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Recovering political violence in Romanian contemporary debates

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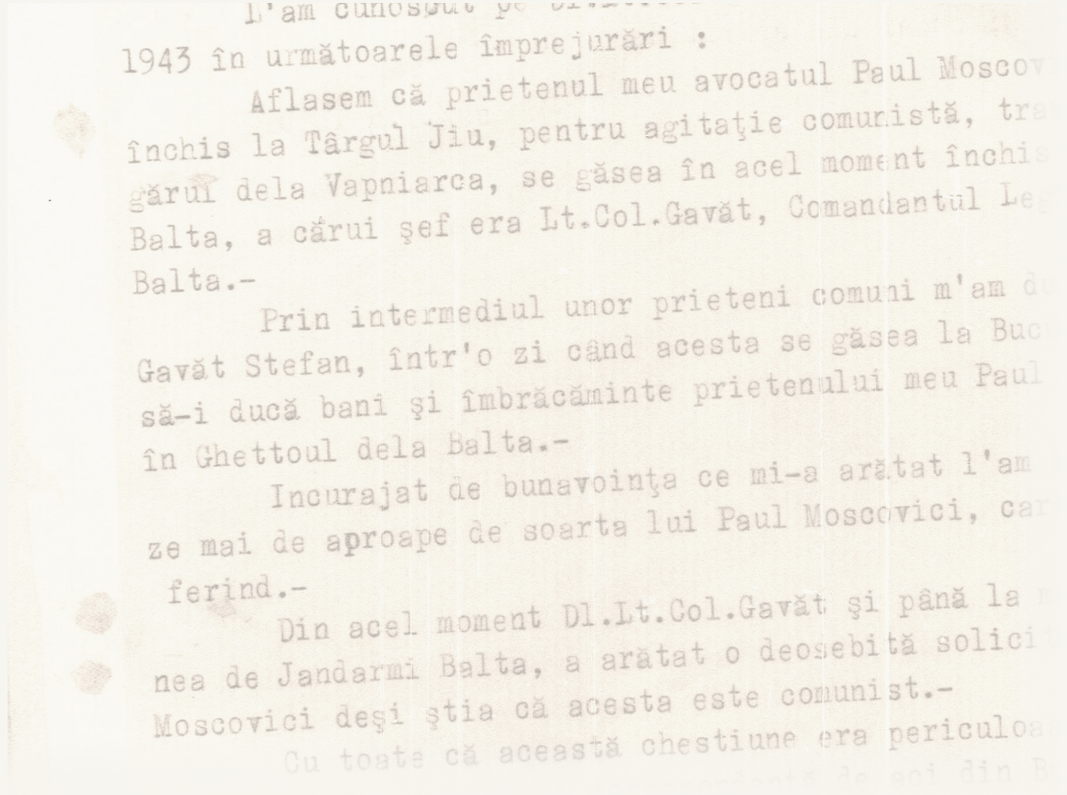
The argument in this manuscript intervenes in the broader debate about the limits, biases and exclusions of the global liberal memory paradigm and the narratives that underpin global liberal democracy. Through a close reading of enduring conservative connotations of being 'liberal' and 'European' in Central and Eastern Europe, and specifically in Romania, the research charts how narratives of political violence have been linked to exclusionary dimensions of liberalism (human rights, neoliberalism) on the one hand, and problematic notions of Europeanism on the other. In particular, I mapped conflicts of memory, debates and contests. The analysis focused in particular on narratives of fragility, vulnerability, victimhood and persecution on the one hand, and of hope and transformation on the other, in order to trace how memory began as a mobilising force, only to become a deterrent to truly progressive liberal notions, and ultimately to contribute to the demise of its myth. The argument builds on a notion of silence that has emerged in relation to the history of the left and social justice movements, critical narratives of knowledge and geopolitics, the mainstreaming of radical rightist thought, or the exclusionary dimensions of the state and law. In turn, the normative approach to political violence offers insights into a long and complex process of unravelling the idealism of liberalism. The analysis weaves together memory studies, intellectual history and political history to provide a cultural genealogy of the pitfalls of liberal memory.

Romanian National Archives, snapshot 1948 trial/Photograph: Dana Dolghin

Silence in the Age of Transnational Memory



Silence in the Age of Transnational Memory

Recovering Political Violence in Romanian Contemporary Debates

Dana Dolghin

Silence in the Age of Transnational Memory
Recovering Political Violence in Romanian Contemporary Debates

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———. "On political heritage: remembering and disavowing 1989" *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research* vol. 32, no. 3, 2018. pp. 34-70. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13511610.2018.1517300?needAccess=true.

———. "The Târgu Jiu Camp: Humanitarianism, Sovereignty and Re-emerging Memories" *Accessing Campscapes* and *Heritage, Memory and Conflict Journal* (HMC), June 2022.

———. "Sighet, competing memories." In *Phantom Borders: case studies from South-Eastern Europe*, edited by Dana Dolghin and Andreas Guidi. Berlin: Peter Lang (forthcoming). The author wrote an essay in this volume and the volume has been edited by the author and a co-editor. It is still forthcoming due to several delays in the production process.

———. “Dissensus: Recent Dynamics in the European Cultural Space.” In *Debating Dissensus over Liberal Democracy,* edited by Ramona Coman and Nathalie Brack. Working Paper 2023, pp. 86-91.

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INTRODUCTION

1. A New Narrative?

In December 2019, on the 30th commemoration of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the European Parliament in Strasbourg passed a memory resolution (termed 'Declaration') on the initiative of populists, conservatives, social democrats and the liberals of "Renew", inscribing a new narrative regarding the December 1989 protests that led to the downfall of the Ceaușescu regime in Romania. The intervention of the state apparatus to quell these protests caused over 1,000 victims, and it was the only case of loss of life during the collapse of state socialist regimes in 1989 across Europe.[1] The brutality of the Romanian authorities against the protesters was only matched by the controversial execution of the dictator a few days later, which made headlines around the world.[2] Specifically, the European Parliament's Declaration emphasised the obligation to settle the legacy of "the use of force against the Romanian people in December 1989, " which "painfully shook all of Romanian society to the core," and called for "the identification of the actual perpetrators of these crimes [that] remains an agonizing unresolved issue for the victims, their families, and for all Romanian citizens."[3]

The Declaration set out to resolve the multiple and clashing accounts of who exactly was the mastermind of the actions taken against the protests and the ensuing violence by paying tribute to the victims among the protesters who took to the streets in Timişoara and Bucharest and condemning the Ceaușescu regime's prolonged austerity politics and brutality. One way to

[1] Peter Siani-Davies, *The Romanian Revolution of December 1989* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 19-30. Siani-Davies provides an overview of the speculations surrounding the events in the immediate 1990s and describes how members of the Social Democrat Party, the NSF, the successors of the RCP (Romanian Communist Party), kept their positions of power and therefore "betrayed" the demands of the protests demanding change on the streets in 1989.

[2] Catalin Stoica. "Romania's Failed Attempt at a Revolutionary Myth: Performances and Rituals of Degradation in Ceausescu's Trial." *Polish Sociological Review*, 128, (1) 1999, 461–83. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41274726. Accessed 16 Apr. 2023.

[3] "Article 3", *Commemoration of the 30th Anniversary of the Romanian Revolution of December 1989*, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2019-0109_EN.html. Last accessed December 11, 2020.

do so was to emphasize the narrative regarding "the sacrifice of the Romanian citizens who courageously stood in the line of fire, opened up the country's path towards NATO, the European Union and the democratic world, from which it had been torn from after the end of the Second World War against the will of the Romanian people."[4]

Establishing a new narrative for the memory of the Romanian protests of 1989 challenged a long absence of commemorative practices of anything else but the fall of the Berlin Wall, even at the pan-European level. Popular mobilizations were a more palatable historical image for this epochal moment of 'transition' than the various orchestrators within the existing political systems in Central and Eastern Europe or any hint of popular distrust in the authenticity of the political transformation.[5] Even in Romania, the images of Berlin were a more alluring trope of memorialization than the local events, which, if addressed, were too bound up with internal party politics and relegated to a type of problematic event which is too polarizing, or too "politicized".[6] The European Parliament's Declaration provided a more constructive angle on 1989, reversing the enduring Romanian outlook on the lack of restorative justice[7] for the victims, a conspiratorial history of a "second-tier" communist takeover, a political coup, or merely an after-shock of a wider neo-liberalizing 'wave'.[8]

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[4] "Preambul", *Commemoration of the 30th Anniversary*.

[5] Raluca Grosescu, "Judging Communist Crimes in Romania: Transnational and Global Influences", *International Journal of Transitional Justice*, 11, 3 (2017), 505–524. https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/ijx016; Lavinia Stan, *Transitional Justice in Post-Communist Romania: The Politics of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 5-25. As of 2015, the Romanian government stands second only to Russia in the number of unresolved reparations for past violence victims' families, their "right to truth" and resolution at the European Court of Human Rights. Historians have pointed to the clean slate desired by the authoritarian regime of the National Salvation Front (NSF), the first political force in the 1990s, social-democrat but which incorporated many of the former key figures of the communist regime, as the cause of such silence on both victims and perpetrators. See Grigore Pop-Eleches, "Romania Twenty Years After 1989: The Bizarre Echoes of a Contested Revolution", in Michael Bernhard and Jan Kubik eds, *Twenty Years After Communism*: *The Politics of Memory and Commemoration*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. pp. 85–104.

[6] It is a dynamic described in Mihai Stelian Rusu, "Transitional Politics of Memory: Political Strategies of Managing the Past in Post-communist Romania", *Europe-Asia Studies*, 69, 8, (2017), 1257-1279, https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2017.1380783

[7] Restorative justice entails the use of memory for reconciliation and dialogue, preventing the repetition in the future. See Anna Cento Bull, "Working through the violent past: Practices of restorative justice through memory and dialogue in Italy." *Memory Studies*, *13*(6),2020. 1004-1019. https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698018790106.

[8] Davies, *The Romanian Revolution*, 5-7.

Indeed, while today's scholarship is beginning to challenge the myth of the achievements of 1989 (for instance, historian Paul Betts argues that the idea of "victory" in the Cold War obscures the transformation's problematic sides, such as inequality, ingrained racism, disenfranchisement[9]) these critiques were apparent in Romania much sooner. A sense of failed expectations, of "disenchantment" with the "unfinished revolution" of 1989, characterized by the successive economic crises of the 1990s, neoliberal reforms, and social disenfranchisement, had long been dominant in the region, as historian James Mark remarked.[10] In this context, the fact that the violence of 1989 in Romanian cities, although pivotal, was never really addressed cannot be considered merely a question of a lack of commemoration of victims. Most often, the impunity was associated with an imperfect transformation to capitalism.[11] Successive generations of public commentators on the right attributed the tainted start of Romanian liberal democracy to the changes triggered by the transition to capitalism more broadly.[12] They took issue with the silencing and, indeed, denial of the events of 1989 by the government as an issue of authoritarianism of the Left.[13] Three decades on, there seems to be a sober association between "1989" and a heritage of missed chances of challenging authoritarianism, but also all the presumed positive changes of the neoliberal transformation.

[9]Paul Betts, "1989 At Thirty: A Recast Legacy," *Past and Present* 244, 1 (2019), 271–305. https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtz016. 273.

[10] James Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution*: *Making Sense of the Communist Past in Central-Eastern Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 1-16. See also Philipp Ther, "1989 and the Global Hegemony of Neoliberalism" in Eleni Braat and Pepijn Corduwener eds., *1989 and the West: Western Europe since the End of the Cold War* (Routledge: London, 2020), 93-123; Martin Conway, "Reading 1989 Backwards" in Martin Conway, Pieter Lagrou and Henry Rousso eds., *Europe's Postwar Periods - 1989, 1945, 1918: Writing History Backwards* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 1–15; Samuel Moyn, *Christian Human Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 5-15.

[11] See for instance, Silviu Cerna, "The Anti-Capitalist Mentality: A Big Problem for Romania", https://www.themarketforideas.com/the-anti-capitalist-mentality-a-big-problem-for-romania-a826/, last accessed April 24th, 2023 or H. R. Patapievici, "Capitalismul ca formă a civilizației, eseu introductive (introduction)" in Ludwig von Mises, *Acțiunea umană. Un tratat de economie* [in Romanian], Bucharest: *Curtea Veche Publishing House*, 2018.

[12] Cătălin Augustin Stoica, "Our Martyrs of 1989 Did Not Die for This!": Political Capitalism in Post-Communist Romania", *Historical Social Research,* 37 (2) 2012, 26-52. DOI: https://www.jstor.org/stable/41636575. See also Cornel Ban, "Beyond Anticommunism: The Fragility of Class Analysis in Romania", *East European Politics and Societies*, 29(3) 2015, 640-650. https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325415599197.

[13] Particularly those convened around Critic Atac, a website and debate platform.

Yet, integrating 1989 top-down into the arsenal of what we might call a "liberal" memory consensus - whose affordances and genealogy will be discussed in the following sections[14] – entailed a number of contradictions. By liberalism, I refer here primarily to the political thought, narratives, and social and economic politics centred on liberty and consensus of those governed, with its 19th century and more recent iterations.[15] In the post-1989 variant of liberal democracy dominant globally, liberalism became broader, prompting scholars to argue it is the "sum of the arguments that have been classified as liberal".[16] The European Parliament's Declaration alluded directly to some of these dimensions, precisely at a moment in which these were being challenged by the right and far-right. First, infusing remembrance of a dark past with a governance scope (commemoration as a hallmark of democracy, collective memory connected to justice mechanisms, or the rule of law and human rights), as the Declaration does when it refers to socio-economic conditions and geopolitical insecurity caused by a violent past, happened as radical conservatives and the radical right were also mobilizing discourses of human rights and citizenship to coin alternatives to the liberal dimension.[17] The Declaration's timing could thus be seen as partly a response to the global "illiberal" and anti-liberal factions challenging the principles of Europeanization, the notion that liberal democracy

[14] A number of authors, who will be quoted in this manuscript, have written about the liberal narratives behind collective memory, especially in relation to human rights (Dirk Moses), ethnicities (G. Mitchell Reyes, *Public Memory, Race, and Ethnicity*). Although the term "liberal memory" has been used, or referred to intermittently, by these authors, a more recent and directly relevant contribution in this direction is Vibeke Schou Tjalve ed., *Geopolitical amnesia: the rise of the right and the crisis of liberal memory* (Toronto: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020).

[15] Shane D Courtland, Gerald Gaus, and David Schmidtz, "Liberalism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2022 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), Available at: https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2022/entries/liberalism/.

[16] Duncan Bell, "What Is Liberalism?," *Political Theory* 42, 6 (2014), 1. doi:10.1177/0090591714535103.

[17] The invocation of the global 1989 polarizes Europe, not only Romanian circles, in multiple ways. In Germany, the fault lines and systemic imbalances it triggered have endured after the regime transformation in Germany, for instance, and played a part in the rise of the "identitarians" stressing identity, freedom and self-affirmation in a less than liberal manner. See Manes Weisskircher, "The Strength of Far-Right AfD in Eastern Germany: The East-West Divide and the Multiple Causes behind 'Populism'", *The Political Quarterly*, 91, 1 (2020), 614-622. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.12859. See also Karel Šima, "From Identity Politics to the Identitarian Movement. The Europeanisation of Cultural Stereotypes?" in Jürgen Barkhoff and Joep Leerssen eds., *National Stereotyping, Identity Politics, European Crises* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, Studia Imagologica, 2021), 75–94.

has produced progress or the advancement produced by liberal tenets of diversity.[18] Indeed, the once very wilful actors of the path to liberal democracy leading Central and Eastern European states "back" to Europe in 1989[19], were now questioning the trajectory of liberal democracy initiated through 1989.[20] On the 30th anniversary of 1989, the old assessment of journalist Fareed Zakaria of the Central European liberal democracies as "illiberal" entities where (neo)liberal economics limited democracy and exacerbated authoritarian tendencies, appeared prescient.[21]

Secondly, in the document drafted by the European Parliament, the Romanian events of 1989 were imbued with a transnational value of democratic Europeanness, with references to the solidarity of the Czech "Velvet Revolution", the peaceful Polish mediated transformation, and the Berlin Wall moment that depicted a triumph of the political resistance and grass-roots change - although the Romanian events of 1989 could hardly be inscribed within a heritage of "democracy" or Europeanness.[22] Given this tension, European institutions crafting ideas about "European way of life" through the 2019 "Commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the Romanian revolution of December 1989" did not have a stable narrative to build on optimism of liberalism in Europe and globally.[23] On the contrary, a potential cultural debate to resolve

[18] Jan-Werner Müller, "The Problem With 'Illiberal Democracy'", *Social Europe* (January 2016). https:/www.socialeurope.eu/the-problem-with-illiberal-democracy. Last accessed March 13, 2019; Peter Verovšek, "Caught between 1945 and 1989: Collective Memory and the Rise of Illiberal Democracy in Postcommunist Europe", *Journal of European Public Policy*, 4, 6 (2020). https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2020.1768279.

[19] The declaration was a joint project, but in general, members of these different groups in the European Parliament have all been at the forefront of debates arguing for the inclusion of victims of communism in European, not only national, remembrance agendas. Members are older "memory entrepreneurs" who have insisted on a notion of "memory of communism/state socialism" in the European symbolic political space. See Laure Neumayer, *The Criminalisation of Communism in the European Political Space after the Cold War* (London: Routledge, 2018), 39-52.

[20] Jan-Werner Müller, *What Is Populism?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 3–15.

[21] Fareed Zakaria, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy", *Foreign Affairs* 76 (Nov/Dec 1997), 6.

[22] Conor O'Dwyer, "Remembering, Not Commemorating, 1989" in Bernhard and Kubik, *Twenty Years After Communism,* 171-195; Laczó Ferenc and Joanna Wawrzyniak. "Memories of 1989 in Europe between Hope, Dismay, and Neglect", *East European Politics and Societies,* 31, 3 (2017), 431–38. https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325417698741.

[23] See relevant publications of the CoE on this topic, here: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/documents-publications/library/library-blog/posts/the-fall-of-the-berlin-wall-30th-anniversary/.

the very contestations of 1989 was replaced by another type of "usable past", one simply mobilizing a positive image of liberalism of the 1990s.

The disappointment with these ready-made narratives was evident in the responses that the Parliament's Declaration elicited. A certain discontent emerged already in December of that year when Romanian President Klaus Iohannis proudly emulated the message of the Declaration and warned that not identifying perpetrators would only be detrimental to the liberal system and the "return to Europe" and that Romanian "would have gone far" if this question of accountability had been resolved earlier.[24] Like many political actors, Iohannis was quick to make 1989 into a paradigmatic trope of a "Europeanizing" process for Romania: that is, "a remorseless and positive process by which Europeans transcended their national frontiers (and thereby their national conflicts)".[25] This blanket victimhood concerning the past has often provided a platform for Romanian liberals (a broad political and cultural circle generally defining itself as anticommunist, pro-European, and market-oriented[26]) to emphasize the cultural and political right to rejoin the European family. Yet, using and homogenizing difficult histories in order to cultivate and prove "Europeanness" has been a tactic criticized by even the staunchest liberal supporters of the EU hegemony. Natalia Buier, for one, has argued that this "break with the past" professed by a rejection of the communist past might well be building political narratives of liberal democracy, but it simply perpetuated reductionist perspectives on complex histories.[27]

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[24] Diana Grigore, "30 de ani de la Revoluție | Klaus Iohannis, la ședința solemnă din parlament", *Gândul*, 16.12.2019. Last accessed March 2023, https://www.gandul.ro/stiri/live-text-30-de-ani-de-la-revolutie-klaus-iohannis-la-sedinta-solemna-din-parlament-aflarea-adevarului-despre-revolutie-piatra-de-incercare-pentru-justitia-romana-premierul-am-fi-ajuns-mai-departe-dac-18668176

[25] Ulrike von Hirschhausen, Kiran Klaus Patel "Europeanization in History: An Introduction", in Martin Conway, Kiran Klaus Patel eds. *Europeanization in the Twentieth Century* (London: Basinsgstoke, 2010) 2.

[26] Endre, Borbáth, "Romania – Polity Contestation and the Resilience of Mainstream Parties", In: Hutter, Swen Kriesi, Hanspeter eds, *European party politics in times of crisis* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2019), 214-235.

[27] Natalia Buier, "Traian Băsescu și Despărțirea de Trecut: Cariera Prezidențială a Anticomunismului Științific" in Costi Rogozanu, Florin Poenaru, eds. *Epoca Traian Băsescu* (Cluj Napoca: Tact, 2014), 225.

Recent re-evaluations of the 30th anniversary of 1989 illustrate where the blindspots in memory-making practices in a "liberal" sense lie. The European angle captured a landscape of memory politics, which tends to shut down "dissonance" and "a discordance or a lack of agreement and consistency",[28] and resolves complex debates with ready-made narratives. The 2019 Declaration reinforced a story of the triumph of liberal democracy over state socialism instead of acknowledging and perhaps responding to the events' controversial memorial and political dimensions over the last three decades. The usage of this transnational Europeanizing narrative with regard to an event like 1989 created a surrogate language – adopting memorial debates and terminology to reference forms of governance, politics and economics - instead of opening a more complex debate about the difficult negotiations of memory that overshadowed the events themselves. This triggered distrust in narratives of "Europe and further exacerbated common past and thus contributed to further exacerbating an already impoverished and polarized sphere of debate on critical histories of human rights and political violence of various Central European governments.[29]

The Declaration, with its defensive and anti-totalitarian remembrance narratives, captures the very tensions embedded within the role of collective memory of political violence in cultivating values of liberalism and generates an interesting set of questions about its usages in relation to the fostering of 'Europeanism'. Indeed, multiple scales are interlocking and in tension in this example. There is, first, the investment in memorial vocabularies to construct notions of *global* liberal democracy, with languages of human rights accountability, and victimhood, that seem to lose their potency when employed politically. Secondly, there are the *European* memory narratives mobilizing the notion of "Europe" to define liberal democracy

[28] J.E Ashworth and GJ Tunbridge, *Dissonant Heritage: The Management of the Past as a Resource in Conflict* (London: Belhaven Press, 1996), 20.
[29] For a broader discussion, see José-Manuel Barreto, "A Universal History of Infamy: Human Rights, Eurocentrism, and Modernity as Crisis", in Prabhakar Singh and Benoît Mayer eds., *Critical International Law: Postrealism, Postcolonialism, and Transnationalism* (Delhi, 2014; online edition, Oxford Academic).,

and promote the two interchangeably (although this nexus is increasingly contested). Thirdly, there is the *national* scale, in this case, Romanian memorial debates, where political violence has been mainstreamed to signal the global triumph about liberal democracy, primarily in relation to the achievements of the 1990s "transition" to democracy and then Europeanization.

It is this paradox of forging consensus around a liberal memory aligned to supposed values of Europeanism and an 'expanding' Europe, which instead creates a restrictive memory sphere, that guides the research for this dissertation. As Ann Rigney has argued, from its earliest days, the idea of a 'European collective memory' aligned to EU values and narratives was about reconciliation between East and West, but also between different groups whose stories had not been properly presented to the public and those in the mainstream, already known.[30] That "reconciliatory" dimension initially also went hand in hand with the value of consensus in the project of liberal democracy until such consensus could no longer be supported.[31] Prompted by an interest in competing interpretations of memory, this study looks at how remembrance practices recruited for a triumphant global liberal democracy emerged and the blind spots, biases and ultimate silences that ensued. The powerful entanglements between the three scales – global, European, and national – functioned to shut down debate, reflection or, indeed, investigation of certain difficult pasts. My argument in this dissertation is that it also created a particular silencing which, although emergent out of high hopes for a liberal democratic transformation, became, rather, a space for channelling the discontent with the latter's affordances.

2. Mobilizing Europe

[30] Ann Rigney, "Reconciliation and remembering: (how) does it work?", *Memory Studies*, 5(3), (2012). 251-258. https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698012440927

[31] Carles Fernandez-Torne, Graeme Young, "Mirroring Truths: How Liberal Democracies Are Challenging Their Foundational Narratives", *Social Sciences*, 12(8) 2023, 438. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12080438.

There is a substantial corpus of writing on European memory, that is remembrance and commemorations of the past that are somehow aligned to notions of European values, shared European heritage and ultimately a strong belief in Europe as a political project.[32] This research shows how the remembrance of the Second World War consolidated a prescriptive way of remembering and of conveying a narrative: that is, a memory "regime", in relation to Europe.[33] Sites of former political violence, often displaying acts of resistance against National Socialism and the plight of victims of the Second World War, have acquired a European or global status of "heritage". Such sites represent key cradles of this political construct. They were part of what historian Jan-Werner Müller calls the "militant memory", a "normative connection to the universalist liberal- democratic kernel of constitutional patriotism" that emerged after gradually rising contestation of the EU *within* the EU from the mid-2000s onwards.[34] This dissertation takes a step back from that moment and seeks to highlight the way collective memory supported contestations and anti-liberal constructs already from the early 1990s, under the guise of a Europeanizing process easily embraced by a diverse spectrum of actors.

Instead of establishing a dimension of consensus by reinforcing commonality through invocations of Europe, different claims to this shared liberal European lineage emerged.[35] For instance, while National Socialism was the central "negative memory" of Europe, between 2000 and 2010, there were intense debates about the politics of the recognition of victimhood inflicted by communism and the imbalances of remembrance.[36] In 2010, a call from Romania,

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[32] See Eric Langenbacher, Bill Niven and Ruth Wittlinger eds., *Dynamics of Memory and Identity in Contemporary Europe* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013); Karin Tilmans, Frank van Vree and Jay M. Winter, eds., *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010); Małgorzata Pakier and Bo Stråth, eds., *A European Memory? Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010).

[33] For the usage of this term, see for instance Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone, eds., *Regimes of Memory* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 6-10.

[34] Jan-Werner Müller, "A Thick Constitutional Patriotism for the EU? On Morality, Memory and Militancy". https://www.princeton.edu/~jmueller/CP-ThickCPEurope-JWMueller.pdf. Last accessed June 23, 2020.

[35] Parts of this section are loosely based on Dana Dolghin: "Dissensus: Recent Dynamics in the European Cultural Space." In *Debating Dissensus over Liberal Democracy*, edited by Ramona Coman and Nathalie Brack. Working Paper 2023, 86-91.

[36] Ann Rigney, "Transforming Memory and the European Project", *New Literary History* 43, 4 (2012), 607–28. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/497937; Aleida Assmann, "Europe's Divided Memory" in Uilleam Blacker and

Hungary and Poland to ban communist symbols was turned down in the European Parliament, because such symbols were not seen as eliciting the same danger as "fascist symbols".[37] The decades between 2000-2010 saw many conflicts over the right of the victims of totalitarianism to belong to the European pantheon. Despite the narrative that took hold around 2008, when the 'Prague Declaration of European Conscience and Communism' inscribed a European narrative on the communist past, discourses and documents coming from EU fora did not always show what Claus Leggewie argues are 'two totalitarianisms' at the basis of the European idea.[38] National governments in Eastern Europe reacted negatively to this lack of representation. Talking about 'totalitarianism' in Europe's past was thus not driven by any European consensus, but rather by nationalist claims, with a vindictive tone that dominated the debate.

Although this landscape has not changed profoundly after 2008, there has been a shift in framing references to "Europe". Cultural landmarks, spaces of remembrance, or cultural goods symbolic of the victory over communist oppression have been earmarked as generative spaces in the creation of Europe, and have been awarded symbolic status, such as the European Heritage Label. [39] The remembrance of Eastern European popular mobilization is now presented as a bulwark for the EU's political construction in the exhibitions of the Brussels-

Alexander Etkind, eds., *Memory and Theory in Eastern Europe* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 25–41; Henry Russo, "History of Memory, Policies of the Past: What For?" in Thomas Lindenberger and Konrad H. Jarausch eds., *Conflicted Memories. Europeanizing Contemporary Histories* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 22–36; Bo Stråth and Peter Wagner, eds., *European Modernity: A Global Approach* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 15-20; Chiara De Cesari, "Memory Voids and the New European Heritage: A Proposal for Studying Transnational Memory", *Journal of Museum Ethnography,* 24, 2 (2012), 152–62. https://www.jstor.org/stable/41710659; Zoltan Dujisin, "A History of Post-Communist Remembrance: From Memory Politics to the Emergence of a Field of Anticommunism", *Theory and Society,* 2, 50, (2020), 65–96. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-020-09401-5. There is an argument to be made that this genealogy of negative memory can start much earlier, after 1945, which I discuss in the following section. See Dan Stone, *Goodbye to All That* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 3.

[37] Leigh Phillips, "EU Rejects Eastern States' Call to Outlaw Denial of Crimes by Communist Regimes," *The Guardian*, December 21, 2010, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/dec/21/european-commission-communist-crimes-nazism. Last accessed July 23, 2018.

[38] Claus Leggewie, "Seven circles of European memory", *Eurozine*, 20 Dec. 2010. https://www.eurozine.com/seven-circles-of-european-memory/. Accessed June 23, 2016.

[39] Tuuli Lähdesmäki, Viktorija L.A. Čeginskas, Sigrid Kaasik-Krogerus, Katja Mäkinen and Johanna Turunen, *Creating and Governing Cultural Heritage in the European Union. The European Heritage Label* (London: Routledge, 2020).

based House of European History Museum.[40] Indeed, with time, a distinct "policy narrative" has emerged about a shared past sufferance that makes societies more aware of their "progress", modernization, and progressive becoming "European": this shift has been fundamental in including the communist past in the European memory space. [41] More and more, the angle on European memory has moved from a shared history of the Second World War, however disputed across Europe, to a question of demonstrating the liberal credentials of Europe, especially after various national challenges to liberal democracy after 2008.[42] As principles of liberal democracy were increasingly contested by nativist and sovereigntist discourses, from Hungary to Poland to Slovakia,[43] collective memory became an instrument to show the virtues of liberal thought.[44]

Yet, mobilizing "Europeanness" to strengthen the pull of liberal democracy does seem to have only led to a further exacerbation of this angle, as was made evident in the case of the European Parliament's Declaration.[45] The notion of a "return to Europe" and a "cultural home" in Europe has been indelibly connected to the recognition of the innate European character of the "nation" (against that offered by communism and a Slavic past), that inspires nationalism

[40] Some of those added are the Pan-European Picnic Memorial Park, Sopron, Hungary (2013), the historic Gdańsk Shipyard, Poland (2014), Sighet Memorial, Romania (2017). Equally relevant are research funding programmes rolled out by the EU; one interesting example is the "European Remembrance" within the CERV *(Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values)* Programmes, focusing on "resistance" and the Holocaust. See https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/justice-and-consumers/justice-and-consumers-funding-tenders/funding-programmes/citizens-equality-rights-and-values-programme_en.

[41] Wolfram Kaiser, "Clash of Cultures: Two Milieus in the European Union's 'A New Narrative for Europe' Project", *Journal of Contemporary European Studies,* 23, 3 (2015), 364–77, https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2015.1018876. I use here the term policy narrative defined as "stories (scenarios and arguments) which underwrite and stabilize the assumptions for policymaking in situations that persist with many unknowns, a high degree of interdependence, and little, if any, agreement." In Emery Roe, *Narrative Policy Analysis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994*),* 34.

[42] Kirsten Ghodsee, "A Tale of 'Two Totalitarianisms': The Crisis of Capitalism and the Historical Memory of Communism", *History of the Present*, 4, 2 (2014), 115-142. https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/kristenghodsee/files/history_of_the_present_galleys.pdf.

[43] Máté Zombory, "The Anti-Communist moment: Competitive victimhood in European politics", *Revue d'études comparatives Est-Ouest*, 2, 2-3 (2020), 21-54. https://www.cairn-int.info/journal-revue-d-etudes-comparatives-est-ouest-2020-2-page-21.htm;

[44] The debate about consensus in the political philosophy of liberalism is complex, stemming from the 19th century, but for an overview in democratic politics, see George Klosko, *Democratic Procedures and Liberal Consensus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[45] See Meera Sabaratnam, "Avatars of Eurocentrism in the critique of the liberal peace". *Security Dialogue*, *44* (3), 2013, 259-278.https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010613485870.

and "othering".[46] What was occluded in these debates was that 'Europe' had been the foundation of political debate in the interwar period in conservative and liberal circles in Romania, Poland and Hungary, serving far-from-liberal agendas bound to notions of 'progress' and 'sovereignty'.[47] Indeed, "Europe", "democracy", and "progress" hold a moralizing dimension of collective memory in connection to liberal democracy, which has made it difficult to untangle the "overdeterminations" embedded within, for instance, how liberalism itself harbours dangerous constructs of Eurocentrism(s).[48]

In fact, with the rise of "illiberalism" and anti-liberal voices in tandem with authoritarian tendencies across the geographical spectrum of European liberal democracies, an appropriation of the notion of Europe has been tied directly to notions of "sovereignty".[49] Although they contest the prerogatives of the EU, appeals to Europeanism were essential for both the Polish PiS and Hungarian Fidesz parties, who bolster their "Catholic" credentials to prove their "deservedness" to a Europe that is evidently anti-Muslim and Christian.[50] Under the guise of a

[46] The abuse of the anticommunist narrative has been a concern in scholarship since the early 1990s. See James Mark, Muriel Blaive, Adam Hudek, Anna Saunders and Stanisław Tyszka, "1989 after 1989: Remembering the End of State Socialism in East-Central Europe" in Michal Kopeček and Piotr Wciślik, eds., *Thinking through Transition: Liberal Democracy, Authoritarian Pasts, and Intellectual History in East Central Europe After 1989* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2015), 88-102; Zoltan Dujisin, "Post-Communist Europe: On the Path to a Regional Regime of Remembrance?" in Kopeček and Wciślik, *Thinking through Transition,* 553–86; Betts, "1989 At Thirty: A Recast Legacy," *Past and Present* 244, 1 (2019), 271–305. https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtz016.

[47] In fact, Europe was part of the narratives of authoritarianism, in 1942, during the debate about Transylvania between Romania and Hungary, which pitted the two countries' "European mission". Both (far-right) Antonescu and Horthy governments competed with one another for their respective recognition of "historical rights". Furthermore, "European" concern motivated nationalist and Europeanist politicians alike. The degree of "civilization" and "Europeanness" played into distinctly segregation politics and politics of exclusions in disputed "regions", like Galicia, Transylvania and the "Christian" buffer that these supposedly entail for Europe. See Holly Case, *Between States: The Transylvanian Question and the European Idea during World War II* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009). See also Shane Weller, *The Idea of Europe: A Critical History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 1-10; Mark Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea* (London: Penguin, 2013), 26-35.

[48] John M. Hobson, *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics: Western International Theory, 1760-2010* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 285-310.

[49] About the "conservative" employment of Europe, and the differences between the contemporary detractors of Europeanism and the 18th century roots of conservative interpretations of Europeanism, see Matthijs Lok, *Europe Against Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023). He traces the genealogy of the resistance to the Enlightenment ideas within the European sphere of thought. For an exploration of 19th century roots of Eurocentrism, see Marjet Brolsma, Robin de Bruin, and Matthijs Lok eds., *Eurocentrism in European History and Memory* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 12-17.

[50] Aleksandra Wrobel, "Orbán Pledges to Keep Hungary Safe and Christian", *Politico* (2018), https://www.politico.eu/article/orban-christian-migrants-pledges-to-keep-hungary-safe/. Last accessed July 12, 2020; Marton Dunai, "Hungary Will Defend EU against Migrant Wave, Orbán Says", *Reuters*, March 4, 2020,

"purification" of origins, conservative right-wing factions in Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia have also used a "cultural" national Europeanism to strengthen their authoritarianisms. A "return to Europe" also grounds Viktor Orbán's messages about an alleged status of "second-class" Europeans imposed on the East by the West.[51] Similarly, Romanian "sovereigntist" factions (those that rally around the message that the jurisdiction of the EU does not trump national sovereignty), most notably the Romanian Social Democrats in 2017 and the liberals, the closest to the "illiberal" wave, commended the 1989 memory Declaration because it showcased local victimhood.[52]

This dissertation highlights how early negotiations of collective memory contributed to the recent dynamics described above, and how the early 1990s national tribulations over negative memory unwittingly also determined the pathway of the Europeanization of memory. It was the defensive Cold War dimension of liberalism, with its anti-totalitarian (and anti-Russian tinge) which characterized the 1990s in Central and Eastern Europe, that is today evident in European iterations. My research aims to show how this process came to be. As Samuel Moyn argues, in the Cold War liberalism first emerged in the 1940s and 1950s, "expectant hope now felt naïve, and the aspiration to universal freedom and equality was denounced as a pretext for repression and violence".[53] Moyn describes the mechanism characterizing Cold War liberals (perhaps among the most famous are political philosophers Judith Shklar and Hannah Arendt[54]), by which the connection with liberalism and rationalism

https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-centraleurope-idUSKBN20R1H0. Last accessed July 25, 2020.

[51] "Hungarian PM Viktor Orbán Denounces EU's 'Colonialism'", *BBC*, 2012. https://www.bbc.com/news/business-17394894. Last accessed March 13, 2019.

[52] Although not operating to the same degree as in Hungary, the "illiberal" direction has had some traction in Romania, through messages by the PSD (the Romanian Social Democrats), insisting on "anti-Soros" narratives. See Corneliu Pintilescu and Attila Kustán Magyari, "Soros conspiracy theories and the rise of populism in post-socialist Hungary and Romania", in Anastasiya Astapova, Onoriu Colăcel, Corneliu Pintilescu and Tamás Scheibner, eds., *Conspiracy Theories in Eastern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2020), 130-155; Andreea Pora, "PSD și Tehnica Persiflării Comisiei Europene", *Europa Liberă* (Bucharest, March 22, 2019, 8).

[53] See Samuel Moyn, *Liberalism Against Itself (*New Haven: Yale University Press, 2023), 11.

[54] Philosopher Hannah Arendt was inevitably attached to the Atlanticist vision of liberalism, also as a reaction to the rampant antisemitism in Europe at the time. The limitation concerning colonialism in her work has reinforced critical readings of her vision of liberalism in her oeuvre. See Pascal Grosse, "From colonialism to National

proper to the Enlightenment is erased by a growing distrust in the capabilities of individuals.[55] The already-discussed disappointment with 1989 in Romanian debates points to how early the seeds of illiberal thought emerged in the region and how they contributed to the re-evaluation of the hopes of equality and rationality of liberalism. Replaced by a European narrative of liberalism, driven by "integration" in the early 2000s, Cold War liberalism returned from the mid-2010s onwards as a form of defensive, and not so optimistic, vision of human perfectibility and freedom.[56] The contestations of liberal democracy emerging since 2014 in Europe and globally made this defensive streak visible yet again.

Because it tracks the avenues that collective memory opened for the contestations of liberal democracy, this dissertation goes beyond interpreting collective memory (and imaginaries about the past) as sitting at the centre of what Peter Verovšek describes as a schism between the West's "liberal conception of internationally constraining democracy rooted in the protection of individual human rights and Central Europe's 'illiberal' version centred on the popular sovereignty of the nation".[57] In this sense, it adds to the corpus of research on European memory by reflecting on collective memory as part of a vision of liberalism that has run out of steam due to restrictive teleological narratives, a selective perspective on the cultural and political process of making Europe and silencing.[58] Rejecting and "criminalizing" communism has politically and culturally edged towards a "purification" from everything associated with the Left.[59] These dichotomies are part and parcel of the "illiberal" memory that Rosenfeld

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Socialism to postcolonialism: Hannah Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism"*, *Postcolonial Studies*, 9 (1) 2006, 35-52, DOI: 10.1080/13668250500488819.

[55] Ibid, 56.

[56] See Amanda Anderson, "Character and Ideology: The Case of Cold War Liberalism*", New Literary History,* 42, (2) 2011, 209-229.

[57] Verovšek, "Caught between 1945 and 1989", 850.

[58] See Gerard Delanty, "The European Heritage from a Critical Cosmopolitan Perspective", *LSE 'Europe in Question' Discussion Paper Series*. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/53305/1/__Libfile_repository_Content_European%20Institute_LEQS%20Discussion%20Papera_LEQSPaper19b.pdf. Last accessed January 23, 2021.

[59] Maria Mälksoo, "Criminalizing Communism: Transnational Mnemopolitics in Europe", *International Political Sociology*, 8, 1 (2014), 82–99. https://doi.org/10.1111/ips.12041; Dujisin, "Post-Communist Europe"; Bogdan C. Iacob, "The Criminalisation of Communism in the European Political Space after the Cold War", *International Affairs*, 95 (2019), 732-734. https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiz065.

describes as emerging since 2013, which also appropriates notions of identity, victimhood and accountability.[60] Similarly, the dissertation also takes a different angle on notions of an "imitation" by the East of the West that Stephen Holmes and Ivan Krastev argue to be at the core of current challenges in liberal democracy in the region. I argue, rather, that the crux of the issue is really in the *type* of liberal narratives that circulated globally, how these latter created distinct frames of memory, and how they have mobilized silences.[61]

The dissertation also adds to this corpus of debates over European memory a reflection on what it is that a liberal dimension entails and the contradictions that it triggers. Consequently, in a first reading, this dissertation is a study of how and what liberal democracies remember in order to define themselves as such. As already shown, memory and heritage paradigms, in Europe and elsewhere, promote flat, reasonable narratives oriented by visions of the future, specifically showcasing the "common": the defeat of certain ideologies, or shared ways of engaging with questions of guilt or responsibility. The dissertation focuses on some of these narratives: notions of modernization, cultures of law, human rights, and civic mobilizations. Often, such "consensus" narratives suppress memory exchanges, encourage silencing and hide the pitfalls of these founding triumphal stories about liberalism. Political subjectivity, the right to protest, and democratic opposition, otherwise tenets of democracy, are at the core of sovereigntist identity and this has created further repurposing of historical discourses. Wendy Brown has been a long-term critic of the damage that moralizing narratives of liberalism produce[62] and the Romanian debates can be a relevant grounding of this critique, as I argue here. If anything, the invisible threads between liberal values and shadow authoritarianisms are increasingly more visible in Central and Eastern Europe, driven by the fact that narratives about

[60] Gavriel Rosenfeld, "The rise of illiberal memory", *Memory Studies*, 16(4), 2023, 819-836.https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698020988771

[61] Stephen Holmes and Ivan Krastev, *The Light That Failed* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2020), 16-20.

[62] See Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 13-25.

a strong state have always grounded definitions of liberalism, and, as historian Quinn Slobodian argues, were also instrumental in neoliberalism since its inception.[63] He also makes the case these are intrinsic to neoliberal thought in Central and Eastern Europe, where many of these ideas emerged in the early 20th century. As the memory of political violence is attached to imaginaries of democracy, I show how these consensus-making memory narratives have aggravated some blind spots and have operated through *silences*. This silencing, I argue, is key to understanding contestations of liberal democracy.

Secondly, and building on the first iteration, this dissertation is a study of what historian Kiran Patel calls a "banal' Europeanism", where "forms of discourse were increasingly structured and according to 'European' lines in order to produce a specific vision of Europe".[64] The discourse of Europeanism, that is, belonging to Europe, "being" in Europe and sharing European values, has been the strongest bind, culturally, for Central and Eastern Europe.[65] Yet, "Europeanism" also feeds nationalist narratives and nativist or xenophobic dimensions of liberal democracy in a myriad of ways.[66] Following Patel's definition, I further make a distinction between "Europeanism" and "Europeanisation", distinguishing the conceptualization of a distinct identity formation from the dynamics of state transformation to 'European,' i.e. EU forms.[67] Though unmistakably linked, as both institutional and discursive processes, these are two distinct concepts, which refer to both formal requisites but also discursive frames (for instance, the memory frame). In this context. I show how silences also

[63] Quinn Slobodian, *Globalists, The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 9-13.
[64] von Hirschhausen, Patel, "Europeanization in History ", 9. See also Dieter Gosewinkel, eds., *Anti-liberal Europe: A Neglected Story of Europeanization* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), 17-20.
[65] See Branislav Radeljić, "Introduction", Branislav Radeljić eds., "The Threatening Other" in *The Unwanted Europeanness? Understanding Division and Inclusion in Understanding Division and Inclusion in Contemporary Europe* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 5-10.
[66] For this debate, see Bolaji Balogun, 'Eastern Europeanism': A Rethinking of 'Race and Racism' by and Against White People from Central and Eastern Europe. *Cultural Sociology*, 0(0) 2023, https://doi.org/10.1177/17499755231208550. See also Hans Kundnani, *Eurowhiteness. The Origins of European Integration* (London: Hurt and Company, 2023).
[67] I thank prof. Luiza Bialasiewicz for suggesting this emphasis. See Luiza Bialasiewicz, Spectres of Europe: Europe's Past, Present and Future, in Dan Stone (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Postwar European History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 98-120.

emerge from the long-enduring habit of externalizing controversial (national) histories into Europeanism, making remembrance into another conduit of Europeanisation.

Thirdly, and perhaps less abstractly, this dissertation is Romania-centric in studying how silencing has been embedded in the Europe-liberal democracy narrative nexus in Central and Eastern Europe, by charting memory debates, and how narratives change between the national and transnational scales. It provides a different angle to the story because, unlike elsewhere in the region, the political narratives in Romania have always professed attachment to European (neo)liberal economics, moralizing "anticorruption" and development. At the same time, as already discussed, a sceptical outlook on democracy and expectations for radical change have shaped anti-liberal tendencies from the start. In this dissertation, I thus show how these liberal tenets constrained the way past histories are told, perpetuated certain iterations and a mobilization that restricted critical reflection. In relation to the actors and voices which are more prominent in this manuscript, I chose to focus not simply on institutional political actors but also on the wider circle of those shaping political debates, such as journalists, writers, historians, and various other individuals who have a public capacity, in order to understand the workings of memory; this wider focus also allows for tracing different pathways of certain narratives.

The following sections outline a theoretical entry point into the three strands of this dissertation. The first section discusses how exactly does the memory of political violence sits at the core of "banal Europeanism" and shapes debate about active citizenship, political participation, and just states.[68] The second section introduces the idea of "silencing" that operates in the contemporary global liberal age, to explain the place of memory in liberal

[68] It is important to point out that all these debates are preoccupied with boundaries between liberalism, authoritarianism and nationalism, and this delimitation has been a central concern in the tradition of liberalism. These recent discussions shed a new light on this issue in Central and Eastern European intellectual contexts. See Jan-Werner Müller, *Contesting Democracy: Political Ideas in 20th Century Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 5-12.

democracy. It argues that silencing in constructing liberal democratic vocabularies has been the driver of the "illiberal", sovereigntist and far-right tendencies in Central and Eastern Europe. The third section describes the main theoretical advantages of looking at the notion of silencing in relation to the political and intellectual affordances of liberal democracy.

3. Cultivating Europeanness: Liberal Consensus and the Memory of Political Violence

The 2019 Declaration of the European Parliament about 1989 codifies the collective memory of political violence in Europe in relation to the strength of liberal democracy and policies of stabilization. As the text argues, the memory resolution is there to defend "the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights; [as] these values are common to all Member States"[69]. In a sense, this defensive relevance of memorialization echoes a similar time in Europe's past. In many ways, the early post-WWII years in Europe, which also operated with the selectivity and calibration of the memory of political violence, war and conflict were instrumental to the emergence of a specific type of consensus. "There was a pervasive sense that the bitter conflicts and personal suffering of the preceding decades were too proximate for it to be possible to celebrate the making of a new democratic era", argue Martin Conway and Volker Depkat about the vision of "true democracy" after 1945.[70]

In the post-war years, the rise and consolidation of Christian Democracy as part of the early political project for Europe were not only reliant on myths such as the medieval *Abendland* (the mythical cradle political space of Europe to help the continent out of the ruins of Nazism), but also on a specific angle on the victory of the Second World War.[71] The

[69] Article G, "Commemoration of the 30th Anniversary"
[70] Martin Conway, Volker Depkat, "Towards a European History of the Discourse of Democracy: Discussing Democracy in Western Europe, 1945–60" in *Europeanization in the Twentieth Century,* 132- 157; 142.
[71] Conway, "Western Europe's Democratic Age: 1945—1968", 148. See also Rosario Forlenza, "The Politics of the Abendland: Christian Democracy and the Idea of Europe after the Second World War," *Contemporary European History,* 26, 2 (2016), 261–86. doi:10.1017/S0960777317000091; Vanessa Conze "Facing the Future

resistance, many of whose members were Christian Democrats, was a preferred trope of memory given precedence during the postwar consensus of the 'trente glorieuses'.[72] It implicitly placed the memory of political violence at the centre of a notion of European "reconstruction" and helped turn the "civilizational mission", which had been one of the tenets of Europe's colonial expansion, into a "reconstructive" drive inwards.[73] As uneasy as it might have been in certain aspects, the memory of violence was a necessary steadying factor for the early project of European integration.

Despite the usage of histories of political violence to stabilize democracy, its mobilization came to be instrumental in the wave of contestation of the post-1945 order, and consensus was ever fleeting. The responsibility for the Holocaust came to be a fault line in Left and the New Left contestations of the conservative establishment of the 1960s.[74] Dealing with the history of the Holocaust often mobilized discourses about persistent issues of race and authoritarianism in Western Europe, while the political establishment was keen on insisting on resistance, heroism and the defeat of Nazism.[75] The memory of and the debate about the Holocaust challenged triumphant narratives about French decolonization in Algeria[76] or elsewhere in Africa and of those in the Federal Republic of Germany. The conflicts about justice

Backwards: 'Abendland' as an Anti-liberal Idea of Europe in Germany between the First World War and the 1960s" in Gosewinkel ed., *Anti-liberal Europe,* 72-90.

[72] Tom Buchanan, "Human Rights, the Memory of War and the Making of a 'European' Identity, 1945-1975" in Conway and Patel, *Europeanization in the Twentieth Century*, 132-157.

[73] Paul Betts*, Ruin and Renewal: Civilising Europe After the Second World War* (London: Basic Books, 2020), 3-10.

[74] Johannes Heuman, "Promoting Global Holocaust Memory in the Era of the Cold War: The Tomb of the Unknown Jewish Martyr in Paris", *History and Memory,* 27, 1 (2015), 116-153. https://doi.org/10.2979/histmemo.27.1.116

[75] Quinn Slobodian, *Foreign Front, Third World Politics in Sixties West Germany* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 23-30; See also Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 17-23.

[76] Andrea Brazzoduro, "Algeria, Antifascism, and Third Worldism: An Anticolonial Genealogy of the Western European New Left (Algeria, France, Italy, 1957–1975)", *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 48, 5(2020), 958-978. https://doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2020.1817232.

for the Holocaust persisted into the late 1970s, with the Auschwitz trials taking place in West Germany in 1963.[77]

Historical representations and remembrance of the Second World War and the memory of atrocities became relevant to Cold War liberalism, a liberalism marked by the potential of destruction, of total war, and above all, by the threat of (USSR) communism.[78] With the threat of totalitarianism looming, anti-Communist interpretations, in the Atlanticist sense, grounded the European Community project from the 1970s onwards.[79] The memory of victims of the Second World War and authoritarianism reinforced liberal democracy as a defender of rights, and the state and Atlanticism against the intrusion of the Left as "totalitarian". Centre-right governments in Europe drove the process of restabilization and European integration as an anticommunist project, as "they exploited [….] fears of Communism—both external and internal—"[80] that also influenced colonial empires' attitude towards the periphery and strengthened the nation-state idea. The anticommunist narrative bolstered arguments on the centre-right, notably Christian Democracy, that the nation-state needed to be preserved at any cost, and on that the European Community was instrumental to this fact.[81] Also, the fact that West European socialists changed political positions in relation to internationalism (the colonial struggle in Algeria proved to them that such struggles could only trigger further upheaval) made shared anticommunism the ground for an informal alliance with the Christian Democrats.[82] As

[77] In general, the concern with the perpetrators, the SS middlemen, came later, after 1950 and was limited in scope. See Mary Fulbrook, *Reckonings: Legacies of Nazi Persecution and the Quest for Justice (*New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 5-10; David O. Pendas, *Democracy, Nazi Trials, and Transitional Justice in Germany, 1945–1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 17-19.
[78] Moyn, *Liberalism Against Itself*, 12.
[79] Forlenza, "The Politics of the Abendland"; Brian Shaev, "Liberalising Regional Trade: Socialists and European Economic Integration" *Contemporary European History,* 27, 2 (2016), 258–79. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777318000073.
[80] Conway, *Western Europe's Democratic Age*, 46.
[81] Wolfram Kaiser, *Christian Democracy and the Origins of the European Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 25.
[82] Brian Shaev, "The Algerian War, European Integration, and the Decolonization of French Socialism," *French Historical Studies,* 41, 1 (2018), 63–94, https:/doi.org/10.1215/00161071-4254619.

such, it marked another moment in time when memory of political violence worked increasingly to stabilize notions of liberal democracy.

This dynamic was not limited to Western Europe. Samuel Moyn shows how, in the 1970s context, human rights also turned into a crucial discursive Cold War instrument against state socialism and with that, ideas about memorialization of political violence came to be connected with liberal democratic rights.[83] Although the states behind the Iron Curtain did not find the same cause in the memory of the Second World War, as antifascism continued to drive that remembrance, they did find a memory cause in the human rights angle, which was associated to Cold War politics.[84]

In 1975, this narrative received a further, and significant, boost with the signing of the Helsinki Accords, a treaty that wedged "human rights" between the East and West, and rendered the discourse of human rights a political condemnation of Eastern, primarily Soviet, political regimes and their track record in curtailing civil liberties.[85] Human rights thus emerged as a defender of a particular European cultural specificity against state socialism.[86] This late Cold War imaginary did away with philosophies of anarchism, socialism, or even social democracy present in the East, as Atlanticism became the tenet of Cold War liberalism and a contrast to French radicalism.[87] Furthermore, the "Final Act" of the 1975 Helsinki Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe enlivened the prospects of the political future for the "Easterners" through narratives about Europeanization.[88] The text grounded the "return to Europe", as described below:

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[83] Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010), 13-18. See also Eric D. Weitz, *A World Divided: The Global Struggle for Human Rights in the Age of the Nation-State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 4-13.
[84] Stone, *Goodbye to All That*, 9-12
[85] Ned Richardson-Little, "From Tehran to Helsinki: the International Year of Human Rights 1968 and State Socialist Eastern Europe", *Diplomatica*, 1, 2 (2019), 180-201. https://doi.org/10.1163/25891774-00102003.
[86] Robert Brier, *Poland's Solidarity Movement and the Global Politics of Human Rights* (Cambridge University Press, 2021), 209-210.
[87] Moyn, *Liberalism*, 120.
[88] Sarah Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of The Helsinki Network* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 2-13.

> In his Nobel Prize speech of 1975, the Lithuanian human rights activist Andrei Sakharov responded to the Helsinki Accords by promoting the idea of Europe as a single geographical space within which Europeans should be free to travel unhindered by Soviet restrictions". Images of Europe were frequently constructed in articles by Polish intellectuals in underground journals, such as those by Adam Michnik in the magazine Puls. [89]

The different meanings ascribed to liberal Europeanness brought together a dizzying range of interests and political causes. The "civilizing" potential of "Europe" and its "re-civilizing" mission were determined by the means of dealing with political violence, and primarily in professing values of Europeanness. As Tony Judt noted, Europe, rather than capitalism, was the imaginary to be reached and attained.[90] The 1970s–1980s pro-Europeanism of Eastern European dissidents was thus an attentively crafted mirage of European liberal identity rather than "Western" capitalism.[91] Debates persisted between reformists and conservatives within the socialist establishment during the last two decades of the Cold War, but "Europe" was a "third way" between capitalist democracy and communism in political debates, a mediator between two types of politics.[92]

The defensive dimension re-emerged in the 1990s, when the history of violent pasts served not only "to reclaim the social contract between citizen and state"[93], but also helped the stark realities of the past shape a vision of the future in Europe.[94] For instance, anti-

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[89] Jessica Wardhaugh, Ruth Leiserowitz and Christian Bailey, "Intellectual Dissidents and the Construction of European Spaces, 1918–1988" in Conway and Patel, *Europeanization in the Twentieth Century*, 33.
[90] Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 690.
[91] Michal Kopeček and Piotr Wciślik, "Towards an Intellectual History of Postsocialism" in Michal Kopeček and Piotr Wciślik, eds, *Thinking Through Transition: Liberal Democracy, Authoritarian Pasts and Intellectual History in East Central Europe after 1989*, 25–28; Ther, "1989 and the Global Hegemony of Neoliberalism".
[92] Ljubica Spaskovska, James Mark, Bogdan C. Iacob and Tobias Rupprecht *1989: A Global History of Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), especially "The West Is Not the Enemy: Reinterpreting Peripheralisation and Backwardness", 56-58.
[93] Teitel, *Globalizing Transitional Justice*, 34.
[94] Yifat Gutman argues that "this Janus-faced view of memory as looking to the past in order to shape the present and future is the basis for the increasingly relevant and pressing concerns and scholarship about the relationship of individual and collective memory to democratic politics; human rights and transitional justice; revenge, imposture and forgery; social movements and utopian moments; and historical facts and scientific technologies" ["Introduction: Memory and the Future: Why a Change of Focus Is Necessary" in *Memory and the Future: Transnational Politics, Ethics and Society* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 13]; Rodney Harrison looked at this issue as an imaginary of frailty that depends on a "late modern disassociation of preservation and value." [Rodney Harrison, "Forgetting to Remember, Remembering to Forget: Late Modern Heritage Practices, Sustainability and the "Crisis" of Accumulation of the Past", *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 19, 6 (2013), 579–95. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13527258.2012.678371.]

discrimination and inclusion legislation made use of the history of the Holocaust as reference for the values of the European space and triggered substantial debates about the limits of free speech.[95] Early in the 1990s, the Council of Europe actively encouraged a politics of remembrance of victims by sponsoring memorials discussing the memory of communism and democracy, and funding museums in Eastern Europe. Building on the older anticommunism of the European project, this perspective merged with the transformational discourse about the values of liberal democracy and neoliberalism. Several resolutions in the European Parliament called for European leaders to act upon their mandate when invoking the Holocaust as a historical language explaining the war in Bosnia.[96] A crucial instance of a relationship between memory and politics was the 2000 Stockholm Universal Declaration of Holocaust Remembrance, with its Article 8 calling upon all "to plant the seeds of a better future amidst the soil of a bitter past".[97] The history of the Holocaust thus metamorphosed into a foundational "negative memory" of European democracies. Natan Sznaider and Alejandro Baer described such focus on political violence as an ethics of remembering in terms of a "reverse Utopia" that is "not geared toward the construction of a new society but toward fending off repetitions of horrific pasts".[98] This victim-centred consensus drove the "transnationalization" of memory, which Chiara de Cesari and Ann Rigney have explained as the process by which political and

[95] Uladzislau Belavusau, "Fighting Hate Speech through EU Law", *Amsterdam Law Forum*, 4, (1), 2012, 20–35, http://doi.org/10.37974/ALF.208; Uladzislau Belavusau and Aleksandra Gliszczyńska-Grabias, "Memory Laws: Mapping a New Subject in Comparative Law and Transitional Justice", *Law and Memory: Towards Legal Governance of History*, 2, 17 (2017), 1-26.

[96] Anne Wæhrens, "Shared Memories? Politics of Memory and Holocaust Remembrance in the European Parliament 1989-2009", *DIIS Working Paper*, 2011, 1–24; Roman Krakovsky, "The Peace and the War Camps, the Dichotomous Cold War Culture in Czechoslovakia, 1948-1960" in Thomas Lindenberger, Annette Vowinckel and Marcus M. Payk eds., *Cold War Cultures: Perspectives on Eastern and Western European Societies* (Berghahn Books, 2012), 213-235.

[97] The Stockholm Declaration was not explicitly European, but it was an important topic within European political circles. This issue is addressed in Rob van der Laarse, "Beyond Auschwitz? Europe's Terrorscapes in the Age of Postmemory", in Marc Silberman and Florence Vatan eds., *Memory and Post-war Memorials* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 72-115.

[98] Alejandro Baer and Natan Sznaider, *Memory and forgetting in the Post-Holocaust Era: the Ethics of Never Again* (London: Routledge, 2016), 34.

knowledge boundaries of the national memory "regimes" become more porous.[99] At the same time, it also determined the way national landscapes of memory developed.

Over the decades, we can see a type of *negative memory* emerging. I use this term to explain the didactic, and often politically imbued imaginaries of the past, that tend to be used to cultivate liberal norms such as human rights, law, and freedom – and a progressive, deterministic view on trajectories of those seeking to abide by them. The fact that victims have been the central vehicle of this "negative memory", a history shared by Eastern and Western Europe, speaks to a certain currency that notions of human dignity have taken on.[100] Partly a way to reflect on vulnerability and to protect states against the return of authoritarianism, the ethos of memory of political violence is constructive. In 1989, political theorist Judith Shklar was taking on memory when discussing "liberalism of fear" to depict a condition of liberal democracy that is "putting cruelty first"—that is remembering or shaping the present in relation to this violent past—an idea she described elsewhere as "more a recipe for survival than a project for the perfectibility of mankind".[101] Furthermore, she argues a "party of hope" and a "party of memory", where collective memory of past politics defines the norms of contemporary liberal democracy, define this brand of liberal thought. With that, she advanced perhaps the first reflection on the role that memory plays in defining liberal democracy – as a warning.[102]

The usage of memory vocabularies in strengthening liberalism testify to the fact that, especially in the 1990s, it was much more than consensus, free markets, and individualism. As John Rawls argues, this ideology was primarily a political project of justice, and the attribute

[99] Chiara de Cesari, Ann Rigney, *Transnational Memory Circulation, Articulation, Scales* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014).
[100] Charles Beitz, "Human Dignity in the Theory of Human Rights: Nothing but a Phrase?", *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 41, 3 (2013), 259-290. https://doi.org/10.1111/papa.12017.
[101] Judith Shklar, *Ordinary Voices* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984), 34.
[102] See Samuel Moyn's discussion of Shklar as a Cold War liberal in Moyn, *Liberalism Against itself*, 13-16.

of "liberal" took shape independently from an exclusively economic doctrine.[103] For Central and Eastern Europe it came with distinct cultural values - of the Cold War, Atlanticism, moralisation of modernisation – that dominated the 1990s.[104] Anthropologist Talal Asad points out, indeed, how "laissez-faire" economy, political liberalism, and different philosophical roots of moral human rights shaped culture, and the modernization of those who aspired to this global condition.[105] In other words, memory contributed to the pull that values had on defining liberalism greater than a political ideology of liberty, exchange and consensus because "at heart, most liberals were moralists. Their liberalism had nothing to do with the atomistic individualism we hear of today. They never spoke about rights without stressing duties".[106] A "negative memory" defended the accomplishments of the global liberal order and instilled a normative position towards liberal democracy. More recently, Jan-Werner Müller argues the "vergangenheitsbewältigungswille" (a political will to engage critically with the past) was a barometer for the liberal democratic quality of a political culture.[107]

Situating a memory of violence on the spectrum of liberalism(s), is useful also in order to showcase the construct of "Europe".[108] Talal Asad argues that "far from being threatened by internal violence, European solidarity is strengthened by it"[109], meaning that the notion of

[103] John Rawls, "The Idea of an Overlapping Consensus", *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 7, 1 (1987), 34–40. https://www.jstor.org/stable/764257.

[104] Rosenblatt, *The Lost History of Liberalism*, 67-71, About the notion of a defensive liberalism, see also Amanda Anderson, *Bleak Liberalism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2016), specifically the Introduction.

[105] Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 14–18; See also von Hirschhausen and Patel, "Europeanization in History: An Introduction". 13-56; Volker Depkat and Martin Conway, "Towards a European History of the Discourse of Democracy: Discussing Democracy in Western Europe, 1945–60" in Conway and Patel, *Europeanization in the Twentieth Century*, 132–37.

[106] Rosenblatt, *The Lost History of Liberalism,* 4.

[107] Jan-Werner Müller, "On European Memory, Some Conceptual and Normative Remarks," in Małgorzata Pakier and Bo Stråth, eds., *A European Memory? Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 25–38, 26.

[108] Volkhard Knigge, "Europäische Erinnerungskultur. Identitätspolitik Oder Kritisch-Kommunikative Historische Selbstvergewisserung" in *Kulturpolitische Gesellschaft E.V. Begründungen Und Perspektiven Europäischer Kulturpolitik*, Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2008, 157.

[109] Asad, *Formations of the Secular,* 166. See also Siobhan Kattago, "Agreeing to Disagree on the Legacies of Recent History: Memory, Pluralism and Europe after 1989", *European Journal of Social Theory,* 12, 3 (2009), 375–95, https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431009337352; Claus Leggewie, "A Tour of the Battleground: The Seven Circles of Pan-European Memory," *Social Research,* 75, 1 (2008), 217–34, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40972058; Peter Verovšek, "Memory, Narrative, and Rupture: The Power of the Past

European core values embraces these negative pasts to show the prestige and superiority of Europe in dealing with "accidents" in the history of Europe and promote peace. Such "civilizational" narratives about what Europe brings were instrumental in the pull those political ideals about moving forward and "modernization" had in Central and Eastern Europe. Following the regime transformation in the 1990s, as "Europe" became the symbol of the end of totalitarianism, professing vulnerability and "cultivating" certain memories as a warning represented a measure of newly found liberal democracy. There is a certain fluidly in comparing the murderous character of communism and National Socialism, as a "totalitarian" past of Europe, which makes democracy emerge as a "product of the ideological wars fought against totalitarianism", as historian Duncan Bell argues.[110]

In Central and Eastern Europe, this use of the memory of political violence, suffering, and pain – and its role in achieving a political consensus (that is, the ultimate goal of liberal governance) - also gauged the progress of a modern, liberal, "civilized" humanity and the political project of EU accession.[111] Justice for the repression and injustices of the past and the victims came to be increasingly associated with "European values", "learning from the past," and, more generally, "democracy".[112] The narrative of European belonging attached to the ideas of anticommunism was about making the previously 'captive' nations whole again. Such a civilizational dimension of (liberal) Europeanness determined the forms of liberal democracy as understood in Central and Eastern Europe. Václav Havel's Civic Forum (OF) (political

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as a Resource for Political Change", *Memory Studies*, 3 (4), 2017, 208-22. https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698017720256.

[110] Bell, "What Is Liberalism?"

[111] This goes in the line of Asad, for whom liberalism, which is synonymous to the West relies on the idea of political violence, which become a compass in the quest for progress. See for more on modernity, law and relations of subjugation Samera Esmeir, *Juridical Humanity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 45-56. See also Aamir R. Mufti, "A Response to Talal Asad's "Reflections on Violence, Law, and Humanitarianism", *Critical Inquiry* 41, (2) 2015 428-434, on the idea of violence and liberalism and progress.

[112] Georges Mink, "Institutions of National Memory Transitional Justice to Political Uses", in Georges Mink and Laure Neumayer, eds., *History, Memory and Politics in Central and Eastern Europe: Memory Games* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 155-170.

movement) was perhaps the most famous to engage the "path to Europe" slogan, but it also resonated with other actors in the region.[113]

In this context, remembrance played a moralizing role, and new progressive liberal actors mobilized images of problematic pasts to ground a new relationship between "citizen and state" in the liberal polity.[114] Invocations of past state actions kept certain demands urgent in the political arena. There was little concern with the fact that mobilizing the remembrance of past political violence was more about change in institutions or political orders and less about social justice.[115] Collective memory was, in fact, a central actor in the "transition" on the progressive path towards liberal democracy and the West.[116] Refusing to acknowledge or denying responsibility toward crimes of the past was primarily a question of the reputation of the state as "civilized".[117] The victims were invoked when reclaiming institutions and structures from former political groups into the liberal democratic sphere.[118] Arguably, the residual influence of this dynamic in Central and Eastern Europe is evident in contradictions that are still visible: in Romania, and elsewhere, despite the flurry of talking about "anticommunism",

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[113] Kim, Seongcheol. "Between Illiberalism and Hyper-Neoliberalism: Competing Populist Discourses in the Czech Republic." *European Politics and Society* 21 (5) 2020, 618–33, https://doi.org/10.1080/23745118.2020.1709368.

[114] Teitel, *Globalizing Transitional Justice*, 13-15.

[115] Nanci Adler, "Introduction: On History, Historians and Transitional Justice", in Nanci Adler, ed., *Understanding the Age of Transitional Justice: Crimes, Courts, Commissions, and Chronicling* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2018), 1–11; Dustin Sharp, "Emancipating Transitional Justice from the Bonds of Paradigmatic Transition," *The International Journal of Transitional Justice,* 9, 1, 2015, 150-169. https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/iju021; Teitel, *Globalizing Transitional Justice*, 12–23; Laurel Fletcher, Harvey Weinstein, and Jamie Rowen, "Context, Timing and the Dynamic of Transitional Justice," *Human Rights Quarterly*, 31 (2009), 163-220. https://humanrights.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/publications/context_timing_and_the_dynamics_of_transitional_justice_a_histo.pdf

[116] The notion of transition was a political and economic term much used in the 1990s, which built on the notion that the political and cultural fields are heavily indebted to economics. See Noel Calhoun, *Dilemmas of Justice in Eastern Europe's Democratic Transitions* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 3–4; Kopeček and Wciślik, "Towards an Intellectual History of Postsocialism", 12-15.

[117] Mark Osiel, *Mass Atrocity, Collective Memory, and the Law* (New Brunswick: Transaction Pub, 1997), 2-13; David Scott, *Omens of Adversity* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2014), 23–37; Teitel, *Globalizing Transitional Justice*, 3–13; Marco Zunino, *Justice Framed: A Genealogy of Transitional Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 5–14 ; Benoît Challand, "1989, Contested Memories and the Shifting Cognitive Maps of Europe," *European Journal of Social Theory,* 12, 3 (2009), 397–408, https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431009338766.

[118] Zunino, *Justice Framed: A Genealogy of Transitional Justice*, 16–26.

the actual numbers, stories and mechanisms of oppression continue to be severely under investigated. The situation has solidified into an impasse about tainted institutions and paralysis of the state and has exacerbated emerging authoritarianisms that rely on a re-emergence of Cold War narratives.

This moralizing quest driving this paradigm of "repoliticized" memory, also transnationally, opened problematic pathways. The equation between the shared destructive scale of National Socialism and communism today reads as an endorsement of the "double genocide" thesis.[119] Jelena Subotić, among others, has discussed such revisionisms in the former Yugoslavia, where she mentions that:

> This equation between communism and fascism, and the appropriation of Holocaust remembrance and imagery to delegitimise communism … has occurred throughout Eastern Europe with much historical revisionism resulting from the attempts of Eastern European countries to deny or cloud their participation in fascist crimes, including the Holocaust, by elevating communist crimes to the level of the Holocaust, by delegitimising anti-fascism, and in doing so legitimising resurgent neo-fascism.[120]

That dynamic has been echoed everywhere in the region and in Hungary, Slovakia, and Romania, among others, memory politics have been shaped by the idea that victims of the Holocaust are preferred to that of communism. There is little nuance capturing the nationalist or nativist implications of this position and not only does it promote a particular angle where communist perpetrators seem more relevant than fascist perpetrators[121], but it also repurposes

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[119] Liljana Radonić, "From 'Double Genocide' to 'the New Jews': Holocaust, Genocide and Mass Violence in Post-Communist Memorial Museums", *Journal of Genocide Research,* 20, 4 (2018), 510–29, https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2018.1522831. The analyses of competing memories and the rise of the double-genocide paradigm (in wider context of 9/11 and the reconceptualization of the notion of terror in the context of EUs Holocaust-centred memory politics) have been the focus of the Terrorscapes project as addressed in Rob van der Laarse, "Archaeology of Memory", EAC OCCASIONAL PAPER NO.11, 2013, 121-130 and Rob van der Laarse, Francesco Mazzucchelli and Carlos Reijnen, eds., "Introduction", *Traces of Terror, Signs of Trauma. Practices of (Re) Presentation of Collective Memories Space in Contemporary Europe* (Bologna: Universita Bologna, 2014), 3-20.

[120] Jelena Subotić, *Yellow Star, Red Star: Holocaust Remembrance after Communism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019), 6.

[121] Luca Manucci, *Populism and Collective Memory Comparing Fascist Legacies in Western Europe* (London: Routledge, 2021) , 360; Ljiljana Radonić, "Post-Communist Invocation of Europe: Memorial Museums' Narratives and the Europeanization of Memory", *National Identities,* 19, 2 (2017), 269–88. https://doi.org/10.1080/14608944.2016.1264377; Ljiljana Radonić, "Introduction: The Holocaust/Genocide Template in Eastern Europe", *Journal of Genocide Research,* 20, 4 (2018), 483–89. https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2018.1528743.

much of the early 1990s defensive liberalism into a helpful narrative for the "illiberal" dimension of democracy.[122]. It can also explain the mechanisms behind the Holocaust becoming an "entrance ticket" to the EU[123], because it supports ideas about a "pure" fibre of the nation, destroyed by these two regimes.

Moreover, this bi-dimensional narrative shapes a "banal" Europeanism, simplifies narratives, and avoids a focus on particular actors. Memory politics thus ironically strengthens what it professes to counter.[124] Consequently, the consensus driving the usable past of political violence for Europe entails a complex puzzle that begs a new analysis of what the concepts of "Europe" and liberal democracy really engendered in terms of memory politics. The binding element then, if we aim to contextualize the current misgivings surrounding "Europeanization", is how the (re) politicization of memory in a liberal sense happened in the past and continues to develop today – a question that this dissertation aims to analyse.

4. Collective Memory and the "Liberal Script"

The trouble with using memory to instil "tolerance, moderation, and civil respect", historian Mark Osiel argues, is that these moralizing approaches to history "presume too much moral consensus" and do not confront the "ethical complexity in wrongdoing".[125] As political theorist Chantal Mouffe has argued, forging liberalism around consensus hides the fundamental

[122] The thesis has also been discussed in recent historiography grappling with the uncharted history of the Shoah in Eastern Europe, for instance Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010). It also shaped the memory debates in the 1990s.
[123] Dan Diner, "Memory and Restitution: World War II as a Foundational Event in a Uniting Europe", in Gotthart Wunberg and Dan Diner eds., *Restitution and Memory: Historical Remembrance and Material Restitution in Europe,* (New York, 2007), 9–23; Rob van der Laarse, "Beyond Auschwitz?" in Silberman and Vatan, *Memory and Postwar Memorials,* 71-92; Assmann, "Europe's Divided Memory", 261.
[124] For instance, in 2019, shortly after the resolution on 1989, another EPP document, "On the importance of European remembrance for the future of Europe", produces an antitotalitarian narrative, which explicitly uses prevention of extremism in the context of the "totalitarian" narrative, effectively equating far-right and left mobilizations. See "European Parliament Resolution of 19 September 2019 on the Importance of European Remembrance for the Future of Europe (2019/2819(RSP))" (2019), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2019-0021_EN.html. Last accessed June 17, 2020. Also see Marlene Laruelle, Margarita Karnysheva*, Memory Politics and the Russian Civil War: Reds Versus Whites* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021) for the emergence of the myth of the "whites" in Russia and abroad.
[125] Osiel, *Mass Atrocity*, 17–18.

antagonisms (between groups, classes) at the centre of politics that represent the social space.[126] Consequently, argues Anna Cento Bull, collective memory debates should do justice to the reality of an "agonistic memory", one which acknowledges the tensions of conflicts and the political stakes, instead of shying away from them.[127] Scholars looking at memory in conflict through notions such as "competing memories" call for charting negotiations around complicated histories to enable a productive understanding of history.[128] Indeed, much work has been devoted to "dissonance" and conflicts, especially visible in memory and heritage studies,[129] because these are always disputed by one actor or another.

This dissertation connects such recent calls for a more complex arena of exhibiting and debating histories of collective memory with a broader reconsideration of the extent to which languages of human rights, order, and personal freedom are still effective in promoting liberal values worldwide, beyond the consensus around these by actors across the ideological spectrum. Sociologist Michael Zürn refers to a "liberal script" to understand these pitfalls. He defines concepts and ideas attached to liberal democracy as "ideas and institutional prescriptions about the organisation of society based on the core principle of individual self-determination". They rely on certain constructs that seem ahistorical and depoliticized:

> Its foundation rests upon implied universal values such as freedom, equality, justice, progress, and tolerance. Its manifestations range from human rights and the rule of law to

[126] Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political (Thinking in Action)* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 3-13. See also Balasz Trencsényi, Michal Kopeček, Luka Lisjak Gabrijelčič, Maria Falina and Mónika Baár, eds., *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe* (Vol II) *Negotiating Modernity in the 'Short Twentieth Century' and Beyond, Part II: 1968-2018* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018*),* especially "14-23. "The Ambiguities of the 'Liberal Consensus.'", 192-213; Zunino, *Justice Framed: A Genealogy of Transitional Justice*, 57.
[127] Anna Cento Bull and Hans Lauge Hansen, "On Agonistic Memory", *Memory Studies,* 9, 4 (2016), 390–404, https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698015615935.
[128] See Alejandro Baer and Natan Sznaider, "Ghosts of the Holocaust in Franco's mass graves: Cosmopolitan memories and the politics of 'never again'", *Memory Studies* 8 (3), 328–344. https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698014568247; Rob van der Laarse, "Europe's Peat Fire: Intangible Heritage and the Crusades for Identity" in Sigrid Lähdesmäki, Kaasik Krogerus Tuuli, Luisa Passerini and Sigrid van Huis eds., *Dissonant Heritages and Memories in Contemporary Europe* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 79–133.
[129] J.E Ashworth and GJ Tunbridge, *Dissonant Heritage*; Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London/New York: Routledge, 2006); van der Laarse, "Europe's Peat Fire", 79–133.

> free-market capitalism. As such, it competes with alternative scripts for organising societies, such as fascism, communism, authoritarianism, or Islamic fundamentalism.[130]

Here, he is putting forth a notion of a script to be able to better flesh out the normative interpretations in which liberalism operates. Zürn identifies fascism, communism, and authoritarianism as histories against which the image of the current political order of liberal democracy is being built. Although the concept does not fully depart from a descriptive perspective, the "liberal script" does offer a glimpse into the way other "scripts", including authoritarianism or communism, fit into an "external" history of liberal democracy.[131] The main takeaway of Zürn's notion is that consensus of liberal democracy can be prescriptive, and that it reduces, simplifies, or stylizes notions through which broader society operates. Opposing, for instance, liberalism to Islam perpetuates a simplistic cultural and geographic sphere of what it is to be liberal. Furthermore, it does not acknowledge the overlaps between liberal democracy with any of the above. This "script" leads to silencing internal liberal dilemmas, exclusionary discourses in social democracy, or employments of religion, such as Catholicism, as superior and rightfully 'European'. Equally, these do away with issues of neoliberalism-driven inequality or the culturalist perspectives operating on racialized categories.[132] Many other facets of histories are either selectively engaged or wilfully ignored.

Given the importance that past political violence plays in interpreting liberal democratic values, this dissertation looks to this notion of "script" in collective memory. It takes this emplotment as a root cause of silencing and, by focusing on debates in Central and Eastern Europe, shows how this relation came to be, evolved, and continues to operate. Because of the

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[130] Michael Zürn, "Die Zukunft Der Liberalen Weltordnung," in *Deutschland Und Die Welt 2030. Was Sich Verändert Und Wie Wir Handeln Müssen* (Berlin: Econ Verlag, 2018), 385–93; Tanja Börzel and Michael Zürn, "SCRIPTS Working Paper No. 1" (Berlin: German Research Foundation, 2019).

[131] Although collective memory is not something that appears in the "liberal script" concept, this addition is important, given the prevalence of memory debates in defining liberal democracy and is consequently further developed in the dissertation.

[132] See Lars Cornelissen, "Neoliberalism and the Racialized Critique of Democracy", *Constellations: An International Journal of Critical Democratic Theory*, 27, 3 (2020), 348-360. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8675.12518.

dissertation's focus on this particular region, some other pasts (such as colonialism) are kept in the background. The concept of "totalitarianism", for instance, a concept dating from before the Second World War, avoids the broader history of authoritarianism, beyond National Socialism and communism.[133] The European heritage (of violence) of imperialism is also silenced.[134] Furthermore, the victim-centred legal and social complex of "totalitarianism" takes the attention away from group struggles or institutionalism.[135] The spectre of the "Gulag", as a shorthand for the Soviet Union, overshadowed the political causes and demands of the 1918 Revolution[136], the remembrance of the Holocaust left little space for taking discourses of anti-fascism out of more radical fringes, and the memory of slavery eclipsed that of anti-colonial struggles.[137]

The selective de-politicization of histories emerging from this liberal "script" obscures certain pasts. This process affects the history of the political left, where anti-fascism is attributed to Christian Democracy and social democracy rather than to more radical socialist circles.[138] Historian Enzo Traverso has outlined, indeed, how because communism is reduced to its Stalinist "totalitarian" dimension, it does away with the complex re-interpretations of the left

[133] See chapter 1 on this discussion.
[134] Ann Laura Stoler, "Colonial Aphasia: Race and Disabled Histories in France," *Public Culture* 23, 1 (2011), 121–56. https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-2010-018. Aline Sierp, "1939 versus 1989—A Missed Opportunity to Create a European Lieu de Mémoire?", *East European Politics and Societies,* 31, 3 (2017), 439–55. https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325417697791; Roger Griffin, "Studying Fascism in a Postfascist Age. From New Consensus to New Wave?", *Fascism* 1, 1 (2012), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1163/221162512X623601. Berny Sebe and Matthew G. Stanard, *"Introduction"* in Berny Sebe and Matthew G. Stanard eds., *Decolonising Europe?: Popular Responses to the End of Empire* (London: Routledge, 2020), 13-18.
[135] Samuel Moyn, *Not Enough: Human Rights in an Unequal World* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2018), 12-14.
[136] Enzo Traverso, *Left-Wing Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 4–14; Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Celebrating (or Not) the Centenary of the Russian Revolution", *Journal of Contemporary History*, 52, 4 (2017), 816-831. doi:10.1177/0022009417723975
[137] Dan Stone, "A Victim-Centred Historiography of the Holocaust?" *Patterns of Prejudice* 51, 2 (2017), 176–88. https://doi.org/10.1080/0031322X.2017.1304347.; Dirk Moses "The Canadian Museum for Human Rights : The 'Uniqueness of the Holocaust' and the Question of Genocide", *Journal of Genocide Research,* 14, 2 (2011), 215-238. https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2012.677762.
[138] Heike Karge, "Practices and Politics of Second World War Remembrance: Transnational Perspectives from Eastern and South-Eastern Europe" in Pakier, Strath, *A European Memory? Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance*, 137–47.

happening in both Western and Eastern Europe after 1965, for example, stripping communism of its much broader political, economic and intellectual Marxist, Gramscian thought.[139]

Similarly, critical investigations of the appeal to and usages of "democracy" by the radical right are absent, as the roots of the dissatisfaction with capitalist democracy in the early interwar period have little visibility today.[140] Debates on the influence of the far-right on conceptions of democracy have been absent until not long ago.[141] This selectivity does not do justice to the myriad of constructs in which liberal democracy is contested. For instance, Ryszard Legutko's book *The Demon of Democracy: Totalitarian Tendencies in Liberal Societies* (2016) argues that liberal democracy and communism are ideologies that "prescribe their followers how to think, what to do, how to evaluate things".[142] For Legutko, a PiS supporter (and incidentally one of the initiators of the European Parliament's Declaration mentioned at the outset), both these systems are radical projects 'where social problems are depicted as solvable through "social engineering".[143] In a similar vein, the 1968 revolution in Poland is contested in the politics of the PiS precisely because of its significance as a moment of the New Left. PiS argues, instead, that the fundamental importance of 1968 resided in the purges within the Party itself, and the consolidation of authoritarian communism. It rejects the transnational history of 1968 as relevant to the Left as a Westernized construct that denies the specificity locally in the countries in Eastern Europe, such as Poland. The argument here is that anticommunism simply represented an imported Western concept.[144]

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[139] Traverso, *Left-Wing Melancholia*, 15; Conway, *Western Europe's Democratic Age: 1945-1968*, 19-21.
[140] Sierp, "1939 versus 1989"; Laure Neumayer, "Symbolic Policies versus European Reconciliation: The Hungarian 'Status Law'", in Mink and Neumayer, *History, Memory and Politics*, 209–25.
[141] Marta Lorimer, "Europe as ideological resource: the case of the Reassembled National", *Journal of European Public Policy*, 27, 9 (2020), 1388-1405. DOI: 10.1080/13501763.2020.1754885.
[142] Ryszard Legutko, *The Demon in Democracy: Totalitarian Temptations in Free Societies* (New York: Encounter Books, 2016), 12.
[143] Ibid., 15-17.
[144] David Ost, "Down with 1989!': The Peculiar Right-Wing Backlash against 1968 in Poland", *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures,* 33, 4 (2019), 843–860. https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325419857141.

My dissertation historicizes these tensions, by adding to views such as those of sociologist Rogers Brubaker that the specificity of the "illiberal" political turn in Hungary and Poland is that it "externalises liberalism" and portrays values like rights as a plural language that opposes the national "specificity".[145] Arguably, these tendencies are more complex, because particular liberal tenets (rule of law, courts of law, a shadow state threatening democracy) are appropriated and operationalized in "illiberal" politics.[146]

By identifying and analysing debates on what we could call a "liberal" identity in Romanian debates and in the regional context, this dissertation seeks to map the extent to which historical appropriations and exploitations in the recent wave of contestations of democracy have adapted ideas central to liberal democracy and Europe, precisely because of their normativity. Contestations of 'Soros agents' and conspiracy theories lamenting the undermining of national sovereignty have also occurred here (specifically with the rise of the AUR, a far-right leaning political party), and there is a general consensus that 'Europe' denotes modernization and a form of "containment" of the drawbacks of national politics and plays a sort of "defensive" role against national politics. Romanian debates can, moreover, offer an additional angle on the pitfalls of a memory shaped by working with the "liberal script". In this sense, the political landscape does not contest ideas of liberal democracy, but rather internalizes them through a strong appeal to a type of "modernization" and "development" narratives.

5. Silences and Liberal Values

As already argued, the dissertation creates a frame to understand "silencing" in the memory dynamics within the liberal script, as described by Zürn and others. Consequently, I

[145] Rogers Brubaker, "Between Nationalism and Civilizationism: The European Populist Moment in Comparative Perspective", *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* 40, 8 (2017), 1191–1226, https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2017.1294700.
[146] Andre Sajó, "The Rule of Law as Legal Despotism: Concerned Remarks on the Use of *"Rule of Law"* in Illiberal Democracies", *Hague Journal on the Rule Law,* 11 (2019), 371–376. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40803-019-00097-z.

do not approach silencing as a functional way to describe the authoritarianism of former governments hiding their own actions or a convenient smokescreen contrived to mask their past biographies.[147] Instead, "silencing" is more suitably understood as spectre, conduit and narrative emerging from attempts to construct a memory that can respond to the promises of liberal democracy and being part of Europe.[148] Silencing, in this context, is a process, a continuous negotiation of norms, as historian Jay Winter argues:

> there is a difference between the sayable and the non-sayable, or the spoken or the unspoken, and that such a distinction can and should be maintained and observed over time. Such people codify and enforce norms which reinforce the injunction against breaking into the inner space of the circle of silence.[149]

Apart from political silence, which denies political crimes or errors, Winter also describes how the memory of war (and violence) became the subject of "liturgical silence" because that matter is too fundamental to a culture to be openly questioned.[150] It implies a sense of reverence to norms, or a codification. Winter identifies two sides of silencing that are specifically relevant for the context outlined so far. He describes "essentialist silence", a type of argumentation that suggests that only those who lived through an experience are seen to be morally qualified to discuss it. The argument across the six chapters is that memory politics in Central and Eastern Europe have often developed around "silencing", under many guises, connected to imaginings of democracy, liberalism and what these could entail.

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[147] More recently, this concern with politics has been taken further by memory scholar Ann Rigney, who has termed activism around memory as a "memory of hope" [see Ann Rigney, "Remembering Hope: Transnational activism beyond the traumatic", *Memory Studies*, 11, (3) 2018, 368-380. https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698018771869. Ann Rigney and Yifat Gutman look at the way trauma in the past is now operative as a political force, instead of changing historical representations or "editing" as the driving force of memory conflicts, in Gutman, "Introduction: Memory and the Future: Why a Change of Focus Is Necessary", Gutman, *Memory and the Future,* 34-35.

[148] Janine Natalya Clark, "Re-Thinking Memory and Transitional Justice: A Novel Application of Ecological Memory" in *Memory Studies,* 14, 4 (2021), 1388-1452. https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698020959813.

[149] Jay Winter, "War Memoirs, Witnessing and Silence", in Philip Dwyer ed., *War Stories: The War Memoir in History and Literature* (London: Berghahn Books, 2017), 29. See also "Thinking about Silence", in Efrat Ben - Ze'ev, Ruth Ginio and Jay Winter eds., *Shadows of War. A Social History of Silence in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 16-20.

[150] Winter, *Thinking about Silence,* 20

Perhaps the most salient similar dynamic of silencing are the concerns about remembrance during the transition to democracy in Spain in the 1970s.[151] There, the imposed consensus that not bringing things to public debate or judicial scrutiny will serve society better than reckoning with it has caused a substantial delay in dealing with far-right history and conservative remnants of the past.[152]

In Central and Eastern Europe, many of the aspects of this transition affected the ways in which the past was retold. The "Europeanization" of the Holocaust, the driving force behind opening debates on the Holocaust in Eastern Europe, created one type of silencing, through deflection. It was not a black-and-white "denial", but a way of showing that the tragedy also lay elsewhere, for instance in communism, an experience understood only by those who went through it.[153] Historian Michael Shafir argues that the Holocaust in Romania is less a question of denial, but of "trivialisation", suggesting it takes away from where the emphasis should lie, that is, communism.[154] Similarly, Viktor Orbán's government has blatantly praised the actions of the authoritarian Admiral Miklos Horthy, the far-right Hungarian leader during the Second World War, as a strongman who could maintain the integrity of state in the face of internal contestation (of the left) and external pressure.[155] The transnational narrative of the Holocaust has also allowed the space to identify national, previously unacknowledged heroes, that are

[151] Ignacio Brescó de Luna, "Between the Unbearable Weight and Lightness of the Past. Banal Silence in Spain's Post-Dictatorship Memory Politics." *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science* 53, (2019), 44–56. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-018-9428-8.

[152] Vincent Druliolle, Recovering Historical Memory: A Struggle against Silence and Forgetting? The Politics of Victimhood in Spain, *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 9, (2) 2015, 316–335, https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/ijv008. See also Jason Xidias, "From Franco to Vox: Historical Memory and the Far Right in Spain", *Center for Analysis of the Radical Right*. Available at: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b7ea2794cde7a79e7c00582/t/63816c934f4fdd080002f857/1669426324018/from+franco+to+vox.pdf.

[153] Kattago, "Agreeing to Disagree"; David Clarke, "Communism and Memory Politics in the European Union" , *Central Europe* 12, 1 (2014), 99–114. https://doi.org/10.1179/1479096314Z.00000000018.

[154] Michael Shafir makes the point that a "denial" of the Holocaust happens not by explicitly refusing to acknowledge its legacies, but by strategies that reduce the number of victims and find victims elsewhere. See Michael Shafir, "Unacademic Academics: Holocaust Deniers and Trivializers in Post-Communist Romania," *Nationalities Papers* 3 (6) 2014, 1–23, https:/doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2014.939619.

[155] Karl Pfeifer, "The Orbán Regime Takes Horthy's Hungary as an Example," *OpenDemocracy*, 2017, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/orban-regime-takes-horthy-s-hungary-as-example. Last accessed June 1, 2020.

more convenient.[156] The Museum for Holocaust Victims in Budapest, for instance, emphasizes specific victims (non-Jews who died during the war, and non-communists who were victims of the acts of violence).[157] These contradictions testify to a new mode of affirming resistance, self-determination and national sovereignty given the lack of any other option because of the singularity of the region.[158] Jelena Subotić has attributed such dynamics to an "epistemic insecurity", that is a sense that the democratic norms in themselves are fragile.[159] Narratives that strengthen ideas of the liberal "state" are directly connected to usable representations of history. [160] It is also why these topics emerge and submerge in a triangular manner in relation to Europeanism and are often mainstreamed.[161]

Heritage and memory in Romania have been useful examples of this dynamic early on and have generally been accepted as a good compromise. More quickly and more aggressively than in other countries in the region, statues of former communist figures were destroyed, and street names and museums changed overnight, as a result of governmental actions but also widespread popular support.[162] Politics was coterminous with the idea of a radical change in both the state and society. On the one hand, following the shorthand of anticommunist narratives often entailed depicting some histories ("development", for instance) in an urgent fashion. Communism continued to be invoked as the root cause of economic malaise or

[156] Ljiljana Radonić, "'Our' vs. 'Inherited' Museums. PiS and Fidesz as Mnemonic Warriors," *Südosteuropa* 68, 1 (2020), 34-47. https://doi.org/10.1515/soeu-2020-0003. Rob van der Laarse, "Muséographies Des Mémoires Concurrentes," in Delphine Bechtel and Luba Jurgenson eds., *Muséographie Des Violences En Europe Centrale et Ex-URSS* (Editions Kime, 2016), 213–32.
[157] Radonić, "'Our' vs. 'Inherited' Museums".
[158] Kattago, "Agreeing to Disagree"; Dirk Moses, "Revisiting a Founding Assumption of Genocide Studies", 3, 12 (2011), 287–300. https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/gsp/vol6/iss3/10/; Dick Howard, "The Anti-Totalitarian Left between Morality and Politics," in Dirk Breckman, Warren Gordon and Peter Moses eds., *The Modernist Imagination* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 331–46.
[159] Subotić, *Yellow Star, Red Star,* 5–6.
[160] Marek Kucia, "The Europeanization of Holocaust Memory and Eastern Europe", *East European Politics and Societies,* 30, 1 (2016), 97-119. https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325415599195.
[161] Michal Kopeček, "Sovereignty, 'Return to Europe' and Democratic Distrust in the East after 1989 in the Light of Brexit", *Contemporary European History* 28, 1 (2019), 73-76. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777318000851.
[162] Caterina Preda, "Postsocialist Statuary Politics in Romania and Bulgaria: An Ambivalent Socialist Heritage" *Comparative Southeast European Studies* vol. 71, no. 2, 2023, 147-168. https://doi.org/10.1515/soeu-2022-0043

corruption and was therefore perpetually mentioned in protest movements as well as social and economic reform movements. On the other hand, although "communism" was the preferred culprit in Romanian public debates revolving around poverty or "corruption", there was virtually no public institutional space of remembrance that engages with this history.

In contrast, representations of (liberal) interwar capitalist democracy continue to be retrieved to speak about the European "spirit", and as a "golden age" in Romania, and in constant contrast to the liberal democracy after the 1990s. The grip of the left in interwar Romania was faint, and never really enjoyed much credibility. Indeed, the anticommunist narrative insists on this strong liberal tradition that the communists abruptly cut down in 1945, turning it into a useful heritage of an "ahistorical" liberalism.[163] A voluminous literature has accumulated on the topic of the category postsocialism/postcommunism by directly contrasting liberalism to an authoritarian Left.[164]

Building on silencing in relation to democracy, this dissertation relies on the contention that "silence need not only be thought of as the antithesis of speech, but that it can be disaggregated into its overt and covert manifestations", as argued by sociologist Vered Vinitzy-Seroussy.[165] By overt silences, she refers to an apparent absence of speech and narrative, but also to the fact that only what is visible becomes a narrative. Covert silences, on the other hand, according to her claim, cause silencing particularly because they are too reified and used. Such silences are about the lack of content and excess image, which often become ritualistic. Vinitzy-Seroussy's typology suggests we should never underestimate how memory is always a political act, and that activism and mobilizations of a certain memory do not necessarily mean breaking

[163] Janna Thompson, "Apology, Historical Obligations and the Ethics of Memory," *Memory Studies* 2, 2 (2009), 195–210. https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698008102052.
[164] The debate has to do with the extent to which political debates about ideological features of liberal democracy have been subsumed under the notion of transition, glaringly emptying out possible critical notions. See Halmai Gábor, "Illiberalism in East-Central Europe*"*, *EUI Law*, 5 (2019). http://hdl.handle.net/1814/64967.
[165] Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi and Chana Teeger, "Silence and Collective Memory," *Social Forces* 88, 3 (2010), 1103–1122. https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.0.0290.

through silencing, but that some "silences [are] aimed at remembering" and other "silences [are] aimed at forgetting".[166] Silence is an ample social space that can create both a space for remembrance and for forgetting, which also implicitly makes them susceptible to appropriations. It is a framework that does justice both to the need to debate and examine the inner workings of "consensus" and to the restrictive, often impoverished, sphere of memory debate in Central and Eastern Europe, which has been instrumentalized more recently into problematic political narratives.

Considerations of reifications and absences, curation, and calibration in memory, all of them creating *silences*, build on a number of points already discussed by scholars of memory, in different contexts. There is something to be said about how silences are triggered by perpetually keeping issues of collective memory urgent, always raw but vague, such as the usage of memory in liberal narratives. François Trouillot points to this continuous relevance of the past for the present as one of the mechanisms of silencing, as the past exists because there is a present that perpetually shapes it.[167] This does not only mean that the past exists because there is a present, but that silencing occurs in the process of competition for the narrators' attention.[168] The work of François Hartog is also relevant for a specific feature of "silencing" and "negative memory": that is, an orientation towards the future, the pull of narratives of modernization, a blurry and inconsequential present and a looming past. This "presentism", he argues, is shaped this suspension between a troubling past and an unclear future, often formulated as a type of catastrophe.[169] In other words, looking at the idea of the future

[166] Ibid, 1110.
[167] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 3-14.
[168] Trouillot is concerned with the various silences that spring up in the process of history-making, and he identifies four different types including the making of sources since not everything gets remembered or recorded and silencing in the creation of archives—the repositories of historical record. See Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 46-49.
[169] See François Hartog, "Regimes of Historicity. Presentism and Experiences of Time" (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), transl. Saskia Brown. It is a perspective that validates ideas that Yifat Gutman points to when discussing memory as a construct emerging from an anticipatory angle of an emergent future. See Gutman, "Introduction: Memory and the Future", 56.

encourages a form of "calibrating" memory, making it usable, enabling this type of silencing.[170] This dissertation, therefore, adds several aspects to an ongoing debate about the internal contestations of liberal democracy by showing how "over determinations" of Europeanness, often driven by imaginaries of a better future through memory, have had the opposite effect.[171]

6. Approach, Sources and Structure

The central methodological challenge of this research was making sense of silences in Romanian debates and in a Central and Eastern European context in order to define the entanglements of memory narratives with liberal thought. To tackle the issue, the path this dissertation takes is to trace the debates about legacies of political violence, over almost nine decades. It does so because histories of political violence have always had a central role in definitions of the state, of citizenship and of justice, and thus visions of liberalism and liberal democracy. The memory of the Second World War was as instrumental for the communist regime as it was for ideas of Europeanization after 1989. Definitions circulating in the interwar period have a strong afterlife, and Cold War liberalism (with its defensiveness and binaries) continues to permeate contemporary political debates. Although numerous studies are looking at the memory of socialism in the region and an equally impressive body of work on right-wing critically approached the constructions of memory in relation to liberal democracy and how notions of Europeanization intersected with ideas about liberal democracy. In this sense, I propose three themes, "modernization", "resentment", and "norms", which I argue were essential "modalities" in which narratives of collective memory of political violence emerged

[170] While aiming to localize this research, the usage of the term post-socialist is intentional because of its presence and invocation in current political discourses and debates, although the question of how long it will be tenable to speak and write about a category of "post-socialism" is imminent. For an overview, see Martin Müller, "Goodbye, Postsocialism!", *Europe-Asia Studies* 71, 4 (2019), 533-550, https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2019.1578337

[171] Leerssen, "Imagology: On Using Ethnicity to Make Sense of the World".

and transformed in relation to ideas about liberal democracy. As the dissertation will aim to show, these were all essential in the interpretations of the past and harbingers of *silencing*.

To do justice to the context, throughout the dissertation, the methodology moves from memory narratives (that is, discourse analysis) to archival sources that clarify certain phenomena and events. It does so in order to show how the politics of memory in the present draws upon simplifications, one-sided interpretations and analyses whose very roots lie in a different genealogy than expected, often not at all "liberal". The aim is not to describe a single historical trajectory, which is beyond the scope of a dissertation in memory studies, but rather to note how shifting cultural discourses in the present imposed certain interpretative lenses on the past. To this end, each chapter starts from a contemporary memory debate, that highlights ongoing tensions with the "liberal" script, and advances through the histories these debates refer to in order to depict the variations of interpretation.

As source material, the analysis mainly relies on archival sources, mass media (newspaper and reports), cultural production and interviews. By recourse to these sources, the dissertation aims to demonstrate how the dynamics of remembrance have changed over time, and have been mainstreamed. Fifteen semi-structured interviews (more open-ended questions, allowing for a broader discussion with the interviewee) with practitioners of memory, researchers, and historians who are relevant for debates on "European" memory (across Eastern Europe and in Romania itself) were also conducted during the research. These are individuals actively involved in how memory is represented in the public space and constructed in the current political debates about Europe. They were selected specifically for their relevance in these debates. Their opinions chart both elite and grass-roots viewpoints, often contrasting. These interviews were used to locate the interpretations and narratives in their specific temporal and geographical context. Many of these interviewees have, indeed, been actively engaged in rethinking remembrance against a normative interpretation. These interviews were conducted

in Romania, Belgium and Germany, face to face or, if not possible, via email. Although not all are featured in the research, they were invaluable in providing further context to my analysis, rather than simply a 'source' in themselves.

To fully explore the contradictions and tensions inherent in memory politics, this research also relies on archival historical research in Germany, Romania, and Hungary, in conjunction with fieldwork, where necessary. Sources in Romania include the National Archives of Romania (SANIC), Ministerul De Interne Cabinetul Ministrului 1881-1952, no inv 2322. the Gendermerie, no inv. 1474 (for the history of the repression of the Jewish community, of the communist circles of the Iron Guard during the Second World War*),* also for the history of the Jewish community*,* Centrala Evreilor no. inv 2185, Comitetul Democrat Evreiesc no. inv. 2782, fond CC al PCR, Rechizitorii, Declaratii Si Stenograme Ale Proceselor Unor Criminali De Razboi Si Personalitati Burgheze 1916-1961 Inv 3140 (no. inv. 3140), Comitetul National Antifascist din România (no. inv. 3023). The Bucharest Elie Wiesel Institute for the Study of the Holocaust archives (that holds copies of the files on Romania from the US Holocaust Museum) was useful in understanding the history of some of the trajectories during the Holocaust discussed in chapters 3 and 4 (USHMM /EWI), primarily for Transnistria. These archives also support the research presented in chapters 2, 3 and 4. The archives of the CNSAS (National Council for Studying the Securitate Archives) were useful for documentation on the Jewish repression and the early communist repression and the Iron Guard in the 1950s (fond Documentar, various files) (also for chapters 2 and 4). In Germany, I have used records from the Bundesarchiv (fond Transnistria BU 1876) to reconstitute some of the biographies of the protagonists in chapter 4. In Hungary, the Open Society Archives, primarily the records of the International Federation of Human Rights (inv. HU OSA 318-,0-8) were useful for the political history of the communist regime and the early 1990s in Romania. Also here, the archive of the Radio Free Europe (HU OSA 300-120-29) supported research for chapter 1. This archival

research was to illustrate better illustrate how narratives are selective in portraying biographies during periods of repression or other turning points in debates about democracy. The usage of historical analysis is necessary in understanding how narratives circulate and how meanings and usages of certain histories change. Apart from these primary sources, the selection of press articles allowed me to reconstitute a history of memory of political violence punctuated by some essential events in the history of liberal democracy in Europe, and turning points that affected its existence in Central and Eastern Europe. Libraries in Bucharest were particularly useful for press collections, primarily Biblioteca Central Universitară (BCUB) and the National Library of Romania.

I also conducted participatory observation, site analyses, and museum analyses between 2016 and 2018. Furthermore, this study occasionally cites biographies of relevant individuals or even organizations to tease out their roles and agendas, reconstructed mainly from the press and secondary literature.

The three parts of the dissertation develop thematically and, at times, crisscross over the decades discussed. Part I, entitled "Modernization" covers the long rise of anticommunist memory politics in the 1990s and 2000s and a reliance on Cold War readings of liberal democracy and Europe. In this part, I examine what purpose anticommunist narratives had in the 1990s in relation to "Europe", specifically connected with cultural ideas about economic development, triggered by an implicit reverence for neoliberal narratives. By looking at the subtle and consistent exculpation of the far-right, Part I suggests this notion of modernization also triggered a mainstreaming of far-right narratives.

To ground these arguments, chapter 1 discusses the ebbs and flows of the "anti-totalitarian" European triumph emerging in the 1990s, whose intellectual roots were the conservative anticommunism discourse of the late Cold War. I locate these discussions in the assemblage of ideas about transition, moralizing notions of development, and neoliberalism in

Romanian debates and how these were integrated into the "transnationalization" emerging together with a memory linked to Europe. The chapter shows how silencing was perceived as a virtue of the new liberal society, by much of the political mainstream, and has imposed a restrictive sphere of reflection early on. Chapter 2 looks at the mainstreaming of silences on the anti-Semitic and violent character of the Iron Guard movement, because of the dynamics described in chapter 1 and owing to a restrictive sphere of debate on notions of democracy. While focusing on the memory of the far-right and the debates on the Holocaust, the chapter shows how their memory was determined by concepts such as forms of development and modernization since the 1990s. At the same time, these silences blend in with memorial tropes emphasizing the guilt of the political Left.

Part II, entitled "Resentment", focuses on the heritage and the representation of conflict and the restrictive histories and historical interpretations that these put forward. Starting from the context described in the previous chapters, I argue that a memory focused on justice and defence framed most of the debates emerging at the time, and these, paradoxically, become conduits of silencing. Consequently, chapter 3 approaches the way memorial perspectives on the Holocaust and communism were constructed, and the narratives they engendered by analysing how they "compete" with each other on two painful heritage sites and the narratives which they create. The analysis unpacks the absences and the overdeterminations in two former spaces of political repression, in Sighet and Târgu Jiu, while showing how memory narratives have entertained a continuous politics of resentment from the 1990s on. Chapter 4 unpacks the selective constructions of the memory of war circulating in Romanian debates today, triggered by modern conflict, especially the wars in Yugoslavia and Transnistria in the 1990s. Focusing on a "geopolitical" imaginary emerging at the time, I tease out how ideas of ethnicity and territoriality became the main frames of interpretations of the Second World War and subsequently of the following conflicts and wars. Consequently, the chapter explores silences

on the past political violence perpetrated by the Romanian government in the region, and how these have been perpetuated.

Part III, "Norms", focuses on recent memory politics involving normative instruments for liberal democracy, legalism, and human rights. Chronologically, it starts from the contexts described in part I and II but looks at their evolution in the subsequent decades. Chapter 5 looks at the narratives around legal pursuits and transitional justice, tracing several legal cases: the 1990 street protests six months after the December 1989 events, the constitutional response to ethnic Romanian–Hungarian tensions, and the recent memorial laws around the Holocaust, which have been unfinished and formative of memory. The chapter identifies a legalist dimension of memory that constructs a selective understanding of history and is often in danger of being instrumentalized by authoritarian discourses.

Chapter 6 looks at the notions of human rights and identifies how and why these are hijacked by memory politics. It specifically looks at the emerging history of past Cold War refugees, visible during the refugee "crisis" of Europe in 2015. The usage of human rights, in this context, advanced a restrictive narrative of victimhood and identity politics that further led to the normalization of anti-refugee sentiments in Central and Eastern Europe.

This dissertation concludes that a collective memory calibrated for liberal thought has been restrictive and has consequently played into the current historical imagery grounding contestations of liberal democracy. Silencing was the instrument of choice, motivated not by denial but by a belief in some progressive force, notions of prestige, of Eurocentrism, and has been instrumental in creating selective narratives about the "nation", "state", and "democracy: notions that circulate through politics of remembrance. Finally, I point to the broader dynamics that such framings continue to promote, particularly to the pitfalls of modernization and Europeanization in driving silences, biases and mainstreaming of ideas of the far right.

Part 1: DEVELOPMENT

Chapter I:
"How do we move further faster?": Narratives of Underdevelopment

1. A New Resolution

Just a couple of months after the European Parliament passed the "December 1989…" memory declaration discussed in the introduction, in late 2019, another resolution dealing with European collective memory, suggestively named "The Importance of European Remembrance for the Future of Europe", followed.[1] This text went beyond promoting a shared consensus over the memory of political violence as an essential pillar for the resilience of European liberal democracy. In this second resolution, there is a noticeable association between sharing and abiding by (European) memory of political violence and 'socio-economic development' as the text attributes Central and Eastern European subjectivity to economic progress as a value. First, the text identifies a new epistemological category of victims in the individuals wronged by impaired (socio)economic development connected to communism:

> Whereas after the defeat of the Nazi regime and the end of the Second World War, some European countries were able to rebuild and embark on a process of reconciliation, other European countries remained under dictatorships – some under direct Soviet occupation or influence – for half a century and continued to be deprived of freedom, sovereignty, dignity, human rights and socio-economic development.[2]

This framing offers a ready-made reading of this problematic past as an interruption, of sorts, of a progressive liberalism. Secondly, the text posits that "Europe" substantiated the social and economic progress following the Cold War in Central and Eastern Europe and thus reinforces the "liberal script" behind Europeanism: namely, that Europe and liberal democracy come in tandem. The EU narrative equates the triumphant gains brought by liberal democracy

[1] The bill was supported by the same core group of Social Democrats, Renew (Liberals), EPP (Christian Democrats) and conservatives involved in the memory declaration concerning the events of 1989 discussed in the Introduction.

[2] European Parliament resolution of 19 September 2019 "Importance of European Remembrance for the Future of Europe" (2019/2819(RSP)). https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2019-0021_EN.html. Last accessed June 12, 2020.

and liberal economics, and the advent of freedom, anti-dictatorship, and democratization in Central and Eastern Europe. Thirdly, references to totalitarianism (here, the correlation between National Socialism and communism as common opposites of current Europeanization) and its remembrance uphold ideas about liberal economics and development. Specifically, it is a notion of 'development' that provides a reconciliatory alternative to communism and resolves potential social dissensus that is central to this declaration. It is also the starting point of this chapter.[3]

In the pages that follow, I focus precisely on such narratives of development and modernization and their usages in contemporary European memory, politics and history. Specifically, I tie them with the prestige enjoyed in Central and Eastern Europe by a certain conservative type of liberalism of the 1990s that has endured until today. In doing so, I aim to nuance approaches where the application of socio-economic narratives to Central and Eastern Europe is neutrally attributed to the "transformation to market economy".[4] Instead, the chapter looks at how, through Cold War liberalism, narratives about the past helped solidify neoliberalism as an ideology that "takes privatization, market and austerity as a given, opposing both the 'collectivism' predominant and the absolute belief in laissez-faire to establish conditions favourable to competition and prevent monopoly" [5] nationally but also at European level. As Samuel Moyn has argued, Cold War liberals:

> Were at one with neoliberalism in castigating modernity as proto-totalitarian, treating the Enlightenment as a rationalist utopia that precipitated terror and the emancipatory state as a euphemism for terror's reign. [6]

[3] See Klaus Muller, "'Modernising' Eastern Europe: theoretical problems and political dilemmas*", European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologi*e, 33,(1) 1992, pp. 109 – 150. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/S000397560000638. On the legacy of modernization theory, see Robert Marsh, "Modernization Theory, Then and Now*", Comparative Sociolog*y, 10 (2014).
[4] For others discussing in the same direction, see Ther, *Europe Since 1989.*
[5] Annelien de Dijn, "Neoliberalism after 1989" in Braat, Corduwener, *1989 and the West*, 88.
[6] Moyn, *Liberalism*, 12.

For Cold War liberals, equality was important, but "liberty faced extinction if calls for economic fairness got the upper hand". [7] Just as for advocates of neoliberalism, for them the Enlightenment had been a rationalist utopia that created more violence.[8] As a cultural discourse about subjectivity, neoliberalism posits that one's capacity to adhere to the moral codes of economic competition entailed accepting "the unavoidability of human ignorance"[9]. This chapter continues some of the strands already previewed in the introduction, in that it follows how national iterations of memory morphed into ideas of a collective memory serving a specific understanding of Europeanism. I trace this developmental notion of 'progress' through its many readings, often portrayed as emancipatory despite its inherently conservative streak.

Cultural narratives of "modernization" have a long history in Central and Eastern Europe and a specific locus in the debate about Europe.[10] Romanian politics of the 19th century were fractured between a camp of "Europeanists" supporting the consolidation of statehood based on rationalism and a closer cultivation of the "West", and more conservative local ('Oriental') visions of democracy.[11] The first camp defined the liberal political factions of the interwar period, making them easily palatable to the far-right politics emerging in Romania.[12] In the 1990s, this particular myth of liberalism seeped into culturalist readings of social transformation and development and seemed to provide a historical backdrop for new reconsiderations of the polity after authoritarianism. Collective memory blended in with identitarian narratives that constructed the parameters of liberalism with Europe as their endpoint – opposed to the fearful prospect that anything regional, 'Slavic' or 'Binflexions about

[7] Ibid.,13.
[8] This is an idea that is visible in the North American discourse concerning Eastern Europe in the 1990s. See Moyn, *Liberalism Against Itself*, 79.
[9] Ibid., 89.
[10] See Muller, "Modernising' Eastern Europe", Roland Clark, "The Romanian Right: Images of Crisis, the Press, and the Rise of Fascism", in Marco Bresciani ed., *Conservatives and Right Radicals in Interwar Europe* (London: Routledge, 2021), 196-197.
[11] Paul Blokker, "Modernity in Romania, 19th century Liberalism and its Discontents", EUI Working paper, 2/2003. Available at: https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/id/1755/sps2003-02.pdf/.
[12] Sandra Halperin, "The far-right in modern world history", *Globalizations*, 20, (5) 2023, 731-751, https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2021.1984734.

nationalism and Europeanism, subsisted in the state socialist years in Romanians about nationalism and Europeanism, subsisted in the state socialist years in Romania, through Eurocommunism, which entailed a constant negotiation with the internationalist dimension of communism coming from Western Europe.[13] After the regime change in the 1990s, the narratives of development visibly embraced Cold War liberalism, when "the end of history seemed retroactively to vindicate its approach to prioritizing freedom is a threatening world"[14] next to a sense of insecurity about the process of adjustment to a shifting global sphere. With Europeanization as the endpoint of this myth of liberal identity, Romanian collective memory narratives were one pathway by which cultural readings of development made it later into the EU politics of identity and memory, as outlined in texts such as the 2019 Declaration.

Notions of development and underdevelopment, first emerging in Marxist-inspired debates about the Third World's locus in the global (Western) economy, were also co-opted by the neoliberal intellectual circles of the Mont Pelerin Society operating in Europe in the 1970s as a project of selfhoning and individuality, but wary of processes of democracy, rather attributed to the radicalism of the left.[15] By "granting the market (and, by extension, its most powerful actors) superior powers of cognition and coordination", individuals could reach their full potential.[16] Although the ties with socialism were evident in the last decades of the Cold War in discourses about planning and social hierarchies, neoliberalism[17] especially enticed thinkers and politicians alike after the fall of state socialism when discussing cultural hierarchies about the deservedness of ascending to the global order and economy.[18]

[13] Maud Bracke, *Which Socialism, Whose Détente* (Budapest: Central European University Press), 323-359, Cezar Stanciu "Nicolae Ceaușescu and the origins of Eurocommunism", *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 48, 1 (2015), 83–95. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2015.01.006.
[14] Moyn, *Liberalism*, 9.
[15] Slobodian, *Globalists,* 125-130.
[16] Dieter Plehwe and Quinn Slobodian eds., *The Nine Lives of Neoliberalism* (London: Verso Books, 2020), 12
[17] For a broader argumentation on the crossings between the emergence of neoliberalism and memory regimes, see Cristian Cercel, "Whither Politics, Whither Memory?". *Modern Languages Open*, 0(1) 2020. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3828/mlo.v0i0.334.
[18] Jennifer Lawn, Chris Prentice, "Neoliberalism Culture/Cultures of Neoliberalism", *Sites* 12, (1), 2014. DOI: https://doi.org/10.11157/sites-vol12iss1id312.

Emboldened by the defensive streak of liberalism of the 1990s, which coupled self- realization with an antitotalitarian state project, this ideology dominated notions of change in the early days of the transformation in Central and Eastern Europe and galvanized public debates in Romania, although it "offers a historical case when neoliberalism is effectively rejected as a set of theories as well as a policy program.[19] Yet, although it dismisses policy mechanism, its radical distrust of democracy processes, made neoliberalism into a generous chest of identity narratives.

There has been renewed attention on the locus of neoliberalism in Central and Eastern Europe, specifically in its symbiotic relationship with the contestations of liberal democracy more recently.[20] Indeed, the same mainstream right-wing political circles that had supported neoliberal reforms, came to contest those in their populist turn[21], emboldened by what historian Adam Tooze calls the "forgotten" 2008 financial crisis in Eastern Europe[22] Viktor Orbán, otherwise a representative political figure of the "long 1990s" triumph of democracy in Hungary, has indeed argued for national sovereignty against the imposition or even "colonialism" of the EU[23], insisting that "foreign multinationals" are eating away at the structure of the state. This, despite Fidesz's use of an aggressive neoliberal politics in the country.[24] Equally, the conservative nationalist Polish PiS (Law and Justice Party) has criticized the tars of (neo)liberalism on the fabric of the nation, while simultaneously taking advantage of the relative economic comfort based on enduring neoliberal politics, legitimized also by former

[19] Ban, *Neoliberalism*, 29.
[20] Marlene Laruelle, "To understand today's social and moral transformation, study illiberalism", *The Loop*. Available online at: https://theloop.ecpr.eu/to-understand-todays-social-and-moral-transformation-study-illiberalism/.
[21] Michael Cox, "The Rise of Populism and the Crisis of Globalisation: Brexit, Trump and Beyond", *Irish Studies in International Affairs,* 28 (2017), 9–17. https://doi.org/10.3318/isia.2017.28.12; Müller, *What Is Populism?*, 6–20.
[22] Adam Tooze, *Crashed*, London: Allen Lane, 18.
[23] András Szilágy and Anna Bozóki, "Playing It Again in Post-Communism: The Revolutionary Rhetoric of Viktor Orbán in Hungary", *Advances in the History of Rhetoric,* 1, 1 (2015), 153–66. https://library.fes.de/libalt/journals/swetsfulltext/15222756.pdf
[24] Nikola Petrović, "Divided national memories and EU crises: how Eurosceptic parties mobilize historical narratives", *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, 32, 3 (2019), 363-384. DOI: 10.1080/13511610.2018.1523710.

dissidents, to strengthen its position.[25] These political groups have juggled such contradictions by reminding the public that the consensus of the 1990s was, in fact, a time of economic hardship, while often using memorial constructs to propose an alternative. The triumphant track to liberal democracy between 1991 and 1995, in reality, featured acute economic austerity and precarity aggravated by lofty economic and social "reformism". In this way, "illiberals" have successfully stoked real and unaddressed grievances about the 1990s and induced a sense of persecution and victimhood in emphasizing how the global "development" of the 1990s did not benefit all in the same way. In the following paragraphs, I trace the antecedents of these discourses, and articulate them in direct relationship with Europeanization.

Memory politics defined by the defensive perspective over liberalism supported iterations of neoliberalism in European memory narratives. It is evident in the way the text of the Declaration returns to a narrative about "backwardness" attached to the past.[26] The EU declaration 'scripts' this dynamic by doubling down on a notion of totalitarianism dear to political debates in the 1990s in the region, but which was problematic since the 2000s, due to narratives of persecution weaponized by various conservative actors. The link is a long-standing one: already for Friedrich Hayek writing in 1944, and for other neoliberal thinkers, freedom from any centralized political entity was about communism and National Socialism, and it was this freedom that was the key to the perfectibility of humankind.[27] It was on those bases that through memory regimes extolling the superiority of the West as protector of rights, anticommunism and liberalism became the only option for individual flourishing; it is through

[25] David Ost, "Authoritarian Drive in Poland", in Jo Harper, ed. *Poland's Memory Wars: Essays on Illiberalism* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2018), 55–65. Stuart Shields, "Neoliberalism Redux: Poland's Recombinant Populism and its Alternatives." *Critical Sociology*, 41(4-5), 659-678. https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920513501349.

[26] I use the term in the same vein as Maria Todorova and others working on the Eastern European space, as a lack of "Western" modernity, that has defined the region in conceptual and empirical analyses. See Maria Todorova, "The Trap of Backwardness: Modernity, Temporality, and the Study of Eastern European Nationalism", *Slavic Review*, 64 (1), 2005, 140-164.

[27] Neoliberals were, contrary to assumptions, very interested in the planning dimension of socialist societies, especially Austro-Marxism. See Martin Beddeleem, "Recoding Liberalism: Philosophy and Sociology of Science against Planning", in Plehwe and Slobodian eds., *Nine Lives of Neoliberalism*, 21- 46.

such memory regimes that economic development became inscribed as a marker of identity[28] (it is worthwhile mentioning here that neoliberal thinkers were key to the shaping of the European project since its early days, and this was only strengthened by the Central European variant after the 1990s).[29]

The current chapter takes a history of memory approach and shows how politics and narratives of defensive liberalism prevalent in Central Europe, on the one hand, and narratives of Europeanism, on the other, merged in understandings of collective memory produced by various European institutions, specifically as the memorial languages became attached to ideals of liberal democracy in all countries of the region, including Romania. The chapter zooms in on a portion of that process. By looking at 1990s Romanian debates, it establishes how cultural and social narratives of "development", "backwardness", and "underdevelopment" grew together with an "anti-totalitarian" memory and neoliberal discourses, and later carried onto the transnational European scene. As the tandem of a vulnerability of democracy and the strengthening of the state shaped these ideas of "development", memorial debates were restricted because this very same tandem was the main terrain in which narratives about European memory of "totalitarianism" expanded. The analysis presented here in some ways continues where the introduction left off, namely by attempting to resolve the question of a 'fatigue' with collective memory and Europeanization, and the explicit dissatisfaction with this becoming an ineffective narrative of liberalism by looking at the history of memory of the long 1990s in Romania.

[28] Jan-Werner Müller, "The Contours of Cold War Liberalism (Berlin's in Particular)", in Jan-Werner Müller, eds., *Isaiah Berlin's Cold War Liberalism* (London: Palgrave Pivot, 2019). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-2793-3_3.

[29] See Roberto Ventresca, "Neoliberal Thinkers and European Integration in the 1980s and the Early 1990s", *Contemporary European History*, 3, 6 (2021), 31-47. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777321000199; Cas Mudde, "Europe's Populist Surge: A Long Time in the Making", *Foreign Affairs*, 95, 6 (2016), 25-30.

The task at hand in this chapter is thus twofold: observing the development of political views in the 1990s in conjunction with both conservative and progressive Europeanism in Romanian and Central Eastern European debates, on the one hand, while also tracking their confluence with dynamics of "European" collective memory, on the other. By looking at the early presence of development in national and regional debates on anticommunism, and the latter's subsequent European trajectory, I show how European 'anti-totalitarianism' helped absorb almost seamlessly the more shadowy neoliberal constructs of the vulnerability and the fleeting character of democracy and the strength of the state, providing a suitable vehicle for later contestations of liberal democracy. It brings memory into this fold and argues that by tracking the cultural narratives of the economic philosophy of neoliberalism emerging in the early 1990s in Central and Eastern Europe, one can also understand the type of silencing that dominated the memory landscape of the 1990s, which set the tone for much of the subsequent debates on political violence. The current chapter starts from this tension between a transnational European memory angle where this type of development is posited (yet again) as a positive alternative, and a national memorial landscape of a profoundly fraught political space.[30]

An engagement with multiple scales in this chapter is essential to understanding how memory politics plays out in liberal democracy. First, the dominance of global neoliberal economics was key to shaping Romanian debates in relation to the early 1990s. Secondly, we can note the influence of the European dimension, which continued to define identity debates in Central and Eastern Europe, and consequently in Romania, together with the global consensus. Finally, there is the national scale, which was intensely reactive to the previous two but also stood out as unique in the region.

[30] Aliaksei Kazharski, "The End of 'Central Europe'? The Rise of the Radical Right and the Contestation of Identities in Slovakia and the Visegrad Four", *Geopolitics*, 23, 4 (2018), 754–80. https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2017.1389720.

2. The "Return to Europe" and the Heritage of Underdevelopment

In the early 1990, Pavel Câmpeanu, a Romanian sociologist preoccupied with the social circumstances of the end of the Cold War, asked a question that was on many other minds at the time: what needs to be done so that the political change accelerates, how do we move on further faster from the inevitable social crisis of the aftermath?[31] The concern with being unable to relinquish "communism", both economically (and culturally), fast enough pervaded all public debates in Romania. Câmpeanu was a respected Marxist sociologist published internationally, who largely adhered to the "end of history" perspective in that he saw no alternative to the teleological terms of the political change.[32] The end was in sight, and advancement could be achieved primarily through economic and political awakening.[33] For instance, the column entitled 'Marketplace of Ideas' was a staple of the *România Liberă* newspaper and ran daily for several years after 1989 for anyone to pose questions and ponder over essential questions.[34] For Câmpeanu, as for other journalists and academics, fast modernization was vital to 'correct' a broken path imposed after 1945, following the logic of modernization theory. Arguably, political and economic realities, and more generally a form of "oppressed" identity, made anything radical, in terms of social change, welcome, as Mihai Chioveanu argues. [35]

But Câmpeanu also represents a particularly local Romanian perspective: a plan of action was needed to address the political and social inadequacy of national affairs in the new capitalist order. Stepping into liberalism meant emancipation, a "way out" from immaturity. If

[31] Pavel Câmpeanu quoted in, „Criza la vreme de tranziție", *Tribuna*, March 23rd, 1994.
[32] Pavel Câmpeanu, *Exit: Toward Post-Stalinism* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1990), 12-16.
[33] Mark, Iacob, Rupprecht and Spaskovska, *1989: A Global History of Eastern Europe,* 87-95.
[34] "Piața de Idei" column, *România Liberă*, editions January, February, Bucharest, 1990, 1-2. BCUB, BU 1385, vol. 90-01.
[35] Chioveanu works within the "modernization" frame, and in that he identified radicalism in politics. See Mihai Chioveanu, "The "strike" of periphery: the twisted road from backwardness to political radicalism in Eastern Europe", *Studia Politica: Romanian Political Science Review,* 11(3) 2013, 447-458. https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-446504.

curbing the length of "transition" demanded radical action, so be it. Ideas about sending ordinary citizens abroad and calling foreigners to the region, in a type of social engineering, were frequent in the Romanian and Hungarian and Polish press at the time.[36] It seemed to be a project meant to overhaul society at large. Darwinian theorist and philosopher Pierre de Chardin was widely circulated in the press at the time and treasured for his "vitalist" view of democracy. There was a biological and "organic" way of human organization for those able, democracy, argued Chardin.[37] Certain groups were depicted as unprepared or incapable of practising democracy; chiefly among those were post-socialist societies that were behind and unprepared for the democratic spirit.[38] A general "lagging behind" of society was the constant reference in relation to the region in his texts. Indeed, what we read in texts like Câmpeanu's is a hope for radical change, kept alive by a narrative of underdevelopment that pervaded intellectual debates, party politics and general social debate in the area.

At the same time, there was not that much trust in democracy among Romanian commentators, which was rather seen as synonymous with social tension and potential conflict.[39] Instead, economics seemed to garner more social trust in an intellectual space where freedom was the main bind, and notions of market competition and planning evoked choice in reaching personal potential. For instance, the transformation came with its own epistemologies[40], sensibilities and new dimensions to cultivate for the individual: liberal values, a type of "emancipated" mindset, as argues a journalist in 1990.[41] There were the "good" and the "bad", "winners" and "losers" in this shift towards the "new sense of entrepreneurial

[36] Ban, *Neoliberalism*, 23.
[37] The mystically tinged articles of Chardin were often reproduced and translated in the Romanian press at the time, *România Liberă*, January 24, 1990. BCUB, BU 1385, vol. 90-01.
[38] Jeffrey Goldfarb, "Post-Totalitarian Politics: Ideology Ends Again", *Social Research,* 4, 1(1990), 533–56. https://www.jstor.org/stable/40970600.
[39] Timotei Jurjică, "Sfârșitul Entuziasmului", *Timpul*, Bucharest, 21 September, 1991.
[40] Sharad Chari and Katherine Verdery, "Thinking between the posts: Postcolonialism, postsocialism, and ethnography after the Cold War", *Comparative Studies in Society and History,* 51, 1(2009), 6-34. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27563729
[41] Nicolae Macovei, "O fundatură: socialismul liberal", *Cotidianul*, Bucharest, 17 January, 1996.

management of the self", and those personas grounded a social and cultural transformative modernization.[42] For instance, the "transition" demands of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in the 1990s in Eastern Europe meant a systemic reconstruction, having to do with cultural notions of identity just as much as economics, as a Romanian journalist argued in 1991.[43] A new identity crystallized in Central Eastern Europe, where the "entrepreneurial" self and market economy were about the flexibility and willingness of the political subject to adapt to liberal democracy.

Consequently, visions drawing on Friedrich Hayek's 1944 *Road to Serfdom* view on economics and social space organized in such a way as to offer the parameters of freedom were highly relevant.[44] They linked up with the central concern of the time in Central and Eastern Europe: the shadow of "totalitarianism" and the limits and potential of the state.[45] What neoliberalism presented was a vision of capitalism which did not need democracy, which, as Quinn Slobodian argues, "focused on designing institutions to inoculate capitalism against the threat of democracy".[46] It was the Mont Pèlerin Society's views, explicitly anticommunist and historically shaped by the Austro-Hungarian ordoliberal tradition, that became relevant for the Central European context.[47] As Cornel Ban argues in the case of Romania, it was a national neoliberalism at work, that has "slightly modified old goals of neoliberal orthodoxy embedded into a protective cocoon of orthodox and unorthodox economic policy instruments

[42] Plehwe, Slobodian, *The Nine Lives of Neoliberalism*, 14.
[43] Costel Ionescu, "Viața fiecăruia să curgă firesc", *Cotidianul*, Bucharest, April 8, 1995. BCUB.
[44] Friedrich A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (London, New York: Routledge, 1944).
[45] Lawn, Prentice. "Neoliberal Cultures, The Cultures of Neoliberalism*"*.
[46] Quinn Slobodian, *Globalists: The End of the Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), 2.
[47] Emerging in the 1930s and 1940s, neoliberalism's most influential ideologues were associated with the University of Chicago and the (anticommunist) European think tank the Mont Pelerin Society. The American group held different opinions than the Geneva-based MPS. For the importance of the Austrian school and the MPS in Europe, see Slobodian, *Globalists*, especially ch. 3. David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 5–31; Brown, *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism,* 65.

and institutions".[48] He makes an important point in that value narratives also influenced the imaginary space of this ideology: these also included historical legacies of trauma.

The interesting insight that these conditions offer concerns the type of change that the "progressives" in the region were hoping for, which, if looking at the intellectual debates at the time, feared the inevitable radicalism of the change. In fact, political change was approached with great caution, primarily because of the potential of politics to bring too much, too fast, to an ailing region. Indeed, a weariness in regard to political change and a type of cautiousness when it came to the gains of this process pervaded politics, which revolved around the notion of the frailty and limits of the individual. One of the core dimensions of neoliberal thought is that these limitations were also in line with the type of liberalism circulated in Romania, which challenged the Enlightenment's impetus. This is evident in the debates encouraged by the Romanian *22* magazine, published by *Grupul de Dialog Social*, an NGO that gathered many of the young liberals at the time (or at least anticommunist regime voices), and was a platform for all these societal reflections. Here one could read dissidents, such as Poland's Adam Michnik, calling for an "anti-utopian revolution" that would just "avoid the Gulag".[49] Normality was also the focus of Czechoslovakia's Václav Havel when he argued the political change "was an opportunity to do away with its abnormality" and he too was often present in the pages of this magazine.[50] "Normality" was not only about a type of desire of the West, it also said something about the imaginary of the political field, which was not really defined as a community alliance, but an individual process of improvement.[51]

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[48] Cornel Ban, Gabor Scheiring and Mihai Vasile, "The political economy of national-neoliberalism", *European Politics and Society*, 24, (1) 2023, 96-114, https://doi.org/10.1080/23745118.2021.1956241.

[49] Quoted in Roger Cohen, "The Accommodations of Adam Michnik", *New York Times Magazine*, 7 November 1999. https://www.nytimes.com/1999/11/07/magazine/the-accommodations-of-adam-michnik.html

[50] Quoted in Ivan Krastev, "Explaining Eastern Europe: Imitation and Its Discontents," *Journal of Democracy*, 2018. https://doi.org/https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/explaining-eastern-europe-imitation-and-its-discontents-2/. Last accessed March 1, 2019.

[51] Ivan Krastev and Stephen Holmes, "Explaining Eastern Europe: Imitation and Its Discontents", *Journal of Democracy,* 29, 3 (2018), 117-28. https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/explaining-eastern-europe-imitation-and-its-discontents-2. The notion of "normality", however, has a long history and complex narratives in the area, see Licia Cianetti, James Dawson and Seán Hanley, "Rethinking 'democratic backsliding' in Central and

Such unassuming ambitions did not impress the European intellectual circles at the time, and the rose-tinted or self-reflexive outlook of the former dissidents contrasted with the scepticism in the 'progressive' nature of these events by the European intellectual community, most famously François Furet and Jürgen Habermas.[52] Yet, Romanian actors at the time did not seem to be bothered by the "catch-up" dimension that Habermas lamented.[53] Instead, they cherished principles of "civil disobedience" and "civilized negotiations" as key revolutionary tools, and human rights, antipolitics and non-politics – a refrain from any deliberative process, specifically involving political parties - as shapers of public debate in the region because these stood apart from radical dictatorship. [54]

So how did commentators reconcile the desire to move faster, to change radically and the weariness of accepting the implications? In Romania, most of these negotiations returned to the transformative political potential of the 1989-1990 events, which were often reduced to "reform". For instance, in an article in 1993, Angela Rogojanu, a journalist, argued that most of the discussions on reform boiled down to "minimal state versus a present state, from economics to social life", which conditioned the extent to which any political power could be contested.[55] The interest in the "state" was conditioned by the narrative of transition, not in the affirmative, but in the negative, as a possible and imminent "failure" of political order.[56] The political liberal mainstream was consumed by the idea that the fate of the Easterners was subsumed in a 'Transition Era', "truly a miracle of epic historical proportion" where capitalism

Eastern Europe – looking beyond Hungary and Poland", *East European Politics* 34, 3(2018), 243-256. https://doi.org/10.1080/21599165.2018.1491401.

[52] Furet quoted in Ralf Dahrendorf, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 2005), 27. But also more recent interventions show the same scepticism at the time, Wlodzimierz Aniol, "On Three Modernisation Narratives in Poland after 1989", *International Journal of Social Economics*, 42, (9) (2015), 777-790. https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/IJSE-03-2015-0075/full/html.

[53] Jurgen Habermas, "What does Socialism Mean Today? The Rectifying Revolution and the Need for New Thinking on the Left", *New Left Review,* 183 (9), 1990, 5-7.

[54] Florin Mirgheșiu, "De la antipolitică la politica de stat", *Graiul Sălajului,* September 2 1998. See also Müller, *Contesting Democracy*, 202-205.

[55] Angela Rogojanu, 'Statul minimal și libertatea maximală", *Alternativa (Cotidianul*), February 3, 1995.

[56]Peter Hitchcock, "The Failed State and the State of Failure", *Mediations* 23, 2 (2008), 74. http://www.doaj.org/doaj?func=fulltext&aId=395161%5Cnhttp://www.mediationsjournal.org/files/Mediations23_2_03.pdf. Last accessed March 17, 2017.

"has always been associated with progress".[57] Ksenia Robbe describes the transition as a time "imbued with endless hopes for freedom and societal transformation, far beyond the claims of a global triumph of capitalism".[58] A concept "oriented towards the wished-for democratic future, the more optimistic, liberal-oriented 1990s; the time of market and democracy building and the imagined 'return to Europe'", as Michal Kopeček and Piotr Wciślik have characterized the transition.[59] It was the one plan that responded to Jürgen Habermas's contention there was no future thinking in the area about the expectations of 1989.[60] Economic transformation and "development" seemed to concentrate all possible types of transformations, including that of the individual and the citizen whose success was subsumed to economic success.

This identity narrative associated with 'reform' was such an ubiquitous discourse that it prompted anthropologists like Katherine Verdery and Daphne Berdahl to argue that 'transition' turned into an intellectual concept with dangerous teleologic and evolutionary undertones.[61] Verdery contends:

> This scepticism comes from being not at all sure about what those central concepts—private property, democracy, markets, citizenship, and civil society—actually mean. They are symbols in the constitution of our own "Western" identity.[62]

The notion of 'transition' in fact only accentuated the cultural disconnect between the former East and West, and reinforced narratives of underdevelopment. Berdahl and others hinted at it becoming an ambiguous terrain where the cultural tones superseded political or economic implications.[63] This focus on transition reproduced normative principles concerning

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[57] Edward Tiryakian, "The New Worlds and Sociology: An Overview", *International Sociology*, 9 (1994). https://doi.org/10.1177/026858094009002001, 23-31.
[58] Ksenia Robbe,"'Anything Is Possible': Rethinking the Politics of Transition through a Poetics of Failure in the Works of William Kentridge and Dmitry Gutov", *Third Text,* 30, 5–6 (2016), 403–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/09528822.2017.1355164.
[59] Kopeček and Wciślik, *Thinking Through Transition,* 1.
[60] Habermas, "What does Socialism Mean Today? 5-7.
[61] See Daphne Berdahl, *On the Social Life of Postsocialism: Memory, Consumption, Germany* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 95–96; Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 15–16.
[62] Ibid.,16.
[63] Berdahl, *On the Social Life*, 37-40.

"modernity" and implicitly modernization, where it seemed people who lived in a space under transformation were not merely at the bottom but also at the beginning.

So central to political discourse was the feeling that the countries needed "to catch up" that the 'interruption' of dictatorship made for a shameful history because it did not meet the demands of liberal democracy and instead perpetuated an underdevelopment attached to the (communist) past. The underlying idea was that the "past" would be corrected by this new ethos of overlapping freedom and economic development creating a sense of the morals (of the markets) in the region. Notions about liberal democracy often relied on emphatic ideas of nation to describe change, reform and making up for lagging behind the "West".[64] The cultural perspective, where transition was bound together with the merits of democracy, wealth, and individuality, might also explain the enduring credibility that this concept still has in Romanian debates. A month after the Romanian revolution, Silviu Brucan, a political scientist active in the former regime, assessed the outcome of the December 1989 events in an interview with French magazine *Le Figaro*, arguing that the country will need twenty years "to learn democracy" and to make the transition possible. "Eastern Europe" should acknowledge that transition is the one path to self-understanding as a new adaptation of Western modernity. Brucan seemed equally credible in September 2014, when the Romanian *Adevărul* newspaper ran an extensive piece entitled: "Why Romania is not different", referencing Silviu Brucan".[65] Although some lamented the broader circumstances that allowed the former chief editor of the communist *Scânteia* (The Spark), the main propaganda news outlet, to be such a credible voice in general, journalist Radu Mitrean commented on the collective idealism of the 1990s politics reflected in the transition.[66]

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[64] Ioan Cișmaș, "România și Occidentul", *Cuvântul*, August 1999.
[65] Redactia, "De ce nu e România altfel. Ce a fost greșit în celebra previziune a lui Silviu Brucan făcută pentru 'Le Figaro' în 1990 ", *Adevărul*, April 3, 2014, https://Adevărul.ro/news/societate/de-nu-e-romania-altfel-fost-gresit-celebra-previziune-silviu-brucan-facuta-le-figaro-1990-1_533d3e140d133766a8772c57/index.html. Last accessed April 17, 2020.
[66] Ibid.

"Democracy", thus, was defined along straightforward lines. In March 1990, the liberal magazine *22* in Bucharest translated one of American sociologist Jeffrey Goldfarb's articles, as a sort of call to arms. Goldfarb ends his article by saying:

> The political projects of the Enlightenment preceded Marxism and socialism and remain vibrant after a new end of ideologies. Now that the Cold War is over, a more sustained struggle for democracy should start.[67]

He argued that ideas of democracy, rights, and rationality should be salvaged and separated from the Marxist experience. Such opinions succeeded in salvaging not only the Enlightenment project, but the credibility of Cold War liberalism. The revolutionary ideas of the Left were particularly discredited in those years by the new, liberal-minded citizens, who could equate such ideas only to oppression and associated change. Historian Robert Brier has argued that it was frequently dissidents who easily lent their critical voice to communitarian and national concerns.[68] For instance, the dissident Hungarian writer György Konrad employed his experience of resistance to propose a political practice where governments that are unwilling to speak to their citizens are obliged to respond to activism: for him, a type of "antipolitics". [69]

Such perspectives contributed to a generalized call for a devaluation of politics. The "cultural" perspective tended to conflate politics with other identity concerns. A vision of "antipolitics" defined a version of the future simply as reconciliation via a notion of innocence and purity of the individual who refuses to participate in the negotiations of politics.[70] Those involved in the debate of the 1990s were indeed trying to understand how the political question could be avoided altogether, in order to encourage a new political alternative in Romania. It fell under what political theorist Wendy Brown describes as the "culturalization of politics" proper to neoliberalism, which applies well to the Romanian context:

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[67] Goldfarb,"Post-Totalitarian Politics", 25.
[68] Brier, "Introduction.", 17.
[69] György Konrad, *Antipolitics* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1984), 227; see also David Ost, *Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990).
[70] Miriam Ticktin, "A World without Innocence", *Journal of the American Ethnological Society* 44, 4 (2017), 577-590. https://doi.org/DOI: 10.1111/amet.12558.

> The culturalization of politics analytically vanquishes political economy, states, history, and international and transnational relations. It eliminates colonialism, capital, caste or class stratification, and external political domination from accounts of political conflict or instability. In their stead, "culture" is summoned to explain the motives and aspirations leading to certain conflicts.[71]

Brown argues elsewhere that this type of politics of neoliberalism brings "inequality, subordination, marginalization and social conflict".[72] Her perspective reveals the trouble with the unfettered rise of (neo)liberalism, which replaced the justice project, central to liberalism, with a therapeutic understanding of politics, that focuses on appeasing collective demands or past histories. Politics is less about societal governance and more about a reaction to contexts of the present or to the past. Depoliticization replaced the political phenomena with an "ontological naturalness or essentialism" and it is these personal vocabularies that have become essential in our understanding of politics.[73] Neoliberal notions of a frail social fabric and the idea that personal limits can be overcome only by honing the self-resonated with the narrative of freedom of the 1990 Cold War liberalism. The boom of neoliberal economics in the 1970s was facilitated by the politics of the Cold War where anti-authoritarian discourses (primarily anticommunist) served the cause of development. [74]

This culturalization of politics was primarily evident in Romania with the debate about "Europe", that took over much of the necessary reconsiderations about the political role of the individual in the aftermath of dictatorship. The notions "Europeanism" and "Europe" had a crucial role in defining a civilizational standard for Romania. For instance, *The Civic Proclamation of Timişoara* (Proclamaţia de la Timişoara), formulated by protesters during the events of 1989, stated that "although we argue for a 're-Europeanization of Romania' we do not want to copy Western capitalist systems":

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[71] Brown, *Regulating Aversion*, 20.
[72] Ibid., 15-16.
[73] Ibid., 15.
[74] David Neilson, "Bringing in the 'Neoliberal Model of Development'", *Capital & Class,* 44, 1 (2020). 85–108, https://doi.org/10.1177/0309816819852746.

> The Revolution was not only anti-Ceaușescu, but categorically "anticommunist. (…)" In consensus with the aspirations of millions of people across Europe, we asked for the abolishing of this totalitarian and bankrupt social system. The ideal of our Revolution has always been a return to the authentic values of European democracy and civilisation.[75]

Regionally in Central and Eastern Europe, and specifically in Romania, Europe solidified into a symbol of progress which also seemed to soften the radical political transformation of the 'transition'. 'Europe' added another "value" of moralism to liberalism. Writing about Romanian politics in the early 1990s, anthropologist Katherine Verdery argued Europeanization is "at one and the same time a statement of political intentions and a statement of national identity".[76] In the 1990s, it was about identity in the future tense, what society "can" become, and a specific interest in virtualizations of the future.

It is a framing that could be best described through the words of Dipesh Chakrabarty, who takes Europe as the site of "modernity" of many cultural geographies.[77] A standalone entity, 'Europe' provided a political formulation that could also rhyme with the sovereignty desired by all Central and Eastern European governments. No longer broken into a duality between East and West, it was an alternative suitable for the development project. Europe became the ideal for all parties involved to attain – though not to engage with critically. Historian Tony Judt emphasized it was not capitalism, but Europe signifying the "new" postcolonial.[78] But this "banal Europeanism" solidified a terrain for "development" to become a vehicle for a type of slim version of democracy but with a strong focus on the institutional, which is paramount for the neoliberal sphere. A narrative closely linked to Europe's "modernizing" dimension during

[75]"Revoluţia de la Timişoara a fost încă din primele ei ore, nu doar anticeaușista ci şi categoric anticomunista. În toate zilele Revoluţiei s-a scandat, de sute de ori: "Jos comunismul!". În consens cu aspiraţia sutelor de milioane de oameni din Estul Europei, am cerut şi noi abolirea imediată a acestui sistem social totalitar şi falimentar. Idealul Revoluţiei noastre a fost şi a rămas reîntoarcerea la valorile autentice ale democraţiei şi civilizaţie europene."Article 1, "Proclamaţia de La Timişoara", 1989. http://enciclopediaromaniei.ro/wiki/Proclamaţia_de_la_Timişoara#Textul_Proclama.C5.A3iei. Last accessed February 3, 2020.
[76] Verdery, *What is Socialism,* 105.
[77] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 7-10.
[78] Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 690.

"the long 1990s" was an abstracted form of cosmopolitanism interrupted by communism. For instance, Gabriel Andreescu, otherwise an incisive writer and analyst of the conservative and extremist undercurrent of Central and Eastern European politics, supports these constructs in his books *Locurile unde se construieşte Europa* (Places where Europe is Built) and *Naţionalişti, Antinaţionalişti* (Nationalists, Antinationalists), where he illustrates a belief of public intellectuals that Europe is a 'societal' mobilizer.[79] He sees it as the formative debate of the time, not in political terms of left and right, but simply as a possibility to advance liberal affordances in the country.[80]

Cultural narratives about development relied on and shaped historiography produced at the time.[81] The new debates and horizons offered by liberalism or Europeanization reframed the writing of history and made it blend seamlessly into public policy, personal history, and memory. Representations of the past, or collective memory at large, were defined by notions of transition and catching up from underdevelopment. Deeply embedded in the "transitional" type of discourses, historiography analysed deficiencies in more general terms of "historical differences" that "need to be re-claimed" and reconsidered. Rather, what grounded them was an avoidance of ideology altogether, whether leftist or centrist.[82] This trope endures today in historiography, as it often returns to the idea of "lagging behind', historicizing the notion of the "nation" in relation to Europe.[83] Still in 2015, historian Bogdan Murgescu discussed Romanian economic history in terms of a delay with regard to the West.[84] Political scientist Alexandru

[79] Gabriel Andreescu, *Naţionalişti, antinaţionalişti* (o polemică în publicistica românească) (Iaşi: Polirom, 1996).
[80] Gabriel Andreescu în dialog cu Adrian Severin, *Locuri în care se construieşte Europa* (Bucharest: Polirom 2000).
[81] Kristian Petrov, "'Transition' in Hindsight: 1990s Transitology as an Object of Intellectual History", in Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, Niklas Bernsand and Eleonora Narvselius eds., *Beyond Transition?* (Lund: Lund University Press 2014), 11.
[82] Trencsényi, Kopeček, Gabrijelčič, Falina and Baár**,** 45-47.
[83] It is a well-accepted perspective in scholarship, practised by contemporary historians who themselves tend to adopt this developmental outlook. See for instance the publication of historian Bogdan Murgescu, *România şi Europa: Acumularea Decalajelor Economice (1500-2010)* (Iaşi: Polirom Publishing House, 2010), especially the Introduction, 2-13.
[84] Ibid., 4-13.

Gussi similarly described the contradictions of the 1990s when he weighed in on the anticommunist discourse, as a mode of action and a tale about the past between modernization and cosmopolitanism.[85] Historian Cornel Ban has also recently discussed this cultural debate as a cultural history of economics in the 1990s where the determination to rethink the national political space and to shape it into something else was essential.[86]

It was a terrain shaped by a particularly selective image of the past. Advocates of pragmatic "scripting" of the past were many. For the circles around *22* magazine the very radicalness of doing away with recent political history was the only way towards liberal democracy. The genre emerging in the 1990s focused on the post-history of totalitarianism functioning not "as a field, but rather prescrib[ing] what needs to be done".[87] Debates saw a growing popularity of autobiographical, political and philosophical polemics that had to do with the geopolitics of the post-Cold War global order. This genre often mainstreamed conservative or reactionary narratives, and a distinct avoidance of the notion of class, socio-economic turmoil or inequality.[88] Take, for instance, Ioan Scurtu's *Revoluția Română din Decembrie 1989 în context internațional* (The Romanian 1989 Revolution in the International Context), a book published in 2009, which professed to be "the first unbiased history of the events and shed light on a painful and controversial topic.[89] The book is centred around the thesis that 1989 goes back to a project interrupted in 1948, and consequently is a "return" to Europe. Also, historians like Gheorghe Buzatu saw the issue of anti-Semitism as an afterthought of imperial borders,

[85] Alexandru Gussi, "Anticomunismul Necesar", *22*, Bucharest, June 2013, https://ziare.com/politica/stiri-politice/alexandru-gussi-in-revista-22-anticomunismul-necesar-1235264. Last accessed March 3, 2019.
[86] Cornel Ban, *Ruling Ideas: How Global Neoliberalism Goes Local* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 116–33. Although very different in scope, also relevant might be Maria Todorova's insightful analysis on the parallel (and its limits) between 'Orientalism' and 'Balkanism' and on the implications "of the Balkans' semi-colonial ideas". See Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997), 6.
[87] Igor Barsegian, "When Text Becomes Field: Fieldwork in Transitional Societies", in Hermine de Soto eds., *Fieldwork Dilemma, Anthropologists in Postsocialist States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2000), 19–29.
[88] Ban, "Beyond Anticommunism".
[89] Ioan Scurtu, professor of contemporary history in Bucharest, one of the most visible historians in public debates. See Ioan Scurtu, *Revoluția Română din Decembrie 1989 în context international* (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Revoluției Române din Decembrie 1989, 2009), 5-8.

specifically Austro-Hungarian.[90] He, too, exonerates a form of interwar, progressive Europeanism.

The modernizing times of 1920s and the 1930s Romania were considered prime examples of a prosperous time, driving the recovery of the interwar period in historiography.[91] The violent history of the opposition between right and left lacked in this idealist iteration of the capitalism of the interwar period, and there were few references to the authoritarian monarchy at the time.[92] A critique of collectivism during the interwar period, rooted in the idea of political transformations brought by this "golden age", came to have a crucial role in upholding neoliberalism in the early 1990s. These images were also very evident in the era's cultural production in Romania because many interpretations of history were made to be synonymous with identity. Siobhan Kattago argues that the imaginary line of 1989, in fact, imposed particularly glowing perspectives on liberalism and implicitly on its roots.[93]

Furthermore, while the Romanian "dissident" figure was somewhat absent in the early years, in contrast to Poland for instance, radical anticommunists took its place in Romanian debates.[94] A tightly knit group of "liberal intellectuals", sometimes returning from abroad, were not only memory entrepreneurs but also distinctly "culturalist" (and US-oriented). Individuals like Vladimir Tismăneanu, Viorel Ruse and Stelian Tănase were the young generation of historians. They referenced a "Soviet" time as a 'monolith' phase and identified with a type of late-Cold War conservative anticommunism. Pushing for a modernization idea, they were intriguingly referencing a lost history of liberalism (because of communism) while referring to the (neo)liberalism of the 1970s, the entrepreneurial drive and the new reality of economics as

[90] Gheorghe Buzatu, *Mareșalul Antonescu în fața istoriei* (Bucharest: Litera, 1993).
[91] Irina Livezeanu, "Romanian Cultural Wars: Intellectual Debates about the Recent Past", 2003.
[92] The complicity of the monarchy (Carol II) with far-right ideologies and the active support for Marshal Antonescu's ascent are particularly not visible in debates on the development of the far-right.
[93] Siobhan Kattago, *Memory and Representation in Contemporary Europe: The Persistence of the Past* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 109.
[94] Iacob, "The Criminalisation of Communism", 3.

necessarily progressive. For many, however, this progressive dimension seemed to be a double-edged sword, a necessity of sorts but also an imposition.

Indeed, the plurality of allegiances to 'anticommunism' as "banal Europeanism" and development unified vastly divergent interests and groups to the extent that the messages of the self-declared liberals or conservatives were often the same.[95] This discourse on modernization brought together divergent political identities and motivations, such as the far-right, the socialist left and the liberals.[96] As liberalism necessarily "required consensus" and therefore one unitary image of the past, the seeds of the Cold War definition still represented a credible perspective. Mirosław Dzielski, philosopher, and an active member of the Solidarity movement, called this a "constructive anticommunism"[97] that merged a past perspective of the Cold War with one directed against the regime's traces in the present. The Romanian opposition to the National Salvation Front relied on the relevance that prominent groups of former dissidents in Eastern Europe granted it[98]. Theirs was a "reconstructive" narrative, where nationalism, liberal democracy and Europe blended into a discourse of transitional reformism.

3. Consensus and the Trauma of Politics

Cultural readings of underdevelopment, that is the mobilization of notions of victimhood, primarily socio-economic, to virtualize progress and rupture with a time of regression in the immediate future, were essential in the 1990s. This distinct focus on identity influenced the prospects imagined for the new liberal democracy. Since the communist past

[95] Alexandru Gussi, *La Roumanie Face à Son Passé Communiste: Mémoires et Cultures Politiques* (Paris: Editions L'Harmattan, 2011), 5.
[96] Michal Kopeček, "From Narrating Dissidence to Post-Dissident Narratives of Democracy: Anti-totalitarianism, Politics of Memory and Culture Wars in East-Central Europe 1970s–2000s", in Pavel Barša, Zora Hesová, Ondřej Slačálek eds., *Central European Culture Wars: Beyond Postcommunism and Populism* (Prague: Humanitas, 2021), 44-46.
[97] For a broader discussion see Piotr Wciślik, "Totalitarianism and the limits of the Polish Dissidents Political Thought", in Wciślik and Kopeček*, Thinking Through Transition*, 140-160.
[98] Gussi, *La Roumanie Face à Son Passé Communiste,* 13-18.

was the main problematic spectre, evoking too much politics – agitation, mobilization, activism – this legacy was, first and foremost, seen as a "bad" trait of the revolutionary project of the Left.[99] As shown above, the consensus was that liberalism represented a cultural and social alternative, that radical identitarian change, although unsettling, was the only option that would bring about a new vision of Romanian political options.

Collective memory narratives were from the start invoked in this context by specifically offering a way of conducting public debate, that wished to avoid, or turn away from, controversy. Only certain histories, and even more selective politics of memory, were acceptable. Discourses around the recent past developed around a "thick line" meant to keep the past at a "usable" but safe distance. It is Polish political leader Tadeusz Mazowiecki that voiced this leitmotif for the region when he argued in the Polish Sejm (Parliament) in 1989 that "we will be responsible only for what we have done to help extract Poland from her current predicament, from now on"[100]. It was consequently acceptable for Ion Cristoiu, a prominent Romanian journalist, to argue for amnesty in the spirit of reconciliation since the momentum for trials has been lost. Similarly, debates avoided nationalist political expressions and more generally tried to refrain from a political reflection on the past.[101] Consequently, the "politics of forgetting" were desirable and constructive and guaranteed the "Europeanizing" future.[102]

It was the early Social Democrats and the Frontul Salvării Naţionale (National Salvation Front, NSF) party that practised this "forgetting" in their narrative about reconciliation through "silence" and "equilibrium". To them, political critique was synonymous with a loss of identity, sovereignty or even hegemony.[103] Political turmoil was a threat and only a normative consensus

[99] See here the discourses of the political parties in power at the time.
[100] Quoted in Magdalena Góra and Zdzisław Mach, "The Polish Elites' Struggle for Recognition of the Experience of Communism in the European Union" in Tea Sindbæk Andersen Barbara Törnquist-Plewa eds. *The Twentieth Century in European Memory Transcultural Mediation and Reception* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 56-83, 64.
[101] Ion Cristoiu, "Justitie de tranziție", *Evenimentul Zilei*, Bucharest: June 1995.
[102] The term appears rarely in literature on Romania. One notable exception is Gussi, *La Roumanie face à son passé* and Rusu, who refers to "Amnesis" see Rusu "Transitional Politics of Memory".
[103] Called the National Salvation Front until 1992 and then the Social Democrat Party; the main political organization, comprising many of the former members of the communist party. Examined in hindsight, they have

could prevent a crisis that could potentially destabilize a fragile state.[104] For instance, the populist discourses of the NSF referred to the "dangerous intermezzo" that opposition to the government represents. The concern was that too much political activity would weigh on a previously heavily ideologized public sphere. A lack of consensus was synonymous with an impending halt of "progress". The NSF proposed a type of "third way", a compromise between socialism and capitalism branded as an "original democracy" ("democrație originală"). Explained "as an alternative to what "Western democracies" had been since the 1970s (to be read as rife with debate) this model of statism for the Social Democrats was necessarily a compromise. In 1993, the NSF discussed the political options that were available and stated that:

> Social democracy has been the foundation of Europe after 1945, but it was waning in the late 1970s. We, therefore, cannot repeat the same mistakes - and it is of utmost importance we take care of this since there is no social control of the capital in our country.[105]

In fact, underdevelopment drove the NSF's concept of "original democracy" and their fiercely conservative, nationalist agenda that lay behind discourses of "consensus". While the liberals equated the transition with the fight against the "neo-communist" threat and waged presumably a struggle for an ideal of democracy, NSF's Iliescu argued in 1992:

> Stalinism cannot be considered a leftist type of thinking. Soviet Socialism was, in its essence, a state capitalism with a socialist cloak. The 1989 revolution thus was never an anti-socialist revolution. It did not belong to the right. Who was the engine? The communists. Party members were the most active in these events, and the working class.[106]

This restrictive narrative was further aggravated by the fact that much of the debate on the past at the time did not make room for the group of vocal former dissidents or that both liberals and conservatives shared anticommunist views grounded in the Cold War. Romanian

been the longest-running political group in power since the 1989 transformation. See Siani Davis, *The Romanian Revolution of December 1989*, 15-20.

[104] "Information note ahead of the February elections", 300-120-29, box 247/2, 13, Open Society Archives, henceforth OSA, Central European University, Budapest.

[105] Ibid, 18.

[106] "PDSR, Comunicat de Presă, March 17 1992", Records of Radio Free Europe, 300-80-10, Box 234, 14, OSA, Budapest.

debates retrieved stories and histories from elsewhere in the region, such as those of the Polish Solidarity movement and the apolitical notion of resistance to communism found in texts by emblematic dissidents like Adam Michnik and Václav Havel. In August 1990, the Romanian newspapers widely praised the "Polish phenomenon" when referring to Gdansk's political mobilization around 1980-1990.[107] Articles by Adam Michnik dominated much of the oppositional press with a somewhat elusive narrative of past solidarity, that showed little preoccupation with the contemporary concerns of the 1990s.[108]

Indeed, the anticommunism of 1956 and the Solidarity movement mobilized organizations like the Grupul pentru dialog social (The Group for Social Dialogue) and other new political platforms in the region, including Romania.[109] The strength of concepts such as 'antipolitics' showed that public opinion opposed politics altogether. [110] It conveyed resistance to politicization, infusing anything with a political value or even placing topics in the political arena. Antipolitics was, for instance, a concept also often invoked by the Institutul Totalitarismului (Institute for National Memory and Totalitarianism) in conferences and publications in the early 2000s.[111] The intention was to transcend political factions and moralize politics, that is, to imprint it with an identity and value dimension outside the confines of one discourse or another. This vision included a new European "reunification" ideal, which was now finally within the grasp of the East. "You cannot advance towards Europe without taking a firm distance from the Soviet period, and human rights abuse", one author argued. [112]

Here we can recognize a form of Jay Winter's "liturgical silencing" that steered away from the past by perpetuating a narrative where development had been interrupted by

[107] Dorin Teodorescu, "Sindicatele în România", *Radical*, Sibiu, January 12 1991.
[108] Adam Michnik, "După 2 ani" in *22*, Bucharest, June 1992. BCUB BU Z 871, vol. 4.
[109] The *22* magazine is an eloquent example along with *România Literară*, in the early 1990s.
[110] See György Konrád, *Antipolitics: An Essay,* San Diego: Harcourt, 1984. See also Muller, *Contesting Democracy*, 228-232.
[111] Conference organized in 2011.
[112] In Igor Caşu, "Nu poţi să avansezi spre Europenizare fără o voinţă fermă de distanţare de crimele şi încălcările flagrante ale dreptului omului din perioada dovietică", *Contrafort*, 1-2 (181-182), 2008. http://www.contrafort.md/old/2010/181-182/1779.html

communism.[113] Silencing occurred because of ambitions of belonging to the Europeanizing sphere, not against these, because the past needed to be recalibrated so that it fit the ideation of European character. Renaming streets, removing inscriptions of the past in the public space were symbols of renewal or deliberate attempts to counter "nostalgia" for the old regime. Much of the 1990s saw debates on whether a vaguely defined museum of communism was necessary, for instance, because it could have triggered unwanted reflections. Journalist Maria Tufan agreed that the Sighet Memorial of the Victims of Communism was enough because it depicted the regime's murderous and illegal beginnings.[114] Mircea Anania, an architect, asked whether the absurdity of the past regime should even be mentioned.[115] The preferred contours of silencing were those moving the focus away from political content and focusing on the moral dimension of victimhood. At the time, the public space was almost violently emptied of any material markers. Statues of communist leaders but also those of anti-fascists of the Second World War disappeared overnight. Importantly, the same reasoning is traceable in recent memory activism, such as Alexandru Groza's (memory activist) 2021 call to support such a project but centred exclusively on surveillance and daily intimidations and "horrors".[116]

Silencing as the centre of affirmations of liberalism began to change in the late 1990s, as the discourses about a victimhood triggered by communism began to emerge at the European level. It provided an alternative to the contested idea of "social peace" of the NSF. The main turning point was the debate that ensued around Stephane Courtois's *Le livre noir du communisme*, which brought forth, albeit controversially, the debate about the numbers of the victims of state socialism.[117] It was the first incursion into the controversy of the Holocaust-

[113] See Introduction. I refer to Jay Winter's concept of "liturgical silence", see Winter, "Thinking about Silence".
[114] For an overview of the debate, Maria Tufan, "Muzeul Comunismului, un eșec în trei Acte", *Press One*, 2019, https://pressone.ro/muzeul-comunismului-un-esec-in-trei-acte. Last accessed March 4, 2020.
[115] Mircea Anania, "Casa Poporului". *Flacăra*, June 6, 1993.
[116] Interview with Alexandru Groza, 2021, https://culturaladuba.ro/muzeul-ororilor-comunismului-va-fi-un-muzeu-al-vocilor-victimelor-comunismului-alexandru-groza-manager-interimar/.
[117] Stéphane Courtois, *Le Livre Noir Du Communisme : Crimes, Terreur, Répression*, second edition (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1998).

communism parallel, which later provided the grounds for the double genocide thesis and was quite popular at the time of its publishing in the region. It matched the ambitions of having the story of victimhood caused by communism heard in the region, despite the numerous debates which emerged around the numbers it proposed.[118] The volume itself gave legitimacy to a type of "engaged" historiography that should serve a liberal "transformation" in the countries in the region.

4. After 2000: Europeanization and the Politics of Trauma[119]

As argued so far, the 1990s narrative of reforms, modernization and fighting underdevelopment instated a very normative understanding of what democracy is: not a process, but a goal, a moral ideal. A defensive notion of memory emerged, where remembering needed to show the belief in democracy to be an active tool in an always future sense of democracy. Politically, this notion shaped various forms of exclusion, both economically and culturally, because democracy was no longer an (imperfect) process to be set in place, but an already tried and tested moral ideal that needed sacrifices and radical decisions to survive. Ethnonationalism, for instance, was often tolerated and even motivated by this need for security.[120] This envisaged that consensus worked with a pedagogy of memory, that needed to teach and fix some broad strokes of reference of the past. This iteration grounded Europeanism and Europeanization in the narratives about democracy and the state in the early 2000s.

The increasing "transnational" activism for this memory started roughly at the beginning of the 2000s, with a "transnational" network of "anticommunist" entrepreneurs from Central and Eastern Europe, many of them former dissident icons – László Tőkés (a Hungarian

[118] Torpey, "What Future for the Future?", 12.
[119] This subchapter is loosely based on Dana Dolghin, "Institution and Inclination in the Post-Socialist Space: Genocide as 'Memory Intervention'", in Dorota Kołodziejczyk, Mateusz Świetlicki eds., *Trauma as cultural palimpsests* (Wroclaw: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2017), 59-75.
[120] I refer at length to the case of Hungarian-Romanian tensions of the early 1990s in chapter 5.

priest symbolic for the Revolution in Timișoara in 1989 but controversially pro-Hungarian), Lech Wałęsa and Václav Havel. They took the message of the Europeanization of memory further to the political cause of European belonging. They often relied on their Cold War biographies of dissidence in insisting on the acceptance into the EU "canon" of the memory of the victims of communism as well as those of post-1989 "democracy" champions.[121] Suddenly, a burst of narratives about the credibility of European liberal values that can and should be upheld through memory was produced by Romanian campaigners.[122] To them, they were having only a partial acknowledgement of past suffering inflicted double violence on the survivors of that regime.[123]

A "politics of regret", a term that Jeffrey Olick uses to describe not a defensive mechanism against repetition, but rather a type of collective memory that performs responsibility and acknowledgement (and often leads to certain reifications), shaped European debates after 2008.[124] However, there was minimal trace of anything that could have passed as regret in Central and Eastern European considerations. Countries in the region were joining the EU in the early 2000s, so a form of memorial representation was now turning into a potential transnational political credential. Consequently, remembrance was a protean field of transnational representation and participation.[125] It supported a mobilization against the government, where memory was a catalyst for diverse grievances, on the one hand, but also conveyed a normalized "trauma" where the ghost of the past was keeping countries away from

[121] Laure Neumayer, "Advocating for the Cause of the 'Victims of Communism' in the European Political Space: Memory Entrepreneurs in Interstitial Fields", *Nationalities Papers,* 45, 6 (2017), 992–1012, https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2017.1364230.
[122] Bogdan Iacob, "The Criminalisation of Communism", 3.
[123] A point made by many, see Zombory, "The Anti-Communist moment", 21-54. https://www.cairn-int.info/journal-revue-d-etudes-comparatives-est-ouest-2020-2-page-21.htm; Ghodsee, "A Tale of 'Two Totalitarianisms'.
[124] See Jeffrey Olick, *Politics of Regret* (London: Routledge, 2007), 12-18.
[125] Maria Malksoo, "The Memory Politics of Becoming European: The East European Subalterns and the Collective Memory of Europe", *European Journal of International Relations*, 15 (04) 2009, 653–680. DOI: 10.1177/1354066109345049.

real development, which was also later instrumentalized by illiberals.[126]. Because of a deeply polarized debate, citizens and civic movements often invoked the EU against "silences" by governments regarding victims' accountability and right to memory. This "defensive" framing of Europeanization often referenced an arrested "development" because of this lack of accountability. On the European scene, memory debates were merged with cultural imaginaries of democracy, as many of the former dissidents, now memory entrepreneurs in Brussels, relied on Cold War liberal narratives of anticommunism to strengthen national liberal democracies in the region in the new European context.

One of the main consequences of this debate was the emergence of the monolithic concept of 'victims of totalitarianism' in the recognition of a "European identity" and as instrumental in the process of Europeanization in Eastern European discourses.[127] It was primarily defined by communism and its subsequent 'trauma" inflicted on liberal democracy, and referred to in conjunction with already existing EU memorial standards, such as the Second World War.[128] The concept of "totalitarianism" might have lost plausibility everywhere else, but it came to support ideas of democratic activism, of agency and responsibility nationally, albeit in an equally restrictive manner. It spoke to a memory that necessarily should have been defensive, capable of steering away from the harm inflicted on contemporary liberal democracy. In Romania, improbable concoctions came out of this memorial perspective, such as the 2005 book *Genocidul Comunist* (The Communist Genocide) by Gheorghe Boldur Lăţescu, who presents the entire political history of communism as a deliberate attack on the make-up of a nation.

[126] Peter Vermeersch, "Victimhood as victory: The role of memory politics in the process of de-Europeanization in East Central Europe", *Global Discourse: an Interdisciplinary Journal of Current Affairs*, 9, (1) 2019.
[127] Ghodsee, "Tale of Two Totalitarianisms".
[128] Jörg Echternkamp*, Experience and Memory: The Second World War in Europe* (London: Berghahn Books, 2013)

Yet, paradoxically, genocide was a successful narrative carrying many of the notions of liberal democracy and human rights in the 1990s, because its very recognition was a sign of a healthy revisitation of past atrocities.[129] Such a climate normalized the exacerbation of the old anticommunism-democracy binary. Indeed, conservative, if not revisionist, history readings backed many of the formulations of 'democracy' in Romania in those years. Articulated already earlier in the late 1990s in Romania, the recognition of being a victim of genocide reached an affirmative future-oriented memory based on 'overcoming communism', and in line with notions of transition and transformation, through Europeanization. Perspectives like those of Lățescu were not even that controversial in those years, and indeed voiced sentiments of persecution invoked more broadly. That language was present in transitional justice processes, for instance in 2003, when the so-called "trial of communism" (procesul comunismului) was beginning to be widely used, by academics, cultural actors and journalists[130], who even invoked a "communist holocaust".[131]

This case shows the early roots of the "double genocide" thesis, which today denominates a rather circumspect perspective of scholarship on the mobilization around victims of communism and its abuse[132] which instrumentalizes Raphael Lemkin's definition of genocide as based on a cultural aspect concerning the rights and expression of minorities.[133]. Indeed, it carries some of the meanings and formulations of Central and Eastern European nationalisms, sovereign logic and conservative stances.[134] The most visible criticism of the totalitarian

[129] See Dirk Moses, "Raphael Lemkin, Culture, and the Concept of Genocide", in Donald Bloxham, Dirk Moses, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies Oxford Handbooks* online, 2010.
[130] See Nicolae Drăgușin, "Procesul comunismului înseamnă cunoașterea istoriei recente*", Revista Memoria*, 55-56 (2-3), 2006.
[131] Gheorghe Boldur Lățescu, *The Communist Genocide in Romania* (New Brunswick: ABE Books, 2005), 4-19. The term was also frequently used in the press in the 1990s and later.
[132] Primarily in relation to denial of the Holocaust in Eastern Europe. See Radonic, "The Holocaust/Genocide Template".
[133] See Douglas Irvin-Erickson, *Raphael Lemkin and the Concept of Genocide* (Pittsburgh: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 152-196.
[134] The term "double-genocide" has been used in the last decade to signal the comparative mindset used in political discourses. See Liliana Radonic, "The Holocaust/Genocide Template", Kristen Ghodsee, "A Tale of Two Totalitarianisms".

perspective has been that the usage and visibility of communism often erase the main history of perpetratorship and Nazism.[135] But the Europeanization of memory has played a role in the perpetuation of this thesis and its dynamic and shows how the liberal Cold War origins of totalitarianism contributed to the excesses of remembrance politics. The Eastern European Cold War warriors' tone had a distinctly mobilizing tinge and helped frame the process of transnational remembrance as a reaction to national politics by emphasizing that their own governments had already neglected their demands. In European fora, these individuals approached the Europe-liberal democracy link as a "defensive" rhetoric.

In 2007, when these advocacy efforts finally started an EU debate about the need for recognition on equal footing of communist crimes and Nationalist Socialist crimes, they were driven by a search for "consensus" at the transnational level. In 2004, when Romano Prodi, the then-President of the European Commission, argued that East European countries joined the European political project as the outcome of "our common commitment to unify our continent"[136], he also signalled a move to define a consensus political identity, and activists in the region felt initially represented. One year later, Johannes Fried, the President of the Association of German Historians, assessed the lack of a consensus around history to be a menace to the European project when ¨national images of memory diverge¨.[137] This perspective drew from the transnational spirit imprinted by the German reconciliation, even though the disputes about memory were divisive.[138.] The attention towards victims was also cultivated by historians working on the area, most notably in the case of Timothy Snyder's attempts to retrieve

[135] Nikolai Koposov, "Memory Laws and Nationalist Lies", *Project Syndicate*, 2018, https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/poland-holocaust-law-nationalist-tool-by-nikolay-koposov-2018-03?barrier=accesspaylog. Last accessed March 13, 2018.
[136] Romano Prodi on 'Accession Day', Dublin Castle, 1 May 2004, Speech/04/221. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_04_221. Last accessed September 7, 2020.
[137] Johannes Fried, *Der Schleier Der Erinnerung* (Munich: C.H. Beck Verlag, 2004), 41.
[138] Laure Neumayer, "Integrating the Central European Past into a Common Narrative: The Mobilizations around the 'crimes of Communism' in the European Parliament", *Journal of Contemporary European Studies,* 23, 3 (2015), 344–63, https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2014.1001825; Neumayer, "Advocating for the Cause ".

both victims' categories (Stalinist and Nazi) and entangled histories of repression in Eastern Europe, particularly Ukraine and place these in an ideological continuum.[139]

Collective memory as a terrain of Europeanization should have alleviated the 'battle ground' of European recognition for parties in Eastern Europe, at least according to the adage that shared (and acknowledged) narratives of the past stabilize European politics and bring reconciliation.[140] Yet, many Eastern European intellectual and political circles were disgruntled with the performativity of this recognition and the little difference this new memory regime made in national politics of democracy and of Europeanness. The recognition of a right to memory in the European narrative did not provide a strong enough recognition to counter a sense of persecution nationally. This "consensus" was not enough because it was seen as glossing over the real dimensions of the communist crimes. In Central and Eastern Europe, some were arguing the ambition was coming from Germany and was driven by an attempt to normalize socialism into debates of contemporary politics.[141] Elsewhere, there was a growing concern about the historical narratives it was triggering. One German commentator argued that the prevailing historical view was a coarse and even dangerous distortion".[142] However, there was consensus that the story needed to be told, and to speak primarily to the success of Europe.

Indeed, the transnational perspective aiming for "consensus" was not regarded with satisfaction by many observers in Romania. Instead, it was interpreted as denying "the real dimension of the repression" as suggested by journalist Matei Martin.[143] He voiced one of the perspectives that put remembrance at the centre of a process to protect the future from a present still tainted by the past. Remembering the past was about preventing more insidious ways of

[139] Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands* (New York: The Dugan Books, 2010), 2–9.
[140] See Birgit Schwelling ed*., Reconciliation, Civil Society, and the Politics of Memory Transnational Initiatives in the 20th and 21st Centur*y (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2012).
[141] Malksoo, "The Memory Politics of Becoming European".
[142] David Katz, "Is Eastern European 'Double Genocide' Revisionism Reaching Museums?", *Dapim Studies on the Holocaust*, 30(3) 2016, 1-30.10.1080/23256249.2016.1242043
[143] Matei Martin, " Cum tratăm cele două orori?", *Dilema Veche*, 808, 2019, Bucharest.

infiltrating these histories into contemporary politics. What emerged, accordingly, was not a debate about memory, but about two competing articulations of anticommunism, one about modernization and development, the other via the totalitarian Cold War concept in which both communism and Nazism are the "enemies" of liberal democracy. Although this move has been somewhat contested both at the time and afterwards, a 2018 article about some statues still present today in the city of Galați mentions a "communist type of mystification of history that is dangerous".[144] In short, the polarization of the debate harmed the very efforts of breaking through silences.

For the political establishment, however, the Europeanization angle made remembering political violence bound up, again, with the definition of Europe as "modernization".[145] For instance, President Traian Băsescu passed a "Condemnation of the Communist Regime" in the Romanian Parliament in 2007, which was backed by leading historians and intellectuals, tying it directly to EU accession, rather than accountability or honouring victims.[146] The report "blamed" the former regime for the imperfections of the democratic space, and the *Final Report* has been seen as a document of evaluation and of moral judgement concerning "communist crimes".[147] It operated with a de-historicized and reified perspective on state socialism that simply reinforced the identification of this regime as the main cause of underdevelopment.[148]

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[144] Ticu Ciubotaru, "Relicvele de piatră ale comunismului continuă mistificarea istoriei", *România Liberă*, April 5, 2018, https://romanialibera.ro/social/relicvele-de-piatra-ale-comunismului-continua-mistificarea-istoriei-720209. Last accessed March 4, 2020.

[145] Jan-Werner Müller, "Introduction: The Power of Memory, the Memory of Power and the Power over Memory", in Jan-Werner Müller ed., *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe Studies in the Presence of the Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1–36; von Hirschhausen and Patel, "Europeanization in History: An Introduction",18-20.

[146] A "democrat" by his own description, he was active in the memorialization of the Holocaust at the time. Iacob, "The Criminalisation of Communism"; Cristian Tileagă, "Communism in Retrospect: The Rhetoric of Historical Representation and Writing the Collective Memory of Recent Past", *Memory Studies*, 5, 4 (2012), 462-478. doi:10.1177/1750698011434042.

[147] Dorin Dobrincu, Cristian Vasile and Vladimir Tismăneanu eds., *Raport Final* (Bucharest: Humanitas Publishing, 2007), 45-50.

[148] Totalitarianism was attributed first to Giovanni Amendola in the late 1920s, from an anti-fascist standpoint, when he uses the term to describe Mussolini's aversion to legal codes and liberal norms. See Ball and Bellamy eds., *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Political Thought*, 182.

For intellectuals, the memory of "totalitarian" victims was framed exclusively by its usefulness for democracy and reproduced the simplistic narratives of democracy of the 1990s. One illustrative example happened in 2007, when the Romanian magazine *Echinox,* a reputed cultural debate review in the country, took on the European debate on a joint commemoration of Holocaust and communist victims.[149] Several historians and cultural commentators reflected on this new paradigm, which was inevitably reflected in national historiography. Corneliu Pitulescu 'lamented" following scripts from elsewhere. He argued that anti-Semitism, was not about race, but had to do with economics. Pitulescu implicitly argued here that following the focus on identity gives the wrong impression about the reasons for discrimination against the Jewish population.[150] He concluded that the problem lies in the instruments one uses to look at this past, and therefore the discussion about how and what to tell about a past should be left out of European fora.

In the same issue, historian Doru Pop zoomed in on the European politics of memory in relation to the negation of communist crimes, which was the burning issue at the time. He argued that those who deny them - state authorities, previously high-ranked members of the communist regime- resort to the same ways of denial as in the case of the Holocaust. Consequently, he wondered if the use of these parallels (between the Holocaust and communist crimes) was not detrimental to the purpose.[151] The argumentation shows the traces of the main framing that also endured over time. In these two opinions, one already sees signs of the way the memory of the Holocaust was simply a benchmark, a norm that can be used and twisted to shed light on the communist past. The utility of opening a conversation on the Holocaust, now transnational, was not denied, but viewed as a "step" towards proving liberal democratic

[149] Corneliu Pintilescu, "Gulag și Comunism, Legislație discrimantorie și represivă", *Caietele Echinox*, 1 (2007), 13-24.
[150] Pintilescu, "Gulag și Comunism", 25–78.
[151] Doru Pop, "Negarea efectelor comunismului în termenii denigrării Holocaustului", *Caietele Echinox*, 1 (2007), 157-162.

credentials, and specifically to break with "communist" underdevelopment. A similar perspective was furthered by historian Florin Abraham, who discusses the "Gulag" and the "Holocaust" as necessary bases for a "democratic memory", which, he argues, had not happened.[152] The purpose of remembrance was to solidify democracy rather than reflect on the political roots, victims, or historical understanding.

The debate laid out in 'Echinox' shows that the Gulag- Holocaust parallel was already a memorial language in 2007 in Romania, but that it had less to do with the past and more with contemporary visions of democracy. The intellectual community was evidently looking "grudgingly" at the memorial gesture of remembering on "European" terms but saw its utility. The tone was sceptical about the progressive nature of this move.[153.] It was not indicative of an interest in expanding the memory field but was rather in the spirit of overcoming a history of underdevelopment by following a normative "democratic memory".

The anticommunist stance made it into a more European-wide narrative through the 2008 the Prague Declaration on European Conscience and Communism[154] and with it, a certain intellectual history of the concept of totalitarianism, and its imaginaries, was indirectly referenced. Anthropologist Kristen Ghodsee considers that the memory debates on two types of victims brought together as a new form of the *Historikerstreit*.[155] She argues, however, that the narrative about communism and state socialism in the public space re-emerged amid the emerging discontent with liberal democracy triggered by the 2008 crisis in Europe, "against a

[152] Florin Abraham, "Rezistență', 'Gulag', 'Holocaust' și construirea memoriei democratice după 1989", *Caietele Echinox*, 1 (2007), 40-57, 41-43.
[153] Mälksoo, "Criminalizing Communism".
[154] Initiated and signed by Czech politicians, it was further signed by 50 key political leaders in Europe. It is not a EU-issued declaration. See Neumayer "Integrating the Central European Past into a Common Narrative".
[155] The *Historikerstreit* emerged in Germany in the 1980s, and with it, the idea that communism can and should be placed in the same category as national socialism. It changed the historical and political sphere forever. It was Ernst Nolte's *Sonderweg* thesis that made this parallel into an important one, but the concept saw many iterations in the years that followed. See for instance Klaus Oesterle, Siegfried Schiele, *Historikerstreit Und Politische Bildung* (Berlin: JB Metzler, 1989).

backdrop of growing social unrest in response to the global financial crisis and Eurozone instability in Spain and Greece".[156]

> The Cold War liberals converged on the proposition that it was 'utopias' that led to totalitarianism. In the immediate post-war period, as the West's chief political enemy switched from Nazi Germany to Soviet Russia, anti-totalitarianism served as a 'semantic bridge': it redirected the stock modes of condemnation of (anti-liberal) fascism onto (anti-liberal) communism. But the concern closest to home was the perceived need to combat the threat from the communist East to Western liberties – and to capitalism. Hence, when the Cold War liberals came to fill out the details of what a political theory of anti-totalitarianism might consist in, it was an image of communist totalitarianism that they had foremost in mind.[157]

It was, first and foremost a view that attributed the horrors of the 20th century to Enlightenment rationality and associated it only with the USSR. The memory narrative of totalitarianism, which uses the equality between victims to strengthen and support the present (liberal democracy) in Europe, that the 2019 Declaration invoked at the beginning of this chapter employs, is a testament to the dimension of totalitarianism that today is primarily referenced through collective memory.

Several thinkers shaped this notion, primarily those dealing with the roots of the authoritarian regimes of the 20th century, although much of the residues used today in European narrative owe to the Atlanticist vision. One of the first, Herbert Marcuse, defined totalitarianism based on the transformation of reason to positivism that led to the rise of Nazism, and drew a direction connection with "the monopoly stage of capitalism".[158] Confronted with the reality of the Second World War, later, Max Horkheimer looked at a parallel between Nazism and "state socialism"[159] He labelled these as "authoritarian" and "repressive" regimes and identifying "permanent mobilisation", "arbitrariness" as core political processes belonging to them. In 1941, taking this reasoning further, philosopher Friedrich Pollock simply marked a clear

[156] Kristin Ghodsee, *Red Hangove*r (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 133.
[157] Richard Shorten, *Modernism and Totalitarianism, Rethinking the Intellectual Sources of Nazism and Stalinism, 1945 to the Present* (London: Palgrave, 2012), 110.
[158] Herbert Marcuse, *"*The Struggle Against Liberalism in the Totalitarian View of the State*"* in *Negations. Essays in Critical Theory*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (London: MayFly Books, 2009[1968]), 1-31.
[159] Max Horkheimer, *Critical Theory: Selected Essays* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 34–87.

difference between "democratic" state capitalism in the United States and Great Britain to the state capitalism of Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia. [160] He argued these solved economic issues at the price of asking for total obedience. That connection between authoritarianism and capitalism disappeared in the underdevelopment narrative of the 1990s. Indeed, the careful links between liberal notions and the transformations of politics are less evident in the interpretation of "totalitarianism" used today in European memory discourses.

Anticommunism through underdevelopment made it into the European narrative, but the type of democracy it entertained had restrictive, culturalist and civilization dimensions, based on modernization claims. This evokes Jacob Talmon's concern with the messianism of what he sees as populist anti-liberalism of totalitarian ideologies and what that meant for European political philosophy.[161] Talmon's *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* played an influential role in shaping and understanding the concept of totalitarianism during the Cold War, and in a different direction than Hannah Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism*.[162] While Arendt's reading took the death camp to be the end and the symbol of "total" governmentality, hers was a theory about subjectivity derived from the fact that totalitarianism shaped the individual to the utmost precision. Talmon, however, seemed more attuned to efforts aimed at developing an "empirical democratic theory" that defined the systems of the Western liberal democracy and its constitutive elements in opposition to communist totalitarianism exclusively. But he did argue that both belonged to the European tradition and that the effort should be to find where things degenerated. Both perspectives represented a memorial counterpart to Francis Fukuyama's "end of history" thesis, with its triumphal take on liberal democracy or to Samuel Huntington's "third wave of democracy", which focused on democratic procedures. Yet, as Scott argues, it was a context that affirmed teleological historical progress of liberal democracy

[160] Friedrich Pollock, "State Capitalism: Its Possibilities and Limitations", in Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt eds., *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader* (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1982), 71–95.
[161] Talmon, *Origins of Totalitarian Democracy,* 56.
[162] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1973[1951]).

over political rivals that offered much solace at the time.[163] Totalitarianism, in a more radical key, where it was separated from any traditional of liberal democracy, provided a middle-ground.

> First, the threat of totalitarianism, represented by the rise of communism, divided emancipatory liberalism into two camps. One of these was a camp skeptical of liberalism's past universalism, and rationalism, suggesting that these were the constituent elements of Marxism— something liberalism should avoid. Another was a development culture, which imagined economic and political transformation as key components in the fight against Eastern communism. Both of these traditions had the same ends: stopping the encroachment of communism through an emancipatory ethic.[164]

It entailed an exclusive look at the initial victims of the communist repression, which fit the interest in the late Cold War, when the concept of totalitarianism had become a "counter ideological" weapon against the USSR. It was a way of marking the Soviet Union as an "evil empire" and the US-led NATO as a triumphant force of that change.[165] The anticommunism that followed, and strengthened the type of liberalism of the 1990s, reinforced this perspective. As Siobhan Kattago has argued, centering the notion of totalitarianism around memory further reinforced the post-socialist discourse that tends to take 1989/1991 as the symbolic boundary.[166]

The developmental notions supported by anticommunism have facilitated many appropriations since. The anticommunism from the East – in its developmental form – became European via discourses of prominent intellectuals and scholars elsewhere and played into local politics. For instance, Anne Applebaum, a distinguished Cold War historian, received accolades from the Budapest Terrorhaza, a well know museum practicing the "totalitarian" narrative in December 2010 "for her outstanding efforts to advance freedom and democracy in Central-Eastern Europe".[167] A similarly visible case is that of historian Timothy Snyder's book *Bloodlands* being appropriated by the government of Lithuania to implement what the prime

[163] Scott, *Omens*, 86-89.
[164] Dillon Stone Tatum, *Liberalism and Transformation. The Global Politics of Violence and Intervention* (Ann Arbour: Michigan University Press 2019), 86.
[165] Howard, "The Anti-Totalitarian Left between Morality and Politics", 39.
[166] Kattago, "Agreeing to Disagree".
[167] Quoted in Ghodsee, "Tale of Two Totalitarianisms", 126.

minister in 2012 has articulated as "historical memory policy" and "a unified view on the past".[168] In the same vein, it prompted the Czech Republic in 2000 to choose November 17 as the symbolic anniversary of 1989 to "honour the struggles for freedom and democracy". That date not only marked the end of communism but also recalled November 17, 1939, when nine students were executed for their resistance to the Nazi occupation.[169] These actions were not only about victimhood but hijacking a discourse of memory to ground their own politics of "development".

Furthermore, there are connotations of European memory, in the way these are used nationally, that perpetuate civilizational undertones proper to neoliberalism. For instance, the debates about state "corruption" that shaped the 1990s and later politics in Romania draw sharp lines between a pure market and the imperfect human condition. "Corruption" is associated with the communist past (shadow networks of the former Communist Party) and a certain "Slavic" dimension, rooted in older anti-Russian rhetoric, that continues to signal an incapacity of letting go of "old" habits. In this sense, it was one of the symptoms of the underdevelopment brought on by communism and by the influence of the Soviet Union, which lingers today.[170] It has been consistently invoked as a root cause of inter-EU migration. Recent anti-corruption protests in Romania have also stressed the importance of shunning the past, resolving it, and addressing it, neglecting the cultural and political context of the 1990s as the decade of a

[168] Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 14-20. See debate here Eglė Samoškaitė, "Naciams ir sovietams tarnavę skundikai – verti pasmerkimo ar gailesčio?", *Skaitykite daugiau.,* 2012. https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/naciams-ir-sovietams-tarnave-skundikai-verti-pasmerkimo-ar-gailescio.d?id=50185844

[169] Johana Wyss, "Exploring Populism Through the Politics of Commemoration", *Europe-Asia Studies*, 73 (9), 2021, 1683-1702. DOI: 10.1080/09668136.2021.1991279.

[170] See for instance Brian Whitmore, "Corruption Is The New Communism", *Radio Free Europe*, 2016, https://www.rferl.org/a/corruption-is-the-new-communism/27669638.html.

hegemonic neoliberalism.[171] Memory, here, foreshadows a vision of "democracy" as imperfect, fragile and in the end easily replaceable, which is a defining element of neoliberal thought.[172]

This developmental perspective therefore encouraged the rise of radical-conservative interpretations of history that support the idea that the state and democracy are fragile, which have mostly gone unchecked until the more recent visible reactions to the "illiberal" turn. For example, the Romanian writer Horia Roman Patapievici, a reputed anticommunist advocate, wrote, in a book entitled *O idee care ne sucește mințile* (An illusion that Drives Us Insane) about the perils of what he sees as a newly emerging left. He claims here that "Western" outlets still reject the communist experience, and that the experience "exacerbated our national defects".[173] He argues, consequently, that the emergence of a new left (primarily youth-led social movements) is a symptom of this weak democratic spirit. This type of perspective in effect peaked in the conservative after-effects of the "totalitarian" view. The conclusion, another prominent pro-European and anticommunist intellectual, Andrei Pleșu, echoed anti-communist intellectual, Andrei Pleșu, in 2017, is that "Europe will never hold if it does not condemn communism and National socialism" in equal measure.[174]

In other words, the "banal" Europeanism narrative behind anticommunism strengthened the developmental angle about the utility of memory, and thus helped it merge with neoliberal politics. It had been previously criticized exactly for the paradox that, as Boris Buden argues, it is a sense of totality, similar to the transitional ideology, which leaves no room for memory.[175]

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[171] David Witwer, Paula Baker, Mary Berry, Daniel Czitrom, Barbara Hahn, James Kloppenberg and Naomi Lamoreaux, "Interchange: Corruption Has a History", *Journal of American History*, 1015, 4 (2019), 912–938, https://doi.org/10.1093/jahist/jaz005.

[172] William Connoly, *The Fragility of Things: Self-Organizing Processes, Neoliberal Fantasies, and Democratic Activism* (New Haven: Duke University Press, 2013), 58-80.

[173] Horia Patapievici, Andrei Pleșu and Gabriel Liiceanu, *O idee care ne sucește mințile* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2016), 134.

[174] Anca Vancu and Andrei Pleşu, "Fără o Unificare a Memoriei, Fără o Condamnare Comună a Nazismului Şi a Comunismului, Europa Nu va Fi Omogenă", *Adevărul*, Bucharest, February 17, 2017, https://Adevărul.ro/cultura/istorie/andrei-plesu-fara-unificare-memoriei-ocondamnare-comuna-nazismului-comunismului-europa-nu-omogena-1_58a6bce55ab6550cb88cc80b/index.html. Last accessed April 1, 2020.

[175] Boris Buden, "The Children of Postcommunism", *Radical Philosophy,* 159 (2010). https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/children-of-postcommunism.

Like the Historikerstreit before it, the anti-totalitarian European idea around collective remembrance reinforced particular histories that proved helpful for "performing" European liberalism, without inciting a deeper reflection on the matter. It thus created distinct "publics" of memory invested in "negative remembrances" as a defence mechanism against anything that threatens neoliberalism and accepts anything that might be "modernizing". Many of the radical conservative politicians operating in Europe today profess exactly this ambition of "reform", of change and individualism, directly indebted to neoliberal thought.

5. Conclusion

The analysis presented above has highlighted the political and cultural narratives that underscored the anticommunism of the 1990s and demonstrates how the perspective on "victims of totalitarianism" in Europe today, embedded in cultural narratives of underdevelopment, was a conduit for a conservative Cold War liberalism and neoliberal narratives into crucial discourses about Europeanism. The chapter has also unpacked notions of underdevelopment and modernization that drove the debates about the former regime's memory and traces, and the fragility of democracy. Two general points emerge regarding memorial dynamics. The first is that although the silencing practised by the social democrats in the 1990s was contested by intellectuals and national pro-European groups as authoritarian, these silences were in fact also perpetuated in the Europeanization process, which did not challenge the monolithic narratives of anticommunism. On the contrary, this process strengthened the selectivity of memory, by focusing on the "outcomes" of remembrance: liberal democracy and "Europeanness". The second conclusion, therefore, is that silences were articulated in relation to neoliberal thought and a defensive narrative on democracy which provided normative definitions of democracy related to "transition", modernization and

becoming of the polity, rather than a complex historical reflection. This process has provided a fertile terrain for illiberal or radical conservative interpretations of politics and memory.

Chapter II:
The Far Right: Silent Stories of Liberal Democracy

1. A Restrictive History

In 2020, the unexpected triumph of the new AUR Party (Alliance for the Union of Romanians) in the Parliamentary elections in Romania triggered not only deep reflection on the preferences of (especially young) voters for the far-right, but also a memorial debate. The AUR was a nationalist organization that often uses far-right notions of exclusion and purity[1] and their sudden ascent prompted questions about the mainstreaming of the far-right. Ideas about regaining sovereignty and national pride were peddled to make Eurosceptic narratives acceptable to the largely young audience of this political party.[2] Representatives of AUR had glorified authoritarian interwar figures responsible for the Holocaust, such as Marshal Ion Antonescu (September 1940-August 1944), and lauded the leaders and actions of the Romanian Legion of the Archangel Michael and the Iron Guard movement (until 1933 its paramilitary faction, afterwards an alternative denominator), the main far-right organization active in Romania in the years leading up to World War II and disbanded in 1941, as icons of national

[1] The group identifies itself as anti-corruption, socially minded and anticommunist and sceptical of the impositions from Brussels. Various of its representatives have shown disdain for any type of constraint of xenophobic tones, such as writer Sorin Lavric who questions gender equity and human rights as "political correctness" and Claudiu Târziu who openly commemorates far-right historical references (https://claudiutarziu.ro/declaratie-politica-in-senatul-romaniei-un-deceniu-de-la-urcarea-la-ceruri-a-parintelui-iustin-parvu/. More generally, they fit into a European context where young, and fresh-faced politicians are taking up the case of a menaced "identity" caused by globalization; see, for example, the AfD in Germany, Chega in Portugal, and Forum voor Democratie in the Netherlands. The movements and parties work with notions of superiority and hierarchy in society, particularly in relation to minorities, and that have helped mainstream their politics and bring a sense of normality (or inevitability) to the re-emergence of the radical right. (Carlos Morgado Braz**, "**CHEGA! A sceptre of the mainstream Portuguese parties' disaggregation or a spectre of fascism?", *Populism Studies*, 2023, https://www.populismstudies.org/chega-a-sceptre-of-the-mainstream-portuguese-parties-disaggregation-or-a-spectre-of-fascism/).

[2] Alexandra Coțofană, "Weaponising the Alliance for the Unity of Romanians (AUR), Novelties and Continuums in Romania's Far-Right Political Extremism" in *Routledge Handbook of Non-Violent Extremism* (London: Routledge, 2023).

sovereignty.[3] Some of its members insisted that the histories of the Holocaust or anti-Semitism of the nationalist movements of the past were mere exaggerations, or "minor histories".[4]

The success of AUR led to a public discussion on historical genealogies and taxonomies of extremism in the Romanian public space.[5] AUR generally rejects accusations of having dangerous allegiances with the past Romanian far-right and contemporary far-right movements by emphasizing memorial positions which are explicitly anticommunist and values such as freedom and "dignity".[6] But the politics of the group, which do not shy away from fascist rhetoric, the social emulations of past far-right leaders such as Corneliu Zelea Codreanu (1899-1938), the popular leader of the Iron Guard movement (1927-1939) and his appeals to social acumen and collectivist politics, are difficult to miss.[7] Moreover, AUR often emulates the Iron Guard's rhetoric about a "pure" Romanian nation.[8] The party stokes a narrative of exceptionalism of the Romanian "nation" proper to right-wing authoritarianism that argues that historical conditions, geopolitical insecurity and economic conditions excuse any conditions of racism or discrimination, which was a core dimension of the fascist-leaning politics of inter-war Romania.

If anything, this new political success shows the potential contribution of memorial narratives to the mainstreaming of far-right ideologies. The way memorial cultures of the far-

[3] G4 Media, interview Petru Clej - Roland Clark and Traian Sandu, "AUR și Mișcarea Legionară. Cât de valabilă este comparația între cele două partide", https://www.g4media.ro/aur-si-miscarea-legionara-cat-de-valabila-este-comparatia-intre-cele-doua-partide.html.

[4] I.C, "AUR, noi afirmații scandaloase: Istoria Holocaustului, o tema minoră. Muraru: Partidul extremist a depășit cadrul legal", *Digi 24.* See https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/aur-noi-afirmatii-scandaloase-istoria-holocaustului-o-tema-minora-muraru-partidul-extremist-a-depasit-cadrul-legal-1789607. Last accessed June 14th, 2023.

[5] The Iron Guard, with its nationalist, entrepreneurial and renewal narrative, is a similar example . See Roland Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth: Fascist Activism in Interwar Romania*; Raul Cârstocea, "Building a Fascist Romania: Voluntary Work Camps as Mobilisation Strategies of the Legionary Movement in Interwar Romania", *Fascism,* 6, 2 (2017), 163–95, https://doi.org/10.1163/22116257-00602002.

[6] Sergiu Mișcoiu, *"*Euroscepticismul Românesc*"*, *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung*, 2021, https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/bukarest/18433.pdf.

[7] Interview Oliver Jens Schmitt, *Radio Free Europe*, https://romania.europalibera.org/a/31663221.html**.** Raul Cârstocea, "Building a Fascist Romania: Voluntary Work Camps as Mobilisation Strategies of the Legionary Movement in Interwar Romania", *Fascism,* 6, 2 (2017), 163–95, https://doi.org/10.1163/22116257-00602002.

[8] Magdalena Ulceluse, "The Golden Dawn of Romania?", *Populism Observer*, 2021, https://populismobserver.com/2021/03/24/aur-the-golden-dawn-of-romania/.

right have "normalized" into mainstream liberal political languages and cultural discourses is a contemporary concern world-wide.[9] Young and fresh-faced politicians have taken up the cause of identities menaced by globalization, such as the AfD in Germany, Chega in Portugal, and Forum voor Democratie in the Netherlands.[10] Such movements and parties work with notions of nativism and hierarchy in society, particularly in relation to minorities, and increasingly mainstream their politics.[11] Much of their politics also has a memorial component: the minimization of the Holocaust,[12] challenging the validity of histories of political violence inflicted by the national majority on certain minorities, contesting the idea of historical accountability (for instance of colonialism) or denying the "right to memory" for certain groups altogether.[13]

Recent developments in Romania are part of this contemporary transnational "normalization" of the radical right; they also, however, have a much longer history, as do other similar right-wing groupings in the region. It has been the case of the Chetniks in former Yugoslavia or the Ukrainian OUN, both eulogized in contemporary politics in the 1990s and considered national anti-communist heroes before that.[14] The OUN, the Ukrainian nationalist and far-right interwar organization continues to be a popular source of identity and solidarity in

[9] Francesco Zavatti, "Making and contesting far right sites of memory. A case study on Romania", *Memory Studies*, 14, 5 (2021), 949-970. https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698020982054.
[10] Anita Nissen, *Europeanisation of the Contemporary Far Right. Generation Identity and Fortress Europe* (London: Routledge, 2022).
[11] Carlos Morgado Braz, "CHEGA! A sceptre of the mainstream Portuguese parties' disaggregation or a spectre of fascism?", *Populism Studies*, 2023. .https://www.populismstudies.org/chega-a-sceptre-of-the-mainstream-portuguese-parties-disaggregation-or-a-spectre-of-fascism. Last accessed December 18th 2019.
[12] See for instance " Rewriting the Netherlands' Past and Future: Thierry Baudet's Use of Holocaust Analogies during the COVID-19 Pandemic", *Europe Now Journal*, https://www.europenowjournal.org/2022/04/28/rewriting-the-netherlands-past-and-future-thierry-baudets-use-of-holocaust-analogies-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/.
[13] Huub van Baar, "Cultural policy and the governmentalization of Holocaust remembrance in Europe: Romani memory between denial and recognition", *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 17, (1), 2017, 1-17, https://doi.org/10.1080/10286631003695539.
[14] Jelena Đureinović, *The Politics of Memory of the Second World War in Contemporary Serbia: Collaboration, Resistance and Retribution* (London, Berlin: DeGruyter, 2019), 14-20.

present-day Ukraine.[15] Similar to the dynamics memorializing the Iron Guard, members of the interwar far right are hailed as popular democracy symbols, uncorrupted democracies and national figures of self-attainment in Croatia, Poland and Ukraine.[16]

Several memorial tropes noticeable in this mainstreaming of the far-right in the region have eased their rise into liberal discourses. Whitewashing their political views through credentials of "anticommunist resistance" helped airbrushing biographies of members of these organizations.[17] For instance, Octav Bjoza, former President of the Romanian Association of Former Political Prisoners (of communism), continuously refused to incriminate members of the Guard and argued they fought for freedom.[18] When asked about his camaraderie with members of the Guard while in prison, he apologetically queried whether that should still matter in the face of the context of the 1950s.[19] It also happened in more mainstream contexts, for instance in 2010, when Ion Gavrilă Ogoranu (1926-1993), a member of the Iron Guard and lifelong advocate of the movement, was the protagonist of the internationally praised documentary *Portrait of the Fighter as a Young Man (Portret al Luptătorului la Tinereţe),* focusing on the anticommunist resistance in Romania's Făgăraş Mountains following the Second World War.[20] As the movie made its way through European cinemas, the *Elie Wiesel Holocaust Institute in Bucharest* cautioned that the film's narrative decontextualises Ogoranu's pre-war anti-Semitic biography and that Ogoranu "was part of the Romanian Iron Guard and a militant for this fascist-like organisation, with both anti-Semite and racist undertones".[21] Yet

[15] Yulia Yurshuk, "Reclaiming the Past, Confronting the Past: OUN–UPA Memory Politics and Nation Building in Ukraine (1991–2016)", in Julie Fedor, Simon Lewis, Tatiana Zhurzhenko eds., *War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus*, London: Palgrave, 2017, 107-137.
[16] Subotić, *Yellow Star, Red Star*, 1–30. Đureinović, "*The Politics of Memory*", 25-28.
[17] Roland Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth: Fascist Activism in Interwar Romania*;
[18] F.N, "Octav Bjoza, Primul Român Decorat de Iohannis: 'Legionarii mi-au marcat tot restul vieţii'", *Frontpress*, 2013, https://www.frontpress.ro/octav-bjoza-primul-roman-decorat-de-iohannis-legionarii-mi-au-marcat-tot-restul-vietii/. Last accessed March 5, 2019.
[19] G.P, "Interview Octav Bjoza", *Gândul*, April 1, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awiOKrTR65U&ab_channel=NTDRomania. Last accessed July 24, 2019.
[20] Resistance groups primarily operating in hiding.
[21] William Totok, "Portretul Luptătorului La Tinereţe" a Stîrnit Controverse La Berlinală", *Deutche Welle*, 2010. https://www.dw.com/ro/portretul-luptătorului-la-tinereţe-a-stîrnit-controverse-la-berlinală/a-5255039.Last accessed April 1, 2020.

the director of the documentary, Constantin Popescu, played down all these controversies and argued the movie "was not a hagiography" of Ogoranu but that he hoped the film avoided new controversies regarding recent political history.[22] Faced with criticism, Popescu defended his position of impartiality and the organizers of the Berlin Biennale, for instance, chose to ignore these complaints and continued to screen the movie.

The religious elements of the movements also eased their wider acceptance. Biographies of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, the leader of the movement, frequently struggle to spell out and identify the radical right ideological message of the movement, because he perpetuated a mobilizing tone about the country's renewal and the nation in the interwar period, tinged with Christian mysticism.[23] Tatiana Niculescu's 2017 book *Mistica Rugăciunii și a Revolverului* struggles, for instance, to articulate the racial and discriminatory direction of the „Captain".[24] It often happens that biographies tend to look at the social prestige and popularity of Codreanu's political persona, rather than delving into his ideology. In both these cases, there are evident silences behind this mechanism of mainstreaming.

The ascent of AUR did move the focus away from these more evident ways of exoneration to the ideological languages through which the far-right in Romania has been classified in contemporary political culture. Commentators such as historian (and prominent member of the Romanian Liberal Party) Andrei Muraru were adamant in properly defining this ideology and often used the term "neo-fascist" to describe the organization and its messages, and, rhetorically, to showcase its lineage to the old far-right movements in Romania. [25] Together with other historians, journalists and politicians, Muraru has spearheaded a discussion about

[22] Ibid.
[23] See Oliver Jens Schmitt, *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu Ascensiunea și căderea „Căpitanului*", Wilhelm Tauwinkl transl. (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2017).
[24] Tatiana Niculescu, *Mistica Rugăciunii și a Revolverului* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2017).
[25] A.V.D. "Deputat PNL: AUR este „o grupare de factură neofascistă", *Digi24*, June 2021, Bucharest. https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/politica/deputat-pnl-aur-este-o-grupare-de-factura-neofascista-1520755. Last accessed December 5, 2021.

the far-right tendencies of this group. The memorial background of that is still revolving around the responsibility for the Holocaust, primarily of the Jewish population, of the Antonescu regime.[26] However a broader consideration of the movement's ideology, racism, and eugenics – widespread discourses at the time- is mostly absent.[27] Readings such as Muraru's have been challenged, however, by a vocal group of journalists and historians who consider it historically inaccurate to apply the label of fascism to the Romanian context and unsuitable to define local dynamics.[28] It echoes a long-standing discourse in Romanian historiography, perpetuated, for instance by Dan Berindei, a well-known conservative historian, who emphasized that the Iron Guard could not really be integrated into a transnational "fascist" context since the movement was solely the result of local dynamics.[29] Historian Marius Oprea, a prominent advocate of memorial retributions, lamented the lack of "incisive debates" on the history of far-right movements or their pull regionally or nationally.[30] The lack of an appropriate language has consequently weighted down the Romanian memorial culture of victims of the far-right movements (primarily the Iron Guard movement), the racism and discrimination towards certain groups (for instance the Roma) and the wider ideological rationale of its political violence.

In a region like Central and Eastern Europe, where antifascism was co-opted as an ideological narrative by leftist authoritarianism and was instrumental in the consolidation of

[26] Michael Shafir, "Unacademic Academics"; Alexandru Florian ed., *Holocaust Public Memory in Postcommunist Romania*, especially "Memory under Construction: Introductory Remarks" (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2018); Mihai I. Poliec, *The Holocaust in the Romanian Borderlands: The Arc of Civilian Complicity* (London: Routledge, 2019), 78-82; Mihai Dinu Gheorghiu, "The Iaşi Pogrom in Curzio Malaparte's Kaputt: Between History and Fiction", in Valentina Glajar and Jeanine Teodorescu eds., *Local History, Transnational Memory in the Romanian Holocaust* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 47–57.

[27] I refer primarily to cultural debates, cultural artifacts that shape and define cultural and political production in Romania. Otherwise, this is an academic debate, mostly entertained by Maria Bucur, Viorel Achim, Roland Clark and others.

[28] RFI, https://www.rfi.ro/politica-141208-alexandru-muraru-aur-scos-afara-lege.

[29] Raul Cîrstocea, "Between Europeanisation and Local Legacies: Holocaust Memory and Contemporary Anti-Semitism in Romania", *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures,* 35 (2) 2021, 313–335. https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325420906201,.

[30] Marius Oprea, "Marius Oprea: Cei Mai Tari Din Europa", *Mediafax*, May 19, 2020, https://www.mediafax.ro/editorialistii/comentariu-marius-oprea-cei-mai-tari-din-europa-arestarea-legionarilor-in-1948-e-la-noi-zi-nationala-19148962. Last accessed June 5, 2021.

communist regimes, this term still polarizes discussion and does not engender widespread reflection.[31] The distrust and indeed reluctance to consider "antifascism" to be anything but a Soviet propaganda narrative for "popular" democracy meant that the opposition to the right was not really a factor in democratic activism.[32] In fact, antifascism has been overshadowed by the political debates about democracy that followed the Second World War everywhere in Europe[33], and condemning or dealing with the far-right history lost its urgency after the 1960s, as historian Jay Winter argues.[34] It lost its relevance for definitions of democracy with the advancement of the Cold War.[35] It was a Cold War position that emphasized repression of religion and of individual enterprise that often de-ideologized the right-wing alternatives. The insistence on freedom and sovereignty, through anticommunism, has been the key to this dynamic.[36] For instance, the Legion of the Archangel Michael and the Iron Guard's Orthodox nationalism have superseded the racism, homogeneity and masculinity imagery perpetuated by the movement.[37] For Central and Eastern Europe, anticommunism, rather than antifascism,

[31] Griffin, "Studying Fascism", 1–17; Michael Rothberg and Neil Levi, "Memory Studies in a Moment of Danger", *Memory Studies*, 11, 3(2018), 355-367. https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698018771868.
[32] Tomasz Rawski, "The Decline of Antifascism: The Memory Struggle over May 1945 in the Polish Parliament (1995–2015). *East European Politics and Societies*,", *33*(4) 2019, 917-940. https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325419831354.
[33] In the 1950s, fascism was approached cautiously, only so far as it stabilized Western Christian Democracy, and debates over fascism were generally envisaged as a benchmark for definitions of democracy, and historiography adopted this perspective immediately after the Second World War, according to Mark Mazower, "Fascism and Democracy Today: What Use Is the Study of History in the Current Crisis?", *European Law Journal*, 22, 3 (2016), 375-385. https://doi.org/10.1111/eulj.12176
[34] Jay Winter, "Human Rights and European Remembrance" in Aleksandr Etkind, ed., *Memory and Theory in Eastern Europe* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 43–58; See also Hugo García, Mercedes Yusta, Xavier Tabet and Cristina Clímaco, "Beyond Revisionism: Rethinking Antifascism in the Twenty-First Century", in Hugo García, Mercedes Yusta, Xavier Tabet and Cristina Clímaco, eds., *Rethinking Antifascism: History, Memory and Politics, 1922 to the Present* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2016), 2-19.
[35] García, Yusta, Tabet, and Clímaco, "Beyond Revisionism", 36-39. Furthermore, the life of the far right in postwar Europe continued to blur political lines, as the reassembling of the right in the 1950s, under the leadership of the Italian Social Movement (the MSI) brought together far-right extremists who had been ousted from countries in Western Europe and Eastern European emigres alike, many coming from far-right circles, were there to prove their anticommunist credentials. See Jean-Yves Camus, Nicolas Lebourg, *Far-Right Politics in Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), 23–36.
[36] Garcia, Yusta, Tabet, *Antifascism*, 18-20.
[37] Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth*, 5-12.

spurred a fight for democracy, and usages of "fascism" or "antifascism" have consistently emerged as outdated in Romania.[38]

Starting from this unease in fleshing out far-right connotations, the current chapter explores the background memorial culture that led to the normalization of the language of the radical right. It argues this has been driven by silences prompted by an impoverished debate on democratic practice triggered by a very "scripted" narrative of liberal democracy in the 1990s, at its turn determined by a sentiment of crisis- as an ideation rather than practice. Specifically, it looks at how ideas of citizens, individuality and society came about in the Romanian political context of the 1990s described in the previous chapter, and how these bolstered a legitimacy of the far-right and silencing of its perils. As Codreanu articulated in his vision statement: "Our programme? We wish to change everything from the ground up. The total rebirth of the country. On the ruins of the old, diseased, impotent, and unjust State one has to elevate the citizen"[39], and this radicalness of change was generally appealing after the political transition of 1989. This "sovereigntist" reading, which takes the historical far-right to stand for oppositional and anti-establishment sentiment, rather than an anti-Semitic or xenophobic orientation, has led to misused histories and lost interpretations of political actions. To chapter 1, the present analysis adds the landscape of the early roots of the far-right in the 1990s, legitimized by anticommunism, and shows how important notions of liberal theory – such as civil society – were uncritically tied in with notions of community that relied on far-right constellations. Specifically, it explains how silencing supported this process.

My approach is in line with scholarly contributions drawing a link between far-right ideology and the inception of civil society, such as Dylan Riley's *Civic Basis of Fascism in Europe*, who points out that the Romanian Iron Guard movement was the first to inspire ideas

[38] Jože Pirjevec, Egon Pelikan and Sabrina P. Ramet eds., *Anti-fascism in European History* (Vienna: Central University European Press, 2023), 1-15.
[39] Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, qtd. in Valentin Săndulescu, „Fascism and Its Quest for the New Man", *Studia Hebraica,* (4) 2004, 349 – 361, 355.

of solidarity in the interwar period and the creation of civil society in the country.[40] He concludes that because "the tension between the fascist movement and the fascist regime that eventually consolidated in Romania was much greater than in either Italy or Spain", the Iron Guard maintained an image of reformers, of identitarians for the simple (lower) classes, against a political spectrum which was increasingly elitist and in crisis.[41] From that start, they professed affinities with the Italian and the French far-right and Nazism, from which they borrowed a philosophy of collectivity.[42] The exclusions, discrimination and nationalism of the movement were less relevant than the image of a progressive speaker of truth to power.[43]

After discussing how such imaginations of civil society re-emerged in the 1990s, connected to an imaginary of democracy immediately after dictatorship that needed to be radical and had little space for negotiation, trial and error and ideological reconsiderations, the analysis moves on to show that collective memory practices since have worked by avoiding questions of ideology, of specific political beliefs, and by deferring questions of responsibility or historical justice to the general interest in the consolidation of the state. [44] Three cases (in the late 2010s) explain how the legacy of the far-right and potentially enduring exclusionary discourses are absolved because of a defensive interpretation of democracy. In the recent debates about the political allegiances of Mihail Sebastian, the author's chronicle of interwar anti-Semitism challenges a cultural "myth" of the "liberal" interwar period and is consequently minimized and denied in different modalities. For instance, commentators continue to deny anti-Semitism and also reflect critically on Jewish "assimilation" as a rather pragmatic question

[40] Dylan Riley, *The Civic Foundations of Fascism in Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 2-14.
[41] Clark, "Images of Crisis", 198-200.
[42] Ibidem, 201.
[43] Simone Chambers, Jeffrey Kopstein, "Bad Civil Society", *Political Theory*, 29, (6), 2001, 837-865.
[44] See Carole Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970/2014), 1-21; Uday Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1999), 5-18; Abigail Green and Simon Sullami, eds., *Jews, Liberalism, Antisemitism: A Global History* (London: Palgrave, 2020), 1-20; Helena Rosenblatt, *The Lost History of Liberalism: From Ancient Rome to the Twenty-First Century* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press 2018), 34-60

of winning state sovereignty after 1918.[45] The Cold War anticommunism further aggravated this perspective as the biography of Valerian Trifa, a former World War II criminal, demonstrates a sense of persecution of the Iron Guard. Finally, the chapter discusses the erasure of the antifascist interwar histories of the International Brigades in Spain.

2. Narratives of the Far Right and the Imaginary of the Citizen

It was in the political mindset of the early 1990s, described in the previous chapter, that debates about the far-right social movements and far-right authoritarianism emerged. Discussions were consumed by the conversation around the role of civil society after regime change, subsumed to the post-dictatorship context, debating what civil society could look like in a changed rapport between citizen and state (no longer oppressive) and a sense of the debt of the state to the citizen in demands of justice.[46] Furthermore, there was a commonsense understanding that the past 60 years of dictatorship had caused irreparable damage to the societal fabric: as journalist Florin Mărculescu argued, communism affected basic human behaviour, the trust in both state and peers, a stolen identity and interrupted progress.[47]

Much of the liberal theory of the 1990s, especially in Eastern European transition narratives, emphasized the idea of a civil society backing the democratic process.[48] Yet, in 1990s Romania, notions of civil society were generally more radical than that. As writer HR Patapievici intimidated, the identity of the citizen was that of a survivor (of authoritarianism) and a political actor continuously critical and skeptical of the new establishment. [49] The citizen,

[45] William Brustein and Ryan King, "Anti-Semitism in Europe Before the Holocaust", *International Political Science Review*, 25, 1 (2004), 35–53. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0192512104038166.
[46] Take for instance an article by Sergiu Mixar "Societatea civila este sublimă dar lipsește cu desăvârșire", *Radical*, May 10, 1999, 5.
[47] Florin Mărculescu, "De la Dictatură la Democratură", *Cotidianul*, April 16, 1993.
[48] Watson, "The Legacy of Communism", 11-20.
[49] HR Patapievici, *Omul Recent* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1997*)*

if anything, was the one who seemed to be the only actor apt to continue the political change of 1989 (already tainted by the unsatisfactory dynamics of the 1990s) and the imaginary of the citizen fighting for "democracy" against a state still suspected of authoritarianism was the main angle that shaped questions of "democracy". Mainstream democratic theory argues that civil society enjoys a symbiotic nature with the state, and it helps stabilize the democratic process, while also holding it accountable.[50] Civil society is the essence of participation, independent from state structures. In the Romanian context, this interaction was less than harmonious, participation was limited and fraught, and the state perpetuated its authoritarian ways, despite a narrative arguing the very opposite.

Romanian public debate often rallied around the idea that a stronger, more functional state would be one defined by the triumph of the citizen.[51] There was a sense that the architecture of the change initiated in 1989 by citizens had to reach its completion in the reform and modernization of the state. In a way, the debates in Romania were the very definition of the idea that the importance of the state was in its "availability, circulation, and the exchange of hope" as anthropologist Ghassan Hage argues.[52] A "'modern' state was the basis of a wealthy civilization founded on capitalism in which general concern for human well-being can flourish" according to Talal Asad".[53] Modern, here, was the key to the debates: the state coming out of communism was outdated (and also "corrupt") – and in need of radical action or change.

Conversely, the "strong" state did not necessarily fully rhyme with the type of democracy envisaged, which was a goal worthwhile pursuing only if citizens could control this process. There was a distinctive appetite for participatory democracy, against elective

[50] Gideon Baker, "Civil Society and Democracy: The Gap between Theory and Possibility". *Politics*, *18*(2), 81-87.https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9256.00064.
[51] The Democratic Convention, the main opposition political party to NSF, used notions of "strong state" in their political programs and documents.
[52] Ghassan Hage, *Against Paranoid Nationalism: Searching for Hope in a Shrinking Society* (Sydney: Pluto Press Australia, 2003), 31.
[53] Talal Asad, "Reflections on violence, law and humanitarianism", *Critical Inquiry*, 41, (2), 2015, 390-427, 392.

processes, but at the same time public opinion was weary when ideas about rights, equality were too pronounced, because they resembled the rhetoric of the previous regime. As described in the previous chapter, a popular slogan even among the political inheritors of the previous regime, employed by both the social democrats (NSF) and the Liberal Party was that democracy should not have been "imported" Still, it should stem from a "national awakening" that would also lead to re-evaluations of community, were equally legitimate. [54] Democracy was a deeply identitarian concern that had to do with national character and a form of justice that granted a role both to citizens and the state in the national "re-awakening".

These notions of radical change of the state and "wounded" identities of the citizen created a conflation between "culture" and politics in public discourse, which I define by returning to Wendy Brown's notions of the culturalization of politics, discussed in the previous chapter. She argues this type of outlook engenders a (neoliberal) politics devoid of (problematic) histories and social and economic conditions and attributes political processes to a question of "culture" that is immovable and exalted character.[55] While imbuing politics with radically identitarian concerns, it is a type of moralization of politics, of finding restorative dimensions of the political space not through actions but figurations of identity. For instance, the renewal narrative was fuelled by the argument that communism was an attack on a homogenous [Romanian] community, which has a strong cultural dimension and was easily exploited by far-right groups who claimed some legitimacy.[56] Similarly, in this attention to an identitarian streak in politics, images of a strong state could entertain visions of democracy, specifically because of the involvement of citizens in this very process of redefinition, and these could bring emancipatory, rather than authoritarian, inflexions to the state.

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[54] Paul Blokker, "Post-Communist Modernization, Transition Studies, and Diversity in Europe", *Paper for the CEU-EUI Annual Conferences on Intercultural Dialogue in History: Europe Through Culture*, Budapest, June 2-3, 2010. http://apps.eui.eu/Personal/Researchers/pblokker/CEUEUI.pdf.

[55] Supported also by Ban, "Beyond Anticommunism".

[56] Liliana Popescu, Lucian Vesalon "They all are the red plague": anti-communism and the Romanian radical right populists, *East European Politics,* 39, (1) 2023,150-169, DOI: 10.1080/21599165.2022.2086862

It was in this context in which political parties flirted with "culturalization" that re-interpretations of the Iron Guard and of the far-right views emerged in the 1990s. Overall, Iron Guard's members resurfaced as legitimate political figures with anticommunist credentials, useful in the 1990s quest for a new democracy.[57] Many of those returning to the country were vocal in public debate and enjoyed visibility and enjoyed respect as former opponents of the regime. Tellingly, in the 1990s in *Declaraţia Mişcării Legionare* (Declaration of the Legionary Movement), the organization criticized Ion Iliescu's pursuit of power because he was not the "legitimate leader of the people".[58] They objected to the attitude of the NSF which criminalized the far-right parties, from 1991, arguing there was a double standard concerning the communist party, still allowed. The New Christian Romania, founded in 1992 by Mircea Nicolau (himself a member of the movement and an active mobilizer of members who were still alive in the 1990s) and led by Romania's Iron Guard leader at that point, Șerban Suru defended the brief trial and execution of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu because "had it not been for this revolutionary killing, the Romanian people would have paid with thousands of lives for the national resurrection".[59] The Christian-Democrat Union, bringing together many former political prisoners, including some members of the Guard, was involved in the contestation of the type of democracy emerging in the 1990s.

Mişcarea Pentru România (The Movement for Romania) was an organization vocal and active in the political disenchantment of the 1990s and co-opted former sympathizers of the far-right movement who, after years in exile as anticommunists, were shapers of the 1990s democratic space. These individuals often fashioned themselves as victims of Antonescu or "anticommunist" exiles in the "West" and ostensibly involved in the "modernization" needed in the 1990s. Traian Golea, for instance, was invited by a number of cultural institutions to

[57] Lixeanu, "Mișcarea Legionară în Comunism".
[58] *Declaraţia Mişcării Legionare*, 1990, http://miscarea.net/declaratia-miscarii-legionare_.htm. Last accessed June 3rd, 2021.
[59] Lixeanu, "Mișcarea Legionară în Comunism", *Mișcarea Legionară* (Bucharest, June 1990).

discuss the position of those exiled in relation to the new change of regime. A new political party, the *Party for the Homeland* (Partidul Pentru Patrie, later Partidul Totul pentru Țară) emerged in this same context.

A new politics of memory followed suit in this "culturalization of politics", specifically when it came to the rehabilitation of flagship far-right figures like Marshal Ion Antonescu. During his 1991 commemoration in Parliament, members of Parliament emphasized his heroism and the brave compromises he made to prevent a Nazi invasion.[60] This narrative came to support the idea of state integrity defended by the Antonescu government. Historians Adrian Cioflâncă, Denis Deletant, and Michael Shafir have discussed the paradoxical politics of the memory of Antonescu, where the 1980s reverence towards the "national", "personal" regime cultivated in last decade of the Ceaușescu regime for its own brand of nationalism continued in the 1990s.[61] The strategies of justifying Antonescu's actions as upholding a strong statehood minimized the intentions and consequences of the territorial expulsions and aggressive politics towards minorities.[62] Consequently, Antonescu's myth fit many political narratives of the 1990s, from the immediate political interest in "patriotism" to the populist narratives about national "roots", given his military persona and humble beginnings.

Anticommunist credentials also calibrated strategies of defending Antonescu, specifically to argue that the 1944-1946 trial of Antonescu and his collaborators, "The Trial of the National Treason", had been a "political" purge trial and therefore farcical.[63] There were organizations with right-wing (nationalist) credentials, such as the Party of Romanian National

[60] Shafir, "Unacademic Academics", 1–23, Alexandru Climescu, "Law, Justice, and Holocaust Memory in Romania.", in Florian, *Holocaust Public Memory in Postcommunist Romania*, 60-61.
[61] For an overview of the Holocaust memory and antisemitism see Cârstocea, "Between Europeanisation and Local Legacies", 320-323.
[62] Adrian Cioflâncă, "A Grammar of Exculpation in Communist Historiography: Distortion of the History of the Holocaust under Ceaușescu", *The Romanian Journal of Political Science*, 2 (2004), 29–46.
[63] Executed after a show trial in 1945-1946, Antonescu was a revered figure for his anti-Russian stance during the war and consequently symbolized a struggle for sovereignty. His political trajectory inspired trust, rather than a necessary reckoning with the Holocaust. See Florian, "Memory under Construction: Introductory Remarks", 1-9; Randolph Braham, *Romanian Nationalism and the Holocaust: The Political Exploitation of Unfounded Rescue Accounts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 7-12.

Unity or The Greater Romania Party, which argued that Antonescu had been a political victim of the "illegitimate" political age dictated by "foreign", Russian, interests. Founded by Iosif Constantin Drăgan (1917-2008), a former Iron Guard sympathizer, the organization played a crucial role in upholding the myth of Antonescu as the victim of an unlawful trial, itself the symbol of a "usurpation" of the legal system by communists. [64] There were others, like the Pro Marshal Antonescu League, that were explicitly interested in his authoritarian-military image in the context of the 1990s that had a certain degree of militarism following the string of governmental repressions of 1989-1993.

Although scholars and the liberal opposition were already warning against Holocaust denial as a breach of free expression in relation to Antonescu, the Iron Guard was rarely cited in the 1990s memorial debate as a problematic actor. In the words of an officer in the Antonescu regime, Traian Borcescu, the organization's intrinsic value rested in its intention to maintain the integrity of the State: "I hit against two strong political movements: legionary and communist. Both tried to infiltrate the army, which meant a great deal of hardship for the Army and our Armed forces."[65] By revisiting Antonescu as a pillar of the strong state, the perspective on the Iron Guard was often of a 'radical' nationalist group, rather than a xenophobic or racist project.[66]

As biographies and voices of 'anticommunists' were in high demand in the 1990s, some members of the movement passed inconspicuously as voices of resistance and repression. For instance, Virgil Ogoranu (the protagonist of the movie discussed previously) also publicly testified about his resistance.[67] In the 1990s, the image of Antonescu [68], the Iron Guard and the

[64] Ibid., 33.
[65] "Din cauza ca ma lovisem de doua curente foarte puternice, cel legionar si cel comunist ... amindoua cautau sa patrunda in rindurile unitatilor militare, ceea ce aducea un prejudiciu prestigiului armatei si unitatilor noastre militare." (Traian Borcescu Ro C269, Arhivele SRR, Radio România).
[66] Alexandru Climescu, "Law, Justice, and Holocaust Memory", 60-61.
[67] See for instance Ion-Gavrilă Ogoranu, *Brazii se frâng dar nu se îndoiesc* (Timișoara: Editura Marineasa, 1993).
[68] Cosmin Sebastian Cercel, "Judging the Conducător: Fascism, Communism, and Legal Discontinuity in Post-War Romania", in Belavusau and Gliszczyńska-Grabias, *Law and Memory*, 228–245.

writings of Horia Sima seemed to be a heritage retrieved from the clutches of "antinationalist communism".[69] Indeed, it was not only the memory of the Iron Guard's violent suppression by the Antonescu government that lent the organization a distinct victimhood status.[70] For instance, the prison of Pitești, which operated until 1951 in the utmost secrecy and employed extreme levels of violence, was run primarily by guards of Iron Guard extraction, such as Eugen Ţurcanu, for instance, and was a symbol of communist oppression.[71] Today, the Pitești memorial has been embroiled in a number of controversies where survivors who had sympathized or were members of the Iron Guard were presented as martyrs.[72] The war and post-war history also allowed for this happen. First, Horia Sima regrouped many members regrouped in Germany, where the organization was tolerated by Hitler and granted asylum in the Third Reich, as they fled the Antonescu government's retaliation following the 1941 events.[73] However, *Reichsführer* Henrich Himmler was the one adamant that the organization, although it boosted its ideological support of the SS ideology and the Romanian alliance with Nazi Germany, had no place in the Reich because of its volatility.[74] Many left Germany for Spain, where they continued to peddle an anticommunist narrative. At the same time, those who stayed

[69] Horia Sima, *Era Libertății. Statul National Legionar (*Timișoara: Gordian, 1995).
[70] Rebecca Haynes, "'Without the Captain': Iuliu Maniu and the Romanian Legionary Movement after the Death of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu", *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 97 (2) 2019, 299-341.
[71.] The prison was a highly secretive and brutal facility operating at the height of the consolidation of the regime. See Andrei Muraru ed., *Dicționarul Penitenciarelor din România Comunistă* (Iași: Polirom, 2008), 34-43.
[72] Red, "Istoricul Mihai Demetriade despre „fenomenul Piteşti" şi dispute instituţionale în IICCMER şi CNSAS", *Observatorul Cultural*, 994, 2019. https://www.observatorcultural.ro/articol/istoricul-mihai-demetriade-despre-fenomenul-pitesti-si-dispute-institutionale-in-iiccmer-si-cnsas/. Last accessed September 11, 2021.
[73] The Iron Guard was challenging the Liberal and Peasant parties and resonated with the regime of Carol II. On September 14, 1940, Antonescu appointed Horia Sima as vice-prime minister. By December, the Iron Guard, with massive popularity in the countryside and a sizeable circle of trust among the middle class, was harbouring ambitions of power, so they challenged Antonescu's politics. This rivalry would contribute to the politics of repression. See Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth: Fascist Activism in Interwar Romania*, 45–47.
[74] The Iron Guard groups spent the war in a hybrid detention regime in the Fichtenhain Special Camp in the German concentration camp Buchenwald until August 1944. These men lived as "VIP" prisoners, spatially positioned between the SS barracks and the military garages, and worked at the Heinkel Flugzeugwerke factory, an aircraft manufacturing company. Another much larger group was living under house arrest near Rostock, on the Baltic seashore. Those who made it to Vienna in 1944 were actively financed by the Nazi regime to establish a "government in exile", that would eventually intervene in the communist takeover back in Bucharest. See Evelyn Zegenhagen, in Geoffrey P. Megargee ed., "Buchenwald", *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933-1945*, Volume I (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2009), 291-291. Silvestru, *Ţara, legiunea*, testimony Dumitru Groza, 15-19.

in Romania were demonized by the Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej regime in the decade after 1948-1949, so that by the 1950s amnesties, many initial members had perished. During the late nationalism of the 1970s and the 1980s, the official discourses on the Guard subsided.[75] Despite its transnational history, because the Iron Guard continued to be portrayed as an Eastern European and Romanian phenomenon, it was never fully integrated into the transnational history of the far right, which strengthened the narrative about its relative innocence. Consequently, the leader of the Iron Guard in 2015, Şerban Suru, continues to argue that the organization was never a copycat fascist or national-socialist movement, but had independent roots.[76]

Like other far-right movements in the region, the Iron Guard was also never counted as a perpetrator during the Nuremberg trials, since the Allies avoided engaging local movements in Central and Eastern Europe, in the Soviet sphere of influence.[77] The USSR was interested in controlling the pursuit of justice in Eastern Europe and keeping it separate from international legal pursuits. In the territories under its control, the focus was on the reconstruction and stabilization of the state communist order, instead of potentially risking a difficult conversation about perpetrators which could also turn to the crimes of the Left during the war.[78] The Soviets conducted a thorough antifascist campaign of trials all through Eastern Europe, determined primarily by the project of political consolidation of the new "popular democracies".[79] Romania (and Yugoslavia) had the most comprehensive juridical queries into local perpetrators during the Second World War, most of them members of the Iron Guard (Romania) and the Ustaše (Croatia).[80] These pursuits were symbols of the rejuvenation brought by the new communist

[75] Although they were closely monitored abroad, as documents in Securitate archives show.
[76] Lixeanu, "Mișcarea Legionară în Comunism".
[77] Climescu, "Law, Justice, and Holocaust", 63; Florian, "Memory under Construction: Introductory Remarks." Raul Cârstocea, "Anti-Semitism in Romania: Historical Legacies, Contemporary Challenges" (Flesburg, 2014), https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/185286/Working_Paper_81.pdf. Last accessed January 23, 2021.
[78] Pendas, *Democracy, Nazi Trials, Transitional Justice*, 6-8.
[79] Fulbrook, *Legacies of Nazi Persecution*, 1-15.
[80] Melissa Feinberg, "Telling Lies, Making Truth" in *Curtain of Lies: The Battle over Truth in Stalinist Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 1–34.

order and, as purges, have contributed to the history of abuses of the regime in the 1950s and discredited their contribution to postwar justice in the region.

As already mentioned, Suru's opinion was shared by a generation of local historians, who continued to reject the fascist character of the movement.[81] Intellectuals such as Iosif Constantin Dragan, using the reformism and radicalism of their modernization claims, saw potential in these memorial symbols in the 1990s to re-legitimize the Iron Guard.[82] That it challenged much of the monarchy's corporatist order and the "corrupt" politics of the government continues to be the most recognizable allure of the Iron Guard.[83] This also emerged from testimonies and memories of those involved with the Guard, which were widely available and circulating in the 1990s. One former member, Dumitru Lungu, argued:

> What attracted me to the Legionary movement was its doctrine. I knew one thing, that you went in it as a person, and had to exit it as a hero, and not momentary hero, as those fighting on the front, no! You were a hero who had to fight himself and had to do everything possible to be a better person! For me, the Legionary movement was not a political struggle, it was a school, an extraordinary school where I found people so pure and beautiful beyond my wildest imagination. [84]

These interpretations were not far off from the idea of achieving collective well-being, as progress towards democracy and modernization demanded a community of enterprising subjects able to withstand the political transformation. In this sense, the Iron Guard's heroic memory blended in seamlessly with past histories where the "state" had been a progressive force because it encouraged values of solidarity and individual perseverance. It brought back

[81] See Shafir, "Unacademic Academics"; Cârstocea, "Between Europeanisation and Local Legacies", 5-7.
[82] Dragan was one of the founders of the League Marshall Antonescu Party.
[83] See Roland Clark, "Images of Crisis, the Press and the Rise of the fascism" in Marco Bresciani eds., *Conservatives and Right Radicals in Interwar Europe* (London: Routledge, 2021), 192; Mihai Stelian Rusu, "The Sacralization of Martyric Death in Romanian Legionary Movement: Self-Sacrificial Patriotism, Vicarious Atonement, and Thanatic Nationalism," *Politics, Religion and Ideology,* 17, 2–3 (2016), 249-273, https://doi.org/10.1080/21567689.2016.1232196.
[84] "La Mişcarea legionară m-a atras doctrina ei. Ştiam un lucru, că în Mişcarea legionară intrai un om, iar la celălalt capăt trebuia să ieşi un erou, un erou nu de moment, aşa cum e pe front, nu! Un erou care să lupte cu sine însuşi, să facă din el tot ceea ce poate să fie mai bun pe linie omenească! Mişcarea legionară, pentru mine, n-a fost o luptă politică, a fost o şcoală, o şcoală extraordinară, în care am găsit oameni de o curăţenie şi de o frumuseţe sufletească cum nu mi-am putut imagina că există pe pământ!" Interview Dumitru Lungu 1269C262/1995, Arhivele SNRR. Also published in Octavian Silvestru, *Țara, Legiunea, Căpitanul Mişcarea Legionară în Documente de Istorie Orală* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2008), 18.

images of "Romanianness" as a radical, self-sacrificial patriotism that had emerged between 1920 and 1933. Elevating the citizen was attainable through personal industriousness in the vision of the Iron Guard, and its members encouraged manual work and participation regardless of class.[85]

The narrative of radical change on which the democracy of the 1990s relied was susceptible to the Iron Guard's image as a distinct anti-corruption movement (and in general against social decay or degeneration).[86] For instance, in his testimony, Aurel Popa, a member of the movement, conveys a belief in patriotic renewal when arguing "even the brothers of the cross came to mix the Legionary movement with the Romanian nation, because it was the most fateful part of the national symbol".[87] He also references an active resistance against a state often portrayed as morally bankrupt by the Iron Guard's propaganda, which was the only alternative to this "corruption"[88]. This was still credible in the 1990s, when the general debate echoed the same feeling. The ideas that the fabric of the nation had been affected by communism fixated on a decrepit state coming out of communist dictatorship, the plundering of state resources by new capitalist actors emerging in the 1990s and in general the discontent with a capitalist class that was former party Communist party members that seemed to prey of the new affordances of capitalism.[89]

Fittingly, in 1992, Horia Sima who survived the war and lived in Madrid after 1946, published here the book *L'Ordre Naturel du Monde. Christianisme. Nationalisme. Démocratie*

[85] Rebecca Haynes has argued that personal motivations and industriousness motivated those active in voluntary work camps of the Iron Guard, where youth were participating in public works and projects. She makes the case that camps were an integral part to the process of shaping a the "new man" that the Iron Guard was presenting to its followers as a contribution to the newly independent State (after 1918) and thus captivated the imagination of intellectuals and public alike. See Rebecca Haynes, "Work Camps, Commerce, and the Education of the 'new Man' in the Romanian Legionary Movement", *Historical Journal* 51, 4 (2008), 943–967, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X08007140.
[86] Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth*.
[87] Aurel Popa "Pentru că noi… chiar fraţii de cruce, au ajuns să confunde Mişcarea legionară cu neamul românesc, pentru că era reprezentanta cea mai fidelă a sentimentului naţional" Silvestru. *Ţara, Legiunea, Căpitanul*, 16
[88] Ibid. 17. For context, see also Cârstocea, "The Unbeareable Virtues".
[89] Marius Ion Bența,'Duplicity, corruption, and exceptionalism in the Romanian experience of modernity' in Agnes Horvath, Manussos Marangudakis and Arpad Szakolczai eds., *Modern Leaders. Between Charisma and Trickery* (London/New York: Routledge, 2020), 211–228.

in which he argued the state after 1989 was facing a catastrophe similar to 1945, when communism emerged in Eastern Europe.[90] Christianity, nationalism and democracy were his credo and the first two elements are integrated into the very principles of the functioning of the state; democracy, he argues, is "intrinsic and organic in the existence of the people".[91] Democracy, he contended, was to be preferred to totalitarian or authoritarian regimes. These messages echoed discourses coming from the NSF Party discussed in chapter 1, which built a discourse around the need for a new community and a more popular type of democracy.[92] The context of the 1930s carried a civic dimension that blended in with the generalized conflictual environment of the 1990s maintained by the Social Democrats. The role of past organizations such as the Iron Guard as a direct representative of the will of the people, amidst a deep social conflict between the Left, the Right and in general conservative mainstream politics, thus neatly resonated with the NSF's discourse of the 1990s.[93]

The context of the 1990s, the economic and political crisis, and much of the street protests and political violence happening in early 1990 (discussed in chapter 5) also shaped a benevolent discourse towards the right. There were parallels in discourse that were hard to miss, for instance, according to the Codreanu and the Legion, the country's degeneration into crisis owed more to the corporatist interwar system than to communism[94]. In fact, the support of the Guard for the early communist movements, in 1933, was defined by ideas that the financial crisis threatened all social classes because of an "unjust state". In 1991, a former member of

[90] Horia Sima, *L'Ordre Naturel du Monde. Christianisme. Nationalisme. Démocratie* (Madrid, 1992), 76.
[91] Ibid.
[92] See chapter 1.
[93] Kristen Ghodsee, *The Left Side of History: World War II and the Unfulfilled Promise of Communism in Eastern Europe* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2015), 63-68.; Dick Howard, "The Anti-Totalitarian Left between Morality and Politics", in Dirk Moses, Warren Breckman and Peter Gordon eds., *The Modernist Imagination* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 331–346.
[94] See Victor Rizescu, "Corporatism in Interwar Romania: Overlapping Sources and Competing Varieties", *Journal of Constitutional History*, 42(2), 2021, 117-131. https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/76620/ssoar-gstocon-2021-2-rizescu-Corporatism_in_Interwar_Romania_Overlapping.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y&lnkname=ssoar-gstocon-2021-2-rizescu-Corporatism_in_Interwar_Romania_Overlapping.pdf.

the Iron Guard, Constantin Teja, explains people's loyalty to the movement by pointing to its stand on "economic justice":

> All the while, the Legionary movement used to state the following: the worker had to be paid well and had to be a shareholder in the entreprise where he works and then he will work willingly, because his stakes also grow....The advantage was that trade in the Legionary way was affordable. Because we settled with very little. The Jews, on the other hand... [95]

According to Codreanu, only a socially conscious "new man", loyal to what Codreanu argued in Parliament in 1935 are the ideals of the movement - "the ethnonational state, based on the primacy of national culture, on the primacy of family and the principle of working corporations"[96] - could solve it. With the appetite for identity and freedom narratives, which abounded in political discourses in the 1990s as an expression of leaving totalitarianism behind, such principles were appealing. Religion also had an important dimension of autonomy, after a long atheist dictatorship, which further helped legitimize the far-right's Orthodox dimension.

The memory activism of the 1990s was driven by a desire for radical democracy, and one tailored to the urban, youth elite. Back then, this radical image of resistance and purification of politics conveyed a collective ethos, belonging to a communitarian and equally "developmental" social project.[97] The abundance, progress and community spirit that contradicted the "underdevelopment" and a sense of persecution and loss caused by the communist period translated almost seamlessly into a blatant disregard of anti-Semitism and xenophobia of the Iron Guard in memory politics.[98] Rather, the ideas the self-representation

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[95] "Pe câtă vreme Mişcarea legionară spunea aşa: muncitorul să fie plătit ca lumea şi să fie şi acţionar la întreprinderea unde lucrează şi atunci va munci cu drag, pentru că acolo cresc şi acţiunile lui... Avantajul era că în comerţul legionar erau preţurile mici. Pentru că ne mulţumeam cu puţin. Pe câtă vreme evreii …" Interview Constantin Teja, B 13332, interviewer Octavian Silvestru, Interview January 1992, Oral History Archives, the Romanian National Radio Broadcasting Company.

[96] Quoted in Săndulescu, "Fascism and its Quest for the 'New Man:'". Corneliu Zelea Codreanu and the patriotic idea about modernization found an echo in the 1990s debate about civil society in the wake of 1989. See also Roland Clark, "The Salience of "New Man" Rhetoric in Romanian Fascist Movements, 1922–44", in Jorge Dagnino, Matthew Feldman, and Paul Stocker eds., *The New Man in Radical Right Ideology and Practice, 1919-1945* (London: Bloomsbury Academic 2018), 275-294.

[97] Constantin Papanace, *Stilul Legionar de Luptă* (Bucharest: Lucman, 2004). Codreanu was also wary of condemning socialism. They equally shared the wrath of the Siguranța (the generic name for the secret police services in the Kingdom of Romania), as opponents of the state.

[98] The fact that communism threatened this development had been a transnational narrative, which inevitably reproduces Nazi propaganda on the topic after the war and too much of the debate about the collaboration of the

incorporated elements of "popular Orthodoxy",[99] martyrdom and "purity. In contrast, racist narratives infiltrated the political and social debate and easily slipped through. Indeed, the ideal political architecture for Codreanu did not include other ethnic minorities – and the Jewish community was virulently singled out – to create a (Romanian) new man embodying the model provided by the Iron Guard.[100] (it is important to recall here that the Iron Guard was not only complicit in the plundering and confiscations of property but also participated actively in the killings of members of the Jewish community between 1933 and 1941).

In effect, the racial dimension was attached to anticommunism, specifically one that meant a rejection of an "Eastern" character, Slavic character, and old right-wing adages resonated with this 1990s mindset.[101] For instance, the Guard's boasted a modernizing drive that would eliminate a form of backwardness associated with the Slavic heritage. For those lamenting in the 1990s that communism had destroyed the "national" community, and that the collectivist political dimension was an interruption of "interwar capitalism"[102], this narrative was useful. Both the Iron Guard and the Antonescu regime in fact insisted on the 'latinité', the Latin character, of the nation, in opposition to Romania's Slavic neighbours.[103] This discourse backed a general civilizational dimension of modernization of the 1990s that fuelled much of the racist undertones of reform, European orientation and Western-centric political and economic ideas that shaped the Romanian debates of the 1990s.[104] There was a wariness of "foreigners", at the time, especially those who criticized the fragile dimension of the country,

state, economically for instance. The paradoxical image of the Jew standing alone against the forces of development, during the early years of the Cold War, a central one that found its legitimation in both the "resistance during the Third Reich and the lesson of the face of the enemy". See S. Jonathan Wiesen, "Overcoming Nazism" in *Central European History,* 29, (2), 1996, 201–26.
https://www.jstor.org/stable/4546593.

[99] Haynes, "'A New Greater Romania'?".

[100] Ion Moța, *Protocoalele Înțelepților Sionului* (Cluj: Vicovia, 2012).

[101] Constantin Iordachi, "God's Chosen Warriors: Romantic Palingenesis, Militarism and Fascism in Modern Romania", in Constantin Iordachi, ed., *Comparative Fascist Studies: New Perspectives* (London: Routledge: 2009), 316-357, 350.

[102] Orenstein , Bugarič, "Work, Family, Fatherland".

[103] For the importance of Latiné for the Antonescu regime, see P*ace si război (1940-1944)- Jurnalul maresalului Ion Antonescu*, Gheorghe Buzatu ed. (Iași: Casa Editorială Demiurg Plus, 2008), 231, 244.

[104] Muller, "Modernising Eastern Europe".

or who questioned the particular angle of patriotism and self-sacrifice.[105] Indeed, in this context, the culture-politics conflation manifested in the way debates about political gains or perceived drawbacks quickly escalated to "national character" and "essence of the nation". Their racial connotations were never discussed.[106].

Memories of its anti-Semitism, anti-Gypsyism and extremism associated with the far-right were thus conveniently silenced. Ostensibly directed against Antonescu, the 1941 pogrom on the streets of Bucharest, which resulted in the looting of Jewish property and the killings of Jews, was rarely commemorated, with several events emerging since the 2010s to mark histories of violence against the community before, during and after the war.[107] Bucharest's Jewish neighbourhood, then home to almost 5,000 people, was burned and pillaged for three days. One hundred twenty-five people died; some were tortured and executed on the outskirts of the city.[108] The Iași pogrom has been commemorated only since the 2010s with a plaque. Other massacres during the Second World War, which were primarily the blame of the Romanian Army, such the 30th of June in Galați, continue to be blankspots.[109]

The anti-communist perspective created overt simplifications in terms of memory that resonated with the general "vindictive" democracy of the 1990s which also simplified political

[105] Rebecca Ann Haynes, "'A New Greater Romania'? Romanian Claims to the Serbian Banat in 1941", *Central Europe*, 3, 2 (2005), 99–120. https://doi.org/10.1179/147909605x69374.
[106] The regional element of the Iron Guard is essential for an understanding of the popularity and the enduring pull of the movement. It shared much of the extreme nationalism, agrarian values, simultaneously anticommunist and anticapitalist of the Hungarian Arrow Cross and the Ukrainian OUN. Szalasi's Arrow Cross was transformed in 1935 into a political party, but its origins lay in the right-wing groups that were the advocates of "national socialism", and admirers of pro-German extremists such as Gyula Gömbös, but advocated independence from Austro-Hungary. See Andrea Pető, *The Women of the Arrow Cross. Invisible Hungarian Perpetrators in the Second World War* (London: Palgrave, 2020), 5-18. The Hungarian Turanist fascism or Hungarianism of Ferenc Szálasi, that upheld the values of the peasantry and isolation and insularity, and implicitly Anti-semitism, are also relevant. See Michał Kowalczyk, "Hungarian Turanism. From the Birth of the Ideology to Modernity – an Outline of the Problem", *Historia i Polityka* 20, 27 (2017), 49. https://doi.org/10.12775/hip.2017.011.
[107] The victims were the scapegoats for both sides in the Iron Guard and the Antonescu government's fight for power. See F. Brunea-Fox, *Orașul Măcelului: Jurnalul Rebeliunei și Crimelor Legionare: Fapte, Mărturii, Documente Fotografice* (Bucharest: Luceafărul, 1944), 45-56.
[108] Adrian Cioflânca, "Erasing Memory, the Destruction of the Old Jewish Cemeteries in Bucharest and Iasi during the Ion Antonescu Regime", *Revista de Istorie a Evreilor Din România* 1, 16 (2016), 332.
[109] The pogrom in Galați was committed by the Romanian Army against Jewish refugees from Bessarabia taking refuge in Romania.

debates. The Iron Guard had argued parties must be obliged not to make promises they cannot keep. It requested that untrustworthy politicians be imprisoned – a call that resonated with those who felt unrepresented by the political options in the 1990s. A deep dissatisfaction with the early democratic politics triggered sympathy for the Iron Guard in the 1990s.[110] In youth and many intellectual circles, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu was often presented as an anti-establishment hero, and not a political leader of the far- right. Ideas of the Guard were taken over by student movements in the 1990, and on banners or in projects of youth NGOs in the 2000s. His image continues to be a rather benign invocation of industriousness and establishment sentiment. The situation is similar, for instance, with leaders of the OUN and the Stepan Bandera cult in Ukraine or the re-evaluation of the Ustasha Leader Ante Pavelić, in Yugoslavia.[111] Yet, following sociologist Dylan Riley's argument that the "civic undertones" of the far-right and fascist movements in Italy, Spain and Romania were those that have made them endure as "plausible inflexions of democracy", this silencing of memory can be explained further.[112] Codreanu's movement developed in "the political vacuum left by the failure of Romania's parties to carry out a democratic project", and thus the appeal of the movement has endured much longer than fascism, argues Riley.[113]

These were all dimensions of an undercurrent memory culture that focuses on the rejuvenation of democracy in the 1990s, and in general the notion of renewal of the polity which, in turn, has had a strong effect of silencing debates on the potential perils of the far-right. For instance, in 2016, the Romanian Social Democrat Party, whose political message is often sovereigntist, used an extensive campaign around the term "parallel state" to suggest the

[110] Rusu, "The Sacralisation of Martyric Death", 249–73; Valentin Săndulescu, "Generation, Regeneration, and Discourses of Identity in the Intellectual Foundations of Romanian Fascism: The Case of the Axa Group", in Maria Mishkova, Dulf Jalava, and Balázs Trencsényi, eds., '*Regimes of Historicity' in Southeastern and Northern Europe, 1890-1945* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 220-220.
[111] See Mark Biondich, "'We Were Defending the State': Nationalism, Myth, and Memory in Twentieth-Century Croatia", in John Lampe and Mark Mazower eds., *Ideology and National Identities* (Budapest: Central University Press, 2013), 54-109.
[112] Dylan Riley, *The Civic Foundations of Fascism* , 5–12.
[113] Ibid., 19.

presence of nefarious forces, not as opposition but as a destabilizing power, effectively constructing a convenient political enemy.[114] Presumably, enduring infrastructures of repression, such as the Security Police, as well as various pre-1989 state organizations continued to damage Romanian liberal democracy from within. The narratives emerging in the partisan press at the time were overtly conservative, with debates about the "right" type of family values and carried explicitly racial undertones. The usage of the term "parallel-state" sparked debates at the time, and the media was quick to associate it with usual authoritarianism attributed to this group, but as an imported notion. The press and local critics attributed the concept of the "parallel state" to a type of contrived authoritarianism inspired by the "parallel state" narrative used by Recep Erdogan since 2014. [115] Using this concept, Erdogan similarly pointed to a nefarious (liberal) organization that worked to undermine the state.[116] Some journalists looked for the parallels in the 1970s American iteration of a "deep state", also popular in the American alt-right, to describe alternative power structures like the CIA and financial actors: in the Romanian context, attributed to shadow representatives of past "totalitarian communism" aiming to dismantle the "rightful state" of the liberal law, the Constitution and popular vote.[117] However the comments and reception of the issue ignored the local roots of these authoritarian narratives that bring together morals, the state and a "healthy" democracy.[118] That liberal alternative was expressively embodied by the right, where factions

[114] DC News Team, 'Cine sau ce este statul paralel?', 2017. https://www.dcnews.ro/cine-sau-ce-este-statul-paralel_567225.html. Last accessed February 11, 2020.
[115] BBC News, "Turkey's Erdogan battles 'parallel state'", https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30492348.
[116] Piotr Zalewski, "Erdogan Turns on Gulenists' 'Parallel State' in Battle for Power", *Financial Times*, 2014. Last accessed April 23, 2019. Ironically, they were invoking the Czech dissident Vaclav Benda's concept of a "parallel society" in communist Eastern Europe as the opposition, while they were insisting on a hidden collusion between past democrats and the EU. See Václav Benda, Milan Simecka, Ivan M Jirous, Jiri Dienstbier, Havel Václav , Ladislav Hejdnek and Jan Simsa, "Parallel Polis, or an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe: An Inquiry", *Social Research*, 55 (1988), 211–46. https://www.jstor.org/stable/40970497.
[117] VM, 'Tăriceanu: Statul Paralel Ne Pune La Încercare Chiar Și Curajul', www.hotnews.ro, 2018. https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-politic-22513572-riceanu-statul-paralel-pune-ncercare-chiar-curajul.htm. Last accessed February 15, 2020.
[118] Liz Fekete, *Racism and the Rise of the Right* (London: Verso Books, 2019), 3-15.

were not shy in using the same narratives about "reformism" or "development". There was little reflection on the points where these converged easily.

In the following three sections, I reflect on more recent debates of memory that operate with the same 'culturalization of politics' leading to a culture of silence of Romania's historical far-right.

3. The Shame of Anti-Semitism

The narrative of the rejuvenation of democracy and "national reawakening" came not only with selective narratives about the political right, but it also brushed off xenophobic or anti-Semitic sentiments that questioned rose-tinted perspectives on the Romanian interwar period. The reading of the age as a "cosmopolitan" moment dismantled by "communism", has had many iterations, one of those since the early 1990s being the fascist and antisemitic inclinations of many Romanian interwar intellectuals, more prominently Emil Cioran and Mircea Eliade.[119] Beyond the cultural space, such inclinations were also present in the political sphere. As Pieter Judson outlined, especially for the successor states of the 19th century empires, liberalism was one of the sources of anti-Semitism, as the focus on the state and reaching a majoritarian consensus closed the space of representation for minority groups.[120] This was particularly relevant in Romania, where the Romanian Liberal Party maintained and even enforced conditions of disenfranchisement of the Jewish community.[121] Specifically, "they aimed at limiting Jews' newly won political rights, social integration, and economic activities", in their

[119] Bruce Lincoln, *Secrets, Lies and Consequences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024), 8-35.
[120] Pieter Judson, *Exclusive Revolutionaries Liberal Politics, Social Experience, and National Identity in the Austrian Empire, 1848-1914* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 35-40.
[121] Lisa Leff, "Liberalism and Antisemitism: A Reassessment from the Peripheries". In: Green, A., Levis Sullam, S. (eds) *Jews, Liberalism, Antisemitism* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-48240-4, 2.

quest to secure an independent state.[122] However, the Liberal Party in the interwar period still enjoys a revered status of tolerant victim of the communist takeover.

The intricacies and the pitfalls of this narrative of a liberal, cosmopolitan "golden age", defined against what followed, were again laid bare in 2016, in a slightly different, at least more Holocaust-aware, context. Upon the first translation into English of Mihail Sebastian's 1934 novel *De două mii de ani* (For Two Thousand Years), debates emerged around the Romanian experience of the rising pre-war anti-Semitism in Europe. Mihail Sebastian (1907-1945) was a popular and widely read interwar writer and journalist of Jewish extraction, and one of the controversial aspects of his work in Romania has been his claims that the appeal of the far right was not exceptional in Romanian interwar society. Sebastian's diary challenged the liberal-cosmopolitan narrative, in the mid-1990s, when his accounts of the sympathies for the far right of close friends, including Mircea Eliade, Nae Ionescu, and Emil Cioran sparked a fierce debate about the "betrayal" of national values.[123] His commentaries showed the ease with which far-right politics and ideas spread in the political and intellectual environment of the time. He was blamed, however, for a spiteful and anti-Romanian attitude against a canon of national cultural elites.[124] The diary alone opened the debate about anti-Semitism, by showing its extent in the past and by making evident similar attitudes in the present.[125] The reception, at the time, focused exclusively on the "staining" of Romanian values by minimizing the immensity of the experience of Soviet occupation.[126]

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[122] Ibid., 4.

[123] All prominent intellectuals at the time, who, despite their diverse preoccupations, were favourable to and even convinced by the regeneration spirit of the Iron Guard. See Livezeanu, "Romania's Cultural Wars", 5-10.

[124] About the re-nationalization of Mircea Eliade after 1989, see Florin Țurcanu, *Mircea Eliade. Prizonierul Istoriei* (Bucharest: Humanitas Publishing, 2000).

[125] The diary from 1935 to 1944 was smuggled to Israel in the 1950s by his brother Benu and published in 1996 where it caused an outcry. See Denise Rosenthal, "'The Mythical Jew': Antisemitism, Intellectuals, and Democracy in Post-Communist Romania", *Nationalities Papers,* 29, 3 (2001), 419–39. https://doi.org/10.1080/00905990120073681.

[126] In 1995, a similar case was that of the translation into Romanian of *Kaputt*, written by far-right-leaning Italian author Curzio Malaparte. It was controversial not because of the author, but because the book was a clear account of the participation of the Romanian Army in the 1941 Iași Pogrom. See Gheorghiu, "The Iași Pogrom, 47–57.

De două mii de ani presented an equally scathing image of Romanian "democracy" in the 1930s.[127] The book depicted the violence against Jewish students and pointed to fast-rising anti-Semitism and growing authoritarianism in the 1920s, in opposition to which there were very few critical voices. It details the sacrifices and humiliations caused by the racial laws implemented gradually from 1924 onwards, the gradual embrace of political right-wing views and the normalization of anti-Semitic sentiments. In the years that followed the publication of the diary, his disclosures have been often revisited. For the most part, Sebastian's work was incorporated into an extensive canon of testimonies by survivors of the Holocaust, as a Jewish voice, that testified to the problematic interwar democracy, but that very interpretative lens opened long-standing conflicts. A debate started around 2007, when literary critic Marta Petreu reinvestigated the interwar cultural history that Sebastian's diary had depicted. In her later book, she argued that Sebastian's status as a victim of "anti-Semitism" had been a hurried "invention" because his political writings had shown "a decidedly antidemocrat collectivist, antiliberal, pro-fascist" tone.[128] The issue of Sebastian's "betrayal" of the Jewish community and his political writings, argued Petreu, should all be reinvestigated.

Sebastian's prominence in cultural circles made him be regarded as one of the stalwarts of interwar modernism, even during the communist regime. Consequently, Sebastian's literary career had placed him in a preferential witness position, with regard to the growing debate on the Holocaust, at the expense of other diaries which circulated in the 1990s with little impact, such as Eva Heyman's account of her deportation to Auschwitz, where she died in 1944, or even those of Romanians of Jewish origins who lived under communist rule.[129] Poet Maria

[127] Mihail Sebastian, *For Two Thousand Years*, transl. by Philip Ó Ceallaigh (London: Penguin Books, 2016).
[128] Interview Marta Petreu – Ovidiu Șimonca, "Figura lui Sebastian a fost mistificată cu premeditare" *Observatorul Cultural* (Bucharest: 2009), Marta Petreu, *Diavolul și Ucenicul Său: Nae Ionescu – Mihail Sebastian* (Iași: Polirom Publishing House, 2009), 5-18.
[129] Eva Heyman was born and grew up in Oradea, a city on the border between Romania and Hungary. She was deported to Auschwitz and died in October 1944, age 13. Her diary was salvaged from deportation and was first published in 1964 by Yad Vashem. She paints a brutal picture of the deportations from Transylvania. See Agnes Zsolt eds, Éva Heyman, *The Diary of Éva Heyman* (New York: Shapolsky Publishers, 1988), Introduction, 9-12.

Bănuş published her diary in 1977[130], while the diplomat Raoul Bossy published excerpts of his Jewish experience during communism, and the figure of humanitarian worker Eugen Relgis became of interest in the late 1980s.[131] F. Brunea-Fox, one of the keen chroniclers of interwar cosmopolitanism and inequality, and segregation of the Jewish community, also wrote *Oraşul Măcelului* (The City of Slaughter) a unique first hand-account of the 1941 Bucharest pogrom.[132] These were all turning points that also showed the barriers and challenges of discussing antisemitism, yet these books and their authors do not have a lingering memorial trace in intellectual debates on the Jewish community in Romania.

Ripples of that debate around Sebastian's visibility were noticeable in 2016, when reviews in international publications such as *The Guardian* welcomed the translation of the book as a fresh look at the "rise of Nazism" at a time when analogies were invoked to understand the crisis of European democracy.[133] Back home, Sebastian's own position in Romanian society came to be fiercely debated, and his assimilation was questioned. Sebastian's position as a critic of interwar democracy came under scrutiny on account of his anarchic intellectual trajectory. His articles were frequently published in *Cuvântul*, a newspaper favoured by the Iron Guard, without harbouring any sympathy for the movement.[134] He later published in the left-leaning *România Liberă* newspaper, again without noticeably adhering to the "left". The debate around 2016 specifically targeted these contradictory political positions and his lack of activism "for" democracy. He was "an eternally undecided individual between the left and

[130] Maria Bănuş, *Sub camuflaj. Jurnal 1943-1944*, Bucharest (Cartea Românească, 1977). Also mentioned in Ionescu, *Jewish Resistance,* 77.
[131] Journalist and writer born in Iaşi, active in the modernist Jewish circles before and after the First World War. Prominent critical voice in the interwar period, he relocated to Latin America when the persecution of Jews in Romania reached its peak. During and after the war he was active in humanitarian European circles, where he contributed to the field with several publications. See Ionescu, *Jewish Resistance to 'Romanianization*, 145.
[132] Reporter, journalist and translator Filip Brauner, prominent in the interwar period primarily for his pieces in the (Jewish) magazine *Adam* and for his close collaboration with the Sociology school of Dimitrie Gusti and with photographer Iosif Berman. See F. Brunea-Fox, *Reportajele mele. 1927-1938* (Bucharest: Albatros, 1977).
[133] Paul Bailey, "'I Am Ashamed to Be Sad': The Remarkable Story of a Jewish Student in 1920s Romania", *The Guardian* (16 March 2016). https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/mar/19/mihail-sebastian-two-thousand-years-nazism-europe. Last accessed May 21, 2022.
[134] Mihai Iovănel, *Evreul Improbabil. Mihail Sebastian: O Monografie Ideologică* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 2012).

the right", argued one journalist. Furthermore, Sebastian's unwillingness to condemn communism, the 2016 article seems to suggest, meant he must have been harbouring secret sympathies for the communists.[135]

These recent arguments ended up contesting Sebastian's "Jewishness" by repeating arguments formulated back in 1934, when *For 2000 Years* came out as a self-contradictory piece. Sebastian included a preface with distinctly anti-Semitic tones written by philosopher Nae Ionescu, a well-known writer and academic and Sebastian's former mentor. Like many other prominent intellectuals, Ionescu had become fiercely anti-Semitic by the end of the 1930s.[136] His beliefs are apparent in the foreword to Sebastian's book:

> If Jews suffer today, they suffer because they are Jews. They will stop being Jews the day they stop suffering, and they will only be able to get rid of the suffering when they will not be Jews. This is a terrible fatality against which there is nothing to be done...But, Christians suffer too.[137]

Opting to keep that preface exposed Sebastian's book to a fierce debate about his position on the Jewish "cause" at the time. In the pages of the Jewish monthly magazine 'Adam', writer Isac Ludo argued that "for years he was deaf to the Israeli blood….When he does, he takes the side of an enemy of the Jewish people, against the Jewish people."[138] The respectable philosopher Mircea Vulcănescu, otherwise sympathetic to the Iron Guard, argued that Sebastian had split with the Jewish community to "melt into the Romanian group". To him, he was the epitome of self-denial, and "considered the objectives (of the Jewish group)" only in passing and "talked about democracy, communism, Christian Orthodoxy, fascism, corporate revolution".[139] Indeed, Sebastian himself noticed that the (de facto) assimilated position of the

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[135] Medeea Stan, "Mihail Sebastian, În Epocă: Evreul Chibzuit, Legionar Şi Comunist", *Adevărul*, November 5, 2016, https://Adevărul.ro/cultura/carti/stigmatele-mihail-sebastian-evreul-chibzuit-legionar-comunist-1_581b4b4f5ab6550cb82d4599/index.html. Last accessed May 1, 2019.

[136] Moshe Idel, "A Controversy over a Preface: Mihail Sebastian and Nae Ionescu", *Modern Judaism*, 35, (1) 2015, 42–65. https://doi.org/10.1093/mj/kju023.

[137] Mihail Sebastian, *După 2000 de Ani,* Preface Nae Ionescu.

[138] I. Ludo, "Un Ovreiu Cumsecade În Ghiarele Moralei Judaice", *Adam* (Bucharest, March 1934). BCUB, BU P II 99, vol. 33.

[139] Mircea Vulcănescu, *Nae Ionescu, Aşa cum l-am Cunoscut* (Bucharest: Humanitas Publishing, 1992), 15.

Jew, a "double identity", was more suspicious than a more traditional role. In 1935, in his reaction to the entire scandal about the book, he points out this was about a normative Jewishness.[140]

In 2016, Sebastian was still portrayed as an intellectual unwilling to share the Jewish community's plight, despite the fact that he himself acknowledged his own controversial status and opted to practise it. These contradictions led to a public questioning of his position as a Jewish victim and credibility as a witness. How could a legitimate Jewish victim not take political sides? The general perspective in the literature and memorial politics of the Holocaust is that a voice for the Jewish community needed to be that of a victim, and perhaps also be an outsider, as historian Jay Winter argues[141] It is worth pointing out that the portrayal of Sebastian as a canon of modernist interwar culture has often worked in tandem with an imaginary origin of democracy attributed to interwar cosmopolitanism.[142] His lack of identification with his Jewish roots made him less controversial. But, in this case, that lack of engagement was turned into an argument that avoided the question of antisemitism altogether but avoided any further political interpretation of his book.

Arguably, the recent controversy happened because, with his first-hand account, Sebastian suggested that anti-Semitism and authoritarianism developed within, and not against, the "liberal" interwar "golden age". The issues of Jewishness in interwar liberal circles were rarely clear-cut, citizenship rights for the Jewish community were limited, and they were still considered "foreign" to the nation.[143] In a recent publication, historians Raul Cârstocea and Éva Kovács point out how, for much of the interwar period, anti-Semitism was a "cultural code of

[140] He argued it was becoming impossible not to affirm allegiance and Zionist beliefs. Indeed, Sebastian's critiques were silenced by his deportation to Transnistria and the Second World War. Sebastian died in 1945 in Bucharest, having "exchanged" Transnistria for forced labour in Bucharest, but he remained somewhat controversial in the eyes of the Romanian Jewish community. He wrote about it himself in *How I became a Hooligan.*

[141] Jay Winter, "The "moral witness" and the two world wars", *Ethnologie française*, 3, (37), 2007, 467-474. DOI : 10.3917/ethn.073.0467. URL: https://www.cairn.info/revue-ethnologie-francaise-2007-3-page-467.html.

[142] Livezeanu, "Romanian Culture Wars", 7.

[143] See Diana Dumitru, *The State, Antisemitism, and Collaboration in the Holocaust: The Borderlands of Romania and the Soviet Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 53-60.

aristocracy and the upper-middle classes"[144], easily turning into the type of virulent antisemitism pointing to conspiracies. Anti-Semitism was attached to a cultural narrative of modernization and political advancement of the interwar period, specifically by suggesting it was a way of keeping at bay religion (Orthodox Judaism) and communism. Rather than being a quest for co-habitation, the purpose of allowing the assimilation of the Jewish community was the stabilization of the post-First World War political system, as an "assimilationist social contract".[145]

Back in the 1990s, Sebastian's work was among the first to open the debate about the implication of the public exculpation of the Holocaust and a rising cult of Antonescu after six decades of communism.[146] The observations that Sebastian makes in relation to anti-Semitism and the exclusions that members of the Jewish community experienced, found little echo in a "politics of avoidance" of the Holocaust, which, according to historian Alexandru Florian has shaped Romanian debates:

> The perpetrators of the Holocaust had always been cast as members of the "fascist dictatorship." This was a strategy to deny the Holocaust in Romania by pointing toward another perpetrator rather than the real, historical one: the Romanian government led by Ion Antonescu between 1940 and 1944.[147]

However, it was also this perspective on the perpetrator, focusing on the authoritarian leader, that did not do justice to the complexity of anti-Semitism and occluded its many facets. It constructed an exculpatory sphere of debate on anti-Semitism, that has been either attached to the Left or to the exceptional regime of Antonescu.

The recent debate, and the old arguments it picks up, not only suggests that anti-Semitism persists, but that perspectives on democracy and specifically a certain teleological

[144] Raul Cârstocea and Éva Kovács, eds., *Modern Antisemitisms in the Peripheries, Europe and Its Colonies 1880–1945* (Vienna: New Academic Press, 2019), 15.
[145] Ibid, 12.
[146] Florian, "Introductory Remarks: Memory under Construction", 18; Shafir, "Uncritical Intellectuals", 9.
[147] Alexandru Florian, *Holocaust Public Memory in Postcommunist Romania* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018, 12.

historical imaginary of liberal democracy contributes to a lack of debate on the topic. The controversy surrounding the publication of the second edition of *De Două mii de ani* indicates a difficulty in addressing darker sides of interwar cosmopolitan perspective, or contradictions. These recent dynamics show how the externalization of meanings of anti-Semitism happens as commentators make continuous efforts to attribute it to something else (communism, political indecision). The novelist Philip Ó'Ceallaigh, the translator of the English edition of Sebastian's novel, described this as a silence in which "we are so used to seeing fascism, Nazism, and racism represented in popular culture, especially in TV and film, in terms of people filled with hatred. It's easier to consign the phenomenon to sadists and psychopaths than to acknowledge that terrible things were done by intellectuals and moralists."[148] It speaks partly to the dynamic of the history of the Holocaust in the peripheries of Europe, which rarely developed on the basis of a debate based on ideological lines, but rather around the notion of a normative cultural purpose (often 'Europeanist'). Furthermore, the real dimension of, or reasons for, upholding "antifascism" are diminished, as Jelena Subotić argues when she says:

> By de-legitimizing communism, post-communist states have also removed anti-fascist resistance from the core memory of the Holocaust which has allowed for a retrieval and ideological normalisation of fascist ideological movements in the present.[149]

There is a certain "shame" of acknowledging the endurance and the myriad of ways in which antisemitism continues to manifest, in this case, triggered by a book that disclosed its very complexities.

The debate revisited the idea that anti-Semitism still belonged to socialism or blamed it on the authoritarianism of communism. Missing, in these debates about the afterlife of Sebastian's writings, is the attention towards the different antisemitism of the Cold War

[148] Scott Timberg, "Observing Terror: A Conversation with Philip Ó Ceallaigh, Translator of 'For Two Thousand Years'", *Los Angeles Review of Books* (Los Angeles, 2018). https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/observing-terror-a-conversation-with-philip-o-ceallaigh-translator-of-for-two-thousand-years/. Last accessed November 1, 2018.
[149] Jelena Subotić, "Political memory, ontological security, and Holocaust remembrance in post-communist Europe", *European Security*, 27, 3(2018), 301. https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2018.1497980.

practised by the communist regimes, where the violence and discrimination against the Jewish community - and their expulsion by the communist regimes – was purportedly caused by the Jewish community's inability to adapt and integrate. As a transnational narrative of the 1960s and 1970s, it grounded the second expulsions of Jewish members from the Communist Parties in the region, especially in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania.[150] It drew upon several overlapping silences which converge in a type of left-wing anti-Semitism, where Jews are to blame for anti-Semitism.[151] One could argue that this denial of Jewishness continues the Cold War perspective on the Zionism debate, which the communist authorities were claiming was designed to bring down the socialist order.[152] By taking this as an issue associated with communism, time and again, instances of anti-Semitism were conveniently scripted as foreign to the fabric of Romanian society.

Indeed, members of the Jewish community were accepted in the first years of the postwar decade. Miriam Korber Bercovici, a survivor of the Transnistria repression, remembers the emphasis on reconstruction by the communist authorities which included those who had survived the Holocaust. She argues that the incentives for reconstruction after the war prompted many survivors, especially those who made it out from Transnistria against all odds, to join the Party.[153] Miriam Sabovici, who survived in Birkenau in one of the work battalions, argues that for many in Romania joining the party was a way of protection against being deported to Siberia or an alternative to fighting for the Red Army.[154] But Sabovici also speaks about the purge of

[150] For Poland and a comparative analysis in the region, see Anat Plocker, *The Expulsion of Jews from Communist Poland: Memory Wars and Homeland Anxieties* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2022), 5-18.
[151] Phillip Fine and Robert Spencer, *Antisemitism and the Left: On the Return of the Jewish Question* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 5-18.
[152] Olga Baranova, "Politics of Memory of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union", in Pawel Marczewski and Stefan Eich, eds., *Dimensions of Modernity. The Enlightenment and Its Contested Legacies* (Vienna: IWM Junior Visiting Fellows' Conferences, 2015), 89.
[153] "Interview Miriam Korber Bercovici", *Libertatea*. https://www.libertatea.ro/stiri/video-interviu-lectia-de-viata-a-lui-mirjam-bercovici-supravietuitoare-a-holocaustului-colegii-ma-inmormantasera-deja-renuntasera-la-mine-2699873.
[154] C2079, Interview Miriam Sabovici, Interviewer Mariana Conovici, *Arhiva de Istorie Orală/Oral History Archive*, Romanian National Broadcasting Company.

the Jews that helped stabilize the regime in 1946 and then again in 1957-1958. In 1949, the notes of a member of the Jewish community looking to leave read differently:

> All the lies that people like Pauker and Chisinovschi utter have unleashed a violent antisemitism which did not exist even during the Iron Guard. Jews do not want to be massacred again; they want to save themselves before the day of revenge. Why aren't there any more ships able to take their wealth earned with so much work?[155]

Several documents of the Jewish Democratic Committee (JDC), the organization that replaced the pre-war Jewish Council with a socialist-aligned version of this institution, show that it encountered problems in trying to integrate those who had returned from the camps. In 1951, the organization counted about 50,000 Jews returned, of which 40,000 came from the camps in Transnistria and from Buchenwald.[156] The organisation's efforts to push for equality and integration were initially supported by the authorities, primarily because of the huge exodus from the country that did not match the ambitions of fraternity within the nation.[157] But the documents kept by the organization depict the disappointment with the politics of reassigning lost jobs or even housing to those who had been affected by the wartime Romanianization policy. The JDC was concerned about the "chauvinist elements inside the Jewish community"[158] but also the question of citizenship, since many Jews, including veterans, "still struggle to get citizenship".[159] In the 1950s, there were rumours that for the Danube-Black Sea

[155] "Toate minciunile pe care împrăștie oameni ca Pauker și Chisinovschi au declanșat un antisemitism violent care nu exista nici măcar în timpul Gărzii de Fier. Evreii nu vor să fie masacrați din nou; ei vor să se salveze înainte de ziua răzbunării. De ce nu există suficiente nave pe care să își ia averea câștigată cu atâta muncă?" "Letter", 14/1949, Fond Documentar (henceforth FD), Arhivele Consiliului Securității (henceforth CNSAS),

[156] Jean Ancel explains the difficulty in having these exact numbers, especially since many were not of Romanian origin. See Jean Ancel, "The New Jewish Invasion" - The Return of the Survivors from Transnistria" in David Bankier (ed.) *The Jews are Coming Back: The Return of the Jews to their Countries of Origin after WWII* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005.), 231-256; 231-233.

[157] Holian, *Between National Socialism and Soviet Communism*,117.

[158] "Notă Informativă, June 10", Comitetul Democrat Evreiesc, no. inv. 2782, 35/1951, reel 1375, frame 840, SANIC, Bucharest.

[159] "Notă Informativă, December 15", Comitetul Democrat Evreiesc, no. inv. 2782, reel 1375, frame 703, SANIC, Bucharest.

channel, a hard labour colony, the first prisoners would be Jews due to "unhealthy origin".[160] Jews were also slowly removed from any administrative positions within party institutions.[161]

The documents of the JDC also suggest a deep distrust inside the community itself when asking for prosecution of the Iași pogrom "and those who have infiltrated in the ranks of the communist cause".[162] Postwar documents provide a record of anti-Semitism, for instance against Rabbi Adler of the city of Turda, who was "disliked because of public expressions" of criticism.[163] Indeed, attitudes towards anti-Semitism were ambivalent after 1945. In between the lines, the reports of the JDC argued that people should be allowed to emigrate according to their wishes. [164] At the same time, it implies the awareness that those desires contravene the postwar reconstruction work that the regime had to carry out. In parallel to the reconstruction process, however, the Siguranța documents depict the surveillance and harassment to which Jews were subjected. Those attempting to flee the country received severe punishments, and some were killed as they were trying to escape.[165]

4. Transnational Victimhood

In the previous section I have shown how the memory politics defensive of democracy tends to neutralize meaningful debates about the presence of antisemitism. This is not only a question pertinent to the 1990s, but also more contemporary. In this section, I move from the national to the transnational, and from the interwar to the Cold War, to examine how memory narratives on the far-right existing today are also determined by Cold War visions of

[160] "Notă informativă", Problema Sionistă, FD, no. inv. 2748, file 43/1943 – "circulă zvonuri că lângă populația neocupată sunt vizați în principal evrei pentru canalul Dunăre -Marea Neagră - se așteaptă racolări de 20000 de oameni.", CNSAS, Bucharest.
[161] "Notă", June 14th, 1945, FD, Problema Sionistă, no. inv 2768, 173/1945, 6-19, CNSAS, Bucharest.
[162] "Raport de derulare", March 1951", Comitetul Democratic Evreiesc, no. inv. 2782, reel 1375, 866 -867. SANIC, Bucharest.
[163] "Dare de seama", Comunități Eveiești no. inv. 3001, file 61/1948, 48-50 SANIC, Bucharest.
[164] "Proces Verbal Sedinta iunie 1947", Comitetului democrat Evreiesc no. inv.2782, reel 1371, 383-387, SANIC, Bucharest.
[165] "Notă informative frontiera Sighet", FD, 664, 1/1943-1951, 39-63, CNSAS, Bucharest.

democracy, which were instrumental in calibrating the postwar history of the far right and its ambivalent memory. Perhaps more familiar is the way in which, after the Second World War, the far right held a valuable potential of propaganda for the antifascist credentials of the Soviet Union.[166] However, their anticommunist credentials were also attractive for Atlanticist narratives, and often led to a complex reputation of the members of the Iron Guard during the Cold War. After the Second World War, the transnational history and memory of the Romanian far-right shows how the Cold War visions of democracy also contributed to specific silences in the last three decades.

The Iron Guard enjoyed a contradictory status during the communist regime. The postwar trials, that is the tribunals in Bucharest and Cluj (1945-1947), did not help unveil the complexity of the movement. These tribunals were presided over by a communist leader, Alexandru Voitinovici[167] but conducted as people's tribunals, not by legal professionals.[168] They were concerned with the unlawful war against the Soviet Union; the terror unleashed against workers and peasants, the 'German colonisation of Romania', the economic disaster, the massacres, the deportations and the campaign of 'Romanianization', operating under the guise of a de facto colonization.[169] Conversely, in an "antifascist" angle, crimes against the Jewish population were narrowed down to "collaborationism" (the official wording of the trials), rather than a distinctly anti-Semitic act. The Minister of Foreign Affairs until 1945, Grigore Niculescu Buzești, argued that "the problem of collaborating with the enemy is not under question here. Our issue is political responsibility, and we must frame it in our

[166] Alexander Anievas, Richard Saull, "Reassessing the Cold War and the Far-Right: Fascist Legacies and the Making of the Liberal International Order after 1945", *International Studies Review*, 2 (3) 2020, 370–395, https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viz006.
[167] "Despre Tribunalele Poporului", Tribunalele postbelice, Ministerul de Interne, H7237, D 2220, 45-48 USHMM/Institutul Elie Wiesel, Bucharest.
[168] Dennis Deletant, *Hitler's Forgotten Ally: Ion Antonescu and His Regime, Romania 1940–1944* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 249-250.
[169] Ionescu, *Jewish Resistance to 'Romanianization', 1940-44* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 56-78.

constitutional regime".[170] The pursuit of justice was consequently selective and driven by political reasoning, and the communist authorities did not target the Iron Guard any more than the former liberal elite. For instance, Emil Pușcasiu, one of the defendants in the Bucharest trials who was sentenced to eight years for war crimes, argued that the main culprits behind the Sighici massacre in Transnistria in 1944, were not only favoured by the prosecutor but that he had also ignored their notorious Iron Guard affiliations.[171] He makes the same claim about a military officer, imprisoned at the time in Aiud but who kept attempting to recruit new members for the Iron Guard in prison.[172]

Nevertheless, between 1944 and 1950, the Iron Guard's remnants, especially those who volunteered to fight against the new communist regime were targeted by the Communist Siguranță, detained in common law prisons and in difficult conditions.[173] Some, like Ogoranu, discussed in the beginning of this chapter, joined the scattered "anticommunist resistance" and lived in hiding, with an imminent death sentence set in 1951.[174] For much of the Cold War, he enjoyed prominence in Western media, as a critic of the regime, so much so that, when finally imprisoned in the 1970s, the international pressure on the Ceaușescu regime secured his freedom.[175] At the same time, the Cold War ideological rivalry was something that provided legitimacy and cohesion to those who had fled Romania. For instance, Traian Popescu's testimony recalls Corneliu Andrei Decebal, a former inmate at Buchenwald, who in 1947 told

[170] "Adresă Grigore Niculescu Buzești", fond Arhivele Ministerului de Interne, file D78271, R3456, 48, USHMM/EWI, Bucharest.
[171] Testimony Emil Puscasiu, Stenograme ale Procesului unor criminali de razboi, no. inv. 3140, III.
[172] "Procesul Lotului Antonescu", fond Rechizitorii, III, 128, SANIC, Bucharest.
[173] "Notă Informativă", FD, 140, 2/1939-1941, 370, CNSAS, Bucharest.
[174] "Ordin", FD 1902/6/1945-1950, 78. CNSAS, Bucharest, Interestingly, the incorporation of the Iron Guard in communist structures of repression did not become disentangled in the contemporary memory debates. An Amnesty International report from 1964 was considering this category of prisoners charged with grave offenses, along with banned political parties and former ministers, those suspected of espionage. See IISH (Internationaal voor Instituut Sociale Geschiedenis). *Prison conditions in Romania. Conditions for political prisoners 1955-64. A factual report compiled by Amnesty International* (London: Amnesty International, 1965), Bro E 3070, Rum 2900.
[175] Totok, *Între mit și bagatelizare*, 47.

the others that the focus should be on keeping the pressure on the new communist government to be able to intervene in the open Russian-US confrontation.[176]

Indeed, the Cold War dynamic shaped the memory of the Romanian far-right, as the case of Valerian Trifa, one the most notorious former fascist political activists living on US soil, shows. The Siguranța of the Antonescu regime identified this former Iron Guard member as one of the prominent Orthodox priests who supported the anti-Jewish actions in 1941 and as one of the perpetrators.[177] He was part of the group that was detained in Buchenwald, where he broke with the faction of Horia Sima. Thanks to his position in the clergy, he took refuge in the US through the Displaced Persons Immigration Law in 1950, also with the help of the Catholic Church.[178] One year later, he was the bishop of the Romanian Orthodox Church in America.

Like many other far-right perpetrators and Nazi collaborators, he became a topic of international dispute as histories of war crimes started emerging by the end of the 1960s.[179] His role as a perpetrator never made it into a very public debate, although Trifa's involvement in the military insurrection is confirmed in his CIA file.[180] The same source shows he had been under the close watch of the exiled Jewish community in the US, who knew of his past in Romania.[181] During his visit to the US in 1957, Moses Rosen[182], the new Chief Rabbi of a severely reduced Romanian Jewish community, launched several attacks on the support the

[176] Interview Traian Popescu, 2299C756/1998 Oral History Archive (Romanian National Radio Company). Also published in Silvestru, *Tara, Legiunea, Capitanul*, 39-44.
[177]"Problema Legionară" - Emigranţi legionari, elemente legionare …. pe care judeţele Alba, emigranţi cu rude rămase în judeţ.", FD, 290/1970, D7886, vol 18, 104, CNSAS, Bucharest.
[178] "Note informative, rapoarte, referate, declaraţii, fotografii, fişe de cercetare, situaţii, tabele nominale cuprinzând foşti legionari şi membrii ai Frăţiilor de Cruce din regiunea Braşov, note de verificare, procese verbale privind activitatea foştilor legionari din regiunea Braşov", FD, 113/1970, D8765, 107 CNSAS, Bucharest.
[179] Documentation regarding the Romanian war criminal [Archbishop] Valerian Viorel D. Trifa, 1940-1976", "Romania Collection, Record Group: O.11 - Romania Collection, file 76, 4 Yad Vashem.
[180] „Raport despre activitatea membrilor Garzii de fier în străinătate", MI D78662, R7237, 3/1952, 087, USHMM /EWI, Bucharest.
[181] Part of Kremer's experiences, often critical of the actions of the US governments are localized in his personal collection at Record Group: O.11 - Romania Collection, file 148, 15-30, Yad Vashem.
[182] Report on the visit of Moses Rosen, January 1957, CIA Archive, Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Nazi War Time Disclosure Act". https://catalog.archives.gov/id/118567200 .Last accessed April 1, 2016.

American government gave Trifa.[183] In an unusual move for the Romanian press at the time, Rosen's claims were criticized as a "misfortune caused to the mother country".[184] In Trifa's case, accusations of war crimes posed a challenge to American foreign policy toward dictatorship regimes like that of Nicolae Ceauşescu.

In the 1960s, Trifa was actively investigated by Dr. Charles Kremer, a Romanian-born American physician, who had emigrated from Romania in 1919 due to anti-Semitism. Kremer was known at the time for leading a long public campaign against Trawnikis Tserim Soobzokov and Mykola Kowalchuk.[185] His revelations about the actions of many former Eastern European refugees were as crucial as those of Simon Wiesenthal, with whom he worked closely during the Cold War.[186] His activities of identifying and trying to bring to trial former fascist sympathizers were widely covered in the US press in the 1950s and 1960s. Archives of the CIA, however, show that prosecuting Trifa was not a priority. One report notes: "It is the source's opinion that the attack against Bishop Trifa is not only being used by the Romanian government but is a Jewish conspiracy".[187] This conservative perspective within the CIA shows the rift around the Jewish pursuit for justice at the beginning of the Cold War. The CIA suspected him of connections with the Romanian Intelligence Service in the 1970s, effectively meaning that bringing Trifa to trial was met with suspicion both on the grounds of the Jewish organizations'

[183] Randolph Braham, *Romanian Nationalism and the Holocaust: The Political Exploitation of Unfounded Rescue Accounts* (New York: Institute for Holocaust Studies, City University of New York, 1998), 43-49.
[184] Report on the visit of Moses Rosen, January 1957, CIA Archive, Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Nazi War Time Disclosure Act". https://catalog.archives.gov/id/118567200 . Last accessed April 1, 2016.
[185] The Trawniki were Nazi auxiliaries, recruited from territories in or around the USSR and interned in specifically brutal camps on occupied Polish territory. Those who survived the war moved to the United States where later revelations disclosed their war-time activities. See Yitzhak Arad, *The Operation Reinhard Death Camps* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018), 165-170. Information on the two are to be found in a note on August 4, 1981 011 Romania Collection, file 148, 3, Yad Vashem. Soobzokov was a native of Krasnodar in Crimea, arrested during Stalin's purges. He joined the Police units during the SS occupation and then the Gendarmerie, and here he was identified as having killed Jews.
[186] "Letter George Beza to Kremer", Romania Collection, Record Group: O.11 - Romania Collection, file 148, 37, 38, Yad Vashem.
[187] Valerian Trifa File, CIA Archive, Nazi War Crimes Disclosure Act.
https://catalog.archives.gov/id/139403385 .

involvement and the concern that such actions could seem to support the Securitate's (Romanian Intelligence Service) agenda.[188]

The case against Trifa reached the US Department of Justice only in 1975.[189] He denied any participation in violent actions during the 1940-1941 period, and the pogrom in Bucharest. To the annoyance of American Jewish organizations, the case never went further. Extradition and facing the Romanian courts of justice were perceived as a direct infringement of human rights. Although he gave up his citizenship in 1980, Trifa never explained his position further than the generalized antisemitism of the time.[190] By 1982, the case was internationally problematic: he reached Switzerland, whose government also suggested any extradition would be refused.[191] He died in Portugal while the deportation process was still ongoing. Kremer said he was relieved that Trifa was no longer in the United States. "At least the United States got rid of a man who poisoned the minds of many people", and who "maligned American democracy."[192]

The case of Trifa shows how the entanglements of anticommunist opposition with war perpetrators during the Cold War further limited the debate on the far right. In the early 1990s and since, the case of Trifa has been discussed in Romania in relation to his involvement with the Securitate. The fact that he had been closely followed by the Securitate abroad became the main focus and overshadowed his own wartime history. The–explicit connection of the Securitate with the head of the Orthodox clergy in the United States has been in general taken

[188] Cristoph Schiessl, *Alleged Nazi Collaborators in the United States after World War II* (Boulder, New York: Lexington Books, 2016), 78-83.
[189] A very similar trajectory to that of Andrija Artukovic, the Ustasha member who escaped to the US and was extradited after a long process in the 1980s. He died in custody, but the sentence was never put into effect by the Tito regime. See Mary Kathryn Barbier, *Spies, Lies, and Citizenship: The Hunt for Nazi Criminals* (Nebraska: Potomac Books, 2017), 184-185.
[190] "Mortal Sins", *Time* (New York: October 1982, issue 78), Yad Vashem, Romania Collection, Record Group: O.11 - Romania Collection, 148, 12.
[191] Mary Thornton, "Switzerland Likely to Bar Nazi Supporter Being Deported by U.S.", *Huffington Post*, October 9, 1982.
[192] Charles Kramer interview, *Jewish Telegraphic Agency,* August 1983. https://www.jta.org/archive/special-interview-an-old-man-is-disappointed-with-trifas-entry-into-portugal.

as a deceit by the Secret Services and a way of delegitimizing his position.[193] Despite his controversial reputation, in Romania Trifa has been often invoked by the Orthodox Church and by many other admirers.[194]

5. The Spanish Civil War

The other implication of the restrictive notion of democracy has also affected the remembrance and the heritage of other crucial historical events, such as the Spanish Civil War. Approximately 2000 Romanians participated in this conflict, which was a microcosm of the conflict between and left and the right in the interwar period. At the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, thousands of fighters from both the Iron Guard and the communist movement in Romania (like from many other countries in the region) travelled to Spain to fight.[195] They were an attraction of sorts in Central and Eastern Europe, due to their heroism and political participation, and faced different outcomes. [196] Olga Bancic, for instance, a communist fighter from Bessarabia, of Jewish origin, was popular as a symbol of antifascist women's resistance. Bancic connected with forces of the Third International at the time and joined the Spanish brigades. She was arrested in 1943 for her activities for the French Communist Party and was killed in the Stuttgart Nazi prison.[197] As an antifascist hero, she was one of the central historical symbols in the regime's propaganda until the end of the 1960s. On the other side of the political spectrum, Ion Moţa and Vasile Marin, two prominent members of the Iron Guard died in 1937

[193] Lucian Turcescu, "Fascists, Communists, Bishops, and Spies: Romanian Orthodox Churches during the Cold War" in Paul Mojzes eds., *North American Churches and the Cold War* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 239–58.
[194] Claudiu Pădurean, "Valerian Trifa, arhiereul controverselor", *România Liberă*, 2013. Available at: https://romanialibera.ro/sport/atletism/valerian-trifa-arhiereul-controverselor-290594/.
[195] Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, *International Communism and the Spanish Civil War, Solidarity and Suspicion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Judith Keene, *Fighting for Franco: International Volunteers in Nationalist Spain during the Spanish Civil War* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2001), 12-40
[196] Vjeran Pavlaković, "Yugoslav Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War", *Research Paper Series of Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, Southeast Europe*, 4, 1(2016), 14.
[197] Mercedes Camino, "Introduction", in David M. Seymour and Mercedes Camino, eds., *The Holocaust in the Twenty-First Century: Contesting/Contested Memories* (London: Routledge, 2016), 3.

and when the bodies were repatriated and occasioned an outpouring of public grief on the streets of Bucharest. [198] Apart from these quasi- familiar names, the memory of the Spanish Civil War and its Romanian participants are largely absent, however, as a 2018 incident made evident.

In January of that year, near the Spanish village of Majadahonda,[199] the commemoration of two Romanian foreign fighters killed during the Spanish conflict in 1937 drew a large group of the Romanian community living in Spain to the monument for Moța and Marin. Erected in the fighters' honour in 1970 by Sergio Cifuentes, the general secretary of the *Hispano Rumana Majadahonda* Association[200], at Franco's orders, that memorial marker also speaks to the role that Spain had in the imaginary of the Romanian Iron Guard.[201] It was inaugurated in 1970 in the presence of Horia Sima, the leader of the Iron Guard and is described as "the spiritual centre of the exile and support for the anti-communist fight for all the Christian and nationalist supporters" in a propaganda publication of the Iron Guard in 1977.[202] In 2018, clad in green shirts and flags, the group, partly supported by the Romanian diplomatic staff, commemorated the deaths of Ion Moța and Vasile Marin, as "heroes" of the Guard's glorious opposition to the communist dictatorship, next to the monument.[203] When the images were published in the Romanian press, they caused an uproar. Maria Ligor, the Romanian ambassador to Spain, defended the decision, but stopped short of arguing for an overt manifestation.[204] Other cases of such impromptu memorialization exist nationally. Indeed, there are several similar cases, for

[198] Valentin Săndulescu, "Fascism and Its Quest for the 'New Man': The Case of the Romanian Legionary Movement", *Studia Hebraica*, 4 (2004), 349–61.
[199] Adrian Petreanu, "Moța și Marin, comemorați la Majadahonda și București", https://www.buciumul.ro/2018/01/16/mota-si-marin-comemorati-la-majadahonda-si-bucuresti/. The town is close to Madrid and saw action during the Second Battle of the Corunna Road, between December 1936 and January 1937.
[200] Recently changed its name to "Speranța Viitorului", presumably because of the far-right memory debacle.
[201] Many Iron Guard members lived in Spain after 1945. The most prominent was Horia Sima.
[202] *Mișcare legionară în texte originale și imagini* (Madrid: Ed. Miscarii Legionare, 1977).
[203] Banică Dobre, *Los Crucificados: Dias Vivido En El Frente Espanol* (Barcelona: Ojeda, 2015), 24-28.
[204] "Audio Maria Ligor, ambasadorul Romaniei in Spania", https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-esential-8016496-maria-ligor-ambasadorul-romaniei-spania-discuta-online-cititorii-hotnews-marti-ora-12-00.htm.

instance Iustin Pârvu, a priest, former member of the Guard, who is commemorated in the Petru Vodă Monastery back in Romania.[205]

The commemorations of members of the former far-right took the Romanian public by surprise. First, seeing an open re-organization of the Iron Guard is not frequently that visible. Secondly, it begged questions as to why the Spanish Civil War came to be representative only for the victimhood of the Iron Guard and why, if formative for the democratic crisis of the interwar period, the Spanish Civil War has been virtually absent from Romanian public debates.[206]

Arguably, at that time of the war, it was the exploits of the fighters of the Iron Guard that made more headlines back at home and heroic stories in newspapers, such as *Cuvântul,* reflected the rising influence of the Guard as a political actor. Gradually, the stories of those returning from Spain, with tales of glory and strife, came to be uncomfortable to the Antonescu regime. The communist groups, whose press outlets had already been banned by the Antonescu regime, rarely spoke out about the more than 500 individuals fighting in Spain in the "Balkan regiment", together with Yugoslav and Bulgarian units.[207] Most of them were captured during the evacuation from Barcelona in 1939 and ended up in the camps on the French beaches, improvised perimeters with barbed wire (Argelès-sur-Mer then Saint Cyprien and then Gurs).[208] Leftist newspapers, like *Adevărul, Dimineaţa, Cuvîntul liber* and *Reporter* were writing about the communists' advances in Spain, with little impact.[209] Their histories primarily circulated in underground leaflets and secret communications to the Party.[210]

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[205] Zavatti, "Making and Contesting".
[206] Mihai Burcea, "Recuperarea Memoriei Interbrigadiştilor Şi Maquisarzilor Români. Studiu De Caz: Ion Călin (I)", *Analele Universităţii Din Bucureşti. Seria Ştiinţe Politice* XV, 2 (2013), 123–48. See also Zavatti, "Making and Contesting".
[207] Burcea, "Recuperarea Memoriei"; Keene, *Fighting for Franco,* 26.
[208] Antonio Cesar Cantano, "Guerra de Propagandas en Rumania durante la Contienda Belica Espanola (1936-1939) ", *Haol,* 29, (2009), 129-141.
[209] VB. "Victoriile din Spania", *Dimineaţa*, January 3rd, 1937, Bucharest. BCUB PU Z 1730, vol. 11000.
[210] The tensions within the leftist circles in Spain are well known, although more nostalgic perspectives tend to gloss over this history. For instance, David Caute uses the term "fellow-travelers" for the intellectual progressive sympathizers of Soviet communism that made their way to Spain. See David Caute, *The Fellow-Travellers:*

Yet, just like the stories of Romanian communists who fought elsewhere in Europe, for instance for the French Resistance, the testimonies of those fighting in Spain were only fleetingly tolerated by the communist regime after the consolidation of the regime in 1946. [211] The experiences some of them had in Buchenwald, Bergen-Belsen or Mauthausen quickly came to challenge the nationalist politics of the regime, because of their international orientation.[212] Individuals fighting in Spain were equally hazardous for the new communist authorities, who were struggling with a lack of legitimacy, and their actions might have made valid political contenders. Many pleaded to be recognized, but in vain. Some returned to the country anonymously, like Moise Schwartz, of Jewish origin from Transylvania, detained in Buchenwald between 1943 and 1944. In the biography of pre-war 'illegals' he compiled after the war, he pleads to be recognized as an "old" member of the Communist Party. He argues that while in Buchenwald, "he had been registered in the camp antifascist committee and was in permanent contact with the communist comrades back home".[213] Among the members of the Association of the Former Romanian Volunteers in Spain, he took pride in sharing the experiences after the war. He ran a campaign by publishing memoirs, biographies, and accounts of those who had fought in Spain and the French Resistance. Documents of the Antifascism Committee constituted immediately after the war show there was a campaign for these individuals to earn pensions or at least enjoy some official recognition.[214]

Intellectual Friends of Communism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). But this umbrella term conceals the very tense relations between Stalinists, Trotskyists, revolutionary socialists, and anarchists, and the social democrats, during the Spanish Civil War after the NKVD and the Comintern offered support to the International Brigades. See Keene, *Fighting for Franco*, 32-35.

[211] See for instance Keene, *Fighting for Franco*; Peter Darman, *Heroic Voices of the Spanish Civil War: Memories from the International Brigades* (New York: New Holland, 2009); Zahira Aragüete-Toribio, *Producing History in Spanish Civil War Exhumations: From the Archive to the Grave* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Pavlaković, "Yugoslav Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War"; Ghodsee, *The Left Side of History*, 45-49.

[212] See Burcea, "Luptatori Antifascisti".

[213] See biography of Moise Schwartz, Asociatia Fostilor Detinuti Politici Antifascisti Din Romania 1947-1958 no. inv 2868, reel 1309, 340-345, SANIC, Bucharest.

[214] See for instance self-penned biographies of Ion Nedelcu, Vasile Contreanu, Fond Comitetul Antifascist 3023, R1457, 22, 23-27, SANIC, Bucharest.

Alternatively, those who died fighting in Spain as "heroes of the working class" were briefly instrumental to the public memory regime of Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej regime (1947-1965). Dead heroes were easier to revere than returning ones.[215] The internal postwar conflicts of the Left further swayed the politics of memory towards nationalist tones, rather than internationalist. As the regime moved gradually away from internationalism, the memory of the resistance in Spain disappeared. For instance, several streets bore Olga Bancic's name for a short period of time. Several similar situations applied to members of the Jewish (communist) resistance who had died in Transnistria (Sergiu Moscovici, primarily, one of the early members of the communist resistance against Antonescu).[216] In stark contrast, Alexandru Jar, Bancic's spouse who managed to survive the war, was ousted as an opponent of the new nationalist direction of the Dej regime.

The anticommunist atmosphere of the 1990s only added to these successive erasures. In the early 1990s, the social democrat government zealously renamed streets, and many ideological signposts of the previously dominant ideology disappeared suddenly. As a vindictive type of debate targeted the type of cultural geographies of state socialism in the public space, streets named after Bancic were renamed. Bedros Horansagian, a journalist, started a public debate when he argued that those fighting on the "good" side of the war, and not Nazi collaborators, deserved to be remembered.[217] Most disagreed with this position, because of her political views. The debate has continued more recently, with different material traces of the communist revolts in the interwar period being discredited or vandalized. [218]

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[215] Burcea, "Recuperarea Memoriei."
[216] Razvan Voinea, *Locuințe pentru Muncitori si Functionari* (Studio Zona: Bucharest, 2021), 123-130.
[217] Bedros Horasangian, "Caragiale, Go Home!," *Ziua*, June 25, 2005, available at: http://www.ziua.ro/display.php?data=2005-06-29&id=179497. Last accessed July 17, 2016.
[218] In 2019, there were several attempts by activist groups to refurbish a commemorative plaque mounted on the warehouse of the Railway Company (CFR) for the victims of the 1933 Griviţa strike repression. Mounted by the communist authorities after the Second World War, it was covered by successive interventions on the premises. The attempts have triggered a fierce debate about the resurgence of "neo-communism" and neo-Marxism, purportedly by biased activist groups and the vandalization of the place. About this debate, see Florentina Ţone, "Ce a mai rămas după greva din 1933", *Historia*, 2017. https://historia.ro/sectiune/general/ce-a-mai-ramas-dupa-greva-din-1933-atelierele-586697.html. Last accessed July 4, 2019.

The case of these successive erasures of the Left speaks about the ontological insecurity that defined the liberal democracy of the 1990s, a fear of uncertainty, of "politics", to which public memory was perfectly aligned. Jelena Subotić argues that the Left's memory shares similarities across Europe, in that their early role in fighting fascism was buried under decades of anticommunism politics.[219] The 1975 Spanish *Pact of Forgetting* (Pacto del Olvido), suppressing memory debates on the legacy of the Franco regime in Spain due to the greater good of liberal democratic statehood, also contributed to this dynamic.[220] The Spanish Civil War became a rather uncomfortable topic to approach directly. Furthermore, the histories of the Spanish Civil War do not fit in the mainstream European perspectives focusing on victims of Stalinism. The Left as a progressive force, that also fought against Nazi occupation, continues to be a problematic topic to approach in the context of European memory dynamics.[221]

Indeed, Romanian debates in fact show how the memory of the Civil War in Spain has been dependent on the defensive streak of liberalism described in chapter 1, anti-Stalinist and generally dismissive of the history of the Left. For instance, Romanian scholarship often refers to the Spanish conflict simply a Soviet "intervention", in which the story of fighters on the Left were inconsequential. Vladimir Tismăneanu, one of the "memory entrepreneurs" best known for his liberal, anticommunist credentials and one of the drivers of the memorial recognition of the history of Eastern Europe in the European "memory' project, argues that the symbolism of the Spanish Civil War resides in the fact that "it signifies the intersection of the Romantic antifascism manipulated cynically by the Third International".[222] According to Tismăneanu, who emphasized the Romanticism of the European perception of the Spanish Civil War, the

[219] Subotić, *Yellow Star, Red Star*, 3-11.
[220] Martin Ortega, "Silence and the right to justice: Confronting impunity in Spain", 2017. Available at *https://gala.gre.ac.uk/id/eprint/16524/7/16524%20MARTIN-ORTEGA_Silence_and_the%20Right_to_Justice_2017.pdf*.
[221] Traverso, 23-25.
[222] Vladimir Tismăneanu, "Stalinism, fascism și Războiul Civil din Spania", *Radio România Liberă Moldova*, October 11th, 2016. https://moldova.europalibera.org/a/28044084.html. Last accessed June 3, 2018.

International Brigades were an instrument of the Comintern, created with the one objective, to "control the Republican effort".[223] The 2007 'Condemnation of Communist Crimes' (see chapters 1 and 5) and the report that was drafted together with that document mentions the "well-defined attributions of volunteers in Spain in the consolidation and the reproduction of the totalitarian regime".[224]

From a similar position, Stelian Tănase, one of the active voices of anticommunist liberalism post-1989, also speaks about the charade that the war was for the communists coming from the East. He argues, for instance, for the Stalinist line of reasoning, emphasizing the disenfranchisement of those who left straight from Romania. He also makes the point that the participation of Eastern European communists, backed by Moscow, was, in fact, a diversion to kill and eradicate dangerous individuals able to pose a threat to the stabilization of the regime. To him, the murder of staunch Romanian communists who were taking refuge in Moscow at the time, like Marcel Pauker, Cristian Racovski, and Alexandru Dobrogeanu Gherea, was "proof that the formation of the International Brigades and the propaganda campaign of the Comintern in favour of the Spanish popular front was meant to hide the Stalinist terror ordered from the USSR".[225] Others have argued that Stalin used the Civil War as a diversion for the Great Terror. The Civil War was used to divert the attention of the West concerning the mass crimes committed in the Gulag. The USSR "played a double game" because its support of the Red Brigades was constrained through blackmail and restrictions on weapons.[226] Following this argument, the USSR only gave the impression that it was trying to help the Republicans because

[223] Vladimir Tismăneanu, "Corabia Amăgirilor: Brigăzile Internaționale Din Spania", 2012. http://www.contributors.ro/cultura/corabia-amagirilor-brigazile-internationale-din-spania. Last accessed April 23, 2017.
[224] Vladimir Tismăneanu, Dorin Dobrincu and Cristian Vasile, eds, *Raport Final* (Bucharest: Humanitas Publishing, 2007).
[225] Stelian Tănase, *Clienții lui Tanti Varvara*, II (Bucharest: Humanitas Publishing, 2009), 45. 23-28.
[226] Ibid., 45–46.

a victory on Franco's side was much more desirable for Stalin. Primarily, it could reinforce the myth of the State in peril, which requires action and strong authoritarian politics.

In an article from 2016, Tismăneanu suggests that the "Manichaean myth that opposes a camp which was decidedly on the side of progress and one which was irremediably obscure is increasingly disputed."[227] This perspective on the Spanish Civil War, he argues, belongs to some historians who "perpetuate the idea that fascism clenched with democracy, forgetting the malicious role of Stalin and his tools. Spain was the testing ground for the export of Stalinism shaped like a 'popular democracy'".[228] Both Tismăneanu and Tănase accepted the thesis that the Kremlin took over the gold of the Bank of Spain. Tismăneanu has been one of the foremost voices of what he calls "the tragicomedy of Romanian communism, which left behind so many broken destinies, destroyed hopes and broken illusions".[229]

This interpretation of the Spanish Civil War illustrates the way the Cold-War tinted reflection on the democratic interwar space affected memory politics, by silencing or outwardly denying a reflection on that which had already been dubbed as the perpetrator: the Left. Attributed to Stalinism, the perspective on the position of the anticommunists plays out along the lines of the conservative turn of the Ceaușescu regime on this matter, which was itself interested in taking over the Stalinist narrative practised by historians like Lavinia Betea.[230] Such a perspective, however, attributes to socialism the role of instigator of extremist movements – including the far-right. Indeed, the history and the deep roots of the far-right, its intellectual roots in many of these debates of interwar seem to be ignored.[231] This is evident in

[227] Vladimir Tismăneanu, "Labirintul Razboiului Din Spania (IV)", *Evenimentul Zilei* (Bucharest, 25th April 2007); Vladimir Tismăneanu, "Labirintul Spaniol: Pasiunile Razboiului Civil, Ieri și Azi", *Contributors* (30th August, 2014. https://www.contributors.ro/labirintul-spaniol-pasiunile-razboiului-civil-ieri-si-azi/. Last accessed June 3, 2018.
[228] Tismăneanu, "Stalinism, fascism și Războiul Civil din Spania".
[229] Ștefan Bosomitu, *Miron Constantinescu. O Biografie* (Bucharest: Humanitas Publishing, 2014), 34-37.
[230] Lavinia Betea, *Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu. Moartea Unui Lider Comunist* (Bucharest: Humanitas Publishing, 2001), 56.
[231] Codruț Constantinescu, "Regatul Român Și Războiului Civil Spaniol", *22* (Bucharest, August 2007). BCUB PU 1 455, vol 111.

the historiography produced on this topic. For instance, historian Florin Constantiniu identifies 1936 as a crucial year in world history, [232] and just as for Doru Liciu in 2011, the Spanish Civil War represented a microcosm of the global confrontation between democracy and communism. [233] Consequently, they both disregard this episode as one of relevance for Romanian politics, left or right. Instead, for both authors, England and France played a geopolitical game that both abandoned the Romanian state and exposed it to the unfiltered influence of the Soviet Union.

6. Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the narratives attached to the memory of the far right over time, and the turning points in thinking about democracy that aggravated silences and "normalized" its role as part and parcel of, rather than opposition to, democracy. The chapter suggests that at the intersection of these developments lie cultural narratives of modernization, democracy and anticommunism through which one can better grasp the difficulty of recognizing the influence and persistence of ideas of the far right and silences concerning anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. At the same time, by looking at the political right's history and memory, one understands how crucial concepts of resistance and opposition often borrow from anticommunist discourses without inquiring into the far-right victim image. This angle does not do justice to the complex debates about Jewish identity in the interwar period or about political dynamics between the left and the right. It also leads to the loss of a debate about the true mechanisms in which ethnonationalism, exclusions and violences shaped the actions of the far-right. These will be further discussed in the next chapter, but this chapter has shown how these are subsumed to issues of radical democracy, without attempting to understand the ways in

[232] Florin Constantiniu, "1936 - un an crucial în istoria universală", *Lettre Internationale*, 2006.
[233] Doru Liciu, "Voluntari din România in Razboiul Civil Spaniol", in Doru Liciu Marusia Cirstea and Liviu Damean ed. *Istorie și Societate*, (Bucharest: Mica Valahie, 2011), 123-135.

which the rose-tinted lens on the interwar period has further impoverished the debate on the right.

Part 2: RESENTMENT

Chapter III:
The Heritage of Resentment: from the Politics of Silence to Narratives of Sovereignty[1]

1. Introduction: A New Synagogue

The 220th year anniversary of the first synagogue in the small city of Sighet, a former Austro-Hungarian town in Northern Transylvania which today sits on the Romanian-Ukrainian border, transformed the building into a heritage space. Pillaged and used as a concentration space during the June 1944 deportation of the town's entire Jewish community to Auschwitz, in 2011, the synagogue was one of the few Jewish sacred sites reconstructed after being destroyed by the Hungarian Army during the Second World War.[2] The synagogue added to the only other Jewish remembrance site, a small memorial museum inaugurated in 2009 by Holocaust survivor and human rights activist Elie Wiesel (1928-2016).[3] Wiesel, one of the best known advocates for human rights and Holocaust memorialization, was sixteen when he was deported in June 1944 from Sighet.

The revival was not only about this space only. The Sighet Jewish community has been gradually holding small-scale commemorations of the deportations.[4,] It helped that since 2014, the new Tarbut Foundation in Sighet has joined several European projects on the past European Jewish communities, and managed to put Sighet back on the map of European Jewish heritage and thus included the Satmar Jewish community (named after the town of Szatmar in

[1] This chapter is based on Dana Dolghin, "Sighet, competing memories" in Dana Dolghin, Andreas Guidi, eds., *Phantom Borders: Case Studies from South-Eastern Europe* (forthcoming) and Dana Dolghin, "Re-emerging Memories: Humanitarianism and Sovereignty in the Târgu Jiu Camp", *Campscapes Journal* (4) 2019, 24-30 and "Re-emerging memories: humanitarianism and sovereignty in the Târgu Jiu Camp", *Accessing Campscapes: Critical Approaches and Inclusive Strategies for European Conflicted Pasts*. *Heritage, Memory and Conflict* 3: 57-63. https://doi.org/10.3897/ijhmc.3.71277.

[2] Johnny Popescu, "La Sighet se construiește Prima Sinagogă Din Europa de după 1940", *Informația Zilei*, March 17, 2011, http://www.informatia-zilei.ro/mm/locale/la-sighet-se-construieste-prima-sinagoga-din-europa-de-dupa-1940.; Ioan Popescu, "No Transilvania Văzută La Radio: Sinagogile Din Sighet" (Radio Cluj, October 26), 2014, http://www.radiocluj.ro/2014/10/26/sinagogile-din-sighet/. Last accessed June 1, 2017.

[3] Lily Edelman, "In Conversation with Elie Wiesel", *in Elie Wiesel: Conversations* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2002), 47-49.

[4] Personal interview director Peninah Zilberman, 14 October 2017, 30 November 2019.

Transylvania, today Satu Mare) in the Jewish heritage sites of Europe.[5] Today, Sighet is recognized as a European (former) Jewish community in the repertoire of the Council of Europe.[6] Its history as a (past) vibrant Jewish community is now celebrated in the heritage politics of Europe. Just like in Sighet, in 2017, the synagogue in Oradea, another important site of the deportations from Transylvania by Hungarian Nazi Allies was also re-inaugurated.[7] Recovering the history of these small communities of Sighet and Oradea was acknowledged by journalists as having "re-inscribed Transylvanian Jewish heritage on the European map".[8]

Reclaiming the Jewish identity of these communities testifies to the reach of the "transnationalization" of the memory of the Holocaust and its "Europeanization". The acknowledgement of a history of political violence as a memorial norm was tied in with a European-minded awareness.[9] A process that defines the uptake of Holocaust commemorations, a shared memorial culture that looks back at the Holocaust as a binding and turning point moment, it has defined European cultural narratives and global discourses alike, as a shared duty of memory in politics more generally.[10] It is a process which has also been endowed with the potential to "break through national framings, silences and biases".[11] For instance, the inauguration was a symbolic return for Rabbi Aaron Teitelbaum of the Orthodox Hassidic community in New York, after many years. The Teitelbaum family had been the

[5] See for instance the projects of the Tarbut-Sighet Foundation and Diana Mesesan, "Discovering Northern Romania in search of Jewish roots", *Romania-Insider.com*, August 17, 2017, https://www.romania-insider.com/discovering-northern-romania-jewish-roots-peninah-zilberman, and Peninah Zilberman,"Maramures & Bukovina Family Roots Journeys", *The European Association for the Preservation and Promotion of Jewish Culture and Heritage,* 2017, https://jewisheritage.org/maramures-bukovina-family-roots-journeys .
[6] Awarded European Heritage Label status in 2017.
[7] The reconstruction happened also with support from Rabbi Rafael Schaffer, who had emigrated to Israel in the 1970s and returned in 2011, and with the support of the American Jewish Community. See Digi 24, "Reconstructia Sinagogii din Oradea", April 1, 2018. https://www.digi24.ro/video/sinagoga-noua-la-sighetu-marmatiei-1725179. Last accessed June 1, 2019.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Kucia, "The Europeanization of Holocaust", 97–119.
[10] Aleida Assman, **"**The Holocaust — a Global Memory? Extensions and Limits of a New Memory Community" in eds. Aleida Assman and Sebastian Conrad, Memory in a Global Age (London: Palgrave, 2010), 97-117.
[11] Ingrid Gessner, "Liberating Dachau: Transnational Discourses of Holocaust Memory" in Udo Hebel, eds., *Transnational American Memories* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 13; See also Natan Sznaider and Rainer Winter in Ulrich Beck, Natan Sznaider and Rainer Winter, eds., *Global America? The Cultural Consequences of Globalization* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003), 174 – 188.

spiritual leaders of the Sighet Jewish community for centuries up to the start of the war.[12] Partly thanks to them, Sighet was one of the leading centres of Hassidic Jewish culture in the Habsburg Empire, next to areas in Galicia,[13] and continued to be regarded as such until the outbreak of the Second World War.[14]

Indeed, this renewed interest in Jewish heritage and the forgotten life of Jewish communities in Sighet also shed light on the many contradictions of the transnationalization process, triggered explicitly by its normativity: that is, restricted ways of referring to certain groups, be they victims or perpetrators, restricted types of commemorations and narratives put forward or even blankspots.[15] It happened in the case of Sighet as well. A monument in the memory of Rabbi Joel Teitelbaum was built near the Jewish cemetery in Sighet, despite the controversial biography of this significant figure in the postwar renaissance of Hasidism for whom Eastern Europe was the "Old Home".[16] He escaped on the so-called 'Kastner transport' on which more than a thousand Jews left Transylvania (Cluj) headed to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, but managed to escape to Switzerland.[17] He finally settled in New York, where, by 1948, he was leading one of the most successful Orthodox congregations. Teitelbaum's escape was criticized by survivors, although Teitelbaum argued his negotiations

[12] Zvi Jonathan Kaplan, "Rabbi Joel Teitelbaum, Zionism, and Hungarian Ultra-Orthodoxy", *Modern Judaism*, 24 (2004), 165–78, https://doi.org/10.1093/mj/kjh012.
[13] Omer Bartov, *Erased: Vanishing Traces of Jewish Galicia in Present-Day Ukraine* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 14-17.
[14] The community grew exponentially, so much so that by the outbreak of the war there were eight synagogues, one on each street inhabited by the Jewish community in Sighet. Jews represented 39.1% of the Sighet population in 1941, with a substantial community of Jewish doctors and pharmacists. See Randolph L. Braham, *The Nazis' Last Victims: The Holocaust in Hungary* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1998), 107-112. Today, the town is left with around 120 families of Jewish descent. (personal communication I Moshe, 2019).
[15] Dan Stone, "The Historiography of Genocide: Beyond 'uniqueness' and Ethnic Competition", *Rethinking History* 8, 1 (2004), 127–42, https://doi.org/10.1080/1364252040001649769; van der Laarse, "Muséographies Des Mémoires Concurrentes"; Radonić, "Introduction: The Holocaust/Genocide Template".
[16] Rabbi Teitelbaum, despite his rich biography, was a controversial figure, often contested from within the Hungarian Jewish community for not preparing the community for the deportations. His interest in preserving the "Haredi" way of life took precedence over any safeguarding of the population. See Kaplan, "Rabbi Joel Teitelbaum", 167.
[17]Rudolf (Rezső) Kastner, a journalist from Cluj (Transylvania), arranged the transport for many members of the Jewish community in Cluj and Hungary. Due to his alleged negotiations with the SS while arranging this transport, he was assassinated in Israel in 1957. See Dan Porat, *Bitter Reckoning: Israel Tries Holocaust Survivors as Nazi Collaborators* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press at Harvard University Press, 2019), 155–56.

with the dictatorial regime of Ion Antonescu to help those listed for deportation were merely formal.[18] In his 1960 book *The Night* Elie Wiesel decried Teitelbaum's failure to act to save the Jewish community.[19] In the case of Sighet, the cooperation of members of these councils with the pro-fascist Antonescu regime has been highly divisive.[20]

What can we then infer from this seeming contradiction between an eagerness to revisit the history of Jewishness, such as in Sighet, and an otherwise restrictive history and engagement with the Holocaust? In this chapter, I argue that this is a selectivity and a politics of silence which does not necessarily owe to denials, but to the way in which sites of political violence were imagined early on, and specifically in the early 1990s, as a "militant" tool for ideas about liberal democracy. I define it as a process of "scripting" liberal narratives into remembrance through a type of resentment, defined here as a type of anger and discontent, and meant to showcase a sentiment of opposition.[21] This chapter adds to the previous two a close reading of silencing in cultural heritage connected to political violence and clarifies how silencing emerged in the spirit of Europeanization and liberal democracy, and simplified histories of the Holocaust.

The contradictions are fitting for the Romanian context of the memorialization of the Holocaust, which has remained in essence a restrictive (liberal) state-making process, and highly contested.[22] Most challenges reside "in the interplay between the official attempts to join in the European memory of the Holocaust" and "local legacies that often diverge from, or even contrast with, the institutional remembrance efforts".[23] It is telling that most historians take the Elie Wiesel Report, effectively a truth-making instrument, a tool of transitional justice, and an

[18] Reports about the advantages and abuse within the Jewish communities have been controversial and debated. See Anders E. B. Blomqvist, "Local Motives for Deporting Jews: Economic Nationalizing in Szatmárnémeti in 1944", *The Hungarian Historical Review* 4, 3 (2015), 673–704. http://real.mtak.hu/32267/1/Blomqvist.pdf.
[19] Elie Wiesel, *The Night* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), 13-18.
[20] Climescu, "Law, Justice, and Holocaust", 65-66.
[21] Müller, *What is Populism*, 15-16.
[22] Shafir, "Uncademic Academics". Ana Bărbulescu "Ethnocentric Mindscapes and Mnemonic Myopia", Florian, *Holocaust Public Memory*, 6-10.
[23] Cârstocea, "Between Europeanisation and Local Legacies", 314.

instrument of accountability (following several instances where politicians and other public figures denied the Holocaust) as a key turning point of writing Jewish history in Romania.[24] Rather than a research endeavour, its very compiling was a form of political apology and a justice-making document. Its enduring legacy, even among historians, points to the way the awareness of the Holocaust and Jewish heritage came to be tied in with more pragmatic concerns about the 'health' of democracy, which has produced performative moments rather than widespread engagement with the topic of the Holocaust and the long history of the Jewish community in Romania.

This vision on the history of the Holocaust, and its relevance for contemporary society did not change an already restrictive perspective on history. In Bucharest, at the time of writing, the only present trace of the Holocaust is a memorial inaugurated after much controversy in 2009.[25] A new Museum of the Holocaust has been under debate for many years in Bucharest and the plans for this museum in the centre of the city have been met with a negative response from policymakers and the wider public ranging from the denial of its necessity to indifference.[26] It would not be the first museum on Jewish history: in Bucharest, the Jewish community's museum has been operating in the synagogues destroyed during the Bucharest Pogrom since 1977.[27] Teaching the Holocaust in relevant school curricula is a continuous source of public controversy.[28] In other words, no substantially greater awareness or acceptance of the debate about the perpetrators, responsibility or occurrence of the Holocaust has occurred

[24] Report of the Commission for the Study of the Holocaust (The Elie Wiesel Report) published in 2003. The report followed the public debate on the official denials of the Holocaust in 2001-2002 in Romania. Led by Elie Wiesel, it set the main cornerstones in the debate about the Holocaust. See Tuvia Friling, Radu Ioanid, Mihail E. Ionescu eds., *Raport Final, Comisia Internațională pentru studierea Holocaustului în România* (Polirom: Bucharest, 2004).

[25] See Horaţiu Pepine, "Asumarea istoriei", (Deutche Welle, October 10, 2009). https://www.dw.com/ro/asumarea-istoriei/a-4774688. Last accessed January 3, 2021.

[26] Red. "Muzeu Al Holocaustului În Centrul Bucureştiului, Refuzat a Doua Oară" , *Digi24*, (March 14, 2019). https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/muzeu-al-holocaustului-in-centrul-bucurestiului-refuzat-a-doua-oara-1097592. Last accessed June 15, 2019. There are plans to have this museum in the center of the city.

[27] There was an early project for a museum of the Holocaust drawn up in the early 1950s, which never went beyond a project phase. See *Muzeul Holocaustului*. R22828, file 145/1951, USHMM/EWi, Bucharest.

[28] Bărbulescu, "Ethnocentric Mindscapes", 6-10.

since Wiesel's Report. Indeed, discussing the active persecution of the Jewish community by Romanian authorities remains controversial to this day and continues to cause fierce debates.[29] Those opposing attempts to transform these sites into permanent memory markers usually also invoke this top-down imposition.[30]

The argument builds on two heritage sites: Sighet, which is already prominent as a European heritage of "totalitarianism", having been awarded in 2017 the European heritage label for the Sighet Memorial (for Victims of Communism)[31], and Târgu Jiu, which is at the opposite end of the visibility spectrum today, a space forgotten or ignored. By exploring these two examples, this third chapter explains how the 1990s scripting of "negative memory" perpetuated silences and actually enforced a conspiratorial perspective on remembrance rather than a reflection dealing with victims or difficult pasts. While less evident than denials, this strategy created a selective framing that endures. In fact, Sighet was known exclusively as one of the few on-site memorials for communist victims in Eastern Europe, Memorialul Victimelor Comunismului şi al Rezistenţei (Memorial for Victims of Communism and the Resistance) and a type of competition between these two "heritages" (Jewish presence versus Communist victimhood) has been a constant. In 2015, for instance, a commemorative plaque was mounted in the local high school to commemorate one of the leaders of the anticommunist resistance, Aurel Vişovan, imprisoned in Sighet as a political prisoner.[32] The ties of the resistance group to the Iron Guard movement prompted a broad rebuke of the initiative by memorial institutes

[29] A survey in October 2023 run by the Elie Wiesel Institute shows that almost half of those interviewed do not know the history of the Holocaust in Romania, or the chain of command of the Antonescu regime in the Second World War. https://www.g4media.ro/sondaj-41-dintre-evreii-din-romania-spun-ca-antisemitismul-a-crescut-in-ultimii-cinci-ani-ei-reclama-antisemitismul-in-viata-politica-si-pe-retelele-sociale.html. Last accessed November 2023.

[30] Marek, "The Europeanization of Holocaust Memory and Eastern Europe".

[31] European Commission decision, 2017. https://culture.ec.europa.eu/cultural-heritage/initiatives-and-success-stories/european-heritage-label/european-heritage-label-sites/sighet-memorial-romania. Last accessed October 11, 2021.

[32] The debate is outlined in Marius Vișovan, "Placa Comemorativă de La Liceul 'Dragoș Vodă' – Bucuria Și Tristețea Noastră!", *Salut Sighet* (March, 2018). Available at: https://www.salutsighet.ro/placa-comemorativa-de-la-liceul-dragos-voda-bucuria-si-tristetea-noastra-autor-marius-visovan. Last accessed September 3, 2021. Last accessed September 3, 2021.

and public opinion, and it was decided that the plaque be removed. In the early days of the memorial, the connection between the two sites, which sit within a 1 km radius, was absent.

2. The Sighet Memorial: Re- inscribing the Victim

Founded in 1993, close to the area of the former ghetto, Memorialul Victimelor Comunismului și a Rezistenței (Memorial for Victims of Communism and the Resistance) operates in the building of the old Austro-Hungarian prison in Sighet. After 1948, it was turned into a political prison by the new communist regime. Sighet was among "a first wave" of memorial spaces for communism in Europe and was among the first memorial museums *in situ* dedicated to victims of state socialism in Eastern Europe in the early 1990s. These were distinctly geared to be spaces of reflection on traumatic events, as a place of heritage designed to convey the magnitude of the trauma of "totalitarianism", the bleakness of the loss of freedom and to serve as a warning for the new liberal democracies in Central and Eastern Europe.[33] Similarly, the Berlin Hohenschönhausen Memorial opened in 1994, and one year earlier the Riga Museum of the Occupation of Latvia effectively integrated the story of state socialism into a narrative of occupation, illegal and "foreign" to the country, just as the Genocide Museum in Vilnius did.[34]

Sighet's genealogy reveals a politically engaged narrative. The memorial was the project of the *Group for Social Dialogue* (GSD), the "civic platform" reuniting "dissidents" and young liberals against (old) communists still in power in the early 1990s. The specificity of the memorial in Sighet is that it has, from the outset, emerged as a deliberately political expression of collective memory. Its motto, "when justice is unable to act as a form of memory, "memory alone can be a form of justice"[35] suggests that commemorations were distinctly "politically

[33] Dirk Verheyen, *United City, Divided Memories?: Cold War Legacies in Contemporary Berlin* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2010), 23-25.
[34] Sodaro**,** *Exhibiting Atrocity*, 36-38**.**
[35] Visit to the Sighet Memorial by the author, 2016.

committed", aligned to the transitional justice efforts of the 1990s and explicitly connected to the liberal ideal that was to come. The founder of the memorial, Ana Blandiana, a young writer who found her voice on the streets in 1989 (discussed in chapter 1 as well), described this initiative in 2012, as:

> A place of collective memory meant to make us understand where the residues of the past in today's society are coming from. (...) A memorial does not mean a road into the past, but one in the present and the future. There are traces of totalitarianism that still curtail a normal development of society, that in some way or other poisons it. For things to develop normally, we all need to understand what has been, why it has been in such a manner, and who is to blame.[36]

The Sighet Memorial was thus unabatingly mobilizing the narrative of justice around "breaking the silence" about the crimes of the past.[37] Started with the support of the Council of Europe in 1994 and defined as a memorial intervention for a "return to Europe", it was also a testament to a particularly local context, where the anticommunist and religion-tinged narratives of the long 1990s shaped the Europeanizing idea. From the outset, its "anti-governmental" reputation made it a popular space of democratic expression and activism, that did not necessarily have to do with history, but with memory politics grounding this safe space for discussions about democracy, change and "transition". This activism triggered a complicated relationship with the national government (national funding began only in 1997) as the memorial was recognized as a "European space of memorialisation".[38]

In effect, the Sighet Memorial aimed to cultivate a renewed will of the "liberal" citizen re-claiming Europeanism. The German-born political scientist Jan-Werner Müller describes how this type of Cold War liberalism relied on a specific knowledge of history, specifically

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[36] Luise Schifter-Popescu, "Atunci Când Justiția Nu Reușește Să Fie o Formă de Memorie... ...Memoria Singură Poate Fi o Formă de Justiție" (Allgemeine Zeitung für Rumänien, 2012), Available at https://www.kas.de/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=06aea41f-4818-48d1-ceba-66842a9d2664&groupId=252038.Last accessed June 15, 2019.

[37] Codruta Pohrib, "The Afterlives of Communist Things: Archiving Feeling in Post-Communist Romania", *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 19, 6 (2016),724-43. https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549415597926..

[38] Ana Blandiana, "Şi Suferinţa Noastră Face Parte Din Patrimoniul Comun European…", *Timpul.md*, https://www.timpul.md/articol/ana-blandiana-si-suferinta-noastra-face-parte-din-patrimoniul-comun-european%E2%80%A6-32758.html . Last accessed June 19, 2017.

shaped by the works of Isaiah Berlin or Raymond Aron. As he puts it, "this liberalism began with what one might call an epistemological foundation, or, if you like, a 'politics of knowledge' – the question about the bases and limits of political knowledge".[39] Based on this "fear" of relapse and of a spectre of the past, it then set out to advance a theory of action and a repertoire of conduct. The type of "memory for justice", practiced in Sighet, was an instrumental narrative of Cold War liberalism, as it accurately depicts the vision built on fear of failure of democracy and a lack of belief in the rational capabilities of the human mind. This persisted, at least in Central and Eastern Europe in the early 1990s, as the social and political conditions of liberal democracy were worsening, and later blended in with a skepticism towards democracy as a process.[40]

The curatorial perspective of the Sighet Memorial was a clear expression of this liberal Europeanist 1990s vision.[41] The memorial provides an experience-driven representation from the perspective of the victims; it extrapolates continuously to the state socialist regime as a whole. It has an evident moralizing dimension of criminalization when supporting 'freedom'. The curatorial narrative describes the pan-European history of the failed political movements which challenged the communist regimes all over Europe. Exhibition texts narrate the 1968 Prague Spring, the 1956 Budapest uprising, and the Solidarity dissident workers' movement in Poland, showing the transnational history of communism in Europe. The memorial welcomes the visitor in the memorial space with a recorded message. Ana Blandiana, the main curator

[39] Jan-Werner Müller, "Fear and Freedom: On `Cold War Liberalism'", *European Journal of Political Theory,* 7, 1 (2008), 45-64. doi:10.1177/1474885107083403.
[40] Michael Freeman, "Past Wrongs and Liberal Justice", *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 5, (2) 2002, 201-220. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27504233.
[41] I have conducted two site visits in Sighet, in the summers of 2015 and 2016, for the Memorial and the Elie Wiesel Museum. The presentation relies on participant observations during two fieldwork trips to Sighet, in 2015 and 2016. The analysis also incorporates the spin-off exhibition space of the Memorial opened in Bucharest in 2013, as a miniature exhibition of the memorial.

and head of the Group for Social Dialogue (discussed also in chapter 1) herself speaks about the liberties trampled by communism and the need to remember.[42]

The past presented focuses on the victimhood of the interwar "liberal" elite, namely the story of the members of the conservative or liberal opposition who were detained and died in Sighet between 1948 and 1955.[43] One of the most conspicuous spaces in the exhibition is dedicated to the interwar Peasant Party leader Iuliu Maniu (1873-1953), a conservative, who died in Sighet due to severe maltreatment. In contrast, only a few victims' stories of the collectivization in the rural areas are associated with the objects. Specifically, the exhibition focuses on elites who were symbolic of the roots of liberalism. Several other sections of the exhibition text explain the illegitimate beginnings of the political consolidation of the regime and stress the demise of the interwar democracy under the new communist authorities.

In this sense, the trauma-ridden display of the biographies on site is less about a direct and personal identification with 'the victim'. Instead, it functions based on what Patrizia Violi terms anti-mimesis, which is modelled as "knowing-how-to-remember", rather than a direct representation, which would fit the in-situ specificity of the museum.[44] It has a pedagogic tone, as it focuses on a certain manner to fight against the potential of forgetting, and the overall threat of silencing by the government, by stoking that fear of the past. Several cells have also been reconstructed in the prison building, preserved in its original form (the building was abandoned in the 1970s). The space of the prison, spanning two floors, exhibits artefacts of former detainees, often received from the public and objects that are, in broader lines, evocative of life under communism. Towards the end of the tour, two rooms concentrate communist

[42] It is an audio message projected in the first space of the exhibition overemphasizing the "trauma" of communism as a whole, rather than the history of the space. This tendency of taking a moral stance against the regime is evident also in the last two rooms of the tour, which focus on the "absurdity" of the last Ceaușescu years.
[43] Simona Bădica, "The Black Hole Paradigm. Exhibiting Communism in Post-Communist Romania" in Peter Apor ed., *Past for the Eyes: East European Representations of Communism in Cinema and Museums After 1989* (Budapest: CEU University Press, 2013), 56-78.
[44] Patrizia Violi, *Landscapes of Memory: Trauma, Space, History* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2017), 14.

memorabilia that help stylize Nicolae Ceausescu's authoritarian regime into an absurd and irony-worthy history.[45] In this sense, it perpetuates a particularly derogatory tone also found in other early museums of the 1990s, such as Berlin's DDR Museum or several others in Eastern Europe, simply underscoring the "anti-capitalist" and impoverishing dimension of state communism.[46] Several elements further strengthen this pedagogical perspective on memory, to emphasize the absurdity of the regime. Texts and the selection of memorabilia, for instance, refer to the persistent "traces" of a "hijacked" revolution of 1989 that supports the idea that "communism is an exclusive creation of Moscow".[47]

Throughout the Sighet memorial there is a conspiratorial perspective that indicates a serious but unnamed threat to (liberal) democracy. There are intimations about shadowy political forces and unidentified nefarious actors that maintained control over the polity after the transformation, and whose presence threatened the legacy of the transformation and were also to blame for the lack of transparency concerning perpetrators. For instance, the exhibition text stresses the lack of evidence available on the communist repression and the capacity of memorial endeavours to thwart attempts to suppress the historical truth.[48] At the same time, the cemetery next to the institution, where the prison's unnamed victims are buried, mentions these victims' existence but does not identify them and no proper investigations have been carried out on site. It is assumed, for instance, that Iuliu Maniu is buried in this area as one of the many presumably unmarked graves of former political leaders. The place is memorialized today as such, even though the few forensic archaeology campaigns have failed to provide such evidence.[49] The cemetery is still symbolically marked as a cemetery of "all victims of

[45] About this see Pohrib, "The Afterlives of Communist Things".
[46] Susan Crane, "Memory, Distortion, and History in the Museum", *History and Theory*, 36, 4 (1997), 44–63, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2505574?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents.
[47] Bădică, "Black Hole Paradigm", and personal interview conducted by the author with Simona Bădica, February 2017.
[48] I have consulted the exhibition texts within the museum and in the several catalogues of the Memorial (June 2015, July 2016) permanent exhibition "the Sighet Prison".
[49] Personal interview conducted with the curators, June 2016.

communism" in Romania, although theirs might be a fate entangled with other victims of the war.[50] Indeed, its documentation seems to suggest the space had an equally complex story and might have contributed to the death toll of the Sighet prison, which is now defined as a place for anticommunist victims.

In effect, Sighet operates as a continuous testament to the 1990s reverence to the "totalitarian" narrative, bolstered by its very "Europeanizing" perspectives and references. The site further follows a counter-memorial logic where a grass-roots representation of a painful heritage is a space of retribution and maintenance of memory of injustice committed by "oppressors" or foreign elements to "democracy"."[51] But by assigning communism, and the perpetrators, as the responsibility of others, in this case the USSR, the representation of communism as imposition continues to be the central feature of the anticommunist angle practised by the institution today. For instance, the memorial as it stands today, and despite a curatorial vision emphasizing change and growth, ignores the events of the immediate postwar period and sidelines other histories of violence, for instance, the complex accounts of Romanian prisoners of war in the USSR[52]. Between 1946 and 1948, Sighet's prison building operated as the Marmoroszsiget repatriation camp run by Soviet authorities.[53] In August 1944, the Red Army was already in the area and administered the repatriation of deportees, including from Transnistria, together with a somewhat reluctant Romanian Army.[54] Sighet was among the few Soviet-run repatriation camps operating on Romanian territory[55], processing both Soviet

[50] See Heritage Resolution on Sighet, *Rezoluţie 20.07.2006 /41-43*. A set of investigations were carried in 2006 and "failed"; they have never been repeated since.
[51] Alexandra Laignel - Lavastine, "Fascisme et Communisme En Roumanie: Enjeux et Usages d'une Comparaison," in Henry Russo ed., *Stalinisme et Nazisme. Histoire et Mémoire Comparées* (Brussels: Complexe/IHTP, 1999), 161.
[52] At the same time 12,778 Germans and 12,778 Romanian citizens were transferred to the German and Central administration groups of the German administration for settlement in Germany. See Milada Polišenská, *Czechoslovak Diplomacy and the Gulag* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2016, 24.
[53] Polišenská, *Czechoslovak Diplomacy and the Gulag*, 239-240.
[54] The clashes and tensions between the Soviet and Romanian Armies were in full swing in 1944; the Romanian government considered itself under occupation after leaving the alliance with Germany. See Vladimir Solonari, *A Satellite Empire: Romanian Rule in Southwestern Ukraine, 1941–1944* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019), 121-123.
[55] Another such camp was in Focşani.

citizens and foreigners between 1944 and 1953. According to documents, this group included around seven million individuals, of which approximately five million[56] were civilians. Germany, Romania and Austria had the highest number of Soviet prisoners of war.[57] In 2017, it was among the first heritage spaces in Central and Eastern Europe to be awarded the "European heritage label" by the European Commission, only for its communist totalitarian narrative.[58] Fittingly, it illustrates many concerns of researchers with this Europeanizing totalitarian perspective, which often reinforces the very revisionist tools it purports to change.

The other history speaks to the more intricate entanglements of responsibility and guilt. The repatriation order issued by the head of the NKVD Lavrentyi Beria[59] focused primarily on the foreigners who had fought for the Nazis. On 13 August 1945 Beria allowed the release and repatriation of approximately eight hundred thousand POWs (Prisoners of War) from NKVD camps: Czechoslovaks, around thirty-six thousand; Poles, twenty thousand; Yugoslavs, ten thousand; a hundred fifty thousand Hungarians, and thirty thousand Romanians.[60] Among the categories listed are also Dutch, Belgians, several hundred Americans, Danes, and Greeks.[61] The order explicitly names Germans – that is Volksdeutsche- who were "sick or disabled".[62] A

[56] We can assume that among these were citizens who fled during the Russian Civil War, as Whites, or during the Stalinist purges. These caused controversies in the foreign policies of the Allies at the time because repatriation was a condition imposed by Stalin during the Yalta conference which met with criticism. See Bob Moore, *Prisoners of War, Europe: 1939-1956* (Oxford, Oxford Academic 2022), 461-476.

[57] N Bugai., "РЕПАТРИАЦИЯ ВОЕННОПЛЕННЫХ НЕМЦЕВ ИЗ СССРв 40-50-е годы", available online: http://militaryarticle.ru/obozrevatel/1996-obozrevatel/12974-repatriacija-voennoplennyh-nemcev-iz-sssrv-40-50-e

[58] See European Commission page here: https://culture.ec.europa.eu/cultural-heritage/initiatives-and-success-stories/european-heritage-label/european-heritage-label-sites/sighet-memorial-romania.

[59] The politics of repatriation that Lavrenti Beria, head of the NKVD, practised at the time were equally motivated by the massive resettlements of the population of the USSR in the immediate aftermath of the war. Potentially he was interested in ridding himself of individuals who were already in a sphere of Soviet influence, elsewhere in Europe. See Gregor Dallas *1945: The War that Never Ended* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 512 514.

[60] Bugai, " РЕПАТРИАЦИЯ ВОЕННОПЛЕННЫХ НЕМЦЕВ ИЗ СССРв 40-50-е годы".

[61] Soviet citizens, driven into captivity, were scattered in different European countries: in Germany - 3,338,583, the Netherlands - 6,934, Austria - 379,929, Denmark - 11,715, Hungary - 3,259, Norway - 92,820, Romania - 133,734, Poland - 87,850, Italy - 92 252, Czechoslovakia - 40 655, Finland - 132 866, Greece - 1402, France - 135 456, Yugoslavia - 26 052, Belgium - 34 056, Bulgaria - 3682, Albania - 824 people according to Polišenská, *Czechoslovak Diplomacy and the Gulag*, 37.

[62] Совет Министров Союза ССР (СМ СССР) 18 июня 1946 г. принял постановление № 1263-519сс "Об отправке на родину больных и нетрудоспособных военнопленных немецкой и других западных национальностей", Archives of the State Archive of the Russian Federation (ГАРФ), Особой папке, Main

special provision about Romanians, Hungarians and Austrians was included in the order; these were to be released "only if they were not used in the main sectors of the national economy".[63] In 1946, the order extended to Germans who had been active in work battalions.

We can, for instance, trace the Czechoslovaks that eventually made it to Sighet in the repatriation camp of Luisdorf near Odessa. Those in this camp mainly were the victims of the deportations of Germans[64] to the USSR, thus mostly Volksdeutsche from Eastern Europe.[65] Fricizek Skala, a Czech police officer who was part of Czechoslovakia's efforts, seems to have been called to evacuate the Czech population from Luisdorf, all travelling to Sighet. He writes:

> Apart from former prisoners of war, there were persons who were taken for forced labour by the retreating German Army and subsequently taken by the Soviet Army to the USSR, and persons taken from their home to work in the USSR, who are now being repatriated to Czechoslovakia. All of them suffer from incarceration psychosis (…).[66]

Czech POW Arnošt Rudolf also confirms that the repatriation camps were hard to bear because of the conditions of those arriving.[67] Having joined the SS "because he spoke German", by the time he left Odessa for Sighet, he had "a leg fracture, and my leg was swollen. I was placed among the wounded."[68] As historian Milada Polisenka suggests, the policies regarding who was allowed to return, as with the deportations, were decided on the capacity to work: "all the first repatriates were goners, sick persons and others unable to work".[69]

The fact that the Sighet camp run by Colonel Krizhanovsky was a place where tragedies happened in the aftermath of the war is also confirmed by the story of two Dutch prisoners in the camp, as the Archives of the Red Cross housed in the Hague show. Documents of the

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Directorate of Prisoners of War and internees, ГУПВИ, Ministry of Internal Affairs Moscow. Available USHMM/Elie Wiesel, R435, 12-14.

[63] The order set up four camps: camp 69, for Germans, in Frankfurt an der Oder, camp 284 for Poles in Brest on de Bug, Hungarians, Austrians and Czechoslovaks in camp 36 in Sighet, Romanians, Yugoslavs and Bulgarians through camp 176 in Focsani. See Polišenská, *Czechoslovak Diplomacy and the Gulag*, 13.

[64] Germans were transferred to Germany, Austria, and Hungary. See Polišenská, *Czechoslovak Diplomacy and the Gulag*, 30.

[65] Germans traditionally living in Eastern Europe since the 18th century.

[66] Polišenská, *Czechoslovak Diplomacy and the Gulag*, 34

[67] Testimony Arnošt Rudolf, https://www.pametnaroda.cz/cs/rudolf-arnost-1921. Last accessed June 10, 2018.

[68] Polišenská, *Czechoslovak Diplomacy and the Gulag*, 245-259.

[69] Ibid., 234.

Repatriation Committee provide a glimpse into life in Sighet before it was turned into a penal facility by the new Romanian Communist Party. Gerrit Erbink had joined the work battalions to escape the occupied Netherlands' dangers and poverty. Erbink and Roelof IJbema were taken prisoner and ended up in the mines of the Urals. Integrated into the German repatriation groups, the two ended up in camp 36 Sighet after Beria issued the repatriation orders. In Sighet, he met tens of other Dutchmen. He remembers a "pleasant life" in Sighet, where he spent over a year.[70] But he mentions that in Sighet he had also met a group of Dutchmen suffering from typhus. In 1965, Jan Molenaar, also a prisoner in the USSR, sent a letter to the Red Cross asking about the repatriation of the remains of tens of Dutch citizens who had perished in Sighet after a typhus epidemic.[71]

In the narrative of the memorial today, these postwar victims do not fit in the canon of the "victims of communism". A similar, ambivalent victim to acknowledge was Oleg Dombrovski, who was also detained in a labour camp in Odessa by the Soviet authorities and by the late 1950s he was boarding a train to return to Romania. Their stop was in Sighet, a less triumphal return than they had expected as survivors of the Russian front, and he describes the repatriation camp as an "immense, empty, shabby, windowless and doorless building", administered by the new 'Securitate'.[72] Dombrovski, a Romanian officer taken prisoner during the siege of Stalingrad and Operation Barbarossa, was also an ill-fitting witness in the memorial's history and message. They were, as he confesses, either examples of fascism or potential "patriots" to be made exemplary in the "building of socialism".[73] Figures like Dombrovski were indeed without rights, and problematic because of their involvement in the

[70] "Report and testimony for the Red Cross", 2.15.43, Archief van de Regeringscommissaris voor Repatrieering, 1943-1945, 1945, 264, 3-12 National Archief den Haag, The Hague, the Netherlands.
[71] Archief van de Regeringscommissaris voor Repatrieering, 1943-1945, 157-159, 2.19.308.
Inventaris van het archief van het Nederlandse Rode Kruis - Netherlands Tracing Mission, National Archief den Haag, 2.15.43, the Hague, the Netherlands. Also In "Spoedig naar huis", *Andere Tijden*, Nov. 2007, https://www.anderetijden.nl/programma/1/Andere-Tijden/aflevering/336/Spoedig-naar-huis.
[72] Testimony of Oleg Dombrowski C661, 2171, Oral History Archive, Romanian National Radio.
[73] Ibid.

Soviet campaign. The decree of November 30, 1948, of the PRR (Popular Romanian Republic) that stated that "all Romanians who had disappeared during the war outside the national territory are presumed to be dead" made this category of prisoners complicated to address. [74]

These two eyewitness accounts speak about two complex histories that cannot be absorbed into a militant narrative that "breaks the silence", or that identifies the roots of contemporary liberal democracy in sacrifice and the resistance to communism. The repatriation camp history provides a different account than one fit for the sacralized "burying place of the liberal intelligentsia".[75] But it is there where the potential to "break silences" about the war really lies. Those returning from the USSR should be, rather, evocative of the fate of many Romanians who were taken as prisoners of war due to their collaboration with Germany.

In fact, the Europeanization of memory, in this case, played an ambiguous role through memorial and history debates, which "also increased polarization" in the region.[76] The memorial generally steered clear of engaging with broader European politics after 2004, where victims of state socialism were presented in relation to those of the Holocaust, despite its initial beginnings as a memorial reflective of the drama of the Holocaust. Victims of the Second World War, including those of the Holocaust, have no presence on the site. Few events have focused on the Holocaust dimension of the nearby Elie Wiesel Museum. Only around 2007, the moment of European accession, some of these histories were brought to the fore and the equation between National Socialist and communist crimes triggered debates.[77] Otherwise, Sighet has remained unchanged, even after newer interventions in the memorial and heritage landscape of the city in 2019 and 2020 and has kept away from touching upon controversies (discussing the Holocaust, human rights perspectives, or the refugee contexts that other memorials engage with today). Although there were no explicit attempts to mediate disagreements that arose between

[74] Albert Konrad Herling, *The Soviet Slave Empire*, Michigan: Funk, 1951., 105.
[75] Bădica, "The Black Hole Paradigm.", 32.
[76] Cârstocea, "Between Europeanisation and Local Legacies", 322.
[77] See chapter 1.

those critical of the emphasis placed on Jewish victimhood near a former communist prison and those supporting it, this silence of the Sighet memorial is defining of its curatorial vision. As described above, the victims of the Second World, or its aftermath, are also silenced in the narrative of this space.

3. The Elie Wiesel Memorial House in Sighet: Re-localizing Jewishness

The Elie Wiesel Memorial Museum (Muzeul Memorial Elie Wiesel) at a first glance shares little with the political project of the nearby memorial for communist victims. It is the childhood home of human rights activist and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel (1928-2016), who boarded a deportation train on 23-24 June 1944 and survived the war, and it was a project initiated and financially supported by Wiesel himself. Located at the entrance of the former ghetto in Sighet, which remains unmarked, this small biographical museum, showcases the life of a Jewish community in Transylvania in the 1930s. In effect, the project of the Elie Wiesel memorial house is perhaps a precursor of the retrieval of Jewish history in Central and Eastern Europe that emerged only in the early 2000s.

Transylvania is a complex "space" of the Holocaust and of Jewishness, and the subject of a complex regional dynamic for various reasons. The Sighet deportations were carried out by the Hungarian government, which administered Transylvania between 1941 and 1944, which also impacted the framing of these events in Romania, after Transylvania rejoined the state.[78] Also, the deportations were part of a long history of violence in this region: Jewish and Romanian groups were massacred in the area in the four years of Hungarian occupation and interethnic tensions.[79] Sighet had been a space of a double deportation in the first wave, in summer 1941, as the Hungarian authorities deported the paperless Jewish community to

[78] Randolph Braham, Andras Kovacs, eds. *The Holocaust in Hungary* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2016), 2-13.
[79] Ibid. *The Holocaust in Hungary*, 148-149. See also Attila Gido, "Archival Sources on the Northern Transylvanian Holocaust" in Adina Babeș, Fruchter, Ana Bărbulescu eds., *The Holocaust in South-Eastern Europe: Historiography, Archives Resources (*Washington: Vernon Press, 2021), 29-57.

Kamenets-Podolsk in Ukraine where they were massacred two months later.[80] Three years later, the remaining Jewish community was deported westwards to Auschwitz. Elie Wiesel remembers that nobody listened to those who had escaped Ukraine and tried to warn others, "but people not only refused to believe [their] tales, they refused to listen".[81] After 1944, retaliations were carried out by the Romanian Army against the Hungarian population. These episodes of the Second World War and postwar history of the community continue to be controversial episodes in Romanian-Hungarian relations.[82] Successive denials or lack of accountability, on both sides, by attributing political violence to the other, during the communist regimes and after 1989, occurred. But there is nothing of this dynamic to be found in the "memorial house".

The museum opts to restore justice through the representation of the 'ideal community', here the small but tight-knit Jewish group, instead of the 'victim' or "survivor" from the community. It is a testament to heritage, as Wiesel himself argues: "I want people to remember and to ask who has been here".[83] The museum's profoundly community-oriented political narrative stresses the Jewish community's continuity in this memorial space. Imagined as a simple 'memorial' house, it displays a small number of Wiesel's personal objects and some contextual historical information. The memorial house evokes a time when the Jewish community had been integrated and assimilated into Romanian society and was an organic part of the community. With this cosmopolitan angle on the history of the community, the Jewish presence that the museum suggests is no longer that of a foreigner, of an individual ousted because of origin or religion, but of a member of the community.

[80] Randolph Braham, *The Politics of Genocide: The Holocaust in Hungary* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000), esp. "Chapter 2, The Beginning of the End", 34; Yitzhak Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 166.
[81] Wiesel, *The Night*, 45.
[82] Hitler mediated the conflict between Romania and Hungary concerning the province in 1940. See Solonari, *A Satellite Empire.* 121.
[83] Elie Wiesel, "*Speech*". https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VbXO4WDnW-I . Last accessed July 18, 2017.

The museum is an expression of the time in which it emerged, 2009, dominated by fierce debates about the boundaries of talking about the Holocaust (and the involvement of national authorities, be it Hungarian or Romanian). It is perhaps not incidental, then, that the one document that describes the situation of the community in Transylvania shows the demographic statistics of the Jewish community in Transylvania after the Second World War, and its steep decline, without further background. The biographical trajectory guides the visitor through the narrative of Wiesel's survival and focuses on the Jewish community's genealogy and the durability of the afterlife of a minority.[84] This framing is important. Avoiding political angles and evidently conciliatory, the memorial house's narrative focuses on the post-1918 period, at the height of the modern independent state, when Jews were assimilated politically, although not necessarily desired. The memorial museum's narrative stays away from the historical and controversial aspects of Jewish history in Sighet, including the contradictory position of the Jewish leadership.

The memorial house - with its biographical trajectory – also avoids the more controversial aspects of anti-Semitism. Sighet, the unofficial capital of the region, had been central to the representation of the Orthodox Jew as an "exotic", foreign, element and the anti-Semitic excesses of Romanian public opinion early in the interwar period. The "exoticism" of Sighet is evident in several journalism pieces in 1930, as shown by Iosif Berman and F. Brunea-Fox.[85] Sighet symbolized the Orthodox, traditional, and isolated Jewish community's peculiar

[84] Adrian Cioflâncă, "Erasing Memory, the Destruction of the Old Jewish Cemeteries in Bucharest and Iași during the Ion Antonescu Regime", *Memoria*, 1. 2013. Also personal interview (May, 2018).

[85] Both were close collaborators of the strong sociology and ethnography tradition emerging in the interwar period, and also were among the first to be appropriated in the administrative effort of the racial policies. This odd tandem enjoyed the rising prestige of being associated with the sociology school of Dimitrie Gusti whose research and considerable community of ethnographers, historians, sociologists later became instrumental in the colonization rhetoric practised by the Romanian government in Jewish persecutions, for instance in Transnistria. Their thorough documentation of the rural and small-town environment mythology before the war did not persist, but gradually grew into intellectual ideas about a "pure" and original peasantry holding the values of "Romanianness", which by the late 1930s escalated into racial politics. The most striking feature of this overlap seems today to be the politics of "Romanianization". See Vladimir Solonari, *Purifying the Nation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 345-348.

story in the eyes of the Romanian public. Of Jewish descent themselves, Berman and Brunea-Fox published from the early 1920s in the popular Jewish magazine *Adam* insights into the life of the Jewish communities of the newly independent Romanian state.[86] They were particularly interested in the communities in Bukovina and Bessarabia, the "latecomers" to the Romanian Kingdom. Maramorosziget (as Sighet had been known up until the postwar period) illustrated a traditional tightly knit Orthodox Jewish community that was exceptional for a public opinion used to distinguish between assimilated and non-assimilated Jewish lifestyles.[87] Unwittingly, such reports paint a picture that shows the cultural aspects of a politics of "othering" and exclusion.[88] Ironically, Iosif Berman, who publicly expressed his disappointment in Ion Antonescu's politics and who died in 1941 as a direct consequence of anti-Semitism, has been instrumental in typifying the image and epistemology of the Orientalized "Jew".[89] A 1939 article in *Sociologie Românească* (Romanian Sociology) emphasized the "backwards character of the city" of Sighet, focusing primarily on the Jewish community's isolation. By 1942 this article would be illustrative of the pervading anti-Semitism.[90]

Secondly, survivors of the deportations from Sighet to Auschwitz often spoke about the visible aggression from the local Romanian population. Several testimonies on the situation during the Jewish community's immediate return from the forced labour camps show the hostilities in the city. Renée Klaristenfeld and Barbara Fischman Traub remember, according

[86] F. Brunea-Fox, "Sighet," *Adam*, 4 (1926), 34. BCUB, BU P II 99, vol. 3.
[87] In 1933, restrictive measures were put in place for members of the Jewish community, continuing those already existing (for instance, numerus clausus, limiting the number able to attend higher education, was happening in practice since 1924, although it was never passed as an official legislation) and reducing access to economic benefits and government and public education jobs. In 1937, these were furthered by restrictions on Zionist activity, less funding for religious activities and fewer opportunities for legal professionals and businesses. See Mihai Poliec, *The Holocaust in the Romanian Borderlands* (London; Routledge, 2021), 41.
[88] Transylvania was the subject of political territorial pursuits from both Romanian and Hungarian governments before, during and after the Second World War, but the Jewish community always represented a separate element for authorities and were not under the same provisions. This uncertain legal status of their citizenship accentuated their repression. See Dumitru, *The State, Antisemitism, and Collaboration in the Holocaust,* 37-41.
[89] The administration change between Romania and Hungary was registered as a notable disruption in the life of the Jewish communities in Northern Transylvania, as Romanian legislation concerning Jewish political life and public representation was severely restrictive. See Solonari, *Purifying the Nation*, 67-69.
[90] Vasile Ilea, "Orasul Sighet", *Sociologie Românească*, 1 (1939). 48–59. BCUB B 2 98, vol. 35.

to their testimonies in the Shoah Foundation Archive, how they survived Auschwitz only to return to the streets of Sighet where they could see stolen items of clothing or objects from their parents' house.[91] Traub speaks of a particularly painful fate for those who returned, but they were also supported as long as they joined the new communist political circles. She left the country only eleven months after returning. [92] Indeed, for those who returned from the camps, which, according to a JOINT (The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee) Sighet office list compiled until 1946, rose to approximately 500 out of the 7000 Jewish returnees in the entire Northern Transylvania region[93], securing a job after their return from forced labour was challenging due to the restrictive legislation.[94]

The Wiesel Memorial Museum equally avoids the troubled Jewish history in the early communist years, where many hopes of integration were dashed. Already in 1943, Matatias Carp, a prominent lawyer active in Jewish rights issues carried out an inquiry for the World Jewish Council on the atrocities in Northern Transylvania. His findings, accusing both the Romanian and the Hungarian governments, received little public attention, although they detailed the deportations and the tensions and complicity of Romanian communities. Based on Carp's wartime archives dealing with anti-Semitic laws during the war, the results of this investigation were published in the *Black Book*, an 800-page volume published in 1947.[95] By 1948, the book had been banned after it had attracted modest readership. In a similar context, Wilhelm Filderman, the Jewish Romanian Union representative in Romania, found it

[91] Testimony Renee Klaristenfeld, (Los Angeles, 1995), USC Shoah Foundation. Accessed in the Jewish Museum, Berlin, June 2016 and online.
[92] Testimony Barbara Fischman Traub (1995), USC Shoah Foundation. Accessed in the Jewish Museum, Berlin, June 2016 and online.
[93] 7000 Jews returned in the entire Northern Transylvania, according to the inquiry performed in 1946 by the World Jewish Committee. Lists are at Federaţia Comunităţilor Evreieşti din România, Bucharest.
[94] Their return and integration were particularly bitter experiences due to the pressures of the new communist authorities on the returnees to join the ranks of the new communist party and prove their allegiance. Returnees speak about the difficulty of adjusting to the former community and accepting the pillaging that had occurred during the year of absence. See for instance Ancel, "The New Jewish Invasion", 231-257.
[95] Matatias Carp, *Cartea Neagră : Suferinţele Evreilor Din România în Timpul Dictaturei Fasciste, 1940-1944* (Bucharest: Societatea Nationala de Editura si Arte Grafice "Dacia Traiana", 1948).

increasingly impossible to continue the World Jewish Council's activity.[96] His work was taken over by the new Jewish Democratic Committee, which in 1946 replaced the Union of Romanian Jews under the new communist authorities.

This silence around the state's attitude towards the Jewish community's plight began in the first years after the war.[97] In the Dej regime's internationalist perspective (1948-1965), the anti-Jewish actions during the Second World War were primarily explained through the struggle against fascism. The Cluj trial of November 1945, one of the two postwar trials held in Romania, saw thirteen prosecutions for abuses against policemen and other perpetrators in Sighet, although none of the convictions substantively tackled the deportations.[98]Although the depositions of the trials in Cluj suggest that the Romanian authorities did not try to interfere on behalf of the Jewish population, other than securing permits for travel, the focus in that trial was, in fact, on the symbolic plight of the Romanian community in the area during the Hungarian-Romanian territorial exchange. It focused on cases from Southern Transylvania, where the takeover by Hungarian troops resulted in substantial violence against the Romanian population by the army.[99] One such example was the massacre on September 9, 1944, when 150 both Jewish and Romanian communities were massacred in Sărmașu village in Northern Transylvania.[100]

Also striking is that the display is almost oblivious to the topography of the site itself. Poignantly, the memorial house stands at the entrance of the former ghetto area, which today is impossible to trace due to transformations in the urban landscape and a lack of memorial

[96] Key figure in the Jewish community, tolerated by the Antonescu regime. He consequently negotiated many compromises concerning deportations to Transnistria. Ousted from the country in 1953. See Dallas Michelbacher *Jewish Forced Labor in Romania, 1940-1944* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020), 92-93.
[97] Tatiana Zhurzhenko, "In the Ukrainian – Polish Borderlands : Geopolitics of Memory from a Local Perspective" in Mink and Neumayer, *History, Memory and Politics in Central and Eastern Europe: Memory Games*, 173–92.
[98] Deposition trial Francisc Hullman, reel 94, RG 004, Documentation of The Cluj Trial, USHMM/Elie Wiesel Institute, Bucharest.
[99] This comes out of the trial of Heinrich Smolka, a "fascist bandit", during the Tribunal in Cluj. Reel 94, 186/1945, USHMM/Elie Wiesel Institute, Bucharest.
[100] Vasile T. Ciubăncan, Maria I Ganea, Ion V Ranca, *Drumul holocaustului* (Editura Ciubancan; Cluj, 1995), 167-172.

markers.[101] Only more recently has the house become a centre for local public commemorations of the Holocaust in the town. In 2014 and 2015, the town hosted the first public commemorations organized by the Jewish community of the deportations from the local train station.[102] The events reproduced the walk that those deported took, starting in the ghetto, then continuing to the synagogue, walking on the main street under the impassive looks from neighbours and finally boarding the trains.[103] The museum has become an essential marker of the small Jewish community still inhabiting the town., and reinforces ideas about Jewish-Romanian cohabitation while it glosses over the tensions and conflicts in general over the history of the Holocaust.

This is an example of a very different dynamic of narrative and scale than that evident in other countries of the region. The Warsaw POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews has often been depicted as disproportionately emphasizing those who saved persecuted Jews or proclaiming that the real tragedy lay in the effects of state socialism.[104] Viktor Orbán's flagship but controversial new Jewish Museum in Budapest uses selective historical narratives that often ignore Hungarians' involvement in the Holocaust and reproduce older anticommunist narratives.[105] In this sense, Sighet, as a heritage space divided between identities of the *victim* (of communism) and the *Jewish presence,* illustrates how restrictive politics of memory emerged from the very intention of telling a story that upholds a vision of cosmopolitan pre-war community, where the Jewish community was relatively well integrated. Although aligning

[101] There is no sign or indication of the latter on the site today.
[102] See for instance the coverage online "Sighet, proiecție de film în aer liber", https://www.sighet247.ro/s/sighet-proiectie-de-film-in-aer-liber-cu-ocazia-comemorarii-victimelor-holocaustului-din-maramures/. Last accessed April17, 2017.
[103] Personal interview, Peninah Zilberman, director Tarbut, July 23, 2018, personal interview, Moshe Zier, head of the Jewish Community in Sighet, August 2015.
[104] Elżbieta Janicka, "The Square of Polish Innocence: POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw and its symbolic topography", *East European Jewish Affairs*, 45, 2(2015), 200-214. https://doi.org/10.1080/13501674.2015.1059246
[105] Julia Creet, "The House of Terror and the Holocaust Memorial Centre: Resentment and Melancholia in Post-89 Hungary", *European Studies,* 30, 1 (2013), 29–62. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789401208895_004.

remembrance with principles of liberalism and liberal democracy was meant to disturb silences, erasures and selectivity, the approach in fact reinforced and strengthened them.

There is also something to be considered about the model of "memorial" houses that unavoidably distract from controversies and contribute to silencing the Holocaust. In the Elie Wiesel Museum case, for instance, the reconciliatory perspective does not lift the veil of the inter-war "golden age" myth and reinforces Jewishness as a minority identity, though nevertheless integrated into society. The museum thus avoids controversies about political questions and instead opts for an idealized pre-war Jewish community and nostalgically re-affirms it. In this way, such memorials play easily into the negations of Jewish victimhood or indeed mobilizations of anti-communist sovereignties that operate today, through the reaffirmation of this assimilation. In fact, the existence of the house has been often invoked by those arguing "enough has been done" to remember the Romanian Holocaust. Primarily, such voices do not operate outside the Europeanizing politics, but within, and drive recent deflections that effectively contribute to shutting down further debate about the Holocaust.

Sighet emerges as a site marked by imbalances of memory, what Pierre Nora calls a dominant perspective on memory shaped by the "asymmetry" of narratives[106], because of the way in which the engaged political narrative of memorial for victims of communism dominates the other histories of this site. Nevertheless, the implicit story that the Wiesel memorial house presents is one of tranquility, of conciliation and "assimilation" that does not do justice to the complexity of the history of the site. Both perspectives, however, are shaped by a context and debate largely interested in the usability of such sites of violence as "negative" markers of remembrance, and politically engaged community spaces.

[106] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire*", Representations* 1, 132 (1989), 19.

4. The Târgu Jiu Camp: Silences and Humanitarian Values [107]

A similar mobilization of "community" history against long-standing silences happened around the former Romanian refugee camp of Târgu Jiu around 2014. During the short neutrality of the country between 1939 and 1941, King Carol II granted visas to Polish citizens, including 6000 officers fleeing the German invasion.[108] Once the inmates were handed over to the Wehrmacht, after 1941, the facility turned into a prison for political opponents of the regime, which included socialists, communists, the Iron Guard, soldiers and the Jewish community.[109] The building was disused, although parts of it continued to operate as a prison, but between the late 1960s and 1989, the nearby museum became an important heritage space of the communist movement, as the destination of schoolchildren learning about the early resistance of prominent members of the Communist Party, including Party leaders, Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej and Nicolae Ceaușescu, against Nazi occupiers.[110]

Sighet has long been a visible site of remembrance in the region and Europe, and under the scrutiny of scholars as a space of reified, selective victimhood of communism.[111] The opposite is true for Târgu Jiu. Incidentally, the only visible monument marking the camp is a clock built in 1941 by the departing Polish officers.[112] After 1989, its reputation as a communist propaganda site discouraged any engagement with this space of heritage. A camp associated

[107] This section is based on Dana Dolghin, "The Târgu Jiu Camp: Humanitarianism, Sovereignty and Re-emerging Memories", *Accessing Campscapes* no. 4, 2019, 26-35 and "The Târgu Jiu Camp: Humanitarianism, Sovereignty and Re-emerging Memories", *Heritage, Memory and Conflict Journal* (HMC), (1) 2022.
[108] Anna D. Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann, *The Exile Mission: The Polish Political Diaspora and Polish Americans, 1939-1956* (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 2004), 24.
[109] Viorel Achim, *Munca Forţată în Transnistria. „Organizarea Muncii" Evreilor şi Romilor. Decembrie 1942 – Martie 1944* (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2015); Ovidiu Creangă, "Târgu Jiu", in Geoffrey P. Megargee, Joseph R. White eds., *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2018), 781-795.
[110] They both used this as a strong discourse of personal legitimation and attachment to communist principles, but from a national angle, rather than internationalist, emphasizing exceptionality, sovereignty, and opposition to the USSR political line. See Stanciu, "Nicolae Ceaușescu and the origins of Eurocommunism".
[111] Ann Hansen, "The Lessons of Sighet" 1 (2014) 33–42; Bădica, "The Black Hole Paradigm.
[112] Alin Ion, "Cum a Fost Transformată În Lagăr Tabăra de Refugiaţi Politici de La Târgu-Jiu. Ceaușescu Şi Dej Au Fost Colegi de Detenţie," *Adevărul*, March 30, 2016, https://Adevărul.ro/locale/targu-jiu/cum-fost-transformata-tabara-refugiati-politici-targu-jiu-lagar-ceausescu-dej-fost-colegi-detentie-1_56faa70c5ab6550cb85be399/index.html.

with the "suffering" of party members did not fit into the anticommunist narrative of the 1990s. The space was relegated to an "unwanted" history of communism, and silencing the political heritage of socialism marked the complete transition of the political culture to liberal democracy. Today, the space is empty, with a scant presence in the memorial debates, virtually a "non-site" of memory.[113]

But a reversal of this dynamic occurred in 2015, during the full-fledged European "refugee crisis", when past histories of displacement became a ground for contemporary mobilizations.[114] Amidst a flurry of arguments pro- or against the Romanian government's temporary refusal to accept refugees, media outlets were looking back to the past to rediscover the Romanian history of refugee reception. Several articles focused on Polish children living in these camps and the Antonescu government's generous policy.[115] In 2015, various public actors, including several museums, made the point that Târgu Jiu warranted action for preservation. The debate rallied those rare observers, lamenting the dismissive manner in which a "painful" heritage, often attached to communism, had not been brought into the public representations of history.[116] As the government (and much of public opinion) was opting against accepting refugees on Romanian territory, their focus was on what Nelson Graburn calls a construction of tradition in the museum space, in this particular case a lost history of a Romanian humanitarian tradition.[117] The history of Polish refugees on Romanian territory during the war showed an alternate past of solidarity at a time of (former) East-West rivalry concerning refugee

[113] Roma Sendyka, "Sites That Haunt: Affects and Non-Sites of Memory," *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* 30, 4 (2016), 687–702, https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325416658950.
[114] About the entanglements of memory at that time, see Dan Stone, "On Neighbours and Those Knocking at the Door: Holocaust Memory and Europe's Refugee Crisis", *Patterns of Prejudice* 52, 2–3 (2018), 231–43, https://doi.org/10.1080/0031322X.2018.1433038; Stone, "A Victim-Centred Historiography of the Holocaust?"; Gross, "Eastern Europe's Crisis Of Shame",.
[115] Alexandra Georgescu, «Amintirile unui refugiat polon: cum au conviețuit oltenii și polonezii timp de cinci ani în Severin în timpul celui de-Al Doilea Război Mondial", https://adevarul.ro/stiri-locale/turnu-severin/amintirile-unui-refugiat-polon-cum-au-convietuit-1635546.html. Last accessed June 15th, 2023.
[116] Aura Stoenescu, "Lagărul de la Târgu Jiu, o fantomă interzisă", https://www.verticalonline.ro/lagarul-de-la-targu-jiu-o-fantoma-interzisa. Last accessed March 2023.
[117] Nelson Graburn, "What Is Tradition?", *Museum Anthropology* 24, 2 (2008), 6-11.

quotas and of fierce debates on the roots of the intolerance in the area and a general revival of "whiteness" in relation to European identity.[118] Retrieving this history presented a positive and more palatable alternative form of "humanitarianism" and international solidarity amidst the international outcry against the reluctant and sometimes violent politics of border control in Central and Eastern Europe.[119]

This revisitation of Târgu Jiu as a symbol of past "humanitarianism" poses interesting questions about the complicated canvas of silences, polarization around memory and heritage and re-politicization in memory politics of past political violence that shaped the prospects of liberal democracy in Central and Eastern Europe. It is also interesting to track how the discourse around Polish refugees changed in the more recent Ukrainian refugee wave. There was a sense that the roots and the heritage of humanitarianism could speak to the context at hand, but less as a motivation or warning, and more in the sense of finding a glimpse of the long lost "liberal" golden-age of the interwar. Through this nostalgia, one could see how collective memory ideals of human rights were effectively used to create a tradition of liberal democracy in the past[120], by glossing over the authoritarian context. Arguably, these interpretations were bolstered by a lack of substantive debate about the meaning and legacy of the dominance of anticommunist opposition as a memorial focus, and the absence of reflection on past right-wing authoritarianism and the Holocaust in Romanian debates, which has been a constant concern in relation to Romanian debates.[121] Those pursuing the debate considered this space as a usable heritage in efforts to construct a past Romanian tradition of liberal democracy and also approached it as a fertile terrain of misinterpretations.

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[118] Federica Ammaturo, "Europe and whiteness: Challenges to European identity and European citizenship in light of Brexit and the 'refugees/migrants crisis", *European Journal of Social Theory*, 22, 4 (2019), 548–566. 10.1177/1368431018783318.

[119] Ivan Krastev, "The Refugee Crisis and the Return of the East-West Divide in Europe", *Slavic Review*, 76, 2 (2017), 291-296. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26565081.

[120] Samuel Moyn, *Human Rights and the Uses of History* (London: Verso Books, 2014), 5-19.

[121] Raul Cârstocea, "Between Europeanisation and Local Legacies*"*.

The narrative dominating the debates about the site's necessary retrieval was the Romanian government's lenient and generous politics towards the refugees in 1939. The optimistic narrative about the past humanitarian values of the government silenced many controversial histories of democracy. At least two different perspectives show the importance that different types of silencing have had on the political significance of this camp, which will be discussed in the next three sections.

4.1 A Forgotten Crisis of Democracy

Târgu Jiu became the epicentre of the resistance against increasing royalist authoritarianism and the militarism of the Carol II regime. Those incarcerated here had been part of the 1933 Griviţa strikes in the national railway company factories, as well as in other protests triggered by the poor conditions of the working class in the inter-war.[122] The communists, both Jewish and non-Jewish Romanians, were fierce critics of the "capitalist" takeover of Antonescu's political establishment. They denounced the government's participation in the war as a German ally, which had been the topic of intense public debate, as essentially a political power game around resources. A manifesto of the camp's youth voiced an anti-war attitude against "Hitlerite plundering" and dissatisfaction with participation in the war.[123] The Communist Party cell in the camp in 1944 sent a note related to improvements in the camp, mentioning the "refusal to trade their release from the camp with going to the front". These members opposed "this war which is against national interest."[124] In the early communist propaganda, the war prompted speculation about the Soviet occupation of Bessarabia as

[122] Registre procese verbale ale ședințelor Consiliului regional al Sindicatului miner din regiunea Valea Jiului*"1930--1933* – Miscarea sindicală din Regiunea Valea Jiului 1920-1944, reel 305, SANIC.
[123] Notă de informare, 23 martie 1943, Miscarea sindicală din Regiunea Valea Jiului 1920-1944, reel 306, 41, SANIC.
[124] Manifest signed "Muncitori și minerii in legatura cu ziua de 1 mai, cheamă la lupta impotriva regimului antonescian pentru revendicări economice și politice, April 26th, 1944; transl. "Against the bourgeoisie capitalism", MRJP, no. 1172, 15.1944, 18, SANIC, Bucharest.

liberation, hiding a host of economic interests in the region. Interestingly, the far-right Iron Guard was also accusing the government of an "unnecessary war effort" that could have been better focused on the collective progress.[125] These histories speak about the social conflicts of the interwar period and the effects of the crisis of democracy. Such accounts went unnoticed in the rather "patriotic" narrative about the history of the camp in 2014.

The camp's history – and this potential memorial space - is suggestive of a deep polarization of the moment, between left and right, and of a profound crisis of democracy, accelerated through the participation in the war on the side of Nazi Germany. Such broader public debate shows public dissatisfaction that furthered the rise of the far right, supported it and gave it a rationale.[126] The causes of this frustration are various, ranging from poverty triggered by the 1930s economic crisis to an isolated government that did not enjoy any legitimacy. The polarization also accentuated the appeal that the communist and socialist circles enjoyed at the time, in an otherwise right-leaning political space. It emphasized a social conflict meant to back Ion Antonescu's argument that the national war effort was a greater good for the "nationalist" cause. Somewhat paradoxically, post-1989 anticommunism also erased other connotations of the camp. As the camp was reduced to an anonymous group of "communist inmates" in the 1990s, the debate then silenced the wider histories of social conflict and the deep political crisis of a waning "democracy".

But conflicts in the camp show the broader complex political balance. In Târgu Jiu, communists enjoyed a more privileged position concerning freedom of movement than the Jewish population, but less so than other categories. A court report in 1944 shows the differences in the regime for various categories of inmates, with some buying their way out of

[125] "Poster for Action against the war calling for a public meeting at the Marna hall in Bucharest" September 23, 1932. Comitetul Antirazboinic din Romania, no .iv. 2972, reel 461, 64-66. SANIC, Bucharest.
[126] Riley, *The Civic Foundations of Fascism in Europe*; Cârstocea, "Building a Fascist Romania".

work.[127] In any case, the camp seemed to have free access and was not restrictive for some.[128] In August 1941 many were released from the camp, and among the most elite category in that regard were the Iron Guard.[129] In 1941, the camp was the subject of an investigation, which had, in fact, to do with the suspicions of a selective indictment of the Jewish population: some complained the wealthy were easily released from the camp. Documents prove that the regime of the camp mirrored this social conflict and unequal treatment. Ilie Lazăr was an inmate who paid money to be in the camp (some people went into the camp because of the protection against the chaos outside or for fear of the Iron Guard). His complaint caused an uproar among those outside the camp.[130] At the same time, in 1943, a report to the illegal cell of the Communist Party from those sent to work as woodchoppers stated that peasants in the region were forced to maintain a high degree of productivity; otherwise, they were interned in the camp.[131]

Secondly, Târgu Jiu stands for a contradictory authoritarian history of the interwar period. After 1941, the camp was notoriously used to detain the Antonescu government's opposition, particularly the communist resistance against the far-right government. The "internment camp for political opponents" operated on the site by order of Marshal Ion Antonescu's regime, and quickly became central to the Jewish deportations and to the oppression of the opposition.[132] In addition to members of the far-right Iron Guard movement after the organization fell out with the Antonescu regime in January 1941[133], the camp housed a host of communist 'illegals' (*ilegalisti*) and both categories were imprisoned for their potential

[127] Testimony David Romaniuc, a communist, who mentioned a 10000 lei fee asked of those coming to the camp to be detained in better conditions, Oral History Archive, SRR, C 1437, 3011, 2011: the special system in the camp, whereby by paying prisoners were granted advantages is also explained in documents from the camp. See Report, March 7, 1941, 26/1941, 1-12, MI. Cabinetul Ministrului no. inv. 2322, SANIC.
[128] This is the case of gen Adjutant Radescu, inmate in Târgu Jiu, paying for his stay there, who is released from the camp for treatment, in Report, file 108/1942, page 73, MI. Cabinetul Ministrului, no. inv. 2322, SANIC
[129] "Note despre eliberări din lagăre, MI. Cabinetul Ministrului, 2322, 56/1941, SANIC.
[130] Dare de seamă despre acuzații din tabara Tîrgu Jiu, MI. Cabinetul Ministrului 2322, 58/1941, SANIC.
[131] "Situația deținuților din lagărul Tîrgu Jiu", MI. Cabinetul Ministrului 2332, 58/1941, SANIC.
[132] Testimony Ion Bica, 1971, SRR Oral History Radio Archive, R 433/1483,1087.
[133] "Activitatea Miscarii Legionare dupa rebeliune", ISJ, no. Iv. 1474, 14/1941, 3, SANIC.

to "destabilize" the state.[134] By March 19, 1941, the camp counted 540 political prisoners: 220 Jews, 70 Romanians and a smaller number of other nationalities such as Hungarians, Russians, Germans, Czechs, and Ukrainians.[135]

This heritage provides a different perspective than the patriotic narrative regarding the loss of Bessarabia and Bukovina's territories (negotiated between Hitler and Stalin) by Romania in favour of the Soviet Union that motivated the decision to join Operation Barbarossa.[136] This has been one of the ways in which Antonescu's regime has been absolved by later supporters. During his trial in 1944, Antonescu himself argued all that he had done was to guarantee the protection of the borders of Greate Romania, 'because eight hundred thousand people died for us to forge a Greater Romania'.[137] The idea of defending territorial integrity has been often used to exculpate Antonescu's collaboration with Nazi Germany, presenting it as unavoidable.[138] A look at the transcripts of 1946 trial of Alexianu, the governor of Transnistria, also shows this attention to territory. He remembers an occasion where Marshal Antonescu's wanted to replicate the results of his governorship, which Alexianu insists was a success of "development" by saying:

> I show the Marshal what I did in Transnistria. I show him the beauty of the crops, how work is done in the kolkhoz and the fields and Marshal Antonescu tells me < Mr. Alexianu, how beautiful Transnistria is, and how bad of a state our country is. And I responded <Mr Antonescu, why do not make the country look like Transnistria? And he answered "I cannot".[139]

[134] Biographies of Ion Bacalu, Marcus Budic, Tilly Davidovici, 59/1941, MI. Cabinetul Ministrului, no. Inv.2322, SANIC.
[135] "Report 17 mai 1941, MI. Cabinetul Ministrului, no.inv. 2332, 26/1941, SANIC.
[136] Solonari, *Purifying the Nation,* 453.
[137] Ion Antonescu deposition, Stenogramele de la Procesul unor Criminali de Război, no. Inv. 3440, 3/577, 456-72, SANIC.
[138] Mariana Hausleitner, "Romania in the Second World War, Revisionist out of Necessity", in Marina Cattaruzza, Stefan Dyroff, Dieter Langewiesche, eds., *Territorial Revisionism and the Allies of Germany in the Second World War* (New York: Berghahn Books 2013), 184.
[139] "Îi arăt Mareșului ce am realizat în Transnistria. Îi arăt frumusețea ogoarelor, cum se lucrează în colhoz și pe câmpuri și Mareșalul îmi spune: Dle. Alexianu, ce frumos este în Transnistria și ce urât este la noi în țară! Și i-am răspuns, Dle. Antonescu, De ce nu faceți țara să arate ca Transnistria? Și el a răspuns, nu pot." Deposition of Alexianu, 341, Stenogramele de la Procesul unor Criminali de Război 3440, SANIC.

Furthermore, records of the Gendarmerie and the police make evident the government's suspicion towards refugees.[140] They concerned the government and were thus kept under a close watch by relevant authorities such as the Police and the Gendermerie. Records of the latter suggest that when Marshal Edward Rydz Śmigły, the Commander of the Polish Forces in the camp, left, there was an increase in the monitoring of the camp. Institutions were afraid of a possible departure of Polish officers from the camp and causing unrest.[141] In general, refugees were considered troublesome for the Antonescu regime, and encouraged them to emigrate to Palestine.[142] Given the territorial ambitions of the Antonescu regime, and its purity quest, a clear target for the regime were Ukrainian-Polish Jews.[143] In fact, in 1941, a decision by the Cabinet of Ministers shows that a 'praetor' was appointed to mediate the complaints of the population concerning the war situation, including those related to the camp and to contacts that the local population had with refugees.[144] The police also kept those living in the villages around the camp under strict watch.[145] A note shows that Polish refugees received no financial compensation beyond what was provided to the Romanians from the ceded territories in the North, since those who wanted to find work already had done so, or so the argument went.[146] Refugees faced many legal barriers. For instance, the required length of residence for those who wished to have their stay extended was lowest for the German population (seven years) compared to thirteen years in the case of Yugoslavs, Albanians, and Italians[147]. Such political reasoning ensured that refugees who were allowed in the country, particularly those coming from Poland, whose alliance against the USSR dated from 1921, bolstered both interwar

[140] "Corespondența între Poliție și Jandarmerie, 77/1941, 14, MI. Cabinetul Ministrului no. Inv. 2322, SANIC.
[141] Referarat despre refugiați polonezi, 83/1942, 1-12, MI. Cabinetul Ministrului, 2322, SANIC.
[142] "Letter from Antonescu to Filderman September 19, 1940. Police report on Jewish emigration to Palestine", File 2704, reel 9, RG 25.004, Selected Records from the Romanian Information Service, 1936-1948, Elie Wiesel Institute/USHMM.
[143] "Ordin de Informare 8676" on Ukrainian Irredentism, 144/1942, ISJ 1474, SANIC.
[144] "Ordin", 15/1939, 167, IGJ, no. inv. 1474, SANIC, Bucharest.
[145] Ordin Circular 313515/1939, 197, IGJ, no.inv, 1474, SANIC, Bucharest.
[146] Raport, 93/1942, MI.Cabinetul ministrului no.inv. 2322, SANIC.
[147] Ordin Circular 31189,4 dec 1939, 15/1939 ISJ, no inv. 1474, SANIC.

governments' nationalist discourse.[148] There were also political strategies at play, primarily keeping the support of France and the United Kingdom.

4.2 Silences: The Holocaust

The camp was more problematic for members of the Jewish community. In June 1941, following the deportation of all Jewish community members aged between 18 and 60 in the villages between Siret and Prut to Oltenia, most of them arrived in Târgu Jiu.[149] Since many of these were later transferred from Târgu Jiu to Transnistria, the camp is central to the history of the Holocaust.[150] In this sense, those interested in emphasizing the humanitarian narrative of 2014, that is a patriotic, benevolent attitude towards refugees, supporting values of prestige of the nation, erased the camp's explicit history of violence committed against the Jewish community 80 years before. This space of heritage also speaks about the pitfalls of framing its Jewish history as communist activity. The testimonies concerning the Transnistrian camp of Vapniarka convey the policy of neglect in Transnistria and the fact that the political prisoners (primarily from Târgu Jiu and Jilava) were always aware of the singling out of the Jewish community.[151] Interestingly, Târgu Jiu featured prominently in the trials after the war, particularly in the flagship trial against Antonescu. Many witnesses in the trial were members of the Jewish community who had been deported to Transnistria and returned to Târgu Jiu, like those in the Acmecetca farm in Transnistria, a veterinary outpost used as camp.[152]

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[148] For both the Polish and the Romanian states, the threats over territorial integrity were the main lines of the foreign policy at the time. See for instance Hugh Ragsdale, *The Soviets, the Munich Crisis, and the Coming of World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 76-78.

[149] Alexianu's deposition, Procesul criminalilor de Razboi, Rechizitorii Declarații, no. inv. 3140, 66/1944, 18-20 SANIC, Bucharest.

[150] Order by which communist Jews from Târgu Iiu are transferred to Vapniarka in Transnistria, 77/1943, ISJ no. Inv. 1474, SANIC.

[151] Testimony of Avraham Simcha, 3557344, 99.193 O.3 Testimonies Department, Yad Vashem.

[152] See Schiţă cu situaţia ghetouriulor din Transnistria, 135/1942, reel 13, RG 25.046, Records of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Special Information Service of Romania [Serviciul Special de Informatii], 1920-1949, Elie Wiesel Institute/USHMM.

Many of those who returned from Transnistria beginning at the end of 1943 were again imprisoned in the same camp. During the postwar trials, several testimonies mentioned that the resistance in the Transnistrian camp of Vapniarka was instrumentalized and strengthened after those individuals arrived in Târgu Jiu.[153] Among these cases is that of Apostol, interned in Târgu Jiu and returning from Vapniarka in Transnistria, who was beaten and abused by Col. Leoveanu, the military commander of the camp.[154] The death toll for Jiului Valley was estimated in postwar documents at 30 percent, especially on the Bumbești-Livezeni railway project.[155] Records show that those sent to the camp underwent a cursory military court trial under various accusations.[156] Some were imprisoned as deserters from the Hungarian Army in 1942, and others for "conspiring against the state" and destabilization, with sentences varying from five to seven years.[157] Jews were imprisoned for not respecting the obligation to give up economic activities.[158]

Interestingly, in the first four years after the end of the war, several influential books on the Holocaust circulated and brought attention to the camps. In 1947 Marius Mircu, a prominent Jewish journalist before the war, wrote *Pogromurile din Bucovina si Dorohoi* (The Pogroms in Bukovina and Dorohoi), with a preface by the then Minister of Justice, Lucreţiu Pătrăşcanu.[159] In fact, prosecutions of Jews were in the public eye at the end of the war, through the trials. Some trajectories show this, for instance that of the lawyer Paul Moscovici, who had been

[153] Deposition Ilie Kanner, Rechizitorii Declaratii, 219, no. inv. 3140, SANIC, Bucharest.
[154] Testimony Gheorghe Apostol, Procesul criminalilor de Razboi, Rechizitorii Declaratii, no. inv. 3140, 4/1944, 3, SANIC, Bucharest.
[155] Trial of Romanian officers accused of crimes in the Targu Jiu and Vapniarka camps. 36-40, reel 20, file 40011, RG 25.004, Selected Records from the Romanian Information Service, 1936-1948, Elie Wiesel Institute/USHMM.
[156] Letter Louis Alletrino, Dutch journalist for the *New York Times*, imprisoned in Târgu Jiu for reporting negatively about the Antonescu regime, 59/1941 5-7, MI. Cabinetul Ministrului, no inv.2322, SANIC, Bucharest.
[157]59/1941, vol II, MI. Cabinetul Ministrului no. Inv. 2322, SANIC, Bucharest.
[158] Liza Dulberger was arrested in Bucharest under that charge, Raport, April 5th, 1941, 59/1941, vol I, MI. Cabinetul Ministrului no.inv. 2322, SANIC, Bucharest.
[159] Marius Mircu, *Pogromurile din Basarabia şi alte câteva întâmplări* [The Pogroms in Bessarabia and a Few Other Events) (Bucharest: Glob, 1947).

detained in Târgu Jiu for communist "agitation" and sent to Vapniarka in Transnistria.[160] He ended up in the Balta ghetto, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Gavăț, commander of the Gendarmerie Legion in Balta. Gavăț seemed to resent the Romanian authorities and facilitated the escape of Moscovici from one of the internment camps. [161] Non-Jewish Communists were also deported to Transnistria. The presence of members of early communist and socialist movements in the camp hampered the presentation of other histories, such as that of the Iron Guard. But the experiences of the new communists in power after 1945 were equally shunned in the anticommunist narratives after the demise of the regime. Other relevant histories continue to evade public debate on Târgu Jiu and broadly on the political polarization before and during the war. By 1944, foreign inmates in Târgu Jiu were looking forward to heading home. Robert Tomasof left the camp to contribute to the Allies' efforts to handle the massive displacement crisis. He went to Poland and Czechoslovakia to contact those who might be there looking to repatriate.[162]

The testimonies of those deported to Transnistria (and the Jewish histories in Târgu Jiu) circulated widely after the war, including during the 1944-1946 trial of war criminals. These temporarily supported Jewish memory. Some of those returning from Transnistria in 1943 and 1944 found employment in the administration and other public functions, especially in Bukovina after the retreat of the German Army. Miriam Bercovici tells the story of her return on foot from Transnistria and her relatively easy integration into the new political order. She arrived in the town of Vatra Dornei where the entire Romanian administration had just left. Since she had learned Russian in her two years in Transnistria, she - barely seventeen years old - worked as a translator there until she started university in 1946. She also recounts the

[160] Declarație martor Ion Raiciu, Procesul Criminalilor de Război, RG 25004, dosar 4001, USHMM/ Elie Wiesel Institute, Bucharest.
[161] Declarație, Procesul criminalilor de Razboi, reel 20, file 40111, USHMM/Elie Wiesel Institute, Bucharest.
[162] Testimony of Robert Tomasof, 469, O.11 - Romania Collection, Yad Vashem.

authorities' efforts to integrate the returnees, a situation that changed radically in 1948.[163] Yet, with the gradual change in both party line concerning the Jewish population and the successive erasures of relevant heritages, these connections were lost.

A similar situation shaped the histories of antifascism. One witness argued "the point of these camps was to take the best anti-fascist fighters" away from society. He continues about the "conditions in the camp, which led to various typhus epidemics of hundreds of deaths, because they were meant to exterminate us". He also refers to the "slave work" in the camp, under the constant threat of being shot.[164] The camp also housed Ukrainian soldiers singled out from the Polish Army officers taking refuge in Romania and other nationalities, such as Russians who lived on Romanian territory, in the last days of the war.[165] One report, for instance, mentions Colonel Borosov, part of the Wrangel group of the anti-Stalinist opposition, interned in the camp.[166]

The anticommunist erasures of the 1990s, when heritage sites, histories and memories altogether were restrictively considered through the lens of an opposition to the past, further shifted the memorial angle on Târgu Jiu as the space of imprisonment of many of the Germans, who, after August 1944, were suddenly on the wrong side of the war. Documents of the Siguranță show that prominent members of the German Ethnic Group, the organization of the Romanian Volkdeutsche and, in that respect, an active supporter of the country's far-right politics, were imprisoned here before being deported to the USSR. In 1945, the camp was one of the main destinations for Germans arrested all over the country.[167]

[163] Interview Miriam Bercovici, January 1995, the USC Shoah Foundation, accessed onsite and online.
[164] Fisă Șerban Leoveanu, Fond Acțiunile Deținuților Politici Comuniști și Antifasciști Din închisori și Lagăre (fond VIII) 1876-1967, no. inv 3504, 16/1967, SANIC, Bucharest.
[165] Such as Terente Fortusneac, deserter from the USSR, 59/1941, 123, and Tihon Eremiscu, survivor of the uprising on the Potemkin, 59/1941, 107. MI. Cabinetul de Miniștri, no. inv. 2322, SANIC, Bucharest.
[166] Raport jandarmi Târgu Jiu, MI Cabinetul Ministrului, no. inv. 2322, SANIC, Bucharest.
[167] List of German and of ethnic German prisoners in Targu-Jiu (1944), File 10/1930, reel 140, RG 25.023, Selected Records of the Romanian Ministry of Interior, 1910-1957, Elie Wiesel Institute/USHMM.

5. Monuments to Resentment

The previous two sections have teased out how "silences" in, these cases, shape contemporary visions about the past. Rendering Sighet a space of memory of communist history meant imprinting a formulation that stylized both the history of the Holocaust, and that of communism. The Sighet Memorial selectively reinforces, in fact, a particular image of the anticommunist political victim, the liberal interwar intellectual, or, conversely, a representation of nationalist ideals. The Elie Wiesel Museum, with its communitarian narrative, also operates as a single narrative space, in this case, of a cosmopolitan and assimilated history of the Jewish minority in the region. As much as one is directly confrontational (in a memorializing sense), the other is not. Târgu Jiu could be said to be a non-site, a space erased – although the silencing operated here was part of a larger process of shying away from exhibiting and discussing controversial histories. Because it evoked the dawn of the communist movement and the persecution of communists, Târgu Jiu did not seem to offer an important enough narrative to open such debates. Târgu Jiu, as a non-site of memory, has thus had an ambivalent afterlife which continues to work politically. The silencing it encourages should be taken as a political manifestation in itself. For instance, contemporary political positions were actively cultivated by the memorialization of these spaces: the lack of accountability on communism, in the case of Sighet, and a useful "forgetting" to serve the anticommunist narrative in the case of Târgu Jiu.

These sites show how heritage and heritage politics operate within a prescriptive history of political violence. Silence, in this context, was a stern political position, and one that primarily reproduced a particular message that practices resentment. Sighet, in the 1990s, became an expression of a "memory of justice", as Ana Blandiana, activist and founder,

argued.[168] Its visibility as a memory space was shaped by the fact that both the authorities and many members of the public attempted simply to ignore this history in its immediate aftermath, against which the memorial mobilized. In 2015, when curator Blandiana was reflecting on the activity of the Group for Social Dialogue, she argued that memory was the most significant accomplishment of this organization.[169] The memorial's public programme has reflected this militant character, most visible in the Sighet Summer School, a unique space for debate on the history of repression, "Europeanization" and political empowerment. A series of related publications have also focused on the relation between communism, memorialization, and "democracy"[170]. Such publications, including "May the Partisans Live until the Americans Arrive" by Aristina Pop Săileanu, "Sighet is the Collective Memory we never had access to", by Cristopher Teodor Uglea, and "The History we were missing", by Camelia Lesan, nevertheless, all speak about the function of the space, rather than engaging the space itself.[171] Highly visible figures such as Pierre Hassner, Stephane Courtois, Petruska Sustrova[172], Pierre Henri Imbert, former President of the EU Council, and Soviet dissident Vladimir Bukovski, have also emphasized the importance of this memorial against "silence", and as a space for generating a post-Cold War political identity.

As argued previously, Târgu Jiu was vital for the communist regime after the war and its invisibility testifies to the enduring contemporary resentment against such spaces. Its complex histories, that speak about the polarization and the crisis of democracy of the interwar years and the histories of the Holocaust in Romania (rather than its "golden age" narrative), did not fit to be framed through the criminalization perspective applied to such sites. Here, the

[168] Also a point discussed in personal interview with the author, June 2018.
[169] Interview by Rodica Palada, in Ana Blandiana, Romulus Rusan eds., *Solidaritatea este Superlativul Libertății* (Bucharest: Fundația Academia Civică, 2015), 2–17.
[170] See for instance, the first publication in 1995, Ana Blandiana eds., *Memoria ca Forma de Justiție* (Bucharest: Fundația Academia Civică, 1995).
[171] Some of these can be accessed on the research department of the Sighet Memorial. http://www.memorialsighet.ro/o-carte-pe-zi-4/
[172] Spokeswoman for the Charter 77 Group, the flagship dissident document of the Cold War. See Christopher Brooks, *Charter 77 and the Legacy of Antipolitics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

narrative engages with state socialist authoritarianism only in as much as it shows the 'success' of breaking with its legacy.[173] At the same time, the new focus on a "humanitarianism" perspective, appealing to the site's relevance in histories of refugee flows, is possible precisely through such silences. The "working class" dimension of the site also disappears in this context, since the mining industry was important economically and the mining community was held up as a beacon of the socialist worker class.[174] In fact, the region produced the first ripple in the narrative of consensus surrounding Nicolae Ceaușescu when the miners initiated the first strikes against the regime in 1974. Between 30,000 and 900,00 workers went on strike for pensions and safety measures, openly contradicting their "privileged" status in the regime.[175] At the same time, silencing the political heritage of state socialism contributed to the erasure and reinterpretation of various forms of repression. Târgu Jiu also operated as a camp for political prisoners post-1948 and many worked as forced labour in the nearby mining industry. The strikes were quelled rapidly but were a central narrative for the opposition during the last decade of communism. In the "resentment" perspective on an engaged memory, such stories do not seem to have place.

Holocaust diarist Jean Améry argues resentment conveys the impossibility to forget; keeping a memory alive; in other words, Améry defines remembering as counter-politics, a form of resistance against master narratives threatening to change meanings.[176] In Sighet and Târgu Jiu, the perpetrators' impunity and the neglect of the victims conditioned these sites' use for collective memory and the mobilization of certain 'images' of the past. Memory was less

[173] See for instance Maria Malksoo, "Criminalizing Communism: Transnational Mnemopolitics in Europe", in *International Political Sociology* 8, 1 (2014), 82–99.
[174] A more extensive argument about the disinterest in a "working class" heritage is made by Emanuela Grama, *Socialist Heritage: The Politics of Past and Place in Romania* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), 1-32.
[175] Although the prison seized to exist, some parts of the building were reused in the regional prison of the Jiului Valley (Livezeni), and this was the epicenter of the working-class movement. Some insights into the conflictual relationship that the group had with the regime is evident in the surveillance documents of the Securitate (FD, 4938/4/ 1974, 111-120, CNSAS, Bucharest).
[176] Jean Améry, *At The Mind's Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and Its Realities* (London: Granta Books, 1999), 3-13.

about closure than about keeping history 'raw', political, and often conflictual, in the cases of both the Holocaust and of communism. Here, Améry's perspective can assist us in understanding how a space for memory politics and the victim's image becomes a selective space of representation. It was Sighet – the former communist prison - that piqued the interest of public opinion and the post-1989 liberals because of its connotations.[177] These two memorial spaces show the endurance – marked on the ground, or not – of how this perspective continues to be perpetuated today through a stylized perspective of narratives of democracy.

The resentment that shaped the very notion of "negative memory" in the early 1990s runs through the very narratives these sites put forward.[178] Silencing was about a reified perspective on history which could, somehow, salvage the very project of democracy that people distrusted. It did not encourage rediscovering a new utopianism through memory, but responded to factors absent from the political conditions of the 1990s, due to crony capitalism, budding authoritarianism and neoliberalism. In this sense, "breaking the silence" is an appropriate strategy and a reflection on a lack of utopian possibilities. From this perspective, we can also then contextualize why the Europeanization of memory perspective equating victims of National Socialism and communism, although it very much resonated with local national discourses, never really took off in a cultural and social environment that was initially very much interested in the internationalization of local victimhood.

As we see in the context of these two memorials, some victims are highlighted while others are silenced in this form of mobilization, the survivor is a more 'useful' story than the victim, and some histories are simply ignored because they do not fit the general frame of the memorial. In 2009, Wiesel invited the audience listening to his speech in front of the new museum in Sighet to remember the forgotten fifteen thousand Jews, who perished in the

[177] It was the general critique formulated against the calls from the Elie Wiesel Holocaust National Institute of Remembrance to stop the mounting of the plaque. The EWIHR is generally a controversial institution in public debate, polarizing in relation to memorial debates.
[178] See also Radonić, "'Our' vs. 'Inherited' Museums.".

Hungarian deportations from Transylvania.[179] He then stressed that Romanian authorities themselves must come to terms with their involvement in the anti-Semitic political actions and deportations from Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Transnistria, and the pogroms in Odessa, Iași and Bucharest.[180] But on that occasion, public opinion seemed to take Elie Wiesel's message from visiting the nearby Memorial for the Victims of Communism and of Resistance in Sighet as an insult.[181] Much of the debate at the time was preoccupied with the apparent disrespect brought to the victims of the communist prison. The histories of Sighet and the Wiesel Museum were starkly separated (although the Elie Wiesel Museum reports friendly relations with the Memorial).[182] The Memorial, albeit briefly, organized some events related to the Holocaust, but it has been largely indifferent to the Jewish histories of the region. In these sites of "difficult heritage"[183], the cultivation of separate histories has remained in evidence.

It is essential to point out that such entanglements of negative memory have been a silent contributor and companion to the "politics of resentment" of the late 2010s' contestations of the liberal democratic consensus. Resentment referred explicitly to a contestation of the imperfect liberal democracy in the 1990s and the memorial narratives outlined above have been crucial shapers of such perspectives.[184] Moreover, these perspectives which already focused on a fragility of democracy, its, were easily hijackable by actors that professed to be able to address

[179] Before the outbreak of the Second World War and the deportations of April-May 1944 to Auschwitz-Birkenau.
[180] Radu Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania: The Destruction of Jews and Gypsies Under the Antonescu Regime, 1940-1944* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000); Radu Ioanid, "The Holocaust in Romania: The Iasi Pogrom of June 1941", *Contemporary European History* 2, 2 (1993), https://doi.org/http://www.jstor.org/stable/20081475.
[181] For instance, in 2002, when Elie Wiesel delivered a speech during the inauguration of the museum. The Romanian government supported the occasion. It was Elie Wiesel's second visit to his hometown after the political transformation of 1989, but in 2002, the opening of the museum was intended by Romanian authorities to redeem several earlier statements made by authorities. In 2001, the Romanian President Ion Iliescu had contributed to the general international opinion that Eastern Europe was denying the Holocaust, by claiming that communism inflicted the same amount of violence on political objectors as Nazi authorities during the Shoah. See Michael Shafir, *Between negationism and comparative trivialization,* ACTA, No. 19, 2002.
[182] Personal interview with Andreea Dobeș, curator Sighet Memorial, June 14, 2017, and curator R.F, Elie Wiesel Museum, July 2016.
[183] Sharon MacDonald, "Is 'Difficult Heritage' Still 'Difficult'?," *Museum International* 67, 1–4 (2015), 6–22, https://doi.org/10.1111/muse.12078; Cynthia Milton and Erika Lehrer, "Witness to Witnessing", in Erika Lehrer, Cynthia Milton and Marie Patterson eds., *Curating Difficult Knowledge: Violent Pasts in Public Places* (London: Palgravre Macmillan, 2011), 1–23.
[184] Müller, What is Populism?, 1–13, Koncewicz, "*Understanding the Politics of Resentment"*.

these vulnerabilities. The lack of debate and presence of more nuanced understandings of contestations of democracy in the past, influences, and dependencies of power, aggravated these misappropriations. For instance, and as noted above, in 2016, the 'humanitarian' history of the Târgu Jiu camp was 'rediscovered' against the backdrop of the refugee crisis that had again revived the East versus West confrontation in Europe. Amidst the general criticism of Eastern European countries during the refugee crisis, Romanian media looked at the period time before the war (1939-1941). Romanian and Polish narratives surrounding the Târgu Jiu camp's humanitarian function met half-way. The Polish government organized an exhibition in early 2018 in the nearby museum in Târgu Jiu's town on the topic of mutual solidarity between the two countries. If Târgu Jiu has been sporadically a topic of interest in recent decades, it was as part of a "geography of generosity", as an exhibition in Warsaw termed the wartime episode. The occasion stoked the memory of past state tragedies to an equal degree for both sides: the Polish government commemorated the exodus caused by the Soviet invasion[185] and evoked laudable past responses to other refugee flows. Târgu Jiu's rediscovery in this anticommunist key also prompted a nostalgic look at a presumably lost but ideal liberalism of the interwar period, where regional solidarities existed.

What is more, Targu Jiu also puts the spotlight on images of catastrophe and suffering and their role in the liberal imaginary. As Didier Fassin has argued, a "humanitarian reason" emerged together with the liberal state and capitalism, and humanitarianism has always supported and strengthened the moral dimension of liberal internationalism.[186] Appealing to the site's 'humanitarian' dimension in hosting refugees served to neatly occlude the interwar government's authoritarian dimension by returning to the nostalgic trope according to which the communist takeover dismantled Romanian interwar liberalism, the "golden-age" of liberal

[185] Redactia, "75 de Ani de La Refugiul Polonez in Romania: Lansare de Carte Si Expozitie de Fotografie La Varsovia Si Lublin," *Hotnews.Ro*, 2014, https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-cultura-18652492-75-ani-refugiul-polonez-romania-lansare-carte-expozitie-fotografie-varsovia-lublin.htm.
[186] Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2011), 3-11.

history. The Europeanizing dimension of the politics of violence further accentuated this dynamic. As debates at the time of the 2015-2016 'reception crisis' revealed, there was a thin line between the liberal impetus, and excesses of this duty of protection.[187]

The underlying motivations, practices, and consequences of humanitarian actions, revealing how they can be influenced by geopolitical interests, cultural biases, and structural inequalities, can indeed be made starkly evident by the role of collective memory and heritage. Specifically, silences have become increasingly more potent in this dynamic. Especially around 2015, heritage became a tool in professing 'European humanitarianism', limited and restricted in its respondents or ethics, but nonetheless a powerful tool of expressing the liberal state's political morality.

With the 'reception crisis' of 2015, heritage spaces of past political violence, war, genocide, and authoritarianism, which are often iterations of difficult histories overcome in the past, have illustrated the fragility of principles grounding the liberal European sphere. The "common" heritage that was meant to "thicken" a unique form of Europeanism by rebutting and educating about past violence appropriated these narratives of Europeanism into a complex defence of authoritarian thought.[188] Oppositional in nature, the interpretation of these histories emphasizes suffering which is still unacknowledged within Europe and consequently contests the liberal consensus which has also been grounded in politics of memory. Heritage politics has led to a new affirmation of the "us" versus "them" in museums and other sites and from spaces of cultivating, even if only performatively, some of the guilt, regret, and awareness of the past. Engagements with history have been transformed (perhaps again, but in a different key) into spaces professing national sovereignty. But zooming in closer on local debates in Central and Eastern Europe showcases the long life of this dynamic, how the seeds of these narratives have

[187] See the special issue edited by Dan Stone, "Refugees then and now: memory, history and politics in the long twentieth century: an Introduction", *Patterns of Prejudice*, 52 (2-), 2018, 101-106.
[188] Müller "On European Memory", 25–38.

been there since the early 1990s and how heritage and collective memory have always been instrumental in their consolidation.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have traced the memorial dynamics of two sites of memory, Sighet and Târgu Jiu, that suggest how the transnationalization of the memory of the Holocaust and later communism has strengthened a selective memory surrounding the Holocaust in Romania. The two sites also contradict the idea that the memory of European-wide political violence can somehow 'positively' transform and add to local and nationalist-tinged ideas of anticommunism, opening this latter up into a more salient debate about collaboration and bystanders. Although the forgetting and silencing of the Holocaust on the site of Sighet was reframed within a victimization narrative, its memory has been overwhelmingly conditioned by national political turns, creating a space of primarily "resentment". The neglect of the repatriation camp in Sighet, part of the memorial's story and undoubtedly shaping the history of the prison the memorial references today, is evocative of a perspective that hides Romanian collaboration during the war.

The case of Târgu Jiu shows a new type of selectivity, which developed together with new discourses of cosmopolitanism, that nationalize, not in contrast to but under the umbrella of a "European memory" and are calibrated by notions of rights, key to the liberal vocabulary of European commemoration. In this case, the figurations of the memory of the far-right weave into a structurally prevalent anticommunist discourse, which has "canonized" a resistance and victim perspective despite other political or historical implications of their history. Equally ignored are the political causes and the social and political roots of the early socialist movement in the case of Târgu Jiu. Paradoxically, this perspective harms a critical memory of the state, not because of nationalism but because the idea of a liberal state needs a particular script to

sustain it. In this case, it was a narrative of generosity and humanitarian reason (to return to Fassin), which strengthened the already exclusionary dimensions of liberal commemoration. The historical perspective consequently ignores the plight of the Jewish minorities and the history of the Holocaust as a continuation of state politics of exclusion and anti-Semitism. Instrumental in this discourse is liberal anticommunism, which implies a distinct dynamic of integrating victimhood and externalizing guilt in successive political framings, and the mobilization of particular memories and claims.

Chapter IV:
Yugoslavia and Transnistria: The Geopolitics of Anxiety

1. Introduction: A Just War

In 2017, in a public intervention in Belgrade, the German-Romanian Nobel Prize winner Herta Müller defended the "humanitarian" intervention carried out in 1999 by NATO troops against Slobodan Milošević's regime that led to the bombing of Belgrade. "If a country unleashes four wars in nine years and with that transforms the cities into cemeteries, it cannot be stopped only by words."[1] Müller indicated that the intervention should have been regarded more positively, against its contested reputation internationally and nationally, because it had been justified as a defence of human rights. To back up her argument, she upheld its legitimacy by saying, "I would have been very content if NATO had intervened in Romania, but this did not happen. And Romanians had to die fighting other Romanians to end the Ceaușescu regime".[2] The affirmation was heavily criticized by Serbian public opinion makers, among them journalist Nemanja Kusturica, who argued that the writer, whose father had served in the Waffen-SS, had insulted the Serbs.[3] Yet, part of the Romanian public opinion perceived her comments as a justified critique of Ceaușescu's repression and also felt vindicated for the years of living under dictatorship.[4]

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[1] Snezana Bjelotomic, "Herta Müller Causes Outrage in Belgrade", *Serbian Monitor* (Belgrade: October 25, 2017), https://www.serbianmonitor.com/en/herta-muller-causes-outrage-belgrade/. Last accessed October 15, 2018.
[2] Michael Martens, "Proteststurm gegen Herta Müller, Frankfurter Allgemeine Debatten", 28 October 2017, available at: https://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/debatten/nobelpreistraegerin-in-belgrad-proteststurm-gegen-herta-mueller-15266577.html. About the debate, "Herta Müller Enrages The Serbs By Speaking The Truth", *Dialog international*, December 1, 2017. https://www.dialoginternational.com/dialog_international/2017/11/herta-m%C3%BCller-outrages-the-serbs-by-speaking-the-truth.html. Last accessed June 15, 2018.
[3] Michael Martens, "Herta Müller Made Serbia Look in the Mirror", *Balkan Insight*, November 1, 2017, https://balkaninsight.com/2017/11/01/herta-müller-made-serbia-look-in-the-mirror-10-31-2017/. Last accessed March 2, 2018.
[4] Red. "Herta Müller in discutie la Belgrad", https://www.hotnews.ro, Accessed February 10, 2016.

Müller's memory retrieval of the Yugoslav context is among the few references to the Yugoslav wars by public figures, which speaks to the lack of a memorial culture of the 1990s Yugoslav wars in Romania up to now. If remembered by public opinion at all now, the conflicts belong to a "blurry" and "transitional" 1990s. As others did before him, writing in 2008, Romanian journalist C. Lecea commented on the peculiarity of having almost no memorial discourse about a war happening right on Romania's doorstep, and a limited historiographical discourse on the Yugoslav situation of the 1990s.[5] The events only re-entered debate after a long hiatus due to the public discussion opened by the Milošević trial in the Hague in 2002[6] when transitional justice, reconciliation, and postwar reconstruction were already part of the transnational symbolic perspective on liberal "identity" and European belonging. Müller's position is interesting, in this sense, because it shows how a deep unease about Romanian state fragility in the 1990s continues to drive the politics of memory of this conflict.

Interestingly, the "humanitarian" intervention in Yugoslavia was a divisive event at the time in Romania.[7] In his book about the humanitarian reason of liberalism, Didier Fassin's argues that moral values and sentiments have become a global liberal currency, but one that is inward looking, often exclusionary, and always bound to forms of inequality that create conditions of dispossession from the start.[8] The responses in Romania triggered by this duty of protection of liberalism were illustrative. In the 1990s, the Romanian *Adevărul* newspaper read:

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[5] See Constantin Lecea, "Ce știm despre Iugoslavia?", *România Liberă* (Bucharest, April 22, 2008). BCUB P 23 111, vol. 2. Also George Popescu, "Iugoslavia după Miloşevici", *Cuvântul* (Bucharest, 9 October 2000).

[6] Cherif Bassiouni, "Real Justice or *Realpolitik*? The Delayed Indictment of Milošević", in Timothy Waters (ed), *The Milošević Trial: An Autopsy,* (Oxford Academic, 2014). 92–105.

[7] Carrie Booth Walling, "Human Rights Norms, State Sovereignty, and Humanitarian Intervention", *Human Rights Quarterly* 37, 2 (2015), 383–413, https://doi.org/10.1353/hrq.2015.0034; Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2011), 14-18; Didier Fassin, Richard Rechtman, *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009); Igor Stiks, *Nations and Citizens in Yugoslavia and the Post-Yugoslav States: One Hundred Years If Citizenship* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 34-41.

[8] He argues "Humanitarian reason governs precarious lives the lives of the unemployed and the asylum seekers, the lives of sick immigrants and people with Aids, the lives of disaster victims and victims of conflict— threatened and forgotten lives that humanitarian government brings into existence by protecting and revealing them. When compassion is exercised in the public space, it is therefore always directed from above to below, from the more powerful to the weaker, the more fragile, the more vulnerable— those who can generally be constituted as victims of an overwhelming fate". Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, 4.

"The war in Yugoslavia might spell the end of political changes achieved with the bloodshed of thousands".[9] In June 1991, a Romanian National Broadcasting Company reporter was discussingdiscussed "the uncertainty across the border"[10] when referring to the sudden Slovenian - Yugoslav Ten-Day War (27 June 1991 – 7 July 1991). As the Slovenian attempt at independence in Yugoslavia was escalating into the Yugoslav People's Army's full-fledged intervention, the event stoked fears about the potential for aggression on Romanian national territory, the bordering Banat region. During the sieges of Vukovar (1991) and Sarajevo (1992-1996), the focus was on images of chaos, the wounded and violent conflict. Often, "insurgents" against the federation were depicted to be at fault for the clashes in the 1990s. Romanian public actors also emphasized the 'chaos' triggered by the disappearance of Yugoslavia.[11] More so, the debate spurred by the Yugoslav war was, for the region, one of wider European security, (echoing the international debate), but also of the perils of internal frailty. For observers, the Yugoslav "brotherhood" dissolution into conflict could have well announced the same fate for the Romanians and Hungarians, the Slovaks, and the Czechs.[12]

Going beyond 'humanitarian' concerns, the discussions about the implications of the war for the sovereignty of Yugoslavia's neighbours returned to the war's "geopolitical" significance and its potential influence on Romanian territorial integrity. Talk about big states and "small states" in the aftermath of the Cold War seemed to dominate the regional debates triggered by the Yugoslav conflict. The potential of intervention by the Romanian government mobilized opposing sentiments. There was, on the one hand, the liberal faction in the opposition who supported any interventionism as long as it was "for democracy", but even there, the tone

[9] Stefan Nistorescu, "Război de proximitate", in *Adevărul* (Bucharest. November 23, 1992). BCUB P 12 981, vol.12.
[10] Daily morning news, June 13, *The Agerpress News Agency Archive*, Newsreel 24, 28, 29, Radiodifuziunea Română Archive, Bucharest.
[11] Cristian Tudor Popescu, "România este în război", şi „nu numai în Iugoslavia", *Adevărul*, 1998. Also see *Sfera Politicii* issue 70/1999.
[12] James Ker-Lindsay, "The final Yugoslav Issue, the Evolution of International Thinking on Kosovo", 1998-2005, in Dejan Djokić and James Ker-Lindsay eds., *New Perspectives on Yugoslavia: Key Issues and Controversies* (London, New York: Routledge, 2011), 176-193.

of public opinion often lamented a lack of true political choice for those in the region and a confirmation of Eastern European states' continuing fragility. On the other, there were the social democrats who still supported the aggressor Milošević regime.

The prospect of getting involved and supporting the NATO intervention mobilized not only a sense of economic and political crises in the early 1990s in the region. By the time of the Belgrade intervention of 1999, there were open controversies about the "servile" attitude of the region's governments. When Andrei Pleșu, the Romanian Foreign Affairs Minister, allowed American planes to transit Romanian airspace, he was generally accused of "excess of zeal".[13] In 1999, Romanian journalist Bogdan Chireac doubted whether participation in the war should be conditioned on acceptance by the international community, "what does it mean for accession to NATO…this is a problem of the UN, it cannot be normal to intervene in a sovereign and independent country".[14] Similarly, journalist Cristian Tudor Popescu positioned the war in a long US power game in Eastern Europe:

> They wanted to demonstrate to the world there is a new master…no educated being would contest the efficiency of democracy and liberalism. The American desires are ideal for any country which has gone through a totalitarian regime. [15].

Popescu argued openly, in fact, that the actions in Belgrade are "a prehistory of the West"[16] Such perspectives were present in neighbouring countries as well. The Bulgarian prime minister Filip Dimitrov set the tone of this scepticism when arguing "the West is expecting us to intervene in a conflict in which they do not fully grasp the full dimensions of the situation".[17] Similarly, the Hungarian newspaper *Magyar Nemzet* wrote about the special kinship between

[13] The Romanian government was asked to provide refuelling locations and open the airspace. See "Următoarea etapă - acceptarea cererii de invazie terestră", *Cotidianul* (Bucharest, April 23, 1999).
[14] Bogdan Chireac, "De ce Iugoslavia", *România Liberă* (Bucharest, March 23, 1994). BCUB P 12 981, vol. 23. He also states later it was an algorithm applied to Yugoslavia, "A fost un algoritm aplicat orbeste de Statele Unite unei regiuni din Europa fara sa tina seama de caracteristicile etnice religioase si culturale ale zonei respective." https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-arhiva-1186790-razbunarea-lui-milosevici-bogdan-chirieac.html.
[15] Cristian Tudor Popescu, "Kosovo", *Adevărul* (Bucharest, April 1, 1999.). BCUB P 12 981, vol. 23.
[16] Cristian Tudor Popescu, "Mini-interviu", *Magazin*, no. 21, 25.07.1999.
[17] Quoted in Adrian Ursu, 'Opinii politice' *România Liberă* (Bucharest, February 17, 1999). BCUB P 12 981, vol.41.

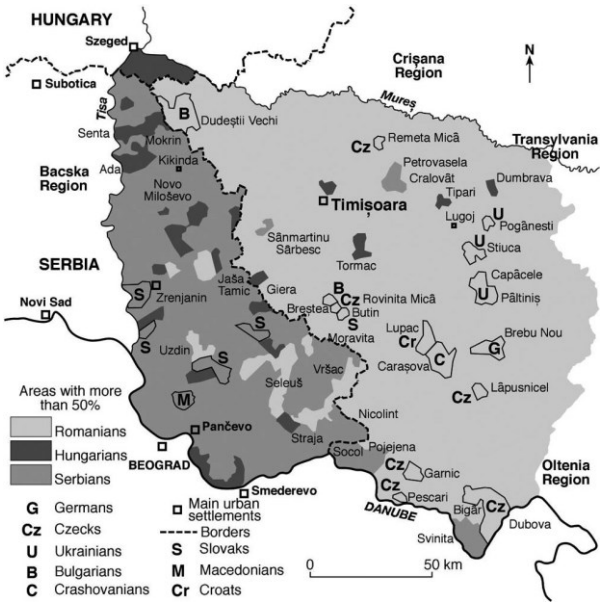
Croatia and a substantial part of Serbia, and how the conflict threatened the "situation all around" ("a környéken kialakult helyzet").[18] Also, the Yugoslav conflict evoked a forced choice between safeguarding the liberal "conquest" of 1989 (and acting like other global powers) and respecting regional dynamics.

This chapter looks at the type of memory politics and narratives arising amidst this moment of 'geopolitical' anxiety and particularly at how a sense of state fragility and shaky liberal sovereignty engendered, at the time, re-framings of the history of war in a militarist tone and through memorial silences. It continues from the previous chapters in that it looks at how humanitarianism, as a liberal ideal of the 1990s, engendered conservative political discourses with selective collective memory constructs. Specifically, it notes how these events drove an undercurrent of defensive cultural constructs of liberalism, which whitewashed past histories of violence.

The analysis mainly traces the historicity of the conflicts around the Romanian borders in the 1990s, and their selective interpretations. It was not just Yugoslavia fuelling such state anxieties in the early 1990s. War seemed to be looming on both borders. The Transnistrian War broke out almost simultaneously on the Eastern Romanian border. Both wars shaped memorial narratives and mobilized selective histories of the Second World War, occupation, and collaboration. Representations of history blended in with discourses on post-Cold War liberal democracy, drawing on both international and European perspectives. The Yugoslav and Transnistrian conflicts are perhaps the more accurate representations of memory debates at the time of a distinct discourse of "liberal nationalism", a protective and self-oriented perspective converting the affordances of liberalism into national solidarity, when all expectations veered

[18] Sebestyén Imre, "Szerb-horvát-muzulmán egyezkedés Bosznia felosztásáról*", Magyar Nemzet*, 1 August, 1992. Budapest.

towards internationalism.[19] I highlight this dimension by looking at the politics of memory concerning the Banat region (in the West) and Transnistria (in the East). Both territories came to the fore in the mental maps of the Romanian public in the 1990s, with long, convoluted and often contradictory histories.



The map of the Western frontier of the Romanian state, with the Banat Region between the light grey and the dark grey areas.[20]

Contemporary map of Transnistria[21]

[19] For an extensive discussion on the concept in Central and Eastern Europe, and particularly a brand of nationalism that, according to the authors, can also be constructive, see Stefan Auer, *Liberal Nationalism* (London Routledge, 2006), 4-13.

[20] DAO / P. Pentsch, Romanian National Census, 2002 & Serbian National Census, 2001 quoted in Remus Creţan, David Turnock and Jaco Woudstra, "Identity and multiculturalism in the Romanian Banat, https://journals.openedition.org/mediterranee/523?lang=en&gathStatIcon=true.

[21] Map of Moldova, including Transnistria in William Zadeskey. "Transnistria: The History Behind the Russian-backed Region", *Origins*, 2022. Available at: https://origins.osu.edu/read/transnistria-history-behind-russian-backed-region?language_content_entity=en. Last accessed January 5, 2024.

2. In Search of a Narrative: Ethnicity and Territory

When the war broke out, the discussion about the limits and the mandate of the new post-communist 'liberal' states, in the Balkans and in the whole of Central and Eastern Europe, was in full swing. Images of the Balkan catastrophe dominated political debates in Romania as well. Concern with the internal fragility of the new states was also paired, however, with an externally focussed preoccupation as political actors stressed "the geography of an uneven world as they assert the moral and political horizons of liberal forms of care towards it", as Simon Reid-Henry has argued.[22] As Reid-Henry suggested, such "care" for the suffering of others became a good measure for assessing the strength of liberalism. This is an accurate description of the negotiations triggered by the Yugoslav and Transnistrian war in Romanian debates. The war, in the 1990s, intersected with immediate national concerns and narratives about Yugoslavia as a symbol, rather than as a practical reality. As much as it spoke about the robustness of liberalism for governments in the region, it was also a time when the baseline political perspective, defined by interventions on humanitarian grounds in the early 1990s, such as the Gulf War and the intervention in Iraq, was highly divisive, primarily because these interventions were portrayed as "interventionist" and "imperialist" at a time when that type of political order was living its last moments.[23] Samuel Moyn has discussed the context emerging in the 1990s as conservative, arguing it represented a subtle normalization of war that went hand in hand with upholding principles of humanitarianism.[24] Humanitarian interventionism became indeed increasingly more bound up with neoconservative agendas in the US context, triggered a series of tensions with other Atlantic partners.[25]

[22] S.M Reid Henry, "Humanitarianism as liberal diagnostic: humanitarian reason and the political rationalities of the liberal will-to-care", *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers.* 39, 3 (2014), 418-431.
[23] See Stephen Wertheim "A solution from hell: the United States and the rise of humanitarian interventionism, 1991–2003", *Journal of Genocide Research*, 12 (3-4), 149-172, DOI: 10.1080/14623528.2010.522053.
[24] Samuel Moyn, *Humane: How the United States Abandoned Peace and Reinvented War* (New York: Macmillan, 2021), 5-16.
[25] Wertheim, "A solution from hell".

Yet, in the countries surrounding the disintegrating Yugoslavia, this dynamic also became a conduit for a conservative wave. In its immediate neighbourhood, the crisis in Yugoslavia seemed to fall predominantly under the rubric of security and mobilized ontological questions of "geopolitics": what was the place of states such as Romania in the emerging order, and how should they position themselves in the European political space.[26] Such considerations were, undoubtedly, cautious, because the narratives attached to the intervention following the 1991 Gulf War had already created a sense of crisis about the area:

> These narratives present rogue states, ruthless dictators, and ethnic tensions as threats to the established liberal international order. The argument made for those in favour of humanitarian intervention is that the use of force is necessary to address the problems of racist and ruthless dictators, tribalism, ethnic tensions, civil war, and religious fundamentalism thrown up in the post-Cold era [27]

Eastern Europe was one of the areas of concern in the wider debate on liberal humanitarianism, precisely because the situation in Iraq echoed events in this region, with Bosnia and Croatia being the main occasions for testing this incipient humanitarian drive. As Stephen Wertheim explains, at the time of the early 1990s, the intention was more to protect affected groups and less regime change, which also triggered questions and concerns about the necessary limits of the US presence.[28] Indeed, it was an ever-evolving picture, with historian Van Evera predicting in 1994 that violence would scorch the region for several decades as dozens of new ethnic groups competed for statehood or irredentism.[29] Timothy Snyder echoed that view when arguing that nationalist war had become "endemic" with the end of the Cold War.[30] With these factors at play, the intervention drive was still mostly veered towards quelling

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[26] Tomas Kavaliauskas, *Transformations in Central Europe Between 1989 and 2012: Geopolitical, Cultural and Socio-economic Shifts* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2012), 36-38.
[27] Anne Orford, "Muscular Humanitarianism. Reading the Narratives of the New Interventionism", *European Journal of International Law* 10, (4) 1999, 679- 711, 691. Se also Orford, *Reading Humanitarian Intervention: Human Rights and the Use of Force in International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 4.
[28] Wertheim, "A Solution from Hell", 150.
[29] Stephen Van Evera, "Hypotheses on Nationalism and War", *International Security* 18 (4), 1994, 5–39. https://doi.org/10.2307/2539176. Also discussed in Bruce Gilley, "Against the Concept of Ethnic Conflict", *Third World Quarterly*, 25, (6) 2004, 1155-1166.
[30] Jack Snyder, *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000), 17.

emergencies, and recalling the Wilsonian right of minorities that positioned the intervention also as a mediator in local ethnicity politics, and commitment to the separation from socialist/communist regimes.

This geopolitical anxiety played a crucial role in rendering the war in Yugoslavia in the immediate region a key symbolic divide of the post-Cold War world between the old "order", nationalist and authoritarian, and the new, transnational model of liberal democracy, as historian Chip Gagnon has argued.[31] The "international expectations" of abiding by global liberal democracy triggered contradictions.[32] For instance, the Romanian government was, at the time, one of Slobodan Milošević's closest allies, and it was to Serbia that Ion Iliescu made his first official visit abroad in 1990.

Yet, Ivan Krastev's argument that the war and Yugoslavia's dissolution in the 1990s represented a radical shift in the separation between liberals and nationalists for the broader area, is more insightful.[33] The partnership between the two came to an end during the Yugoslav wars, he argues. This perspective shaped the normative understanding of belonging to global democracy that coincided with the Yugoslav wars and led to an internal debate about state responsibility and democratic expectations for the neighbourhood's countries facing the age of post-Soviet-American rivalry.[34] It was a debate about if and how the countries in the region should be concerned with developments along their borders, also for the greater liberal good.

Debates in Romania at that time show that instead of a split between the nationalists and the pro-liberals, more complex conservative appropriations and co-options of liberal principles

[31] Chip Gagnon, *The Myth of Ethnic War: Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 67.
[32] The phrase is used by the Minister of Former Affairs of Romania in 1992 and 1993 when the role of the government was being discussed. See *România Liberă*, January 2, 3, 1992. BCUB BUZ 1387, vol. 11.
[33] Ivan Krastev and Stephen Holmes "Central Europe is a lesson to liberals: don't be anti-nationalist", *The Guardian,* 2018. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jul/11/central-europe-lesson-liberals-anti-nationalist-yugoslavia-poland-hungary. Last accessed September 11, 2021.
[34] Gyorgy Toth, "Public Memory in US Transatlantic Relations from the Late Cold War through the 1990s", in Kryštof Kozák, György Tóth, Paul Bauer, Allison Lynn Wanger, eds., *Memory in Transatlantic Relations: From the Cold War to the Global War on Terror* (London: Routledge, 2019), 56–83.

were the most notable outcome of the war.[35] In this sense, nationalists found a space in the conservative critique of the international context of US and Western dominance. For liberals, the prospect of partaking militarily or politically in the conflict in Yugoslavia to defend vulnerable groups was about the extent to which a "proper" liberal political culture could work to confirm that the state was ready to show a belief in Europe.[36] But these lines were easily crossed and came to be shared by different groups. Consequently, instead of a split between liberals and nationalists on the political spectrum, the Yugoslav war moment showed how a triumphalist perspective about the newly acquired sovereignty could easily play into wider post-Cold War divides.[37]

Consequently, the favourite interpretation of Ion Iliescu, the Romanian social democrat president at the time, was to attribute the Yugoslav conflict and nationalism to the mutations of the socialist doctrine transnationally, after Mikhail Gorbachev's *glasnost* reforms.[38] Disputes over ethnicity were often presented as a negative consequence of the disappearance of older socialist internationalism, especially in the NSF party rhetoric, which was slow to break with the Soviet construct. Public concern was less with broad ideals of human rights and more with what actions needed to be taken to prevent these calamities from happening elsewhere, and the NSF party discourse also stressed this need for "peaceful" coexistence with the rebellious state across the border. Furthermore, within a new liberal universe, the Yugoslav dynamic in the region mobilized a host of debates about interpretations of sovereignty, internal doubts about unresolved situations and a stark display of Cold War geopolitical logics.[39] This reluctance to discuss territorial ethnicity in terms of the need to protect co-nationals can be read in former president Ion Iliescu's statement that stressed that ethnicity was not relevant to the Yugoslav

[35] Ioan Pascu, "Romania and the Yugoslav conflict", *European Security*, 3 (1) 1994.
[36] Marian Chiriac, "Intervenția NATO în Iugoslavia", *Sfera Politicii*, 70/99, 16-19, 17.
[37] A point also made in 2018 by Ivan Krastev. See Krastev, Holmes "Explaining Eastern Europe", 120.
[38] Although in the early 1990s, the rapports between Gorbachev and Iliescu were warm, and created irritation in the Romanian public opinion. See Ion Goia, "Înșelăciune și badjocură", pg. 5, *Flacăra*, July 17, 1991. BCUB.
[39] Richard Ullman ed., *The World and the Yugoslav Wars* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1996), 1-9.

conflict: "Muslims were also Serbs, so the civil war thesis was false".[40] Such framing of the concept reduced the severity of histories of authoritarianism and oppression of minority groups for those in power.

At the same time, the conflict was also a useful trope in internal Romanian politics concerning ethnicities. If Iliescu was accommodating abroad, he was quick to point to any ethnic claim as a threat (for further discussion see chapter 5). Gabriel Andreescu, a Romanian human rights lawyer involved in nationalist disputes with the Hungarian community in the 1990s, stressed the need to consider how the Hungarian debate would be affected by rebellious rights of ethnicity at a time when the Hungarian minorities were siding already with Croatia.[41] Fittingly, several projects run in support of Serbian refugees by prominent NGOs, like the Societatea Academică Română (Romanian Academic Society), emphasized the protection of citizen rights and identity politics of the 're-learning of democracy'.[42]

It was a type of conservatism that did not look that bleak in Eastern Europe. In the 1990s, humanitarianism was more present than ever in Eastern Europe because of local debates on territoriality and ethnicity, which were partly the root of the nationalist resurgence and partly triggered by the identity question in the aftermath of the Cold War. Scholars have discussed the Yugoslav wars in a myriad of ways, but primarily focusing on questions of ethnonationalism (in the region) and genocide.[43] These situations put the Social Democrat Romanian government in difficulty at a time when they were attempting to distance themselves from the spectre of ethnic nationalism. Questions of ethnicity and minority rights, of borders and national sovereignty and a different conception of solidarity had to be reclaimed from their socialist

[40] Ion Iliescu, *Fragmente de Viață Și de Istorie Trăită* (Bucharest: Editura Litera, 2011), 24–26.
[41] Gabriel Andreescu, "Universal Thought, Eastern Rights: Scrutinizing National Minority Rights in Romania" , in Magda Opalski and Will Kymlicka eds., *Can Liberalism Be Exported?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 34.
[42] "Report", Activities 1990, Societatea Academică Română, 1995.
[43] Cathie Carmichael, "Genocide and Population Displacement in Post-Communist Eastern Europe", *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*, 10 (2012), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199232116.013.0026; Walling, "Human Rights Norms, State Sovereignty, and Humanitarian Intervention".

roots. In this context, the Romanian Social Democrats were actively looking to reconcile the support for minorities, seen as a prerequisite of liberal internationalism, and their own identity politics, which were otherwise repressive. In official discourses, the respect for human rights or political principles of humanitarianism was often presented as complex or too demanding and as an uncharted form of imposition of a "Western" political project.[44] Such views also calibrated the debate about US interventionism.[45]

The fact that governments in the region were expected to become active defenders and enforcers of humanitarian principles was part of the perception of the Yugoslav context. The possibility to join transnational institutions (such as NATO), high on the government's agenda at the time, helped provide a narrative of the conflict.[46] Yet, historian Chip Gagnon makes the case that ethnic nationalism and territorialism were terms that also functioned as proof of the region's backwardness in terms of the "democratic transition" of 1989.[47] Most frequently, the conflict was readily defined as a form of "quagmire"; commentators imputed blame for hindering the re-ordering of liberal democracy on "age-old antagonisms", "ancient hatreds", and "Balkan ghosts".[48] The European perspective was also important, although much of the Romanian public opinion zeroed in on the US perspectives. Political scientist Nadège Ragaru points to prominent voices among European intellectuals against the war who argued that "Europe as a civilization" was being "crucified" and "ten centuries of Europe" were being sacrificed to the war.[49] This dynamic shaped the political spectrum. The "Western" debate on Yugoslavia and later intervention saw journalists question the "colonial" impetus behind these

[44] Walling, "Human Rights Norms, State Sovereignty, and Humanitarian Intervention", 399.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Sabina Fati, "Interesul Național și Propaganda Antioccidentală", *Sfera Politicii*, 70/1999, 23-28.
[47] Chip Gagnon, *The Myth of Ethnic War: Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 23.
[48] Davis Scott, "Introduction", in Davis Scott ed., *Religion and Justice in the War over Bosnia* (London: Routledge, 1996), 23.
[49] Nadège Ragaru, "Missed Encounters: Engaged French Intellectuals and the Yugoslav Wars", *Südosteuropa* 61 (2013), 498–521, 504. https://doi.org/10.1515/soeu-2013-610405.; See also Pierre Hassner, "Culture and Society", *The International Spectator* 26 (1) 1991, 136-153. https://doi.org/10.1080/03932729108457927.

actions. Others wondered to what extent these narratives hid the civilizational tones that were being imposed on Eastern Europe. Faced with these debates, at a time when governments in the region were struggling to understand their own role, one element brought them closely together: namely, the belief in a success of democracy.

The general position in Romanian public opinion, to which there was little opposition and was shared by many at the time, was that the Yugoslav wars were a turning point of anticommunism and its corollary, democracy. Nadège Ragaru has commented on this binary that shaped the thinking on the war in Yugoslavia in France in the immediate post-Cold War years, where "communist totalitarianism acted as a negative unifying force, around the war."[50] The general perspective was that of a struggle between communism and democracy.[51] From this perspective, everything should have gone as planned in the new "democracy", but older, local feuds (provoked by nationalist passions) jeopardized this project after the war in Yugoslavia. The descent into war in the Balkans seemed to be a logical and almost inevitable progression of the neglect of minorities under "state socialism", as socialist thought held ethnicity to be a "backwards" political concept that opposes the modernizing project.

Nevertheless, this fraught political context was determined not only by the politics of the moment, but also by the wider cultural and social narratives circulating about the Yugoslav wars. Those, even more so than the politics of the time, were diffuse, blending history, memory, politics, and narratives about democracy. In Yugoslavia itself, this climate operated through the same mechanisms. Arguably, the Yugoslav conflicts were the product of the late brand of Milošević's and Tudjman's nationalisms along with concerns about the state's self-determination and sovereignty dating back to the founding of the "first Yugoslavia" in 1918.[52]

[50] Nadège Ragaru, "Missed Encounters : Engaged French Intellectuals and the Yugoslav Wars", *Südosteuropa* 61 (2013), 498–521. https://doi.org/10.1515/soeu-2013-610405.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Mark Mazower, "Ethnicity and War in the Balkans", *European Stability Initiative*, 1997, https://www.esiweb.org/rumeliobserver/mark-mazower-on-ethnicity-and-war-in-the-balkans-updated-1997/.

But the interpretation of the war in exclusively ethnic terms, as a "struggle" of regional nationalisms[53] following the end of the Tito regime, and against multicultural liberalism was dominant in the 1990s.[54] Other causes, having to do with the political dynamics within the Yugoslav Communist Party, the global demise of the socialist economies, and the rise of global economic demands, to name just a few, were equally important, but had little place in the dominant narratives. Milošević's 'nationalism' was defending a federal state (including against 'greater Serb' nationalists) while Tudjman was the strongest 'liberal nationalist' opponent of Yugoslavia (though likewise against Ustaše fascism); he was also a historian and former partisan and communist dissident (of Josip Broz Tito's generation).[55] To him, Milošević's policy was therefore imperialist.[56]

In this context, ethnicity was a problematic but necessary concept, because of the value and the weight that identity politics and the protection of minorities have for liberal politics.[57] It represented a local concern for the former "Easterners", as it stood for a rejection of socialism and against the legacy of state socialism. Inherently, it turned into a terrain of populist posturing. Often, the Romanian Social Democrats defended the reluctance to engage with the Yugoslav conflict and debates on ethnicity as an attempt to defend the state's stability.[58] They reframed accusations of nationalism into a discourse on ethnicity that strengthened the liberal consensus of the 1990s. "Performing" these discourses of integrating minorities in the new political sphere also meant that identity politics represented a liberal and emancipated form of political behaviour, part of Western cosmology.

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[53] Bruce Gilley, "Against the Concept of Ethnic Conflict", *Third World Quarterly* 25, 6 (2014), https://www.jstor.org/stable/3993756.
[54] Stiks, *Nations and Citizens*, 79.
[55] Janine Clark, "National Minorities and the Milošević Regime", *Nationalities Papers*, 35, 2, (2007), 317-339, https://doi.org/10.1080/00905990701254375
[56] Baker, *The Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s*, 57-59.
[57] Baker, *Race and the Yugoslav Region*, 34-30.
[58] Iliescu, *Fragmente de viață*, 41.

Furthermore, claims of recognition of ethnicity often avoided overt nationalisms and were often presented as a concern with self-expression and group identity. In discourses and opinion pieces, ideas about the protection of ethnicities, following a liberal humanitarian script, eased a "nationalizing" perspective about sovereignty, lost territories or kinships that were neglected because of the post-Cold War circumstances, but also maintained a type of limit in the type of narratives put forward. This was not only proper to the Romanian debates at the time but also to the rhetoric put forward by the NSF party in power. Similar dynamics were visible elsewhere: for instance, there was a mix of references to a "Slavic solidarity" in the Polish press, which implied that the post-1989 transformation was not enough reason enough to destabilize old ties, and that had little to do with ideological changes. The liberal *Gazeta Wyborcza* referenced the "fratricide" which threatens to transform the war into an omen of faulty post-1989 politics and threaten the reconciliatory progress brought by the regime change.[59]

For Romanians, the debates about ethnicity and principles of humanitarian internationalism and abiding by the liberal order were exacerbated also by the fact that another conflict was brewing at the border. When the independence of Moldova in 1990 triggered a protracted dispute between Romanian- and Russian-speaking minorities in Transnistria (the border area between Moldova and Russia) it led to an armed intervention by the (still then) USSR, sparking anxious debates about national territory and ethnicity. The Romanian press defined the Transnistrian conflict as a fight for our "brothers", underscoring kinship based on ethnicity. Like the USSR, the Romanian government maintained its neutrality in Transnistria at first, but later became directly involved in supporting the Romanian-speaking group in the area.[60] By the end of 1991, the Romanian government supplied weaponry, ammunition and

[59] Zdislav Bieganski, Joanna Szczutkowska, "Polish Public Opinion Toward 1999 Bombing of Yugoslavia" *Istorija 20. veka, Institute for Contemporary History*, Belgrade, 2017, 9-28.
[60] In 1942, a Romanian census established that the population of Transnistria was about 2.5 million in the territory, which, apart from its administrative centre in the port city of Odessa was divided into small villages and a compound of ethnicities. Most were Ukrainians, Germans and Romanians. See Solonari, *Purifying the Nation*, 341.

armed vehicles, and volunteers from Romania fought on Moldova's side. [61] Concerning Transnistria, the preferred strategy was to pose as the protector of a group against Russian aggression. In Transnistria, for instance, by pitting Ukraine against Romania, the Romanian government stood as a defender of a minority group, against the Soviet Union.

In Romania, the perception and reception of the war in relation to both Transnistria and Yugoslavia relied on selective narratives. This memorial mobilization reinforced selective narratives of the Second World and the socialist system. In a triangular relationship with the transnational focus on liberal democracy of the decade, these angles bolstered, rather than nuanced, selective representations of history. The war was not about the radical modernization project of socialism, but in fact echoed the conservative ideas of sovereignty of interwar liberalism – and nationalism- following the First World War. As historian Holly Case has argued, there had been a sense of socialist federalism among the countries in the region, and this emerged in the early 1990s as a political mirage which could perhaps be mobilized to respond to the challenges of international liberalism. The reinterpretations of these in relation to the demise of the "federation" also shaped the memorial narratives resurrected by the conflict.[62]

The following two sections show how these political notions of ethnicity and sovereignty interacted with the inchoate debates on collective memory in the 1990s and how these framed discourses about the Second World War. The histories emerging at the time were selective and deeply politicized, and the urgency of political concerns influenced what histories were relevant and, more often than not, which should be silenced. In this context, new narratives about the two territories, the Banat and Transnistria, emerged. In the 1990s, the "nationalizing" perspective on the two Romanian regions touched by those conflicts, the Banat (partly

[61] Theodor Tudoroiu, "The European Union, Russia, and the Future of the Transnistrian Frozen Conflict", *East European Politics and Societies* 26, 1 (2012), 135–61, https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325411404885.
[62] Holly Case, "The Strange Politics of Federative Ideas in East-Central Europe", *The Journal of Modern History,* 85, No. 4, (2013), 833-866, https://doi.org/10.1086/672531.

belonging to Yugoslavia) and Transnistria (in the USSR at the time) was a cultural narrative often invoked at the time together with more progressive ideas about the protection of minorities. Public opinion largely ignored past problematic aspects. The Banat, the border territory shared by Yugoslavia and Romania, had been during the Second World and after, the subject of a "Romanianization" policy.[63] Transnistria, the "military colony", or province, as Romanian authorities called it during the short time it belonged to the Romanian state, was the location of the Holocaust deportations of 1941-1944 organized by the Romanian government and also of interest for national discourses.[64] These past histories did not fit the political narrative about the two wars on the borders in the 1990s, which were dominated by a discourse on the defense of minorities, on the one hand, and Russian aggression on the other.

3. The Benign Memory of the Waffen SS

One of the ambiguous subjects that shaped the politics of memory in Romanian public debate during the 1990s wars was the Romanian minority in the Banat. Its exclusion from Serbian society was at times a topic of confrontation in the early 1990s, but it did not match the scale of the emphasis on the Hungarian community. Instead, a different angle emerged around the groups in the Banat, namely that of a heroic resistance of those in the region against Serbian nationalism, which thus underscored the place of the Banat in the image of the "extended" Romanian territory.

Indeed, the memory of a mythical resistance during the Second World War emerged seamlessly. In March 1992, the *România Liberă* daily ran a column about a certain P. Pavel who mobilized the Romanian population in Serbia and emphasized its past oppositional

[63] Haynes, "'A New Greater Romania'?", 68.
[64] Vladimir Solonari, "A Conspiracy to Murder: Explaining the Dynamics of Romanian 'policy' towards Jews in Transnistria", *Journal Journal of Genocide Research* 19 (1), 2017, 1462–3528, https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2016.1208387.

credentials.[65] The article referred to a time at the beginning of the war, when by May 1940, there were tensions between Romanian and Yugoslav troops in the border regions. Particularly, the Timoc region saw various clashes caused by the fact that the states were on opposing sides of the war. In the 1990s, that history became one of victimhood and opposition, although these groups had been targeted because of the pro-Axis propaganda of the Romanian Iron Guard, which was very active in the region and among those living there.[66] Incidentally, the very person referenced in the article was part of a group established seventy years prior in the Banat as an Iron Guard organization.[67] The Iron Guard activity partly explained the Partisans' interventions in the area.[68] The story of the local Romanian groups' victimhood in the Banat flourished without considering that this symbolic opposition belonged to the political far right. As Rebecca Haynes has shown, the Banat was the central laboratory of an ethnic bond and a haven for the Romanian Iron Guard reorganization after the January 1941 rebellion.[69] *Timocul* was published by the Romanian community in the Timoc valley and during the interwar all through the end of the war, and led a consistent campaign for incorporation of the area into greater Romania.[70]

The long-standing "national" narratives of dissent against oppression also emerged in the 1990s as an attraction to militarism (for instance, the debate about Marshall Ion Antonescu's legacy outlined in chapter 2), and the military control of borders. Also, following the events of 1989, the Romanian Army enjoyed a positive reception, and militarism was not foreign to the spirit of the 1990s. There was social trust and political acumen in military imagery and symbolism, guaranteeing that the state still had a pillar of stability and prestige. At the same time, it matched a rather patriarchal and conservative discourse about societal roles, which

[65] Red., "O istorie din Banat:, *România Liberă* (Bucharest, April 18th 1992). BCUB P 12 231, vol 2. See also Haynes, "A New Greater Romania".
[66] Haynes, "A New Greater Romania", 104.
[67] "Notă despre activitatea legionarilor în Banat", FD, D8999/1941, 110 CNSAS, Bucharest.
[68] This is evident in the Siguranta files in the CNSAS Archives. There is a constant and substantial surveillance of the groups. See for instance "Nota asupra activității legionarilor în exil", 78/1985, 18, CNSAS, Bucharest.
[69] Haynes, "Work Camps, Commerce".
[70] Haynes, "A New Greater Romania", 102.

emerged from state socialism and carried further. Certain histories were explored because they provided new repertoires of opposition and sovereignty (often extolling masculinist ideals of competency or honour) and also worked to retrieve individuals and episodes that had been silenced under state socialism.

Among these portrayals were officers in the First World War, at the outbreak of the independence movements in the region. This was a relevant topic in the context of the new realignment of society and polity after 1989. Some of them emerged at the time in response to the visibility of the Yugoslav wars and pointed to the difficult dilemmas that members of minorities had to face. For instance, one such story was that of Artur Phleps, a decorated Romanian officer in the First World War and commander of a mountain corps until 1941 in the Romanian Army. In the Second World War, he joined the SS. It was a reaction to the unsuccessful tactics concerning Nazi Germany practised by King Carol II, which culminated in the territorial losses of 1940 (losses that triggered Romania's involvement in the war and the Romanian Army joining Operation Barbarossa). Between 1940 and 1941, he ran the Transylvania recruitment campaign for a unit that later became the 2nd SS Panzer Division Das Reich and led the *Prinz Eugen* unit, fighting in Yugoslavia. The *Prinz Eugen* unit, whose conscripts included a substantial number of Romanians of German ethnicity, acquired such a reputation for violence through the fiercest interventions against the Partisans that even the German occupation forces in Croatia complained.[71] His biography came up in the context of the persecution of Germans in Transylvania after the Second World War. [72]

However, in the context of the geopolitical anxiety of the 1990s, Phleps's full biography was absent from the public debate, beyond his contradictory positions. In 1940, Bukovina and Bessarabia were annexed by the USSR due to the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. In that summer,

[71] Thomas Casagrande, *Die Volksdeutsche SS-Division "Prinz Eugen": Die Banater Schwaben Und Die National Socialistischen Kriegsverbrechten* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2003), 28-32.
[72] Daraban Dorin (szerk.), "Contextul Istoric si inceputul prigoanei impotriva svabilor,", *Satu Mare. Studii şi comunicări* 13. (1996).

joining the Waffen SS and the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle (the Waffen SS – VoMI)- its racial arm - might have seemed a question of vocation, but for the Bessarabians and the soldiers from Transylvania it was a question of citizenship.[73] However, Phleps stood out in this collaboration due to his ties with the Handschar unit (made up of Croatian allies of the SS, including Boasnian Muslims, targeted explicitly by Hitler) in eastern Bosnia in the summer of 1943.[74] The fact that the commander of the Prinz Eugen unit, Artur Phleps, was nevertheless a highly regarded Romanian officer (who had also earned the sympathy of many by critiquing the authoritarian streak of King Carol II after 1938) did not escape the Partisans. They often collided, even after August 1944, with Romanian authorities, because of this issue. The Yugoslav State Commission for the Determination of the Crimes of Occupiers and their Collaborators investigating the *Prinz Eugen* singled out Phleps as the main culprit, especially for the Nikšić massacre in Montenegro.[75] Taken prisoner by the Soviet Army in September 1944, he was executed in swift retribution.[76] Phelps was also tried posthumously during the Nuremberg trials for collaborating with the VoMI in population resettlement and for recruitment for the Waffen SS.[77]

That type of uncertainty endured to more recent times. For instance, more recent articles on Phleps' biography emphasize his joining the Wehrmacht due to his disagreement with the direction of Romanian royal politics at the beginning of the war (ceding the Northern territories, primarily), but emphasized him being a "brilliant general", caught in the spiderweb of

[73] Dallas Michelbacher, "The Deportation of Ethnic Minorities to the USSR and the Romanian National Idea", *History of Communism in Europe* 3 (2012), 43–57. https://www.pdcnet.org/hce/content/hce_2012_0003_0043_0057; Ulrich Merten, *Forgotten Voices: The Expulsion of the Germans from Eastern Europe after the Second World War* (London: Transaction Publishers, 2012), 2-19.

[74] See Marko Attila Hoare, *The Bosnian Muslims in the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[75]See more in Mirna Zakić, *Ethnic Germans and National Socialism in Yugoslavia in World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 227-229.

[76] The Partisans executed an estimated 16,000 of the captured *Prinz Eugen* men without trial, alongside thousands of Ustasas and Croatian army soldiers, Chetniks, and Home Guards. See Casagrande, *Die Volksdeutsche SS-Division "Prinz Eugen",* 145.

[77] Casagrande, *Die Volksdeutsche SS-Division "Prinz Eugen"*; 21-28; Eric Steinhart, *The Holocaust and the Germanization of Ukraine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 47-50.

circumstances.[78] This example shows how the silences of memory of the 1990s, primarily triggered by the care with portraying ethnicity as part and parcel of the humanitarian liberal debate, primarily oriented towards the exterior, and a fierce nationalism within, cast a long shadow. Although the debates over the past and collective memory opened up more nuanced understandings of perpetrators, Phleps' role in the military anticommunist intervention in Budapest in 1919, which deposed the Hungarian USSR-backed Bela Kun government was particularly emphasized.[79] The article highlighted that as head of the Army in 1942, he appealed to Serbian civilians to aid the German armed forces in stopping the communist groups. Other articles emphasized the inevitability of accepting these political sides, given the difficult predicament of Germans in Transylvania.[80] It was a fitting narrative for the 1990s when a relatively apolitical peace disturbed by wars was the preferred image and when the German community's victimhood was the common interest around the area.

The debate on ethnicity which purposely tried to avoid ideological framing shows how such contested histories never really emerged in the public discussion of the 1990s. The history of political opposition against the Yugoslav authorities, like the post-1944 resistance against Tito, also hid the fact that the Serbian Banat continued to be indispensable for narratives about the nation in the postwar years for the Romanian Dej regime. Already in 1991, a newspaper piece was discussing the intervention of the Romanian Army in the Banat in evocative terms, when praising veterans, and depicted with animosity the contacts between the Romanian Army and the Partisans after the Romanian government left the Axis on August 23, 1944.[81]

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[78] Claudiu Pădurean, "Cum a Ajuns Un Sas Ardelean General În SS", *România Liberă*, 2014, https://romanialibera.ro/special/documentare/cum-a-ajuns-un-sas-ardelean-general-in-ss-353955. Mariana Iancu, "Istoria Miilor de Români Care Au Luptat Voluntar Pentru Armata Germană În Ultimele Zile Ale Celui De-Al Doilea Război Mondial Citeste Mai Mult:", *Adevărul*, 2017, adev.ro/pbg6cf. Last accessed January 1, 2020.

[79] The Romanian Army intervened in Budapest 1919 to topple the communist takeover of Kun. This episode has been one of the revered histories of the First World War in Romanian debates. See Robert Waite, "The Hungarian Revolution of 1919" in Spencer Tucker eds, *European Powers in the First World War: An Encyclopedia (London: Routledge, 1996), 135-154.*

[80] Alexandra Ion Cristea, "Am luptat in trupele SS", *Sibianul*, 9-15 mai 2005, Sibiu.

[81] Aurel Turcuş, "Românii din Banatul Iugoslav", *Renaşterea Bănăţeană*, p.10, 19.11.1991.

4. Nationalizing Transnistria

The same "geopolitical" angle on the other conflict happening at the country's borders, in Transnistria, suggests similar memorial blank spots that have persisted since the 1990s. Transnistria was a conflict less visible than Yugoslavia, but with equally extensive ramifications. Confronted with an independent state of Moldova and an apparent ethnic conflict between Romanian and Hungarian-speaking groups, Transnistria turned into a battle front between the Russian Army and several countries, including Romania. In press and political discourse, the issue had an ethnic undercurrent, centring on a narrative that opposed "Slavs" to the "Romanian-Moldovan" aggression.[82]

The memorial aspects of this war are as complex as those related to Yugoslavia because in 1990 the conflict went almost unnoticed in Romania. But when it did feature, nothing of the history of this stretch of land seemed to make it through. By the end of 1990, the conflict had claimed almost a thousand victims, and the war turned into an opportunity for local nationalism in Romania: "stop the butchers" and "our brothers" were the titles running on the front pages of newspapers.[83] The Social Democrat government stood accused of avoiding bringing the conflict into the spotlight. The afterlife of this conflict was, rather, reduced to seeing the USSR intervention as an indirect "Russian" aggression on Romanian territory and was reduced by the Romanian media and international outlets to a Russian, Cold-War-style paradigm intervention.[84]

This memory did not do justice to the conflict's complexity and the entanglements of perpetratorship and victimhood. The history of the Second World War was crucial in this respect, because Transnistria, a stretch of land on the USSR's borders populated by a mix of

[82] See Johannes Socher, *Russia and the Right to Self-Determination in the Post-Soviet Space* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 112-123.
[83] I.B., "Transnistria", Adevărul (Bucharest, January 21, 1991). BCUB P 13 789, vol. 1230.
[84] Natalia Cojocaru, "Nationalism and Identity in Transnistria," *Innovation* 19 (3–4), 2006, 261–72, https://doi.org/10.1080/13511610601029813.

Romanian, Ukrainian and German (Volksdeutsche) populations spread out in small and intercultural villages, changed with the war. The Romanians were a minority[85] amidst a predominantly German community sent here during the 17th century as colonists or settled here from elsewhere in the Soviet Union as part of Stalin's population politics.[86]

Transnistria was a "gift" by Adolf Hitler to the Romanian regime of Ion Antonescu as a "militarie kolonie*",* between 1941 and 1944. That legal status also created the conditions for it to be the epicentre of the Romanian Holocaust, with conservative estimates pointing to around 370000 members of the Jewish community dying there, next to communists and other prisoners of war. [87] It was integrated, again, into Soviet territory, in 1945.[88] Thus, the history of Transnistria has been one German-Romanian collaboration, on the one hand, and Russian occupation, on the other. The two historical realities shaped the reception and debate over the war at the time of the conflict only in relation to the second interpretation.[89] If the Yugoslav wars mobilized accounts of an immediate threat, Transnistria brought up (ethnic)nationalist angles that were uncomfortable given the tenor of the times. Its role and history were consequently minimized in public debates, especially by the liberals. The conflict in Transnistria was about a narrative of belonging that never integrated the history of perpetratorship of the Romanian government in the area. That silence, however, hid a more complicated and transnational knot about "minorities" and perpetrators during the Second World War, also heavily dependent on Cold War memory dynamics.

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[85] Eric C. Steinhart, "Family, Fascists, and 'Volksdeutsche': The Bogdanovka Collective Farm and the Holocaust in Southern Ukraine, December 1941", *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture & History* 16, 1/2 (2010), 65–96, https://doi.org/10.1080/17504902.2010.11087249.

[86] Doris Bergen mentions thirty million living outside the Reich, see Doris L. Bergen, "The Nazi Concept of 'Volksdeutsche' and the Exacerbation of Anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe, 1939-45*", Journal of Contemporary History*, 29 (4) 1994, 569-582, 569. See also Valdis O. Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries: The Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle and the German National Minorities in Europe* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina University Press, 1993), 23-29.

[87] Steinhart, "Family, Fascists, and 'Volksdeutsche'".

[88] Astrid S. Tuminez, "Nationalism, Ethnic Pressures, and the Breakup of the Soviet Union", *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 5, (4) 2003, pp. 81-136.

[89] See "Convorbiri în Amurg de Război", *Tineretul Liber*, August 19, 1992.

Instead, the sense of persecution triggered at the time of the 1990s war relied on a deeply rooted anti-Slav sentiment. The territory seemed thus to be in the organic fabric of the Romanian nation-state, from which it had been illegitimately taken. Retaliations against Romanians living in Transnistria followed the change of regime in 1944 and thousands were deported to the Gulag. Their persecution was a vivid memory in the 1990s and supported many of the nationalist narratives focussed on victimhood and saving the Romanian minority in the region. Consequently, Transnistria re-emerged in public debates as a nationalist symbol and conjured up a modernizing dimension in Romanian history. Romania, in this perspective, was the "protector state".[90] From this rights-and-ethnicity angle, there was no alternative interpretation.

A review of the discussions in the press at the time demonstrates that the political history of this kinship and the history of the short-lived Romanian governance of Transnistria escaped public debate further than this. As much as the role and the history of Romanian presence in the region could have been brought forward, apart from the narrative of Russian aggression, there were few traces of the longstanding links. The history of Transnistria as a Holocaust site, for instance, was absent since it could have made the Romanian government into a perpetrator, rather than a saviour state,[91] a situation that primarily had to do with a lack of discourse on the Holocaust more generally in Romania. This memorial blank spot has, apart from the reluctance to discuss the Holocaust, also something to reveal about the codification of the war in Transnistria, which has been a blend of nationalism, perpetratorship, and uncertainly assigned responsibility.

[90] Solonari, *Satellite Empire*, 24-26.
[91] Jean Ancel, *Transnistria* (Bucharest: Atlas, 1998). Deletant, "Hitler's Forgotten Ally, 23-30.

5. The Colonial Quests for Purity

The attention to ethnicity had a long history in this context, specifically concerning the virtues of the Romanian state as a "modernizer". The way that the acquisition of Transnistria by the Romanian state unfolded transformed it into a complex entanglement of nationalism and racial politics in the region. It also signalled a form of "orientalist governmentality", with superiority and colonial tones, which had a deep influence on the memory of the war in the 1990s.[92] While the history of the region is intrinsically linked to the Shoah, historians of the Holocaust such as Vladimir Solonari have shown that this was part of a wider story of the Romanianization and nationalization policies which were already strong in the late 19th century and came to fruition in the beginning of the 20th century.[93] "Romanianization", a term conveying Ion Antonescu's politics and thought focused on the economic acquisition of Jewish property, represented a long-term process of the persecution of the Jewish community during the Second World War. Transnistria became a prized territory for linguistic and population transfer, contributing to stories about the essence of the nation and purity, which were instrumental for the Antonescu regime. [94] Inside the country, it entailed the confiscation of property and of jobs, and a compulsory introduction of Romanians in Jewish-owned businesses.[95] In Transnistria, the means to this end were often economic and stressed the need to acquire, change, and modernize, even through population transfers and social engineering.[96] "Romanianization" was perhaps the closest that Romanian political expression approached colonialism, with a rhetoric similar to the nostalgic imaginaries of the extended Polish Commonwealth and Greater Hungary. Such

[92] Solonari, *A Satellite Empire*, 98-100.
[93] Solonari, *Purifying the Nation*, 123–38.
[94] Ionescu, *Jewish Resistance*, 34-36.
[95] Ibid, 24.
[96] Liesbeth van de Grift, "Cultivating Land and People: Internal Colonization in Interwar Europe", in Liesbeth van de Grift, Amalia Forclaz eds., *Governing the Rural in Interwar Europe* (London: Routledge, 2017), 78–102.

rhetoric exculpated any nationalist or aggressive intention attached to territoriality during the Second World War and also shaped the absence of this memory of the war today.[97]

Transnistria has always had a distinct geographical imaginary in Romanian representations, particularly in this colonial mindset. Like the Banat, Transnistria stood between "the two predominant discourses of European modernity: ethnic nationalism as the 'natural' paradigm of state-building and Orientalism as the ideology of European rule over 'backwards' peoples".[98] Soon after its incorporation, in 1941, sociologist Anton Golopenția was sent by the Antonescu administration to gather information on the population and the ethnic interactions and perform a census of the community.[99] Golopenția was the first to introduce the territory into the mindset of the Romanian "kingdom", as his activities received ample coverage in the press, as he encouraged a particular viewpoint that the modernization of the region would enhance the prestige of the greater Romania. Culturalist notions of the territory thus supported political interests.[100]

More so than in the other "new" regions of Bessarabia and Bukovina, anthropological and sociological inquiries, intense journalistic work on the Army's advance, and the infrastructure introduced by the Romanian Army, focused on this territory. Photographer Willy Pragher, for instance, a German refugee to Bucharest since 1933, joined the Army together with the cohort of journalists to track not the military exploits but the "taming" of this territory.[101] He shows the pride that the advancing Romanian Army to the East took in making the

[97] A strong comparison can be suggested with the Germanization of Nazi-Germany-annexed Poland at the same time. See Bradley Jared Nichols, *The Hunt for Lost Blood : Nazi Germanization Policy in Occupied Europe*, PHD Dissertation, 2016.
[98] Solonari, *Purifying the Nation,* 2.
[99] Solonari, *Satellite Empire*, 101-102.
[100] Hausleitner, "Romania in the Second World War, Revisionist out of Necessity".
[101] Willy Pragher is one of the well-known urban photographers of Central and Eastern Europe, primarily of Bucharest, in the interwar. He specifically looked at urban inequality and the urban life. His extensive photo archive of his work on documenting the transformation of Transnistria under Romanian rule is now in the Staatsarchiv Freiburg.

decentralized territory of Transnistria into an industrialized region. A substantial community of intellectuals supported this perspective.

Among them, sociologist Sabin Manuilă supported the territorial redefinition.[102] A leading (scientific) figure of the strong eugenics school in Romania, Manuilă found the racial politics of the Antonescu government to be an opportunity to "cleanse" the country of non-Romanian ethnic groups after busying himself with larger eugenic purposes.[103] Manuilă belonged to a group of prolific eugenics specialists gravitating around the *Revista de Igienă Socială* (Review of Social Hygiene), founded in the 1920s, who initially worked on improving the living conditions and limiting disease in the interwar period in the urban space. [104] By the end of the decade of the 1930s, Manuilă found a continuation of his work in the context of the war. As a close advisor to Antonescu, his vision of racial politics was clear. To him population exchanges would benefit the state and its economics and social fabric, and consequently supported social engineering interventions in Transylvania, through population exchanges.[105] There were also plans to move ethnic Romanians back at the expense of the German population in Romania.[106] He continued this by suggesting certain groups should have been moved to Transnistria, so they could join their peers but also to refashion the social fabric of the territory and replace the Jewish population.[107] More generally, the notion of ethnic purity manifested in his case by calls to move "foreigners" to neighbourhood countries.[108] Such calls echoed German

[102] Achim, "The Romanian Population Exchange".
[103] Solonari, *A Satellite Empire*, 99-100. See also Mihai Chioveanu, "Transnistria, the 'General Plan East', and the 'Shoah by bullets'", *Studia Politica: Romanian Political Science Review*, 10, 3 (2010), 427-446. https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-446713.
[104] On this magazine, Marius Turda, *Modernism and Eugenics* (London: Routledge, 2010), 76-77. Marius Turda, "'To End the Degeneration of a Nation': Debates on Eugenic Sterilization in Inter-War Romania", *Medical History* 53, 1 (2009), 77-14; 80-83. 10.1017/s002572730000332x.
[105] Viorel Achim, "Romanian-German Collaboration in Ethnopolitics: The Case of Sabin Manuilă", in *German Scholars and Ethnic Cleansing 1920-1945*, ed. Michael Fahlbusch and Ingo Haar (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2005), 139–54.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Turda, "To End the Degeneration", 88-90.
[108] Ibid.

politics on ethnicity and minorities, the expulsions of Jews and local populations from every territory colonized and their replacement with more "compliant" German counterparts.[109]

Ideas of modernization, a fixture of the cultural debates of the 1930s, influenced positions in the campaign in Transnistria. For many, this colonial modernization project meant the nation's advancement and implicitly defended the "Romanianization" policy as a necessary homogenization of language and culture in the territory. Hitler offered the territory as a bargaining chip in exchange for assistance in the Barbarossa campaign (the military invasion of Soviet Russia in 1942). But the fact that the territory was incorporated as a "military colony" was not without consequences. It confirmed, in fact, the idea that Transnistria was a form of war "plunder". In public debate, Transnistria represented either a territory that should be modernized for the triumph of the Romanian state or a territory to be defended from the danger of Soviet control. In the press and documents, Transnistria was acknowledged as a "consolidation prize" for the territories of Bukovina and Bessarabia surrendered to the Soviet Union following the partition of spheres of interest. The Romanian government explained its participation in the Second World War through this territorial angle.

The area also had an extraterritorial character, outside the kingdom, that furthered its "geopolitical" relevance. This was confirmed when Antonescu began defending the Jewish population's deportations from the Old Romanian Kingdom as a type of political strategy. Such pragmatism had been present in public debates for at least two decades. On December 16, 1941, Antonescu gave the order to Grigore Alexianu, the governor of Transnistria, to deport the Jewish population of Odessa, arguing there would be support for the Soviet troops. Alexianu remembers:

[109] Henry J. Gwiazda II**, "**The Nazi Racial War: The First Stage in Building the New Order in Poland", *The Polish Review*, 59, 4 (2014), 45-72. https://doi.org/10.5406/polishreview.59.4.0045.

> On November 13, 1942, Marshall Antonescu, pressured by the Ministry, at its turn pressured by German politics, asks insistently that the Jews from Odessa be taken out by any means necessary. They were told they (the Romanians) were in danger because Jews could help the Russians when they arrived. They were saying Jews should be moved anywhere but they should be taken out of Odessa, otherwise they will disrupt peace.[110]

Transnistria was thus an ideal space of expression for the nationalist and colonial ambitions that found a voice in Antonescu's governance. The purification of the kingdom in this lawless territory is present in survivors' testimonies of disorder and the plundering of Jewish deportees. Survivor Elmano Costiner speaks about the plunder of Transnistria by both Romanian and German soldiers. Together with some family members, he survived in the small town of Otaci (Atachi), on the border between Romania and Transnistria, due to the lack of organization of the territory.[111] His depictions of abandoned and pillaged villages paint a picture of a "no man's land", where many deportees roaming the area found a way to stay out of the path of both Romanian and Nazi armies. Like that of many others who passed through Transnistria, his testimony suggests a land important for both armies only as *lebensraum*, as a territory to be conquered and used to benefit the national state.[112] For the Antonescu government, this territory was the epicentre of a process that was less about eliminating a particular group and more about ensuring that the Romanian groups remained the privileged ethnicity in the country. It was a defining element of Antonescu's internal policy, where Romanianization meant removing Jewish (and other non-Romanian nationals, to a lesser extent) from privileged positions in law, business, and teaching. But the work was grounded in a longer process and project of eugenics and modernization.

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[110] Original text: "La 13 noiembrie 1941, Mareșalul Antonescu, asaltat de Statul Major, care la rândul său era asaltat de politica germană, cere insistent să scoata evreii din Odessa sub diferite forme. Le spunea că sunt un pericol, pentru că aceștia ar putea ajuta debarcarea rușilor. I se spunea că pe evrei trebuie să-I bage unde știu numai să-i ducă din Odessa, căci aceștia vor tulbura liniștea "Deposition Grigore Alexianu, fond Rechizitorii, Stenograme ale Procesului unor criminali de război, no. inv. 3140, 72, SANIC, Bucharest.

[111] "Interview Elmano Costiner USC Shoah Foundation" (Bucharest, 1999), http://vhaonline.usc.edu/viewingPage?testimonyID=52639&returnIndex=0#.

[112] Aristotle A Kallis, *Fascist Ideology: Territory and Expansionism in Italy and Germany, 1922-1945* (London: Routledge, 2000), 53–58.

The fight for the development of the Romanian "nation", while the war was raging, inevitably also established a rivalry with Nazi Germany, and Transnistria was a crucial element. So much so, that in Transnistria, the Romanian Army (and governance) came into conflict with the SS, specifically around the SS's attempts to strengthen older German communities as engineers, doctors were relocated in the area.[113] They resettled from other regions of Germany to regions of the *lebensraum*. Holocaust research tends to assign the chaos of Transnistria to the mismanagement of the Romanian authorities, but in effect, there were competing colonization efforts (that combined racialist and economic perspectives) between Romanian authorities and the VoMI, the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle. VoMI, the German NSDAP agency retrieving the ethnic Germans in the outskirts of the Reich and organizing the *lebensraum*.[114] The agency took on Heinrich Himmler's mission to locate "lost German blood" and return it to the *heimat*. At the same time, this group could be used for the war efforts regionally and in fact provided an incremental help to the military organization, the Sonderkommandos, and particulary R, active in the USSR.[115] The deep German roots of the territory posed problems to the Romanian administration that subjected the territory to an aggressive Romanianization policy.[116] Territoriality had a different meaning in the narratives of these two types of political propaganda. For the RSha, it was a question of race. At times, the Romanian authorities clashed and at times, converged with the ambitions of the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle.

The position of Transnistria as a symbol of colonial modernization is also evident when looking at the main rivalry in the area, with the authorities of the Ukrainian state. After the Nazi

[113] Wendy Lower, *Nazi Empire-Building and the Holocaust in Ukraine* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 172.
[114] Aristotle Kallis, *Genocide and Fascism: The Eliminationist Drive in Fascist Europe* (London: Routledge, 2008), 186-188.
[115] Lumans, *Hitler's Auxiliaries*, 246.
[116] Subsecretariatul de stat al Românizării, Colonizării și Inventarului (The State Office of Romanianization, Colonization and Inventory) was specifically designed to lead the strategy on population movements and the ingrated administration of the new territories. It operated between 1940 and 1944, until its activity was taken over by the new authorities. It shows an intense activity to relocate individuals and refugees from occupied territories to lesser populated areas in the Greater Romania and a bureaucratic interest in new citizens. "Letters and notes, Council of Ministers", *Directoratul Romanizarii*, no. inv. 1175, 11/1943, 34-39, SANIC, Bucharest.

authorities refused to grant Ukraine an autonomous state, the Romanian Army held the upper hand. Authorities assured the German government that there would be no reprisals against Ukrainians, suggesting the interest to have as much control over the situation as possible.[117] Documents in the archives of the *Siguranța* suggest a distinct concern with the OUN (The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists), more so than the spats with the Wehrmacht.[118] Consequently, the extermination of Jews in Transnistria, in particular, occurred amidst this exacerbation of the nationalist discourses bordering on racism in Ukraine and Romania alike, leading to frequent disputes around the position and the role of the Ukrainian community.[119] Numerous aggressive actions were perpetrated by the Romanian authorities, despite the assurance that the Ukrainian authorities would not be subjected to reprisals.[120] Ukrainian nationalists were singled out for arrest, including Ukrainians not politically active but solely suspicious because of their ethnic origin. Indeed, the OUN seemed to hold the Security Police's attention at the time.

6. Ethnicity and Memory

The narrative about this 'colonial conquest', backed by a politics of ethnicity, changed after 1944 as Transnistria was now a territory incorporated by the USSR and a reminder of a shameful history of collaboration. The national ethnic dimension around Transnistria thus disappeared in the context of the Cold War. The ethnic dimension, in which Romania, Germany and Ukraine had interest, polarized the debate. Little of this history of nationalization made it into public debate due to the complicated postwar Romanian-German relations at the height of the Cold War. The late 1960s' Ostpolitik changed this perpetratorship narrative concerning the

[117] Andrej Angrick, "The Escalation of German-Rumanian Anti-Jewish Policy after the Attack on the Soviet Union, June 22, 1941," *Yad Vashem Studies*, 26 (1998): 203-238.
[118] BU 839, Volksdeutche Mittelstelle, no. ord. 144, R 111, 12-13/1945, Bundesarchiv, Ludwigsburg.
[119] "Materiale despre naționaliști germani", 286/1975, 54 CNSAS, Bucharest.
[120] "Starea comunității, aprilie 1944", MI/IGJ, no. inv 1474, 9/1944, 12-13, SANIC, Bucharest.

Second World War between "East" and "West".[121] In fact, the investigations on the machinery of war in Eastern Europe were running in parallel to Nicolae Ceausescu's policies, who by the mid-1970s was actively encouraging the emigration of Germans who stayed on after the war, through a secret understanding with Western Germany.[122]

The lack of investigation, from both sides up to the 1960s, contributed to further silencing. There had been, in fact, an unwritten amnesty on such cases as well, following the 1968 understanding between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Willy Brandt concerning the immigration of the German population (and the payments by West Germany to the Romanian state).[123] As a result of the general context, proceedings against members of the Berlin Reich Security Main Office and various Reich Ministries had to be discontinued. Interestingly, Bonn also prevented prosecutors and police officers from investigating Eastern European archives for a long time, presumably because of the hardship it would have caused for those opting to move to Germany.

Nothing substantial changed in the 1990s. The Germans in Transnistria were remembered only through the repression inflicted by the communists in Romania. The only change of the 1990s involved the perpetrator.[124] Prisoners of war from the Siberian camps were all seen as heroes of an unfair reprisal based on their "Slavic ethnicity".[125] Since the first such targeted category was the German minority, the sympathetic liberal outlook on rights and compensations for minorities for the abuse suffered from the USSR intersected with the memorial debates concerning the war in Transnistria.

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[121] Bill Niven, "Reactive Memory, The Holocaust and The Flight and Expulsion of Germans" in Silberman and Vatan eds*., Memory and Postwar Memorials*, 51-69, 58-59.
[122] After signing the Helsinki Accords of 1975, the Romanian state allowed the emigration of Germans in a more systematic manner, primarily as a possible economic incentive and leverage. See Valentina Glajar, *The German Legacy in East Central Europe as Recorded in Recent German – Romanian Literature* (London: Camden House, 2004), 121.
[123] James Koranyi, "Voyages of Socialist Discovery: German-German Exchanges between the GDR and Romania", *The Slavonic and East European Review* 92, (3) 2014), 479-506, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5699/slaveasteurorev2.92.3.0479.
[124] R.M. Douglas, *Orderly and Humane: The Expulsion of the Germans after the Second World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).
[125] Thomas C Fox, "The Holocaust under Communism," in Dan Stone eds., *The Historiography of the Holocaust* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 425-427.

The 1990s investigations into the Nazi past were also instrumental in this overall memory politics, especially concerning the Volksdeutsche returning to Germany after 1991. A remarkable case was that against members of the Nazi self-protection movement from the Transnistrian city of Worms, who had emigrated to Canada and required new investigations by the 'Zentrale Stelle' (The Central Office of the Land Judicial Authorities for Investigation of National Socialist Crimes). Alfons Goetzfrid, born in the Transnistrian town of Rastatt, was subpoenaed to testify in one of the late inquiries concerning "Sonderkommando R" (a military unit hunting the Jewish population in the area). The trial led to the revelation that the 70-year-old man had been on the payroll of the Reich's terrorist group SS as Unterscharführer.[126] Goetzfrid was a typical case of those who joined the SS, hoping for a better life. When World War II ended, he was captured by Soviet forces on 9 May 1945 and put on trial by the Soviet Union in 1947. Götzfrid was sentenced to 20 years at a work camp in Siberia. He was released in 1958 and moved to Kazakhstan. He moved to Germany in 1991 where he got the German citizenship through the program for "late repatriates" (*Spätaussiedler*). In 1999, he was tried by the First Major Criminal Division of the *Landgericht* Stuttgart and was the only participant to be held accountable.[127]

The post-Cold War dynamic also changed the regional responses, including in Romania, where ethnicity was a sensitive topic of liberal legitimation and European legitimacy.[128] For instance, in 1995, when the Romanian government was discussing the first official apologies, it was the German group that received them. The Foreign Affairs minister, Adrian Severin, expressed his regret for what had happened in 1945, emphasizing that "geostrategy and political mutations" at the end of the war caused the suffering, which was part of a broader "tragedy of Romanians during the communist regime".[129] Formulated on the date of the 50th anniversary of

[126] Testimony, PA 276 BU – H3056, Volksdeutche Mittelstelle, Bundesarchiv.
[127] Testimony, PA 276, BU – H34598, Volksdeutche Mittelstelle, Bundesarchiv.
[128] Cercel, *Romania and the Quest*, 201.
[129] Adrian Severin, "Discurs", *România Liberă* (Bucharest, January 14, 1995).

the deportations to the USSR, the Romanian government's apology suggests that in the early 1990s the history of the victimization of the German minority seemed to be part of European reunification. Later that same year, during the German Foreign Affairs Minister Klaus Kinkel's visit, the Romanian government offered apologies for the deportations of the Romanian Germans to the Bărăgan area and the "selling" by the Ceaușescu regime of the German minority that wanted to move to the Federal Republic of Germany. A journalist, Constantin Severin, reporting on the visit of the president of the German Democrat Forum in Romania in Bukovina, Otto Exner, argues for the identification with a victimized minority by highlighting the unicity of the deportations:

> Then, after 1943, the representatives of this species, as a political animal, known by specialists as homo sovieticus, organized massive deportations from the South of Bukovina, as from all other regions in the country, to the coalmines of Siberia. They were transported huddled together, in cattle cars, and many perished in these extermination camps, cross the Urals, and cross the boundaries of the civilized world.[130]

As they did not seem to contradict any canonical memory about the past, these apologies supported a diffuse myth of an old Romanian presence and the historical belonging of Transnistria to Bessarabia, hence the obligation to intervene in the conflict for ethnic re-consolidation.

The debate about possible German precedence over other minorities emerged only recently, around the German Democrat Forum*, Grupul Etnic German* (German Ethnic Group) organization. Historians pointed to the fact that the German Ethnic Group was set up in November 1940 (law no. 3884) for the distinct purpose of defending the German group against any possible persecution in case Antonescu (who was to visit Berlin the following day) would refuse to join the Axis.[131] The organization had been operating on a semi-legalized basis and

[130] Constantin Severin "Apoi, din anul 1943 reprezentanții acelei specii, ca animal politic, cunoscut de specialiști sub denumirea de homo sovieticus, au pus la cale deportări massive de germani din sudul Bucoviei (ca, da altfel, din întreaga Românie) la minele de cărbune din Siberia. Au fost transportați, la grămadă, în vagoane pentru vite. mulți dintre ei au pierit in acele lagăre de exterminare, dncolo da munții Urali. Dincolo de granițele lumii civilizate", *Flacăra*, April 27, 1994.
[131] Ionescu, *Jewish Resistance to Romanianization*, 167-169.

was not criminalized. All members of the German community were sent to camps or arrested, including Andreas Schmidt, sent to the Vorkuta camp and who later perished in the mines of Donbas.[132] The property of GEG, confiscated by the communist authorities[133], also became a topic of opposing narratives in the 1990s, with some arguing that it should be given back. It was on equally challenged grounds with the Iron Guard's property and that of the Group (also called Deutsche Volkgruppe), which both were simply passed on to the government post-1989. After 1989, from successive understandings of the newly ordained organization of the Democrat German Group with two prime ministers, the organization received assurances that the property would be returned – including Jewish property or concessioner property from those who refused to join the SS. These economic entanglements were not considered further, although they were concerned with the presumed continuation between the same organization pre-Second World War - the German Ethnic Group- and the postwar socialist version of the community organization.

Nevertheless, these debates concerning the complicated position of the Romanian Germans were separated from the 1990s' perspective on Transnistria, which focused almost exclusively on the notion of geopolitical angst and Russian aggression. As victims were being singled out or emphasized as Romanian "brothers", divided by Russia, much of the critical perspective on Romanianization did not fit this reductive space of memorialization. The historical memory of the region at the time was selective, and the war itself continues today to be largely absent in Romanian debates,[134] referencing simply a potential Russian aggression, if it is mentioned at all. In 2015, the anniversary of the street clashes in Transnistria prompted journalists in the area to lament the "erasure of the war" from Romanian collective memory.[135]

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[132] Cercel, *Romania and the Quest for European Identity,* 59.
[133] "Interogatorii și membri GEG", F.D, 105/1953, 8-12, CNSAS, Bucharest.
[134] Tudoroiu, "The European Union, Russia, 135-161.
[135] Ștefania Brândușa, "2 martie 1992: 27 de ani de la începutul războiului româno-rus din Transnistria" ActiveNews.ro. https://www.activenews.ro/stiri-basarabia/2-martie-1992-26-de-ani-de-la-inceputul-razboiului-romano-rus-din-Transnistria-130830. Last accessed 23 March 2017.

Similarly, contemporary iterations of the memory politics of the dissolution of Yugoslavia have focused on the individual costs of a lingering conflict in the reconstruction process for Europe, [136] and have been otherwise practically absent from Romanian debates.

7. Conclusion

This chapter has examined two contested spaces at Romania's borders, Transnistria and Yugoslavia, and the different narratives that framed them in the 1990s as conflict engulfed both. As the post-socialist space of debate was grappling with the emerging history and political dynamics around ethnicities and minorities, selective histories framed these discussions. The Romanian debates around Yugoslavia and Transnistria seemed to be driven by an attempt at reframing particularly sensitive ethnic and territorial histories into stories of co-habitation, and in part dissent and resistance, rather than analysing the much more complex politics of perpetratorship. At the same time, debates in the public sphere were dominated by internal concerns, focussed on the security and the fragility of the state. Some histories of minorities were preferred over others, some were deemed directly problematic. In this sense, the wars in Yugoslavia and in Transnistria can also be seen as "memory knots", tying together old interests and animosities of the Second World War, concerns of "second rate" citizens emerging out of the Cold War, and enduring national images of sovereignty that had a long history. These also were dominated by selectivities of memory, revisionisms and silences.

Consequently, the chapter has shown how narratives of the Second World War, mobilized in the context of the 1990s wars in Yugoslavia, did not engage with a history of perpetratorship or responsibility. The war in Transnistria spoke to both nationalist causes and liberal narratives. They were, more often than not, attributed to the communist discourse on the

[136] Catherine Baker, *Race and the Yugoslav Region Postsocialist, Post-Conflict, Postcolonial?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018).

Holocaust, which was focused on the Northern Transylvanian case. Similarly, the Yugoslav wars are an equally blank spot in contemporary historiography and public debate, despite a long history of shared socialist internationalism. Still influenced by a Cold War perspective, thinking about the categories of victims in the 1990s emphasized those of the Cold War – and that meant Germans rather than Romanians. Paradoxically, the narratives did not go against but often incorporated communist propaganda on the Holocaust, which for the Romanian communist historiography emphasizing autonomism was exclusively attributed to Hungary. In this angle, the Romanian state was not a perpetrator, but a victim, one who also had to suffer because of a glorified perspective on the "protection" of its minorities. Such framings contribute to Transnistria still being a blank spot in the memory of the Holocaust.

Part 3: NORMS

Chapter V:
Legalism: no Longer about Modernization

1. Revisiting the Prison of Silence[1]

In August 2013, an investigation by the Romanian *Adevărul* newspaper unexpectedly turned Alexandru Vișinescu, a former communist camp commander, into an international figure and his judicial case, from a debated case of missed justice[2] into a turning point of collective memory practices. Living out his old age quietly in Bucharest, Vișinescu had been part of the group of old communist partisans who had joined the repressive apparatus of the Communist Party immediately after the Second World War.[3] Vișinescu had retired from the Directorate of the Penitentiaries, a Security Services branch, in the middle of the 1980s, and, as amply conveyed by the newspaper investigators, he was living the normal life of a retired state official. Following the public revelation, a swift investigation and trial followed and, by 2014, he had been sentenced to 20 years in jail.[4] Although his case (and other similar ones) were discussed early in the 1990s after the regime change, he continues to be one of the only two cases of camp commanders of Romanian communist camps prosecuted for their crimes, at the time of writing.[5]

The revelation of the Vișinescu case drew considerable international attention and

[1] This chapter is loosely based on Dana Dolghin, "Framing Uncertainty: Memory, Legalism, and the Narratives of the State", in *Jahrbuch für Ostrecht*, 1, 2019, Munchen: Ch. Beck Verlag, pp. 75-83 and on "Institution and Inclination in the Post-Socialist Space: Genocide as "Memory Intervention", in *Trauma as cultural palimpsests. (Post) Communism against the Background of Comparativ Modernities, Totalitarianism, and (Post)Coloniality,* edited by Mateusz Swietlicki, Dorota Kolodziejczyk and Bogdan Ștefănescu, Wroclaw: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2017. pp. 59-75.

[2] The European Court of Human Rights has recently listed Romania, next to Russia, as the least proficient at concluding historical trials on political violence. The state has been the subject of six official fines from the European Council. See European Court of Human Rights Case of JANOWIEC AND OTHERS v. RUSSIA, 12-13.https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{%22documentcollectionid2%22:[%22GRANDCHAMBER%22,%22CHAMBER%22]}

[3] "Cazul Vișinescu: Infracţiuni Contra Umanităţii În Loc de Genocid", *Radio România*, April 23, 2014. https://Adevărul.ro/news/eveniment/tortionarul-visinescu-condamnat-definitiv-20-ani-inchisoare-crime-umanitatii-8_56bb5d9e5ab6550cb8a7d5a5/index.html. Last accessed April 23, 2019.

[4] Visinescu passed away in 2018.

[5] The other, Ion Ficior, led the Periprava labour colony in the Danube Delta.

optimism regarding the possibility of "late" transitional justice of communism in Central and Eastern Europe, with *The Guardian* dubbing the investigation and the trial that ensued the "late Nuremberg of communism".[6] The camp of Râmnicu Sărat, called the "prison of silence" because of the insidious control over prisoners [7] and under Vișinescu's command between 1956 and 1963, was a symbolic place in the memory of communist political violence.[8] Both Vișinescu and the camp had been well-known symbols of the imprisonment, torture and long and hard stints in prison of those opposing the Romanian regime's consolidation from the early 1950s. The swiftness of the investigation and trial underscored a properly functioning judicial system, which had often been singled out as the terrain to measure the "advance" of liberal democracy in the former socialist space and touted as proof of reforms and a successful path to democracy which had been perpetually lacking in Romania.[9]

Transitional justice had represented a sort of "civilizational" benchmark of Central and Eastern Europe immediately after the transformation and has continued to calibrate discussions about democracy.[10] Justice concerning the past – that is the employment of law, trials and a processual approach to the past were considered a sign of democratic "maturity" and progress. The tone of the international and national perspectives on the Visinescu case seemed to show that it continues to be a measure of the absorption of principles of liberal democracy, which

[6] "Romanian 'Nuremberg' Trial for Communist Labour Camp Commander," *The Guardian* (London, September 24, 2014). https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/22/romanian-nuremberg-trial-communist-labour-camp-commander-alexandru-visinescu. Last accessed June 17, 2018.

[7] The architecture of the camp maximized sound; inmates could be overheard by guards at all times and punished for their communication. See for instance Ion Ovidiu Borcea (former detainee in Râmnicu Sărat between 1957-1963), quoted in Cicerone Ioniţoiu, "Râmnicu Sărat. Desfiinţarea celei mai odioase închisori: 13 aprilie 1963", *Memoria*, 2-3 (2006).

[8] The facility, otherwise, hosted a patchwork of political prisoners, from German and Hungarian soldiers who were imprisoned in the initial years after the war, to pre-war democrats like Corneliu Coposu, Ion Diaconescu, former MPs of the Ion Antonescu government, and equally purged staunch Stalinists like Vasile Luca, Iacob Alexandru and General Ion Eremia, active in Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej's nationalist circles in the 1950s, against the internationalist group close to Moscow. About this, see Liesbeth van der Grift, *Securing the Communist State: The Reconstruction of Coercive Institutions in the Soviet Zone of Germany and Romania* (New York: Lexington Books, 2012), 133-134.

[9] Stan, *Transitional Justice*, 13-20.

[10] About the normative and often Western centric dimension of transitional justice, see Dustin Sharp, *Rethinking Transitional Justice for the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 39 – 74.

necessarily includes a redress of the past.

But the revelation of Visinescu's tranquil life in Bucharest also made a sense of disappointment evident. The emphasis in the Romanian public response did not fall on the fact that Vișinescu had been finally tried, but on the tardiness of this fact and the distrust in this hastily put together legal case. Despite the much-touted initiatives of the 1990s to consolidate a so-called trial "on communism", most other legal investigations into cases of former perpetrators had generally been either stopped, extended indefinitely, or led nowhere.[11] Although perpetrators of the early 1950s had been identified, they had never been prosecuted after the regime change. Historian Raluca Groșescu compellingly demonstrates how resonant cases of perpetrators, that is camp commanders, members of the State police and Securitate during state socialism, were discussed as demonstrative cases of a remembrance driven by justice, and often fuelled by revanchist tones without further action.[12] Instead, the few trials in the 1990s focused on members of lower rank military middlemen involved in the events of 1989,[13] but not on those guilty for the victims in Bucharest, where the highest toll was recorded. Despite the mediatized and public celebration of transitional justice, the lack of actual indictments led to delays and false narratives that associated, in the eyes of the public, transitional justice with a governmental politics of silence that betrayed citizens' political demands.[14]

In short, in the Romanian context, the node justice-remembrance-democracy was anything but the ideation that "rebuilds the trust between citizen and state", as legal scholar Ruti Teitel defines transitional justice.[15] The restorative dimension maintained, in fact, a polarized environment of debate. Legal languages had been a preferred approach to

[11] Stan, *Transitional Justice*, 507.
[12] Groșescu, "Judging Communist Crimes".
[13] Ibid.
[14] Stan, *Transitional Justice* , 120-122.
[15] Ruti Teitel, *Globalizing Transitional Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 14.

remembrance. The law operated as a space where pro-European liberals in the area were building their credentials in the 1990s, and where activists often rallied in their support for Europeanization.[16] Although in 1994 and 1995 under the NSF (National Salvation Front) government, the first after the regime change, several members of the Central Bureau of the Communist Party were pardoned on account of the "need for national cohesion", the early NSF postcommunist government did refer to law as a central pillar of their political vision. [17] Remembrance through transitional justice and legal narratives thus also engendered a continuous mobilization of memorialization, operating on the notion that law was a criterion of a "good" democracy in the 1990s.

Moreover, although many questioned the legitimacy of the legal instruments when the revelations about Vișinescu emerged, this case was often cited as a turning point in the mobilization and subsequent operationalization of what could be termed a 'memory-law complex'.[18] As the case reached public prominence, various excesses in the usage of law for remembrance emerged. For instance, historians did not hesitate to join the public calls to speed up any changes needed to convict Vișinescu in the legal code, although these evidently bypassed procedural norm.[19] The Ministry of Justice eventually passed a new amendment to the Code and introduced "(mis)deeds against humanity" as a public offence, as the trial's initial proceedings had already started.[20]

Some historians even backed the decision to use the concept of "genocide" in relation

[16] Ron Dudai, "Transitional justice as social control: political transitions, human rights norms and the reclassification of the past", *British Journal of Sociology*, 69(3), 2018, 691-711. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12300.
[17] Raluca Groșescu, *Justiția Penală de Tranziție* (Iași: Polirom, 2009), Stan, *Transitional Justice*, 41.
[18] Vladimir Tismăneanu, "Calaul Visinescu si genocidul", *Contributors*, 2013. Available online: https://www.contributors.ro/visinescu-si-genocidul/.
[19] A good overview of the debate was provided by Andrei Muraru, the head of the ICCMER at that time, in a weekly series of articles. See Andrei Muraru, "Procesul Vișinescu La București", *Observatorul Cultural* (Bucharest, 2014), https://www.observatorcultural.ro/articol/procesul-visinescu-la-bucuresti-ii/.and a later book Andrei Muraru, *Vișinescu, Torţionarul Uitat. Închisoarea, Crimele, Procesul* (Iași: Polirom Publishing House, 2017).
[20] Sonia Fide, "Sfârșitul Procesului Alexandru Vișinescu", *România Liberă*, April 3, 2014. See also A.F, "Cazul Vișinescu: Infracţiuni Contra Umanității În Loc de Genocid", *Jurnalul Național*, May 5, 2014, Muraru, "Procesul Vișinescu La Bucureşti".

to the communist repression, in order to be able to illustrate the severity of repression under communism and speed up the procedure. To defend the usage of this term, historian Adrian Muraru argued that "a clear intention to deprive the Romanian people of basic means of survival" had been present in the Communist regime.[21] There was a sense of victimization expressed by these references to genocide, voiced in less than equivocal terms, as previously discussed in chapter 1. This sense of injury, at the same time, was part of an arsenal of discourses which encouraged conservative usages of the past and resurfaced, for instance, references to histories of political violence that had to be avenged or bordered on revisionism, in that they accentuated previous difficult histories. Only a few media outlets and public commentators argued that such an excessive take on justice and prosecution could only harm its legitimacy because it could not be defended in a court of law.[22] Vișinescu was the first such case expedited by the IICCMER[23] and the case was the first time this "memory institute" successfully collaborated with the National Prosecutor's office to reach a guilty verdict. Its director argued that the actions of the institution had "to prove that the revolution had not been for nothing".[24] Although IICCMER was initially ambivalent on the topic, the institution in the end conceded that the communist repression belongs under "systematic destruction", which would indeed warrant an accusation such as "genocide".

This debate highlights the culture of "legalism" in remembrance, one that attaches remembrance to liberal democracy and a restrictive notion of the "rule of law", and how such a framing can easily trigger excesses. A sense of victimization caused by the fact that former perpetrators have not been held accountable led to various appropriations and exaggerations.

[21] Adrian Muraru, *Vișinescu, Torționarul Uitat* (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2019).
[22] See Anca Lupescu, " Articolul capcană din Noul Cod Penal care ar putea închide dosarele torționarilor", https://www.stiripesurse.ro/articolul-capcana-din-noul-cod-penal-care-ar-putea-inchide-dosarele-tortionarilor_2868.html.
[23] Institute for Crimes for Communism and the Memory of Exile, the main memory institution dealing with cases of communist perpetrators. The set-up of this organization will be discussed further in the chapter.
[24] Andrei Muraru quoted in "REACȚIA celui care a inițiat procesul și condamnarea lui Visinescu: O zi istorica!", Stiri pe Surse, https://www.stiripesurse.ro/reac-ia-celui-care-a-ini-iat-procesul-i-condamnarea-lui-visinescu-o-zi-istorica_982077.html.

This chapter examines such legalism, historicizes the relationship between memory and law, and traces the change in narratives from the 1990s on, by focusing on three turning points in debates about legal responses to past political violence. First, the chapter analyses the long and debated trial of the repression of the anti-governmental protests in the early 1990s. It subsequently looks at the Constitution of the 1990s, which fundamentally blocked conversations about state responsibility in the oppression of minorities. Thirdly, it examines the legal dimension of memory turned problematic in recent memory laws, which built on the initial attempts to constrain political discourses in the 1990s for the greater good of accountability and democracy building. In the end, these restrictive usages of legalism in memory proved to be a useful breeding ground for conservative and far-right forces. The chapter describes how this "flexibilization" of law happened, and how the 1990s push to use law as an instrument for memory has engendered narratives that have contributed to the contestations of liberal democracy since 2014 and spurred revisionist and "illiberal" narratives. This chapter adds to the previous ones a reflection on how legal mobilizations around memory, which hold a defining role in the liberal imaginary, entertained silences as new narratives of justice emerged.

2. The 'Liberal identity" and Legalism Dialectic

The employment of legal forms in memory-making was strongly connected with the rise of norms of liberal democracy in the reunified Europe after 1989. In France, the Grayssot Act, published in early 1990 intervened in the controversies about the Vichy regime's collaboration during the Second World War and became an instrument for the investigation of the Holocaust, making its denial an offence.[25] The move was contested by historians at the time

[25] Proposed by Communist deputy Jean-Claude Gayssot, later contested because the 2012 Armenian Genocide Law, a similar law, was declared unconstitutional by the French Parliament because it went against rights of free speech. See Robert Kahn, *Holocaust Denial and the Law* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 108-118.

for imposing restrictions on historical discourse, [26] but it did set in place a model of referencing the Holocaust through law as a reason for prohibiting any discrimination because of ethnicity or religion. As has been argued by legal scholar Uladzislau Belavusau, the implication was that such laws represented a normative tool in social conduct.[27] The UK and Germany passed similar laws as civil statutes of the right of free speech, roughly around the same time, in 1991 and 1992.[28] These processes were primarily intended to counter the (re)surgence of the far right and right-wing extremism at the end of the Cold War.[29]

In Eastern Europe at the time, the relation between memory-making and democracy was framed through transitional justice focused on the reckoning with communism and state socialism, rather than the Holocaust or the Second World War. In this case, "coming to terms" with communism was the narrative that helped build civic norms and values representative of the global ascent of liberal democracy. For instance, it led to the creation of transitional memory institutions in Poland, Hungary, Romania, and the Baltics, and elsewhere in the region, which were envisaged as the sole keepers of archives or documentation of past state institutions. These were research and advocacy institutes with a preferential status in relation to accessing and conducting research in the archives of former power structures of the communist regimes, and intended to be advocates for the memory of victims. Mandated with a legal role to build prosecutions, these institutions were meant to support the grass-roots efforts of families to retrieve information about victims and achieve transitional justice, although in practice they were simply tools in doing or undoing present-day political trajectories.[30] The research and

[26] Winfried Brugger, "The Treatment of Hate Speech in German Constitutional Law (Part I)", *Public Law,* 4, 1 (2004), https://doi.org/10.1017/S2071832200015698 There were also European petitions by Timothy Garton Ash and other historians against the French Holocaust memory law. See e.g. for a critical review Robert A. Kahn, "Does It Matter How One Opposes Memory Bans? A Commentary on Liber on Liberte Pour L'Histoire", *Washington University Global Studies Law Review* 15, 1 (2016). https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/law_globalstudies/vol15/iss1/6/.
[27] Belavusau, "Fighting Hate Speech through EU Law".
[28] Gutman, "Memory Laws", 575-607.
[29] 17 European countries made the denial of the Holocaust into a legal offense, including Romania.
[30] See Georges Mink, *History, Memory and Politics in Central and Eastern Europe* (London: Palgrave, 2013), 155-170.

scope of most of these institutions had a distinct connection with the region's democratisation narrative. In Romania, their activity directly responded to the controversial and largely absent care for victims of state socialism in the early 1990s, and carried, quite explicitly, a revanchist narrative to a legal approach. The IICCMER (the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile) and the CNSAS (Council for the Study of the Archives of the Securitate) were the counterparts of similar institutions in the region, created in 2005 and 1998, respectively. This profile determined their institutional politics, approaches and focus as a "democratization" conduit: the victims of interest were primarily those of the 1980s. In general, the organizations looked at structures of the Securitate, cases of "collaboration" and banal surveillance in the late 1970s and 1980s. Their positionality sanctified the usage of history and memory by historians, mass media and broader circles alike as a perfectible instrument of "democratization". Transitional justice "advanced a culture of the rule of law" [31], in relation with the past, but also placed any complex, or difficult histories in a situation of acceptability in relation to democracy, which did not encourage debate, but simply a type of classification.

The implications of the "rule of law" over memory, and the application of legal and institutional norms over collective memory, were numerous and far-reaching in the 1990s and, as noted above, the new democratic governments in Central and Eastern Europe referred to law as a symbol of reclaimed liberal values, democracy, and reconciliation post-dictatorship by reclaiming a state that had been delegitimized because of communism.[32] I define this as a type of "legalism", along the lines of Judith Shklar's definition, who argues it is a culture of law where "the ethical attitude holds moral conduct to be a matter of rule-following, and moral relationships to consist of duties and rights determined by rules".[33] It also framed law in a

[31] Teitel, *Transitional Justice*, 35.
[32] Seyla Benhabib, "Judith Shklar's Critique of Legalism", in Martin Meierhenrich, Jens, Loughlin eds., *The Cambridge Companion to the Rule of Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 124-125.
[33] Reflecting on the power of law and jurisprudence, and the ultimate failure of discussing morality and ethic through law. Judith Shklar, *Legalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), 1.

particularly generous manner. Following philosopher John Rawls, we can advance that there was a sense of morality of law that stemmed from the fact that a liberal society cannot officially endorse a full conception of the good and therefore needs mediation, and in this case, legal mediation representing a seemingly neutral instrument.[34] Law was also seen to de-ideologize the pursuit of justice (from authoritarianism, primarily) by immunizing it from contentious politics as it represented an expression of morality and guidance for individuals.[35] It also strengthened the prestige of the state that enforced it.

These relatively linear perspectives ignored the fact that the capacity of law to repair the misdoings of the past and meet the expectations of citizens had an explicitly political dimension – a liberal one – as anthropologist David Scott argues:

> Transitional justice is the name of a post–Cold War development in liberal justice that, through the political technologies of successor trials and, above all, historical truth commissions, aims to draw a line between the illiberal past and the liberalizing present. Commissioned remembering to construct the truth of what happened in the past, it is argued, is the basis for the "reconciliation" of victims with their perpetrators within a liberalizing political time. [36]

In framing transitional justice in this manner, Scott argues that crimes are taken not to be arbitrary acts of illegality. Instead, they are regarded as examples of anti-liberal politics and counter-examples of the possibilities of liberal democracy.[37] Building on this perspective, transitional justice, in other words, "is about evil regimes, that need to be ousted and marginalised from the present, and not only about bad people."[38] We can thus infer that attempts at undertaking transitional justice (trials, removal from official functions or purges) in Eastern Europe reinforced this political paradigm by affirming that liberal democracy was an antidote

[34] William Lad Sessions, "Rawls's Concept and Conception of Primary Good", *Social Theory and Practice*, 7, (3),1981, 303-324. For context, see also Sune Lægaard, "Feasibility and Stability in Normative Political Philosophy: The Case of Liberal Nationalism", *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice,* 9, 4 (2006), 399–416, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10677-006-9048-0.
[35]Scott, *Omens of Adversity*, 128.
[36] Ibid, 26-27.
[37] Ibid., 127.
[38] Ibid., 128.

to communism, but one that came with certain narratives and silences.[39]

It is important to acknowledge that concepts of law in the 1990s merged with the culturalist discourse of the "laggard" Eastern Europe which could be fixed by "technocracy", norm-making and constitutionalism in politics.[40] The usage of law encouraged the separation between state socialism and the new liberal mindset.[41] In this sense, David Scott's comments that law has a civilizational dimension point to how law serves to propose and legitimize principles of liberalism in society at large and presents it as the best possible version of social interaction:

> The rise to prominence of international law as a "gentle civiliser of nations" and therefore as part of the view that, in general, law should have a disciplining effect on politics. In this sense, the international law idea of transitional justice as the establishment of human rights regimes that underwrite the "transition to democracy" is an extension of the larger legalism that became dominant in Anglo-American liberalism in the last decades of the twentieth century.[42]

The case of these successive erasures of the Left speaks about ontological insecurity that defined the liberal democracy of the 1990s, a fear of uncertainty, of "politics", to which public memory was perfectly aligned. Jelena Subotić argues that the Left's memory shares similarities across Europe, in that their early role in fighting fascism was buried under decades of anticommunism politics. As was discussed previously, the 1975 Spanish Pact of Forgetting (Pacto del Olvido), suppressing memory debates on the legacy of the Franco regime in Spain due to the greater good of liberal democratic statehood, is a prominent example, as the histories of the Spanish Civil War did not neatly fit into the mainstream European perspectives focusing on victims of Stalinism. Overall, the Left as a progressive force, that also fought against Nazi

[39] Kopeček, Wciślik, *Beyond Transition*, 29.
[40] See Jürgen Habermas, *The Lure of Technocracy* (Oxford: Wiley, 2013), 36, Agata Fijalkowski, 'The Criminalisation of Symbols of the Past: Expression, Law and Memory', *International Journal of Law in Context*, 10 (2014), 298–9, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1744552314000135; Uladislau Belavusau, 'Hate Speech and Constitutional Democracy in Eastern Europe: Transitional and Militant?', *Israel Law Review,* 47, (2016), 2.
[41] Shklar, *Legalism*, 34-36. See also Seyla Benhabib, "Judith Shklar's Critique of Legalism"; Samuel Moyn, "Judith Shklar on the Philosophy of International Criminal Law". (2012). https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2148437.
[42] Scott, *Omens of Adversity*, 130.

occupation, continues to be a problematic topic to approach in the context of European memory dynamics.

Post-communist trials tackling political violence were therefore as much about the workings of liberal democracy as they were about remembrance, making history and memory an integral part of "building" (liberal) democracy. Reflecting on this entanglement, sociologist Stiina Löytömäki describes a *judicialization* of memory through prosecutions, restitutions and memory laws and a relationship in which law imposes a constraint on memory.[43] In the same vein, historian Berber Beverage discusses a dynamic attached to this *juridification* of memory, that emerged around the transitional justice context in the 1990s in South Africa.[44] It "engages in a historical discourse in order to have it restore or impose irreversible historical time and (re)enforce the modernist delineation between past and present that is threatened by a (particular) memory that resists chronology and refuses to let the past go."[45] It conceives of the past in terms of morality and the sensitivity to the voices of the victims but is meaningful only in as much as it redresses the state's accountability, leading to an adjustment of memory narratives and historiographical approaches to legal imperatives. The main limitation, however, is that such approaches frame the past to necessarily be an injustice, a harm inflicted. Löytömäki points out, indeed, that such "legalism" is limiting because actors can avoid a potentially damaging debate on perpetrators and instead opt to mediate conflict over the past. Political scientist John Torpey equally suggests that transitional justice operates with a shortened time horizon, rather than with the political and social context given the globalized idea of reconstruction.[46] Focusing on injustices that have to do with one specific regime, instead of a

[43] Stiina Löytömäki, *Law and the Politics of Memory: Confronting the Past* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 24-37.
[44] The term has been used by several authors, but for a detailed outline, see Bain Atwood, 'The Waitangi Tribunal and the Public Life of History" in Berber Bevernage, Lutz Raphael **(**eds) *Professional Historians in Public: Old and New Roles Revisited* (De Gruyter, 2023), 141-163, 152.
[45] Berber Bevernage, *History, Memory, and State-Sponsored Violence* (Routledge, 2012), 49.
[46] John Torpey, *Politics and the Past: On Repairing Historical Injustices* (New York, Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 12-15.

wider context, creates a dimension of "putting the past behind us", reiterating the notion of harm, that perpetuates mobilizations around history. Indeed, as much as civic narratives caused controversies among historians in the Western part of the continent because they considered them too politically involved and aligned with political discourses,[47] in the Eastern part, the evident prescriptive dimension of the presenting public memory through law was a guarantee that the 1989 transformation would meet the goals of reconstruction, or societal renewal, after socialism.

Scott's distinctly "civilizing" understanding of laws and transitional justice was also evident in the civilizational discourse about "returning to Europe" in Eastern Europe. For instance, when it argued memory politics needed to be aligned to the milestones of European statehood[48], the 2007 Romanian Condemnation of Communism (see also chapter 1) explicitly linked memorialization with a performative legal intervention aiming at transforming the state and society. Because it provided a legal frame for remembrance, it openly professed a "European outlook", against the threat of backwardness evoked by communism. This transitional justice moment was about memory to the same extent as it was about promoting the legitimacy of law, against its past role in authoritarianism. The intention was to mobilize law so as to show a liberal, European profile.

Although less visible in the process of transitional justice, using other legal instruments to curtail (ab)uses of memory politics also played an important part in drawing an imaginary boundary between past and present in the region. The so-called "memory laws" came to be part of this broader "culture of law" driven by remembrance. Starting in the early 1990s, this type of legislation focused on condemnation of the far right as part of "democratization". Laws against Holocaust denial and symbols of the far right were widely, and relatively quickly,

[47] See Emanuela Fronza, "The Punishment of Negationism: The Difficult Dialogue between Law and Memory", *Vermont Law* 2006. https://lawreview.vermontlaw.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/fronza.pdf.
[48] Tileagă, "Communism in retrospect".

adopted across Central and Eastern Europe.[49] In Romania, the law against Holocaust denial that passed as early as 1991 irritated liberal circles because it did not extend the same perspective to the Communist party, for instance. It also triggered a fierce nationalist backlash primarily concerning the implications for the perception of the Antonescu regime.[50] For instance, far-right symbols were banned, and naming Romanian authorities as complicit was avoided. However, the attractiveness of memory laws resided in the possibilities these offered for a narrative about state socialism. In Poland, for instance, the first memory law in 1998 was attached to the wave of de-communization inspired by the 1990s' transitional justice.[51] It forbade the use of communist symbols, and although not explicitly integrated into the process of transitional justice, it did operate much in the same manner.[52] The Polish law was first and foremost meant to banish images of the past from public debate and frame this past as dangerous in order to undermine the past's potential to taint the new society's political life.[53]

That normative "civilizing" dimension of "legalism" took a darker turn in the mid-2000s, when it changed from democracy-building to more restrictive narratives of historical memory at first glance well aligned with European standards. Poland and Hungary have been the more extreme examples of this approach in the region. Hungarian memory laws consider the resistance against communism and National Socialism as a question of national character and subsequently penalize references to local participation in the Holocaust.[54] The 2011

[49] For instance, Denmark, the UK and other countries never implemented such legislation. See Ludovic Hennebel, Thomas Hochmann eds., *Genocide Denials and the Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 185; Michael Bazyler, *Holocaust, Genocide, and the Law* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 187.
[50] Alexandru Florian, *The Holocaust in Romania* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018), 59-61.
[51] The Constitution of the Republic of Poland adopted by the National Assembly of Poland on April 2, 1997, *Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland*, No. 78 of 2 April 1997, item No. 483.
[52] Uladzislau Belavusau, "The Rise of Memory Laws in Poland", *Security and Human Rights* 29, no. 1–4 (2018), 36–54, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1163/18750230-02901011.
[53] Such memory laws differed in intention from other famous cases. as the Law Against the Rehabilitation of Nazi Criminals in Russia (2014) and the similar provisions about pointing to perpetrators in the Nakba Law in Israel. See for instance Yifat Gutman "Memory Laws: An Escalation in Minority Exclusion or a Testimony to the Limits of State Power?", in Yifat Gutman, Adam D. Brown and Amy Sodaro eds. *Memory and the future: transnational politics, ethics and society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 230-253.
[54] Randolph L. Braham, "The Historical Assault on the Historical Memory of the Holocaust", USHMM, 2014. Available at: https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20140318-Holocaust-in-Hungary-Braham-Assault-on-Historical-Memory.pdf.

Hungarian Constitution and legislation on the Holocaust effectively backed nationalist exonerations for the Holocaust. New memory laws in 2016 and 2018 in Poland openly appropriated memory laws concerning the Holocaust for the unresolved issues of communism and gave rise to sovereigntist narratives that focus on and uphold ideas of independence and purity of the nation, especially in contrast to Europeanization and 'globalism'.[55] Referring to this dynamic, historian Nikolai Koposov has argued that memory laws in Western Europe were "constructive", by showing, for instance, how Germany introduced laws penalizing Holocaust denial as a constitutive element of the democratic and liberal state. Criminal and declarative laws against the denial of Nazi crimes symbolized Germany's successful transformation as a repentant state committed to avoiding any repetition of the past.[56] In contrast, he argues, in Eastern Europe, where the complicity with the Nazi regime in the Second World War had been time and again marginalized as historical experience, such laws were regarded with hostility.[57] The imbalance was not only about unrecognized complicity with fascist sympathizing governments by the local population, but about nationalist perspectives that were indirectly put forward through law.

Notwithstanding Koposov's argument, the situation is more complex. The transnational perspective offered by legal instruments focused on political violence and memory also provided an opening for parties capitalizing on past genocide, mass murder, and human rights infringements. By appropriating or using the same interpretations of laws that had been integral to the transitional justice process, such as anticommunist definitions of liberal democracy, law itself became a terrain of appropriations, of polarization and ultimately silencing, in that it discouraged debates. Civilizational Europeanism, which built on liberal norms around rule of

[55] Uladzislau Belavusau, *Freedom of Speech: Importing European and US Constitutional Models in Transitional Democracies* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 13-18.
[56] Nikolai Koposov, *Memory Laws, Memory Wars, The Politics of the Past in Europe and Russia* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), 308.
[57] Ibid., 58.

law and restorative memory, further amplified these inherent limitations of the legalist perspective. This trajectory, which is vaguer and sometimes upholding liberal narratives, but leads to memorial silences, is visible in Romania. Legal instruments encouraged a politically engaged memory meant to keep historical memory alive and engendered a deeply moralizing tone that made appropriations and usages of the law quickly turn conservative.

The following sections map this dynamic to show how legalism shaped a form of silencing that serves anti-liberal thought in Romania. Although laws and transitional justice were intended as a way of affirming and thickening the connections with a liberal system, the narratives through which this framing contributed to silencing the past.[58] Looking at these cases, one understands how "legalism" operated selectively. It was less a question of reckoning with the past than about *performing* this reckoning: that is, not substantially engaging with its difficult points, but simply putting the past behind, and looking forward to a liberal state on the horizon. The three cases discussed below show how the long attempts to bring justice influenced the memory of certain events in Romania. With shortcomings or delays in conducting justice, the cultural narratives about these events changed and uncovered new meanings about what legal instruments brought to the interpretations of the state and the political identity of citizens.[59] Trials, investigations, and memory laws operated not in a vacuum, but were influenced by the state's changes and reconsiderations, contestations about the responsibility for citizens, and a lack of legitimacy of the government.

[58] Memorialization in relation to law has been motivated by the public suspicion that former perpetrators continued to be part of the political establishment. The strong prosecutorial system during communism, for instance, involved in both state repression and surveillance, continued to be feared and resented for its haphazardness and its impunity before 1989 because trials never affected former Party members. See Grazyna Skapska, "Restitutive Justice, Rule of Law and Constitutional Dilemmas" in Adam Czarnota, Martin Krygier and Wojciech Sadurski eds., *Rethinking the Rule of Law After Communism* (Budapest: Central University Press, 2005), 211-235.
[59] Teitel, *Globalizing Transitional Justice*, 16.

3. The Trial(s) of the 1990 Protests: Reclaiming Constitutionalism through Memory

Between June 13 and 15, 1990, the NSF government repressed the street protests that had been happening in Bucharest for almost two months (lasting roughly from February to June 1990). Participants accused the government of fraud in the first free elections in May that year and asked that rights "won" on the streets six months earlier, in December 1989 be respected. People, young and old, occupied the centre of the city to protest the results of the election and more generally, the rather disappointing outcome of the December 1989 events, the end of the Ceaușescu regime and the early prospects of democracy of those six months. Historians largely agree that, faced with general discontent, the heavily contested leaders of the new NSF Party, plotted a show of popularity and strength by mobilizing the very people who felt threated by what seemed to be a young, urban elite that was vehemently against anything related to the recently deposed former regime.[60] A large group of coal miners from the Târgu Jiu mining area listened to the rallying call of the recently anointed prime minister Petre Roman "to defend the gains of 1989" and they descended upon the capital city.[61] Mobilized as an unofficial police force by leaders stoking their fears of becoming redundant in the new liberal democracy, several thousands of them committed physical abuse and alleged rapes against protesters in those three days.

The protests have since become a difficult issue in a national debate carried out in a largely conspiratorial tone. Subsequent official investigations into the brutality of the events concluded that four individuals lost their lives. However, since 1990, countless testimonies, opinions and rumours have spoken of unmarked graves, disappearances and a death toll

[60] Holger Dix, "Forgive and Forget? The June 1990 Mineriad", Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. Available online: https://www.kas.de/de/web/rumaenien/laenderberichte/detail/-/content/forgive-and-forget-the-june-1990-mineriad.

[61] Speech on 11 June 1990, quoted in Z F., "Petre Roman despre Piata Universității", *România Liberă (*Bucharest, June 11, 1990). BCUB P 12 341, vol. 23.

approaching one hundred.[62] There are yearly gatherings around the unmarked graves in the Military Cemetery in Bucharest, where the remains of those killed are allegedly buried. There have been damning reports about the governmental response to the protests. In 1992, the case of a family in Bucharest still looking for a fifteen-year-old son who had been caught in the street clashes featured prominently in the Amnesty International Report concerning the aftermath of the political change of 1989.[63] The boy's mother explicitly recalls several members of the Interior Ministry advising her not to pursue the matter further.[64] The events continued to be a source of controversy and debate. To be sure, post-socialist Europe was rife with protests at the time. In 1991 and 1992 in Poland, along with the growing criticism of President Lech Wałęsa, there were social protests of workers against the economic and institutional changes post-1989.[65] But the street clashes in June in Bucharest and the images of the so-called *Mineriade* that circulated worldwide at the time seemed to symbolize the collapse of social structures and an apparent failure of the post-Cold War political potential of liberalism to live up to its promise.[66] Many Romanian witnesses, for example, cited this as the reason for their emigration.[67]

The NSF authorities largely chose to ignore the events, but their triggering "international opprobrium" and the alleged perpetrators acquiring a "controversial" reputation nationally seemed to cause concern to political circles.[68] The afterlife of this repression was a topic of constant debate and mounting criticism against the political leaders of the new democracy. The investigation into the events of 1990 was listed in the numerous public appeals

[62] The number is still disputed, documents differ, but the official documents register this number. The Human Rights Watch reports are inconclusive. Documents of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights consulted for this research register the uncertainty over the number of casualties.
[63] "Notă de informare", 318-0-5, Helsinki Committee, box 2/1990, Romania, 13-22, OSA, Budapest. The case was unresolved even in the more recent documents on the country.
[64] "Notă de informare", 300-120-29, Helsinki Committee, box 2/1990, Romania, 21, OSA.
[65] Petrov, "'Transition' in Hindsight: 1990s Transitology as an Object of Intellectual History".
[66] 318-0-2, Records of Radio Free Europe, box 2/1990, 19, OSA, Budapest.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Red. "Protestele din perspective internationala", *România Liberă*, June 30, 1990, Bucharest. BCUB P 12 341, vol.23.

to identify those responsible for 1989. But the NSF looked down upon this intensifying "legalist" context as an attack on the reconciliatory consensus post-1989 and argued that the NSF was maintaining social peace. As explained in chapter 1, in the narratives of the NSF, the appeals to consensus and solidarity, and ultimately compliance with the politics of the party, were legitimized by the developmental and reformist idea that the state can somehow be absolved by law and justice. Following the justice prescribed by the NSF itself meant that there was an equilibrium of sorts. At the same time, accusations of "radicalism" were part of the NSF's staple strategy in criminalizing citizens as potential threats against the liberal transformation. Tellingly, for instance, then Prime Minister Petre Roman portrayed the protests as "undermining the political will of 1989".[69] Instead, the NSF framed protests, especially those in June 1990, as a civil conflict between the dispossessed "working class" and the privileged few, brought by "capitalism", which forced the miners to react.[70] The invocation of a class narrative pitted the "winners" of 1989 (young, middle class, urbanites) against the supposed 'losers' (the working class), a nostalgic narrative which also served to mobilize the miners' actions in University Square.[71]

In the 1990s, the populist position of the NSF towards protests such as those in University Square was that they were a "lawless hiatus" that could rob the public of the alternative future that the NSF promised to facilitate.[72] They argued that this type of civic manifestation would "hijack" the political transformation and stall real economic change.[73] Both the NSF and the opposition liked to frame the past's authoritarianism in relation to

[69] A phrase often used in discourses which was also the main argument of the opposition to the regime, directed, however, towards the NSF.
[70] Apostol Stan "Frontul asta ce mai e?", *Cotidianul*, pg 2., 12.03.92, Bucharest.
[71] John Glendhill," Three Days in Bucharest: Making Sense of Romania's Transitional Violence, 20 Years On", *Europe-Asia Studies* 63, (9), 2011, 1639-166.
[72] Later that summer, in August, any type of public demonstration was banner by local city authorities, which accentuated the repressive nature of the government after the June protests. See Human Rights Watch World Report 1990 – Romania. https://www.refworld.org/docid/467fca381e.html Last accessed 13 June 2021.
[73] More so, in the archives of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights the events in Bucharest for instance in 1990 are considered in light of this perspective (300-12-20, HCHR box 121, 123, 124, OSA, Budapest).

structural underdevelopment; social conflict represented an iteration of the past and was consequently deemed dangerous, as Prime Minister Roman argued in his 1993 official address to the Council of Europe.[74] The campaign for justice and remembrance of the victims – of 1989 and the early 1990 - from large segments of the public, was accordingly labelled as "extremist" by the ruling government.

However, the legal pursuits inevitably gave the protests an international, European resonance. In 1992, against the backdrop of massive social conflicts and tensions, an official inquiry into the events and the victims of June 1990 started. Several institutions handled the investigation into the repression of the protests without much progress. The reason was that no "collusion" between the state authorities and the workers' union had been detected.[75] This already presented a narrative for those events, which were no longer about a democratic protest but a group interest. This particular angle and the attempts to legitimize those events as part of the new democratic spirit grounded much of the appeals of those insisting on a fair legal pursuit against perpetrators. It was about restoring faith in the very instruments afforded by liberal democracy. Incidentally, the government's refusal to deal with the issue coincided with the difficult coming into being of the CNSAS (the Council for the Study of the Archives of the Securitate), the institution that allowed citizens to access information collected by the Securitate, and the many debates about the misgivings of memory institutes funded, perhaps paradoxically, by the very governments they were to hold accountable.[76]

In 1999, with a new (liberal) government at the helm (The Democratic Convention) the renewed investigations focused on irregularities in the previous government's handling of the events and collection of testimonies. By then, the trial had transformed into a fight for power

[74] Report on the application by Romania for membership of the Council of Europe. Available at: https://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/X2H-Xref-ViewHTML.asp?FileID=7253&lang=EN.
[75] "Progresul Procesului intern legat de Mineriade", HCHR 300-12-20, box 130, 141, OSA, Budapest.
[76] See Dragoș Petrescu, "Public Exposure without Lustration", in Lavinia Stan (ed) *Justice, Memory and Redress in Romania,* New Insights (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2017), 124-145.

between the government and what effectively was the only significant civic opposition (and far removed from the question about honouring the victims). The investigation focused on the alleged attempt by the then ruling NSF party to conceal the actual number of victims. The government stopped the trial shortly afterwards because of a procedural fault. This development only reinforced suspicions that delays were simply a way of preventing action against the government's members. Silencing was also exacerbated by the fact that the investigation focused only on the chain of command during the 1990 intervention, rather than the complex target group that was mobilized at the time.

The early 2000s witnessed a further flurry of debates on the importance of law and memory. These were particularly responding to the silencing of the 1990s and a continuously contentious process of engagement that discredited the very notion altogether. Because of this, efforts that "the protests in June be put back in the discussion about 1989, from which they have been ousted", as one journalist argued, were a central concern.[77] Integrating the 1990s events into the history of the brutal repression of 1989 matched a general anticommunist narrative, which could also avoid the controversies that this process brought forward.

In 2010, on the 20th commemoration of the events, a report broke through a long-enduring silence. On that occasion, the IICCMER (Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of Romanian Exile) issued an official report on the circumstances, suggestively entitled Report on the Fratricide of June 13th-19th, 1990. The report gathered the few already published sources and did not shed any new light on the circumstances but framed the events as a continuation of the transformation to democracy of 1989 and as protracted political violence of communist repression.[78] It came out with the blessing of the leading

[77] Vlad Enachi, "Despre iunie 1990", *Adevărul* (Bucharest,17 January 2012).
[78] "The decision of the IICMER, whose president you are, to extend the activity to the post-1989 period and the protests of 1990s angers and defies the witnesses and survivors, and an unwanted politicization of the recent past and history" argues Mugur Vasilescu, the head of another association of victims of the protests. Quoted in Enachi, "Despre iunie 1990".

anticommunist memory actors in the country. Vladimir Tismăneanu, a seminal figure in the transnational memory of criminalization of communism, stated:

> The report coordinated by Florin Ilieșiu is a logical continuation of the document which president Traian Basescu used to condemn the communist regime in Romania as criminal and illegitimate...I hope that this project will finally open up a national debate without which we will be blocked in the realm of lies.[79]

But participants and victims argued that such an ambitious perspective meant that the protests' political and social roots were becoming a blank spot in the sweeping narrative of transitional justice. The Association of Victims of 1989[80] was the first to criticize this sketchy perspective and what they saw as an appropriation of the victims.[81] It seemed all actors involved, apart from victims, were interested in simply reducing the events to a narrative useful to anticommunism and liberal democracy.

The ebbs and flows of legalism of the 2000s also changed the events' narrative and potential legal proceedings. When the trial recommenced in June 2007 (after a hiatus caused by the Social Democrat governments and as the political landscape grew increasingly radical and polarized,), this time Ion Iliescu was accused of "manslaughter" for allegedly calling the mining groups to Bucharest. The decision to initiate a trial, on July 27, 2007, formulated by the country's main prosecution office, cites a need "to denounce the non-democratic attitude of those in power", who were accused of having "betrayed the ideals of the revolution", and to "alert the population to the threat of a new dictatorial regime".[82] Accordingly, accusations formulated by the prosecutor's office this time around focused on undermining the state, diversion, and false information. The report also underscored the disproportionate use of

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[79] Sorin Ilieșiu, Alin Rus, eds., "*Report on the Fratricide of June 13th-19th 1991",* http://mineriade.iiccmer.ro/pdf/dezbateri/raport_despre_fratricidul_din_13_15_iunie_1990.pdf. Last accessed February 10, 2017.

[80] In 2014, it won the case at ECHR against the Romanian state. See Documentation of "Mocanu and Others v. ROMANIA (Applications nos. 10865/09, 45886/07 and 32431/08), 5.

[81] Loredana Diacu, "Asociația 21 Decembrie 1989 cere realizarea unei anchete efective și eficiente în dosarul Mineriadei", *Epoch Times*, 2016. Available at: https://epochtimes-romania.com/news/asociatia-21-decembrie-1989-cere-realizarea-unei-anchete-efective-si-eficiente-in-dosarul-mineriadei---242623. Last accessed 1 October 2023.

[82] "Mocanu and others v. ROMANIA".

security police personnel and false reporting, and all suspects listed in the trial were therefore indicted for "bodily harm".

The timing was not coincidental and had less to do with the functioning of the political or justice systems than with wider European politics. For the liberal coalition in power, demonstrating "European" values and a spirit of liberal democracy through legalism were crucial part of Romania's accession to the EU in 2007. The Traian Basescu presidency was mainly concerned with criminalising communism as a form of "break-up" with the general impression of a regime that had never ended.[83] The memory of the violence of 1990 was a "useful" past to mobilise in order to suggest a break with the past. Focusing on those events as a vestige of past communism was thus a useful interpretation. The government's intention was to create a narrative of a grass-roots, anticommunist spirit for these events. Arguably, there was a clear intention on the part of the opposition to associate the Social Democrats with past authoritarianism and the repression of 1989, and to contribute to a narrative of the past tainted by communism. With debates about Europeanisation dominating the agenda of the centre-right governing parties, these events were helpful in portraying past authoritarianism, which has been finally vindicated. Nevertheless, and despite the interest, the investigation was dropped just six months later due to procedural irregularities. In 2009, Ion Iliescu was removed from the list of perpetrators due to inconclusive evidence.[84] The investigation singled out the head of state and the responsible institutions (the Presidency, the Government, the Ministry of Defence, and the Ministry of the Interior). This process damaged the potential of legalist narratives in support of "democracy".

The Romanian government re-started the trial in 2014 because of a new verdict from the European Court for Human Rights, which sided with the three victims that petitioned the

[83] Buier, "Traian Băsescu și Despărțirea de Trecut".
[84] Lower ranked officials continued to be investigated.

case in Brussels against the Romanian government.[85] In contrast to a decade earlier, Iliescu was accused of alleged "crimes against humanity" over the protests' suppression.[86] It used the same provisions that applied to the Vișinescu case, and, as in that case, this language triggered substantial controversies. Finally, the potential indictment of Ion Iliescu for the organized repression,[87] under "deeds against peace and humankind"[88], meant that references to "war, genocide and destruction of cultural goods" were extrapolated from the "generalized or systematic attack against a civilian population".[89] Appropriating transnational terminologies attributable to nationalism worked, paradoxically, to amplify a democratic dimension of the state.

Indeed, by using this legalist vocabulary, the trial shifted the collective memory of the event towards a narrative that conveyed a more mature relationship between the state and liberalism. This was no longer a conversation about avoiding identifying or exposing the complicity of state structures in the repression of 1990, and no longer a reaction to the ills of 1990s Romanian democracy. Rather, the emerging memory was that of a lesson learned and a mechanism of accountability that can be robust and not waver under the pressure of a flawed justice. As one of the prosecutor's notes states, "this can hardly be a thorough investigation of the events, but rather a case of delayed justice".[90] The charges effectively held state institutions responsible for organising direct action against its citizens. It cited the alleged decision to launch "a violent attack against the protesters in University Square, who were mainly pushing

[85] For the first time, on the 25th anniversary of the protests, in 2014/2015 artist Emanuel Borcescu's intervention ironically placed several hundred statues of the miners as a reminder of the history of the events in University Square.
[86] In March 2014, the ECHR passed an official verdict for one of the five victims of the protests, asking the government to compensate eight people for the length of criminal proceedings against their ill-treatment in June 1990. See *ECHR vs Romania*. Last accessed March 10, 2019.
[87] "Victimele cer sechestru pe averile inculpaților", Antena 3, June 19th, 2019. https://www.antena3.ro/actualitate/justitie/nou-termen-in-procesul-mineriada-din-13-15-iunie-victimele-cer-sechestru-pe-averile-inculpatilor-462256.html. Last accessed March 11, 2018.
[88] The term is "infracțiuni contra umanității", a concept de facto coined for this investigation since it has not been used before.
[89] Legal code, article 2, available online at: Lege5.ro. https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/109855.
[90] Interview with Ion Voinea. http://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/justitie/incepe-procesul-mineriada-dupa-27-de-ani-742137 and personal interview conducted July 2017.

for the eighth point of the 1989 Timisoara Proclamation and were expressing, peacefully, political opinions against the majority of the political establishment at the time".[91] The "judicialisation" of memory in the trial's narrative was perhaps most evident in this new formulation of "deeds against humanity". By explicitly instrumentalizing the verdict of the European Court of Human Rights, the report underlines the intention to harm and detain demonstrators during the intervention in the University Square, and not to restore order.

As a result, the trial changed memorial narratives about the June 1990 sit-ins in various ways. It opened up more space to discuss silences and simplifications. This was evident in the public debate triggered by an interview with Miron Cozma, the leader of the June 1990 protests, which was published in various media outlets. Cozma's presence was less controversial than the reporter's intervention, and her obvious lack of contextual information about the events.[92] As a result, journalists such as Mircea Toma expressed concerns that the events in 1990 had never been critically examined in isolation as a moment of collective political mobilisation, and that their rightful memory was fading. These contradictions prompted one anthropologist, Mirel Bănică, to suggest that the public susceptibility concerning these particular June events had overshadowed the broader context and the repressive consolidation of the NSF's power and this had led to a silencing of the memory of the urban events.[93] Similarly, others argued that the June events overshadowed moments like January 28 1990, another such protest meeting coming from the "older" political parties (liberal, peasant and the social democrats) against the NSF,

[91] Trial proceedings, 2017, Prosecutor office reports, Ministry of Justice Archives, D23, public records.
[92] I.C, "Realizatoare Digi 24 L-a Intrebat Pe Marian Munteanu, Care a Stat in Coma 4 Zile Dupa Ce Un Miner a Incercat Sa Il Decapiteze, Daca a Fost in Piata Universitatii La Mineriada Din 1990", *HotNews.Ro*, October 21, 2015. Last Accessed, March 14th, 2016. https://economie.hotnews.ro/stiri-media_publicitate-20519469-gafa-digi24-realizatoare-intrebat-marian-munteanu-care-stat-coma-4-zile-dupa-miner-incercat-decapiteze-secure-daca-fost-piata-universitatii-mineriada-din-1990.htm
[93] Mirel Bănică,"Identitatea oraşului: Între istorie şi memorie - Piaţa Universităţii, Bucureşti", *22, 2009*. Available online at: https://revista22.ro/supliment/22-plus-nr-282-identitatea-ora351ului-intre-istorie-351i-memorie-pia355a-universit259355ii-bucure351ti. Last accessed February 1, 2018.

which was also violently dispersed by the police.[94] In fact, the few attempts by grass-roots organizations to commemorate the victims have only taken place since 2014, as damning proof that the dictatorial past has still not been dealt with. The interpretation of the events continued to be selective, this time in line with ideas of democracy and anti-authoritarianism.

The public history of the events had overlooked the fact that the civil protests in University Square in Bucharest were the result of a political opposition against the consolidation of the NSF government, and the new trial provided a new opportunity for this "pedagogical memory". Mircea Miclea, then Minister of Education, argued that the "Mineriade"[95] should be "included in high school curricula" as a democratic example.[96] This narrative emphasises, for example, the symbolic status of the "University Square" in Bucharest. The situation is similar to how the protests in December 1989 were framed.[97] The text thus draws a symbolic meaning from the events as a civic action against that regime still holding on to power. The image of the fragile liberal democracy of the 1990s is dispelled. In effect, the focus has been on recovering the history of these events as a political symbol (of democracy), rather than as an unacknowledged abuse of the state.

The days of physical violence around and in the University of Bucharest and the Architecture Department led to disillusionment. One witness, 'BJ', argued that they were a sign of the failure of "democratic consolidation" and "motivated the first group of massive migration from Romania".[98] Indeed, those who left feared a state gradually sliding into civil unrest and authoritarianism. Personal accounts of the events of June 1990 explain the sudden violence of

[94] Mihaela Simina, "Accent Pe Istorie: România Și Protestele Din Istoria Recentă, Ianuarie-Februarie 1990", *Radio RFI*, 2017, https://www.rfi.ro/politica-92846-accent-pe-istorie-proteste-ianuarie-februarie-corneliu-coposu. Last accessed February 1, 2018.
[95] The name is the colloquial term used in public opinion, and it keeps an indirect reference to the social polarization and class narrative.
[96] A. B, "Cum bine știm sau nu știm", *Hotnews*, June 16, 2019, http://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-esential-20531385-bine-stim-sau-nu-stim-despre-mineriade-invata-elevii-scoala-despre-mineriade-cum-functioneaza-amnezia-sociala.htm
[97] Trial proceedings, 2017, D 23. Prosecutor office Reports, The Archives of the Romanian Ministry of Justice.
[98] Interview with 'BJ' 17 December 2017 by the author. The name is abbreviated as per wishes of interviewee.

(mostly) workers groups against students and different professional categories as "the splintering order" of the early 1990s.[99] They point to the shock of having to acknowledge deep class and generational divisions after 1989: workers chanting against what they perceived as an elitist movement to destabilise the state. Yet, the silence on this episode, which is now increasingly integrated into the "memory for democracy" perspective, illustrates what happens when transitional justice fails to re-create a founding myth of a post-conflict liberal state.[100] The "legalism" of collective memory generally neglects the significance of the events for the individuals who lived through them, and it diminishes the potential for a critical debate on class, authoritarianism and their ramifications for the present.

4. Law-making around Târgu Mureș: "Reconciliation"

The June 1990 Bucharest events came just two months after the street clashes in Târgu Mureş, a multi-ethnic and predominantly Hungarian town in Transylvania, which will be the focus of this section. An event known today as the *Martie Negru* (Black March), it began as a dispute over the rights to bilingual (that is Hungarian-Romanian) language education in Transylvania in March 1990, against the backdrop of the celebrations for the Hungarian national day, March 15th. Romanian groups attempted to prevent Romanian-Hungarian students from entering a local high school in Târgu Mureş, and Romanian and Hungarian political representatives in the city escalated and polarized the dispute.[101] The Romanian government's media channels emphasised the NSF's anti-separatist (and therefore patriotic) stance on the

[99] Interview with another witness, Andrei Mocanu, conducted in June 2017 by the author.
[100] Teitel, *Globalizing Transitional Justice*. 13-18.
[101] Márton László and Zoltán Csaba Novák, *Provocarea Libertăţii. Târgu-Mureş, 16-21 Martie 1990* (Cluj Napoca: Institutul pentru Studiul Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, 2016), 15-30; Anamaria Dutceac - Segesten makes the case that textbooks (in the early 1990s) were a particularly loaded environment for ethnic bias, a situation that continued well into the 2000s and was the topic of various debates where the clash between nationalism and the new liberal discourse is evident. The street clashes caused, officially, five victims. See Anamaria Dutceac Segesten, *Myth, Identity, and Conflict: A Comparative Analysis of Romanian and Serbian Textbooks* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2015), 34.

issue. The Hungarian Jozef Antall government (23 May 1990 – 12 December 1993), and the Hungarian community in Romania, spread panic about the possible escalation of the clashes, which resulted in five official casualties.[102] In 1992, the Hungarian minority leader László Tőkés underlined this in the *Washington Times*, when he argued that ethnic cleansing was taking place in Romania, similar to that occurring in Bosnia- Herzegovina, except that "the means of conveying this are subtler [in Romania]".[103] At that time, Hungarian politician Gyula Horn was the first to argue there was a "pogrom" against the Hungarian population in the Romanian city, comparing the Hungarians to the Jewish minority. International media echoed that perspective when reporting that the victims were from the Hungarian minority, when in fact the victims were Romanian (the national majority).[104]

Indeed, for many outside observers and the oppositional circles in Romania, the events in Târgu Mureş highlighted the Szekely region (the majoritarian Hungarian area in Romania) as a potential hotbed for ethnic clashes.[105] At the time, the events were attributed by the press and international analysts to the suppression of culture and language rights under state socialism in Romania. After World War II, the city had a predominantly Hungarian population (thirty-five hundred thousand Hungarians versus eleven hundred thousand Romanians in 1945), and this ethnic percentage remained unchanged over the postwar decades.[106] In 1952, the Communist Party took a cue from the USSR's solution to the diverse ethnicities in the socialist space and established the Autonomous Hungarian Region (AHR) within the borders of the former Szekely region (which had Hungarian, Romanian, German and Jewish ethnicities).[107]

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[102] Cas Mudde, *Racist Extremism in Central and Eastern Europe* (London New York: Routledge, 2005).
[103] "Adevărul Despre Evenimentele de La Târgu-Mureş", *Evenimentul Zilei*, August 8, 2005, https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-arhiva-1216521-Adevărul-despre-evenimentele-targu-mures.htm. Last Accessed June 2, 2017.
[104] The film footage presented in the news also became one of the main items of newsreel footage for the events internationally.
[105] Paul Roe, "Misperception and Ethnic Conflict: Transylvania's Societal Security Dilemma", *Review of International Studies*, 28, (1) 2002, 57-74.
[106] The first set of laws of the socialist system, also targeting the effects of ethnic fragmentation on the "fight for peace" awaiting the revolutionary state.
[107] Newsreel January 1991, 300-10-2 Radio Free Europe, 20/1991, box 12, File 131 OSA, Budapest.

After 1956, Romanian authorities started rethinking regional integration policies regarding schools, which were increasingly mixed, and the Hungarian group in the city, afraid of a forceful intervention like the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, avoided any political mobilization.[108] The authorities separated the two communities and many Hungarians were encouraged to move to other regions.[109] There was, on the one hand, a distinctive defensive ethnonationalism at play here, and on the other, solidarity because of the shared oppositional credentials. In the 1980s, during the acute economic crisis, there was a constant emigration towards Hungary.[110]

This shared "dissident" history cultivated a politics of solidarity between Romanians and Hungarians in the early 1990s, which was threatened by both governments, primarily because both found it difficult to reconcile such cross-national solidarity with essentially nationalist politics.[111] The members of the new NSF government wanted to distance themselves from the last decades of the communist order, including the image of the oppression of Hungarian minorities, but at the same time they used the ethnonationalist tropes of the past, which emphasised the uniqueness of the Romanian group in the region.[112] As with the 1990s sit-ins, the attention of the official discourse was to respond to internal criticism by focusing on the "international image" of the country damaged by the confrontations. On 6 April, 1990, Iliescu blamed the escalation of Romanian-Hungarian tensions on "foreign intervention" and the "impatience" of the post-1989 climate.[113] In Hungary, the problem was that the position of the Hungarian Romanian community was an essential part of the political discourse of victimhood and that strengthened the policies of the Antall government. This entangled

[108] Márton and Novák, *Provocarea Libertăţii. Târgu-Mureş, 16-21 Martie 1990*, 14-17.
[109] Ibid., 45-49.
[110] Remus Gabriel Anghel, *Romanians in Western Europe: Migration, Status Dilemmas, and Transnational Connexions* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2013), 23.
[111] Myra A. Waterbury**, "**Friends in High Places? The Externalisation of Hungarian Minority Rights Claims" in Anna-Mária Bíró and Katrina Lantos Swett (eds), *The Noble Banner of Human Rights (London: Brill, 2018),* 150–182.
[112] Gussi, *La Roumanie Face à Son Passé Communiste: Mémoires et Cultures Politiques*, 3-15.
[113] "Information reel", 300-30-12 Radio Free Europe, 23/1991, OSA, Budapest.

national-local-transnational dimension quickly turned into a wider competitive debate about the state of democracy between the two countries.

Legalism became useful in this context but failed to mediate memory tensions in this case. In fact, trials were conducted by the Romanian government in the immediate aftermath of March 1990. On trial were approximately thirty individuals identified as having participated in the street fighting although, while the identities of the victims were known, it was more difficult to legally identify perpetrators. The NSF responded to allegations and controversies around ethnic escalation by appointing a Provisional Parliamentary Commission (CPUN) to investigate the violence in Târgu Mureş. Its findings were never made public, although documents made public by the Helsinki Watch Committee show the extent to which the ethnic dimension was challenging to handle after 1989.[114] The reports blamed the new Vatra Românească political party, of nationalist extraction, and emphasized the historical aspect of the conflict between the two minorities and an overlooked "privileged" position of the Hungarian minority in the Romanian state.[115] Consequently, the report implied that the Romanian authorities' efforts to ensure the rights of Hungarians, even during socialism, were ignored. [116] There was no consideration about police actions (or lack thereof) and their role in the escalation of the violence. A further problematic part of this approach was the NSF's description of it as "reconciliation".

Instead of transitional justice, the NSF used another legislative instrument, the new constitution of the state, to address the issue. The timing and the manner in which the constitutional rewriting process was initiated was an obvious attempt to hijack judicial mechanisms, under the guise of "reconciliation" and to impose the will of the majority within

[114] "Report on the Târgu Mureș events", International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, 318-0-5, box 21, file 18, 34-49, OSA, Budapest.
[115] "Report Romania 1990, December 17th, 1990", Records of the Open Media Research Institute, 205-4-140, box 89/1990, OSA, Budapest.
[116] "Internal NSF report", "Helsinki Human Rights Committee", 300-120-18, box 230, file 30, OSA, Budapest.

the limits of the liberal state. The first redrafting of the fundamental law since 1968 began in 1992 and became a symbolic event and a testament to the separation from the past, and the embodiment of the much-discussed reform of the state (see also chapter I). The recent Romanian - Hungarian conflict took precedence in the debates surrounding the new constitution. The Hungarian communities' request to introduce autonomy rights for "national communities", interpreted by the NSF as sovereignty claims by the Hungarian political groups, turned the constitutional into a "nationalisation", which became evident when the Romanians endorsed the new Constitution by a wide margin, while the Hungarian minority rejected it.[117] The document reworked the socialist "melting pot" of communist subjects and transformed it into an NSF impetus for "stability" and "social peace" to which "minorities" were a central concept. The Hungarian minority was singled out as a "cohabitating" group.

The drafting of the Constitution was intended to have a reconciliatory dimension, reinforced by the transnational mediation. In fact, foreign ministers and international organisations, such as Human Rights Watch, were involved in the document's final version, and indirectly used it to prevent an escalation of the tensions.[118] Since it was drafted immediately after the events in Târgu Mureş, the constitutional law had a transitional justice document value, at least in that it sought to resolve or prevent the escalation of the conflict by integrating this asymmetry into an idea of "reconstruction" or social peace needed after strife (in this case socialism). In this sense, the Constitution aimed to "tame" the conflict with the Hungarian community and responded to international concerns and oppositional discourses of the government's chaos and authoritarianism. However, the document translated the idea of insider/outsider into legal terms on various levels and perpetuated a political and cultural

[117] The Constitution, however, provoked an immediate political conflict, despite the transnational mediation work with regard to the competing Hungarian idea of defending the "Magyar" nation. In the two Transylvanian counties where ethnic Hungarians are the majority, the "no" votes were 85 per cent and 78 per cent. See Paul Blokker, "The (Re-)Emergence of Constitutionalism in East-Central Europe." in Narveselius, *Beyond Transition*, 356.
[118] Alina Mungiu-Pippidi and Vartan Arachelian, *Tranziția, primii 25 de ani* (Bucharest: Polirom, 2014), 23–24.

narrative of victimhood. Part of this "community of experience" (and of victimhood) was the implication that "minorities" were to be portrayed as foreign elements to the "post-socialist" community. It responded to the revived identity politics of the 1990s by defining Romanians as a "cultural nation" (that is, "Romanians" coming first) based on the sovereignty offered by the "unity and monolingualism of the Romanian people".[119]

It is arguable that in the Romanian case the law was a valuable instrument for the early populism of the 1990s. It did not solve anything for the victims, but it was an "alibi" for the government that attested to its innocence. Indeed, it is essential to point out here that already in the 1990s, legal instruments were used as a space for legitimising the "us" and "them" narrative (the majority versus the minority). The constitutional capture of the government represented an attempt to quell political unrest but also internal challenges. But the timing and efforts around the Constitution also gave it a memorializing dimension. The legal-making precedent engendered the silencing of the March 1990 events. In the commemorations that followed, the 1990 "Black March" continued to provoke fierce debate.

There have also been specific appropriations and mobilizations of these protests by the far right. Unsurprisingly, this can also be found in Hungarian official discourse. Maria Schmidt, director of the Terrorhaza Museum in Budapest, was arguing that "in the Black March in Târgu Mureş, the Government brought in naive and irresponsible agitators. It was an anti-Hungarian pogrom".[120] Two weeks before the 2013 elections in Hungary, the victimhood iconology was essential to strengthen the idea of an "extended" Hungarian population. Géza Entz, the Minister for Hungarians Abroad, framed the "pogrom" as an "ethnic bomb with a delayed reaction", which was exploding across the border in Romania. Describing the events in Târgu Mureş as a

[119] The Romanian Constitution (1991), article 3, bhttp://www.cdep.ro/pls/dic/site.page?id=339, Last accessed March 15, 2020.
[120] Quoted in Henriette Kovacs and Ursula Mindler Steiner, "Hungary and the Distortion of Holocaust Memory The Hungarian Holocaust Memorial Year 2014", *Politics in Central Europe*, 11, (2),2014, 49-71, 50. https://unipub.uni-graz.at/obvugroa/download/pdf/1016696?originalFilename=true0.

"pogrom against the Hungarian population" was a dominant discourse used by the Hungarian authorities in the international debate on historical accountability in the 1990s and the questionable actions on the Hungarian-Romanian ethnicity issues often collided. Commemorations around the Târgu Mureş events in the following years were few and far between.

This ethnicisation in political discourse also threatened the "Europeanness" that underpinned both Romanian and Hungarian government policies at the time. The narrative of the events on both sides wavered between peaceful coexistence and nationalist mobilisation in the city. Towards the end of the 2000s, even as Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán intensified his discriminatory political rhetoric, the discourse around the commemorations of March 1990 was still generally reconciliatory. For example, in 2002, on the eve of Romania's and Hungary's accession to the EU, the Catholic priest László Tőkés, the trigger of the 1989 protests, was directly involved in putting forward an anticommunist pan-European discourse during an ecumenical council in Geneva. He also led demonstrations of reconciliation that paraded from the Mureş Tribunal to the headquarters of the Romanian UDMR (Hungarian Party) with prayers in both Hungarian and Romanian. The march ended at the Hungarian cemetery, where the poet Suto Andras, one of the victims of the events, was buried. Thirty years after the surprising clashes of March 1990 between the Romanian and Hungarian communities over the use of language in education, the mayor of Târgu Mureş emphasised "we aim to underscore the multi-ethnic society that the city is, regardless of the past, because that is still there."[121]

The Hungarian minority and Human Rights Watch of Transylvania similarly attempted to minimize the politicization. In their 2010 leaflet *From the Black March to the March of*

[121] RL ONLINE, "Conflictul Interetnic Din Martie 1990 de La Târgu Mures, Comemorat Printr-Un Mars Cu Lumanari," *România Liberă*, 2010, https://romanialibera.ro/actualitate/eveniment/conflictul-interetnic-din-martie-1990-de-la-targu-mures--comemorat-printr-un-mars-cu-lumanari-179615. Last accessed June 11, 2019.

Love[122], the organization explicitly argued "the NSF's organic evolution was not true or natural in any way. Clearly, in hindsight, this event (Black March) was a script written for the counterrevolution. In January 1990, it easily manipulated the crowds by rousing them into a blind nationalism".[123] The ceremonies run by the Hungarian authorities seemed to be framed around ethnic reconciliation as a manifesto for the Hungarian representation and existence in the city. This ambiguity was even more evident in 2016 and 2017. Romanian authorities prevented a commemoration on the 15th of March, arguing it was mainly supported by Hungarian nationalist factions and the far-right Jobbik Hungarian Party and avoided any consistent debate on the topic. The situation worsened instead in the 2000s and again after 2014/2015. The debate about the events was dominated by authorities' successive attempts to dissociate themselves from the causes and question the events' importance. Since then, the Orbán government has been stoking the emotional flames of the Hungarian communities in Romania.[124]

In the end, twenty people were convicted in the trials, but like the events two months later discussed earlier, the Black March continued to be a contradictory memory, overshadowed by silences primarily caused by the legal approach to these events and the failure of both constitutional and legal procedures. *Does your head hurt?*, a recent short movie on the events, shows how various victims and participants in the street clashes have different views on the

[122] Raluca Pantazi, "Primarul Din Târgu Mures Sustine ca Maghiarii Vor Face Pe 10 Martie Un Mars Pentru Autonomie: Recunoasterea Tinutului Secuiesc, ca Regiune Geografica, Depinde de Dezvoltarea Economica Locala, Nu de Separare Si Autonomie", *Hotnews.Ro*, 2013, https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-esential-14320080-primarul-din-targu-mures-sustine-maghiarii-vor-face-10-martie-mars-pentru-autonomie-recunoasterea-tinutului-secuiesc-regiune-geografica-depinde-dezvoltarea-economica-locala-atragerea-fondurilor-europe.htm. Last accessed March 10, 2019.

[123] L.N. "Maghiarii for vor face 10 Martie". Hotnews.ro; (Bucharest, March 5, 2011). https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-esential-14320080-primarul-din-targu-mures-sustine-maghiarii-vor-face-10-martie-mars-pentru-autonomie-recunoasterea-tinutului-secuiesc-regiune-geografica-depinde-dezvoltarea-economica-locala-atragerea-fondurilor-europe.html. Last accessed June 1, 2018.

[124] Viktor Orban's politics in Transylvania have been aggressively promoting autonomy, sovereignty and much of the "illiberal" narrative, either through cultural and social "soft" discourses or directly through the UDMR (the Hungarian Party in Romania). See "Orban's largesse wins over Romania's Hungarians", https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210315-orban-s-largesse-wins-over-romania-s-hungarians. Last accessed June 1, 2018.

events. In 2014, the documentary and attempts at reinvestigation drew criticism by one journalist, Dorin Suciu, who wrote:

> The events in Târgu Mureş 20 years ago, a war against the image of Romania. What happened we'll probably never know. However, what happened is a wound on the country's body, and it would be good if we did not pick on it with various commemorations, but rather let it heal and close. Because, either way, scars grow together with the body.[125]

Despite having been evidently integrated into a legal attempt at state-making through reconciliation, the commemorations did not settle into a narrative about state abuse, although this is a widely shared adage in popular opinion. The nationalist mobilization of the 1990s of the NSF government is perhaps the most enduring trait and legacy of those years post-1989. In this sense, at the conjunction between liberal memory-making through law and intense controversy, lies a silenced history of abuse, which is easily mobilized in nationalist and "illiberal" narratives. This is primarily triggered by the very approach and legacy of the liberal memory making through law, whose shortcomings and restricted frames of reference close organic debates on the past.

5. Memory Laws and a Double Condemnation

In the 1990s and beyond, a legal approach was valued precisely for its alleged conflict resolution, for bringing consensus to debates that were so polarised that accountability was often the last priority. In that sense, the legalist approach remained an attractive resource. And as the star of transitional justice faded, new mechanisms of memory laws kept this momentum going. Since 2010, memory laws have slowly emerged in public debate elsewhere in Eastern Europe, within the same anticommunist narrative and as a continuation of the general discourse

[125] Dorin Suciu, "Evenimentele de La Târgu Mures de Acum 20 de Ani Un Razboi de Imagine Impotriva Romaniei", Agerpres, 2010,. https://www.ziaristionline.ro/2011/03/20/dorin-suciu-ziaristul-care-a-documentat-masacrul-romanilor-de-la-targu-mures-post-scriptum-la-o-manipulare-maghiara/. Last accessed April 5, 2018, and Redacția. "Conflictul Interetnic Din Martie 1990 de La Targu Mures, Comemorat Printr-Un Mars Cu Lumanari." *România Liberă* , March 9, 2010. https://romanialibera.ro/actualitate/eveniment/conflictul-interetnic-din-martie-1990-de-la-targu-mures--comemorat-printr-un-mars-cu-lumanari-179615.

of transitional justice. For instance, Poland's 1998 law banning communist symbols was seen as a natural and necessary continuation of the 1990s process, but in the early 2000s, such laws took a decidedly anti-liberal turn.

In Poland, the right-wing European anticommunism oriented towards the EU of the late 1990s came to be useful to more recent agendas of the PiS and other radical conservative actors. This process followed the slow transformation of "de-communisation" from liberal transitional justice to authoritarian "illiberal" contestation based on narratives of victimhood (and potentially more radical ones).[126] After 2010, the newly rediscovered legal anticommunism has been explicitly employed to support the growing victimhood narratives that have driven the quest for acceptance within the European memory pantheon. It has also strengthened "nationalizing" narratives, where liberal European statehood resurrected similar constructs of sovereignty. Indeed, memory politics has been central to this process, also because under the guidance of "EU values," it is an all-encompassing ground for affirming prestige and identitarian discourses. Memory laws and transitional justice could thus be argued to have contributed to the strengthening of the "illiberal" turn post-2012, where the utility of the legal mechanism has been reinterpreted.[127] The memory of political violence has been invoked in relation to state and liberal democracy**,** prompting scholars like Uladzislau Belavusau to term the recent turn to memory laws in Poland (and in Hungary) as "mnemonic constitutionalism", and this is framing is equally useful in the Romanian case.[128] One such example is the "Law of Historical Expression", that brought changes to the Remembrance Act in Poland, which amplified anticommunist narratives to biased and nationalist causes.

[126] Vermeersch, *Victimhood and Victory*, 11.
[127] The Polish-Ukrainian memory debates have been covered in, among others, Rob van der Laarse, "Bones Never Lie? Unearthing Europe's Age of Terror in the Age of Memory"; Tania Zhurzhenko, "Memory Wars and Reconciliation in the Ukrainian – Polish Borderlands: Geopolitics of Memory from a Local Perspective". In Georges Mink, Laure Neumayer eds., *History, Memory and Politics in Central and Eastern Europe* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 173-192.
[128] Belavusau and Gliszczyńska-Grabias, "Memory Laws".

In Poland, one offshoot of this process which began in the 1990s was the 2016 Polish "Street De-Communization" Law, which built on the 1998 law about the presence of communist symbols discussed earlier. Such laws used anticommunism as a form of victimhood that could easily be used to serve nationalist ends, which were important for the agenda of PiS. Since 2016, the affordances that anticommunism allows for have become anything but the liberal precepts that were initially sought. On the face of it, the de-communisation law allowed for the erasure of names associated with the former regime, such as those of streets, buildings, or statues. However, it had a nationalising dimension that led to contradictions. For instance, the name of Branisłaŭ Taraškievič, a prominent Belarusian linguist in eastern Poland, was one of the first to disappear, labelled as a "communist" collaborator. He had in fact been a victim of the NKVD repression in the 1930s. Furthermore, authorities used the de-communization content to strengthen the Polish dimension of the "recovered territories" of the Eastern Kresy.[129] The memory law explicitly reinforced the "double occupation" narrative, explicitly: "Poland was under a dual German and Soviet occupation. Practically every Polish family mourned the loss of loved ones who perished at the hands of these occupying powers", Prime Minister Morawiecki said in explaining the need for the law.[130]

Similarly, in Hungary, the Fundamental Law of Hungary, passed in 2011 focuses on the country's victimised past. It explicitly mentions the two "occupation" regimes in the nation's history, National Socialism and communism, The preamble, entitled "National Avowal", denies "any prescription for the inhumane crimes committed against the Hungarian nation and its citizens under the national socialist and communist dictatorships".[131] Moreover, this new

[129] Kresy, the "Eastern Borderlands" of medieval Poland were an important historical emphasis of the interwar period, later occupied by the Soviet Union. See Peter Polak-Springer, *Recovered Territory: A German-Polish Conflict over Land and Culture, 1919-1989* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), 30-31.
[130] Quoted in Uladzislau Belavusau, "The Rise of Memory Laws in Poland: An Adequate Tool to Counter Historical Disinformation?", *Security and Human Rights,* 2018.
[131] Hungary's 2011 Constitution. https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Hungary_2011.pdf. Last accessed June 15, 2018.

preamble recognizes and formalizes by law an authoritarian past and, more importantly, a "double occupation paradigm", which assimilates both the communist regime and National Socialism intermezzo as occupying forces.[132] The text constructs a victimised perspective on the state, emphasising its legitimacy until 1944, when the country lost its self-determination.

Interestingly, when discussing the destruction of the legal order and private property, the Fidesz rhetoric about the events that led to the national debt and "devastated the value of European civilization" echoes much of the language and vocabulary practice in the 1990s. The legalism in the 1990s was part of the modernising impetus to move forward and to fight off a narrative of underdevelopment that was associated with communism, linking history together with liberal conduct and a technocratic imaginary of politics. The József Antall government in 1990-1991, under pressure of the opposition, was similarly cautious about identifying with a positive image of Horthy but interpreted his time more leniently.[133] The Constitution came one year after the Hungarian government passed the Holocaust denial law stipulating that:

> Those who publicly hurt the dignity of a victim of the Holocaust by denying or questioning the Holocaust itself, or claim it insignificant, infringe the law and may be punished by a prison sentence of up to three years.[134]

Orbán's argument to critics of this addition to the Constitution is that this formulation provides a legal basis in case of Holocaust denials. "Legalism", in this case, legitimises the government to backlink the sovereigntist tendencies of state policy with the spirit of liberal democracy. This suggests that the older rebuke of communism through an independent liberal subjecthood and functional statehood reinforces an "us" versus "them" dynamic. Nikolai Koposov argues:

[132] Ljiljana Radonić, "Post-Communist Invocation of Europe: Memorial Museums' Narratives and the Europeanization of Memory", *National Identities* 19, 2 (2017), 269–88, https://doi.org/10.1080/14608944.2016.1264377.
[133] Blokker, "The (Re-)Emergence of Constitutionalism in East-Central Europe".
[134] The Hungarian National Assembly, "Penal Code Amendment on Holocaust Denial" (2010).

> Memory laws emerged in Western Europe's old democracies as a means to promote reconciliation after World War II. Now, such laws have become one of the preferred instruments of populists attempting to consolidate their power – and to incite the very xenophobic nationalism that provided fertile soil for the Holocaust.[135]

Although Koposov's distinction between East and West here is somewhat artificial, given similar situations in Israel, Russia and, more recently, controversies over similar laws in the Netherlands[136], this intervention does point to a dynamic by which laws are used as instruments to bend liberal democracy languages into "illiberal" alternatives. In this sense, the instruments of legalism were first discredited as not sufficiently relevant to the "nation", and then re-appropriated for the polarizing politics of these governments.[137] These laws illustrate how de-communization gradually turned into a quest to recover the mythical, sovereign histories that prevailed before the Second World War. In Poland, the memory law passed in 2015 criminalizes any mention of Poland's direct responsibility in the Holocaust. In Hungary, the same provision is included in the Constitution. Indeed, memory laws have become a sign of rising authoritarianism in Central and Eastern Europe, as these cases speak to the "constitutional capture" of instruments that can represent the "people".

An interesting aspect in this transformation is the Romanian debate on memory laws, which also tends to nationalise but cling to the liberal element in their representation and is consequently far less evident. A similar debate to the ones already mentioned began in April 2015, when the Romanian Parliament passed a new amendment to the existing 2006 law, which restricts and prohibits the activity and positive image of "the organizations, symbols and actions with fascist, legionary, racist or xenophobic undertones".[138] The amendment had been a long

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[135] Koposov, "Memory Laws and Nationalist Lies", 56.
[136] See for instance Mark Rutte's argument that denial is not a question of law, https://www.haaretz.com/2009-05-27/ty-article/dutch-liberal-leader-holocaust-denial-should-not-be-a-crime/0000017f-defb-d3a5-af7f-feff67bf0000.
[137] Ibid., 79.
[138] The text is available here. https://lege5.ro/Gratuit/g4ztmnjxga/legea-nr-217-2015-pentru-modificarea-si-completarea-ordonantei-de-urgenta-a-guvernului-nr-31-2002-privind-interzicerea-organizatiilor-si-simbolurilor-cu-caracter-fascist-rasist-sau-xenofob-si-a-promov.Last accessed April 2, 2020. Then, too, Ion Iliescu argued that "the crimes of the Second World War and the Holocaust should be considered equally next to those of communism".

time in the making. Since 2002, when the first emergency decree prohibiting the denial of the Holocaust followed the European Council's line and the Stockholm Declaration of 2000, and imposed civic norms of remembrance around the Holocaust, there have been many challenges. In its original text, the law contained only a vague acknowledgement of the Romanian contribution to the fascist discourse and played down the magnitude of the actions against the Jewish populations on Romanian territory and in Transnistria. The text avoided naming the Iron Guard in the law itself, consequently perpetuating an imprecise definition of the "perpetrators" of the Romanian Holocaust.

Over the next four years, campaigners argued for a clear definition of the "perpetrator" as a legal category and its clear attribution. Indeed, the discussion around the law correlated with the transnational context of legal codifications of Holocaust denial in Eastern Europe.[139]. For instance, in 2006, the Court of Appeal decided to partially annul the 17th decision of 1946, arguing that the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact was the source of Romania's territorial losses in 1940.[140] With this decision, the type of exculpatory narrative about Antonescu's historical role reached the level of state narratives by basically removing several of the main accusations formulated against Antonescu during his trial. Among them - and the most resonant - was the betrayal of the country and the loss of these territories. Consequently, when the Romanian Parliament again discussed the law, the director of the Elie Wiesel Institute, Alexandru Florian, emphasised the need to address this imbalance. He wrote: "Whenever there were reports, the institutions argued that the Iron Guard symbols were not equivalent to fascism. It was said that

[139] International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, "Stockholm Declaration" (2000), https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/about-us/stockholm-declaration.

[140] "Reabilitarea Maresalului Antonescu, Respinsa," *Mediafax*, May 5, 2008, https://www.mediafax.ro/justitie/reabilitarea-numelui-maresalului-antonescu-respinsa-2616337.Last accessed May 1, 2017.

Iron Guard are one thing, fascists are another. And so, the law did not work for the legionnaires.".[141]

The Holocaust law of 2015, which addressed these shortcomings, was also a direct application of the European legal dimension on the Holocaust, and its Europeanizing aspects. The new amendment changed those historical representations of the national dimension of the Holocaust and the state's responsibility. Firstly, it corrected what had previously been defined as "organizations and deeds tied in with a fascist character and consequently ignored the Romanian Iron Guard movement, which historically not been classified as fascist".[142] The text also redefined the Holocaust by now explicitly referring to the involvement of the Romanian Fourth Army in the actions in Transnistria, USSR and Ukraine.[143] Most importantly, the text makes the case that the cult of "convicted war criminals and perpetrators of genocide" is also punishable by law. In cooperation with the Elie Wiesel Holocaust Institute, the Romanian law's initiators, liberals Crin Antonescu and Claudia Nazan, focused on the free display and the circulation of symbols of the (far) right, which were not punishable by imprisonment. With this new law, the Romanian government finally addressed the legal vocabulary of the history it refers to, but it also led to a situation where Romania "condemned the Holocaust twice".[144]

There is something to be said about the role of EU institutions in this dynamic. In April 2007, the EU Council of Ministers adopted a directive that was a far cry from the EU-wide Holocaust denial prohibition law, originally known as the 'Framework Decision on Racism and Xenophobia'. The law outlawed any intentional behaviour that condones or trivialises genocide,

[141] Mihai Voinea, "Legea Care Interzice Cultul Lui Ceaușescu Stârnește Mânia Nostalgicilor Comuniști: 'Abia Aștept Să Mă Bage La Pușcărie!'", *Adevărul*, August 2015, adev.ro/pbe1a3. Last accessed June 17, 2019.
[142] The particularity is also that the Iron Guard was not included in the fascist organizations named in the Nuremberg trials, a fact which has been since the centre of the exoneration of the Iron Guard for defenders but also a narrative used to downplay its anti-Semitic dimension. Discussed in ch. 2.
[143] Particularly the massacre of Odessa (1941) when the Romanian Army was responsible for around 30,000 Jewish victims. Odessa was and still is attributed by Romanian historiography to SS troops. See Emanuel-Marius Grec "Geography of Genocide: Deportation and Mass Murder in Romanian-Occupied Territories during World War II", *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 36 (2), 164-178, DOI:10.1080/13518046.2023.2251304.
[144] See Shafir, "Unacademic Academics".

crimes against humanity, and war crimes.[145] Consequently, the law included an amendment that prohibited praising the activities of "individuals guilty of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes".[146] The Framework Decision was not an EU law, but EU Member States agreed to adopt domestic legislation within two years to comply with this EU directive and provide for criminal sanctions in their legislation. The Framework Decision also includes a provision on hate crimes by seeking to punish those who "publicly incite to violence or hatred … directed against a group of persons or a member of such a group defined by reference to race, colour, religion, descent or national or ethnic origin."[147] Although there was little reference to the Stockholm Declaration and the transnational impetus of the prevention of Holocaust denial, the European dimension was relevant even to those historians who denounced the law and criticised it as an uncritical transnational model of Holocaust remembrance.[148]

The debates it has sparked are important, and relevant to understanding why the "double" condemnation happened. In 2015, the law triggered criticism about the potential censorship or "re-writing" of history that the law imposed. As it specifically targeted various obscure groups operating online and sharing the use of symbols of the right, the attempt to moderate the online environment was labelled as a "totalitarian infringement of rights". Marius Oprea, one of the historians working on the memory and archaeology of communist political violence, argued:

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[145] Framework Decision on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM%3Al33178#:~:text=The%20purpose%20of%20this%20Framework,judicial%20cooperation%20in%20this%20field. Last accessed March 19, 2021.

[146] On this, cf. https://legeaz.net/text-integral/oug-31-2001-interzicerea-organizatiilor-si-simbolurilor-cu-caracter-fascist-rasist. Last accessed January 2, 2019.

[147] Framework Decision, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM%3Al33178#:~:text=The%20purpose%20of%20this%20Framework,judicial%20cooperation%20in%20this%20field.130-140.

[148] Bazyler, *Holocaust, Genocide, and the Law*;Rebecca Jinks, "Thinking Comparatively about Genocide Memorialization Thinking Comparatively about Genocide Memorialization", *Journal of Genocide Research,* 2, 4 (2014), 1–18, https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2014.975945.

> A unique institution will emerge here, similar to the Stalinist ones policing thoughts, beliefs and opinions. …There is a real danger of rewriting history in a similar way as the Securitate, who used to impart the label of *legionar* left and right. [149]

This kind of agitated criticism, which in fact echoed much of the 1990s criticism of the law as a liberal instrument, also resonated with the agenda of those decrying the "betrayal" of national values. Critics emphasised the "anti-Romanian" character of the law and portrayed it as a European import without much justification on the ground. Prominent intellectuals such as writer Ion Manolescu argued that it would de facto censor some authors and intellectuals with temporary or long-term Iron Guard allegiances: Mircea Eliade, Mircea Vulcanescu, and Constantin Noica, who at one point or another were close to the Iron Guard.[150] These authors were particularly singled out as "national" values that would be lost if Eliade's ideological undertones in modernist fiction were considered a case of ideological speech. Ambiguities occurred because "all the intellectual figures of the interwar period were associated, at least partially, to the movement".[151] Crin Antonescu, the initiator of the memory law, dubbed as the "Lege Antilegionară" ("The Anti-Legionary Law) in 2015, argued one year later "all these intellectuals have a solid *oeuvre*…that has nothing to do with the fascist doctrine and the legionary practice".[152] The point seemed to deny the significance these individuals held for the political community of the time.[153]

Nevertheless, the debates mainly demonstrated the prevalence of the "double genocide" thesis, which equates between Holocaust and communist crimes and has become a means of

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[149] "O instituție unică va apărea aici, similară cu Securitatea și poliția gândirii, a credințelor și opiniilor. Există un pericol real de a rescrie istoria în aceeași manieră ca Securitatea, care obișnuia să aplice eticheta de legionar la stânga și la dreapta", Marius Oprea, https://flux24.ro/istoricul-marius-oprea-despre-legea-anti-legionari-securitatea-rescrie-istoria-noastra-recenta/.

[150] Quoted in Adina Ștefan, "The anti-national law", *România Liberă*, 23 March 2015. BCUB, B 137, vol 132.

[151] Voinea, "Legea Care Interzice Cultul Lui Ceaușescu Stârnește Mânia Nostalgicilor Comuniști: 'Abia Aștept Să Mă Bage La Pușcărie!'".

[152] Ionut Baias, "Crin Antonescu, Despre Legea Antilegionara", *Hotnews.ro*, August 2015, https://revistapresei.hotnews.ro/stiri-radio_tv-20340865-crin-antonescu-despre-legea-antilegionara-nu-interzice-nicio-opera-niciun-autor-admir-ioan-gavrila-ogoranu-consider-erou-romaniei.htm. Last accessed January 5, 2019.

[153] Petru Clej, "Legea Anti-Legionară - Impact Practic Nul - Exclusivitate," *RFI*, January 31, 2018, https://www.rfi.ro/politica-100912-legea-anti-legionara-impact-practic-nul-exclusivitate-rfi. Last accessed February 5, 2019.

challenging liberal principles. The events of 2015, in which the Holocaust was "condemned" twice, were a consequence of the belief that legalism in relation the past could resolve longstanding conflicts. In effect, the law provided an opportunity, seized by many of those involved, to use the potential of the law to address the communist legacy, by effectively "whitewashing the Romanian legionary movement".[154] In 2006, the law was already seen as a potential instrument for "undoing" the legal definitions that had been in force since 1948, which formed he primary legal corpus on which the Communist Party operated, and often exonerated the Iron Guard.[155] The debate centred on the idea of aligning the debates about the past with a broader political process of Europeanization. Commentators argued that while these instruments had been effective in promoting Holocaust remembrance, they had not been as successful in promoting the memory of communism. In essence, the law set a legal precedent, but also sparked discussions about a potentially "authoritarian" aspect of national history.

Both IICCMER (The Institute for the Study of Communist Crimes and Memory of Exile) and the Association of Former Political Prisoners sided with this angle, and ICCMER's director, the priest Radu Preda, argued the law only aggravated controversies.[156] The opinion of mainstream historians in the research institutes, including the Romanian Academy of Sciences, was that it inflicted harm on the anticommunist resistance. Historian Radu Ciuceanu, also a former inmate, argued "70% of the anticommunism resistance was on the side of the Iron Guard. To eliminate a significant part of the anticommunism resistance is dangerous."[157] In general, the Romanian Academy of Sciences was reluctant to draw the "slightly exaggerated" parallel between the Iron Guard and Fascism.

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[154] Cârstocea, "Between Europeanisation and Local Legacies", 325.
[155] For this dynamic, see Ionuț Biliuță, Constructing Fascist Hagiographies: The Genealogy of the Prison Saints Movement in Contemporary Romania.", *Contemporary European History* 31, (3) 2022, 435–55. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777321000424.
[156] Quoted in "Declarațiile lui Radu Preda privind Legea antilegionară provoacă o revoltă internă la IICCMER" https://epochtimes-romania.com/news/declaratiile-lui-radu-preda-privind-legea-antilegionara-provoaca-o-revolta-interna-la-iiccmer---237610.
[157] Radu Ciuceanu, quoted in Voinea, "Legea Care Interzice"', 2.

The law's potential use in addressing the communist past provided a respite. Some authors referred to the "injustice" of having an asymmetry of memory, between communism and the Holocaust: the Shoah was condemned twice by law, and with it came a ban of symbols, while the same public shame was not applied to the socialist symbols.[158] Cultural and political actors quickly appropriated the law for its potential contribution to transitional justice and to the debate over the crimes of the communist regime. It provided a means of contrasting the silence surrounding communism against what appeared to be a more visible – at least officially – history of the Holocaust. Amidst widespread criticism of the text as "anti-Iron Guard" – the Elie Wiesel Holocaust Institute was also a subject of this debate. Andrei Muraru, former head of the IICCMER, argued that the reference to "extreme ideologies" pertains to the positive image of Nicolae Ceauşescu. According to him:

> "Although this has not been mentioned, the praise of Nicolae Ceauşescu is also outlawed because this law condemns individuals guilty of crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide.[159]

Not only was this a rhetorical hijacking of the purpose of the law, but Muraru implicitly also endorsed a contested accusation of "genocide" by which Nicolae Ceaușescu was tried and swiftly executed in December 1989. Indeed, the specificity of the law was that it also, in effect, confirmed the legality of the Ceaușescu trial in 1989 by condoning the highly controversial use of the term genocide to legitimate their summary execution. Dan Voinea, the Attorney General at the time, is vague about the usage of the term in that case:

> It was a cultural genocide, if you want, but it was mainly about the crimes of communism… Ceaușescu took part in the killing of a number of peasants during the collectivisation. I think the genocide accusation against Ceaușescu still stands.[160]

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[158] "Baias, "Crin Antonescu, Despre Legea Antilegionară".

[159] "Deși legea un menționează acest lucru, este de asemenea condamnat cultul lui Nicolae Ceaușescu pentru ca legea condamnă indivizi vinovați de crime împotriva umanității, crime de război și genocid", quoted in Voinea, "Legea Care Interzice Cultul Lui Ceaușescu Stârnește Mânia Nostalgicilor Comuniști: 'Abia Aștept Să Mă Bage La Pușcărie!'".

[160] "Pune sub semnul întrebării credibilitatea celor care au trecut prin Gulag și în general relativizează crimele comunismului. Ar trebui să fie actualizat și să menționeze crimele comunismului, care au fost condamnate oficial", quoted in Interview Dan Voinea, in Dan Andronic, "Dan Voinea: 'Nicolae Ceaușescu a Fost Sacrificat de

The trial of Nicolae Ceaușescu on December 25, 1989 is an ambiguous event in recent memory, but the brutality and the excess use of force during those days seem like a shameful memory that nevertheless served a good purpose. It is one of the reasons accusations of "genocide" have been used according to the legal forms of 2015. The other response to this terminology was that of Radu Preda, the director of the IICCMER, who argued that the public should ignore the sentences of both the Iron Guard and the circle around Marshal Ion Antonescu due to the visible ideological (communist) dimension. In fact, Radu Preda argued:

> It questions the credibility of those who went through the communist Gulag and in general relativizes the crimes of communism. It should be brought up to date and mention the communist regime, which has been officially condemned.[161]

In this sense, the law had intensified the focus on the past, which aimed to address the lack of transitional justice regarding communism to the extent of erasing it.

The debates surrounding the Romanian law of 2015 suggest that the use of "legalism" is perceived as a stable, and impactful way of referring to the past in "authorized memory narratives". This term is also exploited in narratives that quietly legitimize illiberal or extremist interpretations of history, through the anticommunist angle. Although Romania differs from Poland and Hungary, the debate about this legal instrument of memory follows a similar pattern of appropriating norms of liberal democracy for anticommunist purposes. Like the aforementioned states, the law has served as an "illiberal" construct. "Illiberals" appropriate legal instruments of law for their own gains and purposes, rather than denying them. In Romania, the law acknowledges the importance of the memory of the Holocaust, as a form of Europeanism, while then appropriating this instrument of remembrance in relation to the unresolved legacy of communism. Successive governments' silence on the matter since the 1990s blend with this seeming interest in memory and show similar conservative patterns. The

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Comuniști Pentru Comunism"', *Evenimentul Zilei*, 2015, Available online: https://evz.ro/dan-voinea-nicolae-ceausescu-a-fost-sacrificat-de-comunisti-pentru-comunism.html. Last accessed June 17, 2019.

[161] Quoted in ICCMER, "Comunicat de Presă - Institutul de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului Și Memoria Exilului Românesc (IICCMER), 2015.

specificity of the Romanian law was that it did not, as in Hungary and Poland, impose a new narrative of the state, such as sovereignty or past colonial-like influence in the region, but that it tried to rescue the legitimate state's historical roots. The recent debates about memory laws in Bucharest, in fact, show another side of the Polish and Hungarian legal use of victimhood around sovereignty and a form of "double victimhood": namely, the use of these laws as a modern, liberal democratic instrument that legitimizes the "constitutional capture" that populist conservative governments have undertaken in the region.[162] The stake of the mechanism of memory laws was equally anticommunism but, instead of looking at the ideal "sovereign" moment in the early 20th century, the Romanian laws focused on the narrative of resistance after the war.

The legitimacy of the post-war courts of law has been disputed due to their alleged use as an illegitimate state instrument used by communist authorities. This had implications for the impact these trials have managed to have against the predominant pro-German political environment. This issue was evident in the 2016 debate on the new law. In an open letter, a group of critics of the law argued that if the idea of "war criminal" is accepted, then all verdicts passed by the communist regime in the USSR against Romanians in Bessarabia should also be recognized. It also contests the verdicts against all the "generals in the Army condemned as war criminals at the end of the war".[163] They lamented the fact that the new law offers a precedent to accept all these cases as lawful. The impression was that the parallel with the victims of the 1950s purges would re-legitimize those tribunals.[164] This memory debate was taken over by the new mainstream right at the height of the 2014 momentum.

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[162] David Landau, "Populist Constitutions", *The University of Chicago Law Review* 85, no. 2 (2018), 521–44. https://lawreview.uchicago.edu/publication/populist-constitutions.

[163] Marius Vişovan, "Dreptul la memorie Şi Ultima Scrisoare Adresată Preşedintelui Klaus Iohannis Pe Tema Legii Antiromâneşti", *Ziare Online*, August 6, 2015, Available online: http://www.ziaristionline.ro/2015/08/06/dreptul-la-memorie-si-ultima-scrisoare-adresata-presedintelui-klaus-iohannis-pe-tema-legii-antiromanesti/. Last accessed June 15, 2012.

[164] Dan Tomozei, "Legea Antilegionară" Sau Delirul Liberalismului, Ultima Sfidare Crin Antonescu", *Ziare Online*, August 6, 2015, http://www.ziaristionline.ro/2015/08/06/legea-antilegionara-sau-delirul-liberalismului-ultima-sfidare-crin-antonescu-o-analiza-de-dan-tomozei/. Last accessed June 15, 2020.

6. Conclusion

This chapter examined the role of law and transitional justice in shaping memory, rather than as neutral entities. It highlights how law and transitional justice often deviate from the liberal ideals that they are associated with. In the 1990s, they emerged as a memorial dimension and played a significant role in demonstrating the progress that liberal democracy represents. Laws were a demonstrative, but not a comprehensive type of justice. They showed the capacity to deliver justice that the new state can offer and helped a new generation of individuals in these institutions take up prominent positions. However, the cases discussed also reveal that conservative discourses on memory have consistently co-opted legalism. In doing so, this chapter has shown how the norms of legalism can deteriorate in relation to collective memory. During the 1990s, the focus of conservative discourses around the law was primarily on the immediate decriminalization of the state following the end of state socialism. Law and transitional justice were seen as means of "catching up". Something started gradually changing around 2000, when newly established memorial instruments were appropriated by conservative and radical right narratives such as the new "nationalising" discourses peddling ideas of a lost sovereignty. As demonstrated in this chapter, the anticommunist laws of the 1990s provided a fertile ground for such mobilisations, although their applications and mandates always remained, at least in discourse, within the spectrum of European liberal democracy. In practice, laws were manipulated to fit the rhetoric of right-wing regimes such as those in Poland, Hungary and, as described, Romania, as valuable instruments of bending the affordances of liberal democracy. Their primary impact has been to disseminate the concept of "justice" in memory, while also presenting this mechanism as less abstract and more closely aligned with local political trajectories.

Chapter VI:
Defining Survivors: Appropriating Human Rights

1. A New Monument[1]

In 2017, a new monument in honour of Hartmut Tautz, a young East German who died in an attempt to defect to the West, was constructed at the border separating Slovakia from Austria, where he had been killed in 1986. One of the tens of thousands of people attempting to flee from the communist zone illegally, Tautz was caught and severely injured by police dogs; deprived of medical assistance, he consequently passed away a couple of hours later.[2] Tautz was just one of the still unofficial number of people apprehended by state police while trying to cross the borders of the "Iron Curtain". According to official government ideologies, those fleeing the country were considered common criminals and the enemy "existing within", a status which came with consequences also for the social and economic circumstances of families and acquaintances.[3]

Tautz's small memorial, a project initiated by the European Platform for Remembrance, the European flagship organization seeking "international justice for the Communist crimes"[4] was met with wide sympathy. Setting out "to encourage a broad, European-wide discussion about the causes and consequences of totalitarian rule, as well as about common European values, to promote human dignity and human rights" [5], the organization embodies the "anti-totalitarian" European memory project. Memory projects around the topic of Cold War refugees

[1] This chapter is based on Dana Dolghin, "Human Rights: A B/ordering Narrative in Central and Eastern Europe", in *Borders in Former Yugoslavia and South-Eastern Europe*", Nenad Stefanov, Srdjan Radovic, eds. (Berlin, de Gruyter, 2021), 85-102.
[2] "Noviny Bystřicko, Červenec 2019", http://sdruzenipamet.cz/ospamet/index.php/hlavni-menu/kratke-zpravy/462-hartmut-tautz. Last accessed April 1, 2019.
[3] Those caught leaving Romania were sentenced for treason, as listed in the Criminal Code in art 245 and subsequently sent to prison, with a sentence of on average five years. See Georg Brunner, *Before Reforms: Human Rights in the Warsaw Pact States, 1971-1988* (London: Hurst, 1990), 12-18.
[4] More about the network here: https://www.memoryandconscience.eu/about-the-platfor/about-the-platform/. See also Neumayer, "Advocating for the Cause".
[5] From the organization's website https://enrs.eu/.

demanded a right to memory, a possibility to be remembered, for these individuals. The fact that two border policemen who had shot Tautz later had successful careers in the Army until retirement seemed to suggest these victims were silenced by the very conditions (regime change) that should have brought justice for them.[6]

One of these initiatives, the *Frontier Crossers* (Frontieriștii) was a grass-roots project initiated by *Mișcarea de Rezistență* (Resistance Movement), a local Romanian NGO. Imagined as a public platform for interviews and testimonies of those who had attempted and succeeded in crossing the border as well as accounts about those killed, the project also stressed the urgency of counteracting the authorities' reluctance to pay attention to these victims of the communist border regime.[7] Several historians collaborated in the *Frontieriștii* memory project, conducted research, and strengthened the advocacy effort to showcase this silenced history. The recovery of their memory was, among other things, a stand for liberal accountability (justice, representation of victimhood and human rights).

The Romanian public opinion was perhaps more sensitive to the issue because many fled the country in this way, especially in the 1980s, and their memory was overshadowed by the overall atmosphere of silencing and 'moving forward' of the 1990s. UN statistics count around a hundred thousand Romanians who asked for political asylum in the West, most of them crossing the border with Hungary and Yugoslavia illegally.[8] In 1988 the German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, after reporting that four hundred people had drowned in the Danube attempting to make this crossing in 1988 alone, argued that the "Romanian refugees have a right to be recognized."[9] In 1988, the journal *Magyar Hirlap*

[6] "Noviny Bystřicko, Červenec 2019."
[7] Istvan Deak, "A Doua Decizie În Favoarea Frontieriștilor, În Justiția Din Cehia. De Data Asta Este Vorba Despre Compensații", *Miscarea de Rezistenta*, 2019, https://mariustuca.ro/frontieristii/a-doua-decizie-in-favoarea-frontieristilor-in-justitia-din-cehia-de-data-asta-este-vorba-despre-compensatii-48819.html.Last Accessed January 28, 2019.
[8] Jérôme B. Elie, "The UNHCR and the Cold War: A Documented Reflection on the UN Refugee Agency's Activities in the Bipolar Context", 2007, https://www.graduateinstitute.ch/sites/internet/files/2018-12/UNHCR_and_CW_Work-P.pdf.. Last accessed March 16, 2017.
[9] 1988 *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, June 23, 1981, OSA, box. 2011.

reported that four thousand Romanian citizens had crossed through Hungary and claimed at least four hundred citizens had been shot at the border since the late 1970s.[10] The Yugoslav 'Vecernie Novosti' counted around two thousand victims of these crossings in the same year, and by 1985, the Romanian-Hungarian border was considered the "bloodiest border of Europe".[11] Many of those who left ended up in the Rossi Longhi refugee camp in Latina, Italy.[12] Even during the last months of the Ceaușescu regime, new legislation fenced in large portions of the Romanian frontiers with Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and the USSR.[13]

In effect, the project demonstrated the fragility of memory rights for a group of refugees, who were displaced by conditions in Eastern European during the Cold War. These refugees had been slighted by their national governments and encouraged new narrative of persecution related to the past. Institutionally, the Tautz's memorial was a project of the *Justice 2.0* initiative of the European Platform for European Conscience, the latest initiative of this organization. Since 2007, the organization has animated the campaign to integrate the communist past and crimes into the political debates about a shared European memory.[14] A broad circle of scholars and former political dissidents and activists in Central and Eastern Europe rallied around the organization to "support initiatives at the European level to give indiscriminate treatment to all crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes well as to their victims".[15] Generally, the organization motivated calls for remembrance as a way to address the politically sensitive issue of accountability of the regimes after their end. *The Genealogies of Memory*[16], the most extensive research project of the Platform, has systematically engaged with the memory of communism and its impact on democracy and liberal thought. The Platform has

[10] *Magyar Hirlap*, August 17, 1988, OSA, box. 2011, 14,15.
[11] Z. F, "Granica", *Vecernie Novosti,* April 1986, OSA, box. 2005.
[12] An exhibition in 2018 in the city revisited this history of the building, today an administration center in the town. See Giani Angeletti, "l campo profughi stranieri «Rossi Longhi» di Latina (1957-1989)", *Studi Emigrazione,* 49, 187 (2012), 431-446
[13] One of the last legislative acts passed by the regime faced with an abnormal number of defections.
[14] Dujisin, "A History of Post-Communist Remembrance".
[15] Mission, available: https://enrs.eu.
[16] Ibid.

been prolific in directing memorial reflections around the Holocaust that could also apply to communism.[17] In this sense, the focus has been on the impact of remembrance on contemporary norms of liberal conduct, rather than solely on history.

The timing of the memorial is equally symbolic, as it occurred during the peak of the 2015-2016 refugee or 'reception' crisis. At the time, memorial revisitations such as Tautz's memorial were, as was already discussed in previous chapters, not merely an occasion to retrieve the history of Cold War refugees. Amidst growing criticism of Eastern European governments' refusal to take in the refugees of 2015, the image of the refugee forced out of the country by the repressive socialist forces was promptly instrumentalized. Hungarian state media (pro-Viktor Orbán) broadcasted similar images of Romanians crossing the border to Hungary in 1989 and multiple historical reports on refugees who, due to the Soviet intervention in Budapest in 1956[18], had to "flee the oppressing forces of totalitarianism".[19] The Hungarian and Polish governments focused on 1956 or the 1968 Prague Spring, a symbol of authoritarianism for the entire region.[20]

The intersections of these two perspectives, one anticommunist liberal and the other illiberal, are at the core of this chapter. Using ideas of human rights, narratives about refugees were in themselves not far from "illiberal" positions. In 2014, Lech Wałęsa, the former head of the dissident Polish *Solidarnosc* and former leader of the Polish liberal party, an anticommunist icon, paradoxically reinforced the politics of exclusion of refugees practised by the Polish Law

[17] Baer and Sznaider, *Memory and Forgetting in the Post-Holocaust Era*, 34-40; Mink, "Institutions of National Memory Transitional Justice".
[18] Victoria Harms, "A Tale of Two Revolutions: Hungary's 1956 and the Un-Doing of 1989", A Tale of Two Revolutions: Hungary's 1956 and the Un-Doing of 1989.", *East European Politics and Societies*, 31, 3, (2017), 479–99. https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325417703184; Pfeifer, "The Orban Regime Takes Horthy's Hungary as an Example". Last accessed July 4, 2017.
[19] Rebecca Staudenmaier, "Hungary's Orban Tells Germany: 'You Wanted the Migrants, We Didn't'", *Deutsche Wellle*, 2018. https://www.dw.com/en/hungarys-orban-tells-germany-you-wanted-the-migrants-we-didnt/a-42065012.
[20] Christian Jorgensen, "Will Fear of Refugees Become the Status Quo in Czech Politics?", *Migration Voter*, 2017, https://migrationvoter.com/2017/04/18/will-fear-of-refugees-become-the-status-quo-in-czech-politics/. Last accessed July 23, 2019.

and Justice (PiS) Party by recounting the story of Cold War refugees.[21] He argued that Poles had also been "immigrants and refugees during communism", but they had never laid claims or attempted to change the European order to the extent of the new wave of refugees.[22] In fact, their memory and personal trajectories were frequently mobilized by those opposing the acceptance of refugees, against the political claims of acceptance of "Others" into Europe, and against any claims of belonging of Muslim immigrants within European society. Another iconic figure of dissidence before and during the 1990s, Václav Havel, suggested that Europe could "hardly squeeze" all people who are unhappy with their regimes into Europe.[23]

Conversely, re-claiming past refugees of the Iron Curtain as symbols of human rights, was also civilizational because it could show a history of solidarity with a certain category of (European) refugees, and solidarity with the EU as a testament to the Eastern European states' liberal credentials.[24] Historian Timothy Snyder has insisted that the very experience with totalitarianism in Eastern Europe should have led to a greater sensitivity towards the plight of refugees and stimulated solidarity for those escaping the Middle East or Africa.[25] This, however, has not been the case.

Taking a cue from the recent memorialization interest in Cold War refugees, essentially as a history of loss and recovery of rights, this chapter charts the appropriations and the devaluations of human rights in debates about collective memory. I argue that collective memory cases, such as that of Cold War refugees, were an instance of human rights "populism",

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[21] Pawk, "Wałęsa Oceniał Sytuację Polityczną. Nagle Rzuca: Żona Do PiS-u Mi Się Zapisze. Chowam Długopisy", *Wiadomosci*, 2019 <https://doi.org/http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/7,114884,24493237,walesa-ocenial-sytuacje-polityczna-nagle-rzuca-zona-do-pis-u.html>. Last accessed June 2, 2020. Yossi Melman, "'If Europe opens its borders'", *Jerusalem Post*, September 20, 2015, https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/World-Affairs-Simple-solutions-for-a-complex-world-416499. Last accessed June 2, 2020.

[22] Radio Poland, "Walesa Makes U-Turn over Polish Asylum for Refugees", *Radio Poland*, 2015, https://www.geopolintelligence.com/walesa-makes-u-turn-over-polish-asylum-for-refugees/. Last accessed June 18, 2020.

[23] Michael Zantovsky, "Refugees and Responsibility in Central Europe", *Today's Zaman*, 2015, https://www.vhlf.org/havel-in-the-media/refugees-and-responsibility-in-central-europe/.

[24] Yulyia Komska, *The Icon Curtain: The Cold War's Quiet Border* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 1–32.

[25] Snyder, *Mapping the Road to Unfreedom*, 6-8.

both useful to ground the contestations of liberal democracy by governments in the area and a leverage against it.[26] However, rather than arguing that such a phenomenon is one of the excesses of the new illiberal actors, this chapter explains it can be an indicator of how human rights ideas changed in the region, through anticommunism and progressive Europeanization. Such appropriation occurred as Cold War liberalism relived its 1980s heyday and became an instrument in those excesses. This chapter looks back at a particular moment in the early 1990s when such constellations emerged. It adds to the previous chapter another reflection on how norms of liberal expression – in this case human rights – rely on collective memory narratives. Specifically, I show how silencing emerges as human rights are folded into political discourses about recognition and a right to memory.

2. Cold War Refugees

Projects such as *Frontieriştii* or the Tautz memorial retrieved, first and foremost, a convenient image of Cold War refugees for Western European (and American-Atlantic) sensitivities.[27] Carl Bon Tempo's book 'The Americans at the Gate' rightfully suggests that Cold War refugees contributed to a political identity of the refugee "that stressed adherence to particular political and ideological traits" rather than humanitarian need.[28] In 1952, the US Escapee Program launched by the government to resettle refugees from Soviet-occupied Eastern Europe shaped Eastern European refugees' image during the Cold War as essentially

[26] See for instance Eric Posner, "Liberal Internationalism and the Populist Backlash", *Arizona State Law Journal,* 795, 49 (2017). https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=13506&context=journal_articles

[27] The particularly one-dimensional perspective on the refugee, shaped by Cold War liberalism, was useful at the time of 2014, amidst global concern centred on the dichotomy between "refugee" and "migrant". See Eugene Quinn, "The Refugee and Migrant Crisis: Europe's Challenge", *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 105, 419 (2016), 275–85, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24871398.

[28] Carl Bon Tempo, *Americans at the Gate: The United States and Refugees During the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 24. See also Jan Raska, *Czech Refugees in Cold War Canada: 1945–1989* (Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press, 2018), 48.

pro-Western liberal.[29] The old exile communities in the USA and Europe welcomed these individuals. This is especially true of those who left immediately after 1948 and continued to be active in the resistance against the regime back home. The Czech community in Canada, and many of the anticommunist exiles in Romania who made it there or to the US in the 1950s, were active in bolstering the US's image as a protector of rightful political dissidence.[30] The Ukrainian diaspora has been equally visible in these networks.[31] According to the UN Refugee Agency, 1956 represented the first major test of the Refugee Convention when the "exodus of refugees from Hungary after the Soviet suppression of the uprising in 1956" had to be dealt with.[32] The United States and most European governments disagreed over the very definition of a 'refugee' proposed in the convention in consultation with the UN Human Rights Division and the International Refugee Organization (IRO), particularly because of the political framing of such individuals. The IRO defined the refugee, in a broader manner, as an individual that suffers from "persecution, or fear, based on reasonable grounds of persecution because of race, religion, nationality or political opinions".[33] The 1951 UN Refugee Convention, for instance, helped distinguish between refugees and migrants on the basis of the same criterion. The text avoids using the gravity of human rights violations to determine one's position as a refugee, citing rather "the protection of persons whose persecution or fear of persecution is due to events in Europe after the outbreak of the Second World War and before July 1, 1950."[34] "Refugees"

[29] Susan Lisa Carruthers, "Bloc Busters: The Politics and Peagentry of the Escape from the East", in *Cold War Captives: Imprisonment, Escape, and Brainwashing* (Berkeley: Berkeley University Press, 2009) , 59-97.
[30] In 1965, the legislation was revisited by the US Senate and included more provisions for Eastern Europeans by providing more privileges for those "fleeing communism" or the Middle East. It effectively allowed those fleeing the repercussions of the 1968 Prague Spring to enter the country easily. The system was evidently in favour of "anticommunist" refugees. See Benjamin Tromly, "Ambivalent Heroes: Russian Defectors and American Power in the Early Cold War", *Intelligence and National Security* 33, 4 (2018), 642–58., https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/02684527.2018.1442296
[31] Raska, *Czech Refugees in Cold War Canada: 1945–1989*, 51–76.
[32] Amanda Cellini, "The resettlement of Hungarian refugees in 1956", *Forced Migration Review*, 54, 2 (2017), 7-19.
[33] Article 2 of the IRO Constitution. https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/1948/08/19480820%2007-01%20AM/Ch_V_1p.pdf.
[34] "UN Refugee Convention, 1967 Protocol", 1967., https://www.unhcr.org/about-us/background/4ec262df9/1951-convention-relating-status-refugees-its-1967-protocol.html. Last accessed June 23, 2019.

were primarily the opponents of communism, persecuted and ousted from their country because of their opposition and demands for reform within the system.

The US government showed where its preferences lay when, following the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, refugees were let into the US through the Hungarian Escapee Act of 1958[35], on political grounds of danger posed by a totalitarian regime.[36] Anticommunism, rather than "minorities" rights, defined the very status of refugee, and it did so in exclusionary manner, argued Vijay Prashad, who makes the case that there were racial undertones in the very definition. The legitimate refugees were those of the USSR and Eastern Europe, persecuted by communism, but not those in Asia or Africa.[37] Immigration came, in fact, to be about "fleeing communism".[38] During the Cold War the debates about these refugees often framed a sort of superiority of Eastern European refugees over others.

However, the acceptance of Eastern European refugees was not without contradictions. During the early 1950s, at the peak of the Cold War, the "last million" of internally displaced persons, who were still lingering in the camps and demanded to stay in "Western Europe" or to emigrate to the United States because of possible oppression if they were to return to Eastern Europe were instrumental in defining the doctrine of humanitarianism.[39] Similarly, those who either left furtively by scaling fences and borders or chose to remain as "political refugees" in the "West" during the Cold War had been decisive in politically defining the refugee in the European space.[40]

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[35] Bon Tempo, *Americans at the Gate*, 87-89.
[36] Shawn Parry-Giles, *The Rhetorical Presidency, Propaganda, and the Cold War, 1945-1955* (Connecticut: Praeger, 2002), 64–75.
[37] Vijay Prashad, "The World's Poorest Citizens Are Being Betrayed by the #1 Organization Designed to Protect Them", *AlterNet*, January 2018, https://www.alternet.org/2018/01/un-broke-promise-refugees/. Last accessed March 10, 2019. See also Emma Haddad, *The Refugee in International Society Between Sovereigns* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 24.
[38] Anna Holian, *Socialism, Between National Socialism and Soviet Communism. Displaced Persons in Postwar Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011), 78.
[39] See Holian, *Socialism, Between National Socialism and Soviet Communism,* 23-24; Kjersti Brathagen, Rasmus Mariager and Karl Molin eds., *Human Rights in Europe during the Cold War* (London: Routledge, 2014) , 2-12.
[40] Olaf Glynn, Iriall; Kleist, "The Memory and Migration Nexus", in Irial Glynn and J. Olaf Kleist *History*, *Memory and Migration: Perceptions of the Past and the Politics of Incorporation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 3-29.

A very different status was reserved for German and Jewish groups leaving countries such as Romania during the Cold War. After 1948, the requests to leave Romania by the Jewish population were explicitly denied[41], and, as the "defections" increased, they caused an obvious embarrassment to the government. By the 1970s, the Jewish community's few remaining members were allowed to leave only if the Romanian government received compensation from those leaving and from the Israeli government. The German population was another group whose requests to leave the spaces they had inhabited for centuries were delegitimizing the Dej regime, but the government was reluctant to agree to their departure.[42] German groups would make their way stealthily out of Romania into Western Germany until the 1970s, when the Ceaușescu regime signed a (secret) agreement with the GDR government. The regime received money for the Germans' "return" to Western Germany.[43] These immigration politics were dependent on and associated with the reparations after the war and endured as an aftereffect of "fascism" (the plight of the German groups had been recognized relatively early in the 1990s).

With their anticommunist credentials, Cold War refugees represented internal European victims, supposedly liberal in mindset and loyal to the European idea. Moreover, these individuals became global icons of the "West": oppressed in their home countries by a totalitarian system, they were looking for a better life in a democratic system where they could thrive. Europeans, Christians and homogeneously white, they were determined to blend in and could integrate into "Western" society.

The image of the refugee portrayed in contrast to those circulating during the 2015-2016 crisis was different. The "old" Eastern European image of having been discriminated against

[41] Ancel, "A New Jewish Invasion".
[42] Steinhart, "Family, Fascists"; Otto J.Pohl, "Soviet Apartheid: Stalin's Ethnic Deportations, Special Settlement Restrictions, and the Labor Army: The Case of the Ethnic Germans in the USSR," *Human Rights Review* 13, 2 (2012), 205–24, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12142-011-0215-x.
[43] James Koranyi, "Voyages of Socialist Discovery: German-German Exchanges between the GDR and Romania", *The Slavonic and East European Review*. 92, (3), 2014, 479-506.

by communist authorities in the past played into the discourses in 2015.[44] This was evident in Lech Wałęsa's statement that "wherever we went, we respected local culture and laws"[45], which echoed a type of superiority of Cold War refugees, determined by similarity of tone, of purpose and interest." Constructing the "good" refugees accentuated the centrality of belonging to Europe as boundary-making and implied this right is allowed for some, but not for those coming from outside Europe. Such arguments depicted adherence to the West's values as the rightful political cause and distinguished between anticommunist refugees and contemporary migrants.[46] This can be seen as a manifestation of a "whiteness" complex, which is determined by the superiority of a comfortable and adaptable individual, willing to be part of the European spirit.[47] In the context of the 2015 refugee crisis, the memory of Cold War refugees, and their anticommunism, was an important narrative to put forward because it showed the importance of this anticommunist identity and, at the same time, deflected criticism about the exclusions of certain groups, such as the Muslim community, operating in Eastern Europe. These refugees were presented as a positive example for those seeking refuge in Europe.[48]

Refugees from the region represented an important narrative of the right-wing conservative nationalist parties like PiS and Fidesz that invoked the deep-rooted history of "protecting" Christianity as proof of their own "Europeanness".[49] Preserving Europe "for Europeans and against Muslim invaders" was Orbán's justification for the border fence being erected at Hungary's Eastern borders in 2017.[50] Conservative politicians consequently differentiated between the rights of Western-oriented refugees, that is past refugees from

[44] Artur Lipinski and Agnieszka Stępińska, "Polish Right-Wing Populism in the Era of Social Media", *Problems of Post-Communism*, 66, 1 (2019), 71-82, https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2018.1484667; Petrovic, "Divided National Memories.
[45] Melman, "If Europe opens its gates".
[46] Glynn, Kleist, "The Memory and Migration Nexus", 10-11 .
[47] Aniko Imre, "Whiteness in Postsocialist Eastern Europe, the Time of the Gypsies, the End of Race", in Alfred Lopez ed., *Postcolonial Whiteness* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2005), 79–103.
[48] Dan Stone, "A Victim-Centred Historiography of the Holocaust?"
[49] Emily Schultheis, "Viktor Orbán: Hungary Doesn't Want 'Muslim Invaders'", *Politico*, August 1, 2018, https://www.politico.eu/article/viktor-orban-hungary-doesnt-want-muslim-invaders/.
[50] Ibid.

Eastern Europe during the Cold War, and the rights of "others" (that is "non-Europeans"). The refugees from communism, with the enemy embodied by an external aggressor, Viktor Orbán consequently argued, were a worthier cause. As Peter Gatrell noted, the 'refugee' thus remained a construct reserved for Europeans.[51] By emphasizing the plight of past Cold War refugees, Orbán also invoked a racialized human rights dimension.

Consequently, in referring to 1956, Orbán was reviving an ideologically charged meaning of political refugees directly associated with anticommunism. The concern about who "deserves" to find their salvation elsewhere, away from their home country, transformed into a polarizing dispute about the right to be called a refugee. For instance, the very right to immigration was being questioned as an infringement of political norms and as an overindulgence of the politics of tolerance when Hungarian officials argued that "immigration is not a human right" and questioned whether one "can be a refugee and violate the borders of five or six safe countries."[52] With a distinctly patriotic narrative that excluded some categories of individuals from the tenets of liberal ideals, such as human rights or free movement, Orbán's government's tone was more radical (right), but not far from the above-cited positions of Havel or Wałęsa, who are widely lauded as **"**political dissidents" who contributed to the liberal and civic project of the common European polity."[53] They embodied the general idea of political formation as "dissident politics often influenced the emerging constitutional systems based on the protection of human rights."[54]

[51] Peter Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 87-89.
[52] Interview Peter Szijjártó, "Immigration 'Not a Human Right': Hungary FM on EU Criticism", *Al Jazeera*, October 6, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5sk8k4hZNr0. Last Access September 23, 2018.
[53] Brandușa Armanca, *Frontierиștii* (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2011), 11.
[54] See Jiri Přibáň, "Political Dissent, Human Rights, and Legal Transformations. Communist and Post-Communist Experiences", *East European Politics and Societies*, 19, 4 (2005), 553-572. doi:10.1177/0888325405275987.

3. Frontierișii and the Meanings of Human Rights

During the 'triumphal' 1990s, the Romanian government showed little interest in the stories of refugees, particularly those who were unsuccessful in their attempts to flee.[55] Those who survived and forged a successful life abroad were, on the other hand, often featured in the media after 1989, commenting on national politics. Nevertheless, there persisted a widespread belief that these individuals had been wronged in terms of how their experiences were remembered. These victims of the communist regimes were not included in the 2000s campaign for the transnationalization of the memory of communism supported by governments in light of EU accession. In a way, the central memorial claim of the *Frontieriștii* project, focused on giving back some political identity to Cold War refugees by doing justice to these nameless individuals who had been criminalized and never rehabilitated, played into this narrative of accountability.[56] The project's assertion of "breaking" the silence garnered significant attention from Romanian public opinion. This was due to it being a refreshing change after a prolonged period of silence, rather than any potential for a more nuanced perspective on European migration.

Examining the *Frontieriștii* project, the selection of interviews presented in the public debate demonstrates a shift in perspectives. For instance, the exhibition catalogue recounts the story of a certain "Petru C." who attempted to cross into Yugoslavia in 1990 but was ultimately returned to Romania by the Yugoslav authorities, resulting in a two-year prison sentence. The report cites propaganda regarding the supposed "economic need for people to stay in the country

[55] William,Totok, "'Fenomenul Frontierist' - Un Capitol Uitat Din Istoria Comunismului Românesc", *Deutche Welle*, March 2009, https://www.dw.com/ro/fenomenul-frontierist-un-capitol-uitat-din-istoria-comunismului-românesc/a-4100952. Last accessed June 18, 2016.

[56] Governments never rehabilitated the "wrong-doers" escaping across the border, the legal status of these individuals was never reviewed, and most are still listed as criminals. Although Eastern European states never denied the victims of the borders post-1989, there have also been no official attempts to acknowledge the state's responsibility on their behalf. In the 1990s, the topic became uncomfortable because of the responsibility implications for state authorities. See Stan, *Transitional Justice,* 89-102.

and the fact that these individuals were 'traitors' of their own country".[57] "Petru C." explains that he only felt validated in his decision to leave for the West in the 1990s, when he no longer had to explain or justify his actions. Therefore, the emphasis during that time was on a particular victory. It could be argued that this situation was not one that could be taken advantage of, unlike the refugees from Hungary's 1956 Revolution in Europe and the US, who were a crucial part of the myth of the Hungarian 1956 Revolution that emerged immediately after the political transformation in Hungary.[58] Not was their history comparable to the one that triggered visible interest in Czech debates, as many of the members of the democratic diaspora had been in contact with dissident groups such as Charta 77.[59]

The stories of those who made it across the border despite being pursued by local police forces are remarkably similar in the selection presented on the *Frontieriştii* platform. Most of these individuals left the "East" in the 1980s, driven by extreme austerity and a general collapse of the economy. Silvian Cenţiu remembers leaving behind a society "that stifled my creativity and constantly brought me down" for a West (in this case, the United States), which was "an idea, of a philosophy of living".[60] The tone in these two testimonies is distinctively "civilizational" in that their exile seems to be told as a personal progress achieved by integrating into "Western" society. The image that emerged was that of a righteous refugee, compliant with the West's values, who looked up to Europe, and saw the West as the best alternative to communism and, finally, someone who adhered to the liberal ideals despite all risks. Such

[57] Brathagen, Mariager, Molin eds., *Human Rights in Europe* , 6.
[58] Keskés, Gusztáv,"Menekültszállítás és hidegháború. Az Európai Migráció Kormányközi Bizottsága (ICEM) és az 1956-os magyar menekültek*",* SZÁZADOK, 152, 1 (2018), 145-170.
[59] Vojtěch Jeřábek, *Československí Ue Studené Válce* (Prague: Stilprchlíci vus Press, 2005).
[60] Marina Constantinoiu, "Interview Silvian Cenţiu" (Miscarea de Rezistenta, 2019), https://mariustuca.ro/frontieristii/un-brasovean-face-strategia-de-imagine-a-sua-in-1988-a-fugit-din-romania-comunista-48680.html. Last accessed May 28, 2018.

innocent refugees did not pose a threat to the liberal order, but easily integrated into and accepted the "heroism of the West".[61]

The campaign in Bucharest after 2014 aimed to provide reparations for the victims, and address the authorities' disregard for these victims' human rights. Since then, the IICCMER has published two volumes on the matter that place the story in the broader context of the "victims of communism". In January 2019, this institution launched a public appeal for information and testimonies on cases of border crossing and killings.[62] The announcement describes the actions as an "infringement of human rights" and a denial of "fundamental liberties". It also notes that "apart from a punitive dimension, which is never too late, memory also has a didactic role"; referring to the difficulty in travelling beyond the Iron Curtain.[63] Interestingly, in 2019, IICCMER launched a new campaign to prosecute those it deemed accountable, particularly border guards, who were identified as perpetrators.[64] In this sense, re-claiming the identity of Cold War refugees also meant recovering a symbol of anticommunism.[65]

A direct tie to liberal democratic practice enveloped the memory of Cold War refugees. Branduşa Armanca, the author of a 2011 study on the mass media perspective of those fleeing, argued that the story of Cold War refugees should have educational implications because "according to the INCSOP survey, 48% of Romanians consider the communist system to be superior. What is worrying is that 34% of people think it was better before 1989".[66] Such statements illustrate how the activism around Cold War refugees' remembrance evoked

[61] Several camps existed near Trieste, at the Yugoslav border. The "detention facilities" were the first stop for individuals; they were kept under strict surveillance until the papers of political asylum or deportation to the country of origin were ready. See Angeletti, "l campo profughi, 6.
[62] IICCMER, "Alexandra Toader, Președintele Executiv Al IICCMER, Pregătește Începerea Investigațiilor În Dosarele Torționarilor, Frontieriștilor Și În Cel Al Crimelor de La Revoluție," 2020, https://www.iiccr.ro/alexandra-toader-noul-presedinte-executiv-al-iiccmer-pregateste-inceperea-investigatiilor-in-dosarele-tortionarilor-frontieristilor-si-cel-al-crimelor-de-la-revolutie/. Last accessed April 23, 2020.
[63] ICCMER, "Comunicat de Presă - Institutul de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului Și Memoria Exilului Românesc (IICCMER)," *Agerpres*, January 25, 2018. Last accessed April 23, 2020.
[64] IICCMER, "Alexandra Toader, Președintele Executiv Al IICCMER, Pregătește Începerea Investigațiilor În Dosarele Torționarilor, Frontieriștilor Și În Cel Al Crimelor de La Revoluție." Last accessed April 23, 2020.
[65] Tromly, "Ambivalent Heroes".
[66] Armanca, *Frontieristii*. 34.

languages of human rights in collective memory. Armanca's book offers an extensive interpretation of testimonies belonging to the military involved in the killings. Similarly, the Iron Curtain Project, a Dutch-German initiative, looks at the enduring character of this former internal boundary of Europe.[67] This perspective paints the former border as a reminder that "the hard-won freedom is under threat everywhere."[68]

The *Frontierișstii* project highlights the special status of these individuals within the European space and their unrecognized history as victims of an intra-European border.[69] This memory in relation to the idea of freedom created many other narratives, which all underscored primarily an exclusionary side of the European "belonging" narrative.[70] To historian Jan Gross, the culprit of the " compassion deficit" for refugees displaced by conflicts outside Europe was the legacy of communism. Similarly, he attributed the unwillingness to take in refugees to the erasure of the Holocaust in the region, also due to an unwanted legacy of the past.[71] He claimed that people could grasp their ethical obligations to solidarity only after this legacy is resolved.[72] Around the same time, historian Timothy Snyder referenced the careful manner in which the forces of liberalism were ushered back in 1989, in an effort to trigger a spirit of solidarity in the refugee crisis of 2015.[73] Snyder, like Gross, argues that in Eastern Europe, rights are determined by the insufficient acknowledgement of their infringement in the past. He argues that remembrance – particularly anticommunist memory - can contribute to catching up with what has been lost.[74] He connects the question of the memory of communism: in this case, with the

[67] See https://www.ironcurtainproject.eu/en/.Last accessed March 1, 2020.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Tassilo Herrschel, in *Borders in Post-Socialist Europe: Territory, Scale, Society* (Routledge: London, 2011), 5-15.
[70] Stone, "Refugees Then and Now".
[71] Gross, "Eastern Europe's Crisis Of Shame".
[72] It implies that a degree of xenophobia that assumes that this history would have been adequately understood without the six decades of state socialism and discrimination associated with the previous regime. It was a perspective less cited than the one regarding the Holocaust that triggered a libel suit in Poland against Gross. See "Poland Angry over Claims", 16 oct 2015, *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/16/poland-anger-over-claim-that-poles-killed-more-jews-than-germans-during-war. Last accessed March 1, 2020.
[73] Snyder, *Mapping the Road to Unfreedom*, 34-36.
[74] Stefano Bottoni, *Long Awaited West* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 3-16.

exploits of democracy, and does little to refer to the fact that anticommunism in itself hides exclusionary, often racializing, dimensions.

Such an interpretation of the communist past only facilitated further exclusions. In 2014 Lech Wałęsa argued that:

> We in Poland have small flats, low salaries, and meagre pensions. Watching the refugees on television, I noticed that they look better than us. They are well-fed, well dressed, and maybe even are richer than we are.[75]

In 2015, memories of past refugees were mobilized as a "competing" memory, that of the Eastern European "good" refugee, against those who were claiming a new European identity. The image merged with covert forms of bias in Eastern European narratives, portraying a compliant and bona fide "European" refugee whose rights were not recognized. In this case, the image of the refugee and ideas of human rights were invoked to represent a form of Europeanism that is also "superior" to others.[76] As in the case of Havel's resurrection of the image of the dissident's political cause, the language of human rights here was used to underscore a fundamental misrecognition of this experience, a required "dissident" political agency for the image of progressive politics and principles of a democratic citizenry. Wałęsa accordingly argued that refugees from communism who seek economic advancement were more likely to comply with demands of loyalty to the European project and identity. In this sense, it is equally relevant to look in the direction suggested by Gyorgy Tamasz where the debate and divergences about human rights have to do with the split of the Left in the 1970s. With the end of the global movement of 1968, human rights coming from the Left lost their legitimacy. Instead, they were integrated into the rising power of the right without a distinct alternative. [77]

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[75] Radio Poland, "Walesa Makes U-Turn".

[76] Madeleine Hurd, Hastings Donnan and Carolin Leutloff-Grandits "Crossing Borders, Changing Times", in Hastings Donnan, Madeleine Hurd, Carolin Leutloff-Grandits eds., *Migrating Borders and Moving Times: Temporality and the Crossing of Borders in Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 1–24; Herrschel, *Borders in Post-Socialist Europe: Territory, Scale, Society,* 15.

[77] See G. Tamas. He was among the few voices that associated the refugee dilemma in Eastern Europe not with the betrayal of principles of liberalism, but with the problems of reclaiming of genealogies of the Left. He argues

Frontieriştii contributed to this narrative. Rodica Gutler, whose testimony was collected through the *Frontieriştii* project and published in the daily newspaper *Gândul*[78], tells her story of leaving in 1981 with a fake passport and settling in Germany. However, she omits the uncomfortable details of her departure: the possibility of "getting caught" and heading to prison either in Hungary or in Romania. Her future husband's testimony only reinforces her account. He is also a political refugee, who swam across the Danube to the Serbian side with three friends as part of the only refugee group escaping the country who managed to succeed. Charting her own story of escape from political oppression, Gutler ends her account by expressing scepticism about the post-2015 wave of refugees in Germany, arguing that she does not consider that "the level of integration will ever alleviate fears against these new communities."[79]

4. The Conservative Narrative of Human Rights and the "Europe" Ideal

The idea of "belonging to Europe" has long been associated with human rights.[80] References to human rights have consistently featured in the official discourse of the European Union, and after the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht, this reference became a defining characteristic of the EU.[81] As EU Commissioner Frans Timmermans has stated, Europe safeguards and "passes on the memory of past atrocities to the next generation of Europeans" as it "recalls the

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that the "impossibility of launching an Enlightenment-inspired political program that can challenge the predominant 'romantic-reactionary reaction' which the left still evokes is at the core of this competition of memory". He argues the root of the situation today "still lies during the Cold War", when the real "continuous eroding leftist politics started". G.M Tamas, "The Meaning of the Refugee Crisis", *OpenDemocracy*, September 2015, https://doi.org/https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/meaning-of-refugee-crisis/. Last accessed April 6, 2020.

[78] Andrei Luca Popescu, "Interview Rodica Gutler", *Gândul* (Bucharest, September 27, 2015), https://doi.org/https://www.Gândul.info/stiri/refugiati-din-romania-rodica-a-fugit-de-comunism-cu-pasaportul-unei-prietene-johann-a-trecut-dunarea-inot-merkel-este-atat-de-smechera-incat-se-recunoaste-la-ea-siretenia-lui-iliescu-14752651. Last accessed April 5, 2019.

[79] Rodica Gutler, interview, *Adevărul* (Bucharest, June 15, 2014).

[80] Yvonne Donders, "Diversity in Europe: From Pluralism to Populism?" In J. Vidmar (ed.), *European Populism and Human Rights* (London: Brill, 2020), 52-71.

[81] Belavusau and Gliszczyńska-Grabias, "Memory Laws: Mapping a New Subject in Comparative Law and Transitional Justice". Banke Stokholm Cecilie, "Remembering Europe's Heart of Darkness. Legacies of the Holocaust in Post-War European Societies", in Pakier, Stråth *A European Memory? Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance*, 165.

importance of defending the human rights of every European".[82] The human rights dimension in the European narrative seems to support the fact that the memory according to which the Holocaust has had a direct and linear influence on the rise of human rights (see the EU Prague Declaration of 2008, discussed in chapter 1)[83] has only reaffirmed the commitment to human rights against the history and legacy of communism as a perpetual violator of human rights.[84] This Cold War totalitarianism angle on communist crimes is supported by the reduction of communism to Stalinism[85] – therefore autocratic repression – and places it in direct opposition to any history of rights.[86]

According to Rosa Fregoso, human rights are often viewed through the lens of the Cold War discourse of "Western cosmology and are presented as a liberal narrative to which it is difficult to find alternatives".[87] The emphasis on human rights was reinforced by the anti-"totalitarianism" angle during the Cold War.[88] The legitimacy of human rights was further strengthened in the post-1975 Helsinki Committee politics, where human rights diplomacy was seen as crucial to the socialist regime's future demise.[89] A Cold War perspective thus restricts all discussion by emphasizing anticommunism as a tenet of liberal identity, side-lining the collective memory of the political Left in Europe. The monopoly of the anticommunist perspective, even institutional, accordingly also painted a restrictive memorial perspective

[82] Joint statement by First Vice-President Timmermans and Commissioner Jourová ahead of the Europe-Wide Day of Remembrance for the victims of all totalitarian and authoritarian regimes Brussels, August 22, 2018. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT_18_6783
[83] Duncan Bell, 'Introduction: Memory, Trauma and World Politics', in Bell (ed.), Memory, Trauma and World Politics, 1–29, 'The Memory of Politics in Postwar Europe', in Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner and Claudio Fogu (eds), The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 1–39.
[84] Natan Sznaider, Daniel Levy, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 45-57.
[85] Described in chapter 1, but also see Muriel Blaive, The Reform Communist Interpretation of the Stalinist Period in Czech Historiography and Its Legacy. *East European Politics and Societies*, *36*(3) 2022, 992-1014. https://doi.org/10.1177/08883254211012757
[86] Assmann, "Europe's Divided Memory".
[87] Rosa-Linda Fregoso, "For a Pluriversal Declaration of Human Rights", *American Quarterly* 66, 3 (2014), -583–608, https:/doi.org/10.1353/aq.2014.0047.
[88] For a more critical look at the downsides of this approach, see also Ghodsee. *The Left Side of History*.
[89] Carruthers, "Bloc Busters." 81-83.

around human rights, including the rights to mobility. Human rights represented a concern in the early 1990s regarding the political perspectives of the country: EU accession, liberal democracy, and a transformation of the political sphere.

Later, human rights were brought up as a modality to purge the past from the social and political space, by exposing and outlawing the former structures of repression, such as the German *STASI* or the Romanian *Securitate*, or simply the police and institutions of force. Anthropologist David Scott sums up the notion of the close correlation of the two when he argues that the discourse of human rights:

> constitutes the inner core value of the global project of liberal democracy, or to put it more precisely, liberal democracy is no longer seen as one of rival or contestable political options that variously serve to protect human rights, but as itself an absolute human right.[90]

Nowhere is this more evident than in Eastern Europe, where human rights served as a means to advocate or fight for the transformation into a liberal democracy. Historian Michal Kopeček writes that "the discourses of human rights have a unifying language for voicing criticism of the political regime in a moral and conceptual framework that was understandable for the rest of the world".[91] However, dissidents like Adam Michnik only cite the freedom of expression and political participation as moral rights, that is the Western definition, steering clear of notions of rights that could have recalled leftist socialism.

Paradoxically, however, this dimension has contributed to a new type of illiberal or anti-liberal Europeanism. The newly constructed memory of the Cold War refugee was used to highlight the biases in defining who belongs to Europe based on religion and cultural dimensions: those Cold War refugees did because they were Christian and part of the European "fabric", while other categories did not. Even in the narratives about Cold War refugees, one Hungarian observer argued:

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[90] Scott, *Omens of Adversity*, 129.
[91] Kopeček, Michal. "Human Rights Facing a National Past: Dissident 'Civic Patriotism' and the Return of History in East Central Europe, 1968 -1989." *Geschichte Und Gesellschaft*, 3, 1, 2012, 573-602. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.13109/gege.2012.38.4.573.

> The border that the '56ers crossed was a political demarcation between two states that have had a close relationship for centuries, under the Habsburg Monarchy and then the dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary that lasted until World War I. Austrians and Hungarians fought together to oppose Ottoman expansion into Europe. We share not just this history but also our common Judeo-Christian heritage. When Austrians received the '56ers, it was like they were taking in their cousins.[92]

The intention was to trace a lineage between those "worthy" refugees from communism and the previous imperial powers, who have forgotten their historical "debt" to Eastern Europe.

In Orbán's narrative, Cold War refugees were in fact, part of the "alternative" collective memory of oppression in Europe and new memorial images that needed to be cultivated.[93] This right-wing alternative victimhood in relation to Europe has also been instrumental in the myth of the 'Greater' Hungary split by the Trianon Treaty of 1919, a constant theme of Hungarian nationalism. Here, the memory of Trianon is instrumentalized to show the illustrious history of Hungarian sovereignty and to point to the guilt that imperial European powers had in its undoing. Similarly, the Polish PiS has excavated the memory of the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth as a cradle of Christianity, that the West had contributed to dismantling.[94]

The fact that this foundational European narrative has proven, around the 2015 refugee crisis, to be a terrain of political exclusion taps into a growing corpus of scholarship that has reconsidered the roots of human rights as Eurocentric rather than universalist concepts. These are based on a robust conservative anticommunism of the Cold War that has trickled down in understandings of liberal democracy. As Samuel Moyn argues, "human rights" are a "cosmology which emerged in the pre-war Catholic American environment".[95] Scholars have argued human rights have an ideological embedding that should be investigated as such, rather

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[92] Zoltan Kovacs, "No, the Hungarian Refugees of 1956 Are Not the Same as Today's Migrants", About Hungary, 2016, http://abouthungary.hu/blog/no-the-hungarian-refugees-of-1956-are-not-the-same-as-todays-migrants/. Last accessed December 10, 2019.

[93] Anna Menyhért, "The Image of the 'Maimed Hungary' in 20th Century Cultural Memory and the 21st Century Consequences of an Unresolved Collective Trauma: The Impact of the Treaty of Trianon", *Environment, Space, Place,*8, 2 (2016), 69-97. https://www.pdcnet.org/esplace/content/esplace_2016_0008_0002_0069_0097..

[94] Simone Benazzo, "Not All the Past Needs To Be Used: Features of Fidesz's Politics of Memory", *Journal of Nationalism, Memory & Language Politics* 11, 2 (2017), 134-145. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1515/jnmlp-2017-0009.

[95] Moyn, *Christian Human Rights*, 42-45; Moyn, *Not Enough: Human Rights in an Unequal World* , 46-47.

than being considered liberal and therefore neutral. Political theorist Wendy Brown suggests that human rights not only "converge neatly with the requisites of liberal imperialism and global free trade" but also serve to legitimize them.[96] Arguably, it is a restrictive perspective on a much more nuanced debate. The Cold War's ideological dependencies, according to Samuel Moyn, reinforced the idea that rights were lacking in the East and were advanced across the Iron Curtain by the West.[97] He suggests that the socialist view of personal freedoms (women's rights, marriage rights, employment etc.) in the East has been contrasted with the political participation and expression constructed in the "Western" idea of fairness through human rights.[98]

The European Convention of Human Rights played a crucial role in defining the differences between the European Community and the Soviet Union, precisely through the rubric of human rights. Marco Duranti explains that the institution of human rights, in the early 1950s, served as a stabilizing force for the anticommunist alliance in Western Europe.[99] The memory of the Holocaust, for instance, played a crucial role in the development of the Human Rights Declaration of 1948 as long as it built on the victorious narrative of the Allies at the end of the Second World War.[100] These factors provide an alternative perspective to the commonly held belief that human rights are solely a progressive dimension of the West. It is also worth

[96] Brown, *Aversion*, 15. Brown points to the depoliticizing character of the liberal consensus which also led to the pitfalls of the neoliberalism, such as the conservative turn on the right. In this sense, she is among the few scholars who has anticipated some of the "illiberal" elements at play today. See also Whyte, "Human Rights and the Collateral Damage of Neoliberalism".

[97] Moyn, *Not Enough: Human Rights in an Unequal World*, 2-3, Plesch, *Human Rights after Hitler*, 9-10.

[98] While the West proposed "human" rights as negatives, demanded from the state, the Socialist regimes proposed "civic" rights (that is social and economic) to their citizens, as granted by the state. See Moyn, *Not Enough: Human Rights in an Unequal World*, 15–38.

[99] When there was no consensus among Western Europeans as to how much hope to hold out for continued cooperation with the Soviets. Marco Duranti, *The Conservative Human Rights Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 14–23.

[100] Marco Duranti, "The Holocaust, the Legacy of 1789 and the Birth of International Human Rights Law: Revisiting the Foundation Myth". *Journal of Genocide Research* 14, 2 (2012), 159–86, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2012.677760. Whyte, "Human Rights and the Collateral Damage of Neoliberalism". Jessica Whyte, *The Morals of the Market* (London: Verso Books, 2019), 10-20.

noting here that the Romantic ideal of the European project grounded in human rights furthered narratives about the mission of Europe and Eurocentrism.[101]

It is thus not surprising that conservative usages of human rights emerged alongside their symbolic role in the implosion of communist regimes.[102] The recent focus on the memory of Cold War refugees presents a new aspect of the human rights-memory nexus.[103] In the context of the refugee movements of the 2000s, human rights continue to carry an exclusionary dimension. In Orbán's discourse, the fact that some groups, such as Muslims, were able to benefit from these rights devalued the principles of the rights in themselves. These "racialized" categories of a "good" (internal European refugee) and a 'bad" (external refugee) appropriated notions of human rights to suggest the particular worthiness of one against the "other". Wałęsa recognised Eastern European refugees as "better" while, Fedor Gal, a former Slovak dissident and contemporary public figure, argued that notions of rights included in constitutions and upheld by recent international declarations were unjust and partly to blame for Czech/Slovak split of 1993.[104] In his opinion, human rights represented a vehicle for prioritised liberal state formations in the aftermath of 1989, but they failed to acknowledge the abuses of communism.

This new conservative conversation about Cold War refugees highlights the limitations of a perspective where human rights were no longer a unifying narrative of consensus in the European space, but rather a tool to expose the faults of the idea of a "tolerant" Europe.[105] When

[101] Human rights are considered universal, and thus associated with Enlightenment discourse, whereas Europeanism as an essential category (like Christian as in Orban's discourse) is associated with Romanticism. Yet the EU project is generally considered to be in line with the Enlightenment project, and thus opposed to Hitler's European *Kulturkampf* (against France's "mission civilisatrice"). See Marco Duranti, ""European Integration, Human Rights, and Romantic Internationalism", in Nicholas Doumanis ed. *The Oxford Handbook of European History, 1914-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[102] Michal Kopeček, "Human Rights Facing a National Past Dissident 'Civic Patriotism' and the Return of History in East Central Europe, 1968 -1989", *Geschichte Und Gesellschaft* 3, 1 (2012), 345-378, https://doi.org/10.13109/gege.2012.38.4.573

[103] Jay Winter, "Human Rights and European Remembrance", in *Memory and Theory in Eastern Europe*, Aleksandr Etkind ed. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 43–58. Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *Human Rights and Memory* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2010), 1-24.

[104] Zprvej ruky ("From the First Hand", (1991). https://ceskepodcasty.cz/podcasty/z-prvej-ruky. Last accessed June 5, 2019.

[105] Also in "Hungarian PM Viktor Orban Denounces EU's 'Colonialism'".

the refugees were to be accepted into the EU, governments in Eastern Europe found a platform to argue that a different standard was being applied within Europe. The victimhood of some people within Europe itself was not recognized. They suggested that a "double standard" applies to Easterners, who were still seen as second-class Europeans. This interpretation implies that human rights as a value of the European Union, are marked by scarcity and competition, where human rights for some meant fewer rights for others. These readings reinforced the memory of the diverse ways in which human rights were infringed and how certain voices had been ignored. The memorial retrieval of Cold War refugees thus became another microcosm of how the memory of communist crimes was silenced by European memory actors, who did not consider the plight of the Easterners. Such emphasis on exclusion represents a distinct departure from human rights as an inclusive language.

Recent East European politics of victimhood have thus appropriated and used human rights as a counterargument to the European "belonging" narrative. These texts suggest that the status of Cold War refugees as internal European victims of human rights violations has not been fully acknowledged, and they are "worthier" of consideration. The debate on memory regarding Cold War refugees was also initially directed against national politics of silencing where the right to memory was linked to the recognition of human rights. As a result, the transnational dimension of rights was 'weaponized' and used against the political positions that contested Romania's governmental rearrangements. For example, ideas of human rights were used to challenge the policies of the Social Democrats, which hindered or limited transitional justice. The significance of these individual memories lies in the exposure of abuses committed by the same authorities who were morally responsible for finding a resolution to the events. In the Romanian debates, the general European interest in refugees and the broader consideration of human rights and their locus in European identity offered an opportunity to bolster the national debate over silencing. However, in the shadow of these debates about Europe and the

locus of Cold War refugees' memory, national dynamics of memory defined what human rights represented in the negotiations post-1989. As symbols of liberal democracy, the narrative about human rights has also shaped selective identity narratives based on the past and facilitated the rise of conservative politics.

Indeed, the debate on the admittance of refugees in Romania employed a notion of human rights as a question of European values to defend the government's indifference but did not do so on humanitarian grounds. Human rights were simply a type of political performance, as illustrated by 2015 debates. Romanian Prime Minister Victor Ponta explained his rejection of compulsory quotas through an inability to integrate those arriving".[106] He condemned, nonetheless, any type of anti-refugee sentiment"[107] Similarly, European prestige represented leverage in the refugee debate: the Romanian Foreign Affairs Minister criticized Hungary's plans to build border fences as an attack against "civilized" Europe and "outside of the European spirit"."[108] The discourse about "European values"[109] used these images to demarcate between a "genuine" European status and an inferior "other".

During the 2015-16 refugee crisis, human rights values came to represent a divisive dimension of Europeanness. The Romanian prime minister, Victor Ponta, accused the Hungarian government of using a "club" against the refugees and neglecting European values.[110] Peter Szijjártó, the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs, reminded Ponta that Hungary had been the cradle of the events of 1989. The Polish PiS criticized the defence of

[106] Press conference of Victor Ponta, Romania's Prime Minister (Bucharest, September 7, 2015), https://www.gov.ro/ro/stiri/discursul-primului-ministru-victor-ponta-la-ora-premierului-in-plenul-camerei-deputatilor. Last accessed May 1, 2020.
[107] "O Declaratie a Lui Victor Ponta Tensioneaza Si Mai Mult Relatiile Cu Ungaria", Hotnews.ro, September 15, 2015, https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-esential-20427947-declaratie-lui-victor-ponta-tensioneaza-mai-multe-relatiile-ungaria-budapesta-cere-lui-ponta-inceteze-minciunile-premierul-roman-vorbeste-atitudini-care-aduc-aminte-nazism.htm. Last accessed May 1, 2020.
[108] Press statement of H. E. Bogdan Aurescu, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, September 19, 2015, https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/mapamond/bogdan-aurescu-despre-planul-ungariei-de-a-construi-un-gard-la-granita-cu-romania-este-un-gest-mai-degraba-autist-439738. Last accessed May1, 2020.
[109] "O Declaratie a Lui Victor Ponta Tensioneaza Si Mai Mult Relatiile Cu Ungaria".
[110] Ibid.

human rights as political correctness that threatens Poland's identity as a defender of Christianity.[111] These situations exposed other past human rights violations and suggested that European values were not applied to all in the same way. Human rights thus emerged as a basis for claims-making, rather than inclusion.[112] This is best exemplified by the case of Laszlo Nagy, the individual who helped organize the 1989 picnic that led to the opening of the Hungarian border toward Austria as part of the Hungarian Democratic Front, the conservative nationalist opposition movement – and who now supported Viktor Orbán's construction of a fence on the southern border by saying "this fence was against us, this was our jail for 45 years. The other is protecting us".[113]

5. Human Rights: Epistocracy and the Liberal Survivor

The preceding section demonstrated how the recent resurgence of Cold War refugee in memory discourses has presented human rights as a narrative of victimhood and specific "deservedness" of being European since 2010. Both Viktor Orbán 's appropriations and more mainstream liberal initiatives, such as that of *Frontierișstii*, worked with the idea that Cold War refugees were survivors still excluded from a shared European memory. These emerging memories established new constructions of identity - for instance, by relying on the connection between human rights and European values, primarily by cultivating a European memory. However, this situation also reveals a lack of trust in human rights and, indeed, a detached usage of human rights which become simply instrumentalized as a vocabulary necessary to the liberal order, but also discredited, unequal or weak enough to provide a platform for "illiberal"

[111] Jan-Werner Müller, "The Problem with Poland", *The New York Review of Books*, February 11, 2016, https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2016/02/11/kaczynski-eu-problem-with-poland/.Last accessed June 13, 2019.
[112] Stone, "On Neighbours and Those Knocking at the Door".
[113] Valerie Hopkins, "Hungarians Celebrate Fall of One Border and Erection of New One", *Financial Times*, August 2019, https://www.ft.com/content/e996e156-bde4-11e9-b350-db00d509634e. Last accessed September 27, 2019.

governments to openly discuss and exploit them. The flaws of the human rights doctrine (or ideology) are also evident in collective memory practices, although collective memory was an important defender of this discourse for a long time.[114] In this sense, the genealogy of a specific usage of human rights in the memorial debates in Eastern Europe is helpful in understanding how "illiberal" narratives can be readily accepted.

It is then fitting that the identity and much of the debate of cases of Cold War refugees and other victims were constructed and disputed through the infringement of their rights by the communist state. Indeed, retrieving this liberal identity of the survivor found a fertile terrain in the vocabulary of human rights. It was not incidental, given the role and impact that human rights had at the height of Cold War anticommunism. The focus of this approach was on individuality, state accountability and recognition. The framing through human rights has maintained a clear and distinct relation to the "state". The image of the survivor required an anchor, and the abuse through practices of (state) surveillance, harassment, or intimidation, which defined the system of control by the end of the Romanian Communist regime, became its symbol.

Human rights thus provided a crucial link between retributive justice and the values of liberal democracy. Remembering past violations of rights was important for re-evaluating citizens' political identities after a dictatorship. Identifying someone as the survivor or the victim of mass surveillance, social engineering and diffuse political control was important because it is difficult to establish agency in this situation since most citizens had internalized the system.[115] For pragmatic reasons, many individuals in socialist societies made a rational

[114] Lea David, *The Past Can't Heal Us: The Dangers of Mandating Memory in the Name of Human Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 21-40.
[115] Stan, *Transitional Justice* 134–38; Gussi, *La Roumanie Face à Son Passé Communiste: Mémoires et Cultures Politiques*, 12–15. Lewis Alison, "The Secret Files and Lives of Stasi Collaborators: Reading Secret Police Files for Identity and Habitus", in Corina L. Petrescu, Valentina Glajar and Alison Lewis eds., *Secret Police Files from the Eastern Bloc: Between Surveillance and Life Writing* (Camden House, 2016), 27-56; Petrescu and Petrescu, "The Canon of Remembering Romanian Communism: From Autobiography to Collective Representation", 45-47. Maria Todorova, Augusta Dimou and Stefan Troebst eds., *Remembering Communism: Private and Public Recollections of Lived Experience in Southeast Europe* (Budapest: Central University Press, 2014), 89-112.

calculation to prioritize their professional or career prospects, leading them to adopt a mentality of "ordinary men", to paraphrase Holocaust historian Christopher Browning's terminology.[116] In the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, defining oneself as the survivor of this type of regime (which relied more on coercion than immediate violence) became a crucial aspect of liberal identity building post-1989.

Human rights are helpful in distinguishing between victims and perpetrators in a memorial climate where, as historians James Mark and Peter Apor argue in their book *State secrets*, "politics of memory in the post-socialist space are politics of collaboration".[117] The emphasis was on identifying those who could be considered guilty of collaboration and how, as such cases were portrayed as a "threat" to liberal democracy.[118] Although many cases of collaboration surfaced, few were credible and even fewer explained the implications of these actions. Inquiries were often in the public space, but the chain of events, interests and entanglements between collaborators and potential victims were rarely explained. Therefore, the demands for the right to information about past state abuses against citizens, which dominated memorial debates, were not incidental. The relationship between the state and the individual was linear, as it pertained to the binary of the two. Human rights were an "invocation" against the authorities' unwillingness to engage, transferred to the legal and institutional realms where rights abuses could have been proven. Memory became a pragmatic concern with legal dimensions.

Campaigns thus emerged in the early 1990s around archives and institutions of the former regime, whose repositories could provide evidence of wrong-doing. It was an obsession

[116] Cristopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1998). 159-161.
[117] Péter Sándor Horváth, James Mark and Peter Apor, *Secret Agents and the Memory of Everyday Collaboration in Communist Eastern Europe* (London: Anthem Press, 2017), 45.
[118] Also similarly argued by Raluca Ursachi, "Post-communist Romanians Facing the Mirror of Securitate Files" in Simona Mitroiu ed., *Life Writing and Politics of Memory in Eastern Europe* (London: Palgrave, 2015), 222–241.

with the documentation and repositories of information of state institutions of repression[119] that Mark and Apor, looking at the long history of these negotiations, saw as turning gradually into a "fetishization of files".[120] Access to the archives of the Security Police served not only retributive justice, but also the right to memory through human rights. In Romania, they were listed among the civil appeals formulated during the 1989 events, such as the Declaration of Timișoara.[121] This right to memory through human rights was accompanied by a general bureaucratization of memory that could legitimize survivors' identities. The lure of accessing archives and the promises of contact with "original documents" was not about the citizen who survived but rather about an institutional impartiality that could track this linear-state individual relationship.

The entire pursuit emphasised the epistocratic perspective, meaning a restricted sphere of knowledge, belonging only to experts, where histories of abuse were 'proof' to be used in the public mobilization of the recognition of the victim's rights.[122] Such 'expert' institutions had a performative role in affirming liberal norms. The CNSAS (the Council for the Study of the Archives of the Securitate), an institution designed to mediate and organize public access to personal surveillance files, was at the centre of this debate. Institutions like the CNSAS were part "of an emerging global culture of memory defined by the growing power of liberal human rights that emphasized the importance of remembering atrocities and state crimes against individuals".[123] Making that documentation of past repression available was also proof of a "functional relationship between those institutions and citizens".[124] The institutions that had

[119] Petrescu, "The Canon of Remembering Romanian Communism", 43–47.
[120] Horváth, Mark, Apor, *State Secrets*, 34.
[121] The document was written as a public document by those present in the protests to ask for an end to the shootings and the resignation of Nicolae Ceausescu. The last demand is for all those loyal to the regime, or having been part of the power architecture, to withdraw from public office after the dictatorship is toppled. The document is often invoked as a proof of the popular solidarity and organization.
[122] Julian Reiss, "Expertise, Agreement, and the Nature of Social Scientific Facts or: Against Epistocracy", *Social Epistemology* 33, 2 (2019), 183–92, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02691728.2019.1577513.
[123] Horváth, Mark, Apor, *State Secrets*, 4.
[124] Corina L. Petrescu, Valentina Glajar and Alison Lewis eds., *Secret Police Files from the Eastern Bloc: Between Surveillance and Life Writing* (Rochester: Camden House, 2016), Introduction, 34.

received the retrieval of this memory cultivated an "apolitical image of themselves. As impartial arbiters of a complex and difficult past, they stood above politics and that could call on the authority of the archive to overcome the legacies of the communist era.[125] However, while archives are often seen as apolitical they were not immune to political influence.[126] The term 'apolitical' was used, rather, to contrast them with the former establishment and to highlight the political independence of the dissident subject.[127]

Indeed, many such institutions have been continuously mired in controversy. In 2005, for instance, historian Germina Nagâț, the head of the investigation and research unit at the CNSAS, argued "in my office one can find a diverse body of resources that lead to Parliament Members, who were officers of collaborators of the Securitate, members of the judicial body who were officers and other cases at the same level."[128] The controversy continued when the then head of the CNSAS, journalist Mircea Dinescu, argued that had he heard the name of the head of the Senate at that time, he would have discussed it immediately. In August 2008, Dinescu was arguing that "national security" files were in the hands of researchers who would present them to the public.[129] None of these promises became actual cases. In this sense, the institution failed to provide any memorial space for wronged individuals. Such an approach shaped a restrictive manner of engaging with past histories and attached the memory of human rights violations of the communist regime exclusively to this perspective, which often was merely performative and failed to deliver.

Furthermore, the very understanding of the victim-perpetrator dichotomy proved too narrow, discrediting the appeal of human rights notions. For instance, Romanian dissidents, like

[125] Florin Abraham, "To Collaborate and to Punish: Democracy and Transitional Justice in Romania", in *Secret Agents and the Memory of Everyday Collaboration in Communist Eastern Europe*, eds. Péter Apor, Sándor Horváth, and James Mark (London: Anthem Press, 2017), 127–150, 130.
[126] Petrescu, "The Canon of Remembering Romanian Communism", 50.
[127] Alison, "The Secret Files, 56.
[128] Germina Nagâț, interview in *Adevărul*, June 2005. Last accessed 28 June, 2017. BCUB BU II 87, vol. 639.
[129] Hotnews, "Mircea Dinescu Si Andrei Plesu Au Demisionat Din CNSAS," 2004, https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-arhiva-1255311-mircea-dinescu-andrei-plesu-demisionat-din-cnsas.htm.Last Accessed July 23, 2015.

the late mathematician Mihai Botez, appear to have provided information to the Securitate about another dissident, poet Dorin Tudoran.[130] The difficulty in distinguishing the perpetrator from the victim led to a divisive debate. A memory of the regime as a negator of individual rights shaped the victim's image by appealing to human rights vocabulary. With a collaborator who was hard to define, the question of memory turned into an attempt to reclaim civic rights for the 'banal survivor', that is the person who simply demanded the recognition of their human rights against the politics of silencing from the state. But the survivor had to have his or her human rights defended against institutions still complicit in this politics of silencing. It created an imbalance in the way human rights were framed in memory debates. Rather than focusing on the individual, the scope of mobilization through the language of human rights produced continuous pressure on the state.

The relevance of the individual angle to memory in reclaiming civil or individual rights lost its significance further in 2008, when access to the CNSAS files was restricted based on a new law.[131] The general public debate on collaboration reached a standstill as journalists were no longer granted unrestricted access to these files due to the infringement of human rights caused by the procedure. Public access to files was granted only to those affected by one informant or another, and after officially petitioning for it.[132] Petitions concerning information on past ties with the Securitate could no longer refer to "individuals assimilated to collaborators". The revised law maintained the right to start public investigations of individuals who held high positions in the party, such as former first secretaries, only if these individuals

[130] Cristina Petrescu, "Entangled Stories: On the Meaning of Collaboration with the Securitate", in Mark, Apor; and Horváth *Secret Agents,* 150–62.
[131] "LEGE Nr. 293 Din 14 Noiembrie 2008", 2008, http://www.cnsas.ro/documente/cadru_legal/LEGE293_2008.pdf.
[132] The initial law of the National Security Archives stipulated that all these files are open, similar to the *STASI* archive legislation, for all individuals to consult the documentation that the Security Police had on them. The law also makes clear that they should be publicly and easily accessible. It is a project about the victims and those affected persons (those who were the target of information gathered by the *Stasi*) and third parties. It was a solution for a polarized memory culture and environment which inevitably created and supported an interest and gradually the "reputation" of a history of collaboration. See Zombory, "The Birth of the Memory".

"had supplied information that infringed human rights".[133] The organization was also no longer allowed to investigate members of the Church without an explicit request by the Orthodox or Catholic Churches. This change had significantly altered the human rights narrative regarding memory. It has shifted from a defensive invocation against silences to an instrument for perpetuating them.[134] This event marked a turning point as it demonstrated the fatigue with the expectation that collective memory expressed through ideas of human rights would invigorate discussions of responsibility, culpability, or liability.

The campaign for holding the perpetrators accountable resulted in a division and devaluation of this epistocratic perspective, and the attempts to reclaim it have been equally polarized. In 2014, these archives and the survivors' identities became the subject of public debate, coinciding with the rise of the rights debate elsewhere. A local newspaper launched a campaign for the "Right to the archives of communism".[135] The campaign, supported by the broader community of scholars, highlighted selective access practices to documents about the Second World War and the Cold War period. The supporters argued that the "right to archives, the backbone of historiography and democracy" was violated and that the "CNSAS is in no way better in respecting civic rights than the communist state".[136] Many historians, including two former directors of National Archives, supported the campaign. Fighting silence was already essential to framing and motivating political and civic individual rights.[137]

The concept of using politics to discover and uphold human rights was thus progressively discredited, leading to their devaluation. In 2018 historian Marius Hodor, who

[133] "LEGE Nr. 293 Din 14 Noiembrie 2008", article 4.
[134] Andrei Manolescu, "Noul Proiect Al Legii de Funcţionare a CNSAS", *BBC*, May 5, 2008, https://www.bbc.co.uk/romanian/news/story/2008/05/080505_lege_cnsas.shtml.
[135] Deschiderea arhivelor, *Jurnalul Naţional*, Bucharest, January 23rd, 2014.
[136] Ibid.
[137] 'De-communization" was central to the teleological transition imaginary to liberal democracy. Consequently, while the debate about the *STASI* archives quickly became a transnational debate about post-unification Europe, the impact the Security Police information all through the former socialist space was to infuse meanings and assign values to the silenced history of repression. See Juan Espindola, *Transitional Justice after German Reunification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 13-30.

was working at the Romanian Council for the Security Police archives (CNSAS), leaked the names of people who had collaborated with the Secret Police to the mainstream press. The head of the Romanian Academy of Science, Ionel Haiduc, was the particular target of this case. Hodor opposed "these types of institutions where one does not do what the previous person has done." As a result, he published lists of alleged informers that were previously classified which led to a legal investigation against him.[138] Subsequently, Hodor was dismissed from the institution, on the grounds of abusing his mandate in this institution and "leaking documents without a proper contextualization".[139] However, it is unclear whether these individuals were actively involved or simply targeted for collaboration at the time. The document provided by the author contains a list of approximately two hundred names. This lack of clarity raises questions about the document's documentation value. Hodor's case highlights the potential for the search of guilt among collaborators to damage the trust between the state and its citizens, and to hinder the resolution of debates about the past. As a symbol of the fight against silencing, this mobilization of memory transformed into a personal, civic "right to information". The practice of 'leaking' of such documents also speaks to the way in which these archives have become the focal point of claims for the recognition of citizens' rights violations, as well as a repository of dissidence on behalf of citizens themselves.[140]

Indeed, in 2017, during the debate organized by the IICCMER, director Radu Preda defined archives as harbingers of democracy and progress, rather than memory, explicitly defining them as political repositories. He argued:

[138] Loredana Diacu, "Istoric Suspendat După Ce Face Publice Numele a Sute de Colaboratori Ai Securităţii. Apel La Mobilizare!", *Epochtimes*, May 27, 2018, https://www.europafm.ro/dupa-ce-a-publicat-liste-cu-presupusi-colaboratori-ai-securitatii-m-hodor-suspendat-de-cnsas/. Last accessed March 1, 2020.
[139] Ionel Stoica, "Cum Este Hartuit Istoricul de La CNSAS Care a Facut Publica Lista Intelectualilor Care Ar Fi Colaborat Cu Securitatea", *Ziare.Com*, 2018, http://www.ziare.com/stiri/cnsas/cum-este-hartuit-istoricul-de-la-cnsas-care-a-facut-publica-lista-intelectualilor-care-ar-fi-colaborat-cu-securitatea-1532378. Last accessed April 1, 2020.
[140] Stan, *Transitional Justice* , 132–35.

> On the contrary, it is an act of liberation, of exorcism of a post-totalitarian state to make this mechanism of state terrorism known. Because, if we are fundamentally interested in something around this entire discussion around communism, it is not really communism per se, but rather the evil can take the place of the state, how the citizen from a free individual ends up the slave of the state- all these essential lessons that, otherwise I think we can learn.[141]

Preda summed this up stating that "archives are a repository of redemption of an otherwise broken trust between citizen and state". Archives were thus meant to represent a political, educational force that should cultivate liberal values.

The disillusionment with the epistocratic perspective was also apparent in discussions about collaboration elsewhere in the region. In 2017, this was demonstrated by the controversy surrounding Julia Kristeva's alleged collaboration with the Bulgarian *Darzhavna Sigurnost*, or State Security. Kristeva is mentioned as an "operative" or an "agent" who provided information on several members of her Parisian circles, but the evidence was inconclusive. Several who have studied the files claim that these were "information retrieved", which does not entail intentionally disclosing information. One journalist noticed the contradiction in accepting the opinion of a former repressive state institutions over that of a potential victim.".[142]

While the image of the "banal survivor" from these archives holds political significance as a symbolic representation, opinions of those who have read their files reveal ambivalence towards the archives and their purpose. The CNSAS recently launched a project on oral history related to these files and testimonies indicate that many people questioned the type of citizen-state relations these files and archives should ensure. Users were highly sensitive to a persistent lack of social trust. Monica Pillat Săulescu stated that her relationships were affected by the situation. She described herself as "almost inhumanly detached from work colleagues, who did not understand why I avoided contact with them, outside the university. I was taught to trust no

[141] Radu Preda, quoted in ICCMER, "Comunicat de Presă - Institutul de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului Și Memoria Exilului Românesc (IICCMER)".
[142] Boryana Dzhambazova, "Bulgaria Says French Thinker Was a Secret Agent. She Calls It a 'Barefaced Lie.'", *New York Times*, April 1, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/01/arts/julia-kristeva-bulgaria-communist-spy.html. Last accessed April 3, 2020.

one,"[143] but also emphasizes that she made conscious efforts to forget about who might have acted willingly against her:

> When I read my file, there was a sudden collapse of the image of so many people close to me I considered friends but were just playing a character. At first, I blamed them. I was utterly outraged. I wanted to tell them...although many are not alive. I wanted to tell their relatives: "This is who your husband was" (...) I nearly fell sick seeing how many there were. Then I realized they are excusable. Nobody who lived through what that was can accuse another. (..) I forgive them. I have nothing to accuse them of. They could not do it otherwise.[144]

Her opinion is similarly echoed by Andrei Bodiu[145]:

> I think it gave me some peace paradoxically. I saw it, on the one hand, as a lot of filth, and on the other like...I got rid of my weight. I mean some things became clear, and in a way, I was glad I could read this file. This is paradoxical, because on the other hand, it is impossible not to be affected (..).And I have confirmed that I need to have a civic attitude, and I have to talk about these things and educate students to understand that freedom is the most precious thing[146]

Gabriel Liiceanu, one of the main anticommunist voices argues:

> if you ask me about what I think happened, I will tell you these people were, on the one hand, poisoned by the way they had been taught. According to this, an entire nation was made out of presumptive traitors. On the other hand, they had reached such a level of routine that all the evil they were doing, performing under a total banality, they were doing their job. Opening this file, and of all the things I consequently read (is the story) of people who go to their workplace daily, who, on the limit beat people up, torture, make up incriminating files which had have horrible consequences, with a psychological effect, but do so under the guise of doing their job. This is the most interesting thing, that all repressive regime, horrible, dictatorial, totalitarian end up so that those who serve it serve it with the banality of their jobs...[147]

A tension thus emerges around the survivor when the archive prioritises memory norms over experience. Although these norms employ the witness in the debate about memory, the memorial context, and the divisions around aggravating silences, caused fatigue in the relevance of human rights' relevance framed through past experience. Not only did these lose the relevance for the retrieval of memory, regardless of the archive's organisational frame, but they

[143] CNSAS, file 23/2006, interviewer Cristina Anisescu.
[144] CNSAS file 25/2006, interviewer Cristina Anisescu.
[145] CNSAS, file 17/2007, interviewer Daniela Iamandi.
[146] CNSAS, Oral History Collection. 34/2000.
[147] CNSAS, Oral History Collection., 36/2000.

also demonstrated how human rights infringements no longer supported the representations of political identity. Instead, they encouraged a conservative perspective that is disinterested in the idea of an individual reconciliation through human rights.

6. Conclusion

This chapter examined the emergence and decline of human rights narratives as a means of creating memory. It highlighted how the devaluation of human rights' role was linked to their association with a concept of European (Western) belonging. Additionally, the chapter demonstrated that memory representations though human rights linked to European "belonging" can be exclusionary. The concept of human rights, instead of broadening perspectives on the past, has created new exclusions embedded in the memory-making terms framed by the "transitional", evidently political, referrals to the past of political violence. Focussing specifically on the figure of the refugee, past and present, the chapter outlined how during the Cold War, the image of the refugee was a symbol of political dissent that embodied both a trauma of unrecognition in the European sphere and a viable manifestation of political identity – and how this figure was re-inscribed in the post-Cold War context to, rather, articulate exclusions and the boundaries of European belonging.

CONCLUSION:

1. The Genealogy of the Backlash against Liberalism

Starting from the debates prompted by negotiations around liberal democracy in Romania and Central and Eastern Europe more broadly, in the 1990s and the later 2000s, the research in this dissertation charted how distinct narratives of collective memory of political violence became bound up with the ideals of liberal democratization and, at the same time, contributed to the demise of the myth of liberal progress. I focused, in particular, on narratives of fragility, vulnerability, victimhood and persecution, on the one hand, and of hope and transformation on the other, in order to trace how remembrance started as a mobilizing force only to become a deterrent of liberal notions. I have done so at the confluence of memory studies, intellectual history, and political history because, in hindsight, the context and implications of these issues today speak about a complex process of unravelling of the idealism of liberalism and global liberal democracy. In his 2023 book *Liberalism Against Itself*, Samuel Moyn argued that the liberal ambition of the 1960s descended into authoritarianism and materialism due to the ascent of "modernization theory" that captured democratic thought. He suggested that many of the progressive liberal ambitions were thus converted into neoconservative (and neoliberal) policies, also transforming what is considered a 'liberal mindset'.[148] To a certain extent, this dissertation has traced precisely this process in a different historical moment, and by moving the focus to Central and Eastern Europe.

Specifically, the manuscript has looked at the long history and the trials and tribulations of the memory of political violence, which has been a productive terrain of dispute, debate, and cultural construction of liberal democracy in Central and Eastern Europe. The historical angle to memory offers many insights about what we might call a general unease in debating and

[148] Moyn, *Liberalism Against Itself*, 25.

discussing the past in times of political and social transformation. Having a public debate guided by justice pursuits on past political violence was, in many ways, a given for all countries looking to reinforce their emergent liberal democracies in the 1990s after long authoritarian rule, but this quest slowly turned into a restricted field of negotiations, at first nationalist, and subsequently sovereigntist and nativist by the 2000s. At the outset of this process, a modernizing frame attributed to transitional justice determined a strong link between governance, policies and collective memory, but also constructed a restrictive sphere of debate. Second, national histories of political violence, such as those of the Holocaust and crimes of state socialist regimes, were quickly aligned with agendas about Europeanism, Europeanization, and the strengthening liberal democracy, only to impose clear boundaries when it came to actual accountability. Indeed, Europeanism became a deterrent in opening up uncomfortable truths. In this sense, political violence gradually changed from an instrument of the liberal consensus, which brought a sense of common past and reinforced a shared goal (that is, achieving the ideal of liberal democracy and the affordances it would bring), to an instrument of exceptionality. In tracing this transformation, my dissertation draws attention to some of the blankspots that have rendered liberal ideals fragile.

By placing the focus specifically on post-communist Central and Eastern Europe in this examination of the paths taken by liberal ideals, some aspects of the dynamic of collective memory become clearer. The analysis shows how global collective memory disputes and debates have been a constant in the politics of the region, and that they rarely were actually only about remembrance, victims or reconciliation. Such memory disputes spoke to wider dynamics – most directly to those inscribing the collective memory meant to ground the European project especially after the EU constitutional crisis of 2005. The Europe-wide memory work made narratives about past political violence – the Holocaust and the Second World War, first and foremost – a wishful instrument in the need to ‘stabilize’ the European polity around a guiding

set of narratives and ideals. Although scholars initially considered the notion of European memory as a success story and a consensus project for the EU, there were clear dichotomies at play from its outset, divided across narratives of victimhood and political representation.

Since 2010, what has emerged from scholarship and political debate is largely a "divided" memory regime between "East" and "West". Central and Eastern Europe is thus most frequently characterized by negative (victimhood, nationalisms) aspects of European memory, while in contrast in the "West" both progressive and conservative forces debate the sturdiness of "European" values, and of liberal democracy. As much as collective memory was a shared narrative attributed to liberal democracy (and to Europe) in the 1990s, by the 2010s, it became la terrain rife with dispute for both these political and cultural constructs.[149] The analysis presented in this dissertation further opens up this perspective, and explores three interlinked scales - global, European and national - to show how these binaries driving consensus have always been at play, often stifled memorial reflections, and ended up encouraging nativist, exclusionary and limiting discourses about liberalism which, in the end, failed the very promise of building it.

Europeanism and Europeanization have, accordingly, been key elements in this analysis, and all chapters in fact show how anti-liberal constructs have permeated these notions, specifically through the conduit of collective memory. The impression that emerges is that Europeanism has become a building block of anti-liberal constructs that are easily mainstreamed into the social and political space. With its human rights-tinged narrative, collective memory and remembrance have been a field where these anti-liberal and illiberal narratives have grown, under the guise of a normative, value-driven narrative about community, national as well as European. This memory architecture has not led, indeed, to a more nuanced understanding of the past but, more often than not, just placed competing ideas of the past side

[149] Assman, "Europe's Divided Memory".

by side.[150] Without really drawing connections between them, collective memory has been reduced to competing claims for recognition and narratives of victimhood. Implicitly, this has strengthened an authoritarian streak of the (neo)liberal political European context in subtle ways that often prey on idealized notions of the interwar period and the supposed beginnings of a European identity.[151]

One by one, the chapters of this dissertation have shown how memory regimes, debates and perspectives which have relied on the idea of lessons learned (of past infringement of rights or state abuse) – whether about the Holocaust or communist regimes – can be key in understanding both contestations of liberal democracy since the mid-2010s, primarily through the adaptations of the past to the liberal ideal, as well as the roots of the dissatisfaction with the "European" values narratives. Indeed, the chapters traced a process where collective memory became a marker of the resilience of other correlators – such as democracy, markets, anticommunism, Europe – in a process that began in the 1990s and is still on-going. Consequently, the research charts specific cultural narratives about liberal "values" across time, how they came into being, the way they influenced collective remembrance and the appropriations and usages of narratives about the past, specifically in relation to the rise of liberal vocabularies, for which they were instrumental. The argument historicizes the connections between liberal vocabularies - human rights, constitutional law, economics – and cultural narratives such as Europeanization, as well as the interlocking relation with Europeanism as an identity consolidator (this dynamic is explained in the introduction).

The dissertation thus argues that some of the national dynamics of difference at play since the 2010s should not only be attributed to old adages about "good" or "bad" Europeanism, and more or less "learned" liberalism, but also to the roots of these processes. We thus need to

[150] Sznaider, "The Ethics of Never Again".
[151] Michael Wilkinson, "Second Time as Farce? Authoritarian Liberalism in Historical Perspective", in Jeremy Rayner, Susan Falls, George Souvlis and Taylor C. Nelms eds., *Back to the '30s? Recurring Crises of Capitalism, Liberalism, and Democracy* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 133–54.

untangle some of the biases that existed in the very construction of the liberal transformation after the Cold War, and which have subsequently shaped anti-liberal and far-right debates. This is why the three sections of the manuscript – development, resentment, norms – hint at the actual role of memory discourses for liberal democracy and their limitations. Instead of making the case for a rigid boundary between these last two constructs, liberal democracy and Europeanization, the argument follows how the mobilization of collective memory around "democracy" triggered a side effect of normalization of more conservative narratives of Europeanism. The other direction the research builds on is a growing awareness of the drawbacks of liberalism itself, as a set of exclusionary and marginalizing narratives for certain groups or communities. Collective memory becomes a key indicator of these issues, with memory debates (as is highlighted here) showing a thin and often porous boundary between liberal and anti-liberal formulations.

Consequently, the argument develops in two distinct, but interconnected, directions. One points to several new adaptation processes of national collective memory of political violence to the global "liberal" script, a term that defines the prescriptive liberal mainstream – anticommunism, Western-Centric in its view and economically-directed, and exclusionary. In this vein, I also discuss the "calibration" of past political violence into a form of 'banal", everyday usage of Europeanism and the cultural norms of liberal democracy, which often slipped into anti-liberal formulations and a type of national focus fusing nationalism and authoritarianism. These processes often entailed fluctuations in the public visibility or urgency of a particular history, such as that of the far right or the Holocaust.[152] They also rely on a steadfast Cold War liberalism and anticommunism that endured, as discussed in chapter 1 and

[152] Samuel Moyn, "Antisemitism, Philosemitism and the Rise of Holocaust Memory", *Patterns of Prejudice,* 43, no. 1 (2009), 1–16, https://doi.org/10.1080/00313220802636023; Jeffrey Herf, "The Anti-Zionist Bridge: The East German Communist Contribution to Antisemitism's Revival After the Holocaust", *Antisemitism Studies* 1, (1) 2017, 130–56, https://muse.jhu.edu/article/718360.

chapter 6 more at length. Indicative here are arguments about the imposition of communism from abroad, or innocence in relation to the Holocaust.

The other direction of my research looks at what happened in the specific Romanian context, namely a type of selectivity and silencing of certain histories, mainly aimed to ease the integration of liberal values into new narratives of identity. In order to look at this selectivity in relation to liberal values, the research builds on the notion of silence as coined, among others, by Vinitzky-Seroussi and Teeger, who define silence as a zone of contact, where topics and representations are sometimes emphasized or mobilized, to trigger attention and public reaction, or, on the contrary, ignored, in order to avoid political or social controversy.[153] Here, the concept of silence is identified as a negotiation and a changing space of adaptation of images of the past to contemporary political and social ideas. There is also something to be said about how this terminology inspired the methodology adopted in the dissertation, in that the manuscript does not only look at "elite" or political actors. Instead, it probes public debates, involving journalists, commentators, and wider political and cultural communities, specifically to understand how such mainstreaming of restrictive ideas of the past – often informed by a need for radical change - operated.

Indeed, by taking the 1990s as a turning point – instead of a starting point – in the politics of memory, this dissertation expands on the idea that collective memory of past political violence was defined in anticipation of the (liberal democratic) future. The assumption about the representations of the past was that they had to defend some kind of (liberal) values and further cultivate their roots. In politics, economics, and a polarized public sphere, this fragility often triggered a limited space of debate, easily prone to appropriations and falsifications that followed, and took a new turn after 2010. Accordingly, silence functioned as a form of memory-making that calibrated images of national relevance into a content that can apply and be easily

[153] Vinitzky-Seroussi, Teeger, "Silence and Collective Memory".

accepted within the growing obligation towards a collective memory of shame, apology, and regret. The dissertation has also shown how nationalist or nativist narratives that exclude particular groups or categories have co-existed with the continuous attempts to redress historical injustices, using constitutional means, in this dynamic of silencing for a new liberal space to come.

The intimation of the argument is that collective memory operating since the 1990s, as a form of collective mobilization for a better, brighter future, on ideological grounds, also shaped the very contestations of this future. The dissertation thus hints at how the global trajectory of liberalism relied on such virtualizations and prescriptions and hopes of the future, yet through a limited political language that entailed the reiteration of a few and repetitive scripts of the past. These discourses met their purpose in that they did indeed impose a canon of remembrance, in largely liberal terms, but they also impeded debates on complex, competing representation of the past. The three general sections of the dissertation – development, resentment and norms – are thus intended to sign-post how collective memory influenced visions of the future and insured a sense of virtualization that often seemed restrictive.

2. Liberal Narratives

The central thread in the dissertation is how the trials and tribulations of the persistence of Cold War liberalism and anticommunism since the 1990s in relation to politics and memorial discourses have been directly bound up with the ideals of liberalism. This entanglement has informed a "negative memory", a term which I borrow from previous work on the memory of the Holocaust as a denominator of the past meant to act as a warning and as a restrictive sphere of reference. Here, I specifically look at communism and the Holocaust, which were paramount for both liberal democracy and European ideations, but often solidified into reductionist perspectives. The "competition" between these two collective memories of violence was one of

the emerging effects, connected also to the role these two histories had in the consolidation of liberal democracy. The Holocaust framed future visions, by lending itself to discourses of human rights, inclusion, and liberal values, albeit as warning. The communist past was, on the contrary, a rather uncomfortable legacy, which was integrated into the virtualizations of liberal democracy not as a (learned) lesson, but as a potential threat.

In this sense, the transnational sphere of memory (both European and that defined by the global rise of liberal democracy in the 1990s) has had an important role in marking out the status of a liberal democracy, a process that began long before the "transnationalization" turn in memory of the early 2000s.[154] If in the 1990s, the "transitions" in Central and Eastern Europe triggered a careful and often restricted investigation of communism, this selective perspective was later carried into the "proper" liberal political and social sphere, which would be beneficial to the transformation. But this correlation had also other implications. Human rights discourses and the (neo)liberal narrative of the development of the 1990s morphed into important coordinates for the liberal state, but did so, in the region, based on a specific, limited, and often conservative understanding of anticommunism in the political spectrum.[155] In time, this remembrance solidified the connection with the core values of liberalism (human rights, freedom of expression), and continued to grow into the 1990s.[156]

The memory of communism graduating from a national discourse of persecution to an element of wider EU politics of memory was reinforced by the Cold War reification of the regime in terms of "totalitarianism" (adverse to human rights and economic freedom), propelled into the European orbit. In fact, the "illiberal" alternative emerging from Eastern Europe in the

[154] Quinn Slobodian, "Jurisdiction Leap, Political Drain, and Other Dangers of Transnational History", *New Global Studies* 4, 1 (2010), 8.
[155] Hans Kundnani, *Utopia or Auschwitz: Germany's 1968 Generation and the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 2–14.
[156] Larissa Allwork, "Holocaust Remembrance as 'Civil Religion': The Case of the Stockholm Declaration (2000)", in Diana Popescu, Tanja Schult eds., *Revisiting Holocaust Representation in the Post-Witness Era* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 288–305.

2000s simply exacerbated the conservative streak of older European Christian democracy. This discourse sidelined any possible variants of social-democratic anticommunism, specific to 1950s and 1960s debates in Western Europe, as shown in chapter 1. The already conservative approach of the 1990s, whereby social democrats and liberals alike toyed with nationalist ideas and a rather exclusionary politics, was extended into the late 2010s' contestations of liberal democracy across Central and Eastern Europe.

Chapters 1, 2 and 3 outline the evolution of such narratives in the Romanian context in relation to the global advent of liberal democracy. Chapter 1 shows how narratives of development, bolstered by the political and economic neoliberalism of the 1990s, had an imprint on memorial debates that imposed a conservative and restrictive tone to national discussions. Social actors often borrowed from a deep-seated and powerful narrative of underdevelopment, or 'interrupted' modernity, that after the 1990s was attached to communism but in effect, continues a long political and intellectual tradition dating back to the nineteenth century. In the 1990s, "underdevelopment" acquired a cultural definition of economic discrepancies and a "catching up" to Europe and the West, directly correlating with modernization influences. Furthermore, such a developmental perspective echoed the cultural narratives of the World Bank- and International Monetary Fund-type of neoliberalism that swept through the former East in the 1990s.[157] This narrative borrowed much from the Cold War notion of totalitarianism, where authoritarianism and dictatorship directly challenged the development of liberal democracy. Such arguments warrant a better understanding of the ideas of the "radical change" and the "narrative of hope" embedded within the liberal democracy and the persistent Cold War liberalism that shaped the political and cultural sphere in the region after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The entanglement between an aversion against anything related to the political Left and the emphasis on the liberal democratic sphere attached to

[157] Quinn Slobodian, "Demos Veto and Demos Exit. The Neoliberals Who Embraced Referenda and Secession", *Journal Of Australian Political Economy* 96 (2020), 19–36.

Europeanization placed Europe at the centre of "the liberal script" in local debates. Europeanization was a driving factor but also one that restricted public debate further through its association with anticommunism and the totalitarian narrative.

Indeed, initially compliant with the liberal (public) sphere's demands, the new democracies in Eastern Europe, partially weakened by the financial crisis of 2008, showed signs of a revival of the early nationalizing and exclusionary languages of the 1990s. Nevertheless, the dissertation has avoided attributing this shift only to nationalist politics in the region, and pointed out how they were also strongly shaped by the narratives of neoliberalism, of culturalization of democracy, individual ability and economic success. This research has especially looked at a constant drift of the discourses on liberal politics into conservative and at times far-right positions, which regularly draw upon memories of political violence. The Romanian context's specificity is that this type of politics did not affirm itself against Europeanization but vocally in its favour, unlike other states in the region such as Hungary.

Chapter 2 demonstrated how the liberal consensus of the 1990s influenced the "normalization" of the far right and the trivialization of the Holocaust, not only through the reification of the communist "experience", but also through a very restricted understanding of democracy. Primarily, it shows how, as anticommunist and neoliberal narratives took precedence over much of the debates on memory in the early 1990s, they reduced the urgency of the debate on the far right. There was an emphasis on the robustness of the "state" (weakened by the communist past) and a sense of victimization connected to a wounded national idea. Thus, when certain topics, such as antisemitism, have arisen, there was a ready-made arsenal of narratives at the disposal of those arguing it is irrelevant or "foreign" to the fabric of society. This redactional element was further strengthened by the narrative that the "modernity" of the interwar period was interrupted by communism.

This contributed, most visibly, to the uncomfortable and selective history and representation of the Holocaust. Chapter 3 shows how this history has been consistently brushed aside, not only due to the dominant anticommunist perspective, but also because collective memory seemed to be politically engaged in the process of "modernization": locating the roots of a local "liberalism" was more important than admitting guilt for injustices in the past, such as Nazi collaboration. In a similar manner, debates that could have shaped the memorial image of the far right, were not investigated in their context. Chapter 2 has shown, indeed, that ideas of the far right re-emerged with the virulently nationalist revival and return of anticommunist heroes and have continued on the same path ever since. Against this discursive background, the "competing" aspects of communist crimes and the Holocaust exemplify much of this manifestation. In Chapter 3, I also showed how this debate was reflected in the heritage sites of Sighet and Târgu Jiu. As I have demonstrated, memorials and museums have embodied disputes about the memory of political violence in Europe – both communist crimes and the Holocaust– in an overly simplified manner. In this sense, they operated as an early indicator of "resentment", one of the recent tenets of "populism"[158] responsible for a new political narrative of historical national "wounding". Furthermore, the concept of transitional justice not only shaped democracy through references to injustices in the past, but also shaped memorial narratives. Chapters 1 and 5 depict how these also incited a polarizing public debate about what memory should and should not do.

All chapters, but in particular chapters 3, 5 and 6, have highlighted how the "long 1990s", that is, the consensus and the triumph of the end of the Cold War, were the cradle of selective constructions of the past in the late 2000s. This is the main takeaway from the paradigm of the transition-marked debates over commemoration. The emphasis on moving forward and progress also turned left-wing and right-wing ideas on their heads in the post-

[158] Koncewicz, "Understanding the Politics of Resentment".

socialist Romanian 1990s. Finally, the emergence of the "illiberal" factions and contestations of democracy which belong to the 2020s have found a fertile terrain for instrumentalization in that decade, as shown in the way a sense of victimhood has been mobilized by such forces, and economic divides and disenfranchisement have been invoked, also in the politics of memory.

3. Emerging Narratives from Silences

The process of adaptation to liberal democracy explicitly triggered the selectivity of memory to European and global political norms. The main finding of this research, however, is that such selectivity and silencing did not happen by ignoring liberal credentials, but through them, precisely by adapting to their norms. Silences were ample spaces for the negotiation of political identity, as a post-socialist but forward-looking state, in the global sphere of liberal democracy. "Calibration" also plays a crucial role in how the historicized approach sets the Romanian debates apart from the main actors of the "illiberal wave" in Central and Eastern Europe, while also showing some points of convergence. If "illiberalism" works to externalize liberal processes, suggesting that they are "foreign" to the fabric of the nation, a different process shaped the political and memorial spaces in Romania, although contestations of political imposition from the EU sometimes occurred here as well. The central tendency was to "internalize" liberalism and to construct memorial representations that strengthened it. National debates in Romania have thus continuously tried to relocate it against the communist intermezzo and in general rejected anything that was not conducive of this purpose related to liberal imaginaries. Liberal values also played an essential role in a narrative countering the former idea of "underdevelopment". For society at large, "liberal identity" represented a "return" to Europe from which Eastern Europe had been separated in 1945 and stood for a just transition to neoliberalism, and justice for abuses.

As described in chapter 3, 4 and 6, the communist angle overtook the Holocaust in Romanian national narratives. For instance, the collective memory, interpretations and narratives about the Second World War and the Holocaust were limited, aggravated by a notion that the grievances were elsewhere (state socialism) and somehow separated from the national roots of the far right. As anticommunism was becoming a European discourse, rather than only a regional discussion, a local "banal' Europeanism, which emerged in the 1990s in Eastern Europe, re-exhumed the history of the far right and of authoritarianism.

Chapter 4 describes how the 1990s, and specifically Yugoslavia's dissolution, represented a first moment where selective histories of the Second World War came to be a valuable political resource that responded to geopolitical insecurities triggered by the conflict and the wider international and European context. Because of a predominant emphasis on security in the region, the problematic nationalism shared between Serbia and Romania dating back to the interwar period, was an absent narrative. It replaced another narrative of antifascism with a new, de-ideologized notion of sovereignty and self-determination in an anticommunist dimension.[159] Such framings neatly matched the humanitarian reason, as defined by Didier Fassin, shaping the international politics of those years globally. In the context of the 1990s, political violence, its memory and its history was a step towards affirming a distinct identity, on the one hand, but also an obstacle to attaining it because that debate on identity relied exclusively on older national narratives.

The analysis also looked at how liberal instruments – law, transitional justice, geopolitical imaginaries – that in theory were to work against "silencing", turned into a distinctly supportive mechanism *for* silencing. Such instruments were co-opted into a vindictive perspective on remembrance, which only compounded silences. The research suggests this dynamic was not limited to political actors but also engaged other societal actors (museums,

[159] Kopeček, "Sovereignty, 'Return to Europe'".

intellectual groups, NGOS) that made memory a question of global politics of liberal democracy, rather than a self-reflective investigation.

Chapters 5 and 6 build on the recent reversal of narratives of "hope" and look at memory's appropriations. Transitional justice and human rights, particularly in their entanglement with memory, have constructed a conservative sphere of debate where rights and justice have become terrains of victimhood claims. Nationalist, nativist, and exclusionary discourses have thus emerged from a supposedly shared memory of "totalitarianism" across Europe. This conflict came to play an essential role in the growing divisions regarding liberal democracy in the region. In the "illiberal" alternative emerging from Eastern Europe, the state is no longer expected to operate on the liberal "rule of law" that defined the "long 1990s" consensus.[160]

This study has, furthermore, demonstrated how looking at political violence entangled with national and transnational memory permits us to understand new ways of silencing. For instance, the anticommunist debates in the 1990s in Romania show that the collective memory of political violence transcended the national level and was determined by a global liberal democratic dimension. Yet, on the other hand, the emerging silences in this new politics of memory and in the global alignment of liberal values such as human rights and tolerance coincide with the public and political "usability" of remembrance. The cases of silences in debates and in remembrances of the Holocaust, as well as of the 1989 and 1990 protest movements, also suggest that "liberal memory" led to a deep counter-critique of liberalism. In particular, the "anticommunist" character has drowned out the fascist and exclusionary nature of the far right in memory narratives, while also silencing the interwar beginnings of the communist movement. The antifascist discourse of the Second World War became associated entirely with the Cold War 'communist occupation' idea. Other histories, such as those of the

[160] Lipinski, "Polish Right Wing Populism.", 342.

Holocaust and the history of the Second World War, took a backseat, also overshadowed by their use by state socialist propaganda.

The entanglement between the victims of communism and of the Holocaust has, moreover, produced images of the past that silence, reduce and minimize problematic episodes of Romania's twentieth-century past. My research suggests that these "curated" visions of history have adapted to and accommodated the ideals of the "long" 1990s of liberal consensus. With the European focus on a shared past, victims of communism and National Socialism might be increasingly lumped together by policy and politics, but this recognition does not apply to all. As historian Jelena Subotic has argued, the very idea of "crimes of communism" has been predominantly about Stalinist victims. Consequently, it reduces both the dimension of history and devaluates, in fact, the anti-fascist dimension across Europe.[161] However, in Tito's Yugoslavia as in postwar Romania, Stalinist communists themselves were victimized by trial and internment in detention camps, complicating a singular "European" memory of such crimes.[162]

There is also something to be said about the memory-making of negative memories and this "liberal" construct in terms of collective memory production. One of the most evident traits of this entanglement has been the epistocratic dimension of the memory of political violence (which is defined in the text as the idea of an expert knowledge limited to a few, particularly governance instruments). This focus on memory as a state-making process, rather than as a shared collective reflection, only reinforced a view that collective memory is not fit for popular discussion or consideration, and that it rather should be directed and instrumentalized towards a distinct vision of the future. Institutes of "national" memory, partly working on public remembrance and partly institutions channelling remembrance to a liberal "norm" of conduct, have been one of the main protagonists of this restrictive sphere of remembrance,

[161] Subotić, "The Big Gray Truck", 9.
[162] Blaive, *Clashes in European Memory*; Jarausch, "Contours of a Critical History".

unapologetically striving for consensus. Set up in the 2000s amid a flurry of interest in the technocratic, purportedly apolitical, dimension of memory, such institutes have become the "keepers" of records. Despite the initial enthusiasm for their existence, they often transformed into organizations that have simply recreated the selectivity and politicization of memory. Their agenda, in the Romanian case, has not been explicitly nationalist (or nativist) as in Poland, Hungary or even the post-Yugoslav states, but they have become the main actors of public memory perpetuating the idea that history is increasingly displayed in a "better" way through a resort to democratic, Europeanist grounds. Throughout the chapters, however, a quite different reality emerges.

Several tropes of the notion of "belonging to Europe" have become apparent throughout this research. The first one is an apolitical consensus. All chapters, and perhaps 1, 2 and 4 in particular, show how the architecture of collective memory in Eastern Europe more widely and in Romania specifically, owed to an interest in a common narrative of progress aimed at cutting off the past from potential controversies. While the past was predominantly represented by the political right to memory, because of the anticommunist angle it was intrinsically defined by a politics of silencing, calibrating the past in the present and aligning it to diverse (Europeanizing as well as nationalizing) identity ambitions. This memory politics that is partial to a politics of claiming political rights is a constant in the narratives analysed in the dissertation, and more often than not, shared by parties and actors across the political spectrum. A second key trope is a form of nostalgic sovereignty that looks back at imagined histories where the state was emerging as a modern entity. Chapter 4 suggests that this idea of sovereignty has, in fact, been encouraged by a rather benign consideration of notions of national purity and innocence, erased by "Soviet" aggression. Debates about collaboration, complicity or deep-seated authoritarianism are simply replaced with a dimension of victimhood provoked by a loss of national sovereignty, independence, or autonomy. Chapter 4 also suggests that the tropes of

sovereignty played an important part in the reception and memorial dynamics around the wars in Romanian "historical territories", such as the Banat and Transnistria. Those memories also played an important part in the ambiguous memory of the Yugoslav wars in Romania today. A third trope is that of a liberal "norm" that should be internalized. But, by looking at the employment of legal instruments and principles of human rights in legal debates, chapters 1 and 5 demonstrate how this norm has only perpetuated a restrictive sphere of reflection on the past. While remembrance is easily and readily accepted as a norm, these two mechanisms that statedly promote a "duty to remember" have, in fact, imprinted simply a prescriptive (and restricted) approach to remembrance.

Looking at the "long 1990s" in relation to memory is also important because it presages how (and why) many of the cultural ideas about liberal democracy collapsed after 2008 and how, since then, anti-liberal, "illiberalism" has been able to produce new historiographical interpretations and memorial regimes. Indeed, the 'Holocaust-communism competition' identified here became a fertile background of populist negotiations of the histories of sovereignty in the region, such as the Trianon moment for Hungary, where the territory of the country was divided between the former imperial powers. The exact same history in Romania was articulated as a triumph of national self-determination or "sovereignty". Indeed, the research presented here tackles many of the causes and implications of the turn towards authoritarianism in the region, and the long roots of the "illiberal" narrative, that only came into full view with the systemic shift in the imaginary of "the long 1990s" of neoliberalism. The historical approach helps set out how some of these phenomena are not new at all; their roots can be traced back for over a century and have since lived through several iterations.

Part of this dynamic is also linked to a distinct moralization of memory, defined more and more by what is "acceptable", and what carried a duty to "remember". This dynamic, I have argued, cannot be reduced to erasures, but it did lead to a "cultivation" of the past through

liberal credentials that hid and impeded a necessary reflection of the tars of liberalism itself. In the dissertation, I have argued that Europeanization has functioned as a crucial conduit of this dynamic. Later, it also became a conduit for anti-liberal politics.

At the same time, the dissertation has teased out how collective memory almost always supports narratives about the future, making these negotiations always explicitly political. Such narratives are only about the past in as much as they are able to support "progress" and a sentiment of moving forward, both instrumental for liberal theory. "Modernization" and "transition" in Eastern Europe have thus been instrumental in this narrative of liberal democracy. This framing also allows us to understand why 'reconciliation' and 'consensus' attributed to collective memory are untenable aspirations.

4. Directions for Future Research

The dissertation forms part of a wider research agenda aiming to shed light on how memory politics appropriate elements of the "liberal script" and "European ideals" to ends that, in practice, go against ideas of social justice or dialogue, and meaningful investigations of political violence perpetrated by and in Europe, let alone outside it. It argues that silencing the past, as a persistent practice of memory, should be interpreted rather as an intrinsic dimension of building liberal narratives, but also as a cause of dissensus and contestation. From these conclusions derive several implications for research that are outside of this dissertations' scope. In the following, I outline three of these, namely silences and other memory dynamics employed in building liberalism, cultural geographies of liberal imaginaries, and narratives of the ideological dimensions of liberal democracies.

First, the core of this dissertation was to capture the means through which collective memory narratives that employ a flattened vision of history come about as a defensive instrument of liberalism, that operate to limit debate. For instance, I have made the argument

that the correlation between the victims of communism and that of National Socialism continues to be a contested story which can easily veer, as it has on many occasions, towards conservative and far-right narratives. This perspective on liberal victimhood can also open related pathways of reflection, however, which remain to be investigated, such as on the victims of colonialism, and the victims of European racial politics, who have also been part and parcel of "Europeanization" and have also triggered excesses of political interpretations and forms of silencing.

Similarly, the silencing of the history of the Left across Europe, and of the vital place of antifascism, in narratives of liberal democracy, is not only relevant for Central and Eastern Europe or for Romania. This suggests new comparative areas of focus and of attention that have not been the object of this study: for instance, examining the legacy of these two elements in the narratives of contestations of democracy that are happening also in more 'established' liberal democracies elsewhere in Europe.

At the same time, a deeper reflection on the way the 2010s European memory project overshadows the beginnings of the European Union, its conservative roots, and the impact this has had behind the Iron Curtain in defining the European project requires a separate analysis. In a way, the "liberal' dictum overshadows long-enduring intellectual links between fascism, colonialism, and genocide. Of particular interest here are the entanglements of neoliberalism and distinct visions of globalization which tend to be overshadowed by the project of neoliberalism itself.

Furthermore, research should be dedicated to the formative encounters and entanglements between Eastern Europe and the Global South in memory politics, which have equally been silenced and reduced to 'simply' questions of national identity and today fuel xenophobia, discrimination, and a lack of memorial language about the deep political entanglements between the Middle East, Asia, and Eastern Europe. Such an approach could

complement the image of the "alternative globalization" of the Cold War in the socialist space, as recently discussed by James Mark and Artemy Kalinovsky.[163] Alternative histories of the dynamic exchanges between socialist countries, particularly in the Middle East, relating, for instance, the origins of postcolonial theory to earlier dynamics of Soviet communism and Arab self-determination movements, are essential also to understanding the Europeanism "bias" in Europe. Such research could also present a different angle to the idea of a "white" and nationalist Eastern Europe which emerged in the 1990s and has been the source of anti-Muslim feelings or exclusion.

Finally, there are the internal ideological dimensions of liberalism which could be further investigated, starting from the Romanian debates on integration and modernization. Colonial metaphors from within Europe, often backed by liberal narratives, have strengthened "benign" formulations of the far-right. The role of memory practices in mainstreaming radical and far-right ideologies, in Romania and elsewhere in the region, would therefore deserve deeper attention. Looking at the beginnings of liberalism is paramount to deciphering these routes, and here, thinkers of the right in the interwar period are a particularly potent case study. A further connected direction of future research are the cultural and political narratives set by neoliberalism in Eastern Europe and how these have dominated memory politics. New research would need to investigate collective memory's role in stabilizing and confirming the changing but ever-stable supremacy of ideas of marketization, ideas about deservedness and social hierarchy.

[163] Steffi Marung, James Mark, Artemy M. Kalinovsky eds., *Alternative Globalizations: Eastern Europe and the Postcolonial World* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2020), 56.

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SUMMARY:
SILENCE IN THE AGE OF TRANSNATIONAL MEMORY: RECOVERING POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN ROMANIAN CONTEMPORARY DEBATES (1989-2020)

This dissertation interrogates the relationship between the process of Europeanization through remembrance, on the one hand, and how liberal democracy is defined, on the other, by looking at the debates surrounding the core element that brought them together: political violence. Time and again, the cultural narratives of liberal democracy have relied on the history of past infringement of rights or state abuse, signified by the Holocaust and the communist regime, to mark their strength. At the same time, these 'scripts' of liberal democracy have indelibly shaped practices and parameters of debating such histories, and questions of responsibility and accountability more generally.

This research takes a historical approach in understanding memory narratives. It points to specific cultural ideas about liberal values across time and the way they influence collective memory narratives in the present. In this sense, the dissertation traces the silencing that has been attached to norms of liberal democracy and untangles the indirect biases that this process has perpetuated. For instance, interpretations and narratives about the Second World War continued to put forward selective perspectives on state socialism and the far-right in the 1990s. Similarly, the history of the far-right and authoritarianism have often been marginalized in the over-arching Europeanizing narrative. In the process of 'transition', anti-communism has also been transformed from a regional debate to a European discourse in the 2000s, and the local 'banal' Europeanism which emerged in the 1990s in Eastern Europe continued this process of silencing.

Romanian debates and the context of Central Eastern Europe suggest that the liberal 'languages' of modernization, commemoration of victims, human rights and constitutional law have relied excessively on a 'negative memory' of state socialism. In that process, there was also an element of the 'calibration' of memory where anti-communism facilitated a particularly

curated understanding of the past, at the expense of other equally relevant histories. Specifically, this dissertation explains how the retracing and integrating of a lost 'liberal' heritage has reduced the complexity of historical debates. As the story advances into the 2000s, the analysis of the continuities and discontinuities of memory shows how selective remembrance became a constituent of the liberal consensus. The 'bureaucratic', and in some cases highly exclusionary, politics that focused on the making of a 'strong' liberal state often excluded the attention to the more problematic sides of liberal narratives: inequality, devaluation of politics, embedded exclusions.

Consequently, this dissertation historicizes how the connections between Europeanism, global democracy, and anti-communism played into the current "illiberal" narrative that contests liberal democracy. This thesis shows that silencing was part of that process. The argument develops in two distinct, but interconnected directions. One points to a number of new processes of adaptation of the collective memory to the global 'liberal' script. This often entailed fluctuations in the public visibility or urgency of a particular history such as that of the far-right and the Holocaust. The other is about a sense of persecution. It relies on arguments about the imposition of communism from abroad, or innocence in relation to the Holocaust. These narratives have continued within the dynamic transnational sphere of debates about the necessity of remembrance.

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SAMENVATTING:
STILTES ROND HET POLITIEK GEWELD IN HET ROEMEENSE PUBLIEKE DEBAT GEDURENDE EEN PERIODE VAN TRANSNATIONAL GEHEUGEN (1989-2020)

Dit proefschrift richt zich op de relatie tussen processen van Europeanisering en herinnering enerzijds, en narratieven over liberale democratie en anticommunisme anderzijds in Roemenië na 1989. De nadruk ligt hierbij op de publieke debatten over politiek geweld. Evenals elders in Centraal- en Oost-Europa kenmerken de dominante "liberale" vertogen in Roemenië zich door de "Europese" wens om lessen te trekken uit het "negatieve" verleden, te weten de Holocaust en de misdaden van het communisme.

Dit onderzoek naar de hedendaagse Roemeense herinneringscultuur volgt een historische benadering die de lezer in staat stelt om specifieke culturele ideeën over liberale "waarden" en collectieve herinneringen over de Tweede Wereldoorlog en het communisme gedurende de afgelopen decennia vanuit ideologisch perspectief te duiden. Een belangrijk aspect hiervan zijn de "stiltes" in deze vertogen en de manier waarop zij het verleden zuiverden van pijnlijke gebeurtenissen. Terwijl Oost-Europese anticommunistische vertogen "Europeaniseerden", ontwikkelde zich daartegenover in Roemenië – zoals elders in de buurlanden – vanaf de jaren negentig een "banaal" Europeanisme, dat in de hele regio transnationaal werd geïnstitutionaliseerd. Banale, binaire anticommunistische vertogen bleken daarbij een effectieve afleiding om de pijnlijke geschiedenis van extreemrechts en autoritarisme met een Europees verhaal te overschaduwen.

Door te kijken naar Roemeense herinneringsdebatten is in dit proefschrift nagegaan hoe liberale vocabulaires – ten aanzien van mensenrechten, tolerantie en constitutionele rechten – steunden op de "criminalisering" van het voorafgaande communistische regime. Langs deze weg werd het publieke geheugen "gekalibreerd" en konden rechts-autoritaire opvattingen worden gegrondvest in schijnbaar "Europese" vooroorlogse tradities. Het postcommunistische

Europeanisme bood zo een uitweg aan het nationalisme om zich door een uiterst selectief begrip van het verleden te verschonen van pijnlijke gebeurtenissen waarvoor ogenschijnlijk niemand verantwoordelijk kon worden geacht. De transnationalisering van het anticommunisme was daarbij van grote invloed op het overbrengen van nationale discoursen, bijvoorbeeld met betrekking tot liberale rechten en tolerantie. Concreet betekent dit dat het Oost-Europese nationalisme zich vanaf de jaren negentig tot na de eeuwwisseling bij uitstek richtte op de herontdekking van en terugkeer naar een verloren "liberaal" erfgoed. Deze Oost-Europese "Whig"-benadering van een na 1989 herstelde continuïteit van het verleden, maakte nadien steeds plaats voor combinaties van "bureaucratisch" neoliberalisme en een nativistische politiek van uitsluiting die zich concentreerde op een "sterke" staat. Toen het anticommunisme van de jaren negentig een vormende kracht en kenmerk van de Europese identiteit werd, werden dergelijke nationale stiltes rond het vooroorlogse antisemitisme, de Holocaust en het naoorlogse communisme alleen maar meer geaccentueerd.

Door middel van een analyse van de Roemeense herinneringsdebatten legt dit proefschrift de verbindingen tussen Europeanisme, liberale democratie en anticommunisme bloot en laat het zien hoe ze paradoxaal genoeg een cruciale rol speelden in het huidige betwistingen van het liberalisme dat zich met name in culturele zin steeds scherper afzet tegen de "oude" liberale democratie en het "zwakke" Europese liberalisme. Als gevolg hiervan ontwikkelde de postcommunistische herinneringscultuur zich in twee tegenstrijdige, maar onderling verbonden richtingen. De eerste betrof een aanpassing van het collectieve geheugen aan het mondiale (feitelijk meer Amerikaanse dan Europese) "liberale" script. De tweede tendens draaide om de bovengenoemde "verzwijging" van massaal geweld en discriminatie in het eigen nationaal verleden door deze vorm van "banaal", alledaags Europeanisme. Deze balanceeract kon echter niet voorkomen dat het nationaal zwijgen regelmatig werd verbroken door herinneringsconflicten, zoals rond de rol van extreemrechts in de Tweede Wereldoorlog

en de honderdduizenden omgekomen Joden in de kampen van het door Roemenië bezette Transnistrië. Pijnlijke herinneringen en verantwoordelijkheden waartegen de benadrukking van Roemeens slachtofferschap van het van buitenaf “opgelegde” communisme een krachtig middel bleek om de eigen schuld aan de Holocaust te ontlopen. Slachtoffers konden immers geen daders zijn. De dynamische interactie tussen Europeanisering en nationalisme opent via deze “stiltes” een ander (weliswaar grimmiger) perspectief op de weinig kritische Europese bewieroking van transnationale herinneringen en mensenrechten.