



MEMORY POLITICS AND TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE



# Europeanisation and Memory Politics in the Western Balkans

*Edited by* Ana Milošević · Tamara Trošt

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# Memory Politics and Transitional Justice

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The interdisciplinary fields of Memory Studies and Transitional Justice have largely developed in parallel to one another despite both focusing on efforts of societies to confront and (re—)appropriate their past. While scholars working on memory have come mostly from historical, literary, sociological, or anthropological traditions, transitional justice has attracted primarily scholarship from political science and the law. This series bridges this divide: it promotes work that combines a deep understanding of the contexts that have allowed for injustice to occur with an analysis of how legacies of such injustice in political and historical memory influence contemporary projects of redress, acknowledgment, or new cycles of denial. The titles in the series are of interest not only to academics and students but also practitioners in the related fields.

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Editors

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and Memory Politics  
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During the preparation of the manuscript, we organised a mini symposium and a post-conference brainstorming session at the annual meeting of Memory Studies Association in Madrid (2019) and held a panel at the convention of the Association for Slavic, East European, & Eurasian Studies in Zagreb (2019). We express our deepest appreciation to scholars who participated in our panels and meetings and shared their insights, as this book is also part of a much larger conversation with memory activists and academic researchers from a broad range of disciplines.

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Snježana Koren and Dubravka Stojanović, both as the early pioneers of work on (re) constructions of memory through history textbooks, and for endless patience and help with drafts and manuscripts and acquiring primary material.

Lastly, we express our deep affection and regard for our families and children, who once again offered both patience and understanding as the book devoured time and intruded into family life.

# PRAISE FOR *EUROPEANISATION AND MEMORY POLITICS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS*

“This volume is an important contribution to debates about Europeanization. Through well researched case studies, it shows how European memory politics are appropriated and incorporated into local and national memory discourses. The contributions show how Europeanization has become a performance and is not transformative when it comes to memory politics. The insights of the chapters and coherent framework shed light not just on the Western Balkans, but contribute to a critical understanding of Europeanization more broadly.”

—Florian Bieber, *Jean Monnet Chair in the Europeanization of Southeastern Europe, Professor of Southeast European History and Politics, University of Graz, Austria*

“Europeanisation and Memory Politics in the Western Balkans is an impressive book. By presenting a set of highly readable case studies, Milošević and Trošt demonstrate how crucial the study of memory politics is for a better understanding of European politics more generally. The focus is squarely on the countries of the former Yugoslavia, but the analysis, conclusions and ideas apply to a much larger area. The book also provides us with a complex understanding of Europeanization and shows how far-reaching the political effects can be of something as seemingly apolitical as ‘memories’. The Western Balkans form a rich field of study in their own right on this topic, but, as readers of this book will realize, they provide us also with a sharp lens through which we might see certain



developments in the EU — and even elsewhere in the world — more clearly.”

—Peter Vermeersch, *Professor of Politics, Leuven International and European studies (LINES), KU Leuven, Belgium*

“This excellent and timely volume explores the processes and practices of Europeanisation on cultures of memory, sites of memory, and memory politics in South Eastern Europe. Through its interdisciplinary and innovative approach, the volume addresses truly transnational memory processes in the interplay between European institutions and memory entrepreneurs in new or prospective member states. Crucially, the chapters foreground the roles of local memory actors and elites in the promotion, actualization and sometimes appropriation of ‘Europeanized memories’ in the region, aspects that had received insufficient attention in the existing literature. This is a stimulating read and an important contribution to the research fields of memory politics, Europeanisation, and contemporary South Eastern Europe alike.”

—Tea Sindbaek, *Associate Professor at the Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen, Denmark*

“This book stands out for combining two fields that previously have not been combined: literature on Europeanisation and literature on Memory Politics. Especially the latter is still in its infancy and Milošević’s and Trošt’s contribution adds an important dimension to a still underdeveloped research area. The combination of the two different sets of literature is innovative and allows the different authors of this edited volume to ask new questions that so far have not been addressed in a systematic way.”

—Aline Sierp, *co-founder and Co-President, Memory Studies Association & Assistant Professor, Maastricht University, The Netherlands*

“Memory issues are abundant in contemporary European societies and take many shapes. As an in-depth analysis of the impact of EU norms of remembrance on a crucial but often forgotten region, the Western Balkans, this book brings the literature on Europeanization of memory politics to a new dimension. Unlike many studies focused on the East-West mnemonic divide, inspired empirical studies highlight the peculiarities of memory struggles in national contexts marked by the legacies of the Yugoslav wars, unresolved statehood issues and competing external influences. They provide a strong contribution to the study of the state and

non-state actors involved in memorialization processes in post-socialist Europe, with their specific political agendas and strategies of legitimization in national and transnational arenas. This ambitious volume paints a complex picture of the power asymmetries at the core of contemporary memory battles, which account for diverging interpretations of Europe's painful pasts."

—Laure Neumayer, *Assistant Professor, University Paris I Panthéon Sorbonne, France, author of The Criminalisation of Communism in the European Political Space after the Cold War*

"In this groundbreaking volume, Milošević and Trošt explain how dealing with the past is a functional prerequisite for EU membership. In the Western Balkans there is still no common understanding of the roots, consequences and outcome of not only the most recent ethnic wars led throughout the territory of former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, but also with regard to the Second World War and its aftermath. Theoretically innovative and empirically rich, this book offers a comprehensive and comparative study of how politicizing memory affects not only relations between neighboring states in the region, but also their efforts vested in the EU accession processes."

—Marko Kmezić, *Lecturer in Southeast European Studies at the University of Graz, Austria, author of EU Rule of Law Promotion: Judiciary Reform in the Western Balkans (Routledge, 2016), co-editor of Stagnation and Drift in the Western Balkans (Peter Lang, 2013) and The Europeanisation of the Western Balkans: A Failure of EU Conditionality? (Palgrave, 2019)*

"This dynamic collection of case studies on the Western Balkans builds upon the results of regional memory politics research over the past decade and adds a European level in analyzing transnational and supranational processes of memorialization. Comprehensive in its geographical scope and ambitious in its theoretical contributions to the field of memory studies, this volume is essential reading for scholars and policy makers seeking to understand bottom-up and top-down mnemonic strategies, actors, and relationships from the memory sites of Southeastern Europe to the institutions of the European Union."

—Vjeran Pavlaković, *Associate Professor of Cultural Studies at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Rijeka, Croatia*

“The Old Bridge in Mostar, a masterpiece of Ottoman architecture, stood for 427 years before it was destroyed in 1993 during the war in Bosnia and Hercegovina. There was no military purpose for this, the overt intention was to erase whatever there was to remind of the existence of the foe’s historic memory. Much in the same manner, with the intention not only to annihilate its inhabitants but also to rub out their material cultural memory, the ancient Adriatic city of Dubrovnik was bombarded mercilessly for many days. The warlord who committed this barbaric act later unbelievably said: ‘We shall rebuild it, even older and more beautiful’. Who wants to understand the logic and the political goals of such lunacy, which is an intrinsic feature of identity politics and conflicts, is well advised to study the eleven chapters of this book. Only on the basis of understanding the purpose of the wars against memory, one can also understand why attempts, also explained in this book, to impose top-down memory norms fostered by the EU more often than not produce additional conflicts.”

—Dušan Reljić, *SWP, German Institute for International and Security Affairs*

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# Introduction: Europeanisation and Memory Politics in the Western Balkans

*Ana Milošević and Tamara Trošt*

**Abstract** This chapter explores how the process of European integration has influenced collective memory in the countries of the Western Balkans. Whether it is coded as “reconciliation”, “good neighbourly relations”, or “cooperation with the ICTY”, dealing with the past remains a formal–informal condition for EU membership. However, divergent interpretations of history, including the Second World War and the Yugoslav wars, continue to trigger confrontations between neighbouring countries and hinder their EU perspective. We show that these “memory wars” also have a European dimension, and have become a tool to either support or oppose Europeanisation. Politics of memory is thus used not only to foster EU identity and endorse so-called EU values, but also to support nation- and state-building agendas. The tensions that derive from

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the past, however, continue to persist even after achieving the strategic goal of entering the European Union. In this chapter, we take stock of the ways in which Europeanisation processes have interacted with memory politics in the region, and suggest new ways of capturing how and why memory is negotiated, exhibited, adjusted, or ignored in the process of Europeanisation.

**Keywords** European Union · Memory politics · Europeanisation · Western Balkans

Over the last 20 years, the European Union and its member states have given steady support to the European perspective of the Western Balkans. The enlargement policy of the EU, however, has evolved from “a promise of a European future” (the Thessaloniki Summit) and “a credible perspective” (the Junker Commission) to the post-Brexit’s “firm, merit-based prospect of full membership”, dependent on the Union’s very own political, security, and economic interests. The key pillars of the Enlargement agenda for the Balkans, however, remain the same: democracy, the rule of law, and the respect for fundamental rights are seen as the main engines of economic integration and the essential anchor for fostering regional reconciliation and stability. Beyond examining the effects of EU integration processes on the countries in question, the Western Balkan countries are seen as a test case for the transformative power of Europe (Börzel 2013).

Two decades ago, Europeanisation scholars and policymakers were focused on examining the transformative capacity of the European Union (EU) to induce change in candidate countries. The assumption of this early work was that the EU had the capacity to “export” good practices in democratisation, the rule of law, and various policies to candidate countries, and accordingly, research was focused on assessing the effects of these processes (the so-called “Europeanisation as enlargement” field of research) on three domains: domestic structures, public policy, and normative frames.<sup>1</sup> The “domestic turn” in Europeanisation studies

<sup>1</sup> Featherstone and Radaelli (2003) have advised analysing effects on political structures separately from the influence on values, norms, and discourses. While research has examined the influence of Europe on individual and collective identification, values, norms, and

attempted to contextualise these impacts by examining how domestic factors affect or mitigate the success of rule transfer (Subotić 2011; Elbasani 2013), which, while still focused on institutions, importantly brought domestic conditions and actors in dialogue with broader EU processes. As the Western Balkan countries slowly progressed in the accession requirements, new research has begun examining the on-the-ground and unintended effects of Europeanisation in other fields, showing, for instance, how the EU visa liberalisation regime effectively further alienated the Roma population of the countries due to its reliance on biometric passports (Kacarska 2019), or the continued existence of segregated “two schools under one roof” in Bosnia as a consequence of OSCE intervention in the 1990s (Swimelar 2013). This research underlines the need for a better understanding of how EU processes interact with local actors and domestic conditions.

In line with the new focus of Europeanisation research, an increasing number of studies from various disciplines have analysed the impact of Europeanisation on the collective memory of both EU member states and candidate countries (Mälksoo 2009; Gensburger and Lavabre 2012; Kucia 2016; Kowalski and Törnquist-Plewa 2017; Milošević 2019). They have concluded that the EU’s politics of memory is based on the rejection of anti-Semitism, xenophobia and racism, respect for human rights, freedoms, and protection of minorities (Levy and Sznajder 2002; Assmann 2014; Leggewie 2008). Common heritage, memory, and shared attitudes towards the past serve as a source of self-legitimation for the EU (Conway and Patel 2010; Littoz-Monnet 2012; Calligaro 2013; Sierp 2014; Kaiser 2012; Neumayer 2018; Lähdesmäki 2017). They convey broadly defined European values and undergird the idea of a common future through the fostering of a European identity. The European Parliament (EP) has produced the “EU memory framework”—a number of soft law and decisions that delineate shared attitudes towards the Holocaust and rejection of all forms of non-democratic, totalitarian regimes. Although not legally binding for member states, this framework is selectively downloaded by (potential) members that seek to align with EU norms of remembrance and display their European identities. Yet, it has

discourses, the underlying assumption of these studies—of the EU as a teacher of (new) norms (Börzel and Risse 2012)—has been recently criticised (Kulpa 2014; Szulecka and Szulecki 2013; Slootmaeckers 2017).

also provided a rationale to memory entrepreneurs to push nationalist sentiments forward (Milošević and Touquet 2018).

The Union has not yet succeeded in crafting a common European sense of “who we are” based on a narrative of a shared past. For many European elites, the Union remains an emphatic way of saying “never again” to the disastrous ways of the last century. Nevertheless, the EU has become both a memory arena and a political opportunity structure for the “uploading” of domestic preferences: national narratives about the past. In EU relations with candidate countries, not only do the EU’s ideas of the common European past affect local memory practices, but power asymmetries also become more visible. Countries with EU membership play an important part in coercing the candidate countries to redress the matters of the past (e.g. historical injustices, borders, or minority protection), issues that have proven to be very resilient to Europeanisation. These dynamics were particularly visible in the recent case of North Macedonia, whose EU accession process has been delayed because of the “name dispute” with neighbouring Greece. However, precisely because an overwhelming number of studies have questioned how (ethno)national memories have affected the process of EU integration of the countries, we ask a different question: we ask how Europeanisation affects collective memory in the Western Balkan countries.

In addition to studying the results of such power asymmetries between the EU and the candidate countries, our volume explores the possibility that domestic elites and institutions can manipulate memory politics on the national and transnational levels. (Trans)national memory entrepreneurs use and abuse the EU memory framework to achieve a broad set of goals: seeking acknowledgement, recognition for their own narratives of the past, to pacify tensions, and support or even oppose Europeanisation. In this process, collective memory—knowledge and representation of the past—is constantly reinterpreted in the light of present political (individual or collective) needs. Since memory itself is a tension between what is remembered and what is forgotten, what is present and what is missing, memory actors (ab)use its inherent selectiveness to underpin their agendas and support their interests. What this volume clearly demonstrates is that EU memory politics is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, lessons of the past serve as a promise of non-repetition, showing that European countries share a tragic past but have a future in togetherness. Adoption of EU norms of remembrance

is instrumental for those who seek to politically signal so-called European values and identities. However, the quest for a shared past based on minimum common denominators is also producing unintended consequences. On the ground, deeply rooted national memories and narratives remain fundamentally unchallenged.

This volume explores how the process of European integration influenced collective memory in the countries of the Western Balkans. Whether it is coded as “reconciliation”, “good neighbourly relations”, or “cooperation with the ICTY”, dealing with the past remains a formal–informal condition for EU membership (Touquet and Milošević 2018; Kostovicova and Biquelet 2018; Mihajlović-Trbovc and Petrović 2017). However, there is no common understanding of the past in the region: neither of the causes (and consequences) of the Yugoslav wars (Ramet 2002; Jović 2017; Djokić and Ker-Lindsay 2010; Dragović-Soso and Gordy 2010), nor of the Second World War, both which have created “ethnically confined” memory cultures (Kuljić 2006). As such, divergent interpretations of history continue to trigger confrontations between neighbouring countries and hinder their EU perspective. We show that these “memory wars” also have a European dimension—they have become a tool to either support or oppose Europeanisation (Mink and Neumayer 2013; Dragović-Soso 2012; Milošević and Touquet 2018; Milošević 2019; Subotić 2019). Politics of memory is thus used not only to foster EU identity and endorse so-called EU values but also to support nation- and state-building agendas. The tensions that derive from the past, however, continue to persist even after achieving the strategic goal of entering the European Union.

The volume thus focuses on the following questions: How have EU integration processes affected memory politics in the countries of the Western Balkans? Can we as a result of Europeanisation observe the emergence of a consensual narrative about the past? Which internal/external (f)actors facilitate or constrain the change, and through which mechanisms? How do (non-) state actors support or resist Europeanisation at memorial sites, museums, commemorations, and production of soft memorial laws? What are the outcomes of Europeanisation through memory politics?

The Europeanisation of memory invites more and different forms of analysis than historians and political scientists alone have provided. To enrich our understanding of the effects of Europeanisation on memory politics, we take a multidisciplinary approach to allow for linguistic,



legal, cultural, historical, political, anthropological, and socio-economic perspectives. This approach allows us to capture how and why memory is renegotiated, exhibited, adjusted, or ignored in the process of Europeanisation. Across ten case studies, this volume looks at the ways in which official memory politics—state-acknowledged and state-promoted narratives about the past—are encoded and decoded in collective memory through the use of mnemonic tools and practices. While analysing the impact of Europeanisation on national memory politics, we collected data from commemorations and political speeches as one of the most dominant ways in which historical narratives are created and dispersed on the political and societal levels. We analysed hard and soft laws by the European and national parliaments, aesthetics and performativity of monuments, virtual mnemonic communities, and memory sites to uncover interests invested in, and meanings ascribed to them by a wide variety of actors. Authors across chapters have put significant effort into visiting hundreds of sites of memory across seven countries of the region in order to document and study symbolic rituals and (often conflictual) meanings attached to them by elites, political parties, institutions, survivors, and victims' organisations.

Throughout the volume, we show that domestic applications of European memory norms in the Western Balkan countries have been both selective and tactical. On the one hand, EU norms of remembrance serve as a normative model to emulate and adapt to domestic needs and purposes and hence signal the countries' European identity and commitment to the process of Europeanisation. But EU memory politics and receptiveness of its norms and models by potential member states are problematic in the long term. The EU's anti-totalitarian stance has been instrumental in downplaying and erasing Yugoslavia, the trans-ethnic liberation of the region during the Second World War, and 50 years of peaceful coexistence among former Yugoslav republics. The anti-fascist foundation of the EU and its unequivocal rejection of anti-Semitism are also fostered through timely and selective reactivation of Holocaust remembrance: memory politics remains in exclusive service of domestic needs and purposes of memory entrepreneurs to both support, or alternatively oppose Europeanisation. European memory adjustments have thus produced certain unintended consequences (Milošević and Touquet 2018), providing a rationale to memory entrepreneurs to push nationalist sentiments and even historical revisionism forward (Vermeersch 2019; Pavlaković and Pauković 2019; Subotić 2019; Đureinović 2020).

We also demonstrate the differences in the reach of Europeanisation in countries at various stages of the EU accession phase. The reach and grasp of Union's memorial norms are lesser in the countries with an elusive perspective of becoming EU members, where the traditional narrative of EU integration has revolved around reconciliation and peace-building among former warring parties. A key role in these processes was given to political elites, as those who are to lead the change and demonstrate changed ways in dealing with the legacies of the conflict. Yet, many of these changes have been cosmetic and lack deeper on-the-ground resonance. Memory politics is being renegotiated continuously, but also contested by a wide variety of memory actors (e.g. survivors of wartime atrocities, NGOs, political elites) that seek to promote their own views of the past and hence, challenge official memory politics.

Thus, the main contribution of this volume is that it provides a comprehensive understanding of how Europeanisation and memory politics interact. Avoiding a single-country case study and instead examining this interaction in the entire region of the Western Balkans (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia<sup>2</sup>), the volume is able to draw general conclusions about the effect of Europeanisation processes on memory politics across the region. Although this book examines the impact of Europeanisation on memory politics in the Western Balkans, our goal was to develop innovative theoretical approaches to studying Europeanisation of memory politics that can be applied to other countries. The systematic analysis of official memory politics, from fieldwork at the sites of memory to studying the role of museums and social networks in transmitting narratives, provides insight into the impact of Europeanisation on collective memory. Secondly, the volume documents the outcomes of EU integration processes in the arena of memory politics across the various stages of the process, documenting it in cases still far from accession (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo), during the accession process (Montenegro,

<sup>2</sup>We consider our range of cases to be one of the strengths of the volume. However, a deliberate choice was made to focus only on the countries of the post-Yugoslav memory landscape. As former Yugoslav republics (and Kosovo—a former autonomous province) these countries effectively have a shared past: the experience of being part of the same political federation formed after the Second World War. This explains why Albania, in particular, has not been examined. We bring cases from all seven countries that emerged following the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Since Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina underwent very dramatic changes in memory politics, their central role in this volume is unsurprising.

Serbia, North Macedonia), and after EU accession (Croatia, Slovenia). This allows us to draw insights on the varying pace of alignment with EU memorial norms and practices, dependent on a country's advancement towards EU membership. Finally, the chapters capture the interplay between Europeanisation and memory from top-down (led by the EU and imposed by external actors), the co-option and manipulation of the EU memory framework by elites and memory entrepreneurs, as well as bottom-up (local and grassroots contestations of memory). We examine the interaction between these (f)actors via unique angles, such as examining how gender and memory politics interact, which has been largely neglected by similar studies.

### EUROPEANISATION AND ITS (EXPECTED) EFFECTS

Traditional Europeanisation research viewed Europeanisation primarily as “the domestic adaptation to European regional integration” (Graziano and Vink 2007, p. 7). In this early research, focusing on the initial EU member states, the main questions concerned how European integration and everyday policymaking affect domestic structures, and how domestic structures adapt to European integration (Caporaso 2007). According to Risse et al.'s (2001) three-step model, (1) processes at the European level lead to pressures to adjust, wherein the extent of the pressure is determined by the “goodness of fit” or the congruence or incongruence between “Europe” and the domestic level; (2) the pressures are mediated by domestic-level factors, including mediating institutions, domestic structural and cultural conditions such as the type of party system, formal and informal institutions, veto groups, etc., which in turn lead to (3) outcomes, reflected in domestic structural change, which range from a straightforward “downloading” EU-level policies, symbolic change without substantive content, no change, or active attempts to subvert European policy (Caporaso 2007).<sup>3</sup>

With the “domestic turn” in the Europeanisation literature, scholars and policymakers began focusing more on the domestic factors affecting the EU's ability to successfully transfer the rule of law (Elbasani 2013), importantly bringing domestic conditions and actors in dialogue with

<sup>3</sup>In measuring the “success” of Europeanisation, however, scholars have called into question the measurement of outcomes, highlighting the “capability-expectations” gap of Europeanisation potential (see Nielsen 2013).

broader EU processes. This work questioned the transformative capacity of Europe and of the EU accession processes in particular, to induce changes in the prospective countries. Here, the central question was centred on understanding why certain EU policies were more easily transferred into some countries more easily than others (Börzel and Risse 2003; Mastenbroek 2017), and which domestic factors served as obstacles for this transfer. Commonly categorised as “fit-misfit” models, these studies examined how certain domestic conditions mediated the EU’s effects and determined its success, including policies, economic conditions (gender inequality), ideational systems (like conceptions of citizenship), institutions, and constitutional orders (Caporaso 2007). This research also showed the possibility that “Europeanisation” was not a simple top-down process, but that elites could gain leverage by playing a double game—domestic and European (Moravcsik 1994). While the approaches to understanding these domestic factors include both rational choice institutionalist and sociological institutionalist perspectives (Featherstone and Radaelli 2003; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005), they both operate under the “goodness-of-fit” model and assume that the EU has the capacity to “export” good practices in democratisation and the rule of law.

Empirical studies of the effect of Europeanisation were, and continue to primarily be focused on, the level of policy. The effects of Europeanisation have been studied on environmental, immigration, transportation, and refugee policy in the initial EU member states (Jordan and Lieferink 2004; Knill 2001; Héritier et al. 2001; Lavenex 2001; Vink 2001; Toshkov 2007). In the Western Balkan states, studies have examined the effect of Europeanisation on the rule of law and judiciary reform (Kmezić 2017), environmental policy (Fagan and Sircar 2015), foreign policy (Bojinović Fenko and Stahl 2019), minority policy (Koneska 2019; Sardelić 2018), education policy (Klemenčič 2013), citizenship policy (Kacarska 2012), corruption and regional policy (Vučković and Đorđević 2019), and migration and border security (Geddes et al. 2012), and entire volumes have been dedicated to studying the interaction between the EU enlargement process and domestic politics, taking Europeanisation both as the dependent and the independent variable (see Bieber 2013; Noutcheva 2012; Radeljić 2013; Džankić et al. 2019; Ker-Lindsay et al. 2019). This led to new definitions of Europeanisation as the “processes of (a) construction, (b) diffusion, and (c) institutionalisation of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ‘ways of doing

things’, and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU public policy and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures, and public policies” (Radaelli 2003, p. 30). Newer literature has questioned the depth of some of the reforms, suggesting that many of the changes at the executive level were skin-deep and lacked deeper on-the-ground adoption (Slootmaeckers and O’Dwyer 2018; Trošt and Slootmaeckers 2016; Webb 2018; Mos 2020).

The “Europeanisation as enlargement” literature thus assumes EU processes will induce change in prospective EU member states either via external incentives and conditionality (a cost-benefit calculation, primarily driven by elites, and reflected in the legal and executive sphere), or by socialisation, wherein the EU would act as a “teacher” of new norms (Börzel and Risse 2012). Both of these have been criticised; pointing to the problematic notion of the EU as a “teacher” of norms (Slootmaeckers 2017), and alerting to the effects and in some cases backlash against EU conditionality (Kmezić 2019; Zhelyazkova et al. 2019) as well as unintended consequences of the accession processes, such as the above-mentioned examples of Roma and biometric passports or Bosnia’s enduring two-schools-under-one-roof policy. The sphere of LGBT rights has particularly highlighted the complex and multifaceted nature of Europeanisation’s domestic effects (Slootmaeckers et al. 2016): in addition to the plethora of domestic conditions, such as the transnational embeddedness of domestic LGBT institutions that determine the effectiveness of policy diffusion across new and potential member states (Ayoub 2014), unintended on-the-ground effects had the ability to derail or strengthen the effect of these measures: in Serbia and Bosnia, despite the initial violent backlash against increased LGBT visibility—widely perceived in the public as “selling out” to the EU’s endless conditionality demands (Pavasović Trošt and Kovačević 2013)—the antigay backlash seems to have led to an improvement in LGBT rights norms (Swimelar 2019). On the other hand, the recent regression in LGBT rights in Poland, an “old” EU member state that seemed to have already passed the EU test in terms of LGBT rights, shows the absence of long-lasting post-access changes in norms, suggesting that social learning might not be able to fill the gap following the removal of external incentives under particular domestic conditions (O’Dwyer 2010).

At the same time, in their examination of the effects of Europeanisation on the Western Balkan countries, several studies have pointed to the

areas where the EU accession process has contributed to marked improvement, particularly in the sphere of the visa liberation process, which acted as a significant stimulus in successful EU rule adoption (Kacarska 2012; Trauner 2011) and minority-related laws and citizenship policies (see Džankić et al. 2015). The backsliding in the rule of law over the past decade has mostly been attributed to the high number of domestic formal and informal gatekeeper elites that control the state, in addition to inefficient economies and several unresolved bilateral disputes and unfinished reconciliation processes of the 1990s wars (Džankić et al. 2019, pp. 2–3). Indeed, in addition to state capture across the region, not having adequately dealt with the 1990s conflicts is pointed to as one of the biggest threats to regional stability (Djolai and Nechev 2018). This volume thus specifically addresses how Europeanisation and memory interact, bringing attention to memory politics as an additional sphere affected by Europeanisation processes, inadequately addressed by the literature as of yet. Asking how EU integration processes have affected memory politics in the countries of the Western Balkans and examining the outcomes of Europeanisation through memory politics brings to the foreground an important dimension of the Europeanisation process in the Western Balkans. As Bieber (2019) has pointed out, there is an insufficient understanding of this interaction—the adaptation, transformation, and rejection in specific regional contexts—between European standards and institutions with the regional context: we need a better understanding of “the process of constructing relational spaces characterised by asymmetric relations in which ideas, rules and norms are constructed, transferred, adopted, implemented, transformed and rejected” (p. 245), that can only be achieved by more historically nuanced and socially complex examinations of this interaction.

## THE EUROPEAN UNION AND MEMORY

The existence of shared memories and identities is one of the key elements of legitimacy building for both nation-states and the EU. Until recently, however, scholars have been mainly interested in the influence Europe has on society and patterns of individual and collective identification (e.g. Cowles et al. 2001; Checkel and Katzenstein 2009) which more recently has been absorbed by the wider discussion on European values, EU citizenship and the European public sphere (e.g. Foret and Calligaro 2018; Bauböck 2019; Risse 2015). Largely abandoned now, the literature

on European identities overlooked the possibility that Europeanisation could affect collective memory. While the concept of collective memory now receives more attention in EU studies, there are still a number of theoretical and methodological challenges in its applicability.

Traditionally, scholars of nationalism have subscribed to the belief that a nation seeks to establish continuity with the past by mobilising history and memory to legitimise itself and cement group cohesion. The “invented traditions” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) and “imagined communities” (Anderson 2006/1983) approaches both rely on the nation-state’s symbiosis with history, anchored in continuity with a “suitable” past. In stark contrast with the primacy of nation as a prism through which the past is observed, the European Union has been promoting a transnational view of history that advocates “discontinuity with the past” (Pakier and Stråth 2010; Mink and Neumayer 2013; Neumayer 2018). A European memory—a shared view of the past—therefore seeks to transcend the boundaries of nation-states by jointly “working through the past” in the name of shared universal principles, Europeanised practices (Müller 2010) and the construction and dissemination of “European canons” (Karlsson 2010).

The past is interwoven in the foundational narrative of the Union: the EU emerged out of “the darkest hour of Europe” to break the pattern of millennial conflicts among European peoples (Müller 2010; Della Sala 2010). Former enemies, France and Germany, put aside their differences and worked together to build “a new Europe” (Guisan 2012). The birth of the Union is narrated as a “victory over history” and a mission to safeguard peace in post-1945 Europe. As such, peace, cohesion, and stability were the main objectives of the early European Community, enabled by economic integration and the German reckoning with the past. This telos of an upward movement from “war to peace” suggests that the European Union is a product of memory work (de Cesari and Kaya 2019), a measure of non-repetition, and a form of restorative justice that prevents recidivism.

However, an EU policy on memory that put in focus dealing with the past emerged only after the end of the Cold War. Following the fall of communism in the Baltics, Central and Eastern Europe, new member states fostered ownership over the EU by seeking and obtaining acknowledgement and recognition of their own post-1945 totalitarian experiences (Mälksoo 2009; Onken 2007; Kattago 2009; Perchoc 2015). In Western Europe, the Holocaust was the cornerstone of European memory and

identity before the memory of the communist crimes in Eastern Europe became an issue (Banke 2010; Kucia 2016; Kowalski and Törnquist-Plewa 2017; Neumayer 2018; Subotić 2019). After the fall of communism, these repressed and to a large extent invisible memories of the crimes and suffering behind the Iron Curtain came to the surface and triggered the discourses on “memory as a right” and a measure of transitional justice (Mink and Neumayer 2013; Bernhard and Kubik 2014; Belavusau and Gliszczyńska-Grabias 2017).

The outcome of these processes is EU politics of memory—a shared, transnational representation of the past forged and validated by the members of the group (member states). The most commonly used mnemonic tools used to disseminate such a transnational memory politics are soft laws and days of remembrance installed by the European Parliament, creation of monuments, memorial plaques, organisation of European commemorations as well as heritage-making and museumisation (Manners 2011; Kaiser et al. 2014; Milošević and Perchoc 2020).

## EUROPEANISATION OF MEMORY

The past decade has seen the rapid increase of literature examining “European memory”. Different scholars and different academic disciplines, however, disagree on where to locate and how to approach the impact of Europeanisation on collective memory. The main bulk of literature situates Europeanisation of memory between transnationalisation and “cosmopolitanisation” of domestic discourses and remembrance practices (Levy and Sznajder 2002; Assmann 2014; Mälksoo 2009; Conwey and Patel 2010; Pakier and Stråth 2010; Gensburger and Lavabre 2012; Sierp 2014; de Cesari and Rigney 2014; Kucia 2016; Kowalski and Törnquist-Plewa 2017; Milošević 2019; de Cesari and Kaya 2019; Verovšek 2020).

EU memory politics is, clearly, instrumental in defining what Europe is and what it stands for. The rejection of all totalitarianism (Stalinist–Communist and Nazi–Fascist on par), anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and racism, as well as respect for human rights, freedoms and protection of minorities, are at the core of the EU’s politics of memory (e.g. Neumayer 2018). The literature makes clear the causal relationship between the EU Enlargement policy and memory politics. The so-called Enlargement rounds leading towards the deepening and widening of the European



Union are “critical junctures”<sup>4</sup> in EU integration history able to account for the emergence of and (differential) changes in EU memory politics.

Perhaps the most tangible result of this intense transnational political engagement with the past can be observed in the European Parliament (EP) with its mass production of soft laws that convey political positions on the past in the light of present (Milošević and Perchoc 2020). As a result of more than 40 years of symbolic politics by the EP, the “EU Memory Framework” mentioned above emerged, consisting of a number of soft laws and decisions that delineate shared attitudes towards the past (Milošević and Touquet 2018). Although not legally binding for member states, the EP invites states to align with EU norms of remembrance to display their European identities and commitment to the future in peace and togetherness (Dragović-Soso 2012; Milošević 2017). However, more habitually the EU as a memory arena is used by the member states to reaffirm national memory politics and pursue domestic political interests at the international scale.

We explore the politics of European memory fostering by operationalising memory politics as an actor-centred and outcome-oriented approach to social remembering. We go beyond identity-based, constructivists’ interpretations of memory and remembrance as a part of societal cultural codes and myths, instead adopting a more nuanced perspective. Drawing from historical institutionalism, we link constructivists’ views with rational choice perspectives to explain not only how, but more importantly why, countries engage with the past. Accordingly, we deploy a broad definition of Europeanisation of memory politics, as:

... the processes of construction, diffusion and institutionalisation of shared values, remembrance practices, policies, discourses, narratives, beliefs and norms associated with the past - which are first defined and consolidated in the EU policy process and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, practices and public policies of member states and acceding countries. (Milošević 2019, following Radaelli 2003)

<sup>4</sup>The crisis in the 1970s, the Fall of Communism in 1989, structural transformations (big-bang Enlargements), the failure of the EU constitution (2005) as well as Brexit—all had an impact on the surge in the political use of memory by the EU institutions and within the EU territory. As historical institutionalists argue, these critical junctures charted a new path: memory politics became a tool to explain the new circumstances.

This operationalisation of Europeanisation of memory enables us to observe the process of “uploading” (member states) and “downloading” ((potential) member states) values, remembrance practices, policies, discourses, narratives, beliefs, and norms associated with the past (Milošević 2019). Uploading is a mechanism of Europeanisation typical for a symmetrical type of relation between the member states. Member states are active in projecting their own policy preferences, practices, and narratives to the EU (Milošević 2017; see Olsen 2002; Börzel 2005) whereby memory entrepreneurs seek acknowledgement, endorsement, recognition, or alternatively the promotion of their own views and interests which are projected onto the past. Memories that get integrated into the EU memory framework become situated in a broader historical context receiving symbolic recognition. Downloading, on the other hand, concerns (as this volume shows) the selective and tactical transfer of rules, models, and ideas, associated with the past, which occurs at the level of member states and non-members, with an aim of socialising into a common commemorative culture and therefore building their loosely defined European identities. Downloading of the EU memory politics has been instrumental in mirroring the so-called European values upon which the EU—allegedly—has been founded. Countries seeking to join the EU are expected to condemn the Holocaust and embrace universal moral lessons derived from it to prevent future violence. The Holocaust serves as Europe’s most important moral lesson, a warning for the future, and a crucial part of its identity. Yet, as this volume shows, states can manipulate the existing Holocaust memory framework to rewrite their pasts and assist continued relativisation of past crimes and injustices.

We examine the ways in which top-down memorialisation is organised and managed at both the EU and national levels, but also examine who are the main actors promoting, supporting, managing, or alternatively opposing the Europeanisation of memory. Broadly, we define “memory actors” as individuals, groups, and institutions that are acting as active conduits of collective memory. Narrowly, we analyse those actors who have the power to influence official memory politics. It is here that we situate “memory entrepreneurs” as those who, in a very pronounced way, “seek social recognition and political legitimacy (of their own) interpretation or narratives of the past” (Jelin 2003, pp. 33–34). Political elites, political parties, like-minded individuals, as well as institutions

play a crucial role in (de)legitimising historical narratives. Their memorial activism springs out of the desire to shape, challenge, or obstruct a dominant view of the past.

### A EUROPEAN MEMORY FOR THE WESTERN BALKANS?

The interaction between transnational and national dimensions of memory politics constitutes the environment in which actors, from social movements to political parties, navigate in making claims over what “European memory” is or is not. However, the existing accounts tend to focus on the East–West dichotomy as the main lens through which the enlarged EU memorial landscape is perceived and analysed. The regions and countries on the periphery of this East–West divide, such as the Western Balkans, have received scant attention in the research literature. Much uncertainty still exists about the impact of transnationalisation of discourses about the past at the EU level and their transposition in the process of EU Enlargement towards potential member states. However, the EU is not simply a newly available political opportunity structure to which domestic preferences are projected, but also an actor itself—with its distinct pluralistic identity and memory. The EU memory politics is comprised out of the uploaded historical material of its member states and serves jointly forged interests such as legitimacy building. It vests the EU with a specific historical fibre underpinning the objectives of EU identity politics, or the pacification of relations. But communitarian interests and the interests of member states may not always be compatible. Bilateral disputes over the matters of the past are particularly telling in this regard as they have proven to be very resilient to Europeanisation. The case of North Macedonia, whose EU accession process has been hijacked by the “name dispute” with neighbouring Greece, demonstrates how power asymmetry of membership in the group plays an important part in coercing the candidate countries to redress the matters of the past (Trajanovski, this volume).

Our case studies show that the Europeanisation process in the field of memory politics has been more performative than fundamentally progressive. EU memory politics is legitimising nation-states’ claims to advance the process of Europeanisation and support their EU bid or alternatively to oppose it. On the one hand, EU membership remains a key driver for building peace in the Western Balkans. Fundamental elements of the EU’s accession criteria such as respect for the rule of law, minority protection,

and accountable and mature political governance, can empower societies to resolve the legacies of the past and jumpstart the reconciliation process. In this sense, EU memory politics could serve as a form of a conflict-resolution “know-how”—and not a prescribed template—to address (and make the amends for) previous injustices enacted upon marginalised or otherwise oppressed groups. On the other hand, the EU reports assessing progress in the advancement of a country positively evaluate national alignments with EU memory politics and endorse “the politics of regret” (Olick 2007). For instance, Serbian president Vučić was praised by the EU leaders for his attendance at the 2015 Srebrenica commemoration, despite the fact that Serbia still does not acknowledge the events as genocide (Touquet and Milošević 2018). In this way, symbolic politics serves as a measurement tool and a test of the progress these countries make in dealing with the past, “reconciliation” and “good neighbourly relations”, and supports their advancement on the EU path. The concrete expectation of the EU in this regard is that political leaders must take ownership of the reconciliation processes and fully commit—in words and deeds—to overcoming the legacy of the past and solving open issues well before their accession to the EU.

However, domestic applications of European memory norms in the Western Balkans have been both selective and tactical, as we demonstrate. In the context of their path towards EU membership, political elites, parties, institutions, as well as non-state actors advocated for a clear cut with the communist past as an aspect of their “return to Europe”. On the one hand, the EU’s anti-totalitarian stance has been instrumental in downplaying and erasing Yugoslavia, the trans-ethnic liberation of the region during the Second World War, and 50 years of peaceful coexistence among former Yugoslav republics (Đureinović, McConnell, Cateux, this volume). These shifts in memory politics are for instance reflected in legal and political attempts to silence or eliminate traces of Croatia’s Yugoslav past in urban spaces as well as in places directly affected by the Croatian War of Independence, officially known as the “Homeland War”, from 1991 to 1995 (McConnell, this volume), and in historical revisionism of the First World War as an attempt to reconstruct the new Montenegrin nationhood narrative—premised on distancing Montenegro from Serbia—as fundamentally European (Zečević, this volume). In a manner resembling other post-communist states in Europe, memory entrepreneurs deploy an anti-totalitarian narrative that often leads to the relative equalisation of national socialism and communism (Đureinović,

this volume). The EU memory framework serves this aspect of reinterpretation of the Second World War and its aftermath in Yugoslavia. In Serbia, the appropriation of the anti-totalitarian discourse is used for the rehabilitation of the *četniks* and recasting of their movement as anti-communist. In Croatia, the *ustaša* are represented as victims of communism, which leads towards the whitewashing of the country's fascist history. Slovenia, an EU member state since the 2004 enlargement, has also adopted the European anti-totalitarian narrative, which has manifested itself in the construction of a monument to "Victims of All Wars" in the centre of Ljubljana, which, while depoliticising the deaths of those who died in the various wars of the twentieth century, avoids a condemnation of domestic actors like the Slovene Home Guard (*Slovensko domobranstvo*), which collaborated with the Axis powers in the Second World War (McConnell, this volume).

Indeed, soft laws made by the European Parliament have assisted elites and political parties in their endeavour to co-opt those aspects of the Europeanisation process that fit their needs. The selectiveness in domestic applications of EU norms is most visible when comparing countries in different stages of EU accession. While EU memory politics are selectively applied in the pre-accession phase described above, the post-accession phase reveals the reversibility of the Europeanisation of memory. The post-accession phase contestation of the memory in the case of Croatia demonstrates a certain (un)dealing with the past and reinterpretation of Europeanness. Enacting the Holocaust canons of remembrance (Karlsson 2010) in Croatia's Jasenovac Memorial, for instance, provided Croatia a way of signalling the EU-compliant moral lessons from the past, however, as Zaremba (this volume) shows, the motivations of memory entrepreneurs that supported the "Holocaustisation" of Jasenovac diverge. Her study provides an excellent example of how "cosmopolitan narratives" of Europe (Levy and Sznajder 2002) mean very little beyond elite-led and elite-practiced forms of remembrance. Our findings thus additionally suggest that apparent mnemonic consensus are frequently just a "dress up" by elites, lacking deep on-the-ground effects. As the chapters demonstrate, we cannot simply take for granted that the enactment of cosmopolitan and ethical models of remembrance and reconciliation are indeed producing the desired effect of learning from and dealing with the past. The Holocaust framework can assist in the continued relativisation of domestic crimes by state fascist regimes. Its application in the Croatian case shows that the rift between

political processes and on-the-ground effects is very deep. Both Zaremba and McConnell (this volume) take the same example to illustrate this, by examining the evolution of the state-promoted commemoration in Jasenovac, which has been boycotted for several years by the human rights activists, victims' associations and representatives of the Serb, Roma, and Jewish minorities in Croatia.

While elites might strategically use prospective EU membership as a political tool, politically signalled commitment to the European project and its underlying values through the use of memory politics does not always resonate on the local, grassroots level. The events of the 1990s wars are still deeply entrenched in collective memory at the local level, where discourses on Europeanised memory and domestic political manipulations of the past are either rejected or countered. This is perhaps most visible in the rise of counter-memorial culture: State-sponsored memorials and performative commemorations have slowly been driven onto the side-lines, making place for grassroots memorials, artworks, artistic performances, and counter-monuments. The case of Prijedor, for instance, shows that in the absence of an EU perspective, the economic renewal of the city takes precedence over the "right to memory". In a city where more than 3000 Bosnian Muslims and Croats went missing, were detained or killed in 1992, the places of their suffering are not a part of the official municipal commemoration. The lack of recognition and acknowledgement of the wartime suffering has given rise to a new set of counter-memorial practices led by the survivors, victims' associations, and local artists (Bajec, this volume). The absence of the EU perspective in Bosnia-Herzegovina was also flagged by Moll (2013), who argues that the European Integration process was and remains unable to affect dominant nationalist memory narratives because of the lack of interest of dominant elites in accelerating the Integration process, combined with a hesitance of the EU to get involved in memory questions in BH. Vučkovic (this volume) similarly argues that the EU's approach towards memory matters in Bosnia-Herzegovina so far has been tepid and reduced to genocide in Srebrenica (1995). Being both a memory activist and a researcher, Vučkovic gives as a critical assessment of the culture of denial and forgetting in Prijedor, concurring with Bajec that the Europeanisation of memory can still occur on the fringes of memorial practices. In this endeavour, memory activists fill in the void and give voice to voiceless: they are both agents and engines of change.

The case of Mostar in Bosnia-Herzegovina shows that reinterpretation of the past, and its (initially assigned) symbols and values, can also be seen as a forceful intervention with the aim of engineering a Europeanised past in service of reconciliation. The new narrative of Mostar and its *Stari most* as a symbol of “bridging” aims to recondition the past from being “a curse” and a source of division, to “a model for the future”. The European reinterpretation of the past, as Cateux (this volume) shows, either leads to the erasure of “unsuitable” memory, or as a tool to ascribe novel meanings to the past. The renovation works of the communist-era Partisan cemetery and its use in the observance of May 9 (the Day of Europe) illustrate this, as symbols and locally grounded memories are divorced from their native context and meanings, to enable a display of so-called European values. The elite-led performance of European-ness is rejected by the veterans of the Second World War and anti-fascist organisations as alien, the larger question being: to whom, then, does the anti-fascism belong in Mostar, if a Europeanised memory flattens the differences between Yugoslavia and the former communist countries in the East.

Indeed, emulation of EU mnemonic norms and discourses with the aim of fostering European identity or receiving political advantages such as EU fast-tracking, can clash with the on the ground narratives of the past. This is the case with Mostar (described above) as well as with Skopje. North Macedonia’s “Skopje 2014 project” was envisioned to vest the capital city with an European identity and reaffirm national identity, yet its divisive potential was palpable both in the domestic and foreign political sphere. The set of ethnocentric, archaeological, linguistic, and mnemonic measures enacted since the mid-2000s launched the peculiar process of promoting the ethno-Macedonian national past as a top-scale political priority. It led to the so-called “name dispute”—a bilateral issue between the neighbouring North Macedonia and Greece on the official usage of the name “Macedonia”. The case presented by Trajanovski (this volume) illustrates how mnemonic entrepreneurship can not only trigger protests and inter-ethnic resentment, but also how mnemonic dissent between Athens and Skopje can hinder the EU Integration process. Longest standing in the EU queue, North Macedonia failed to get a date for the start of the EU accession talks until agreed consensus on the past was achieved. It resulted in the “renaming” of the country and erasure of contested memory in the North Macedonian capital.

Similarly, we show that “historicizing strategies” (Mink and Neumayer 2013) can be an effective tool to persuade actors to reject norms, values, and freedoms endorsed by the EU. While analysing the social media discussions of opponents of the Istanbul Convention in Croatia, Obajdin and Golušin (this volume) reveal how non-state actors equal Europeanisation to “gender ideology”—a discourse that entails fears about traditional gender roles being undermined by third-wave feminism and LGBTQ + rights. In this view, “traditional values and culture” are “endangered” by Europeanisation, and Croatia is a victim of a forceful implementation of (gender) ideology—a “totalitarian”, “undemocratic”, “fascist”, “parasitic”, and “violent” Europeanisation. Similarly, Hoxha and Andresen (this volume) observe how local values can both oppose and clash with EU norms: through the lens of gender, they show that citizens in post-conflict Kosovo perceive dealing with the past as being crucial for the early stage EU integration process. Both Kosovo-Serb and Kosovo-Albanian respondents in their focus groups see themselves as Europeans and believe that Europeanisation processes are an opportunity not only to overcome the troubled past, but to reconcile the male-dominating and women-suppressed war narratives in Kosovo. However, gendered memories can also be used as a tool for contestation of the EU, to persuade local actors to reject norms, values, and freedoms promoted by the EU and seen as incompatible with “traditional national values”, or, in Hoxha and Andresen’s case, to highlight the inconsistencies between perceived EU demands and on-the-ground felt effects of the EU integration process.

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