western Europe, both parties have suffered serious blows.

For a long time, the dominant position of Christian democrats, or of conservative parties with a more-or-less outspoken Christian signature, seemed uncontested. After the regime changes in Spain and Portugal in the 1970s, such parties seemed almost naturally to assume a central place in the political system. Furthermore the fall of the Berlin Wall left Christian democrats untainted; in Germany, Helmut Kohl was even able to use its momentum to consolidate the power of the Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands (CDU). Yet this dominant position eroded or was fundamentally undermined by the 1990s in Italy, Belgium, and the Netherlands, and more recently in Spain, although in some cases Christian democrats partly recovered from these blows.<sup>14</sup> In countries without a strong Christian democratic tradition, like France and the United Kingdom, the conservative parties suffered a similar decline. The French Gaullist movement became increasingly fragmented and its electoral position was challenged by the Front National and, more recently, by Emmanuel Macron's *En Marche*. The British party system also suffered from fragmentation, realignment of previously loyal constituencies, and substantial support for third parties—such as the Liberal Democrats, the Scottish Nationalist Party, the Democratic Unionist Party, and the UK Independence Party. Equally troubling is the fact that the most decisive issue of the last decades, Brexit, has unsettled both the Conservatives and Labour.<sup>15</sup>

The failure of the United Kingdom's Labour Party to profit from the self-destructive tendencies among the Tories underlines a more general weakness of social democratic parties in Europe. Again, this was not self-evident and around the year 2000 social democrats ruled supreme in most Western European countries, based on a Third Way platform that included the acceptance of economic liberalization, austerity measures, and a call for self-help within civil society. Yet within a few years, this came to be seen as selling out to the neoliberal creed, and, as a result, social democratic parties in the Netherlands, France, Italy, Germany, and to a lesser extent also Spain, were electorally decimated, while in the United Kingdom, Labour was incapacitated as a result of the split between Blairites and Corbynites.<sup>16</sup>

Even more important than these electoral shifts is the fact that the major European parties lost their role as vehicles of a social compromise based on fairness, proportionality, and power sharing. Even where there was not an actual *Proporzdemokratie* (like in Austria or Belgium, where political positions and social benefits were evenly distributed among the major political parties), in most European countries, there was a kind of *trasformismo*, the late nineteenth-century Italian system in which political elites from the major parties regularly alternated in positions of power. Moreover, for a long time, these parties had been able to absorb social conflicts and new social movements, first of all in an institutional sense by crowding out or integrating more radical parties on the left and the right, and by maintaining a strong connection to organizations within civil society, such as employer organizations, trade unions, and churches. They were also able to do this ideologically: the major parties were able to suppress historically available alternatives, not only in the form of an outspoken anti-communism, but, as Dan Stone has

argued, by cementing an anti-fascist consensus.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, social and Christian democrats legitimized their position in contrast to a third alternative of laissez-faire capitalism, by forging the welfare state in a productive tension between corporatist, socialist, and liberal conceptions of social order.<sup>18</sup>

This was never a fully static order: there were moments of radicalization to the left, for example when in 1969 the new German chancellor, Willy Brandt, announced that he aimed for a radical democratization, not just of the state, but more fundamentally, of social relations.<sup>19</sup> A similar perspective was presented by the Dutch coalition government of 1973 to 1977, led by the social democrat and Dutch Labour Party leader, Joop den Uyl, who promised a redistribution of income, knowledge, and power. After the Congrès d'Épinay in 1971, the French Parti socialiste (PS), under the leadership of François Mitterrand, overcame a long period of ideological confusion and electoral marginalization in competition with the more powerful French Communist Party, and won the presidential election of 1981 on an outspoken socialist platform. Yet Mitterrand's turnabout in 1983 was equally symptomatic of the moments of moderation following the more radical phase in the 1970s.<sup>20</sup> A similar *Tendenzwende* had already been made in Germany in 1974 when Brandt stepped down in favor of the more pragmatic Helmut Schmidt, while in 1975 Joop den Uyl had to acknowledge the 'the narrow margins of democratic politics,' when his government introduced its first austerity policies.<sup>21</sup> The swing of the political pendulum to the right was in the end perhaps more lasting, with the rise of conservative leaders like Margaret Thatcher, Helmut Kohl, and Ruud Lubbers inaugurating neoliberal policies that set the tone for the coming decades. In light of these shifts, it might indeed make sense to interpret the 1970s as the 'Sattelzeit' between the Second World War and the end of the Cold War.<sup>22</sup>

In the context of this ideological landscape, the impact of 1989 can be delineated more clearly: even if it did not initiate the transformation of institutional and ideological positions, it confirmed a dramatic shift in the parameters of the political field. The first pole, anti-communism, fell away, and with it the position of social democracy as the acceptable face of the left; the second pole, anti-fascism, was relocated thus creating room for the re-emergence of xenophobic nationalism; and the third pole, laissez-faire capitalism, changed from the outpost of the ideological field into the rallying flag of neoliberalism, smack in the middle of ideological debate. If there was an impact of the fall of the Berlin Wall on the political system in the 'Former West,' it was first of all the creation of a neoliberal common ground between the mainstream political parties, and then the emergence of a new dividing line between this neoliberal consensus and a left- and right-wing populist opposition that rejected not just the neoliberal policies of the mainstream in the name of a *préférence nationale* or the radical multitude, but also the consensual political style that came with it.<sup>23</sup>

### **The radical critique of liberal democracy**

The transformation of the political landscape therefore affected not only the mainstream parties, but equally the communist and fascist alternatives. As stated

above, both Stone and Bull observe a kind of reconstruction of these tendencies. Having reviewed the crisis in parliamentary and party democracy in the previous sections, we are now perhaps better positioned to contextualize their arguments and evaluation. The post-1989 reconstruction of the left of the left and the right of the right takes place in the context of a transformation of parliamentary and party democracy, yet it affects most of all the liberal foundations of democracy by questioning the liberal distinction between private and public; between the personal and political; between economy, culture, and politics. Both leftist and right-wing radicalism also manifest themselves in new, populist modes of politics, claiming to represent 'the people' without the mediation of elections, parties, and politicians. In questioning fundamental assumptions of liberal democracy, it can be viewed as the third and final aspect of the crisis tendencies Western European democracy is subject to.

With regard to the development of the left of the left, it is questionable to what extent this is a continuation of or a reaction against communism. Already long before 1989, communism was ideologically depleted. Most communist parties in the West were therefore unable to respond to the fall of the Berlin Wall in any other way than despair and melancholy—in itself perhaps a legacy of a longer-term leftist 'culture of defeat.'<sup>24</sup> In part, the unwinding of communism was the result of its inability 'to offset the tarnishing of the Soviet socio-economic model.'<sup>25</sup> Ironically while some, notably the French and Italian Eurocommunists, shifted toward a social-democratic position, from the middle of the 1970s the social democrats themselves began to dissociate themselves from Keynesian economic planning, thus leaving the reformed communist still in the position of statist planning ideologues. Next to its lack of economic efficiency—which only became more evident in the 1970s—communism also fell into disrepute in the face of the human rights discourse emerging in the 1970s, primarily in protest against the persecution of dissidents in Eastern Europe.<sup>26</sup> Connected to that was the impact of the peace movement, rejecting not only both parties in the nuclear arms race, but also forging contacts between peace activists in both West and East.<sup>27</sup> Yet the failure was also homebred, as Western communist parties were unable to successfully incorporate most of the post-1968 activism. Initially, the surge of activism led to a rise in membership of some of the communist parties, yet the agenda of the new activists competed in organizational, strategic, and ideological terms with the traditions of the established communist parties.<sup>28</sup>

Organizationally, the new activists rejected the bureaucratic and centralist power structure of communist parties, and were more inspired by Trotskyist, Maoist, and anarchist notions of a direct connection to the spontaneous forces of the popular masses, and preferred to organize as movements, not as bureaucratized parties.<sup>29</sup> In strategic terms, these new social movements continued the communist strategy to mobilize the masses, yet the goal was no longer to conquer state power, but to transform—'decolonize'—civil society into a sphere of uninhibited communication. This strategy was vindicated by the protest against the communist regimes and the revolution that toppled them in 1989, generally perceived as an uprising of civil society; in the end, the genie of this revolution was not



Marx, but Tocqueville.<sup>30</sup>In ideological terms, the new activists were inspired by a variety of themes—feminist, gay, anti-racist, anti-nuclear, ecological—which despite their diversity were united in their rejection of work and property as central ideological categories, and material economic growth as the main measure of progress. Instead of these categories, central to the ideology of both communist and social-democratic members of the progressive political family, the main concern of the newer members of the leftist tribe was the recognition of personal and collective identities, and respect for cultural difference. Like the previous socialist and communist movements (and also civil rights movements), the new movements still fought against discrimination, but this was no longer only defined in terms of equal (economic) opportunity and the distribution of material wealth. Although these issues still played a role in the struggle for global justice, they were now reformulated as issues of repairing historical injustice and the recognition of global (ecological) interconnectedness.<sup>31</sup>

Given the organizational, strategic, and ideological differences, it is problematic to see new, radical, left-wing parties as a continuation of previous communist parties, an idea that is also questionable in terms of the formal organizations and their personnel. The focus on parties and their family relations also underestimates the shift toward movement-type organizations in civil society. The radical left manifested itself in the demonstration for nuclear disarmament in the mid-1980s, attracting millions of protesters across Europe; the anti-racism demonstrations in the early 1990s; and the series of protest movements in the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2008, such as the Occupy movement in many parts of Europe, the Spanish *Movimiento 15-M*, the *Nuits Debouts* and the *gilets jaunes* in France, and the *Aufstehen* movement in Germany.<sup>32</sup> Although new party formations have emerged, some of which were electorally successful (like the German and Dutch Green parties, or the Spanish *Podemos*, which grew out of *Movimiento 15-M*), each of these parties have a close yet also tense relationship with social movement organizations.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, they struggle to reach out to the lower-class constituencies that were mobilized by the older members of the leftist party family. Despite calls for a ‘left populism,’ ‘the people’ appear to be mobilized more successfully by the right than the left.<sup>34</sup>

This brings us to the reconstruction of the right of the right after 1989. On closer inspection, the potential of the radical right to mobilize ‘the people,’ and therefore also the danger of right-wing populism, seems more limited than suggested by warnings against a ‘return of the repressed,’ or even a resurgence of ‘new fascism.’ In terms of the number of people mobilized, right-wing activism remains limited. The largest number of protesters the German anti-immigrant and anti-Islam movement, *Pegida*, has been able to mobilize is estimated at 25,000 people for a demonstration in Dresden on January 12, 2015. But in most other *Pegida* demonstrations, only a couple of hundred people participated. Other issues that might be characterized as right-wing attracted more protesters. In France, the largest instantiation of the anti-abortion *Marche pour la vie* attracted between 11,000 (according to the police) and 50,000 (according to the organizing committee) anti-abortion demonstrators.<sup>35</sup> Yet the number of protesters the French

conservatives were able to mobilize was much less than most of the left-wing protest. In Germany, the potential of Pegida to mobilize supporters is weak in comparison to the number of demonstrators attending protests against Pegida, and the support they receive, even from the conservative journal *Bild*, whose headline asserted ‘*Nein zu Pegida!*’<sup>36</sup>

More important than numbers is perhaps the nature of the protests: the attack on immigrants and ethnic minorities in many parts of Europe seemed unimaginable in the aftermath of Nazism. But also then, the counter-mobilization and manifestations of solidarity and indignation these attacks provoked were equally remarkable. Most striking in this respect was the massive outpouring of indignation in responses to the murder of the editors of *Charlie Hebdo* in January 2015. While Pegida tried to cash in on anti-immigrant and anti-Islam sentiments, their expectations of a mass response did not materialize: the slogan *Je suis Charlie*, mobilizing hundreds of thousands of protesters around the world, was highly ambiguous, but not racist or directed against Islam.

Given the populist nature of the right-wing movements, it is perhaps ironic that they have made their most important impact in electoral and parliamentary politics, thus confirming the idea that party democracy as such is perhaps not in crisis.<sup>37</sup> Geert Wilders, leader of the Dutch Freedom Party, has already been a member of the Dutch parliament for over 20 years, which is his main platform of political action, not least because his freedom of movement is severely restricted due to continuous death threats. The Front National, the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, and the Vlaams Belang are also primarily electoral machines, aiming to gain seats in representative bodies. This is not to say they cherish parliament for intrinsic reasons. Wilders angered his fellow MPs by calling the Dutch Second Chamber a ‘fake parliament,’ and his recent competitor for the populist vote, the MP Thierry Baudet, has explained his frequent absence from debates in parliament by declaring that its petty quibbles were beyond his dignity: ‘I refuse to participate in this fairytale world. [...] I am busy building an organization outside this Chamber.’<sup>38</sup>

However, even if right-wing populist parties attract a lot of attention with such interventions, there seems to be an insurmountable electoral threshold: so far, none of the parties have been able to attract much more than 20 percent of the vote. An exception is perhaps Italy, where Berlusconi won a series of elections on an anti-communist platform (remarkably, after 1989) that included the neo-fascist party Alleanza Nazionale, while Berlusconi himself presented a political style reminiscent of Mussolini—a comparison he did not contradict, to say the least.<sup>39</sup> An explanation for the persistent attraction of fascism in Italy might be the half-hearted departure from its fascist past, especially in comparison with the deep-seated anti-Nazi consensus in Germany (perhaps less so in former East Germany, now the main recruiting ground for Pegida and AfD). In no other European country have radical right-wing parties with identifiable links to the fascist past gained an electoral foothold. If such connections become manifest, party support withers away, as was the case with the German Republikaner. The other outcome is the party tries to distance itself from that past—and in the case of Marine le Pen and

the Front National, also from the (founding) fathers of the party. Even if parties stem from a fascist legacy, or in some cases, like the Austrian FPÖ or the Italian Lega Nord, only at a later stage embrace fascist themes, the use of the label itself is still a non-starter. This seems even to be the case in Italy, where even the most outspoken fascist movement elusively calls itself ‘CasaPound’ after the fascist modernist poet Ezra Pound.<sup>40</sup>

But perhaps it is not their potential to mobilize activists or voters, but the reappearance of the fascist ideology and style on the political scene that indicates a dramatic change in Western European politics. In that sense, Stone is right to warn against a resurgent fascism. But perhaps the more nefarious issue here is that this is only in part to be explained as the result of the rise of new, populist, extreme right-wing, ultranationalist, or even neo-fascist parties. As the expert on right-wing radicalism, Cas Mudde, argues:

Rather than the populist radical right, it has been the mainstream right-wing that has pushed West-European politics to the right, in part in response to media and popular responses to relatively recent developments (such as multi-ethnic societies, the Maastricht Treaty and 9/11).<sup>41</sup>

## Conclusion

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of communism affected not only the communist parties: all players in the field had to adjust as a result of crisis tendencies in Western European democracies dating back to the 1970s. The period between 1968 and 1982 can in many ways be seen as the *Sattelzeit* between the postwar period of high-modernist politics and the postmodern condition, announced by Jean-François Lyotard in 1979.<sup>42</sup> In the high-modernist phase, mass parties with a stable constituency shared parliamentary control over a state, and in this way, by and large, were able to deliver on their electoral promises. In the postmodernist phase, parliamentary debate increasingly became a spectacle, performed in the pursuit of voters whose identity became more diverse, fragmented, and individualized, while social and political transformations no longer followed a recognizable ideological script, but turned into self-propelling, auto-poetic processes. These tendencies became manifest in 1989 and were in some ways also reinforced. The fall of the Berlin Wall itself was a revolution no one had planned or was able to control; the processes of European integration that ensued were depicted as natural events, while the attempts to control it came from outside the parliamentary system.

Although most Western communist parties were abolished or thoroughly reformed, their disintegration had already set in by the 1970s. More remarkable was the reorientation of mainstream Christian and social democratic parties after 1989. The political family of the left lost not only its disciplined communist father, but also its more inclusive social-democratic mother (if we can use such gendered clichés), and multiplied in a great variety of parties and movements. The conservative family on the right welcomed the lost son of fascism

back into its midst by adopting his nationalist program and populist style. At the same time, both social democrats and conservative Christian democrats remained in most countries dominant political forces, based on their institutional power within the state. Yet they acted on the basis of a neoliberal consensus, which was presented for a long time not as an ideological choice, but as a technocratic policy option for which ‘there is no alternative,’ as Margaret Thatcher used to emphasize. As a result, parliamentary and party democracy has acquired a zombie-like character: it still functions, yet as an ideologically and socially living dead.<sup>43</sup>

Yet this is not the end of democracy. In the wake of the crisis in parliamentary and party democracy, new forms of political engagement have emerged. It is important to acknowledge that both radical leftist and right-wing reconstructions distanced themselves from the established system of political parties and parliamentary politics—and that the left did this generally more systematically and also more successfully than the right. In ideological terms, both left and right question the liberal limitations on political choice. This is definitely unsettling, especially when cherished ideas about the rule of law and the protection of minorities are put in jeopardy. But some other things need to be unsettled, notably the wisdom of a neoliberal economic order, that, even after its meltdown of 2008, in many ways seems intractable. The hard issue here is whether it is possible to separate reform of the global neoliberal order based on the mobility of money, goods, and labor from the nationalist destruction of a society of open borders and free movement of ideas and people.

Ironically, it is right-wing and nationalist populism that has gained more traction in elections and parliamentary politics, not because of the inherent power of extreme right-wing parties or movements, but as a result of the adoption of nationalist content and a populist style of debate by much of the right—and some of the left. Adopted by the mainstream, its self-regarding anti-establishment rhetoric adds to the impression that we have entered a political zombie world. Yet in itself, a reorientation of politics toward social movements, self-organization, and civil society is not necessarily a bad thing. It is an important legacy of 1989 that regrettably has largely been lost from sight, covered by the all-pervasive fear that the only alternative to a ‘restrained democracy’ would be a completely unrestrained populism that can only end in fascism.

## Notes

- 1 Diamond and Plattner, ‘Why the “Journal of Democracy”?’
- 2 ‘... in a certain sense a rewinding revolution [...] clearing the way to catch up for a failed development.’ Habermas, *Die nachholende Revolution*; Bermeo and Nord (eds.), *Civil Society before Democracy*; Blokker, ‘Democracy through the Lens of 1989: Liberal Triumph or Radical Turn?’; Elster (ed.), *The Roundtable Talks*.
- 3 Braat and Corduener, ‘1989 and Its Three Consequences for the West.’
- 4 Stone, ‘The Return of Fascism in Europe? Reflections on History and the Current Situation.’
- 5 Bull, ‘The Radical Left since 1989: Decline, Transformation and Revival.’

- 6 Patzelt (ed.), *Parlamente und ihre Funktionen*.
- 7 Pierre and Peters, *Governance, Politics and the State*. A representative collection of articles discussing this theme is: Bellamy and Palumbo (eds.), *From Government to Governance*; and the ‘Symposium on Democracy and New Modes of Governance.’
- 8 Kirkpatrick, ‘Beyond the Cold War.’
- 9 See the contributions to Meny, Muller and Quermonne (eds.), *Adjusting to Europe*; Green Cowles, Caporaso, and Risse (eds.), *Transforming Europe*; Schmidt, ‘The Politics of Economic Adjustment in France and Britain: When Does Discourse Matter?’; Will and Jacquot, ‘Using Europe: Strategic Action in Multi-Level Politics’; Featherstone, ‘Introduction: In the Name of “Europe”’; Hanf and Soetendorp (eds.), *Adapting to European Integration*; Levy, ‘Redeploying the State: Liberalization and Social Policy in France.’
- 10 Mair, *Ruling the Void*.
- 11 Foa and Mounk, ‘The Danger of Deconsolidation.’
- 12 Norris, *Democratic Deficit*, 241.
- 13 See the Online Exchange on ‘Democratic Deconsolidation,’ at [www.journalofdemocracy.org/online-exchange-%E2%80%9Cdemocratic-deconsolidation%E2%80%9D](http://www.journalofdemocracy.org/online-exchange-%E2%80%9Cdemocratic-deconsolidation%E2%80%9D) [January 25, 2019]; Amy C. Alexander and Christian Welzel, ‘The Myth of Deconsolidation: Rising Liberalism and the Populist Reaction’; Pippa Norris, ‘Is Western Democracy Backsliding? Diagnosing the Risks’; Erik Voeten ‘Are People Really Turning Away from Democracy?’; and the response by Roberto Stefan Foa and Yascha Mounk, ‘The End of the Consolidation Paradigm: A Response to Our Critics.’
- 14 Van Hecke and Emmanuel Gerard (eds.), *Christian Democratic Parties in Europe*; Kalyvas and Van Kersbergen, ‘Christian Democracy.’
- 15 Lynch and Garner, ‘The Changing Party System.’
- 16 Mudge, *Leftism Reinvented*.
- 17 Stone, *Goodbye to All That?*
- 18 Eley, ‘Corporatism and the Social Democratic Moment’; De Haan, ‘The Western European Welfare State beyond Christian and Social Democratic Ideology.’
- 19 A comprehensive overview of the German political landscape of the 1970s is offered by Faulenbach, ‘Die Siebzigerjahre: Ein Sozialdemokratisches Jahrzehnt?’; see also Faulenbach, *Das sozialdemokratische Jahrzehnt*.
- 20 Grunberg, ‘François Mitterrand et le Parti socialiste français.’
- 21 Den Uyl, ‘De smalle marge van democratische politiek.’
- 22 Faulenbach, ‘Die Siebzigerjahre: Ein sozialdemokratisches Jahrzehnt?’ 36; see also Hellema, *The Global 1970s*.
- 23 Ther, *Europe Since 1989: A History*.
- 24 Traverso, *Left-Wing Melancholia*.
- 25 March and Mudde. ‘What’s Left of the Radical Left?’
- 26 Moyn, *The Last Utopia*.
- 27 Hudson, *European Communism Since 1989*, 28–30.
- 28 Waller, ‘The Radical Sources of the Crisis in West European Communist Parties.’
- 29 Slobodian, ‘The Meanings of Western Maoism in the Global Sixties.’
- 30 Keane (ed.), *Power of the Powerless*; Keane, *Civil Society: Old Images, New Visions*; Arato, *From Neo-Marxism to Democratic Theory*; Kaldor, ‘The Ideas of 1989’; Ekiert and Kubik, ‘The Legacies of 1989.’
- 31 The relation between older and newer progressive agendas is often formulated in oppositional terms, for example, Fraser and Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition?*; Judt, *Ill Fares the Land*. This seems to overlook the extent to which social class plays a role in claims of recognition, and the claims to distributive justice implied in identity politics.
- 32 Theoretically, this point was made by Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*—the recent trade book reprint of the original version, published in 1985, is itself an indication of the persistence of this kind of activism; empirically, the new social movements were charted in Kriesi et al., *New Social Movements in Western Europe*.

- 33 For example, Tsakatika and Lisi, ‘Zippin’ Up My Boots, Goin’ Back to My Roots.’
- 34 Mouffe, *For a Left Populism*.
- 35 [https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marche\\_pour\\_la\\_vie\\_\(Paris\)](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marche_pour_la_vie_(Paris)) (January 25, 2019).
- 36 *Bild*, January 6, 2015: Kate Connolly, ‘German Leaders Condemn Xenophobia after Pegida Protests,’ *The Guardian*, January 6, 2015.
- 37 This is also reflected in scholarship: most studies of right-wing radicalism focuses on parties; that is even the case for an otherwise informative study from a social movement perspective Klandermans and Mayer (eds.), *Extreme Right Activist in Europe*.
- 38 *Handelingen Tweede Kamer der Staten Generaal*, 2018–2109, nr. 35000.3, Algemene Politieke Beschouwingen, September 21, 2018.
- 39 Orsina, ‘The Republic after Berlusconi.’
- 40 Ignazi, ‘The Extreme Right in Europe: A Survey’; Cento Bull, *Italian Neo-Fascism*; Cento Bull ‘Neo-Fascism’; Castelli Gattinara and Caterina, ‘Discourse and Practice of Violence in the Italian Extreme Right’; Jones, ‘The Fascist Movement That Has Brought Mussolini Back to the Mainstream,’ *The Guardian*, February 22, 2018.
- 41 Mudde, *On Extremism and Democracy*, 15.
- 42 Lyotard, *La Condition Postmoderne*. Similar observations, largely derived from an American context, can be found in Rogers, *The Age of Fracture*.
- 43 Crouch, *Post-Democracy*.

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# 14 The radical left since 1989

## Decline, transformation, and revival

*Martin J. Bull*

Any assessment of the impact on the West of the Cold War in 1989 cannot fail to consider the question of what has happened to that political space to the left of social democracy occupied since the Russian Revolution by Western communist parties. Indeed, the overthrow of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe posed an immediate and dramatic question about these parties: whether they had any further relevance (albeit as opposition parties) in the Western political systems of which they played a part. After all, their very creation and continued existence had been predicated on an equally monumental historical event: the Russian Revolution of 1917. That revolution had ushered in a long-term distinction between social democratic parties on the one hand and communist parties on the other, some of which (in the East) became rulers, while others (in the West) became long-term opposition parties to the capitalist system. The implication of the disappearance of the former, therefore, was not difficult to draw: they were surely redundant, and this was the expectation.

Thirty years on, however, when we look at the area known commonly as the ‘radical left’, we see a rich tapestry of political parties, many (but not all) with ‘communist’ in their name. In short, communism as we knew it disappeared but not, it seems, communism per se or the radical politics with which it is associated, and which more generally has witnessed a mushrooming of new variants with the freeing of the radical left area from what was the overarching shadow of the Soviet umbrella. This chapter assesses the trajectory and fortunes of the radical left in the period since 1989 as a means of providing a perspective on the significance of the 1989 events for this political area. The first section of this chapter contextualizes the historical importance of the 1989 revolutions. The second section then assesses the immediate impact of the revolutions on the family of West European communist parties (WECs) in the early 1990s. The third section analyzes the transformation of the radical left that subsequently occurred, exploring the current radical left and assessing to what extent it can be described as a genuine ‘party family.’ The final section looks at the performance of the radical left and its likely prospects.

### **The historical context of the 1989 revolutions**

It is not possible to understand the significance of the 1989 revolutions without reference to their historical context and specifically to the Russian Revolution

of 1917. Although divisions between reformists and revolutionaries in Socialist parties pre-dated 1917, it was the Russian (or October) Revolution that cemented an ideological and organizational division between communist parties on the one hand and socialist or social democratic parties on the other, giving birth to two distinct party families.<sup>1</sup> Two years later, in 1919, the Communist International (Comintern) was founded, and in 1923 the Labour and Socialist International. In 1920, the Comintern formulated 21 Points (a form of international Communist manifesto) that had to be adhered to by any parties wishing to join. This set off a reaction across socialist parties elsewhere in the world, with factional struggles resulting in the hardening of some stances of existing socialist parties to conform to the Comintern's demands or, more frequently, in breakaway factions from the socialist parties forming new communist countries across the world. Significantly, in the Comintern and its successor (the Cominform), what started out putatively as an international umbrella for communist parties became a vehicle for the dominance (and defense) of the Soviet Motherland, once it became clear that what the revolution had achieved in that country was not going to be so easily exported elsewhere.

Of course, it would be fanciful to argue that this division (between socialist and communist parties) remained unchanged between the 1920s and 1989. In the period until the 1960s, Western communist parties—while participating in their respective parliamentary democracies as any other political parties and embodying a level of ambivalence in what they actually stood for—essentially followed the Soviet Union's foreign policy, which changed over time: from orthodox in the 1930s to promoting Popular Fronts (alliances between communist and socialist parties) in the 1940s, to a more orthodox line again in the 1950s Cold War. However, in the 1960s the strains in the international communist alliance began to show, especially with the emergence of new types of political parties on the far left. The Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968 proved to be an important turning point, as Western communist parties were divided in their responses, the larger Italian and Spanish parties coming out in opposition to it. This laid the basis for the development of the so-called Eurocommunist parties (especially the Italian, Spanish, and French communist parties) and 'national roads to socialism' in the 1970s, which strained further the relationship with the Soviet motherland, since Eurocommunism was premised on the rejection of the guiding influence of a single country over the international communist movement. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1980 and its intervention in Poland the following year, which witnessed the imposition of martial law and the repression of the Solidarity trade union movement, constituted a further turning point in Soviet–Western communist relations. The influential Italian Communist Party (PCI) refused to participate in the international conference of communist parties held in Paris in 1980, strongly criticized both Soviet actions, and, in response to the latter, Enrico Berlinguer, the leader of the PCI, declared that the progressive 'impulse' of the October Revolution had become exhausted. The 1980s therefore witnessed a fragmentation between Western communist parties, the Italian and Spanish following their own ways, while the French returned to a more orthodox position in support

of the Soviet Union. Eurocommunist unity (which had always been more apparent than real) was dismantled, but it was not replaced with any other unity, thus confirming the essential failure of the international communist movement to impose any common model on the relationship of non-ruling parties with Moscow. The electoral and organizational decline of Western communist parties during the 1980s further enhanced this fragmentation as the individual parties looked for different ways to respond to loss of voters and members.

Yet, despite these monumental changes in the relationship between Western communist parties and the Soviet Union, and despite the internal changes in the configuration of the Western European left, the essential distinction between communism and social democracy remained not just valid but the most important division still prevailing in the European left. The WECPs were still regarded and treated as a 'party family' and the very fact that there was a wide-ranging debate over whether there was anything still 'distinctive' about these parties seemed simply to confirm that the division, however much 'softened,' remained intact. True, the nature and role of the relationship with the Soviet Union had dramatically changed, yet, if Eurocommunism had stood for anything, it was not a break with the motherland but rather the idea that there was no single model governing that relationship—which was still regarded as 'special' (in the sense of more 'privileged' than other parties of the left—even if that was based on little more than a legacy). This proximity was confirmed in the response of these parties to the reform process, commonly known as perestroika, embarked upon in the Soviet Union in 1985 by President Gorbachev. The prospect of 'real' socialism being reformed was too captivating to be ignored by those WECPs that had distanced themselves from Moscow previously, and they found themselves seduced back into a distinctive relationship with Moscow based on support for Gorbachev. And since, at the same time, some more orthodox Western communist parties were suspicious of, if not outright opposed to, Gorbachev's program of reform, the division between Western parties was transformed into one based on 'pro-Soviet' versus 'pro-Stalinist' positions. Either way, the Soviet Union, on the cusp of the revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe, still played a key defining role in WECP identities. From that flowed two other features that continued to distinguish their identities from other parties of the left: their teleological nature (however much WECPs had embraced Western principles of democracy, at the same time they remained committed to building a society different to the capitalist one—they were pursuing 'parliamentary roads to socialism'), and the maintenance of a party organizational principle, democratic centralism, which emanated from Leninism and through which internal elections were controlled and dissent suppressed.

This is not to suggest that there was any uniform model of WECPs, since there was variation both between and inside these parties along all three dimensions (the link to the Soviet motherland, their teleological nature, and the operational principle of democratic centralism). But these differences did not change the distinctiveness in the identity of these parties in relation to social democratic parties, arguments being advanced to support this even in relation to the more 'liberal' of

them, such as the PCI.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, to a large extent, this reflected the debates inside these parties between those advocating the effective social democratization of the parties versus those who argued that it was the very de-radicalization of their parties (to the mere management of capitalist development) that left them no different to the socialist parties of Craxi, Gonzales, and Mitterrand. The leaderships, for the most part, were either ‘centrist,’ mediating between the extremes while allowing a degree of ‘liberalization,’ or ‘orthodox,’ resisting any of these changes. The events of 1989, however, changed that situation forever, quickly bringing to an end the history of a distinct family of non-ruling communist parties in the West.

### **The 1989 revolutions: WECPs and their successors**

The West European communist parties’ support for, and hope in, the perestroika reform process left them totally unprepared to deal with the collapse of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe (symbolized in the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989) and the ending of the Soviet Union in 1991. Perestroika was concerned with reforming socialism, and, irrespective of exactly what this entailed, it meant that the process was evolutionary and aimed at retaining socialism intact. The revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe, in contrast, were concerned with throwing out socialism altogether, and the speed and decisiveness with which this proceeded, combined with the optimism that had been generated around Gorbachev’s reform program, caught the Western communist parties off guard. Extraordinarily, the ruling communist parties of Central and Eastern Europe (beginning with the Hungarian) started shedding their names, symbols, and histories while the non-ruling parties of the West dithered and hung on to theirs. For the latter, the dilemmas they had been confronting until then (electoral and organizational decline) were dramatically transformed into an existential crisis involving their very survival as communist parties. Their responses to this crisis brought the tensions between and inside the parties to breaking point, and this erstwhile ‘family’ of WECPs cracked and, by the early 1990s, was no more.

A simplistic, ‘linear’ view of history, of course, would have dictated a straightforward ‘social democratization’ of these parties and the overcoming of a 70-year division in the history of the European left. Yet, this was never likely to have happened for two reasons. First, as outlined above, this ‘family’ of parties had always ‘housed’ within it very different parties shaped by differing national environments over a 70-year period but held together in what was often a semblance of unity by their teleological nature, internal organizing principle, and loyalty to the Soviet motherland. Second, the idea and meaning of ‘social democratization’ had been completely transformed in the course of 70 years, meaning it was no longer such an easy ‘choice.’ In particular, any Western communist parties contemplating this option were aware that their social democratic counterparts had long been grappling with analogous problems to those of the WECPs in terms of organizational and electoral decline. Ironically, therefore, of the different choices facing the parties, straightforward ‘social democratization’ was probably the least appealing, because simply crossing the Rubicon offered no sure prospect of survival.

WECPs became, broadly speaking, divided into three camps in their immediate responses to this crisis.<sup>3</sup> First, some parties adopted what might be described as a ‘social democratizing’ logic, recognizing in the collapse of ‘real socialism’ the failure of communism itself, requiring therefore the effective dissolution of their party organizations and the shedding of their heritage, symbols, and names, while at the same time avoiding a straightforward social democratization that would have entailed a straightforward embracing of their pre-1917 colleagues on the left. Instead, these parties attempted to follow a ‘new road’ on the left, immediately evidenced in the choice of names (which avoided any reference to social democracy) and a continuing quest to be independent. The Italian Communist Party, for example, transformed itself into the Democratic Party of the Left, and the Finnish Communists into the Left Alliance. Second, other parties—such as the Spanish and Greek parties, as well as part of the Italian party, which split to form Communist Refoundation—viewed the collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe as a rejection of a particular ‘degenerated’ form of socialism but not of socialism itself. Indeed, they viewed the collapse in ‘real existing socialism’ as a veritable opportunity to return to the original Marxist principles and (re)construct communist parties on that basis. Third, some orthodox Western communist parties (the French, Belgian, German, and Portuguese), at least in the short term, simply rejected the idea that anything had changed that required them to re-evaluate their strategies and goals (a position that became increasingly untenable after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991).

If, therefore, we are in this section assessing *only* the fate of Western communism (as opposed to the trajectory of all the party organizations that formerly represented Western communism as well as other radical left developments – see next section), the focus is on the second two groups, since both aspired to continue with the doctrine that putatively inspired the 1917 Russian revolutions. They can also be viewed together since some of them shifted position from the orthodoxy group to the other ‘re-founding’ group. Their electoral performances after 1989, however, were anything but successful. Leaving aside the Cypriot Communist Party (AKEL) as an exception (based on its unusual national environment), an analysis of the first 15 years of elections after 1989 shows electoral stasis or decline for all the main Western communist parties that opted to stay in existence: the Danish, French, Greek, Italian, Luxembourg, Portuguese, and Spanish communist parties.<sup>4</sup> Excluding elections in the year 1989 itself and also election results where the communists were part of an electoral alliance, the largest share of the vote secured by a Western communist party in the period up to 2004 was 9.9 percent by the French Communist Party in 1997. Compared with its heyday in the years of Eurocommunism, Western communism became a marginalized political movement after 1989, their changed situation characterized, and likely exacerbated, by two other factors.

First, while the communist parties in Central and Eastern Europe could be distinguished from WECPs on the basis of their ruling nature in communist regimes, once the revolutions of 1989 had taken their course, the choices faced by the political parties as parties were not so different and their responses were equally



divided, except that the anti-communist sentiment was, for obvious reasons, even more pronounced. Even though some 'successor' communist parties survived in areas of Central and Eastern Europe (e.g. Russia, Ukraine, Czech Republic, Moldova), most of the erstwhile ruling communist parties took the route of social democratization (e.g. Hungary, Poland, Slovakia), or at least conversion into some kind of non-communist party of the left/center-left (e.g. Serbia, Romania, East Germany), while in other countries they disappeared altogether (e.g. Croatia, Slovenia, the Baltic States).<sup>5</sup>

Second, the disappearance of the Soviet Union both as an example (albeit flawed) of 'real existing socialism' and as an international 'leader' of the communist world removed a vital linking factor or reference point for communist parties in the West that decided to stay in existence. The point was that non-ruling communist parties had not been just a distinct family apart or a 'Western' movement but part of an international movement represented by a network of ruling regimes and a 'Motherland,' all embraced by the same Marxist-Leninist ideology. However tainted the ruling 'model' had been, its removal fundamentally changed everything for the rulers and non-rulers alike.<sup>6</sup>

To summarize, the impact of the 1989 revolutions on Western communism was fundamental in nature, comprehensive in scope, and both immediate and long-term in time-span. The revolutions effectively destroyed the international communist movement and WECPs as a distinct 'family' of parties. These parties were already facing long-term organizational, ideological, and electoral decline, and the dramatic events of 1989 caused them to splinter, both internally and externally, with the most influential of them 'leaving' the communist fold for pastures new in the social democratic/democratic socialist area. Moreover, those that attempted to keep the communist label or aspiration alive, either in orthodox or (apparently) rejuvenated form, were left, for the most part, as marginalized remnants of a burnt-out cause. End of story? Not at all, for Western communist parties have not, since 1989, made up the entirety of the 'radical left' experience. On the contrary, while in the early years after 1989 there may have been good reason to focus on the fate of Western communism in the form of post-communist organizations (be they orthodox, rejuvenated, or social-democratized), it was becoming clear, within a decade, that the events of 1989 had helped stimulate a far broader sea change in the political area to the left of social democracy,<sup>7</sup> generating new configurations of radical left politics that remain with us to this day.

In fact, to understand fully what happened to the radical left after 1989, it is important to note that Western communist parties did not constitute the entirety of the 'left of the left' experience *before* that date, making the revolutionary impact of 1989 more a catalyst for change already underway than acting as something entirely new. The monopoly of Western communism on the far left had already begun to be undermined in the two decades before the 1989 revolutions by two notable developments: the emergence of the 'New Left' on the one hand, which was prominent in the 1960s and 1970s, and the 'New Politics' (Greens) in the 1970s and 1980s on the other. Both of these originated in social-cultural phenomena and saw their original expression (first in the United States) in the new social movements (and notably but not only the student movements) of the late 1960s,

which were concerned with broader issues than just forms of class struggle: civil and political rights, gender, drug policies, peace, the Third World, and so on.

In Europe, the combination of the rise of social movements and increased industrial militancy saw the New Left become an outlet for frustration with the traditional channels of expression of the far left (communist parties), seen increasingly as bureaucratic organizations that had become wedded to parliamentary practices. WECPs in several European countries therefore found themselves 'out-flanked' by political organizations (occasionally in party political form) forwarding not just radical social and policy reforms, but non-parliamentary, grassroots politics as the best expression of democracy and achieving their goals. In some European countries, the New Left or extra-parliamentary left became the origin or impetus toward the growth of terrorist movements, some elements effectively de-radicalizing and channeling their efforts into democratic socialist ventures as the movement split, while others became more militant and went down the route of political violence.<sup>8</sup>

The New (or Green) Politics came from a not dissimilar milieu, but it was one more characterized by ecologism and opposition to the use of nuclear energy. Their challenge to the far left was two-fold. On the one hand, they rejected, in the causes they pursued and the electorate they represented, the long-standing notion of the left-right cleavage in politics. On the other hand, there was no doubt that, if placed anywhere on the traditional political spectrum, the Green parties that emerged were—on various criteria—clearly more radical and leftist in nature than centrist and right.<sup>9</sup> Their original ideological basis, ecologism, rejected capitalism, and was skeptical about the capacity of representative democracy to deliver on the environmental agenda, promoting forms of direct democracy instead. Indeed, if there was a difference between the parties it was focused on how much 'red' was on the inside of the 'Green' (hence the nickname 'melon' parties for several of them). In short, traditional parties of the far left such as WECPs found their role under threat on two related fronts, for the Greens threatened to show that it was possible to be radical and leftist in a new era of political competition where the traditional left-right cleavage no longer properly represented a range of choices that corresponded to society's aspirations.

These changes help explain why traditional parties of the left (social democratic and communist) found themselves in electoral, ideological, and organizational decline in the 1980s. In short, the tidal wave of change unleashed by the 1989 revolutions hit a family of parties already in difficulties, and the effect could be described as completing a process already underway by instigating an existential crisis that was not just limited to WECPs. The monumental scale of what occurred in 1989 meant that all left-wing political parties (and notably all parties to the left of social democracy) found themselves tarnished in the public perception (no matter how independent they had become from the Soviet motherland), with their traditional policies (based fundamentally on nationalization or at least a strong interventionist state) viewed as out of touch if not dangerous. Left-wing politics was entering a phase of acute hostility from other political forces and Western publics at large, necessitating a fundamental reconfiguration and rethink that would see the European postwar radical left changed forever.

### **From the WECPs to the radical left: a new party family?**

The 1989 revolutions were a watershed moment in the history of the left because they removed a decisive division in the far left that had structured it for more than 70 years. WECPs, at least as a fairly distinctive family of parties, exited a political space to the left of social democracy that they had long coveted, allowing that space to be occupied, over time, by other actors. This development allowed other factors to play a significant part in the way in which the far left subsequently developed. These factors included: the expansion and growth of New Left and New Politics issues; the rightward drift of social democratic parties in the 1990s; the development, and later discrediting, of notions of a ‘Third Way’; the world economic crisis of 2008; and the subsequent rise of protest politics and populism. The changes were, therefore, a combination of pre-existing trends that now found space to mushroom more fully, alongside new issues sparked off by changes in the political, economic, and social environment. Combined, they have acted as a foundation for transformative change in that political area to the left of social democracy, reconstituting, reshaping, and reforming the old WECP family into something different, now commonly known as the ‘radical left’ or radical left parties (RLPs). But, 30 years on, do RLPs constitute a genuine ‘party family’ like their WECP forbears? Mair and Mudde identify four different criteria for evaluating the existence and distinctiveness of a ‘party family’: the parties’ names or labels; the parties’ origins (or their sociology); party policy or ideology; and the international federations or transnational groupings to which the parties belong.<sup>10</sup> This section will use these four criteria to assess the extent to which the post-1989 radical left might be seen as a real ‘party family.’

Table 14.1 classifies by nomenclature (which in practice, to a large extent, also indicates their origins) the parties most commonly associated with the ‘radical left’ in Western European political systems. Four features immediately stand out from this table. The first is the extraordinary tapestry of radical left parties in Europe that has emerged since 1989. Indeed, this area has been widely dubbed a ‘mosaic left,’ which, in contrast with their WECP predecessors, is the ‘heir of multiple and often conflicting legacies.’<sup>11</sup> The party names alone give clear indicators of the diversity of sociological origins: communist, worker, Proletarian, democratic socialist, socialist, Green, left, radical, as well as ‘We Can’ (associated with origins of an anti-establishment or protest nature). The second is the increased emphasis on alliance or coalition-making in the new parties (an anathema to the former communist parties before 1989), especially in relation to the Green parties (the so-called Red–Green alliances). The third is the rise, especially since the economic crash of 2008, of a new category of RLPs in the form of Podemos, a social protest party that is more difficult to classify easily on the traditional left–right spectrum.<sup>12</sup> The fourth is that, despite these important features of organizational change and the disappearance of the ‘family’ of WECPs, there has been a persistence of the communist name and communist organizations. Contrary to many of the expectations and observations of processes underway in the immediate aftermath of the 1989 revolutions, communist parties in the West survived and even grew.<sup>13</sup>

Table 14.1 'Radical left parties' in Western Europe by nomenclature and country (since 1989), founding and dissolution dates (when after 1989), and indicative electoral size (through average share of vote 2000–2015)

	AUS	CYP	DMK	FIN	FRA	GER	GRE	ICE	IRE	ITA	LUX	NET	NOR	POR	SPA	SWE	SWI
Communist	KPÖ 0.85				PCF 5.34 NPA 2009– LCR–2009		KKE 6.4			PCI–1991 RC 4.02 PdCI 2.32			NKP 0.02	PCP 7.74			
Workers		AKEL 32.83			LO	WASG –2007	DEA 2001–		WP 0.28								PdAS 0.79
Socialist			SF –2012			PDS –2007			SP 1996– 0.66			SP 9.66	SV 7.9				
Left				VAS 8.5	PG 2009–	DL –2007 9.73	SYR 2004–16.38		DL 1992–99		DL 3.36			BE 1999–6.86	IU 6.18	V prev VPK 6.4	
Red–Green							KEDA 2000–04	VG 1991–2004									
Peoples					FI 2016– 11.03		AKOA–2013	1999–13.87									Pod 2014– 20.7
							AC 2002–15	PA –1998									
							PU 2015–										

Key:

AUS = Austria; CYP = Cyprus; DMK = Denmark; FIN = Finland; FRA = France; GER = Germany; GRE = Greece; ICE = Iceland; IRE = Ireland; ITA = Italy; LUX = Luxembourg; NET = Netherlands; NOR = Norway; POR = Portugal; SPA = Spain; SWE = Sweden; SWI = Switzerland.

AC = Active Citizens; AKEL = Progressive Party of Working People; AKOA = Renewing Communist Ecological Left; BE = Left Bloc; CDU = Unitary Democratic Coalition (electoral coalition between PCP & Greens); DEA = International Workers Left; DL(GER) = The Left; DL(IRE) = Democratic Left; DL(LUX) = The Left; EL = Red–Green Alliance; FI = France Unbowled; IRSP = Irish Republican Socialist Party; IU = United Left; KEDA = Movement for the United in Action Left; KPO = Communist Party of Austria; LCR = Revolutionary Communist League; LO = Workers' Struggle; NKP = Norwegian Communist Party; NPA = New Anti-Capitalist Party; PCdI = Party of the Italian Communists; PCF = French Communist Party; PCI = Italian Communist Party; PCP = Portuguese Communist Party; PdAS = Party of Labour; PDS = Party of Democratic Socialism; PG = Left Party; Pod = 'We Can' (Podemos); PU = Popular Unity; RC = Communist Refoundation; SF = Socialist People Party; SP (IRE & NET) = Socialist Party; SV = Socialist Left Party; SYN = Coalition of Left, of Movements & Ecology; SYR = Syriza or Coalition of the Radical Left; V = Left Party; VAS = Left Alliance; VPK = Left Party-Communists; WASG = Labour and Social Justice—The Electoral Alternative; WP = Workers Party.

Notes:

Founding dates included only in cases where parties were born after 1989; a single date followed by dash = date of founding, with party still in existence; a single date preceded by dash = party in existence until that date; two dates with hyphen between = lifespan of party; figures = average percentage of vote share in lower house 2000–2015; average vote share not provided for parties no longer in existence; purely electoral coalitions and their effects on aggregate vote share are not included (and explains some missing vote averages for parties still in existence).

Source: Average vote figures from Katsourides (2016: 7) and author's own calculations.

Instinctively, the fragmentation expressed in Table 14.1 does not appear to be a likely foundation for a 'party family,' something that tends to be reinforced by the difficulty that was experienced in finding a common term or label for this grouping, once the term 'post-communist' parties began to wane as a useful instrument of description.<sup>14</sup> Expressions such as 'far left'<sup>15</sup> or 'extreme left' may have seemed to have been adequate in the immediate aftermath of the 1989 revolutions, when expectations of total marginalization if not disappearance were rife. However, WECPs themselves had for a long time been out-flanked by tiny orthodox Marxist-Leninist parties devoted to overthrowing the capitalist order through political violence, which, like their 'extreme right' counterparts,<sup>16</sup> had been dubbed the 'extreme left,' making such a term difficult to transfer. Alternatives, such as 'left of the left,' 'New Left,' or 'New European Left'<sup>17</sup> did not catch on, possibly because they lacked an adjective to distinguish these parties from their social democratic counterparts (and 'left of the left' was, in the 1990s, used more as a question concerning the whole of the left: 'what's left of the left?'). 'Transformative left'<sup>18</sup> and 'Radical Left Parties'<sup>19</sup> constituted clearer attempts to recognize explicitly the continuing division of the left into two broad camps: social democracy and its affiliates on the one hand and a 'grouping' to its left. Of these two terms, it is the latter that gained traction and the label 'radical left parties' (RLPs) is now widely used to group together the diverse political groupings to the left of social democracy. Even though there are inherent problems with the term, especially in some areas outside an English language context,<sup>20</sup> 'radical left parties' retains a definitional relevance appropriate to the 'expansionist' aspirations of the parties to the left of social democracy as well as usefully mirroring a similar expression developed to account for changes in right-wing political parties),<sup>21</sup> which, together, convey a sense of a more fundamental change that might be at work in undermining the traditional left-right party spectrum through the rise of RLPs and radical right parties (RRPs).

However, it should be emphasized that it has not been possible to make good sense of RLPs without the use of subdivisions. Different authors have used variations of subdivisions depending on the emphasis they place on different possible criteria (origins, ideology, policies, etc.). March's categorization provides a good illustration of the sort of subdivisions necessary to make sense of what would otherwise constitute too diverse a range of individual party organizations under one umbrella: 'conservative communist' parties, 'reform communist' parties, 'democratic socialist' parties, 'populist socialist' parties, and 'social populist' parties (this last being distinguished by its explicit fusion of left- and right-wing traits, making it controversial to define it as a genuine RLP).<sup>22</sup>

If it is possible, while recognizing and accepting these parties' diverse social origins, to categorize them under a single umbrella term (albeit with subdivisions), do they stand for a single ideology or set of policies or do they, at least, carry a 'distinctiveness' analogous to their WECP predecessors? In fact, there are commonalities that act as clear binding elements in the post-1989 radical left. In narrow definitional terms, March and Mudde define RLPs as 'radical' in the sense of, first, a rejection of 'the underlying socio-economic structure of contemporary

capitalism and its values and practices,' and, second, the proposal for 'alternative economic and power structures involving a major redistribution of resources from the existing political elites.'<sup>23</sup> And the authors define them as of the 'left' in the sense first, of 'their identification of economic inequity as the basis of existing political and social arrangements,' second, of their anti-capitalist (as opposed to anti-democratic) nature, and third, of their international outlook in identifying national problems as having 'global structural causes.'

At the same time, it is easy to identify clear differences between the parties. Since they do not now all originate from a split in social democracy, some of them do not define themselves in relation to it, indeed do not even view social democracy as constituting the left. They also have very different ideological beliefs, some motivated by Marxist or socialist principles, others principally by ecological or environmental beliefs. They have different views on internationalism and the European Union (EU). And they have very different, party organizational features.<sup>24</sup> This has resulted in most classifications (or subdivisions) being based on the differences between so-called 'traditional' RLPs (essentially those emanating from the 'communist' fold) and New Politics/New Left RLPs (as in March cited above). Yet, while these differences are still evidently present, there are signs that they are breaking down, at least in terms of potential identity indicators of whole parties. Gomez, Morales, and Ramiro, in a detailed analysis of RLP programmatic positions, found that some of the parties that were consistently identified, on the basis of programmatic positions, as being located in the New Politics category, were, in fact, parties that still remained loyal to the communist identity.<sup>25</sup>

If this suggests that change is occurring, it should be added that the programmatic positions of RLPs have, perhaps inevitably, also been shaped by the changing broader political context in which they have been operating. The decade immediately following the collapse of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe witnessed the emergence of much stronger forms of both globalization and monetary integration at both European and international levels, reducing the range of policy instruments available to left-wing governments to achieve their objectives. The reaction of center-left (social democratic) parties has been largely to accept this more circumscribed set of affairs, with a notable shift toward the center in their policy positions, thus opening up space to their left (especially as these parties have experienced a decline in members and votes). That political space, inherently constrained at first by the dominant tide of neo-liberal thinking, became more viable and vibrant as a consequence of the great recession of 2008 and the ensuing Eurozone crisis, which produced a hardening of the resistance to globalization as an inevitable form of capitalism, notably regarding the EU, where the Eurozone crisis witnessed the emergence of austerity policies effectively imposed on national governments through the use of the Stability Pact to ensure compliance with the EU's deficit rules. Ironically, therefore, if the overthrow of the communist regimes in 1989 was expected (at least in the long term) to unify communists and social democrats, the implementation of austerity politics two decades later confirmed just how different social democratic parties remained from the communist and other RLPs and drove a further wedge between



them: ‘The implementation of the austerity measures has fundamentally operated as a new political cleavage, which has once again separated the social democratic forces, on the one side, and the Anti-Austerity Left parties, on the other.’<sup>26</sup> Finally, the subsequent rise of the populist far right (also in reaction to globalization and the great recession) fueled even more activeness and visibility on the part of the radical left, which views the former as a significant risk to democracy itself.

In short, the radical left political space has partly been defined, and been helped in defining itself, by the changing political context in which it has been working over the past 30 years. Fagerholm,<sup>27</sup> in a detailed study of party programs of RLPs before and after 1989, found that while among a majority of RLPs there was a perhaps inevitable de-radicalization of leftist party programs and a consequent shift toward the center (on the left–right dimension) during the 1990s compared with the pre-1989 positions of such parties, the period after the economic crash in 2008 witnessed a shift back toward a stronger emphasis on leftist socioeconomic themes among several of the reform communist parties, democratic socialist parties, and populist socialist parties. In addition, the author found that, although the post-1989 period was marked by an increased emphasis among RLPs on what might be described as ‘new left’ issues such as diversity and, notably, environmentalism, these parties nonetheless have remained:

distinguishable from competing (non-left) parties mainly through their comparatively strong emphasis on socialist economics (i.e. issues related to nationalization and the controlled economy) and working class interests, and from all other, non-radical left, parties through their emphasis on Marxism and other issues frequently associated with radical left rhetoric, such as anti-imperialism, demands for peace, and a critique of European integration and the armed forces.<sup>28</sup>

This is probably explicable not just in terms of ‘old habits die hard,’ but by the dramatically changed political context since 2008 that has made radical left propositions more pertinent and potentially more attractive to voters than in the previous two decades. Indeed, while 1989 marked a significant turning point in the trajectory of the radical left, it cannot be seen as the only one of the past 30 years, as the veritable crisis of 2008 and the great recession that followed have demonstrated.

Finally, if there is a semblance of definitional and programmatic unity, the question arises as to whether these parties are or can be represented by the same organization internationally. Perhaps the best indicator of this is the attempt to obtain unity behind a single European Parliamentary Group. Prior to 1989, WECPs were members of the ‘Communist and Allies’ Group. Post-1989 that became redundant, but the first attempt to create a new parliamentary group, led primarily by the Italian and Spanish communist parties, represented an attempt to bring together former communists and social democrat parties in a single organization, ‘European United Left,’ despite the presence of the European Socialist group. This operation was opposed by the more orthodox communist parties, led



by the French, which set up the 'United Left' group in opposition. Neither of these groups survived beyond the 1994 European elections. The European United Left was left untenable by the departure to the European Socialist parliamentary group of the sizeable Italian Democratic Party of the Left (formerly PCI), and the United Left did not have the numbers to reconstitute an autonomous group. Meanwhile, changes in national and European politics made possible a form of rapprochement between the two sides and a new 'Confederal Group of the European United Left' (GUE) was established and later expanded (after the EU's Scandinavian enlargement in 1995) to the 'Confederal Group of the European United Left and Nordic Green Left' (GUE/NGL), which has a confederal nature based on two groups. The clear absence of communist or Marxist references in the name and declaration of the group, combined with the environmentalist orientation of the group since the entry of the Nordic Green Left, reinforce the notion of a clear break with the old communist group after 1989 and the construction of a European parliamentary group better representative of the constitutive parts of the radical left.<sup>29</sup> This is not to underestimate the diversity and divisions among these groups, but they have managed to maintain the group intact.

Outside and beyond the European Parliament, most (if not all) of the RLPs are members of the Party of the European Left (PEL), which was founded in 2004 and whose first president was the then leader of the Italian Communist Refoundation Party, Fausto Bertinotti. The party's purpose, as stated in its statute, is to unite 'democratic parties of the alternative and progressive left of the European continent,' with its main reference points being 'the values and traditions of the communist, socialist and workers movements' as well as 'feminism, environmentalism and sustainable development, peace and international solidarity, human rights, anti-fascism, progressive and liberal thinking.' At the same time, the break with the traditions of the pre-1989 communist left could not be made more specific in the preamble where it excludes any association with Stalinism, which it declares as being in contradiction with socialist and communist ideals.<sup>30</sup>

To summarize, while the 'radical left' differs from some of the usual criteria associated with a party family, and notably the origins in a common sociological root and name (be it social democracy, Christian democracy, fascism, communism, and so on), and while it is difficult to compare it to the West European Communist Party family that preceded it, there is nonetheless a sufficient degree of cohesion around its definitional attributes ('distinctiveness'), its program, and its international outlook and representation to suggest that the radical left is more than just the sum of its individual parts, and therefore can be usefully studied as a political grouping that has carried on the mantle of radical left politics after 1989. If so, the remaining question to ask is how well it has performed in doing so.

### **Changing performance of radical left parties**

Writing in 2005, March and Mudde described the trajectory of radical left politics as characterized by 'decline and mutation' (and they might have added 'de-radicalization' too). Significantly, the authors, while pointing up the opportunities

presented to RLPs by their freedom from the ideological constraint of the Soviet Union, identified one of its most difficult problems as being the lack of a ‘clear meta-narrative’ and ‘an alternative development model.’<sup>31</sup> As outlined above, while the latter still does not exist, a ‘meta-narrative’ has, to some extent, begun to emerge in the past decade, framed around ‘anti-austerity’ politics.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, since this has been on the back of a world economic recession of which the Eurozone crisis has perhaps been its most potent symbol, there has been a beneficial effect on the fortunes of the RLPs.

The 1990s and 2000s witnessed a dual impact on the radical left: the imposition of the neoliberal agenda on the one hand and the broad acceptance of that agenda by social democrats on the other (many would argue under the guise of the so-called ‘Third Way’). The radical left’s record, in this situation, was a mixed one. While in the 1990s, RLPs tended to be behind strikes and demonstrations against governments, securing modest electoral success (e.g. in Spain, France, and Italy), the 2000s witnessed several examples of RLPs entering into government as junior partners to social democrats or supporting them in parliament, including in Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Spain, and Sweden. While the social democratic responses varied<sup>33</sup> they constituted, for the most part, a form of suppression of the traditional social democratic platform and acceptance of the necessities of neoliberalism and globalization. The experiences for RLPs were sobering in terms of governmental achievement and electoral outcomes (see Table 14.1).<sup>34</sup>

The economic crash of 2008 and the subsequent imposition of austerity, notably through the EU’s ‘fiscal compact,’ combined with continued social democratic compliance with this approach and the resultant electoral debacle of social democratic parties,<sup>35</sup> and the rise of the right has, over time, given RLPs a new voice, greater visibility, and a measure of success that would hardly have been anticipated back in 1989. One can highlight the increase in support for RLPs in countries such as Greece (Syrizya), Denmark (Red–Green Unity), the Netherlands (Socialist Party), Portugal (Communist Party and the Left Block), Germany (the Left), and Finland (Left Alliance). In addition, new parties that mix up radical left ideas with others (Podemos in Spain) have proved electorally successful and led to a revitalization of interest in radical left politics. The European United Left/Nordic Green Left Group in the European Parliament increased its number of MEPs from 35 (in 2009) to 52 in the 2014 European Parliament elections (although the Communist Party of Greece then left the group, reducing it to 14).

Supporters of RLPs are generally younger than those of other parties, more educated, more secular, more likely to be based in urban conurbations, more likely to have a trade union background, are generally more dissatisfied with the workings of parliamentary democracy, and are more Eurosceptic.<sup>36</sup> However, the Eurozone crisis and great recession appears to have added a further component to this support: those pro-EU voters who have nonetheless become increasingly dissatisfied and negative—as a result of the economic impact of the Eurozone crisis—with the EU’s neoliberal, austerity-driven approach to the crisis, thus enabling RLPs to ‘forge a heterogenous electoral coalition of Eurosceptic and pro-EU voters.’<sup>37</sup>

The radical left, in short, has an agenda and it is one that has gained traction. Yet, its regeneration and prospects should not be overstated for three reasons. First, its electoral gains have not, in the very recent past, matched that of its radical right counterparts. An analysis of the percentage vote share for RLPs in the 28 countries of the EU in the last two parliamentary elections saw an average rise of 1 percent compared with nearly 2 percent for radical right parties, which have been able to exploit, in particular, the European migration crisis with simple messages that have linked the crisis to Euroscepticism and thereby provided a basis for the attraction of traditional working-class voters.<sup>38</sup> Second, the success of RLPs is evidently linked to, if not mainly explained by, the collapse of the center-left parties' vote (whose overall vote share across the EU 28 in the past two parliamentary elections declined by almost 2.5 percent) due to their effective acceptance of neoliberal austerity politics.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, research has shown that, despite the greater heterogeneity of radical left and right parties and some degree of commonality between them, the two types of parties have 'sharply diverging ideological profiles' with both expressing 'the traditions associated with their mainstream counterparts,' meaning that they should be seen as 'splinters from the party families with which they are commonly associated.' In that sense radical left and right voters are, like mainstream voters, ideological voters who still, to a large extent, gravitate to an ideological area and then support a specific party within that area.<sup>40</sup> If so, it suggests that if the center-left parties re-radicalize (as for example has happened in the British Labour Party under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn), RLPs may be prone to losing their newfound support. Third, there remain significant questions about the political offerings of RLPs. While the visibility and prominence of RLPs have grown in line with the deleterious impact of austerity politics, and while fierce opposition to neoliberalism has gained traction and revealed an appetite among many people for an alternative, the shaping of that alternative remains in its infancy. Furthermore, and perhaps inevitably in terms of the heterogeneity of this party family, any moves toward developing a serious alternative will bring out a constellation of different ideas that will test the unity of this party family. In short, the current increased attractiveness of the radical left probably has more to do with its frontal opposition to austerity politics than any alternative it is promising—and that is hardly a recipe for sustainability in the long run.

## **Conclusion**

The revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989 were a veritable milestone in the history of the Western European political left, and especially that political area located to the left of social democracy since the Russian Revolution of 1917. With the overthrow of the communist regimes, there seemed, in 1989, to be no further rationale in the division between communists and social democrats, and no further role for the former to play. That scenario appeared at first to be played out in the 1990s as post-communist parties divided in their responses to the historic events of 1989, and what had been a historic and influential 'party family' died.

Yet, in doing so, few of the parties that made up that family simply accepted social democracy as their new reference point. On the contrary, most of the parties or their successors were determined to keep radical left politics alive by experimenting with new names, platforms, and alliances, as well as keeping the communist name alive. Furthermore, the disappearance of both the WECP party family and the suffocating embrace of the Soviet motherland created fresh opportunities for other party organizations to flourish. As a consequence, a new form of radical left politics was born. True, it is difficult to argue that RLPs constitute as clear and united a 'party family' as their WECP predecessors. Yet, there is sufficient commonality to make them the object of comparative study. Furthermore, the significant changes in the broader political context have made their coherence, visibility, and growth more visible. Neoliberalism and its effective acceptance by many social democrats, the great recession, the Eurozone crisis, the EU's neoliberal response in the form of austerity policies, and the suffering this has produced across Western European nations, has given a new voice to RLPs, as well as facilitating the rise of new forms of radical left politics in both left-wing populism and a form of populism that merges the ideas of left and right in its programs. The revolutions of 1989, in short, did not end radical politics but acted as a catalyst to its reshaping, a process that was further influenced by the economic shock of 2008 that is still reverberating today.

## Notes

- 1 Von Beyme, *Political Parties*; Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism*.
- 2 Bull, 'A New Era for the Non-Rulers Too.'
- 3 Bull, 'The West European Communist Movement: Past, Present and Future.'
- 4 March and Mudde, 'What's Left of the Radical Left?' 48.
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 Bull, 'A New Era for the Non-Rulers Too.'
- 7 Hudson, *European Communism Since 1989*.
- 8 For example, Tarrow, *Democracy and Disorder*.
- 9 Richardson and Rootes (eds.), *The Green Challenge*.
- 10 Mair and Mudde, 'The Party Family and Its Study.'
- 11 Balabandis, quoted in: Katsourides, *Radical Left Parties in Government*, 6.
- 12 Pauwels, *Populism in Western Europe*. One might add that there are new protest parties that seem to mix up left and right ideas and claim to be neither of the left or right but to go beyond this cleavage, of which the Five Star Movement in Italy is the best example.
- 13 Hudson, *European Communism Since 1989*.
- 14 Bull and Heywood (eds.), *West European Communist Parties after the Revolutions of 1989*; Bell, *West European Communists and the Collapse of Communism*.
- 15 March, *Contemporary Far Left Parties in Europe*.
- 16 Mudde, 'The War of Words: Defining the Extreme Right Party Family.'
- 17 Hudson, *European Communism Since 1989*.
- 18 Dunphey, *Contesting Capitalism*.
- 19 March, *Radical Left Parties in Europe*.
- 20 See, for example, Calossi, *Anti-Austerity Left Parties in the European Union*, 86–89, who proposes his own alternative of 'anti-austerity left' to capture the most significant paradigm-shifting event in the millennium.
- 21 Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*.

- 22 March, *Radical Left Parties in Europe*.
- 23 March and Mudde, 'What's Left of the Radical Left?' 25.
- 24 Amini, 'Situating the Radical Left in Contemporary Europe,' 12–13.
- 25 Gomez, Morales and Ramiro, 'Varieties of Radicalism.'
- 26 Calossi, *Anti-Austerity Left Parties in the European Union*, 107.
- 27 Fagerholm, 'What Is Left for the Radical Left?'
- 28 *Ibid.*, 32.
- 29 Calossi, *Anti-Austerity Left Parties in the European Union*, 154–160.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 178.
- 31 March and Mudde, 'What's Left of the Radical Left?', 42–43.
- 32 Calossi, *Anti-Austerity Left Parties in the European Union*.
- 33 Merkel et al., *Social Democracy in Power: The Capacity to Reform*.
- 34 Dunphy and Bale, 'The Radical Left in Coalition Government: Towards a Comparative Measure of Success and Failure.'
- 35 Downes, J. F. and E. Chan, LSE Europpblog, 'Explaining the Electoral Debacle of Social Democratic Parties in Europe.'
- 36 Ramiro, 'Support for Radical Left Parties in Western Europe'; Gomez, Morales, and Ramiro, 'Varieties of Radicalism'; Rooduijn et al., 'Radical Distinction: Support for Radical Left and Radical Right Parties in Europe.'
- 37 Beaudonnet and Gomez, 'Red Europe versus no Europe?'
- 38 Bruno and Downes, 'Why Has the Populist Radical Right Outperformed the Populist Radical Left in Europe?'
- 39 Downes et al., 'Understanding the "rise" of the Radical Left in Europe: It's Not Just the Economy, Stupid.'
- 40 Rooduijn et al., 'Radical Distinction: Support for Radical Left and Radical Right Parties in Europe,' 536–541.

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# 15 The return of fascism in Europe? Reflections on history and the current situation

*Dan Stone*

We are entering a new age of irrationalism. People have never been motivated solely by rational choice and it is clear that, as Eelco Runia says, ‘People start to make history not despite the fact that it is at odds with—yes, destroys—the stories they live by, but because it destroys the stories they live by.’<sup>1</sup> We see that happening now, as Western Europeans are more and more drawn to destroying the stories that have characterized their societies since the end of World War II, that is stories of the success of liberal democracy, of intra-European and international cooperation and security, of the welfare state, of the free market (or, in most countries, of welfare capitalism), and of tolerance and multiculturalism. These stories are being destroyed at such a rate that the phenomenon must today be considered a pressing concern. In spite of the serious problems facing the world—climate change, overpopulation, feeding ten billion people, the threat of nuclear war—in Europe whole countries are consumed by problems that on a global level look like local squabbles. Fear of refugees, a small percentage of whom have actually made it to Europe, dominates the headlines across the continent. Debates about whether Muslim women can swim in burkinis take the place of serious discussion about racism and exclusion; a distrust of experts of all sorts means that opinion can be taken as truth. And in Britain, the Brexit vote means that politicians and journalists are outbidding each other in the race to see who can back the most self-inflicting damage to the country, and to the rest of Europe, as decades of Eurosceptic misinformation finally take their toll. We are familiar with the psephologist’s proposition that people don’t always vote in their own interest; but this mass vote against national interest, economically and culturally speaking, in the name of slogans such as ‘taking our borders back’ bespeaks a new level of vulnerability to demagoguery. What is happening?

In this chapter, I do two things. First, I defend the argument that the term *fascism* retains its value for understanding contemporary political life in Europe. And second, I provide a historical reading of post-Cold War Europe in order to explain why we need to start using the term *fascism* again. With respect to the first point, it is important to be clear: I do not argue that people who voted to leave the European Union (EU) in Britain, or that the Party for Freedom (PVV) in the Netherlands, the Front National (FN) in France, or the Alternative for Germany (AfD) in Germany are fascists. Nor do I think that fascists are threatening to come

to power in any European countries, although anti-liberal authoritarians have already done so in Poland, Hungary, and Austria. Rather I want to say that the forces that drove fascism in the 1930s are in some measure visible again today and that the parties and movements that are usually referred to as ‘populist’ share an intellectual space with ‘classic’ fascism. The argument is not meant to be alarmist but does argue that those who reject the use of the term are not, as they think, contributing to conceptual clarification but making a confusing situation even more confused. Drawing rigid distinctions between fascism and populism ends by downplaying the dangers of the current situation, in which Europeans seem to be sliding away from democracy without realizing it, and sometimes, as in the case of Geert Wilders or Marine Le Pen, with the express aim of defending ‘European values.’ We should not be surprised: since the 1970s, and increasingly so since the 1990s, scholars such as Roger Eatwell and Richard J. Golsan have been warning about ‘fascism’s return,’ and since so much effort has been expended on analyzing the conditions that permitted the rise of fascism in the 1930s, historians ought to be well placed to point to similarities and differences today.<sup>2</sup>

With respect to the second aim of this chapter, my intention is to contribute to an explanation of how we arrived at this situation, one that would have shocked Europeans a generation ago. I draw on arguments I have set out elsewhere, especially in my book *Goodbye to All That?* (2014), where I claim that the end of the Cold War accelerated the abandonment of the postwar consensus, which had already been in demise since the 1970s. In the early 1990s it seemed important to expose and to argue against what Vladimir Tismaneanu called ‘fantasies of salvation,’ the revived radical ideologies that promised Eastern Europeans ways of making sense of the post-communist world by drawing on the region’s fascistic prewar past.<sup>3</sup> It was thus pleasing to see Eastern Europe develop a seemingly secure democratic system, in which, by the 2000s, the most noteworthy characteristic of the system was its stability. But now, almost a decade after the financial crash of 2007–2008, Tismaneanu’s diagnosis is taking on new relevance in both Western and Eastern Europe. As Eleni Braat and Pepijn Corduwener note in their introduction to this volume, the focus of most post-Cold War studies has been on Eastern Europe. But events in recent years mean we can now see that from the point of view of European security, democracy, and neoliberal capitalism, the effects of the end of the Cold War have been no less profound in Western Europe. This chapter shows how Braat and Corduwener’s perception that these three characteristics have been tested by the fallout from 1989 is just as significant for understanding the ‘former West’ as it is for the ‘former East.’<sup>4</sup>

## **Fascism**

Critics of the applicability of the ‘fascism’ concept to contemporary Western Europe are right that the current situation is different from that of the interwar period. But I would argue—apart from the historian’s point that of course no two moments in time can possibly be the same—that what we now see is an adaptation of fascism that both draws on a store of ideas from the past and takes new

energy from current-day issues. There is a need to connect Europe's history of fascist ideas and heritage with the very current concerns that are breathing new life into that heritage. The question is not: does the present look like the 1930s? The answer to that is of course no in most respects. The question is: can the circumstances in which we currently live crystallize in such a way that fascist-like phenomena can emerge? The answer to that question is much less clear-cut. In terms of Western European security, democracy, and capitalism, the threat of something like fascism is growing as each of those factors is being tested and, in many respects, found wanting.

For over 20 years, scholars have been worrying about the rise of far-right populism in Western Europe. Roger Eatwell, for example, predicted in 1994 that a newly emergent far right would succeed through populist appeals to nationalism and ideas such as 'fortress Europe.'<sup>5</sup> Today, a slew of books and articles examining the meaning of populism—of both left and right—is appearing in bookshops at a rapid rate. Arguments not just over what populism means but whether it is compatible with fascism, or if right-wing populism is a euphemism when what we really mean is precisely 'fascism,' are currently and unsurprisingly in vogue.

There are several reasons why fascism and populism should be considered incompatible. The most obvious is that populists contest elections and claim to represent 'true' democracy, whereas fascism is anti-democratic. Unlike fascists, for whom political violence was a necessity, populists have not, at least in Western Europe, created militias that would match their violent rhetoric with violent organizations or actions.<sup>6</sup> Populism can therefore be considered a democratic force, albeit a non-liberal one (as in Victor Orbán's notion of the 'illiberal state'), since it reasons that democracy has been 'stolen' by self-serving elites and contends that it wants to 'return' democracy to 'the people.' Fascism claims to speak in the name of the people but does not—historically speaking, at least—provide the people with an option to exercise any democratic mandate to confirm their claim. Populism is a style or discourse and not an ideology. On the basis of this fundamental difference, some political scientists proclaim fascism and populism to be entirely different, a view echoed, of course, by populists themselves: Marine Le Pen, for example, has tried to ban journalists and other commentators from referring to the FN as fascist, as has Nigel Farage of the UK Independence Party (UKIP). Le Pen's decision to change the FN's name to the Rassemblement National in March 2018 was also motivated by this desire to de-demonize the party, dissociating it from its extremist image. The position is clearly summed up by Jérôme Jamin:

Populism mobilizes a discourse glorifying the honest people against the corrupt elite, the extreme right postulates racial and cultural inequalities between peoples and nations and advocates extreme nationalism as a form of political organization that can protect the people from their enemies. In the name of democracy, populism rejects the elite and the institutions they represent while the extreme right rejects the principles, values and foundations of democracy.<sup>7</sup>

Or, as Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Kaltwasser put it, populism is:

A thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic camps, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté generale* (general will) of the people.<sup>8</sup>

These definitions—to which could be added more by Ernesto Laclau, Jan-Werner Müller, Paul Taggart, Francisco Panizza, Hanspeter Kriese, and others—suggest that there is a clear division between populism and the extreme right, or fascism (ignoring for the moment political science debates about the differences between far right, extreme right, fascism, neo-fascism, and so on). But the neat distinctions provided by political science do not always match what is going on around us. As Federico Finchelstein notes, populism has a history, and theoretical perspectives that do not attend to this history are likely to be short-changing the reader.<sup>9</sup>

Jamin himself, after pressing the difference between populism as a style and the extreme right as an ideology, concludes by noting that the current climate in Europe makes the distinction less clear-cut. He notes that parties traditionally associated with fascism or neo-fascism have toned down their openly racist rhetoric in order ‘to embrace an ambiguous progressive and secular speech against “totalitarian Islam”’ and that both ‘populist and extreme-right leaders have embraced today a new struggle against Muslims in the name of democracy.’ This is nowhere more clear than in the Netherlands, where Geert Wilders’ PVV condemns Islam in the strongest terms, not (ostensibly) as a racist position but in order to defend secular European liberties. Jamin concludes, rather ambiguously, that this change ‘makes it more difficult to dispel the confusion between nevertheless two very different kinds of speech.’<sup>10</sup> This ‘nevertheless’ is not, in my opinion, very convincing. Might it be that referring to currently thriving right-wing populist parties as ‘democratic,’ by contrast to fascists, who are ‘undemocratic,’ is to take the populists and the fascists too readily at their own word?

Indeed, it is precisely a confusion between populism and fascism that seems to characterize the current scene in Europe. This is not a failing of the disciplines of political science or history but simply a recognition of a very febrile and fast-changing set of circumstances, whereby established certainties are being called into question. We remain as unsure now as in 2016 where Trump stands with respect to North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), European security, and Russia, though it is clear that he detests the mainstream media, regards Twitter as a means of communicating with the public in a search for ‘ratings,’ cannot abide criticism, and favors the break-up of the EU. In the United Kingdom, a prime minister who voted to remain in the EU is now leading the charge toward a ‘hard Brexit’ with Britain leaving not just the EU but the single market and the customs union, while trying to tell us that ‘the British people’ voted not for isolationism and protectionism but for a new openness to the wider world. (Whether this is why voters in Stoke or Boston chose to leave the EU is highly questionable.) The threats Brexit poses to the future of both the

United Kingdom and the EU are being brushed aside as alarmism. Meanwhile, although UKIP has slipped back into the dysfunctional lunatic fringe, its former leader Nigel Farage poses as a UK–US go-between, claims to have the ear of President Trump, and openly supports Wilders, Petry, and Le Pen (to whom he gifted a thoroughly unchallenging interview). UKIP’s achievement has been a shot in the arm for Eurosceptics across Europe, with many European movements now speaking an anti-Brussels language that used to be the preserve of the British tabloids. In Warsaw in November 2017, some 60,000 marchers took part in Poland’s independence rally, which became a magnet for the far right; some carried slogans such as ‘Pray for Islamic Holocaust’ and ‘pure Poland, white Poland,’ yet the march was praised by Poland’s interior minister, Mariusz Błaszczak, as ‘a beautiful sight.’ In the United States, President Trump has had among his advisers some who come from extreme-right milieus; although Steve Bannon is no longer formally an adviser to President Trump, he continues to praise the president in his attempts to foment nationalism across the world. At a speech at the FN’s party conference in Lille in March 2018, for example, Bannon celebrated nationalist movements, especially the FN, saying ‘You are part of a movement that is bigger than that in Italy, bigger than in Poland, bigger than in Hungary,’ and urged the delegates: ‘Let them call you racists, xenophobes or whatever else, wear these like a medal.’<sup>11</sup> It is clear what Finchelstein means when he says we must attend to history and describes populism as ‘an authoritarian form of democracy’ and as ‘a reformulation of fascism.’<sup>12</sup> This leads us toward a discussion of fascism.

According to Robert Paxton, fascism is ‘a system of political authority and social order intended to reinforce the unity, energy, and purity of communities in which liberal democracy stands accused of producing division and decline.’<sup>13</sup> In this definition, playing by parliamentary rules is not crucial: how one achieves the end of rebuilding the (supposed) community is of secondary importance. We should be wary of pressing the distinction between populists—who use elections as a means to attain power—and fascists—who talk in terms of storming the bastions of power—for several reasons. One is historical: we know that both the Nazis and the Italian fascists, for all their talk of the *Machtergreifung* (seizure of power) or the March on Rome, were appointed to power through quasi-legitimate means, that is through the actions of established elites who felt that bringing the fascists into power would tame them, bolster their own positions, and see off putative threats from the left. Furthermore, the Nazis’ and Fascists’ talk of *das Volk* or *Il popolo* suggests that their anti-democratic rule, which needed only occasional plebiscites and no recourse to parliament, drew legitimacy from its appeal to the notion of unity amongst the people, however they chose to define ‘the people.’ Fascism, like populism, claims to speak for the people as a ‘higher form of democracy.’ As Mussolini wrote, fascism was opposed to democracy, ‘which equates the nation to the majority’; but fascism ‘is the purest form of Democracy’ where the nation is conceived qualitatively as the ‘most powerful idea’ of a few becoming the conscience of all. In that case, fascism ‘could be defined as an “organized, centralized, authoritarian Democracy.”’<sup>14</sup>

The second reason to beware the tidy distinction between populism and fascism is contemporary: it is hard to believe that far-right populists, should they win power through a parliamentary election, would be willing to concede that power after a period of four or five years; rather, voting against a populist government would be portrayed as treasonous and a proof of one's not truly belonging to the people. This fear is why commentators such as Aristotle Kallis and Nigel Copsey warn that the problem is less with 'fascism' than with the 'mainstream.' The real danger of far-right movements—whether populist or fascist—is not that they are likely to win elections (yet) but that they are able to change the political discourse so that their ideas and policies are taken on board by the 'mainstream' parties and electorate as a means of keeping the far right out of power.

In fact, this is clearly the far right's strategy. Geert Wilders may have been kept out of government by Mark Rutte on March 15, 2017, but this was in no small measure because the latter adopted some of the former's 'tough talk' on Muslims and immigration. In another example, when Björn Hoecke, the AfD's leader in Thuringia, said that Germany's 'laughable policy of coming to terms with the past is crippling us,'<sup>15</sup> the statement was rejected by many in the party but the aim of getting the message out into the public sphere had already been achieved. Indeed, the rejection of the message was part of the strategy so that the populist claim that the elite prevents 'the people' from speaking their mind would be subliminally established. In extremis, the biggest danger is that a perception of crisis would be sufficiently strong to persuade established parties of the 'mainstream' to invite previously outcast parties into power, as in Austria. And the problem is not just on the right; supposedly center-left parties such as the Dutch Labour Party and the British Labour Party have been suffering huge losses precisely because they have not offered a genuine alternative but have accepted the narrative of austerity set by the right and have posed for so long as light versions of the mainstream center right that voters opt instead for the stronger position. The point is being made by journalists as well as academics alarmed at the current state of affairs. Natalie Nougayrède, for example, in an article on Marine Le Pen, argued recently that,

Xenophobic populists were allowed to thrive in Britain and the US because mainstream parties (the Tories, the Republicans) provided them with a sufficient amount of complacency, if not buoyancy. The French far right is buoyed by similar factors.<sup>16</sup>

Such an outcome in which political establishments turn to the far right as a way of saving themselves is surely one historical analogy that is to be avoided by Europe's leaders. But the fact that it is possible to conceive of such a thing happening suggests that fascism is not an aberration of Western European democracy but a permanent fixture that can tempt 'liberals' if they fear that there is no other way to defend their interests against some putative threat. The results of the Italian elections of March 4, 2018, in which the far-right Lega (formerly the Lega Nord) and the Five Star Movement took the largest share of the vote, clearly indicate this trend.

Of course, there are very few parties that openly claim to be fascist and those that do are tiny. Even Golden Dawn, whose fascist style and aesthetics are unmistakable, claims to have Hellenic roots and no connection with modern fascism. Roger Eatwell notes that for all the similarities of style and discourse between populism and fascism, populists ‘cannot hold that an authoritarian new elite is required to foster a “new man” in order to achieve radical change.’<sup>17</sup> I am not so sure. Do not the authoritarian leadership style of a Trump, the one-man show of a Wilders, and the FN’s and Fidesz’s desire to strengthen the presidency (like Erdogan’s, Putin’s, or Xi Jinping’s) combine the language of ‘populist democracy’—the leader speaking for the people—with a desire to reshape society so that a sense of rebirth gives ‘the people’ new hope? The ‘people’ might be central to populism, but it is not clear that current right-wing populists want to hand control over decision-making to ‘the people’ or whether they prefer to claim to speak for them.

### **Europe after the Cold War**

What then are the changes that have taken place that have made the return of fascism a possibility? When I wrote of the ‘antifascist consensus’ as the primary shaping force of postwar politics, this was a shorthand for all the forms of organization that were put in place in Western and Eastern Europe after 1945. In the East, this meant an enforced communist one-party rule that brutally eliminated oppositions real or imagined and painted any resistance as a reincarnation of fascism, as in Hungary in 1956. Here antifascism, which began as a legitimizing force, gradually lost its potency as it came to be little more than a slogan, instrumentalized as a way of maintaining the ‘new class’ in its position of power and increasingly regarded as a pro forma, empty signifier by most of the population.<sup>18</sup> In Western Europe, it meant welfare capitalism, corporatist labor arrangements, Keynesian economics, and the more or less universal advocacy of parliamentary democracy, even among parties of the right that had previously regarded democracy with suspicion.

The concept of antifascism may be regarded as too simplistic a tool for making sense of the complexities of divided postwar Europe, which also encompassed decolonization, European integration, Atlanticism and NATO, anti-communism, civil rights, and the new consumerism. That is correct, but I would stress that ‘antifascism,’ in my reading, did not mean only a political position espoused by elites but was a way of describing the whole sociopolitical culture of postwar Western Europe, in which the aftereffects of World War II necessitated a rethinking of the arrangements that had brought war to Europe twice in a generation. In my analysis, antifascism was a means not just of keeping extreme ideologies at bay but was a description of an economic and cultural reshaping of Western Europe. This arrangement—and the story that sustained it—has been steadily dismantled since the 1970s. Beginning with Thatcherism in the United Kingdom, the neoliberal reforms of the 1980s, even where socialists were in power such as in Italy, have eroded almost to the point of their



disappearance the sense of common values and shared tradition that built the postwar world, helped along by the fortuitous economic circumstances of full employment and the redistribution of wealth.

In other words, the story that built the postwar world no longer seems sustainable to many Europeans. This story suggested that the forces that drove fascism—unemployment, nationalism, mass politics, and war—could be kept at bay by engineering more equal societies in which high levels of taxation would provide a welfare state and generate a sense of inclusion. This did not need to be a leftist narrative; indeed, throughout the postwar period, center-right, Christian democratic governments in most of Europe drove this narrative in the context of European integration and anti-communism, giving rise to a form of welfare capitalism that claimed to have found a way of binding European citizens together while offering a viable alternative to the authoritarian politics and statist economics of the communist bloc.<sup>19</sup>

Under these circumstances, the far right had little chance of success, either electorally or culturally. Although the Cold War nurtured the far right—fascists made good anti-communists, whether at the level of states such as Spain, or groups, or individuals—and the Eastern bloc also incorporated many former fascists into its ranks (most notably in Romania where, by the 1970s and 1980s, ‘national communism’ was the order of the day), any fascist narratives or ‘memories’ of the interwar and wartime periods could only be harbored in delimited and clandestine circles. Yet a fascist memory of fascism—something that scholars have so far hardly analyzed—did survive precisely because of these incorporations and amnesties, including the United States’ promotion of secret service anti-communist operations and the funding of liberal anti-communist cultural productions.<sup>20</sup> It was kept alive in small groups and radical movements and, from the 1970s onward, in the attempts of the *nouvelle droite* to update fascist thought. This drive to adapt and to contemporize means that we can understand the contemporary far right in terms of a process of negotiation with the fascist past, gradually revising the stories that sustained the postwar world, pushing at them in order to muddy the waters. Slowly suggesting, for example, that Vichy France, Mussolini’s Italy, or Franco’s Spain were not all that bad, that they represented forces of authenticity and order against the threat of what can today be portrayed as national disintegration in the face of globalization, European federalism, and liberal-encouraged multiculturalism. This renegotiation is consciously designed to promote the reemergence of the forces that drove fascism. And while we cannot yet say that right-wing populism is fascist or that fascists are threatening to take power, these counter-narratives that ‘belong to a cosmology harking back to the blackshirt years’—involving notions of crisis and national decline, suspicion of ‘democratic hypocrisy,’ nationalism, and xenophobia—are clearly taking their toll on established postwar narratives.<sup>21</sup> Given that the latter are losing their force anyway in the light of 30 years of neoliberal reforms with all their attendant inequalities and sociopolitical challenges—not least the politics of austerity—a revival of alternative stories derived from the prewar period seems increasingly to be gaining traction. This is a deliberate

policy to change the meaning of ‘consensus’ so that what appeared to be the norm in the 1950s and 1960s no longer applies.

What has replaced the postwar settlement in Western Europe? In general, we see a downgrading of narratives of equality and an increase in nineteenth-century-style liberalism, which stresses individualism, a small state, self-improvement, distaste for poverty, and the free market. This change has occurred even in areas where notions of the ‘common good’ had prevailed since the end of the war, such as the provision of essential resources like water and fuel, and the introduction of market forces into nationalized industries such as health provision and social housing. Even with respect to welfare systems, there was a ‘clear break with the tendency towards greater equality that characterised the Western European welfare states until the 1980s,’ with even the social democratic parties failing to protest, as Ido De Haan has observed.<sup>22</sup> The benefit to the Western European population is that a majority—but not an overwhelming one—grew richer and became accustomed to an embarrassment of choice where consumer goods (from food to luxury goods) were concerned, thanks to the availability of easy credit and the expansion of service/consumer economies. The 1970s seem distinctly ‘post-war’ when seen in these terms by comparison with the changed nature of Western European societies in the 1980s and 1990s.

This enormous shift in Western European socioeconomic conditions was facilitated and catalyzed by the end of the Cold War. The triumphalist narratives that accompanied that moment highlighted not just liberal democracy as a ‘better’ system but suggested that the power of consumerism—symbolized by black market Levi’s on the streets of Moscow—had undermined communism far more than the highfalutin rhetoric of Charter 77 or even Solidarity had done.<sup>23</sup> In fact, the single biggest cause of the end of the Cold War was Gorbachev’s decision not to use military force to intervene in the affairs of the Eastern European satellite countries as had been done on previous occasions, and as the *apparat* in those countries expected. The Cold War was thus over by the end of 1989 and the collapse of communist regimes followed swiftly, including in the USSR itself by the end of 1991. Yet the notion that the West ‘won’ the Cold War and defeated the ‘evil empire’ by force of its superior political system, the appeal of consumerism, and its role in the arms race remains ubiquitous. There is of course some truth in it: East Berliners, crossing into the West in November 1989, charged to the department stores and sex shops of the Kurfürstendamm. Anatoly Chernyaev, Gorbachev’s adviser, wrote in his diary on November 10, 1989, that ‘The Berlin Wall has collapsed. This entire era in the history of the socialist system is over. ... This is the end of Yalta ... the Stalinist legacy and the “defeat of Hitlerite Germany.”’<sup>24</sup> In other words, the antifascist slogans were dead.

In the East, that meant the establishment of a curious system combining democratic structures without democratic experience. This is why one sometimes saw the celebration of anti-communist heroes who had been fascists or fascist collaborators. In the ‘former West,’ the fascination of Eastern Europeans for Western consumerism gave a new lease of life to that focus, as the economies were increasingly geared toward growth fuelled by consumer spending and borrowing.

The result was what Yannis Stavrakakis calls a ‘second spirit of capitalism,’ which coincided with and encouraged the entrenchment of ‘post-democracy’ or ‘managed democracy,’ in which consumption became the primary marker of participation in social life. As Stavrakakis writes,

[the legitimization of] post-democratic mutation of liberal democracy was thus based on the (relative) democratization of consumption and luxury that, mainly through borrowing, now became accessible to large sections of the population, which could (partially) enjoy it, accepting the collapse in the regulation of labour relations, the reduction of their rights, exploding inequality, and so on. The price to be paid for this galloping individualistic eudemonism was none other than the de-democratization of modern democracy. [...] In short, neoliberalism attempted to establish a ‘democracy without the demos’, a regime that is ‘acting autonomously from the people.’<sup>25</sup>

Stavrakakis’s analysis is clearly focused on the Greek case. Here, a whole country’s exclusion from neoliberal prosperity and subjection to strict austerity—the other face of neoliberal economics, here driven by the strictures of the euro—explains Stavrakakis’s insistence that populism is a legitimate response to the elitist ‘anti-populism’ of those who represent the EU status quo.

I am not sure that the same analysis applies with equal vigor to Western Europe (excluding Greece from ‘Western Europe’ for the moment). Is it the sense of a lack of participation in the political process that is fuelling the rejection of established parties in Western Europe? There is certainly a disconnect between ‘elites’ and ‘the people’ (or some of them) that, all commentators agree, fans the flames of populism. But although when asked, people will often say that politicians are too distant and arrogant, or have no connection with how ‘real people’ live, their concerns are very much about their life chances, economic circumstances, and (lack of) opportunities. A ‘democracy without a demos’ is only a partial—though important—explanation for the rise in populism. The exclusion of ordinary people from the functioning of democracy could just as readily be a description of post-war Western European representative democracies as of their early twenty-first century ‘post-democratic’ versions—only it did not matter in the first three decades after the war when people felt their life chances were improving.<sup>26</sup> Besides, outside of Greece, where Syriza remains more popular than Golden Dawn, ‘populist’ movements have been of the right—with the partial exception of the Five Star Movement in Italy and Podemos in Spain, which evade being easily located on the political spectrum even if the former increasingly looks like a party of the right. Again, we are faced with a problem: why do people, when they have genuine grievances, find explanations coming from right-wing demagogues—especially the claim that all society’s ills are down to immigration—so much more appealing than social democratic arguments concerning the current incarnation of Western European market economies and the huge disparities of wealth they generate?

History matters here. The end of the Cold War certainly meant, as Braat and Corduener set out, a deepening of existing notions of European ‘security,’ an

emphasis on the technocratic nature of European 'democracy,' and a strengthening of the liberal market economy. I would add that together with these phenomena, we also see a revival of what might broadly be called 'anti-antifascist forces.' This is not a coincidence: the overturning of the postwar economic settlement also facilitated the overturning of the postwar sociocultural consensus. The *Tendenzwende* (change of direction) promoted by Chancellor Kohl in the 1980s drove through market reforms in Germany, and opened up space for nationalist interpretations of German history that had existed only in fringe spaces since 1945, such as the broad discussion of 'Germans as victims' (of bombing raids, of Red Army rape, of expulsion, as prisoners of war (POWs), and so on). The 'refounding of the Republic' in Italy in 1994 brought the country firmly into the neoliberal sphere and permitted the flourishing of the 'post-fascist' narrative. In France and the Netherlands, wartime narratives of resistance, long exposed as quasi-mythical, competed after the Cold War with apologetic versions of history in which collaboration was seen as morally explicable. In Denmark and Norway, exposés of local varieties of Nazism have appeared as the electorates in those countries have shifted radically rightward.

None of this should surprise us. World War II was a series of mini civil wars in which those who were seduced by the notion of European union under a racially reordered German hegemony fought those who retained their faith in parliamentary democracy, socialism, or communism (and in which the latter also fought each other). The scholarly emphasis in discussions of the end of the Cold War, as Braat and Corduener note, has been on Eastern Europe, where the explosion of nationalism after 1989 was most evident, and where the extent of local collaboration with Nazism has been crucial to historiography and has engendered emotionally charged political debates.

But the change in Western Europe has been perhaps more momentous: without even seeming to realize it, Western Europe, whilst continuing to mark Holocaust Memorial Day and to commemorate VE Day, is sliding into a form of right-wing hegemony that maintains those commemorations but refigures them as part of a defense of nationalist ideas in which Europe and the 'European way of life' are under threat from outsiders. It has long been the case, especially in the United Kingdom, that the commemoration of World War II has been used to bolster a sense of national belonging (Britain's 'standing alone in 1940' narrative); but now that memory is being put to the service of anti-internationalism in a way that is markedly more threatening. A narrative that attacks immigration as 'not what this country fought for' is a curious inversion of the postwar pride in defeating fascism. The long-term wait of the 'neo-fascists' is coming to an end as activists and thinkers who remained largely in the shadows after 1945, even in the context of the Strategy of Tension or CIA-funded anti-communist outfits, are emboldened to speak. The Cold War kept fascism alive, thanks to its welcome of radical anti-communism; the end of the Cold War, with the demise of social democracy and the entrenchment of neoliberalism, is permitting it to flourish.<sup>27</sup> Where it does flourish, we might call it—echoing Copsey's phrase 'fascism ... but with an open mind'—'narrow-minded fascism.' That is to say, in contrast to classic fascism

with its expansionist warrior agenda, what we see now is a xenophobic, protectionist ideology that combines notions of national rebirth with a desire to isolate the nation from outside forces.

## Conclusion

Aristotle Kallis notes that the economic crisis of the 1930s was a catalyst rather than a primary cause of fascism, ‘revealing and legitimising strong pre-existing concerns and resentments, both among the elites and public opinion.’<sup>28</sup> The same is true today. The current and ongoing economic crisis, in which parents are concerned that their children will have fewer chances in life than they enjoyed and in which incomes are being squeezed for all except the rich, is the fuel for, rather than the primary cause of, the rise of the far right. Fascism has shown itself to be a malleable and adaptable shape-shifter; the precise problems that Europe faces today are not the same as in the 1930s—how could they be?—but they are also not entirely different. In Europe today we have welfare states (though much subjected to ‘rationalization’), national health services, and the structures (from Erasmus exchange schemes to gas pipelines to international law) put in place by the EU that prevent national disintegration and provide a sense of interconnectedness that is hard to break. But also not impossible, as Brexit shows. Despite the complications of the negotiations—especially over the rights of EU citizens in the UK and UK citizens in the EU—and the bill to be paid by the United Kingdom for exiting, a determination to break free of EU structures (or what Le Pen calls the ‘EU prison’) can succeed—or so it looks at present. According to research polls, even if they do not support leaving, a majority of EU citizens favor a referendum in their country, following the Brexit model, on membership in the EU.<sup>29</sup>

Today we do not have some of the main drivers of classic fascism: the demand to create a totalitarian state, a desire to fashion a ‘new man,’ visceral fear of communism, aggressive and expansionist foreign policy, intra-European rivalries, political violence. Still, in broad terms, the rejectionist message is similar: xenophobia, especially directed at Muslims; fear and hatred of immigrants; racial prejudice; hatred of multiculturalism and attempts to promote the social success of ethnic minorities; scoffing at ‘political correctness’; violent misogyny; conspiracy theories concerning remote, venal elites, the media, and coded claims about Jews; extreme nationalism with its psychoanalytically suggestive defense of borders and fear of movement; economic protectionism—these are all familiar refrains.

What seems to confirm Kallis’s claim so strikingly is the fact that even if the circumstances are different, the vocabulary and ideas on which the rejectionist movements and parties draw comes from a readily available and culturally familiar stock. As Andrea Mammone argues, the ‘new’ right-wing movements ‘represent a sort of adaptation of some traditional “old” political streams as well as a modernization of some classic fascist ideas. This could be conceptualized as a *contemporarization* of neofascism within a post-materialist and global society.’<sup>30</sup> And far-right memory—a topic that is almost entirely unstudied—suggests that historical revisionism is indeed promoting such a contemporization of classic

fascist ideas.<sup>31</sup> It seems that both Western and Eastern Europeans slip into the language and style of fascism all too easily. Let me sum up my argument by considering why it is the case that people seem to so easily draw their tools from a fascist arsenal when times are hard.

I said in my introduction that the destruction of the stories by which Western Europeans have lived since 1945 signaled a new age of irrationalism. The immediate objection is that those who distrust and/or no longer believe in those stories are not in fact behaving irrationally, that they have good grounds to reject them. This is indeed a crucial point, since it is clear, given all the commentary about those who have been ‘left behind’ by globalization or who are ‘losers’ in the modern world, that large sections of the population have much to complain about. But the soul-searching commentary that self-reflexively criticizes the ‘liberal elite’ of politicians, journalists, and academics is too hasty; it suggests that we should sympathize with people who vote for the populist far right in a way that is actually more condescending toward ‘ordinary people’ than is maintaining the status quo against their wishes. For it suggests that it is natural when people feel excluded that they vote for the far right. Yet there are other choices on offer among the new parties. Are we really happy to say that people vote like sheep for Marine Le Pen or Matteo Salvini when they say that all of their problems are caused by immigrants, simply because they are ‘left behind’? Do we really think that people believe they will be economically better off with a policy of ‘national preference’ and preventing immigration? Do we think these people have not thought about who will care for them when they need to go to hospital or move to an old age home?

Far-right voters are by no means all angry, young, unemployed white men—indeed, the vote is more about the provinces rejecting the metropolis or the lower-middle classes trying to protect what they have—and nor are they ethnically homogeneous, at least not entirely. It seems that for all the developments in right-wing thinking since the end of World War II—with the *nouvelle droite*, identity politics, postmodern racism, designer fascism, or what has been called ‘the ruthlessly effective rebranding of Europe’s far right’<sup>32</sup>—the tendency to support the far right comes from somewhere visceral and emotional rather than from a considered philosophical stance, let alone from any evidence-based logic. It is legitimate for commentators to say so rather than beat themselves up for not recognizing that parts of society feel ‘left behind.’ My point is not that people don’t have legitimate grievances; the claim that the ‘left behind’ are voting against established parties is clearly right, although talking to voters one senses that they often feel not so much left behind as a sense of regret for *what* has been left behind, that is some quasi-fantasy notion of the nation as it used to be. Rather, my point is that there is no contradiction between a rational anger at being excluded and ‘thinking with the blood’; the latter is evident in that people who vote for the far right do so despite all the indicators showing that these are the people who have most to lose, economically speaking, from a closing of borders, loss of European funding, and the putting in place of ‘national preference.’

In other words, when people vote for such ideas it is precisely, as Runia says, *because* it destroys the familiar stories by which they have lived. It is a conscious



choice to take the bet that they will prefer a situation in which they may be poorer but there will be fewer people who do not look like them. This means that those who still defend notions of international cooperation, social democracy, and decency toward other human beings need to speak out and criticize. Responding by saying ‘we are to blame for not noticing the plight of the “left behind”’ is insufficient; instead, we need to call out the far right at every opportunity, to show that their message is destructive, not only of the peace that has prevailed in most of Europe for 70 years but of national economic prosperity, even if they claim the exact opposite. And it especially means taking on the increasingly ubiquitous and extraordinarily mendacious narrative that claims that the last 30 years have been dominated by a liberal social democracy that has deliberately set out to destroy people’s communities (the role of the coded ‘hidden hand’ here is not hard to hear). Anyone who has studied postwar Western European history to even the barest extent will know that if social democracy ever characterized the region, it was in the first 30 years after 1945, three decades of antifascism and welfare capitalism that increasingly seem aberrant in European history.<sup>33</sup> Even that notion of a ‘social democratic moment’ is questionable (apart from perhaps in Scandinavia and the United Kingdom), for the majority of ruling parties in Western Europe after 1945 were Christian democrats who, after the carnage of World War II, had now resigned themselves to accepting the welfare state, and thus instituted systems of welfare capitalism that would keep the most violent forms of rejectionism, especially communism, at bay.

After the oil crises of the 1970s, Western European economies and societies, at different rates, came to be dominated by a neoliberal consensus in which an extension of individuals’ social and cultural freedoms (such as gay marriage or the legalization of abortion) went hand-in-hand with the rule of the (supposedly) free market. This momentous shift from the ‘antifascist consensus’ to the ‘neoliberal consensus’ has brought about the vast inequalities we see in Western Europe (and the United States) today, not ‘social democracy,’ which has been more or less extinguished in the last 30 years. Indeed, a renewal of social democracy so that its fundamental ideas of fairness, relative equality, and a tempered market is the most pressing desideratum, if people who vote for the far right are to have their grievances directed in a constructive rather than destructive direction. Immigration has not brought about the decline in living standards experienced by those who vote for populists, but without a social democratic critique of globalization, protectionist and anti-immigrant narratives go unchallenged. Kallis notes that,

Democracy imploded in the 1930s not so much because fascists and their radical fellow travellers across the continent waged such a formidable challenge to its institutions but because it never possessed sufficient supplies of legitimacy among the public and the elites that were supposed to defend it.<sup>34</sup>

The same, I would suggest, is threatening to become true now, even in a situation of far deeper entrenched democratic structures and mindsets than before the war. A majority of the Western European public does not actively want fascism;



the question is whether they care enough about democracy to defend it. It is worth recalling that there is also a European tradition of anti-liberalism and anti-democratic thinking.<sup>35</sup>

In *Goodbye to All That?*, I ended the book with the following words, which at the time I hesitated to use for fear they might seem alarmist:

A mere thirty years after the most destructive war in world history, fuelled by Nazism, a movement whose inner dynamic leads first to the annihilation of others and then to self-destruction, Europeans faced a revision of the past, which gradually eroded the strength of the antifascist settlement. The Cold War and its demise confused the issue, making people think that the discrediting of communism necessarily led to the rejection of antifascism. If this trend is not halted, then by the hundredth anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War, a Europe of protectionist, nationalist micro-states led by populists demanding ‘national preference’ but without the means to pay for it and unwilling to admit the foreign labour necessary to sustain it, will once again march the continent into the abyss.<sup>36</sup>

My fear now is that I was too optimistic. It is time to think less about the fine distinctions between ‘populism’ and ‘fascism’ and to recognize the threat that now hangs over Western Europe. Precisely because ‘fascism’ still, after the horrors of World War II, dare not openly speak its name, fascism in the twenty-first century begins with populism. In 2013, Federico Finchelstein and Fabián Bosoer could title an article with the question ‘Is fascism returning to Europe?’<sup>37</sup> Now it is clear that it has returned, the question is how to contain and defeat it. Several countries in Eastern Europe have already been accused of drifting into authoritarianism. If no serious opposition develops, the same will happen in Western Europe and, whatever we call it, we will have destroyed the stories we have lived by for 70 years.

## Notes

- 1 Runia, ‘Burying the Dead—Creating the Past,’ 319.
- 2 Cheles, Ferguson and Vaughan, *Neo-Fascism in Europe*; Eatwell, ‘Why Are Fascism and Racism Reviving,’ 313–325; Golsan, *Fascism’s Return: Scandal, Revision, and Ideology Since 1980*.
- 3 Tismaneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation*.
- 4 Hlavajova and Sheikh, *Former West: Art and the Contemporary after 1989*.
- 5 Eatwell, ‘Why Are Fascism and Racism Reviving.’
- 6 In Ukraine, as in the United States, the situation is different. On political violence, see: Bloxham and Gerwarth, *Political Violence in Twentieth-Century Europe*; Gerwarth and Horne, *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War*.
- 7 Jamin, ‘Two Different Realities,’ 47–48.
- 8 Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, 6.
- 9 Finchelstein, ‘Returning Populism to History,’ 467–482.
- 10 Jamin, ‘Two Different Realities,’ 49.
- 11 Willsher, ‘History’s on our side.’

- 12 Finchelstein, 'Returning Populism to History,' 469. See also Finchelstein, *From Fascism to Populism in History*.
- 13 Paxton, 'The Five Stages of Fascism,' 11.
- 14 Mussolini and Gentile, 'The Doctrine of Fascism,' 42, 50.
- 15 'German AfD Rightist Triggers Fury with Holocaust Memorial Comments.'
- 16 Nougayrède, 'Don't be Complacent about the Risk of President Le Pen,' 27.
- 17 Eatwell, 'Populism and Fascism,' 25. See also Case, 'The New Authoritarians.'
- 18 See Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation*. The 'new class' is a reference to Milovan Djilas, *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1957).
- 19 On Christian Democracy, see: Kaiser, *Christian Democracy and the Origins of the European Union*; Gehler Michael and Wolfram Kaiser, *Christian Democracy in Europe since 1945*.
- 20 Mammone, *Transnational Neo-Fascism in France and Italy*, 32; Ganser, *NATO's Secret Armies: Operation Gladio and Terrorism in Western Europe*.
- 21 Mammone, *Transnational Neo-Fascism in France and Italy*, 16.
- 22 De Haan, 'The Western European Welfare State beyond Christian and Social Democratic Ideology,' 517.
- 23 See, for example, Boyle, 'The Cold War Revisited.'
- 24 'Diary of Anatoly Chernyaev Regarding the Fall of the Berlin Wall' (November 10, 1989), 586.
- 25 Stavrakakis, 'The Return of "The People": Populism and Anti-Populism in the Shadow of the European Crisis,' 507; citing J. G. Feinberg, *Democracy without a Demos?*
- 26 See here Conway's studies: 'Democracy in Postwar Western Europe: The Triumph of a Political Model,' and 'The Rise and Fall of Western Europe's Democratic Age, 1945–1973.'
- 27 See also Cento Bull, 'Neo-Fascism.'
- 28 Kallis, 'When Fascism became Mainstream: The Challenge of Extremism in Times of Crisis.' See also Copsey, "'Fascism ... but with an Open Mind": Reflections on the Contemporary Far Right in (Western) Europe.'
- 29 Stokes, Wike and Manevich, 'Post-Brexit, Europeans More Favorable toward EU.'
- 30 Mammone, 'The Eternal Return?' 187. See also Mammone, *Transnational Neo-Fascism in France and Italy*, 16–20 on 'adaptation and contemporarization.'
- 31 Pető, 'Revisionist Histories, "Future Memories": Far-Right Memorialization Practices in Hungary.' See also the articles by: Hurd and Werther: 'Go East, Old Man: The Ritual Spaces of SS Veterans' Memory Work,'; 'Retelling the Past, Inspiring the Future: Waffen-SS Commemorations and the Creation of a 'European' Far-Right Counter-Narrative'; 'Waffen-SS Veterans and Their Sites of Memory Today,' in Jochen Böhrer and Robert Gerwarth (eds.), *The Waffen-SS: A European History*.
- 32 Polakow-Suransky, 'The Ruthlessly Effective Rebranding of Europe's New Far Right.'
- 33 Eley, 'When Europe Was New,' 17–43; Eley, 'Corporatism and the Social Democratic Moment,' 37–59, esp. 58: 'By the 1990s, little remained of either the practices or the principles, let alone the material structures and institutional architecture, that organized the political common sense of the three decades after 1945.'
- 34 Kallis, 'When Fascism became Mainstream,' 15.
- 35 Gosewinkel, *Anti-Liberal Europe: A Neglected Story of Europeanization*.
- 36 Stone, *Goodbye to All That?* 294.
- 37 Finchelstein and Bosoer, 'Is Fascism Returning to Europe?'

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