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### Orwell's shadow

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# Orwell's shadow

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The historian as an  
antidote to nationalism  
in postwar Asia and  
Europe



# **Orwell's shadow**

## **The historian as an antidote to nationalism in postwar Asia and Europe**

Inaugural lecture

delivered on 9 February 2016 at the University of Groningen upon acceptance of the appointment, through the Groningen University Fund, of professor of Europe-East Asia Relations, with a focus on Japan, at the Faculty of Arts by

**Janny de Jong**

A slightly shorter version of this text was delivered on 9 February 2016.

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Dear Rector and Members of the University Board, dear Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Your Excellency the Ambassador of Japan, distinguished guests, colleagues, students, ladies and gentlemen,

Today, first of all, I will take you to the very gloomy and dark world of the novel *1984*, written by Eric Arthur Blair, who you all know of course as George Orwell. He wrote this novel between May 1946 and December 1948, and published it on 8<sup>th</sup> June 1949, half a year before he died of tuberculosis.

*1984* was an immediate success, and became highly influential. Expressions such as 'thought police', 'thought crime', 'doublethink', 'newspeak', 'memory hole', and of course 'Big Brother' have entered the English language, just as the adverb 'Orwellian' has come to signify something sinister.<sup>1</sup> *1984* has been filmed twice, translated into some 65 languages, and has sold millions of copies worldwide.

I first read *1984* when I was about 16 years old, and it made a huge impression on me. Orwell's dystopia about a world where there is no escape from Big Brother and where people are taught to live only in the present, since only the present matters, was to me primarily a warning about where totalitarian regimes might lead to.

It was scary indeed; yet the idea that actual history was being constantly re-written in order to match the current circumstances situation (as you can see in the following quote: 'Oceania was at war with Eurasia. Therefore Oceania had always been at war with Eurasia'), that part did not strike me as very realistic. It was very crucial and fitting in the context of the novel, but indeed it was fiction. The notion that you could actually stop people remembering things, that memory could be controlled, sounded simply too bad to be true.

How little did I know.

Today, as in 1949 when Orwell published his novel, his shadow is all over the place, especially in regard to the use and misuse of history. This is the case in present-day East-Asia, as shown for example in the Chinese-Japanese tensions, and in Europe, which is confronted with economic distress and a crisis situation regarding refugees and displaced persons.

These two regions are not mentioned by accident: in my professional life, I divide my attention between Europe and East-Asia, particularly Japan. As Director of Studies, I am responsible for the International Erasmus mundus Master Programme *Euroculture*, and the track East Asian Studies in the Master International Relations. Furthermore, I am Director of the Centre for Japan Studies in Groningen. This lecture reflects both regions. Although quite diverse, there are also striking similarities in the role history plays in both Europe and Asia at present.

One of the best-known quotes about the role of the past in Orwell's *1984* goes as follows: 'Who controls the past, controls the future: who controls the present, controls the past. (...) All that was needed was an unending series of

victories over your own memory'.<sup>2</sup> And indeed, the protagonist Winston Smith works in the *Ministry of Truth*, where he constantly revises the past in order to stay in line with the present.

Last year, in August 2015, when the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Asia was commemorated, *The Economist* directly referred to this quote on its cover: 'Xi's history lessons: How China rewrites the past to control the future'.<sup>3</sup> The print edition opened its *leaders* section – in other words, it considered this item the most important that week – with the following blunt clarification regarding these history lessons: 'The Communist Party is plundering history to justify its present day ambitions'.<sup>4</sup> All in all, no less than ten pages were dedicated to history matters in Asia in this issue.

While also – in all fairness – referring to the ambivalent discussions on the past in Japan, the editorial uttered sharp criticism on firstly, the Chinese distortions of history, secondly, the peril of the first Chinese commemoration of the end of the Second World War by means of a huge military parade, and thirdly, the beating of the drum of nationalism by issuing continuous warnings in schools, museums and TV programmes that Japan was not only an aggressive power in the past, but that it could menace Asia again. The conclusion was that these issues constituted a grave danger for stability in the region.

*The Economist* also pointed to the possibility that nationalist agitation might affect internal stability: once the genie has escaped from the bottle, it is not easy to put it back again. That nationalist agitation can be a double-edged sword is a lesson the Chinese know from historic experience. Nationalist demonstrations are indeed a potential risk of the government, since they can turn into a platform for uttering other complaints and objections. National and local authorities are well aware of that: a recent analysis of anti-Japanese protests that took place in Chinese cities in 2012 shows that local authorities were less inclined to allow nationalist demonstrations in cities with many unemployed college graduates and ethnic minorities, in other words where there existed the potential risk of social unrest.<sup>5</sup>

Yet the past has also shown that domestic protests can be very effective for executing international leverage. The 2005 protests triggered by the Japanese state approval of a controversial revisionist history textbook, as well as the bid of Japan, together with three other countries, to gain a permanent seat at the UN Security Council, are a case in point.<sup>6</sup>

Already in the 1980s, Japan had become an 'easy target' of the nationalistic policies of China, when sharp criticism was expressed on Japanese history textbooks and on visits by high-ranking Japanese politicians to Yasukuni shrine in Tokyo – where the spirits are enshrined of those who fought on behalf of the Emperor.<sup>7</sup> That the great bulk of Japanese history textbooks in high schools in fact offer a rather dry account of the historic facts, and are relatively 'light on patriotism' – which is precisely why the nationalistic

Japanese Society for History Textbook reform wants schools to use textbooks with a more patriotic and less 'masochistic view' on this period – has become clear from a comparison of the textbooks used in China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan and the United States.<sup>8</sup> Still, it is true that Japanese textbooks have also downplayed controversial aspects, and are for instance particularly low on information about the Japanese colonial rule in Korea.

History education is often used as a tool to instil patriotic feelings. Examples of rewriting history to foster nationalism are therefore fairly easy to find. Recently, the re-writing of a great many schoolbooks in India was covered in the news: the Hindu Nationalist Party (BJP) of PM Narendra Modi tries to propagate a sense of 'Indianness', by referring to culture and values, and stressing the scientific progress in ancient times. It may surprise you to hear that stem cell technology refers back to the Hindu epic Mahabharata, and automobile technology existed already in India's Vedic times (1500-500 BCE before Common Era). The author of many of these school books, the Hindu activist Dina Nath Batra, did not see any harm: 'Education of every country should be rooted in its culture and wedded to its growth. I'll write whatever evokes nationalism in children'.<sup>9</sup>

Let's return from South to East Asia. The earlier quoted 'plundering' of history by China to justify present-day ambitions is a perfect example of Orwellian thinking: the past as a political tool. That history serves as a source to justify and butter up present-day concerns should not surprise us, however. This is, after all, hardly a new phenomenon: traditionally, histories were often written to memorise the good deeds and wise decisions of rulers.

Political nationalism tends to 'forget' certain events and stress others. The French philosopher and historian Ernest Renan already highlighted this feature in the 19th century, in his frequently quoted speech on the 'essence' of a nation (1882). He argued that not only this amnesia was done on purpose; in fact, it was crucial:

Forgetting, I would even say historical error, is an essential factor in the creation of a nation and it is for this reason that the progress of historical studies often poses a threat to nationality. Historical inquiry, in effect, throws light on the violent acts that have taken place at the origin of every political formation, even those that have been the most benevolent in their consequences.<sup>10</sup>

It is one of the reasons why nationalism has a doubtful repute. As the renowned historian Eric Hobsbawm pointed out in his important book *Nations and Nationalism*: 'No serious historian of nations and nationalism can be a committed political nationalist (...) Nationalism requires too much belief in what is patently not so. (...) Historians are professionally obliged **not** to get it wrong, or at least to make an effort not to'.<sup>11</sup>



So I am in excellent company when I argue that historians, instead of being an extension of the state or nation, not only ought to keep their distance, but what's more, play the role of what cultural historian Peter Burke has nicely called the 'remembrancer', a word that was used as a euphemism for debt-collector, who kindly 'reminded' people of debt they might have forgotten.

It is this topic that I will elaborate on further in this lecture, comparing how the role of 'remembrancer' might have and indeed has worked out in East Asia, particularly in Japan, and in Europe. And furthermore, how the Second World War, Cold War, and the End of the Cold War shaped post-war identity.

Peter Burke, to be fair, did not refer to *national* history. He signified the function of the historian in general as a custodian of the social *memory* of certain deeds and events. Very instructive indeed, not only to see what is remembered, but, perhaps even more importantly, to observe what is left out, suppressed, excluded. Historians, in his opinion, should be the 'guardians of awkward facts, the skeletons in the cupboard of the social memory'.<sup>12</sup>

I should make clear what I have in mind when using the term nationalism, presented in the title of this lecture as rather problematic, and in need of a neutralizing antidote. Nationalism can of course be perceived in different ways. One form is that of a shared, 'imagined political community', as the well-known definition of historian and political scientist Benedict Anderson points out.<sup>13</sup> Nationalism does not need to be exclusionary. In what is also called 'liberal nationalism', identification with 'a plurality of cultures and communities' can be a feature. Modern liberal nationalism, as defined by political scientist David Miller, allows for multicultural diversity within a society, an inclusive identity 'accessible to members of all cultural groups'.<sup>14</sup> It is nationalism in its exclusionary form that is potentially harmful for peace and stability.

In my view, the role of historians is not primarily to identify the 'villains' in history, and certainly they should avoid using an anachronistic framework. The duty of historians is rather to understand, interpret, and analyse the past critically. This critical investigation should be nuanced and balanced, but should not take into account what effects research might have on the image of a given country. Historians are not politicians.

I would like to illustrate this point with an example from close to home: the investigation of the policy regarding war crimes committed by Dutch soldiers in Indonesia during the Indonesian war of independence, and the Dutch public discussion about it. The first national debate about this started in 1969, when the revelations and accusations of whistle blower Joop Hueting on Dutch national television came as a shock. The psychologist Hueting – who was drafted to fight in Indonesia when he was 19 years old – told of crimes that had been committed by the Dutch troops in pursuing their task to restore 'peace and order'. These acts had not been mere incidents, but had been committed on a large scale.<sup>15</sup> It was much easier to talk about war crimes committed by the French in Algeria, Germans in Europe, and Americans in

Vietnam, than to look at what one's own troops had done, Hueting said, and yet it was necessary that 'a civilised nation' came to terms with this past and corrected the far too positive image of the way the war in Indonesia had been fought.<sup>16</sup>

In itself, this need not have been such an eye-opener. Already in the years 1946-1949 there had been discussion in parliament and the left-wing press in particular about violence committed by Dutch soldiers, and in 1949 the government did acknowledge that 'some' excesses had taken place, in particular in South Celebes (now: Sulawesi), and ordered an investigation into these matters. At the same time, the government played down the number of misdeeds and warned against thinking that this in any sense had been standard procedure.<sup>17</sup> The impact on the general public, also from the stream of publications in left wing news media after that, was rather limited. The uppermost sentiment was that the Dutch had been victims in and of the Second World War, and there was less space and understanding for criticism of Dutch warfare, and certainly less interest in general for what had happened in the East.<sup>18</sup>

In that respect, it was amazing that the public reaction to a current affairs programme, *Achter het Nieuws* (Behind the News) by the VARA, a left-leaning broadcast association, was so different. It immediately triggered reactions and debate, showing what influence this medium had, especially at a time when there were only two Dutch television channels.<sup>19</sup> Eight days later the news programme presented a follow-up, with interviews of other veterans, and a third broadcast a few days after that with a panel discussion about the political background and possible further steps. One of the panellists was a political novice: Hans van Mierlo. He was the leader of a newly founded party, D'66, and said that taking the perpetrators to court was not the primary aim – first and foremost it was important that the Dutch people confronted this past. However, the possibility should also not be excluded either, as otherwise it did not make any sense to ask 'our neighbours' to sanitise their past.<sup>20</sup>

Already on 24<sup>th</sup> January, the social-democrat J.M. den Uyl had requested an inquiry in parliament. The prime minister, P. de Jong, ordered an official investigation into the information that was available in the official archives; in the report, which was already published in June, the acts of violence were listed as incidents, or 'Excesses'. The word 'war crime' was avoided at the specific request of the prime minister, fearing for an emotional comparison to what Germans and Japanese had done during the Second World War. He also wanted to prevent the question of to what extent the people who were responsible for these war crimes had been punished.<sup>21</sup> A year later, the first substantive study on the colonial violence was published, which is still considered as a key reference today.<sup>22</sup>

Two decades later, a similar discussion took place. This time it was because of the way L. de Jong, at that time without doubt the best-known historian in the Netherlands, had used the word 'war crimes' in the manuscript of volume 12

of Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog (the *Kingdom of the Netherlands during World War Two*). Some members of the reading committee strongly advised against that usage, while others were in favour. One reviewer, 'a former army officer, even took the unprecedented step of leaking the text to a conservative newspaper, *De Telegraaf* (The Telegraph), that had already been very vocal in defending 'the' veterans. This caused strong public reactions and public debate; the final text would eventually read 'excesses' instead of 'war crimes'.<sup>23</sup> De Jong had already been severely criticised, and had even been taken to court by a committee with the telling name of Comité Geschiedkundig eerherstel Nederlands-Indië (Historical Rehabilitation Netherlands Indies), because it disagreed with the way he wrote about the Dutch colonial presence in the Netherlands Indies (volume 11a).<sup>24</sup>

Even though the end of colonial rule in Indonesia became a sensitive, even traumatic period in Dutch history – as would again be clear in 1995, when Queen Beatrix accepted an invitation from President Suharto for a State Visit, and the issue of formal apologies was raised in the Netherlands – gradually there was more space for recognition that indeed the warfare had been 'dirty', and the Dutch had not always belonged to the 'good guys'. This became evident in 2011, when a court ruled that the surviving relatives of men killed in a mass execution in a village in West Java, Rawagedeh, were to be paid money as compensation.<sup>25</sup> A little over a year later, the taboo on making formal apologies was broken, when a formal apology was issued by Tjeerd de Zwaan, the Dutch ambassador in Indonesia.<sup>26</sup> However, in 2005, Minister of Foreign Affairs B.R. Bot had already recognised, both in the Netherlands and in Indonesia, that the Netherlands had been 'on the wrong side' of history.

Still, the fact that such acts of excessive violence could *not* simply be described as incidents that took place in the framework of the so-called 'Politionele Acties' (itself a euphemism for war) in the years 1947 and 1949, but belonged to the very structure of the war, made the front pages again in 2015.<sup>27</sup> Historian René Limpach gave the Dutch regime the label of 'violent police state'. No more, no less. Not a pleasant message, but it is important that these facts are faced. Limpach acted - once again - as a remembrancer.<sup>28</sup>

At the same time, we have to acknowledge that these facts do not necessarily comply with the *memories* of the different people involved. It seems, as was stated in a background article in *NRC Handelsblad*, as if everyone has his or her own memory of the final years of the Dutch colonial presence in Indonesia.<sup>29</sup>

What can be digested from the above is that it is important to seek for:

1. Understanding on how power relations influence views and perceptions of the past, and in particular how the past is used as a political tool and – as a response;
2. A nuanced interpretation, taking into account various perspectives on an issue, and aspire for what professor of Japanese history Tessa Morris-Suzuki has called 'historical truthfulness'. There may never be a complete, let alone

fully objective and fully correct representation of the past, but to strive for a nuanced and balanced view is certainly possible and necessary.<sup>30</sup> It is here that the historian should blow the trumpet.

In the following part, I will discuss further how and why the history of the Second World War still plays a very important role both in Europe and in East Asia, and how the end of the Cold War influenced international and national politics and the perception of the past. Before I do so, I would like to delve a little deeper into the relation between history and memory.

While memory is imbedded in the present, historical understanding, though itself historically positioned in time, concerns the past. There is no agreement amongst historians as to the exact nature of the relationship between past and memory. The past should be separated as an object of knowledge from the present, yet the past is a kind of mould that influences and connects to the present.<sup>31</sup>

Memory can result in a feeling of rupture with the past, and different groups in society can have conflicting memories, depending on group, class, gender, or social position. Because of the great many studies of memory, the idea that the past itself is flexible and subject to change gains increasing ground. 'The past appears to be no longer written in granite but rather in water. It is continually reclaimed for power and identity politics', writes professor of English literature and renowned specialist on cultural memory, Aleida Assmann.<sup>32</sup>

The end of the Cold War significantly changed domestic politics and international relations in Europe and in Asia. It sparked what is often called a 'memory boom', a host of new studies on the role of memory, and this added 'a new layer of meaning' to the past.<sup>33</sup> Memory studies have developed into a vibrant interdisciplinary research field, particularly in relation to war, reconciliation, the Holocaust, and general historical injustices. It has almost become a matter of adding more of the same thing: 'we add yet another site of memory, we address yet another historical injustice.'<sup>34</sup>

Let us return to the perception of the history of the Second World War. When comparing the role that the experience of this war had in Europe and in Asia, large differences come to the fore, especially in relation to Germany and Japan. Both countries were confronted with an allied occupation, which in the case of Japan almost fully consisted of Americans, who came to the country with the idea to transform it into an American-style democracy as soon as possible.

Education as a means to foster democracy was thought important: already in 1945, a practice started that was called *Suminuru*: blackening – literally, with the help of black ink and paintbrush – all pages and sentences in schoolbooks that were deemed to have a militaristic, nationalistic or undemocratic character. This blackening practice started before the Americans even set foot in Japan, and was initiated by the Japanese government. In his important book

*Embracing Defeat*, John W. Dower describes this process in terms of 'simultaneously a ritual exorcism of teachings that had only yesterday been deemed sacrosanct and a practical exercise in encouraging criticism of received wisdom'.<sup>35</sup> It had a huge impact on the children.

New classroom textbooks with titles such as *Democracy reader for boys and girls – Shōnen shōjo no tame no minshu Tokuhon* – appeared in 1946, telling the children that even without the Allied occupation, democracy still ought to be introduced because: 'If we look at the history of mankind, to become a democratic nation and democratic people is true to the way people should be'.<sup>36</sup> The Americans took pains to introduce their reforms, such as the introduction of a new constitution, as Japanese, and presented their policies as a continuation of the democratic reforms that had already started in the 1920s, but had gone astray in the 1930s and 1940s because of a small group of military leaders. Censorship involved many topics; for instance, criticism of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP – the occupation government), China, Korea, the US or Russia was not allowed, nor were pictures or reports of the effects of the nuclear bombs. Framing the war in the narrative of good versus bad made criticism of the firebombs and nuclear bombs a difficult matter anyhow.<sup>37</sup>

The influence of the US remained large, even after the signing of the peace treaty in 1952. The focus on continuity might have legitimised the occupation, but implied that there was less interest in what had actually led to the war, or in whose responsibility it was, other than that of the state and the military.

Therefore it is a definite understatement to say that the war – which in Asia did not start in 1939, but already in 1931 – is still a very contested and much debated issue. While the Chinese in particular use this topic to strengthen their present-day nationalism, nationalist Japanese, including historians, do the same by arguing that the rhetoric of the war years was sincere, that the criticism by Western voices, in particular the Americans, is hypocritical, and that the war dead ought to be mourned as departed heroes, *eirei*.<sup>38</sup>

Yet at the same time, this nationalist point of view is highly controversial within Japan itself. The Japanese nation's memory of war, and in particular of defeat, has thus been called a 'conflictive and polyphonic public discourse'.<sup>39</sup> Although it is not unusual that conflicting opinions exist within nations in regard to war memory, the Japanese discourse is particularly strongly fragmented, with marked differences within the political spectrum. While in China the war history is used as a tool to unite the population, in Japan it has become 'an issue of national division'.<sup>40</sup> Therefore the war is anything but a past issue, but remains in 'living memory'. What is more, core symbols of Japanese nationhood, such as the flag and the emperor, are related to interpretations of Japan's past and identity.<sup>41</sup>

In the 1990s, there were already more than a hundred museums and exhibition sites concerned with war defeat or world peace in Japan.<sup>42</sup> Together, these represent a very conservative and nationalist vision, next to

more moderate and leftist views on what the true or correct story is.

Recent national museums in China on war offer a more unison view; the idea is to educate the people about Japanese atrocities, with the explicit purpose of to strengthening patriotic, nationalist feelings.

Nonetheless, a historic perspective on this rise of Chinese nationalism with a focus on Japanese war deeds shows it is a relatively new phenomenon. While Nanjing now looms large in the Chinese nationalist discourse, the violent capturing of this city did not play such a huge role during Mao's time, firstly because Nanjing was the Nationalist capital and communists were not involved, and secondly because he did not want to dwell on defeat. Or in the words of Ian Buruma: 'Mao's regime was interested in heroic narratives, not martyrology'.<sup>43</sup> When the peace treaty with Japan was signed in 1972 (sooner than this was not possible because the Japanese foreign and defence policy was closely tied to that of the US), the past was referred to, but did not play a major role. The Joint Communiqué of the governments of Japan and China acknowledged the Japanese responsibility for serious damage inflicted upon China, and looked to the future, mentioning relations of peace and friendship.<sup>44</sup>

Between 1979 and 2008, Japan spent huge sums on development aid to China, involving grant aid, loan aid, and technical cooperation.<sup>45</sup> This gave Japan political leverage in potential conflicts. Yet the 'special historical background' continued to play a role. This leverage is now gone, and one of the reasons for an increasingly tense relation between Japan and China is that the economic power of China – being very self-confident now – has risen tremendously. Another reason is the growing political importance of nationalism.<sup>46</sup>

Since the reforms of the Chinese economy by Deng Xiaoping in 1978, the communist ideology gradually lost its appeal. Economic reforms did not necessarily mean also political reform; this was made very clear during the 1989 Tiananmen square protests, which were violently suppressed by the military. As a result the CCP became increasingly dependent upon nationalism.<sup>47</sup>

In China, the end of the Cold War strengthened the focus on the Second World War experience. Its improved relations with the US coincided with an increasingly critical attitude towards Japan. The stress has been placed on victimhood and the atrocities Japan committed, which has in turn strengthened nationalism in Japan.

Though there are certainly issues that can be criticized, it is not true that the Japanese as a whole have sanitized the past and failed to acknowledge wartime aggression. For instance, Japan has repeatedly issued official apologies. Yet the overall image is not uniform because of ongoing disputes such as the visits of Prime Ministers Nakasone, Koizumi and Abe to the Yasukuni shrine, where souls of the Japanese war dead, including prominent war criminals, are enshrined, textbook issues, and problems regarding

acceptance of official responsibility towards the *ianfy*, the sexual 'comfort women'.

Historians have played a contradictory role here. Some Japanese nationalist historians, united in the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform (*Tsukurukai*), have pleaded for textbooks that stressed patriotic values, while others had a completely opposed view.<sup>48</sup>

I turn my attention to Europe now.

Looking back, one might say that Europe immediately tried to overcome the past of two World Wars and the influence of two totalitarian systems. In the European integration project that started with the European Coal and Steel Community in 1950, it was explicitly stated that cooperation was intended to prevent future war.<sup>49</sup> It was indeed highly remarkable how quickly France and Western Germany in particular came to terms with one another again. But one needs also to look toward outside intervention, namely the American pressure for the establishment of the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) in 1948 to implement the Marshall Plan, and most of all reduce trade barriers. Integration was first and foremost economic integration, though deepening and enlargement in other areas gradually followed suit.

When the European Union was granted the Nobel Peace prize in 2012, President Van Rompuy identified its 'secret weapon' as 'an unrivalled way of binding our interests so tightly that war becomes materially impossible'.<sup>50</sup> Yet this is not the only story to tell about coming to grips with the past.

Whilst in 2005 Tony Judt could write that 'the recovered memory of Europe's dead Jews has become the very definition and guarantee of the continent's restored humanity', this was not always the case.<sup>51</sup> Particularly in the first decades after the war, there was a collective amnesia. In all the previously German-occupied countries of Europe, the tendency was to block the memory, for instance with regards to the question of how many people had collaborated, and how much, and to move on instead. In France (to name just one example), it was only in 1995 that the reluctance to acknowledge the collaboration of the Vichy regime was overcome by President Chirac; this was the same year Queen Beatrix acknowledged the fate of the Dutch Jews during her visit to Israel.

We now remember with fondness how the social democratic German chancellor Willy Brandt knelt in Warsaw in 1970, as an ultimate symbol of atonement for the past, especially since he himself had been part of the resistance against Nazism. Therefore, in the words of *Der Spiegel* reporter Hermann Schreiber, Brandt knelt 'for all who need to kneel but don't – because they dare not or cannot or cannot dare (...) Then he kneels for Germany'.<sup>52</sup> However, here the picture is a bit misleading, since in fact this act was hotly debated in Germany at the time, as was Brandt's 'Ostpolitik' as a whole. Actually Brandt was in Warsaw to sign a treaty that recognised the

Oder-Neisse borders with Poland, an act which did not please everyone in Germany, to put it mildly.

The influential news magazine *Der Spiegel* directed an opinion research institute to conduct a quick poll on the question: 'Was Brandt allowed to go down on his knees?' Most of the respondents (48%) said the gesture was exaggerated, while 41% thought it had been an appropriate decision. In the age group 30-59 years, the percentage that considered the gesture overdone was higher: 54%.<sup>53</sup> Internationally, however, the acclaim for his gesture was immediately higher: *Time Magazine* made him Man of the Year, and in 1971 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

The picture became iconic, and it was this gesture that 'ended the postwar period', Bernard Giesen writes; indeed, he calls this the start of a new German political identity.<sup>54</sup>

It took until 1984 before a picture could be taken showing the French president and the German chancellor Helmut Kohl holding hands at the commemoration of the First World War.<sup>55</sup> Like the picture of Brandt, this became an iconic image, symbolising the narrative of a United Europe, a Europe that arose from the ashes of wars, and the reconciliation that had taken place since then. That holding hands in cemeteries can also go awfully wrong was proved by the action involving American president R. Reagan and chancellor Kohl at the German war cemetery in Bitburg in May 1985. The reason being that in Bitburg, Waffen-SS soldiers are also buried.<sup>56</sup>

This discussion refers only to Western Germany and its relation to Western Europe. The war memory in Eastern Germany was very different, as here German fascism apparently only referred to the Western part of the country. In general, the history and memory of the European East and West are strongly divergent.<sup>57</sup>

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union provoked a great many new studies and interpretations. What had been the official truth in the GDR, writes historian Tony Judt in his superb book *Postwar*, was now discredited root and branch. This carried another risk: if anti-fascism had been a communist lie, it was now very tempting to look with sympathy to all discredited anti-communists, including fascists.<sup>58</sup>



# DER SPIEGEL

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Historians have played an important role in countering myths about the Second World War, yet they did not necessarily agree amongst themselves. In West Germany, the so-called *Historikerstreit* comes to mind, which started in 1986 as a dispute in the public sphere between Jürgen Habermas and Ernst Nolte, the one opposing tendencies to 'historicise the past', by putting the Nazi atrocities in the context of other gruesome deeds, such as those committed by Stalin or Pol Pot, and the other opposing politicisation and demonization of German history. The ensuing debate was very political and ideological, and ended in a stalemate.<sup>59</sup>

After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, there seemed to be a strong political will for more European integration. However, the further development of the European project and the inclusion of the relatively poor Central Eastern European countries proved to be more so a policy supported by the elite than by the average EU citizen. The financial crisis of 2008 did not help either. Euroscepticism, which was always potentially there, has obtained a serious boost during the last decade. As China made Japan its evil empire, Europe is – mostly phrased in one-liners – identified as the new enemy of national identities. What is of particular interest here is that historians contributed for decades to paint a rosy picture of developing a European identity and spirit by stressing commonalities, and by largely neglecting internal differences. This image is changing now, as a result of an accumulation of crises. In particular, the crisis concerning refugees and displaced persons has fuelled an increase in nationalism. It also has forced the old enemy, Germany, into a leading role, which has led to mixed feelings.

What we can observe now, as a result of this Euroscepticism, particularly predominant among rightist, nationalist parties, is that Europe does not seem to recognise the benefits of its long-lasting peace.

Though the EU has indeed made it highly unlikely that its 28 members will be engaged in war amongst themselves, the nationalism that is developing at present undermines European cohesion and solidarity. Eastern European countries are on a collision course, which poses a danger for internal stability in the member states, as well as for Europe as a whole. In Europe, we see once more that history is misused for nationalist aims. Re-emerging nationalistic narratives produce a lack of trust, and lead to the radicalisation of groups who feel socially excluded. From having been a binding element, the EU has instead become a divisive factor.

If anyone knows well the dangers which nationalism, racism, xenophobia and populism present, it is historians. Historians have an obligation to offer an antidote, to correct images that play games with historical facts and reality. This does justice to historical truthfulness.

In the Euroculture Master programme, we have taken up the challenge with a curriculum which recognises that Europe's future is shaped not only by economics and politics, but also by struggles over identities, values, and

heritage. The programme highlights the vital interplay between culture and politics in European society.

However, further steps are thought to be necessary. Therefore, one month ago, I submitted an application on behalf of the Euroculture Consortium for a Marie Skłodowska Curie Joint Doctorate programme. Its objective is to investigate the condition of and need for societal integration in Europe today, and devises qualitative strategies to strengthen collective confidence and societal trust on different levels in Europe. It focuses on the cultural dimensions of the societal integration process. The project foresees positions for 15 PhDs, who are not only expected to conduct high-level research on pressing political and cultural issues, but also to engage in public debate by approaching relevant media for stimulating dialogue in the public domain.

To conclude:

In this lecture, I have shown that in both East Asia and in Europe it has taken quite some time to discuss the consequences of the war, and that taking responsibility and recognise one's own role has not been easy.

Historians have indeed played the role of 'remembrancer', but my own view is that they should engage much more in the public debate, especially when history is misused or misinterpreted. It certainly would not hurt the development of a fair picture if the reasons for and background of European integration, Europeanisation and democratisation would be contextualised and explained better. A strong emphasis on nationalism is dangerous.

I would like to conclude by mentioning one important element that I have not discussed so far, but which nevertheless is crucial. If historians need to play the role of 'remembrancer', then at least they should be able to execute and publish research independently. Nowadays, this freedom is not granted everywhere. I return to the book with which I started this lecture, *1984*, which contains a perfect description: 'Freedom is the freedom to say two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows'.<sup>60</sup>

Ik heb gezegd.



## **Acknowledgements**

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I am very grateful to the Groningen University Fund for the establishment of this chair. I would also like to thank the University of Groningen and the Faculty of Arts for this wonderful opportunity to encourage teaching and research in the challenging field of Europe-East Asia Relations with a focus on Japan.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Robert McCrum, 'The Masterpiece that Killed George Orwell,' *The Guardian*, 10 May 2009, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/may/10/1984-george-orwell>.

<sup>2</sup> George Orwell, *1984*, Penguin classics, London etc., 2000 (1st edition 1949), 40.

<sup>3</sup> *The Economist*, 15-21 August 2015. Print edition. Cover.

<sup>4</sup> 'Xi's history lessons. The Communist Party is plundering history to justify its present-day ambitions', *ibid*, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Jeremy L. Wallace and Jessica Chen Weiss, 'The Political Geography of Nationalist Protest in China: Cities and the 2012 Anti-Japanese Protests', *The China Quarterly* 222 (June 2015): 403-29, 411.

<sup>6</sup> The question how CCP leaders use domestic protest in interactions with Japan and in foreign relations in general is dealt with in Jessica Chen Weiss, *Powerful Patriots: Nationalist Protest in China's Foreign Relations*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014. From the same author: 'Autocratic Audiences, International Bargaining, and Nationalist Protest in China', [https://www.academia.edu/4341564/The\\_2005\\_Anti-Japanese\\_Protests\\_in\\_China\\_and\\_UNSC\\_Reform](https://www.academia.edu/4341564/The_2005_Anti-Japanese_Protests_in_China_and_UNSC_Reform).

<sup>7</sup> Yanan He, 'Remembering and Forgetting the War: Elite Mythmaking, Mass Reaction, and Sino-Japanese Relations, 1950-2006', *History and Memory* 19, no. 2 (October 1, 2007): 43-74. A lot of discussion has been going on about the question whether or not the protests were orchestrated or spontaneous. See for the last view for instance Yue-him Tam, 'Who Engineered the Anti-Japanese Protests in 2005?' *Macalester International*: Vol. 18, 2007, Article 25. <http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/macintl/vol18/iss1/25>.

<sup>8</sup> The textbooks promoted by the Japanese Society for History Textbook reform are used in less than 1 % of Japanese school districts. The comparison was done in the Divided Memories and Reconciliation project at Stanford University. The schoolbooks in the other countries under examination were much clearer bent on providing a patriotic and even triumphant narrative of the war. Daniel Sneider, 'Divided Memories: History Textbooks and the Wars in Asia', (29 May 2012) <http://www.nippon.com/en/in-depth/a00703/>; all examined Japanese textbooks recognised the killing of large numbers of Chinese. Daniel Sneider, 'Textbooks and Patriotic Education: Wartime Memory Formation in China and Japan', *Asia-Pacific Review* 20, no. 1 (2013): 35-54, 40; Sven Saaler, *Politics, Memory and Public Opinion: The History Textbook Controversy and Japanese society*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Monographien aus dem Deutschen Institut für Japanstudien, vol. 39. München: Iudicium-Verlag, 2006.1 (2013): 35-54, 40.

<sup>9</sup> Murali Krishnan, 'Rewriting textbooks in India, a hidden agenda?', *Deutsche Welle* 22 October 2015, <http://www.dw.com/en/rewriting-textbooks-in-india-a-hidden-agenda/a-18799080>.; earlier 'History Wars' erupt in India', ABC Radio Australia, updated 13 August 2014 <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/international/radio/program/asia-pacific/history-wars-erupt-in-india/1356146>, Accessed 20 November 2015. See also Chandrasahas Choudhury 'Self-censorship claims a victory in India', *Livemint* 13 February 2014, <http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/vo1qVpKUlhAwPXq6FhcKII/Selfcensorship-claims-a-victory-in-India.html>.

<sup>10</sup> [http://ucparis.fr/files/9313/6549/9943/What\\_is\\_a\\_Nation.pdf](http://ucparis.fr/files/9313/6549/9943/What_is_a_Nation.pdf). Accessed 19 January 2016.

<sup>11</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780. Programme, Myth, Reality*. Cambridge, 1990, 12-13.

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- <sup>12</sup> Peter Burke, 'Historian as social memory', in Thomas Butler, ed. *Memory: History, Culture, and the Mind*. Wolfson College Lectures 1988. Oxford, UK ; New York, NY, USA: B. Blackwell, 1989. 97-113, quote on 110.
- <sup>13</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities : Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. 2<sup>nd</sup>, rev. ed., London: Verso, 199, 5-6.
- <sup>14</sup> David Miller, *Justice for Earthlings, Essays in Political Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, 91.
- <sup>15</sup> Achter het nieuws, 17 January 1969. *1945 Nederlandsch Indië. 1949 Indonesië. 1969 Achter het Nieuws. Drie VARA-producties*. Transcripts of the texts, spoken during the broadcast of Achter het Nieuws 17, 25 and 27 January 1969, Uitgave omroepvereniging Vara, 1969, 16.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-20.
- <sup>17</sup> For a summary of the number of times this was discussed in parliament before 1969, see *De excessennota. Nota betreffende het archiefonderzoek naar de gegevens omtrent excessen in Indonesië begaan door Nederlandse militairen in de periode 1945-1950*. SDU uitgevers, The Hague, 1995, appendix 12, 1-12. See for instance The Minister of War, Parliamentary proceedings 19 March 1947, 1222-1223 who read a letter of a corporal who complained about the lies and propaganda in 'German style' by the communist newspaper *De Waarheid*. (*The Truth*). The critical report of two of the three specialists, C. van Rij and W.H.J. Stam on what became known as the Zuid-Celebes- affaire (the South-Celebes Affair), was not made public. Willem IJzereef, *De Zuid-Celebes Affaire*, Dieren: Bataafsche Leeuw, 1984, 152-153. However, in 2012 Members of Parliament received this report confidentially. The monthly magazine *HP/DeTijd* obtained a copy and decided to publish it on its website. See 'Nederland op Zuid-Celebes; een orgie van geweld', *HP/De Tijd* 14 July 2012, update 17 July, <http://www.hpdetijd.nl/2012-07-14/nederland-op-zuid-celebes-eeen-orgie-van-geweld/>. Accessed 14 January 2016.
- <sup>18</sup> J.A.A. van Doorn, *Gevangen in de tijd. Over generaties en hun geschiedenis*, Boom, Amsterdam 2002, 41-42. E. Locher-Scholten, 'Van Indonesische urn tot Indisch monument. Vijftig jaar Nederlandse herinnering aan de Tweede Wereldoorlog in Azië', *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review* 114, no. 2 (January 1, 1999): 192-222, 204.
- <sup>19</sup> For an analysis of why the medium of television created this difference, see S. I. Scagliola, *Last van de oorlog: de Nederlandse oorlogsmisdaden in Indonesië en hun verwerking*. Amsterdam: Balans, 2002, 295-302.
- <sup>20</sup> 'Achter het nieuws', 27 January 1969. *Ibidem*, 99.
- <sup>21</sup> Jan Bank, 'inleiding bij de heruitgave van de excessennota', *De excessennota*, 13.
- <sup>22</sup> J.A.A. van Doorn, and W.J. Hendrix wrote *Het Nederlands-Indonesisch conflict (The Dutch Indonesian Conflict)*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition 1970, 4<sup>th</sup> edition Walburg pers, 2012, based on information the authors gathered in Indonesia, when they were sent there to restore 'order and peace'.
- <sup>23</sup> Boudewijn Smits, *Loe de Jong, 1914-2005: historicus met een missie*. Amsterdam: Boom, 2014, 751-759; S.I. Scagliola, *Last van de oorlog: de Nederlandse oorlogsmisdaden in Indonesië en hun verwerking*, Amsterdam: Balans, 2002, 239-240; J.A.A. van Doorn, 'Indische trauma's', *HP/De Tijd*, 20 August 1993, 30-36, 32.
- <sup>24</sup> An overview is provided in Jan Th. M. Bank, C. Fasseur, E.H. Kossmann, A.H. Paape, I. Schöffner, and P. Romijn, eds. *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog. Deel 14 Helft 2: Reacties*. The Hague: SDU grafische bedrijven, 1991.
- <sup>25</sup> Excellent research into the Rawagedeh atrocity was done by Harm Scholtens, *Rawagedeh, 9 december 1947, een nieuwe Nederlandse versie?* (Master's thesis University of Groningen, 2007).

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<sup>26</sup> Bart Luttikhuis, 'Juridisch afgedwongen excuses. Rawagedeh, Zuid-Celebes en de Nederlandse terughoudendheid.' *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review* 129, no. 4 (December 12, 2014): 92-105.

<sup>27</sup> Anne-Lot Hoek, 'Geweld Indië was structureel', *NRC-Handelsblad* 14-8-2015.

<sup>28</sup> See also Harm Ede Botje, Anne-Lot Hoek, 'Onze vuile oorlog', *Vrij Nederland*, 10 July 2012. <https://www.vn.nl/onze-vuile-oorlog-2/>. Other publications: Gert Oostindie, Ireen Hoogenboom, and Jonathan Verwey. *Soldaat in Indonesië, 1945-1950: getuigenissen van een oorlog aan de verkeerde kant van de geschiedenis*. Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2015; Henk Schulte Nordholt, *Een staat van geweld, Inaugurale rede*, UvA, Amsterdam 2000. Hylke Speerstra, *Op klompen troch de dessa: Indiegongers fertelle*, s.l., Bornmeer, 2014. A Dutch translation was published in 2015.

<sup>29</sup> 'Wat er echt in ons Indië is gebeurd', *NRC-Handelsblad* 14-8-2015. In fact, there is a debate going on about whether these facts were actually forgotten, or suppressed, or were not crucial for the national memory. Remco Raben argues that a real incorporation of the knowledge about colonial violence was prevented because the colonial empire was not a central issue in Dutch national memory. That is why previous publications on the colonial military were not incorporated in the national narrative. See Remco Raben. 'On Genocide and Mass Violence in Colonial Indonesia.' *Journal of Genocide Research* 14, no. 3-4 (September 24, 2012): 485-502, 498. See also the introduction to this special issue of the *Journal of Genocide Research* (September 24, 2012) by Bart Luttikhuis and A. Dirk Moses. 'Mass Violence and the End of the Dutch Colonial Empire in Indonesia', 257-76, esp. 269-270 as well as P. Bijl, 'Colonial Memory and Forgetting in the Netherlands and Indonesia.' *Journal of Genocide Research* 14, no. 3-4 (2012): 441-61, and also J.J.P. de Jong, *Avondschot: hoe Nederland zich terugtrok uit zijn Aziatisch imperium*. Amsterdam: Boom, 2011, 10-13.

<sup>30</sup> Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *The Past within Us: Media, Memory, History*. London; New York: Verso, 2005, 29.

<sup>31</sup> Geoffrey Cubitt, *History and Memory*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007, 39.

<sup>32</sup> Aleida Assmann, 'Transformations between History and Memory.' *Social Research* 75, no. 1 (2008): 49-72, 57.

<sup>33</sup> Sheila Miyoshi Jager and Rana Mitter. *Ruptured Histories. War, Memory, and the Post-Cold War in Asia*. Cambridge, Mass.; Harvard University Press, 2007, 2.

<sup>34</sup> Astrid Erll, 'Travelling Memory.' *Parallax* 17, no. 4 (November 1, 2011): 4-18, 4.

<sup>35</sup> John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*. London: Lane, Penguin Press, 1999, 247.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 249.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 411-414. The controversy in 1995 over the text that accompanied the exhibition of the Enola Gay, the B-29 used to drop the nuclear bomb on Hiroshima, at the Smithsonian Air and Space museum in Washington is a case in point. Historians of repute complained about the unbalanced historical context in an open letter, dated 31 July 1995. Philip Nobile, and National Air and Space Museum, eds. *Judgment at the Smithsonian. Smithsonian Script by the curators at the National Air and Space Museum*. New York: Marlowe & Co, 1995.

<sup>38</sup> For *eirei* see Akiko Takenaka, *Yasukuni Shrine: History, Memory, and Japan's Unending Postwar*. Studies of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015.

<sup>39</sup> Akiko Hashimoto, *The Long Defeat: Cultural Trauma, Memory, and Identity in Japan*. New York City: Oxford University Press, 2015, 15.

<sup>40</sup> Philip A Seaton, *Japan's Contested War Memories*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Ltd., 2007.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>42</sup> Roger B. Jeans, 'Victims or Victimizers? Museums, Textbooks, and the War Debate in Contemporary Japan.' *The Journal of Military History* 69, no. 1 (2005): 149–95; Matthew Allen and Rumi Sakamoto. 'War and Peace: War Memories and Museums in Japan.' *History Compass* 11, no. 12 (2013): 1047–58; Walter Hatch, 'Bloody Memories: Affect and Effect of World War II Museums in China and Japan.' *Peace & Change* 39, no. 3 (July 1, 2014): 366–94.

<sup>43</sup> Ian Buruma, 'From Tenderness to Savagery in Seconds', *The New York Review of Books*, 13 October 2011. <https://www.chinafile.com/library/nyrb-china-archive/tenderness-savagery-seconds>. Allen, Matthew, and Rumi Sakamoto. 'War and Peace: War Memories and Museums in Japan.' *History Compass* 11, no. 12 (2013): 1047–5.

<sup>44</sup> 'Joint Communique of the Government of Japan and the Government of the People's Republic of China', available on <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/china/joint72.html>. Accessed 14 October 2015.

<sup>45</sup> Reinhard Drifte, 'The Ending of Japan's ODA Loan Programme to China—All's Well That Ends Well?' *Asia-Pacific Review* 13, no. 1 (May 2006): 94–117. Between 1979 and 2005, Japan transferred 3.13 trillion yen to China in loan aid (yen loans), 145.7 billion yen in grant aid, and 144.6 billion yen in technical cooperation.

<sup>46</sup> Jayshree Bajoria, 'Nationalism in China.' Apr 2008. Council on Foreign Relations. <http://www.cfr.org/china/nationalism-china/p16079>. Accessed January 2016  
Edward Friedman, 'Raising Sheep on Wolf Milk: The Politics and Dangers of Misremembering the Past in China', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 9, no. 2–3 (2008): 389–409, 392.

<sup>47</sup> Edward Friedman, 'Raising Sheep on Wolf Milk: The Politics and Dangers of Misremembering the Past in China', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 9, no. 2–3 (2008): 389–409, 392.

<sup>48</sup> For more on this matter, see an interesting and balanced reader: Sven Saaler and Justin Aukema, eds. 'The Politics of Memory in Japan and East Asia', *Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, Course Reader no. 7, 2013.

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.schuman.info/9May1950.htm>, accessed 20 January 2016.

<sup>50</sup> [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_SPEECH-12-930\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-12-930_en.htm), accessed 18 January 2016.

<sup>51</sup> Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*. New York, NY etc.: Penguin Press, 2005, 804.

<sup>52</sup> 'Dann kniet er, der das niet nötig hat, da für alle, die es nötig haben, aber nicht da knien – weil sie es nicht wagen oder nicht können oder nicht wagen können (...) Dann kniet er da für Deutschland'. Hermann Schreiber, 'Ein stück Heimkehr', *Der Spiegel*, 14 December 1970, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-43822428.html>.

<sup>53</sup> The poll was conducted by the Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach. 'Kniefall angemessen oder übertrieben?', *Der Spiegel*, 14 December 1970, no. 51, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-43822427.html>; Michael Sontheimer, 'Kniefall vor der Geschichte', 3 Oktober 2010, <http://www.spiegel.de/einestages/willy-brandt-in-warschau-a-946886.html>, accessed 4 February 2016.

<sup>54</sup> Bernhard Giesen, 'The Trauma of Perpetrators: the Holocaust as the Traumatic Reference of German National Identity', In *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, edited by Jeffrey C. Alexander, Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2004, 112–54, 132.

<sup>55</sup> <https://iconicphotos.files.wordpress.com/2010/05/010204149300.jpg?w=700>, accessed 4 February 2016.



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<sup>56</sup> Giesen, 'The Trauma', 133-134; Richard J. Jensen, *Reagan at Bergen-Belsen and Bitburg*. Vol. 1st ed. Library of Presidential Rhetoric. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007, 125-126.

<sup>57</sup> Bronislaw Geremek, 'Common memory and European identity.'  
[http://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/sites/default/files/2856\\_EN\\_politics\\_past\\_en\\_090603\\_1.pdf](http://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/sites/default/files/2856_EN_politics_past_en_090603_1.pdf).

<sup>58</sup> Judt, *Postwar*, 824.

<sup>59</sup> See *New German Critique*, No. 44, Special Issue on the Historikerstreit (Spring - Summer, 1988) for the importance of this debate for matters such as the political use of history.

<sup>60</sup> Orwell, *1984*, 93.