

# RICERCHE STORICHE

RIVISTA QUADRIMESTRALE

anno XLVII, numero 2, maggio-agosto 2017

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## Le memorie divise d'Europa dal 1945 a oggi

a cura di

*Carlo Spagnolo e Luigi Masella*





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ISSN 0392-162X  
ISBN 978-88-6995-276-0

Fascicolo stampato con il contributo dell'Università degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro - fondi di ricerca PRIN 2011 - "Pratiche, linguaggi e teorie della delegittimazione politica nell'Europa contemporanea", unità di ricerca di Bari, resp. prof. Luigi Masella.

In copertina  
Domenico Palladino, Porta, Lampedusa (2008)

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### SOMMARIO

*Le memorie divise d'Europa dal 1945 a oggi*  
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#### Introduzione

- C. SPAGNOLO *Le memorie divise d'Europa dal 1945.*  
*Note a margine della crisi dell'integrazione europea* pag. 7

#### La crisi dell'UE e il ruolo delle memorie nazionali

- a cura di *Roundtable-debate "the EU crisis and Europe's divided memories"*  
C. SPAGNOLO *Interview with Geoff Eley, Leonardo Paggi, Wolfgang Streeck* » 27

#### La costruzione delle memorie nazionali in Europa occidentale dal 1945 a oggi

- C. CORNELISSEN *Memorie controverse della seconda guerra mondiale  
nell'Europa continentale: un confronto sistematico  
fra Germania, Austria e Italia* » 47
- P. DOGLIANI *Le politiche della memoria in Francia, 1945-1991* » 59
- D.W. ELLWOOD *L'immagine degli Stati Uniti nelle memorie inglesi  
ed europee della guerra* » 77
- L. MASELLA *L'Europa e lo stato nazionale postbellico  
Breve intervento su aspetti dell'eupeismo in Italia* » 85

#### Politiche della memoria e costruzioni sovranazionali dell'Europa dal primo dopoguerra ad oggi

- C. VILLANI *Internazionalismi, europeismi e memorie politiche europee  
dalla Società delle Nazioni alla costruzione comunitaria* » 95
- I. MORTELLARO *Tra diritti umani e "Washington consensus":  
evoluzioni e avventure del potere sovranazionale (1971-1989)* » 111
- M. VERGA *Dal Consiglio d'Europa all'Unione: storia e cittadinanza europea* » 129

F. FOCARDI	<i>La commissione storica italo-tedesca e la costruzione di una “comune cultura della memoria”: fra dimensione nazionale, rapporti bilaterali e quadro europeo</i>	» 151
A. D'ONOFRIO	<i>L'Europa nel secondo dopoguerra tra storia e memoria. Percorsi storiografici tra identità nazionali, approcci comparativi e prospettive transnazionali. Una rassegna storiografica</i>	» 175
Abstracts		» 199
Gli autori		» 203

ROUNDTABLE-DEBATE  
“*THE EU CRISIS AND EUROPE’S DIVIDED MEMORIES*”  
INTERVIEW WITH GEOFF ELEY (G.E.), LEONARDO PAGGI (L. P.),  
WOLFGANG STREECK (W. S.)

**1. Right from the beginning, European integration encountered resistance and has experienced periods of stasis and regression but today’s crisis is of a new, more extreme kind. Since the rejection of the constitutional treaty in France and the Netherlands in 2005 we have seen the growth of local “populist” movements opposed to immigration and the loss of control over the employment market, a resurgence of nationalism in many countries and the referendum vote in favour of Brexit on 23 June (2016). Is this a crisis of rejection connected to the almost unnatural and extraordinarily rapid expansion of the size and remit of the EU after the 1991-92 Maastricht Treaty? Are we now paying the price for the EU’s over-ambition or for the “democratic deficit” on which it was built?**

(W. S.) It is almost conventional wisdom today to answer both your questions in the affirmative: over-ambition and democratic deficit at the same time. Yes, integration has crossed the threshold beyond which it makes itself felt in everyday life, especially as member countries have become so much more heterogeneous. “Nationalism”, as you call it, has always been there, except in Germany and, perhaps, Italy – two countries whose citizens were for a long time willing to exchange their national identity for a European one. Elsewhere it was contained within national borders, which were still relevant. This has changed with the simultaneous widening and deepening of the Union. Also, as to nationalism, don’t forget that the Internal Market and monetary union and in particular the “rescue operations” for governments and banks, pitch countries against each other, making them compete for economic performance and fight over both austerity and “solidarity”.

(G. E.) Each of these explanations carries much weight, in my view. Of course, it’s important to remember that popular identification with “Europe” has always been hugely variable across regions, periods, and all of the many internal societal divisions, member-country by member-country – whether “Europe” is taken to mean the EU per se, the “European project” in some politically coherent sense, a set of usually diffuse but nonetheless significant ideals, one kind of negatively understood Eurocentrism or another, or the cumulative effect of an elaborate range of practical conveniences and recognitions (i.e. the process of “growing together” over time via collective encounters, circuits of communication, structures of educational exchange, professional and administrative inter-connectedness, integrated labor markets, increasingly prevalent patterns of pan-European travel, the EU’s ramified regulative apparatuses, and

last but not least football). In the earliest phase (1957-1970s) the Common Market subsisted on a hard-headed economic and geopolitical pragmatism (a kind of bastard internationalism) that was ordered along the primary Franco-West German axis while leavened by disproportionately influential elements of intellectual Europeanism. It was really during the 1980s, with the “objective” consequences of cumulative integrative processes, the coalescence of the institutional and regulative machinery, and the emergence of a more coherent European project, that “Europe” acquired over time a far stronger and genuinely popular material actuality. In that sense, the Single Europe Act and Maastricht solidified a European presence whose penetration downwards into the respective European societies became impressively effective. In the meantime, major processes of disruptive change have continuously undermined those potentials. Two of these are the ones signalled in your question. First, the relentless drive for enlargement has rendered the cohesion and political efficacy of the EU as such unmanageable, whether as an institutional complex of political negotiation or as an object of popular identification. Second, the hopelessly undemocratic character of the EU’s institutional arrangements (everything summarized in the banality of the “democratic deficit”), which were apparent from the outset, has now been continuously exacerbated to the point of chronic dysfunctionality. I’d then add the following. Third, despite the promising gestures during the 1980s toward an operative politics of collective betterment and the promotion of European wide public goods (“social Europe”), anything resembling a social democratic or even social-liberal commitment to a redistributive politics has long been sacrificed in the interests of the reigning neoliberal economic agenda. Fourth, the rigid post-2008 adherence to a politics of austerity has disastrously negated whatever was left of the rhetoric of the common European project per se. Finally, the EU’s political incapacity in face of the permanence of the refugee crisis has not only placed the member-states and societies under increasingly intolerable particularized strain, but has continuously exposed the EU’s political ineffectuality too.

(L. P.) The reasons of the ongoing crisis go much deeper and have to be traced in the economic governance plan adopted when the single currency was created. I always find particularly useful to re-read the way in which Guido Carli, the day after the signing of the Maastricht Treaty (which he had taken part in as Minister of the Treasury of the Italian government in February 1992) commented on the meaning and the outcome of that choice in his personal notes: “the European Union implies the notion of the ‘Minimal State’, the abandonment of mixed economy and of economic planning, the redefinition of the ways the expenses are arranged, a redistribution of responsibilities that reduces the power of parliamentary assemblies and increases that of governments, fiscal autonomy for local authorities, the rejection of the principle of widespread gratuitousness of services (and the ensuing reform of healthcare and of social security), the abolition of the wage indexation scale, the dramatic reduction of pockets of privilege, the mobility of the factors of production, the reduction of the State’s presence in the credit system and in industry, the abandonment of inflationary behaviour not only by workers, but also by the producers of services, the abolition of the norms that fixed administered prices and tariffs. In a word: a new pact between States and citizens, to the latter’s advantage”.

These words provide a brutal, but extremely clear picture that briefly summarizes the meaning and direction of a political process that would soon involve the whole of Europe: the dramatic reduction of State powers in terms of both economic and industrial policies, the dismantling of the public sphere and of its power to reorient the market, the breaking of the social security and of the pension system, the collapse of trade unions' bargaining power, the transfer of the effective decision power from parliaments to the executive branch. Twenty-five years after, we are in such a position as to be able to evaluate the outcome of a set of choices that have systematically, and almost scientifically, eroded the economic and social foundations on which democracy had been rebuilt in Europe after 1945.

**2. If we adopt Weber's categories, the EU can be seen as deriving its legitimacy from three sources: one is "bureaucratic" and depends on Community law and the functioning of the Single Market; another is "traditional", or historical, and is born out of memories of the war, the supranational theories of the 1950s, and the extraordinary social and economic growth of the "trente glorieuses", but it has been shaken by the failures in Yugoslavia and Ukraine; the third is "charismatic", a dimension which appears to be lacking completely on account of the absence of both a vision for the future and the "constitutional patriotism" invoked by Habermas. In what ways do these three forms of legitimacy conflict?**

(W. S.) Traditionalism in Weber is not about memories of good times; it is a mode of justification of a social order that draws on a belief that something is right by being the way it always was – that what was right in the past must on this account alone be also right today. This is the ultimate premodern form of legitimacy, and it was never available to integrated Europe. European integration was and is typically justified by its alleged contribution to economic efficiency. In some places, Weber speaks of a fourth source of legitimate order which he calls *zweckrational*, or instrumentally rational, based on shared interests rather than on respect of the law, on the sanctity of tradition, or on charismatic values and ideas. Remember the "pro-European" arguments put forward by the Remain camp in the British referendum? They were all about the economic advantages of EU membership. But those that thought that this would do forgot that Weber has always considered an interest-based social order as inherently unstable: interests can unpredictably fluctuate and differ between individuals as circumstances change, unless they are legitimated, and thereby stabilized, by a collective ideal or shared identity. One finds this encapsulated in Jacques Delors' famous dictum that "you cannot love a market" – meaning efficiency as such being not enough to hold a society together. Of course, Delors cast aside his own insight when he turned to supply-side policies in his second term of office, after the historical break in 1989. Today integrationists have to accept that reference to efficiency is not enough to make people support integration – and try to heal their lack of legitimacy by construing new, attracting "narratives" instead. But, as Abraham Lincoln famously put it, you can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time – but you can't fool all of the people all of the time. A de-democratized capitalist political

economy is not a traditional family, nor is it a rule-governed hierarchy or a community of shared values – and even the best advertising agency is unable to compose a rhetoric that credibly represents a technocratic machinery in such terms.

(G. E.) I've begun answering this question implicitly above. While slightly nervous about an overly formalist deployment of Weber's distinctions, I can certainly see the pay-off here. What you refer to as the "traditional" or "historical" sources of legitimacy are what I'd put into my own category of "growing together" along with the coherent investments in the European project, especially when historicized to the 1980s. Likewise, the abject vacating of the ground of "positive Europeanism" (whether as any "vision for the future" or forms of Habermasian "constitutional patriotism") on the part of the European political class really does constitute a catastrophically damaging political failure, although I don't personally find the Weberian category of the "charismatic" as the most helpful way of theorizing this. Given the falling away of the second and third sources of legitimacy as you've described them, and indeed the corrosion consequent on the geopolitical convulsions of the 1990s and 2000s (Yugoslavia, Iraq-Syria, Ukraine), only the regime of regulation ("bureaucratic" legitimacy, Community law, Single market) is left. And a technocratic, regulationist conception of "Europe" has very little popular purchase or mobilizing political appeal.

(L. P.) The current picture is one of legitimization crisis. The nation-states have renounced the fundamental prerogative of steering their economy in favour of a bureaucratic organism preventively stripped away of any political dimension of a federal kind. At a national level the wholly political power of governing the domestic demand disappears, but no analogue prerogative is reconstructed at the European community level. Austerity policies and crisis of politics proceed hand in hand not only because of the punitive social contents that are displayed and implemented, but also because of the introduction of power procedures relying on a system of rules that bypass the nation-state and prefigure a rule of law more and more alienated from any form of democratic legitimacy. The drama of this phenomenon is further emphasized by the fact that in the 1990s it was precisely the parties belonging to the social-democratic tradition that became the main executors of the Maastricht order. The Manifesto subscribed in 1999 by Tony Blair and Gerhard Schröder was an authentic hymn to modernization in which any awareness of the cyclic character of capitalistic development, i.e. of its structural tendency to alternate booms and recessions, went lost. When the American crisis became once again a world crisis, from 2008 onwards, social protests could no longer find any kind of democratic political outlet. The persistence of economic stagnation, adding to the dramatic increase of the migration phenomenon, has paved the way to a growing populist wave that has ended up taking centre stage in the European political life.

**3. In historiography, European integration is interpreted in at least two different and conflicting ways: from the federalist perspective it is viewed as a positive response to a long-term crisis of the 19th-century European nation states, which after surviving two world wars were in search of a recipe for co-existence that**

would safeguard peace and democracy, through an increasing transfer of sovereignty over time; from Alan Milward's "realist" perspective, on the other hand, it is seen as a means of restoring the sovereignty of European countries and thus aiding economic growth and the expansion of the Welfare State. The so-called "populist" protest against the Single Market would seem to invalidate both of these views, as it sees European integration as a cause of unhappiness and sacrifice of sovereignty for the sake of rigid budget criteria. Do the old theories simply have to be adjusted to the great changes brought about by the end of the Cold War, or do we need a very different theoretical and interpretative approach that looks back to 1945 or even beyond? And in this regard, can the split – suggested by Fritz Scharpf – between the nationalism on the "edges" and the liberalism at the "centre" of the EU be "backdated" to well before 1991?

(L. P.) If we look at it more closely, federalism has never gone beyond the statements of the Ventotene program and of other similar projects of democratic rebirth elaborated in the years of anti-Nazi resistance. World War II ended with the military occupation of Europe by the two winners and the establishment of a bipolar order that excluded almost on principle the formation of a third political actor other than the two superpowers. Europeanism then took the form of a democratic rhetoric of lofty ethical and political consequence, celebrating the value and necessity of peace and condemning the atrocities of WWII in the name of brotherhood among peoples.

The actual political reality of the second postwar Europe is highlighted by Alan Milward's historical narrative: according with the British historian the reality that came into being was the reconstruction of the nation-state, which had been completely defeated and delegitimized by the final result of the war. This way, in the framework of development policies of Keynesian inspiration, a full inclusion of the working-class movement was realized for the first time, laying the basis for a democratic experience that had no equals in earlier European history. The process of European integration opened in 1957 by the Treaty of Rome provided dividends for the countries which had subscribed it, insofar as it remained within the framework of a customs union and of a common agricultural policy. The abolition of tariffs was indeed a useful additional incentive for a development that was, however, solidly rooted in the Keynesian policies pursued by the European nation-states. The European project underwent a radical reformulation in the first half of the 1970s, when the goal of full employment was replaced by that of inflation control. It was precisely such goal that led to the establishment of a European monetary system that would be put into practice in the following decade. When, with the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, a currency without state was created, the federal hypothesis was formally sacrificed on the altar of the omnipotence of the market, empowered to discipline the quantity and the quality of public spending. Today the revival, or rather the actual acceptance, of a federal political perspective obligatory implies the liquidation of the austerity and the launching of fiscal policies and investment plans of European extent.

(W. S.) I never understood how the federalist perspective came to be seen as categorically different from Milward's "realism". Peace in Europe – more precisely: among

the Western European countries that had come under American supervision after 1945 – was above all assured by the division of Europe between American capitalism and Russian-led Communism, as institutionalized in the confrontation between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, and in particular by the division of Germany. The latter allowed the other Western countries, most of all France and Britain, to accept an international postwar settlement that differed categorically from the one after 1918, by recognizing the need of the traditionally over-industrialized German economy for assured access to import and export markets outside of Germany proper, without having to rely for such assurance on territorial expansion. This in turn reassured the rest of Europe that their national integrity would this time be preserved. Traces of this mutual accommodation were found until a short time ago in the popular resistance in Germany to anything that looked like German nationalism, as well as in the British and French concern at the time of German reunification that a larger Germany might no longer be willing to sacrifice its national interests on the altar of European unity. Incidentally, up to this day German political leaders cannot distinguish between German national and collective European interests, as a result of which they honestly believe that the interests they regard as self-evident, for example in EMU, are not German but European interests.

In terms of political economy, I believe that the stories that are being told about European integration, its crisis today and the rise of populism neglect the deep transformations of European capitalism, and of capitalism in general, between the 1950s and today. The European Economic Community set out in the long-gone world of the state-administered and socially embedded capitalism of postwar reconstruction and changed in parallel with the latter changing into the global, financialized, disembedded capitalism of today. On the way, there were moments when attempts were made to turn the European federation-in-waiting into a supranational welfare state mirroring the national Keynesian welfare states that had been created under American protection after the end of the war (for example, the battle for the so-called “Social Dimension” of the Internal Market). But all of these projects were defeated, not least by the British under Thatcher. In the last two decades the European Union finally and, I believe, irreversibly turned into a liberalization engine, deployed by national governments, center-right as well as center-left, to enforce on their societies liberalization policies that might otherwise have been blocked by popular resistance. Here we observe the beginnings of a special kind of class division in Europe: between internationalist elites using European integration to cut off the designated losers of globalization from political influence, and new nationalist “populists” promising to restore national sovereignty in defense of ordinary people against the vagaries of global markets. In this context, liberal-cosmopolitan internationalism came to be hijacked by capital and its profiteers as an ideological weapon against the inevitably locally-oriented working classes, also to drive a wedge into the Left between its new, “progressive” middle-class camp and its traditional labor camp. As Social Democracy everywhere tends to side with the middle-class progressives, its old working-class constituency is left to be picked up by the new populist parties, mostly of the right-wing sort.

(G. E.) Each historiographical perspective indicated in the first part of your question seems to me persuasive – for the founding period (late-40s to early-70s) they de-

finitely need to be deployed together in subtle and complex combination. The variegated “populist” protests against the Single Market gathering pace since the 1990s hardly invalidate these explanations for the formative years. Such protests are certainly partly a political reaction formation (i.e. against the EU per se). But their gathering force and ideological coherence derive from far broader processes of social dissolution and political realignment usually summarized in turn via the shorthand of deindustrialization, neoliberalism, globalization, and so forth (classically in the instance of Brexit, but also in Le Pen’s distribution of popular support). Scharpf’s distinction seems mainly operative for the most recent context of post-enlargement.

**4. A currency without a government seems to imply, if not exactly a return to the automatism of the 19th century market, at least something similar to the Gold Standard Exchange of the years after the First World War, and the setting aside of the Keynesian project of managed economic development that contributed to the success of Western European democracies after 1945. Is this a case of an institutional mistake due to the divergent interests of France and Germany in the 1980s, or a deliberate choice made by the western ruling classes during the phase in which the ground was being prepared for the euro? In attempting to identify the intellectual tradition behind the preference for a currency detached from politics, is it correct to see the policies of Schäuble and the Bundesbank as a return to the tradition of German “ordoliberalism”, or is it a case of a broader, neo-liberal position influenced by Milton Friedman and the Chicago monetarists?**

(G. E.) I want to resist the binaries posed in each of your formulations! On the one hand, there’s clearly been an extraordinarily effective generalized diffusion of neoliberal precepts between the later 1970s and 1990s, both as gross assumptions and as highly elaborated programmatic thought, whose success has been so complete as to leave no easily available political and intellectual “outside” (see e.g. recent intellectual histories by Angus Burgin, Daniel Stedman-Jones, et al.). But on the other hand, it’s also hard not to detect a specifically German project in the comportment of Schäuble and the associated networks and milieus, which has definite earlier genealogies. The option for “a currency without a government” likewise presupposed both the “deliberate choice” you’ve mentioned (itself informed and shaped by the emergent neoliberal hegemony) and the effective dissolution of the original Franco-West German condominium that between the 1950s and 1980s had usually functioned so well. (I find Perry Anderson’s reading of the EU’s history in *The New Old World* brilliantly persuasive in this regard). Of course, the “automatism of the 19th century market” was also an actively constructed project too (c.f. Polanyi). In the German case, for example, the reorganizing of the social environment for capitalism entailed much hard work and carefully conceived, always contested political intervention, from the Zollverein and the coalescence of a German-national liberalism to the Bismarckian wars of unification.

(L. P.) The languages varied from country to country. In the 1990s Italy witnessed an authentic exhumation of Luigi Einaudi, who had been completely forgotten for decades.

The political substance to be considered is the formation of a new kind of intellectual and political cadre embodying the financial shift that had taken place in international capitalism in the mid-seventies: such cadres had their baptism of fire at the IMF, the World Bank, the OECD and in America's major investment banks, now handling masses of capital by ten times bigger than the budget of national States. From these institutions a new ruling elite has flowed first into the EU agencies and then in the national governments, taking the role of protagonists and guarantors of policies that give the market an essential role in disciplining State budgets. Their credo is easy to summarize: the crisis of the 1970s sheds light on the existence of a "narrow path to growth" that requires at the same time more promotion of private investments through the creation of larger margins of profit and strict inflation control. They refuse the previously common practice to negotiate prices and salaries with trade unions and intend to congeal public investment, while welfare and employment are seen as questions of secondary importance. They are the protagonists of a new global civil society and constitute the original source of a new transnational hegemony. These new clerics think in abstract and make no specific references to concrete contexts, whether they are needs, social groups or territories. They are the new Brahmins of the XXI century. Even their knowledge, their Veda, becomes power insofar as it is indifferent to, and detached from, history and the concrete situation. The formation of this new political elite is not just a cultural event, but implies a profound modification of the way the EU is governed. Someone has said that Maastricht marked the birth of a government of rules that replaced a government of choices. That was exactly the most important novelty of the 1990s, which pushed into the background the problem of the democratic deficit, for decades the only one focus of the critical debate on the process of European integration.

(W. S.) I think here as elsewhere, one can easily overestimate the significance of economic doctrines. For example, ordoliberalism was important in the early Federal Republic but not all-important: it had to coexist with Social Catholicism and social-democratic trade unionism. Reality is only rarely not compromised. In post-war Germany there was not just competition policy and a low-inflation monetary policy, but also worker participation on the shopfloor and on company boards, together with sectorally centralized collective bargaining and a rapidly expanding welfare state. In any case, the present structure and functioning of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) is far from an outflow of ordo-liberal theory; if anything it draws on ordoliberal figures of thought to justify what is in reality part and parcel of a Hayekian neoliberal transformation of the post-war settlement of socially embedded capitalism. To understand this, one must take into account the global trend of capitalist development in the past four decades toward lower growth, higher debt and inexorably rising inequality, through a sequence of crises beginning with inflation, followed by an accumulation of non-Keynesian public debt and not ending with a global build-up of private debt as a result of financial deregulation, all of this accompanied by a de-coupling of democracy from the government of the economy. It is only in this context that one can begin to understand why the governments of France and Italy and even Greece have so unshakably followed the German lead with respect to monetary and fiscal policy under EMU. They signed off on everything, even the final Diktat to Greece in July 2015. Remember

that EMU was not a German invention: it was demanded by France under Mitterand and, to an extent, by Italy as well, and was created against German resistance.

Why do France and Italy cling so faithfully to the Euro and the policies that come with it? The answer is that they wanted and still want the Euro as a tool for disciplining their own, unruly societies and, in particular, their trade unions and working-classes. EMU imports an external constraint into their countries, in the form of a hard currency, without which neoliberally-minded governments would not be able to “reform” their political economies so as to make them “competitive” under global capitalism. The Euro is the instrument for them to do what people like Monti or Macron tell them is economic common sense. They also need EMU, and Germany in particular, to assign the blame for the pain they inflict on their countries, or in case the medicine fails to work. As to Germany, its insistence on the Euro being managed in line with the treaties (which were signed by all member countries!) is not, unlike what “progressive” economists in France and elsewhere believe, a matter of insufficient training in Keynesian – or better: Post-Keynesian – economics. Germans, including Herr Schäuble and Frau Merkel, are not on average less intelligent or enlightened than other Europeans. For them EMU as it is is simply the best of all worlds for a heavily export-dependent, over-industrialized economy: a fixed nominal exchange rate with most other European countries, unchangeable regardless of a steadily improving real exchange rate, plus a heavily undervalued currency in relation to the rest of the world, undervalued because of the economic weakness of the other EMU countries and of the ECB trying to help them by further depressing the Euro’s external value.

Why austerity, then? This comes down to the question of whether the German government – any German government – could sell to German voters extensive and indeed expensive fiscal and other transfers, in whatever form, from the North of Europe to the South, perhaps even to France. The answer is: it couldn’t, and it knows this – at least as long as it couldn’t control how such transfers would be used. Since the other countries all insist on their political sovereignty – mind you that it was Germany that wanted a “political union” before monetary union, and that it was France that was against it – there can from a German perspective be no “transfer union”. Merkel and her friends at Mercedes and BMW might be willing to accept one nevertheless, to keep the Euro alive, but voters wouldn’t. So all there will be is “growth programs” administered by Juncker and Co. that will be *ein Tropfen auf dem heißen Stein* (a drop in the ocean) without doing anything against the widening economic disparities inside Euroland, except perhaps for buying governments in receiving countries more time to complete their neoliberal “reforms”, on the model of what they believe were the “Hartz reforms”, while promising their increasingly incredulous voters that this will result in eternal, German-style prosperity for their countries (Monti!).

**5. Why were the neo-corporatist policies that were so important in the 20th century abandoned as EU objectives after the publication of Delors’ White Paper? How is the decline of neo-corporatism related to the transformation of the culture of the large political parties – both Christian and Socialist – that backed European integration?**

(L. P.) The decay of the mass party, meant as a subculture endowed with a strong ideological identity, is certainly a phenomenon intertwined with the advance of a consumerist society and the proliferation of a mass-media system which intrudes more and more in the traditional modes of social life. It is however unquestionable that the Maastricht order has been a great accelerator of the crisis of European democratic systems insofar as it has progressively reduced the room for political decisions. It is not by chance that it was precisely in Germany, i.e. the country that most of all has controlled and influenced the process of European integration in accordance with its own interests, that the typical European political system founded on mass parties and the central role of the parliament has kept intact many of its traditional features. The conservative European elites are today totally consenting with a German supremacy in order to keep at bay the social conflict: a kind of democratic revisiting of the early 1940s “new order”. Actually a more and more senseless European rhetoric is covering their corporatist and anti-national interests.

(G. E.) In a sense the answer is already inscribed in the very terms of the question! Capitalist restructuring and the attendant social transformations since the 1970s have fundamentally undermined the necessary socio-political bases of the long-lasting post-war settlement. After Delors no political vision – or organized political will – has materialized capable of giving European integration compelling (or even minimally persuasive) popular appeal.

**6. The “end of history”, of which Fukuyama wrote in 1992, today seems applicable to Europe rather than to the United States, in the sense that the phrase refers not only to a crisis affecting the idea of progress but also to the belief that the EU is a stable solution to political conflict. This can be seen, for example, in the metamorphosis of politics into administration, and the illusion of the elimination of war and ending of ideological conflict. Why does politics today seem to have such little need of history and such great need of memories?**

**Are we in a period of transformation of the political realm that tends to separate politics and economics from history, or is the emerging discourse on memory merely a symptom of demographic aging, an intellectual fever that extends even to the social sciences?**

(G. E.) I agree very much with the main thrust of the thinking in this question. But so far from confirming any separation of politics and economics from history, don't the remarkably effective political appeals of the populist Right tend rather to show the opposite? The idea that “we are in a period of transformation of the political realm” is persuasive but needs a lot of unpacking.

(L. P.) With an impressive analogy with what happened in the beginning of the XX century, when the theory of imperialism was elaborated thanks to the contribution of political analysts of various orientations (Hobson, Hilferding, Lenin, etc.), the protagonists of globalization are once again the great Leviathans, the nation-states rich not only in economic resources, but also in history and identity. This is the meaning of

the competition between the USA and China, not to mention the resurgence of the geopolitical influence of post-Soviet Russia, which many would like to exercise by attributing its fault to Putin's wickedness; and isn't the remarkable growth of the Indian economy also due to the massive State structure inherited from British colonialism? Even the most successful periods of South American economies always coincide with a reinforcement of the State thanks to the emergence of a strong populist leadership. In the Middle East crisis, finally, the growing influence of strong States of ancient tradition, such as Iran and Turkey, contrasts with a lasting political fragmentation of the Arab people, which has not managed to go beyond the Caliphate.

How singular the contrast between such a global state of affairs and an EU defined by a senseless and self-damaging system of "currency without state" (it seems that such phrase was coined by our Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa!), which is anyway kept together by Germany's supremacy and arrogance. In order to quit Maastricht's hierarchic cosmopolitanism and move back to an effective federal perspective it will be necessary to get rid of a whole culture, a subaltern culture that has handed over the destiny of a continent to financial capital taking the risk to obliterate an entire civilization. Here is the main reason of the great identity crisis that is currently haunting our Europe.

(W. S.) I find this question so complex that I can only provide a number of more or less unrelated facets of what might eventually be a sufficiently complex answer. Is there in the Europe of today a need for memory as distinguished from history? There clearly is a need for fabricated selective stories, or memories, dressing up a post-democratic, consumerist, neoliberal, Hayekian political economy as a legitimate society. Will they be believed by enough people to make them sufficiently canonical? Hundreds of thousands of PR experts are working on this and try to sell LBGTIQ rights, travel without borders and the synthetic communities of Facebook and Twitter as historical progress. Politics turning into administration was in fact a historical (Marxian) dream of progress – one that has materialized in present-day Europe as the nightmare of a technocracy shielded from politics, so as to protect electorates from the temptations of "populism". Will people recognize the farce, and the tragedy that comes with taking it at face value? That war has allegedly disappeared is presented as historical progress as well, but mostly in terms of young people no longer having to serve in their countries' military, further cutting back on the obligations that used to come with the rights of citizenship (rights which in the process turn into consumption goods, in the general context of progress being reduced to, and conceived exclusively in terms of, an increase in individual liberties). Warfare has long been delegated to the United States and to highly professionalized Special Forces, maintained by all West European countries but operating in complete secrecy, so almost nobody notices – and in the absence of the traditional *levée en masse*, nobody really cares. The same applies to modern killing technology, such as drones. Presently, of course, history as warfare is coming back in new forms as failed states proliferate on the capitalist periphery, with streams of refugees exporting their misery into the European prosperity zone, and with religious fundamentalism carrying violence into its cities.

The widespread absence of a historical consciousness and the often successful efforts to fill the gap with fictional "memories" – for example, how peace in Europe is allegedly owed to the European Union – may be due to a perhaps unprecedented phenomenon,

which is revolutionary change proceeding slowly but steadily, without major disruptions, over at least two political generations, with no end in sight. That the historical dimension of what we call the neoliberal revolution is so rarely noticed, and can be noticed only with special effort, may be explained by the fact that it evolved over such a long time, without dramatic ruptures or breakdowns. So each generation sees only a small section of the momentous process of crisis and change that has been underway since the 1970s, and therefore may perceive only little or no difference between the beginning and the end of its observed historical time. As the true historical dynamic of our era is recognized only from a distance, it is not recognized at all by those who cannot or will not distance themselves from their everyday lives. This is why it is so urgent that social science today sheds its system-theoretical habits and returns to an approach that affords the historical nature of the social world proper recognition.

**7. With the reunification of Germany and the opening up of Eastern Europe, the dominant narrative focused on overcoming the Cold War and on the idea that *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (struggle to overcome the negatives of the past) was now complete; every hidden chapter in the history of the individual nations, beginning with Germany, needed to be brought to light to illuminate the Holocaust as the basis for a shared culture of human rights. As Walser pointed out in 1998, it is almost as if *Monumentalisierung der Schande* (Monumentalising the shame) is being invoked as a guarantor of the morality of modern-day politics.**

**It seems as though that project, which was perhaps never properly managed, is running aground: paradoxically, the attempt to create an inclusive memory, through the spread of memorial days for the victims of “totalitarianism” has resulted not so much in a “European memory” as in memories for groups or nations claiming victim status and vigorously contesting previous “official truths”. Conversely, post-national historiographies take refuge in a form of – on occasions smug – “moderate patriotism” which aims to normalize the past of individual countries. Is a “European memory” possible and what characteristics should it have in order to safeguard democracy from the re-emergence of identities based on exclusion and conflict?**

(G. E.) Again, I agree strongly with the thrust of this question. “Trauma talk” has achieved such pervasive dominance that the most reliable ground for the making of effective political claims has now become the traumatic wound of a past injustice, and indeed the grander-scale the better – slavery, colonial dispossession, expulsions, genocide, any form of discrimination, collective suffering, or violations of rights. This recourse to a memorial language of traumatized identity not only replaces the appeal to more classical universalist ideals, but also spectacularizes suffering and injustice, so that any dramatic experience of exceptional violence becomes implicitly privileged as the main ground from which legitimate and effective political claims now need to be filed. In the process, other fundamental grounds of democratic action – positive ideals of human self-realization and social emancipation, for example, or the mundane suffering of everyday poverty and exploitation, can become much harder to build. In that

sense, a “memorial” politics does tend to constrain as much as it helps. Memory work – the working-through of a difficult and compromised past – has always been vital for the rebuilding of democratic political culture in Europe since 1945, and nowhere more impressively than in Germany (qua the process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* since the 1960s). And, as contemporary German events continue to show, this necessarily remains a work-in-progress, whose grounds will continue to settle and shift, sometimes in dangerous and unexpected ways. But that political work of memory was always moved by forward-looking and inevitably contested visions of the good society too, whether in 1968, the mid-1980s, or the aftermath of unification. Without some comparable vision of a desirable, generously conceived, and realistically attainable democratic future – distressingly absent from the centerground of current political discourse inside the EU – a “European memory” worth the name will not be possible.

(W. S.) West Germany was reorganized as a democratic-capitalist country in the 1950s and 1960s when the Holocaust was not nearly as present in public memory as it is today. Here, again, NATO and the Americanization of social life were much more important than history and memory. Today the Shoah and the Nazi crimes in general are very much part of educated German consciousness, or of German culture generally: as a German, you simply cannot subscribe to a “Right or wrong, my country” sort of patriotism. In fact you are aware, or always likely to be reminded, that an entire people, even one that prides itself of having been at the forefront of human civilization, can be led, or can lead itself, to relapse into the worst form of barbarism. But then, knowledge of history is not easily taught to the Generation Twitter, not even in Germany, and for those growing up now the first half of the twentieth century is almost as distant in time as the Middle Ages. Moreover, collective memory, including the German one, is not very instructive politically. For example, the fact of the German genocide committed on the Jewish people does not tell us how many immigrants today’s Germany must and can take in per year, and from which countries – not to mention what kind of supranational European institutions Germany should help build and sustain. It does not even entail precise instructions with regard to German policy toward Israel: must Germany support whatever the Israeli government does to secure the existence of Israel as a state, or must it be rigorously committed to human rights and international law, which would mean taking sides with the Palestinians in Gaza in their struggle against the present Israeli government. Particularism or universalism?

As to “patriotism”, its contents differ between countries and individuals, and they change over time. Watch how the Italian football team sings its national anthem before games, and compare this to the way the Germans sing if at all. On the one hand, as sociologists know, people do identify as members of groups and develop loyalty to the groups with which they identify. Germans are not categorically different in this respect, although their attachment to their country still tends to be moderated by the memory of Nazism and genocide, as pointed out. Will this last? It certainly will be different among the large numbers of immigrants now settling in Germany: Germans with Turkish, Palestinian or Eritrean roots will hardly see themselves sharing in whatever kind of historical responsibility for the Holocaust. It is also true that young Germans today, when traveling abroad, are less likely than the generation that preceded them

to keep silent when being personally reprimanded for the German Nazi past. In short, I think a legitimate European order of peace and cooperation cannot be built on historical memories, or on German acceptance of historical responsibility for the worst crime against humanity in the twentieth century if not in history. And I also think that a “European memory”, encompassing the historical experience from Norway to Sicily and from Ireland to Rumania, is no more than a chimera.

(L. P.) Until the 1970s European historical awareness was characterized as a sum of national memories that to a certain extent all ignored, in their discreteness, the geopolitical demotion that had struck the continent as a whole at the end of World War II. These memories were divided, often even opposed to each other, but all equally anti-German. And they were also memories marked by phenomena of omission and self-exaltation. English memory celebrated the hard defeat inflicted on Nazi Germany, but forgot the end of the Empire. French memory put between brackets Vichy in order to exalt the uninterrupted continuity of the republican tradition. Italian memory stretched beyond measure the consensus enjoyed by the Resistance in order to support a program of democratic renewal and modernization of the country that clashed with the persistence of elements of feudalism. However, it cannot be neglected that precisely because of their being partial (but has memory ever been an exact copy of what Leopardi called the “arid truth?”), these memories were marked by an unequivocal democratic and anti-fascist will, that same will expressed by the post-war constitutions (with the exception of Germany), which not only preached freedom and equality, but also defined conditions and instruments for their fulfilment.

Anti-fascist culture, welfare state and Keynesian policies were the three distinguishing features of the ideological and political balance of European nation-states before the huge storm of neoliberal culture imposed by force the new horizon of globalization, with its economic policies harnessed to budgetary equilibrium and a growing limitation of national sovereignties imposed by free-to-move financial capitals. It was in such new context, made official by the Maastricht Treaty, that emerged the EU project for a European memory which, dropping the traditional and somehow mandatory reference to World War II, assumed the Holocaust as a common theme that overlapped the multiplicity and the variety of national context. It was a bureaucratic operation that had the same abstract and categorical character of all the legislation of European governance. It took the form of a memory/device, detached from any actual historical experience and imposed through the proliferation of laws (in 2009 it was even made mandatory to remember the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact), with the attendant sanctions for the transgressors.

Hence the memory of the Holocaust, isolated from the context of World War II in which it developed, becomes the symbol of an absolute Evil, obliterates the memory of Stalingrad and the role played by the Soviet Union in determining the defeat of Nazism, and finally comes to the full affirmation of a theory of two totalitarianisms that, especially in Eastern Europe, ends up fuelling the revival of openly fascist memories.

**8. The handling of debt in Greece and the other PIGS countries, the tension in Ukraine, the emergence of the refugee problem, and the relationship with Tur-**

**key all indicate a lack of shared political preparedness in the EU, which has led to member States, notably Germany, stepping up a weight. Germany has occasionally attempted to mediate and is ready to bear some of the costs but does not appear able to provide a political vision that can prevent a relapse into the nationalist memories evoked by the conflicts across European states. Why do the ruling classes of the big countries show such a lack of interest in seeking a common EU growth and social policy based upon common standards? Is the culture of the most important country, namely Germany, perhaps significantly influenced by a kind of self-referentiality after the successes of reunification and expansion on the world market? And do the other Western European countries look backwards out of nostalgia for their achievements during the Cold War? Is the lack of vision perhaps connected to the fact that Europe's ruling classes now have an impoverished knowledge of history and that they have lost their cultural capability to conceive of conflict as a permanent dimension of politics?**

(L. P.) The 2008 crisis has shed full light on the de facto leading position achieved by Germany in Maastricht Europe. Behind the veil of the impersonal government of rules, an open politicization of all inter-state relations has been produced. The crises that shook Greece in 2010 and once again in 2015 witnessed in a spectacular way the existence of a rigidly oligarchic structure which exercises a strict control not only over economic policies, but also over political stability. In Italy the government led by Mario Monti in November 2011 saw a strong limitation of the power of control over the state budget by the prime minister, a measure that continued with the following governments.

Starting from this fact, it has gained currency a representation of Germany as a “reluctant hegemon”, one often repeated by Jürgen Habermas and endorsed in Italy also by a respectable specialist of German Studies such as Gian Enrico Rusconi.

German economy is today structurally unable to play that driving role that has often been invoked. The history of capitalistic development has already fully shown the features of a model of supranational hegemony in the form of the driving role played by the US domestic market for the whole Western system until the 1970s. The German model, based instead on the dramatic increase of exports and the ensuing containment of internal demand, not only does not provide any possibility of expansion to the other European countries, but it even requires from them to pursue the same goal of accruing their competitiveness by lowering workers' salaries and dismantling their social security and pension systems. The password of this economic model is: growth without equality. In his book *Buying Time: The Delayed Crisis of Democratic Capitalism* Wolfgang Streeck has usefully highlighted the sense of the “domestic reforms” imposed by Germany and the massive losses in purchasing power caused by them, which today are jeopardizing any attempt at reviving European economies.

Yet, I do not intend here to demonize the role of Germany, which is undoubtedly supported by the consensus of a large “coalition of the willing”. It is time though to realize that the German line on austerity can perpetuate itself only insofar as it gathers a large consensus in Europe, not only among the conservative ruling elites (which have gained absolute supremacy after the suicidal of social-democracy), but also among the business elite. Austerity policies certainly hamper growth, and there-

for the occasion for profitable investments. And yet, in the prostration in which now trade union representation and labour politics are, it is now possible to appropriate more and more of the cake. Profits can increase without the political risk of a redistributive conflict that would inevitably break out in a situation of economic growth. Germany is nowadays the point of reference of a vast range of openly conservative European forces that support a neo-Malthusian economic and political model. Not by chance Macron's immediate request after his elections for a Euro budget to finance investments and stimulate growth has been already rejected. He has been accused, as usual, to try to turn the currency union into a transfer union, against Germany's interest. Germany is once again contending for primacy in Europe on the basis of a model of hierarchy and coercion.

(G. E.) Each of the major problems you've mentioned has occasioned a recrudescence of the national particularisms the EU has been charged historically with transcending, or at least finding the means of constructively mediating and containing. Indeed, those respective crises, not least because of their convergence and interpenetration, have acquired forms of severity that aggregate to a running general crisis of the "European project" per se. It's true that Germany has occasionally provided a forward-looking lead. But Merkel's surprisingly bold if arbitrary initiative on the refugee question has been more than matched by Schäuble's ruthless adherence to the austerity measures required by the reigning neoliberal orthodoxies. A "kind of self-referentiality" describes the German policy-making mindset very well. But exactly Schäuble's political obduracy even suggests a kind of latter-day hankering after non-military but nonetheless classical early-20th century German conceptions of *Mitteleuropa*, a suspicion for which the political arrogance accompanying the Greek debt crisis provides distressingly ample confirmation. That crisis has exposed the diminishing moral-political efficacy of any remaining "Europeanist" ideals, because if those ideals retained any reliably instituted, practically efficacious, convincingly internationalist meaning then the Greek predicament would surely have been the occasion for a more constructive debate and a spur to genuinely European intervention. Precisely the extreme vulnerability of Greece inside the overall power relations of the EU and the wider global economy (in common with the other PIGS countries) should surely have been a compelling call to moral-political action and strategically helpful and constructive social-political remediation as opposed to fiscal-disciplinary correction. Yet not only have "the Greeks" been demeaned and penalized (inside a shamefully contemptuous and near-racialized public discourse), but their structural predicament of indebtedness and dependency was originally engineered by the EU's fiscal machinery and dominant capitalist interests in the first place. The political crisis would be dire even without the increasingly rigidified and unbendingly punitive regulatory regime of the EU. But the effect of that actually existing EU policy regime is to maximize the harshness of the austerity measures so consistently demanded and applied by Germany policy-makers and their eastern and northern European allies. Inside this dominant political context, where is the ground for cooperative action based in explicitly internationalist (i.e. collective-European) principles? Routinized invocations of Europe's pre-1945 past and

the ending of the Cold War divisions are no basis for building that ground. There is indeed a lamentable political failure at the center of the EU's policy-making institutional complex: it's impossible to detect any operative vision of the future that's capable of mobilizing genuinely popular enthusiasm or enunciating a popular political appeal that's larger-than-pragmatic and other than economically self-interested. Instead the ground of emotionally satisfying political campaigning has been ceded almost entirely to the populist Right and its consistently effective if specious appeals to the nation and its purported sovereignties, quite apart from their xenophobic, racist, and Islamophobic aspects. The diminishing purchase of the arguments from economics alone inside a prevailing political-economic climate of austerity was made calamitously clear by the debacle of the UK referendum, after all. Yet, unfortunately, the officially constituted European leadership still shows depressingly little sign of being able to leave its well-earned complacency behind. Any renewal of the European project will require venturing out from the existing, doggedly reiterated, administrative, regulatory, and technocratic ground.

(W. S.) Germany is not the only country without a "political vision". There are sleepwalkers everywhere in the Europe of today, and the question seems appropriate if by demanding such a vision we may not be asking too much of our political leaders. Why no common EU growth policy? Rather than explaining its absence with reference to German culture, German unification or German self-referentiality following the end of the Cold War, one might remind oneself that we live in a world of a decaying capitalism in fundamental crisis that has long grown out of control. Why assume that there is or can be a common, unified growth strategy for a group of highly heterogeneous countries, in social structures, political cultures, socio-economic institutions, levels of development etc. etc., if only Germany was willing to think one up? Why expect Germany of all countries to feel an obligation to behave as though capitalism had already been overcome, i.e., "altruistically"? I do not think that the cluelessness of our leaders needs to be explained by their loss of historical culture, or by intellectual deficits. Both may be independently present, the loss as well as the deficits. But more important, I believe, is the fact that the growth capacity of contemporary capitalism is running out, and has been running out for some time – and that the institutional structures European elites have forged for their common house, the European Union, is particularly deficient when it comes to developing common solutions. Strangely enough, even people on the left who are highly skeptical on capitalism in general, when speaking about Europe often seem to believe that the present malaise is essentially a cognitive problem, if not just a German cognitive problem.

My hunch is that the time of big, internally diverse states, and even more so of potential supranational superstates, is over – and that the future may be on the side of small countries, like Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland and, perhaps, Scotland and Catalonia, with a capacity to use the toolkit of national sovereignty to define for themselves a niche in global markets where their peoples can prosper, more or less. Unlike a united Europe, they may be able to combine strategic intelligence and democratic participation, and respond nimbly and flexibly to changes in their – international – environment. For this Germany would have to give up the Euro, and countries like France and

Italy would have to decentralize and empower their regions, who in turn would have to empower their citizens, casting aside pre-modern, oligarchic, rent-seeking social structures that stand in the way of equitable economic prosperity – the revolution that we all were too lazy or too faint-hearted or too shortsighted to complete in the 1970s.

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*Rivista quadrimestrale di storia fondata da Ivan Tognarini*

Pubblicazione edita da Istituto non esercente attività di impresa.

Gli articoli sono valutati da referees anonimi.

Sito internet: <http://www.ricerchestoriche.org>

Il materiale inviato non si restituisce. La redazione si riserva inoltre di apportare ai saggi quelle modifiche necessarie a soddisfare le esigenze editoriali e grafiche della rivista.

Registrazione del Tribunale di Firenze n. 2289 del 14 giugno 1973

«Ricerche storiche», rivista quadrimestrale dell'associazione «Ricerche Storiche e Archeologia Industriale».

*Direzione:* Francesco Mineccia (direttore scientifico), Sara Fioretto (direttore responsabile)

*Segretario di Redazione:* Francesco Catastini

*Redazione:* Via Fiume, 8 - 50123 Firenze - tel. 055.289639 - e-mail: [info@ricerchestoriche.org](mailto:info@ricerchestoriche.org)

*Editore e stampatore:* Pacini Editore S.r.l. - Via Gherardesca, 1 - 56121 Pisa

Tel. 050.313011 - Fax 050.3130301 - E-mail: [info@pacinieditore.it](mailto:info@pacinieditore.it) / [abbonamenti@pacinieditore.it](mailto:abbonamenti@pacinieditore.it)

*Abbonamenti e prezzi:* Abbonamento annuo € 50,00, abbonamento estero € 85,00

un numero € 19,00, un numero doppio € 36,00, un numero triplo € 54,00

Versamento sul conto corrente postale n. 10370567 intestato a Pacini Editore S.r.l.

Versamento bancario: C.R. Volterra - filiale di Pisa

IBAN: IT 46 B 06370 14002 000010002603 BIC CRVOIT3V intestato a Pacini Editore S.r.l.

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