



**THE POWER OF THE PAST: A
HABERMASIAN APPROACH TO THE
STUDY OF COLLECTIVE WAR
MEMORIES IN INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS ILLUSTRATED BY
RECENT FRANCO-GERMAN
RELATIONS**

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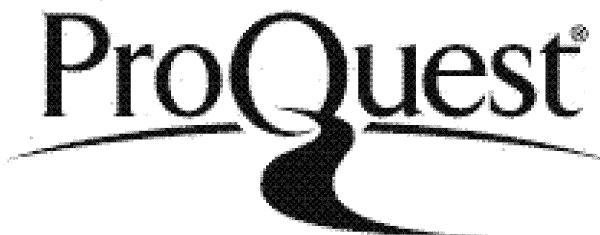


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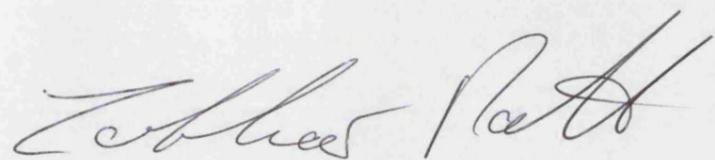


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To Beatriz, Valentina and Daniel

Written declaration

Herewith I declare that this work is my own.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lothar Rast".

Lothar Rast

30 September 2006

THESES

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Abstract

The central question of this thesis is how to conceptualise the impact of collective war memories in international politics. The main theoretical argument developed in the work is that Jürgen Habermas' Critical Theory, in general, and his two concepts of social learning and political legitimacy, in particular, are useful and hitherto unexplored ways of advancing our knowledge concerning that question.

Based on this premise the thesis highlights the importance of political memory groups for the formulation of practical imperatives in politics and develops a theoretical concept of social learning that can be applied to the remembering of past wars. It further argues that societies can learn to remember past wars in different stages and that those stages can be identified in the history of Western Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This is illustrated by the cases of Germany and France in that period.

Delving further into the question of how collective war memories may or may not legitimate international politics and foreign policy decisions, the dissertation develops a notion of political legitimacy that is based on Habermas' theory of communicative action. The discussions in France and Germany concerning both the attempts to form a European Defence Community (EDC) in 1954 and the European Monetary Union (EMU) in 1991-1992 are used in this work to illustrate the application of this notion of legitimacy.

The thesis concludes that Habermas' Critical Theory not only helps to advance our theoretical knowledge of the impact of collective war memories on international politics, but also provides useful insights into possible ways to critically and consciously transform such an impact.

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love, their understanding and sacrifices that this thesis was possible at all. Both children were born while I was doing this thesis, and I often had to turn down their pleas for joint quality time with their dad. But my greatest gratitude and admiration is for Beatriz, whose strength, love and support were the sole reason why I was able to write and finish this work. It is with all my love, my respect and my gratitude to Beatriz that I dedicate this work to her.

List of abbreviations

ADMP	Association pour Défendre la Mémoire du Marechal Pétain
BDKK	Bund Deutscher Kriegsgeschädigter und Kriegshinterbliebener
BHE	Bund der Heimatlosen und Entrechteten
BT	Bundestag
BVN	Bund der Verfolgten des Naziregimes
CDU	Christlich-Demokratische Union
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CHG	Commission d'Histoire de la Guerre
CHGM	Comité d'Histoire de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale
CHOLF	Commission d'Histoire de l'Occupation et de la Libération de la France
CNR	Conseil Nationale de la Résistance
CSU	Christlich-Soziale Union
DDP	Deutsche Demokratische Partei
DNVP	Deutschnationale Volkspartei
DP	Deutsche Partei
DKP	Deutsche Kommunistische Partei
DMIH	Délégation à la Mémoire et à la Information Historique
DUD	Deutscher Union-Dienst
DVP	Deutsche Volkspartei
EC	European Communities
ECB	European Central Bank
ECSC	European Community for Steel and Coal
ECU	European Currency Unit
EEC	European Economic Community
EDC	European Defence Community
EFTA	European Free Trade Area
EMU	European Monetary Union

EU	European Union
FDP	Freie Demokratische Partei
FN	Front National
FNCPG	Fédération Nationale des Combattants Prisonniers de Guerre
GDP	Gesamtdeutsche Partei
GDR	German Democratic Republic
HIAG	Hilfsgemeinschaft auf Gegenseitigkeit
IAR	International Authority of the Ruhr
IR	International Relations
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands
MRP	Mouvement Républicain Populaire
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NKFD	Nationalkommittee Freies Deutschland
NPD	Nationalpartei Deutschlands
NSDAP	Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei
OEEC	Organisation of European Economic Cooperation
PCF	Parti Communiste de la France
PDS	Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus
POW	Prisoner of War
PS	Parti Socialiste
RPF	Rassemblement pour la France
RPR	Rassemblement pour la République
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander of Europe
SEA	Single European Act
SFIO	Section Française de la Internationale des Ouvrières
SED	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands
SRP	Sozialistische Reichspartei
UDC	Union Democratique du Centre
UDF	Union pour la Démocratie Française
UDSR	Union Démocratique et Socialiste de la Résistance

UFAC	Union Française des Associations de Combattants
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Education and Science Organization
VdK	Verband der Kriegsgeschädigten, Kriegshinterbliebenen und Sozialrentner Deutschlands
VDS	Verband deutscher Soldaten
VVN	Verein der Verfolgten des Naziregimes

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INTRODUCTION

The question of what nations should do about a difficult past is one of the great subjects of our time.

Timothy Garton Ash¹

Since the 1990s there has been an increasing interest in the phenomenon of collective memory among various disciplines of the social sciences, such as sociology, cultural studies, history, media studies, anthropology, political science, linguistics, and social psychology (Irwin-Zarecka, 1994:10). In fact, although the term ‘collective memory’ was coined by the French sociologist and philosopher Maurice Halbwachs back in the 1920s,² it was not until the 1980s that the term became a subject of debate in disciplines other than psychology. By then, the post-modern and post-structural critique of the social sciences and the subsequent stress on identity formation led to a re-discovery of Halbwachs’ writings on collective memory (*New German Critique*, 1997:3). Additionally, the 1990s saw the emergence of a new sub-discipline of cultural studies, cultural sociology, that made the study of collective memory as a social phenomenon its centrepiece.³

Also, in the 1990s the concept of collective memory gained prominence in the literature on International Relations (IR). This was partly due to the echoing of post-modern and post-structural critique targeted against positivist IR (George, 1994; and Smith, Booth and Zalewski, 1996). This critique coincided with the rising interest in ideational phenomena, such as collectively shared ideas, values and norms that challenged materialist (in the broad sense) approaches.⁴ Ideational approaches of IR theory departed from approaches or schools which pre-suppose timeless motives or general interests attached to states-as-actors, such as Realism, or, which, like Pluralism, focus on components of states, such as decision-makers or specific interest groups. Rather, in the ideational perspective, collectively shared ideas, such as collective memories, are seen as temporary phenomena that exert varying influence on the relations between

¹ Quoted in: Cairns and Roe, 2003: 65.

² On Halbwachs’ theory see: Halbwachs, 1958; Halbwachs, 1980 and Halbwachs, 1992.

³ On this discipline see: Fentress and Wickham, 1992 and Irwin-Zarecka, 1994.

⁴ On the ideational critique of IR that gave rise to Kratochwil’s constructivism in IR see: Kratochwil and Lapid (eds.), 1996; and Katzenstein (ed.), 1996.

political communities. The interest in studying collective memory in IR, therefore, lies in its assumed explanatory power of current behaviour of states in the international realm. In other words, these approaches in IR suggest that collective memory influences the present formulation of foreign policy objectives and national interests, which, in turn, helps to account for the behaviour of states or collectivities (nations, transnational or Diaspora groups) in the international arena.

Among the variety of events in the past that may give rise to collective memory, traumatic events, such as genocide (including the Holocaust) and wars, occupy a prominent position. As Ekkehard Krippendorf claims, “no single act of politics interferes so radically and so profoundly in the lives of people, in fact in the life of every single human being, as war” (Krippendorf, 1982:29). Following Krippendorf it can be assumed that, from all possible collective memories, collective memories of wars exert a particularly strong impact on international relations. In fact, in the 1990s the presence of the past, the conscious recalling or invoking of past wars, gained unexpected relevance for IR. The new regimes in the republics of the former Soviet Union, as well as in the Balkans, mobilised people – often for war or fighting – by making reference to past wars that fuelled territorial or political claims or fears of domination or even extinction. Similarly, during the process of German reunification in 1990 historical references to a return to “Bismarck’s Germany” or even the looming of a “Fourth Reich” abounded. Furthermore, in recent years, the consciousness and articulation of historical wrongdoings and perceived unjust events in the past – sometimes very recent past – have triggered demands for restitution and reparations (Torpey (ed.), 2003 and Barkan, 2000). To be sure, the majority of these claims for restitution have taken place at a domestic level in countries like Argentina, Rwanda, Cambodia, or South Africa. But there have also been cases of inter-state relations heavily influenced by claims for restitution (like the policy of Bolivia toward Chile for the lost access to the sea or the Chinese claims against Japan for atrocities committed during the Second World War).⁵ As these examples show, past wars and violent conflicts have increasingly influenced the present agenda of the relations between states. Despite the undeniable importance of collective war memory for current interstate relations and the well-documented influence of the past in German, Israeli, Yugoslav or

⁵ See the case studies in: Barkan, 2000 and Torpey (ed.), 2003.

Northern Irish presents; and although much academic work has been produced that confirms that collective war memories are important factors in national and international politics, it remains unclear just how to conceptualise the impact of collective war memories on international politics. As Jan-Werner Müller, referring to the Yugoslav wars, states:

[...] while very few would doubt that memory mattered and exercised power [...], fewer would be able to explain precisely how it mattered. Thus, despite the intense focus on memory in history, sociology and cultural studies, the memory-power nexus remains curiously unexamined. And while it has become a commonplace to stress the imaginary quality of the nation, tradition, and implicitly, memory, that is their sheer 'constructedness', just how these imaginations and constructions come to have real political consequences is far from obvious (J.W. Müller (ed.), 2002:2).

It is precisely this question that the present work aims to tackle. More concretely, in this dissertation I argue that a) collective war memories do have an impact on international politics; b) this impact varies according to the role and interaction of memory groups in the political process; and c) in order to assess the conditions under which this impact might actually take place, it is necessary to analyse (1) the level of social learning in collective war memories, embedded in the concrete formation of rationalisation processes in societies, as well as (2) the conditions of practical discourses in politics that generate political legitimacy.

In developing this argument I strongly rely on Jürgen Habermas' Critical Theory, and more specifically, on his theory of social evolution, as well as on his theory of communicative action. More concretely, in this work I seek to provide a better understanding of the impact of collective war memories on IR by applying Habermas' Critical Theory to (a) the historical rise and possible future transformation of national collective war memories, (b) the different levels of social learning in remembering past wars, and (c) the formation of political legitimacy. For one thing, Habermas' theory of social evolution offers useful tools for the historical analysis of societies, as well as of the changing role of communicative action in them. For another, this theory, with its emphasis on the importance of political legitimacy and the conditions necessary to create it (practical discourse), constitutes a very useful framework to develop the concept of social learning in remembering past wars and a notion of political legitimacy,

both of which, I claim, help to advance our understanding of the impact of collective war memories on international politics.

To be sure, some of the questions posed in this work have been dealt with in the literature, although from a different perspective. The theme of collective memory, for one, has been, as was stated above, explored since the 1920s. Interestingly enough, Halbwachs' studies were followed by a wave of scepticism in the 1930s, when sociologists such as F. Bartlett (1932), advanced the idea that collectivities could not have a memory. Halbwachs' thesis would however experience a revival, when authors from different disciplines brought the notion of the reciprocal constitution of collective and individual memory to the foreground. Just like Halbwachs did, these authors argued that individuals require social frameworks to be able to remember, while social frameworks are also influenced and shaped by individual memory (Mahlberg, 1987:23-34).

While this approach is illuminating in that it points to the interplay between the individual and society, its ultimate focus lies on individual memory, something that renders it prone to reification. In fact, by de-linking social memory from individual memory, this approach runs the risk of confusing the analytical concept with the empirical phenomenon, thus screening out the 'social sphere' and leaving the question regarding the process or processes whereby individual remembering is transformed into a collectively shared state of mind unanswered. For, as Winter and Sivan (1999) have pointed out, collective memory is a mediated process, where civil society and intermediate groups or lobby groups play a crucial role. Thus, although the mutual constitution of and the relationship between individual and collective memory have been stated, and despite the fact that the role of intermediate groups as important means of communication and transformation between individual and collective memory has been mentioned in this approach, neither the political process nor the way in which this transformation takes place, is adequately addressed.

In turn, psychologists, psychoanalysts and social psychologists have shed light into the mental processes and psychological functions of collective war memory. Recent literature on the two world wars, but, above all, recent Holocaust and genocide studies, have drawn attention to the presence of past events that are deemed 'traumatic', usually

linked to immense scales of physical and psychological suffering and the loss of loved ones (Neal, 1998; LaCapra, 1998; and Douglass and Vogler, 2003). These studies rely on psychoanalytical concepts like ‘melancholia’ and ‘working through’, developed by Sigmund Freud, to point to the reason for the presence of the past. They argue that, from a psychoanalytical point of view, the past pervades the present, because it cannot be easily overcome. The traumatic impact of the experiences encapsulated in the memory of the past can, according to these approaches, only be overcome through therapeutic intervention.

In my view these works have contributed two important aspects to the study of collective memory: firstly, they have drawn attention to the fact that memory does not simply refer to events, but also to emotions, feelings of guilt, shame, pride. It is indeed emotions and psychological mechanisms at work that are to be held accountable for possible distortions of eyewitnesses’ perception of past events (both at the time of the event and in the later remembering of the event). Secondly, psychoanalytic approaches stress that collective remembering and recalling of past suffering, such as that experienced during the two world wars or genocides, is actually part of the individual and collective mourning process and, thus, part of dealing, of coping, with traumatic events. Hence, seen from the psychoanalytical perspective, collective war memories are both part of the problem (feelings attached to a certain event in the past) and part of the solution, or dealing with the problem (mourning and working-through of those feelings attached to past events). Despite these valuable insights, however, these approaches, with their focus on the individual level and its projection onto the social level, have screened out the political system and the political processes and their interactions with collective war memories.

As regards the area of conflict and peace research, most studies on the relationship between violent conflicts and collective war memory have relied on social psychological concepts such as ‘collective images’ or ‘collective perceptions’ to explain the impact of collective war memories in IR (Kelman (ed.), 1970; Larsen (ed.), 1993; Rieber (ed.), 1991 and Volkan, Montville and Julius (1991). Some authors have stated the existence of a “negative cycle” between collective memory of past wars or massive violence and the continuous war. As cases in point they cite the ongoing Northern Ireland conflict, the Balkans and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Chirot and Seligman

(eds.), 2001; Kaufman, 2001; and Cairns and Roe (eds.), 2003). Yet, such theorising relies on an analogy between individual and collective psychological phenomena, screens out politics and fails to address the contested and communicative nature of memory. Furthermore, these approaches fail to address the becoming, stabilising and transformation of collective images. Thus, while insightfully pointing to the cognitive dimension of collective war memories, this literature fails to highlight the link to politics and to understand the contested process character of collective war memories.

Post-structuralist authors in conflict and peace research, such as Vivienne Jabri (1996), also highlight the relationship between a “negative cycle” of discourses on collective war memories, which reproduce the image of the enemy through discourses about ‘the other’, and continuous wars or violence (Jabri, 1996:134).⁶ Such functionalism and single-effect models, however, do not match with the variety of empirical cases. Neither the case of West Germany nor the case of South Africa confirm the general claim that collective memory of past wars and massive violence leads automatically to the reproduction of enemy images. Much to the contrary, the evidence of such cases shows that collective war memories may have many different outcomes. These different outcomes point to the shortcomings in theorising about the translation of war experiences into collective war memories that contradict social-psychological or post-structuralist assumptions. Moreover, although post-structuralist authors shed light onto the contested nature of collective war memories and the fact that the past is “reconstructed” according to present needs, they fail to include a notion of politics and highlight the interaction between these contending discourses on collective war memory and politics.

Collective memory has also been a subject of attention of the discipline of cultural studies. Works from this perspective stress that collective memories are no passive ‘imprints’ on people, but rather, the result of ongoing activity among the collective forms of remembering. Collective war memories are reproduced and reinforced by conscious action both by governments and society at large in cases like monuments, museums, history textbooks or publications on the past, as part of the repertoire of national ‘memory sites’ (*lieux de mémoire*, in Pierre Nora’s words). These mechanisms

⁶ This is very similar to the theoretical assumptions of psychological approaches. On the parallels see: Volkan, 1988.

of organised and structured remembering acquire even more importance where ‘first-hand experience’ by those who were present at certain events (like World War I) slowly disappears. Thus, from this perspective, collective memory is much more than the result of mental activities.

Interest in the practices involved in collective remembrance has also triggered research about collective war memory as a process and an outcome of contested versions of particular memories. This contested nature of collective war memories is exemplified in the controversies that often take place over war memorials, even films, or war commemoration ceremonies. The observation of this phenomenon has prompted the emergence of a widespread literature on the ways in which politics shape collective memories and the representations of past events. Drawing from the notion of “invention of tradition” (Hobsbawm and Ranger (eds.), 1983), which in the 1980s emerged in the literature of nationalism to denote the role of the modern state in the construction of tradition and “the past”, this literature on war memories stresses the use and abuse of the past by political forces to legitimate their position on or claims to power and their policies in the present. Thus, the manipulative grip of politics on the formation and representation of collective memories is fairly well documented in the literature. By contrast, the opposite question, central to this thesis, of how collective war memories influence politics, especially international politics, has hardly been addressed by these authors.

Similarly, a considerable stock of literature in the sub-field of foreign policy analysis highlighted in the 1980s and 1990s how collective memories informed specific decision-makers, particularly in times of crisis. According to these works, decision-makers tend to reduce the complexity of decision-making by drawing on historical analogies and specific lessons from the past or myths in order to come to decisions, particularly in times of foreign policy crises (Buffet and Heuser (eds.), 1998; Neustadt and May, 1986). While this argument points to a very concrete influence of memory on foreign policy, the literature on this approach leaves out of its analysis the wider social and political context in which the decision-making process takes place.

Finally, Ashplant, Dawson and Roper (2000:3-85), have noted that two major paradigms dominate our understanding of the construction of shared memories of past

wars: the top-down and the bottom-up-approach. The top-down approach focuses on activities and manipulations by states to ‘invent’ traditions, to repress certain information and to mould collective war memories to present public needs and interests. The opposite approach also identified as the “social-agency”-approach (Winter and Sivan (eds.), 1999) focuses on individual and group memories that struggle with other groups and government agencies for dominance and privilege and in order to silence alternative voices.

This approach also finds support in oral historians and scholars who advocate a “history from below” to highlight the gap between “official” memory and popular memory of past wars or violence. In other words, personal, non-official accounts are seen as critique or alternative voice to the official version. At present, this trend of thought sees the construction of collective war memories predominantly as a struggle. Yet, lacking a notion of politics, these types of approaches fall short of explaining how the different interests are reconciled – unless a crude philosophical realism is given the preference here. This, again, points to two important deficits in the current literature on collective war memories: a lack of any notion of politics and an insufficient attention to intermediary agents as well as processes of mediating those interests with the constructed collective war memory. Moreover, these approaches suffer from two methodological and epistemological flaws that need to be avoided by any theorising on the impact of collective war memories on international politics: first, they reify collective memories by approaching them as something apart from social groups or social and political processes within societies and giving them a life and existence of their own; and, second, they fail to question the “official” or “public” memory, often influenced, if not outright controlled, by governments or influential groups and not synonymous with the memory that many individuals hold on a past event.⁷

This brief review of the literature on collective memory points, on the one hand, to the need to inquire into the political and social processes whereby collective war memories come into being and are transformed; for focusing exclusively on the outcomes, be they a decision, a representation of memory or a policy, is clearly insufficient to establish to what extent, if at all, collective memories have an impact on international politics. On

⁷ The emerging sub-disciplines “history from below” and “oral history” highlight the often extreme difference between the two forms of memory of the same past event.

the other hand, it makes it evident that specific tools are needed to assess the actual impact of these memories on international politics. It is the aim of this work to make a contribution towards filling these gaps. In order to do so, and based on Jürgen Habermas' Critical Theory, I propose to analyse the communicative process through which collective memories are both shaped and contested. By communicative processes I refer to communicative action of societies and the practical discourse to create political legitimacy. Both terms will be discussed and introduced in more detail below.

It is in fact my contention that, by looking at a) the level of social learning in remembering past wars, b) the level of societal rationalisation and, c) a communicative concept of political legitimacy, it is possible to provide a theoretical framework to answer the empirical question regarding if and to what extent collective war memories have an actual impact on international politics.

Given the contested nature and the lack of general definitions of the term 'collective memory', it seems important to clarify basic concepts in Chapter 1. Based on a re-reading of Maurice Halbwachs, the concepts of collective war memories and "political memory groups" are developed. Chapter 2, in turn, introduces Habermas' Critical Theory of social evolution and, as one strand of that theory, his theory of communicative action and relates it to political memory groups and collective war memories. By the end of chapter 2, the general approach of Habermas is explained and the proposed application of his Critical Theory to the study of collective war memories in IR spelt out. In chapter 3, the rise and transformation of national collective war memories in modernity will be discussed with reference to the Habermas' theory of social evolution and, as one of the strands thereof, the concept of social learning. In order to illustrate the change in the levels of social learning in remembering past wars, the case of Germany (chapter 4) and of France (chapter 5) are discussed. These two chapters explore how both France and Germany, on very different roads and for very different reasons, are currently engaged in a process of remembering past wars at what Habermas calls a post-conventional level of social learning.

The second application of Habermas' theory of social evolution is the concept of political legitimacy, which is developed in chapter 6. This concept provides the theoretical framework to analyse the empirical impact that specific collective war

memories have on particular decisions or courses of international politics. To illustrate the application of this framework, chapter 7 looks at two specific decisions in international politics in France and Germany; namely, the decision to form a European Defence Community (EDC) in the 1950s and the decision to form a European Monetary Union (EMU) in 1991 after the negotiations in Maastricht.

In the final remarks I highlight some of the areas, where approaches of a critical practice, based on a Habermas-inspired Critical Theory of collective war memories, might be applied. This final section emphasises the fact that Habermas' theory is not only heuristically useful, but also a reliable guide for critical action with regard to collective war memories and their possible impact on international politics. A brief section of final remarks restates the main arguments and findings of the thesis and recapitulates on the salience of the past in our understanding of the present.

A Theoretical Foundations

Chapter 1

Conceptualising Collective Memories and Collective War Memories

Whatever epoch is examined, attention is not directed toward the first events, or perhaps the origins of these events, but rather toward the group of believers and toward their commemorative work.

Maurice Halbwachs (1992:234-235)

James Fentress and Chris Wickham have characterised the topic of social memory as “a vast subject, and a complete treatment would range from psychology to philosophy, from neurology to modern history, and from zoology to Proust’s *petite madeleine*” (1992:202). Similarly, Ana Douglass and Thomas Vogler have commented on memory: “Perhaps nowhere are there more unexamined assumptions and unargued assertions than in the memory business, and few issues are as ideologically charged” (2003:14).

The underlying premises are in fact too diverse even within one discipline, let alone across disciplines, to give a comprehensive and still meaningful overview of the discussion about memory. This may be one of the reasons why hardly any author on collective memory provides a general definition of the subject. Another obstacle may be caused by the absence of an agreed understanding about one of the main questions - if not *the* question – posed by the subject; namely, how to conceptualise the interaction between individuals (who are finally the ones who remember) and collective memory.

Given the lack of agreed definitions or characteristics of collective memory, it seems important to clarify the key terms used in this thesis. It is my contention that Maurice Halbwachs, who is sometimes identified as the founding father of the study of collective memory, has offered a convincing conceptualisation of the relationship between individual and collective memory, which has not been appreciated until recently in the literature. Thus, the first part of this chapter will briefly introduce Halbwachs’ conceptualisation of collective memory and highlight how this guides the study of collective memory in epistemological, but also methodological terms. The second part of this chapter will look at another central question in the study of collective memory:

the relation between history and memory. This discussion highlights not only the relationship between historiography and lived and constructed collective memory, but also the role of critique of collective memory by historiography. The third part introduces the practices or, in the words of Connerton (1989), “bodily practices” of collective remembering that are involved in collective memory. This part also shows that remembering is not only a cognitive or mental act, but also entails directed activities. A fourth part clarifies the three central dimensions of collective memory, the cognitive, the emotional and the practical-moral dimensions, that are also of primary importance to the thesis.

Based on the previous discussions, the fifth part of the chapter develops the notion of ‘political memory groups’, which is central to the conceptualisation of the way and extent to which collective war memories influence national and international politics, which will be carried out in the following chapters. The chapter then moves on to the specificity of collective war memories and clarifies how the term ‘collective war memories’ will be used in this thesis, thus preparing the ground for the introduction, in chapter 2, of the theoretical framework of the thesis, i.e. the Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas.

1.1 The role of social groups in collective memory: Maurice Halbwachs

The French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1877–1945) wrote extensively on conceptual questions concerning the study of collective memory. He was the first to refer to the phenomenon of ‘group memory’, which he described as “[...] remembrances of events and experiences of concern to the greatest number of [group] members. This memory arises either out of group life itself or from relationships with the nearest and most frequently contacted groups” (1980:32). Halbwachs explored this phenomenon in four of his writings: “The Social Frameworks of Memory” (*Les Cadres Sociaux de la Mémoire*) published in 1925; “The Legendary Topography of the Gospels of the Holy Land” (*La Topographie Légendaire des Evangiles en Terre Sainte*), published in 1941; “The Collective Memory of Musicians” (*La Mémoire Collective chez les Musiciens*) published in 1939; and “Collective Memory” (*Mémoire Collective*)

published post mortem in 1950.¹ With his death in 1945, his writings and, therewith, the study of collective memory fell almost into oblivion until the late 1980s.²

Even after the renewed interest in the phenomenon of ‘collective memory’, Halbwachs’ analyses were briefly mentioned, but not made the subject of reflection or departing point in the theorising on the subject. Often he was dismissed as a ‘social determinist’ and not given particular attention. This seems unjustified, given the fact that the author addressed, in a rather rigorous and detailed fashion, central questions of the study of collective memory, in particular, the question regarding how individual and collective memory are related to one another.³ Yet it is only recently that Halbwachs’ writings have been given more attention in the literature on collective memory and the careful balance, which Halbwachs tries to strike between individual and collective memory, has been re-discovered, as well as his critical edges toward the study of collective memory (Devine-Wright, 2003:9-33; Winter and Sivan (eds.), 1999:24-25).

In this first section, I aim to demonstrate that Halbwachs’ answers and suggestions concerning the relation between the individual and collective memory, as well as about the importance of social groups, are of great usefulness to the study of collective war memory. For one thing, Halbwachs provides a conceptual framework that clarifies the relationship between individual and collective memory while avoiding the pitfalls of social determinism, on the one hand, and the individualism on the other hand. For another, he tries to come to terms with the task of “how to relate a conception of memory which, while doing full justice to the collective side of one’s conscious life, does not render the individual a sort of automaton, passively obeying the interiorised collective will” (Fentress and Wickham, 1992:ix).

The psychologist Frederick Bartlett wrote in 1932 about Halbwachs’ work: “[w]hether the social group has a mental life over and above that of its individual members is a

¹ The first two articles are included in Halbwachs, 1992; the last two in Halbwachs, 1980. The last essay was meant to be a reply to the critics of his earlier essays. However, his sudden death in the concentration camp of Buchenwald in 1945 left this essay a fragment.

² The four main treatises of Halbwachs on collective memory, written between 1925 and 1941, were translated into English in the 1970s and 1980s.

³ See in particular the reply to his psychologist critics in Halbwachs, 1980: 13-17.

matter for speculation and belief" (1932:300).⁴ Without denying the possibility that something like a collective memory may exist, Bartlett considered individual memory as the only form of memory that could qualify for scientific research. Halbwachs engaged at length with that critique. It seems to me there are seven claims central to Halbwachs' response to Bartlett's critique that characterise in brief his approach to the study of collective memory.

First claim: individual memory requires social frameworks

Halbwachs declared any individual, monadic memory of the past to be impossible. He had three sets of arguments for that claim: Firstly, any individual requires a social group, or, to be more precise: social frameworks (*cadres sociaux*), in order to establish the meaningful links between events and facts that make up a memory (1992:53 and 58; 1980:27-32). Without a socially constructed awareness of past, present and future marked by certain remembered events, an individual would not be able (a) to link individual events or circumstances on a linear time scale (past-present-future) and (b) to establish meaningful links between them. Thus, individuals establish links between events by socially established meanings (1980:58). These social meanings make memories communicable and meaningful.

Secondly, memory of the past serves the purpose of social bonding and requires thus the coincidence and agreement with others. For many critics this assertion gave too much emphasis to the social environment of individuals, thus describing the individual's memory as a mere result of group memory.⁵ Individuals have more than shared memory, but membership of a group is linked to the reproduction of a certain group memory by remembering certain facts deemed important to the group. This sharing of memory, which is different from the idea that each member has the same kind of memory, is what renders certain memory collective.⁶ However, the shared memory is not an individual property (like a common denominator everybody possesses) but,

⁴ Such a critique against the concept of collective memory has been echoed by Gedi and Elam, 1996:30-50.

⁵ On these critics see: Halbwachs, 1980: 16-17.

⁶ This is why Halbwachs does not immediately regard a deviant memory present within a group as evidence against the existence of collective memory. See: Halbwachs, 1980: 52.

rather something that is only present when group members meet regularly and jointly remember the past.⁷

Thirdly, individuals seek confirmation by other group members of their recollections of the past. One reason for this is that the consciousness of shared experience itself provides a form of bonding between these individuals and makes it possible to relive this event in the presence of other witnesses, for example through re-enactments of past events. Any event or date remains, however, essentially contested because of its embeddedness in different social groups or societies.⁸ This renders the 'official history' of a group or nation one form of memory, but by no means the only one. There are, in fact, many memories about groups and nations (including the memory of the group or nation about itself). This claim also rejects the idea that any social group has a homogenous, static or uncontested memory. Resulting group identities supported by collective memory can be described as a temporary reconciliation between these different memories. While collective memory contributes to the necessary condition of identity for social entities, it is always a temporary form of reconciliation.

Second claim: memory depends on language and communicable categories that are social by necessity (deep hermeneutics argument)

The two most important tools to remember, language and social categories, which any individual requires, are also of a social nature. Halbwachs makes that reference to the embeddedness of individuals in specific social-cultural environments that provide important tools to grasp natural and social environments in the first place:

People living in society use words that they find intelligible: this is the precondition for collective thought. But each word (that is understood) is accompanied by recollections. There are no recollections to which words cannot be made to correspond. We speak to our recollections before calling them to mind. It is language, and the whole system of social conventions attached to it, that allows us at every moment to reconstruct our past (Halbwachs 1992:173).

⁷ "Our confidence in the accuracy of our impression increases, of course, if it can be supported by others' remembrance also. It is as if the very same experience were relived by several persons instead of one." Halbwachs, 1980: 23.

⁸ The contested nature of memory was, thus, stated long before post-structuralism. It is therefore surprising that the study of collective memory is not prominent in post-structuralist writings. See: Hodgkin and Radstone (eds.), 2006: 3.

As Durkheim and later Wittgenstein insisted, a private language is a logical contradiction and an empirical anathema. So if ‘individual thought’ from a language point of view is nonsensical, so is the concept of ‘individual memory’. Both rely on tools that are always social by nature.⁹ Here Halbwachs draws on arguments developed by hermeneutics in the sense that any individual or even society, at a certain period, is embedded in a lifeworld, i.e. the sum of all cultural codes, habits and interaction that creates a level of understanding necessary for interaction and collective survival, and which is usually assumed unconsciously.

But Halbwachs goes further and insists that collective memory is even the pre-condition of any knowledge. While Kant argues in his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1998) that perception, concepts and ideas require each other for knowledge, Halbwachs includes collective memory in this triangle. Perception is only possible with the help of meaningful words. These words owe their meaningfulness to a shared memory. This shared character of memory makes understanding of and communication about objects possible. Collective memory is, therefore, a necessary element of perception (Halbwachs, 1992:168). The ontological claim implies that any knowledge is conditioned by collective memory and fundamentally time- and group-bound.¹⁰ The ultimate consequence of this argument is the rejection of there being any knowledge prior to language and to experience. This argument was put forth by the nineteenth century romantics against supporters of the Enlightenment (epitomised in the controversy between Kant and Herder) and the philosophical hermeneutics.¹¹ This creates a consciousness of what I call the hermeneutic condition:

The conceptual world in which we live conditions us. If thought is to be conscientious, it must become aware of these prior influences. It is a new critical consciousness that now has to accompany all responsible philosophising, and which takes the linguistic and thinking habits built up in the individual in his communication with his environment, and places them before the forum of the historical tradition to which we all belong (Gadamer, 1975:xv).

⁹ Connerton makes a similar argument and refers to “habit-memory” as a precondition of understanding (1989:23), which seems very close to Gadamer’s concept of deep hermeneutics. On Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics see: Gadamer, 1975, in particular pp.311-324.

¹⁰ For a more elaborated discussion on the problematique of memory-free knowledge see: Fentress and Wickham, 1992:4-7.

¹¹ On the debate between hermeneutics and Enlightenment see: Riedel (ed.), 1994:7-18.

Third claim: collective memory is established and maintained through public discourse (including narratives) and public commemorative activities of the group

In order to carry out the function of social bonding, activities are required and, necessarily, they have to be carried out in the public sphere of the group. Without that public sphere, the support of social identity and bonding will not be achieved by reconfirming the sameness of interpreting and valuing certain pasts. As Winter and Sivan have stated:

Collective remembrance is public recollection. It is the act of gathering bits and pieces of the past, and joining them together in public. The 'public' is the group that produces, expresses, and consumes it. What they create is not a cluster of individual memories; the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Collective memory is constructed through the action of groups and individuals in the light of day (Winter and Sivan (eds.) 1999:6).

Halbwachs develops that argument by drawing attention to the fact that memory is not something passive or fixed in the individual human brain, but needs communication and joint remembrance activities by the group to maintain a certain *shared* memory of past events. Collective memory requires constitutive and supportive social action. Public rituals, commemorations or conversations, *interactive remembrance* of group members, provide the space for reinforcing recollections of the past, reconfirm (or challenge) narratives or attached meanings of past events. Such activities presuppose, but also reproduce, shared meanings or constitute a ground to test whether the hitherto dominant meanings of past events are still valid.¹²

Through shared memory, bonding across generations in a group is also expressed and established by public celebrations and ceremonies. By remembering the significance of certain events that not even all group members may have experienced first-hand, they all share first-hand a joint and certain experience of that significance. In other words: it is the meaning and significance that a group attaches to an event and that is shared, not necessarily the experience of the original event itself. While later generations cannot experience an event first-hand, they are personal witnesses of the significance of a commemoration of an event. Group members realise and often share the importance of,

¹² A similar notion of collective memory is proposed by Douglass and Vogler: "What is 'collectively' remembered is not in this sense the sum of isolated personal experiences but something that was an intensely shared communal experience [...] (Douglass and Vogler, 2003:17).

say, a parade or a celebration of a certain event. But this experience is only possible if an individual grasps the significance of a commemoration through a social framework. Additionally, there are experiences made by the group that further provide material for shared group memory. Memory attaches significance to facts and events and this makes differences between the facts and events (important/unimportant; positive/negative; affirmative/repulsive).

This claim has important methodological implications for the study of collective memory: collective memory, which serves the purpose of social bonding and sharing meanings, is present, I would argue, when the group comes together and practices that bonding and sharing.¹³ Thus, joint discourses, the struggle between different versions and the sharing of narratives of past events or joint commemorations and ‘bodily practices’ are not a ‘proof’ of collective memory, but actually the practices by which collective memory is established in the first place. It is in those two areas, public discourses and commemorative activities by the group, where collective memory can be identified and analysed. They are part of the bonding and the reconfirmation of the group as a group. This interactive element makes commemorative practices different from ‘memory resources’ such as films, history books and museums, since they are offers for collective memory frameworks which may or may not be used or applied.

Fourth claim: collective memories of the past are constructed by the present needs of the group

In contradistinction to Henri Bergson, his earlier mentor, Halbwachs assumes a ‘presentist view’ on collective memory¹⁴: the present group or society reconstructs the memory of the past according to its present needs (Halbwachs, 1992:182-198; Halbwachs, 1980:80). Halbwachs argues that a group will only remember events that have significance for it in the present. If external circumstances or the composition of the group change (generational changes, for instance), it might happen that a certain event might lose significance, and, thus, any meaning for the group as a whole (Halbwachs, 1980:80). Some authors regard this view as being too constructivist and

¹³ See also Connerton: “If there is such thing as social memory, I shall argue, we are likely to find it in commemorative ceremonies [...]” (1989:4-5). On the importance of public commemoration see also: Gillis (ed.), 1994.

¹⁴ On the term ‘presentist view’ and the debate on this approach see Lewis Coser’s introduction in Halbwachs, 1992:1-34.

caution that this presentist approach does not explain the sustained presence of certain events or facts in social entities. In other words, the ‘internal context’ and structure of an old memory only allow a transformation to a certain degree.¹⁵ While this argument highlights the limited transformability of the content, it does not really contradict Halbwachs’ ‘presentist view’. If a certain event becomes irrelevant for the sustaining group, it will vanish from the collective memory of that group – however long this process might take.

Fifth claim: collective memory necessarily prioritises sameness over difference of group experience

The group itself influences the selection of experiences that have been chosen, accepted and jointly remembered by the group. It is in particular experiences that are similar which reconfirm the dominant values in the group. Halbwachs identifies a need for groups to recognise a *shared* similarity, or even identity, with each other and with manifestations of the same group in the past – despite all changes of persons and circumstances within the group – in order to accept a *we-ness* and not dissolve into its component parts. This quest for unity is supported by collective memory, in that it focuses on similarities of experience: “When it considers its own past, the group feels strongly that it has remained the same and becomes conscious of its identity through time. The greatest part of its memory spans time during which nothing has radically changed” (Halbwachs, 1980:85-86). Collective memory, then, contributes to a sense of continuity that helps to foster a sense of identity and thus enables the group to survive as such.

Collective memory is well suited to maintain a ‘we’ over time, argues Halbwachs, by connecting the past with the present, focusing on sameness or similarities (1980:87; 1992:83).¹⁶ Therefore, one other (and very powerful) source for changes in collective memory over time is the need to smoothen out differences between members of a group or between groups in a society; to focus on sameness and to forget acts that highlight differences (Halbwachs, 1992:182-183).

¹⁵ On the difference between ‘external or social context’ and ‘internal context’ of narratives see: Fentress and Wickham, 1992:71-72.

¹⁶ See also: Fentress and Wickham, 1992:30. This does not exclude particular cases where social groups are created from collective memory: “In its most direct meaning, a community of memory is one created by that very memory.” (Irwin-Zarecka, 1994: 47).

Sixth claim: Collective memory needs to provide a useful framework of individual experiences

While Halbwachs insists on the need to use social frameworks to appropriate experience when members participate in group activities, he also underlines the fundamental role of individuals: if social frameworks and the resulting collective memory are not firmly grounded in specific time and space and connected with the experience of individuals, the stated collective memory in the group remains without emotional attachment. There cannot be such a thing as universal memory for Halbwachs (1980:84). Memory is linked not only to concrete social entities, but also to concrete experience of events and facts. Without the possibility for individuals to structure, control and link their own experiences to group memory, that memory either changes or remains without emotional attachment by its members (Halbwachs 1980:58-59). The importance of experience is closely linked to the claim that remembering constitutes meaningful relations between events.

Collective memory requires specific 'landmarks' (events, persons, places, dates) for its existence. These landmarks provide 'rules of attention': that is to say certain dates, persons and events are deemed important to the group.¹⁷ Group members use these landmarks in order to locate their own experience in the group memory. This claimed link between experience and memory renders any concept of the latter inevitably historical and attached to specific groups. Thus, Halbwachs claims that collective memory *forges* the recollection of experience, but does not *invent* a group memory from nothing. The link between memory and experience influences the relative importance an individual attaches to the collective memories provided by the different groups of which she is a member. The relative strength of group frameworks depends to a large extent on whether the individual uses that framework for interpreting his or her experience. Here Halbwachs stresses the impact of the individual and defies any ideas that suggest that individuals are simply bent into pre-constructed collective memories that have no significance for them. This view is in line with authors who have pointed to the limited success of fabricated memories in societies where the public sphere is tightly controlled – for example in former and present Communist countries (Irwin-Zarecka, 1994:91).

¹⁷ This necessity of collective memory is analysed in Halbwachs' study "The Legendary Topography of the Gospels of the Holy Land". See also: 1992: 175.

While Halbwachs acknowledges the potential for using collective memory for political purposes, he does not regard collective memory as a pure means of propaganda. The author points to the necessary balance between manipulation and the usefulness for individual experience in order to be accepted and used as a means of bonding with the group and structuring past experience. In line with Halbwachs, Irwin-Zarecka points out:

The essentially mythical structure of remembrance, the often all-too-obvious ideological bents, the emotional charges of symbols and disputes, in short, the expected departures from objective (and dry) facts do not make collective memory into a terrain of pure fiction. What they do is necessitate a closer look at their own truth claims. For in order to understand how collective memory works, we must appreciate how it is framed in relation to its base- collective experience (1994:145).

Halbwachs makes the social groups the fundamental building blocs of collective memories. However, there are horizontally competing social groups and there are different social groups on the vertical axis, from family to class to the nation. Halbwachs argues that all these different groups provide different social frameworks for remembering experiences in different ways. The importance of the group for the individual depends, as in the case of different horizontal groups, upon the connectedness to the personal experiences of the individuals (Halbwachs, 1980:76). Additionally, the more affected the group members are by an experience, the more they look for collective memories that are connected to that experience (Halbwachs, 1980:83-84). This is why Halbwachs assumes that broader frameworks such as that of a nation have a lesser impact on the individual than do social groups such as families, classes, or religious groups (Halbwachs, 1980:77).

In his work, Halbwachs also shows the relevance of collective memory for the formation and transformation of political and social groups. He illustrates this point in his analysis of classes. He argues that one basic component of class is the mutual recognition of class members of a shared experience. Against Marxist or structuralist theorists, Halbwachs insists that the specific manifestation of class goals and class action can only be understood if a double process of interpretation within the class is taken into account. First, the membership of a class at a particular period depends upon

the specific recognition of shared experiences. Second, the specific formulation of class interest, then, depends upon the temporarily dominant collective memories emanating from the remembering of those experiences.¹⁸

In recent years feminist writers have identified 'memory projects' for the formation and formulation of collective interests (Irwin-Zarecka, 1994:130).¹⁹ Others have pointed to sub-groups within nations, such as aborigines in Australia or African Americans within the USA, that claim a different memory of the past that is more in agreement with their own remembrance of the past (Mellor and Bretherton, 2003; and Conley, 2003). Through discourse, singular individuals realise that they share certain experiences. The sense of sharing a certain experience enables the formulation of common viewpoints and interests. These memory projects challenge the current political and social order in two ways: first, they expose the marginalising and silencing aspect of the current official or dominant formulation of collective memory, and, second, they bring to consciousness that certain experiences are not the result of idiosyncratic factors, but, rather, a structural feature of the current social and political order. These examples coincide with Halbwachs' definition of class and the necessity of identity among group members. Any collective memory has to be reconciled with particular experiences. If this reconciliation fails to materialise, new collective memories –sometimes causing the re-grouping of members – will occur.²⁰ As long as members of the group have that feeling of shared experiences, the group is able to reproduce itself and represent itself to itself through memory work. But if this feeling vanishes, either group memory will be transformed or group membership will change or, in the worst case, disappear.

Seventh claim: only hurtful experiences on the national level supersede other social frameworks in structuring experience

The many intermediary groups on a vertical scale provide social memories that connect much more easily with the particular individuals under normal circumstances. This is why Halbwachs never seemed interested in analysing the collective memory of nations. However, Halbwachs did concede that extreme events, such as wars or catastrophes,

¹⁸ For a further elaboration on Halbwachs' notion of class see: Halbwachs, 1958 and Halbwachs, 1992:181-182.

¹⁹ For a documentation of a feminist 'memory project', see: Haugg (ed.), 1987.

²⁰ Such an option is only available in groups with voluntary membership.

might have a deep enough impact for people to provide a national framework of memory that supersedes other frameworks (Halbwachs, 1980:77). However, even in those rare cases where national history, which Halbwachs defines as the ‘faithful summary of the most important events that have changed the life of a nation’ (1980:77), are predominant, there is still no homogenous view as to how to remember this event. Halbwachs mentions the fact that important landmarks of national history may be remembered differently within the nation.

What are the implications of those claims by Halbwachs for the study of collective memory? How appropriate are Halbwachs’ concepts for the study of collective war memories? I believe that the claims regarding social groups (admittedly a very broad category, ranging from family to towns, nations or classes) help to highlight some of the interactions between individual and collective memory: the shared significance is re-confirmed and established through common practices. This implies that collective or shared memory is only to be identified during those activities where such shared meanings are established or rehearsed, i.e. during discourses, ceremonies, parades, speeches, debates etc. Methodologically, this means that collective memory is only present in those gatherings and can only be read off from those gatherings and activities. Those activities are given preference over other ‘memory resources’, since they directly aim at establishing bonds and shared meanings. The disadvantage of analysing those memory resources lies in the necessity to infer the assumed sharing of a collective memory that is offered by that resource. I would claim the increase of those resources, ranging from buildings to songs is what causes the (justified) uneasiness that many authors feel with regard to memory studies, given that scholars infer an acceptance and sharing of certain meanings that are sometimes unintentional and far from certain to be accepted by group members. It therefore seems useful to follow Halbwachs’ insistence to concentrate on public commemorations and discourses for the analysis of collective memory.

Halbwachs convincingly rejects the idea that ‘collective memory’ refers to identical memories among the members of a group or a common minimum denominator. Rather, it refers to something sufficiently shared by group members. The individual memory includes many more memory traits than that of a single group and thus will only be a part. But Halbwachs’ insistence on the public nature of remembering seems not only to

be in line with many current scholars, but also follows from his reasoning of bonding and sharing meanings. Although public commemorations and discourses on the past are identified as the locus of collective memory, I understand Halbwachs in that he does not imply any uncritical acceptance of “official collective memory”, but, on the contrary, alerts us to the need to use oral history and history from below to see how far those social frameworks of collective memory are accepted and applied. Furthermore, I would argue that from Halbwachs’ concept of collective memory, there is a need to reflect on the conditions of public discourse and public commemorations in order to avoid reification and confusing officially paraded collective memory with shared memory, while not abandoning the idea that those occasions are the main locus where collective memory *can* be established.

Halbwachs offers one selection criterion of collective memory, sameness of experience, which helps us to understand why and how certain events are remembered or forgotten. While this is a useful insight, it seems important to add to that other mechanisms, particularly psychological, are also at work in the process. These will be discussed below.

The link between personal experience, group experiences and the memory of past events is an important and also a critical one. I would argue that Halbwachs already laid the foundation for the idea of ‘history from below’ or ‘oral history’.²¹ While it would be futile to claim that eye-witnesses or testimonies are necessarily “truer” than recorded history, documents or reflections on an event, oral history does provide an insight into whether or not there is a sufficient match between perceived personal experience and collective memories and the variety of remembrances of the same event.

The claims that individual and collective memory is performed by language and social frameworks help limit the range of possible forms of individual and collective memory. These relational aspects of individual memory show that memories need to be communicable to and shareable with others. Furthermore, the deep-hermeneutic condition reminds authors that we will always grasp only part of the layered cultural memory within a society, most of it being unconsciously followed and not made the

²¹ On oral history see: P. Thompson, 1998; and Perks and Thomson (eds.), 1998.

subject of reflection. A conscious remembering of the past means that people use categories (including linguistic ones) of the past in the present in order to grasp consciously specific events or parts of that past. One might even go as far as to say collective memory is a form of self-reflection of the past about itself via the present. While this reflection fosters a consciousness of the embeddedness of knowledge in experience encapsulated in language and social concepts via memory, the fact that this applies to entire societies and works mainly unconsciously makes it difficult to draw specific insights into the study of collective memory.

As was mentioned above, Halbwachs' interest is more with smaller social groups, particularly social classes. The marginalisation of national frameworks is due to the fact that "in normal times" that framework seems less appealing to the experience of many individuals and citizens. However, it is precisely what Halbwachs deemed "the exception", traumatic events or wars, which are central to this thesis. Although Halbwachs does not analyse specifically collective war memories, it seems appropriate to apply his thoughts also to collective memories of different types of war. In those memories, the relation between individual and collective memory, as well as the need for a social framework, and the usefulness for individual experience seems to apply, too.

In sum, individuals require certain instruments provided by a wider social arena. Those instruments exert an influence on the formulation and articulation of individual memory. At the same time, being part of social groups, the members create, through practices and discourses, a shared memory, which is not over and above the individual, but which is established and reconfirmed by those public and collective commemorations. Thus, the role of social groups seems pivotal in the reasoning of Halbwachs on collective memory. Based Halbwachs' notions, I propose the following working definition of collective memory:

Collective memory is the public reconstruction of a selected past by the members of social groups that has significance and perceived relevance to the experience of the group as a whole, as well as of its members – a significance which they convey through the memory by attaching meanings and values, and which group members share through joint public discourses and commemorative practices.

This definition takes Halbwachs' points into account (the bearers of collective memory are social groups, in relation to experience, established and reproduced through joint action and discourse), but also includes other aspects of collective memory, which deserve attention and go beyond Halbwachs' treatises. These are what I now turn to.

1.2 The relationship between history and memory

Halbwachs himself juxtaposed history and memory. Pierre Nora also sees both as being directly opposed (Halbwachs, 1980:82-83; Nora, 1990:12-13). The first was identified with "dry" analysis of facts, based on a method that seeks knowledge by extracting in a structured manner information from the past. By contrast, memory was seen as the malleable and – almost irrational – omitting of facts and forgetting of contexts, while sometimes even inventing other facts. Halbwachs, and many other authors with him, pointed to the psychological mechanisms of memory (social bonding with other group members, aim to establish a positive image of the group, self-esteem), which influence the selection of events and facts (Hodgkin and Radstone, 2006:9). History is therefore seen by many authors as a necessary corrective devise in order to avoid too much a diversion from verified facts:

Historians are able to reject something explicitly told them in their evidence and to substitute their own interpretation of events in its place. And even if they do accept what a previous statement tells them, they do this not because it is judged to satisfy the historian's criteria of historical truth. Far from relying on authorities other than themselves, to whose statements their thought must conform, historians are their own authority; their thought is autonomous vis-à-vis their evidence, in the sense that they possess criteria by reference to which that evidence is criticised (Connerton, 1989:13-14).

Thus, history should "critically test memory" (LaCapra, 1998:8) by applying a professional method testing the empirical evidence. However, I would question the strict juxtaposition of memory and history on the ground of truth claims and also lower the expectations of a "critical correction" of history against "too fictive" a remembering. The clearest evidence of a corrective function of history is produced when factual errors occur in the public remembrance of past events. If, for example, the historical site was somewhere else or the date was different. However, the corrective potential of history

and historiography is much more limited if it comes to what E.H. Carr defined as ‘historical facts’: Historical facts refer to plausible or even causal *links* between historical events supported by sufficient evidence. Historians use specific methods to gain information in order to make an informed judgment about the question, say, whether US president Roosevelt knew in advance about the attack of Pearl Harbour, whether Germany took a “special path” in the nineteenth century or whether Napoleon III provoked the Franco-German War in 1870/71 (as many German historians claim) or was tricked by Bismarck naïvely into a war he did not want (as many French historians claim). Historians judge the available information (whom they grant a certain status of truth) as to whether it sufficiently supports a historical fact or not. While history has the support of evidence, it also relies on a series of judgments. Thus, as E.H. Carr pointed out: “Its status as a historical fact will turn on a question of interpretation. This element of interpretation enters into every fact of history” (1992:12-13). The difference between the ‘rational’ history and the ‘irrational’ memory melts: both judge the past, although based on very diverging efforts to find evidence in support of their judgments.

Collective memory directs attention to specific events deemed worth mentioning, remembering and studying. The ‘agenda-setting’ in historical science and historiography seems heavily informed and influenced by the political sphere as well as society as a whole.²² If collective memory is predominantly reproduced by social (including political) groups, there is certainly an influence on the agenda of historical science, as some examples suggest. Germany, for instance, commissioned huge volumes of historical research from the historian Thimme in order to prove the injustice of the famous article 231 of the Versailles Treaty (sole responsibility of Germany for the First World War) (Wilson (ed.), 1996:11). In fact, some authors even claim that collective memory *should* direct historical science to “problems that are still alive or invested with emotions” (LaCapra, 1998:8). History, as Halbwachs claimed, attaches an equal value to any historical fact, while memory clearly judges historical facts for their significance as well as their moral meaning. Yet, even here I would caution against stretching that difference too far: critics of ‘official’ national history claim that, in the final analysis, this is also a dominant memory of a specific generation of historians or

²² As Hodgkin and Radstone have argued: “Often, it seems, history is willing to question the epistemological status of its object of study – the past – but less ready to engage with how ‘the past’ itself is variously conceptualised and constituted as history, memory, or archives” (2006:3).

political and social class that establishes rules of significance for historical research. Here, again, I think that collective memories of social and political groups do have a considerable impact on the agenda setting of historical research, which limits the autonomy of history. As Fentress and Wickham have stressed:

Memories die, but only to be replaced by other memories [...]. We may, sometimes, it seems, only be deluding ourselves when we think we are ‘debunking’ social memory by separating myth from fact: all we may get is another story. This does not mean that we must accept social memory passively and uncritically. We can enter into dialogue with it, examining its arguments, and testing its factual claims. But this interrogation cannot uncover the whole truth. It is a mistake to image that having squeezed it for its facts, examined its arguments, and reconstituted its experience; that is to say, having turned it into ‘history’ - we are through with memory (Fentress and Wickham, 1992:202).

In sum, although in the literature on collective memory “history” is often juxtaposed as “the opposite” of memory, this claim seems highly overstated: history plays an important role in testing evidence and challenging popular held meanings about past events. Although historians are in a position to dwell more systematically on information and sources, they are also faced with the challenge to judge historical facts for their plausibility. The more fundamental the judgment, the more contested any claims for historical facts are likely to be. This often applies to judgments concerning international war and peace. However, what oral history can very well contribute to within the instruments of historical science, is showing the existence of different remembering and perceptions of the past and the different *effects* that past events had for those involved or those witnessing an event.²³

Finally, historians have begun to analyse the *history of specific memories* and their effects. Henry Rousso (1991), for example, analysed how the French were haunted by the “Vichy Syndrome”. Thus, history can treat memory (official and local) as a legitimate object of historical research and contribute important insights.²⁴ As such, it

²³ For example, Alessandro Portelli identifies a huge gap between the local and the national-official memory of a mass execution by German troops at the Fosse Ardeatine during the Second World War. See: Portelli, 2006.

²⁴ See: Evans and Lunn and their analysis of the memory of eyewitnesses mentioned in the study by Ronald Frasier (“The blood of Spain”) in: 1997: xvii.

will highlight the history of the effects of certain events in the past, but also the effect of certain memories of those events.

1.3 Practices of collective memory

Politics is seen as being heavily involved in providing important 'memory resources', in particular, in the cases of monuments, museums, school textbooks, and curricula of official history classes. Governments are depicted as occupying the realm of 'gate-keeping', i.e. letting certain information and interpretation pass, while withholding others. But this evident influence of governments is sometimes overstated. Recent literature claims that there are many other forms of memory 'resources' that cannot be tightly controlled by political means, ranging from narratives to buildings, songs, dresses, books, films, documentary or memory as re-enactment of events in the past (Irwin-Zarecka, 1994:11-13; Assmann, 1995:125-133). Also, those 'memory offers' that are heavily informed by politics do not have to match with 'experience supply'. Marginalised groups within societies reproduce their memory of a remembered common past often quite successfully - even if the public sphere (or the public sphere of a group) is controlled by the government or by dominant individuals. Public commemoration requires a certain permissiveness of the public spheres in order to provide a suitable framework for the groups' experiences.²⁵ Although the influence of politics on the provision of those resources is very high, the impact on the actual use of those resources for the remembrance of experience may be limited. This reinforces the point made earlier that frameworks of memory need to be reconciled with individual or sub-group experience.

There is a common thread through the literature on collective memory, namely, that it is used by politics to legitimate policies and the present political order. However, if the link between legitimising political orders and collective memory is stated as a general proposition, how are cases, where political legitimacy is produced without collective memory, to be explained? If it is only collective memory that is responsible for political

²⁵ This aspect, as I will show in the next chapter, is of central concern to Habermas.

legitimacy, the key concept of politics needs to be presented and the relation to collective memory clarified. And if there are other aspects besides collective memory that are deemed influential for the establishment of political legitimacy, then those other factors and the relation between them have to be conceptualised. In any of those questions raised by this assumed link, it is of paramount importance to provide a concept of political legitimacy. If such claims are to be sustained, I argue, there needs to be a notion of politics that helps to understand the impact of collective memory on political legitimacy; for, otherwise it remains a simple statement whose opposite can claim to be just as true.²⁶

Many commemorative events sustain collective memory by the mere fact of repetition, which supports an idea of continuity. One of the important practices of collective memory is a collective re-enactment of past events. As Halbwachs has pointed out, commemorations and ceremonies are central means of establishing collective memory. They help to bond as group or nation, to express the meanings and significance attached to the events of the past in public. A ritual as “rule-governed activity of a symbolic character which draws the attention of its participants to objects of thought and feeling which they hold to be of special significance” (Steven Lukes, quoted in Connerton, 1989:44) is an important type of practice that helps to establish and represent collective memory. As with rites, the force of parades, commemoration ceremonies and other bodily practices (Connerton, 1989: *passim*; Winter and Sivan (eds.), 1999:29-39) lies in their repetitiveness.

Those practices are complemented by numerous memory sites, places, habits or events that represent the continuity of the group or society and its perceived characteristics to themselves in time. Those sites are often identified with museums, memorials or commemoration sites. However, as Pierre Nora claims, those ‘memory sites’ can be much more, not being designed specifically for remembering the past or expressing continuity of a society, but, willingly or not, contributing thereto (see: Nora (ed.), 1996; and Nora (ed.), 2001c). However, as Hodgkin and Radstone (2006:12-13) insist, memorials and museums spark particular controversies because they are conscious efforts to collectively remember a past. This is much more contested than other memory

²⁶ Given the importance of the question of how politics relates to collective memory, a notion of political legitimacy will be provided in chapter 6.

sites mentioned by Nora, such as the Eiffel Tower for the case of France. Other sets of 'memory resources', such as songs, films, art, cloths, photographies, etc., are provided by the cultural realm (Turim, 1989; Lipsitz, 1990; Middleton and Woods (eds.), 2000). However, following Halbwachs' claim that collective memory depends on joint practices (including discourses), it is my contention that public discourse and joint commemoration, as well as the debates around memory sites are particularly powerful, because those interactive elements are central to the establishment and reproduction of shared memory, while other 'memory resources' often leave open the question whether the meaning transported there is actually shared.

In complex groups such as modern societies, where members do not know each other, the practices of joint commemoration become more important, although the question remains whether or not members of the group actually feel their experiences and meanings they attach to an event in the past are being represented. This is why so many authors (including Halbwachs) warn against taking national commemoration ceremonies, organised by ruling political actors and classes as an expression of collective memory. Commemorations and joint practices are also very important means in the transition from first-hand experience to represented joint experience. This, again, points to a need to develop a critical yardstick or criteria to judge the permeability of the public sphere where collective memory is established. This is the case, for example, in the commemoration of the First World War (as, in fact, of many other earlier events): while collective memory was heavily informed by eye-witnesses, testimonies and original documents at the beginning, with the vanishing of the first-hand generation, commemorations and joint discourses on the war became more important, only to yield their role of places to create and reproduce the collective memory of World War I, to memory sites and cultural memory resources.

Governments have many means to control access to information and monopolise in some areas dominant representations of collective memories, such as in the organisation of national commemorations or in history classes. While governments effectively control the availability of information in the context of history classes, some analysts of history school books warn against reading off from the text of those books the appropriation and use of those frameworks by the pupils (Barton and McCully, 2003).

1.4 The emotional, cognitive and practical-moral dimensions of collective memory

As has been previously discussed, Halbwachs claims that the collective memory of a group also influences the perception of that group: collective memory attaches certain meaning to a specific past, which, in turn helps the group to interpret similar events or facts in very much the same way. This is what I regard as the *cognitive dimension* of collective memory: members of a group recognise a certain event as being similar or alike to something remembered or as being related to a remembered past. In those cases the remembering leads to similar meanings' being attached to new situations and events based on the collective memory. This is what some authors refer to as 'societal beliefs' or 'societal images' (Bar-Tal, 2003:85). Thus, collective memory has a cognitive dimension that directs perception, helps to interpret situations and provides orientation. Images are picture-like subjective imaginations that direct our thinking and our action. Experiences are processed by images in such a way as to create certain expectations and social patterns of interpretation, which directs our attention and our processing of information in the present. Thus, they show an amazing stability despite changes in the environment.

The more distant the image becomes, the more details get lost, and the more the concrete and specific image turns into a general notion (Halbwachs, 1992:188). When we construct an image of a person or an event, we do not want to depict all the details, but rather, to present the characteristic, the typical. An image, therefore, compresses the historical dates by constructing one situation or characterisation that captures the assumed essence of that event or person (Halbwachs, 1992:61). From the rather concrete image further transformations can take place to make it a general notion: the concrete details of the event or person are suppressed and a general notion, bare of any limitations caused by references to a specific person or event, is created. The movement from event over image to concept could be seen as a 'de-contextualisation' of experience:

Images can be transmitted socially only if they are conventionalised and simplified: conventionalised, because the image has to be meaningful for an entire group; simplified, because in order to be generally meaningful and

capable of transmission, the complexity of the image must be reduced as far as possible (Fentress and Wickham, 1992:47-48).

In addition to the cognitive dimension, there is also an *emotional dimension* of collective memory: it is not only that certain events or dates are remembered, but also the emotions that are attached to them (which may change of time due to present interpretation).²⁷ Feelings of hurt, grief, guilt, shame, pride, accomplishment, or others are part of the remembering past events. Often this emotional dimension is very clearly identified by the naming of the remembered event. Be it the 'betrayal of Dunkirk' or the 'Diktat of Versailles', naming the event is often linked to the attachment of the feeling that a group holds toward a past event. As psychologists point out, grief and mourning gain particular importance when violent pasts, such as wars, are remembered:

Those people are involved in memory work, that is, public rehearsal of memories, quite often [...] act in order to struggle with grief, to fill in the silence, to offer something symbolically to the dead, for political reasons. In most of their immediate concerns, they tend to fail. The dead are forgotten; peace does not last; memorials fade into the landscape (Winter and Sivan (eds.), 1999:18).

The massive loss of loved ones, for example in wars, is a heavy burden for all survivors and a clear imprint to structure collective memory. Psychologists have long insisted that the commemoration of past wars and remembering traumatic events or tragedies is also part of dealing with the feelings that event provokes (Winter, 1994). Part of the reasons for the selection by groups and societies of specific events is precisely the emotions they recall. Douglass and Vogler, paraphrasing Nietzsche, suggest that "History is what hurts" (Douglass and Vogler, 2003:5). In other words, collectively experienced painful events are particularly remembered in order to treat them in one way or another. By contrast, other authors like Anthony Smith (1999) claim that often a 'glorious past' is remembered to elevate the self-esteem of the group or society. Whatever the specific emotion or feeling that influences the selection of certain events, it is important to keep in mind that collective memories do not only remember facts or meanings established between facts in the form of a narrative, but they also remember – and, thus, reproduce – certain feelings and emotions held by the group.

²⁷ On this aspect see: Schudson, 1995:346-364; Pennebaker, Paez and Rimé (eds.), 1997.

Now, the way the group or society *deals* with the feelings and emotions they remember exerts considerable influence on the process of remembering. In the case of war or mass violence, one possible, and, often, common, way is repression of those feelings and consequent avoidance of public remembrance. Another often identified mechanism is victimisation, whose consequences Daniel Bar-Tal describes:

As the numbers of human losses grow, societies develop beliefs about being victimised by the opponent. These beliefs focus on the losses, death, the harm, the evil and atrocities committed by the adversary, while they delegate the responsibility for the violence solely to the 'other' (Bar-Tal, 2005:86).²⁸

A more dramatic form of victimisation is what Vamik Volkan (1988) calls 'narcissistic victimhood', where one's own atrocities are seen as a mere defence, while the adversary is dehumanised and de-rationalised. All three types of reaction (repression, victimisation, narcissistic victimhood) are examples (and not an exhaustive list of possible reactions) that suggest an influence on the selection and interpretation of past events and facts.²⁹ Thus, the remembering of certain feelings and the dealing with those remembered feelings influence each other, but should be kept separated analytically, because they are part of different practices and structuring processes.

Collective memories also entail a *practical-moral dimension*. Through collective memory, the group represents the group to itself by using the past. This collective self-representation is one important element for collective action. A consciousness of a collective 'we' is the precondition of what this 'we' wants to do as a group. In other words, collective memory has a practical dimension. As was mentioned earlier, events and persons are not remembered for the sake of it, but because of their significance for a specific group. This significance, imbued in a meaning attached to those events or facts also includes a value judgment on the content of remembering in the form of good/bad, pride/shame, etc. Memory therefore also includes a moral judgement that directs action toward those events. For example, if the remembered event was traumatic, the memory also contains an answer to the question of what should be done to avoid such an experience in the future. Or a particular memory may imply an obligation to the dead or

²⁸ See also: Devine-Wright, 2003:15.

²⁹ One practical prescription to deal with those traumatic feelings is trauma work. On trauma work see: LaCapra, 1998 and Caruth (ed.), 1995.

the group as a whole. If a region, ritual, person has been deemed important or sacred, current group members might be imbued with the obligation of worship or to imitate them. The concrete practical-moral imperatives deriving from collective memory may vary over time within a group or between groups. In this context, the study of myths provides important insights into the practical-moral aspects of collective memory:

Myth is [...] a shorthand for a particular interpretation of a historical experience or policy, or a policy with some acknowledged historical antecedents, that is invoked in the present to justify certain policies (Buffet and Heuser (eds.), 1998: ix).

For Heuser and Buffet the remembered past event mobilises both emotional and moral appeal to support certain causes of action. Thus, it is not that, first, collective memory is established and, then, the practical consequences are discussed, but collective memories themselves encode practical-moral imperatives. The most accomplished forms of those practical-moral imperatives are “lessons learned from the past”.³⁰ As some authors have observed, those guides to practice are based for most groups on a moral judgment, not a pragmatic assessment of options. Remembered pasts, invested with emotions, create obligations, a righteous and rightful way.

Although in practice collective remembrance creates a collective memory with these three dimensions, thus forming a unity, it is important to separate the three dimensions, not only for theoretical reasons. The contested nature of collective memory can be identified for each of the three dimensions discussed above: First, there may be disagreement and contestation on the cognitive aspect of collective memory, disagreement on the narrative or the linking of specific events by meanings and significance. This means, the remembered past would be labelled in a different form, while other aspects would be preferred. Thus, historical analogies between past and present events would be rejected: the situation of, say, Iraq 1991 does not resemble the situation of Munich 1938. This is a cognitive disagreement. Second, there may be disagreement on the emotions encapsulated in memories. For example, there has been widespread disagreement on emotional and moral judgment of the German soldiers on

³⁰ Examples of those lessons that go beyond foreign policy makers are: Dower, 1999; Fromkin and Chace, 1985.

the Eastern front. Recalling those events triggered quite different emotions that were also expressed publicly (pride versus shame). Remembering the French Revolution triggers very different and opposing emotions in France. Some remember it as a source of pride, of Enlightenment others remember it as the greatest carnage in modern French history and the beginning of France's international and domestic decline.

Finally, there may be very different 'lessons learned' for different groups. What are the lessons of World War II? What was the lesson of the Vietnam War? Even the consensual claim "Never again" may have different practical consequences: "Never again Hiroshima" may mean never to allow a militaristic regime to take over Japan again; it may mean never to be disadvantaged technologically; it may mean to refrain from producing, possessing and using atomic weapons. Thus, even if there is agreement on the cognitive or emotional dimension of collectively remembering, say, Hiroshima, there may be disagreement on the practical-moral imperatives that follow from that remembered event. This last dimension has a potentially high impact on the formulation of policies and politics in general.

All three dimensions are analytically, and from the nature of discourses, to be separated: the cognitive discourse looks at the truth claims regarding the appropriateness of analysing a situation (whether or not it resembles a remembered situation in the past); the practical-moral imperatives are part of a practical discourse, which inquires about the right course of action, while the emotion evoked by a remembered past is very much informed by personal experience or the position of the group in this event. In practice, however, those three dimensions are related to each other, condensed in historical analogies and myths, providing a package of answers to all three aspects. Notwithstanding, one important analytical task of studying collective memory is to separate those three dimensions.

At the same time, not all social and political groups are necessarily equally interested or active in all three dimensions of collective memory. Although they might have ideas about practical-moral imperatives from, say, the Holocaust of the European Jews during the Second World War, their activities might be more directed towards the emotional and cognitive side of it. It is my contention that cognitive and emotional memory groups have been much more researched and documented than political memory groups, who

advance predominantly practical-moral imperatives derived from the past. It is that latter type of social group that is at the centre of this thesis. In this work I argue that they are important intermediary groups that explain the impact of collective war memories on international politics. It is to these groups that I now turn.

1.5 Political memory groups

Politicians are well aware of the weight that political-moral imperatives derived from past experiences exert on the political debate, especially if those are clearly identified as ‘lessons’ learned by society from an event that this society deems important – even if for negative reasons. This is why the arguments based on collective memory, in general, and collective war memories, in particular, are powerful in the political discourse.

In the past, single politicians have been cited as having their own memory of the past, according to which they guide their actions in the present (for example, Charles de Gaulle or Helmut Kohl). However, following Halbwachs’ insistence on the need for social support, it seems pertinent to draw attention not to individuals, but rather to social groups engaged in public remembering. Memory groups come, thus, to the foreground. The term ‘memory groups’ refers here to those groups, which actively take part in joint commemoration that goes beyond their own group boundaries. In other words, they are groups that participate in the creation of a collective memory, of which they are but one part. Transcending their own self-commemoration, memory groups may be interested, for instance, in the cultural realm or in the emotional dimensions of collective memory.

Within the larger set of social groups participating in the collective remembering of past events, there are groups that have a particular interest in advancing the practical-moral imperatives they derive from collective memories. These groups, which are central to this dissertation, will be referred to as ‘*political memory groups*’ and are to be understood as interest groups or social movements, which, lacking a broader political agenda, advance specific policies based on a remembered past –sometimes, but not always, through the existing political parties. As a case in point the 1950s-“without me”-movement against rearmament in West Germany comes to mind.

The relationship between political parties and political memory groups deserves a closer look. While political parties fulfil the fundamental function of transmitting ideas, values and interests from society to the state authorities, something that might include furthering policies explicitly based on practical-moral imperatives derived from a particular interpretation of the past, they do not limit themselves to that. By contrast, political memory groups exist solely with the purpose to advance narrower political demands or policy preferences, derived explicitly and predominantly – if not exclusively – from a collectively remembered past. In their quest to further their demands, political memory groups often resort to political parties; yet on – rather exceptional – occasions they may also act outside the existing party structure.

By focusing on ‘political memory groups’, so conceived, this work seeks to conceptually grasp those – admittedly rare – cases that go beyond party politics. Moreover, the emphasis on political memory groups enlarges the picture beyond governmental statements and policies regarding the past. In this context, the risk of taking the national, official memory for granted, or at face value, as the framework that citizens use in structuring their experience and remembering, is reduced.

Given these additional considerations on the study of collective memory, the definition of collective memory should be extended:

Collective memory is the public reconstruction of a selected past by the members of social groups that has significance and perceived relevance to the experience of the group as a whole, as well as its members – a significance they convey through the memory by attaching meanings and values to them, and which group members share through public discourses and commemorative practices. As a result, collective memory forges the individual memories of group members, directs perceptions, helps them to remember and deal with emotions and prescribes morally-bound action.

The main interest of this thesis lies with political memory groups that draw practical-moral imperatives from collective war memories. What exactly is meant by these latter and why they should be approached as a specific type of collective memory will be discussed in the next and final section of this chapter.

1.6 The characteristics of collective war memories

Like in any form of collective memory, in collective war memories there is a competition between social frameworks about the meaning, emotions, and practical-moral imperatives of past wars. Much of what has been stated for collective memory also applies to collective war memory. Collective war memory can, therefore, be defined as:

The public reconstruction of a selected aspect of wars or organised violence by the members of social groups that has significance and perceived relevance to the experience of the group as a whole, as well as its members- a significance they convey through the memory by attaching meanings and values to them, and which group members share through public discourses and commemorative practices. As a result, collective war memory forges individual memories of group members, directs perceptions, helps to remember and deal with emotions, and prescribes morally-bound action.

Experience of war should by no means be reduced to the experience of battles, but, rather, it encompasses the entirety of the experience of soldiers, partisans/resistance fighters, non-combatants and civilians being affected by war, occupation, liberation and the perceived consequences of war. For Winter and Sivan the complete war experience is a traumatic one:

War is trauma, a situation of overwhelming, extreme, and violent pressure with enduring impacts. It disrupts equilibriums and requires an effort to restore them. That effort (intentionally or not) contributes to the processes of remembrance [...] (1999:9).

Central to remembered war is the fact that, at the heart of remembering, there is the massive loss of life of loved ones by the conscious action of another group or country.³¹ Hence, the mourning or remembering of consciously inflicted death is one of the essential aspects of collective war memories.

³¹ For Bar-Tal, it is the massive violation of the “sanctity of life”, with its irreversible effects, that makes war memories so painful, albeit necessary (2005:79).

War may create new memory groups or affect the bonding of existing memory groups. As authors like Daniel Bar-Tal have argued, in the specific form of war memories, often lays the seed for ongoing violence and war:

The monuments and cemeteries, then, are constant and enduring reminders about the losses suffered in conflict, the sacrifices made by patriots and heroes and the malevolence of the opponents. In one sense and during certain periods they represent concrete investments in the continuation of the conflict. [...] Rituals and ceremonies related to the violent conflict, which commemorate particular battles, wars and especially fallen members of the society, are another expression of the culture of violence. [...] They glorify battles and wars, the heroism of those who participated in the events, the martyrdom of those who fell, the malevolence of the enemy and the necessity to continue the struggle in fulfilment of the patriotic 'will' of the fallen (Bar-Tal, 2005:89).

The nature and kind of war also influences the possibility of collective remembering. To be sure, the most difficult wars to be remembered are civil wars and unsuccessful secession wars. In both cases the adversary or enemy is still within the polity and may feel as the 'loser of war', while others are perceived to be the 'winners of war' and behave accordingly (Adam, 1999). This renders social bonding and the construction of shared meaning around the war an extremely difficult and often futile task. Another difficulty for the emergence of a shared war memory is posed by the ideological cleavages and alignments that cut across state boundaries during the war. The Second World War, for instance, was characterised by ideological alliances between Communists in one country and the Soviet Union, or Fascists or authoritarian regimes with Nazi-Germany. If the internal allies of foreign regimes continue to exist after the war, creating a shared war memory becomes extremely difficult. By contrast, the task of creating shared meanings of past wars and recalling, therewith, similar emotions and practical-moral imperatives is made easier when the war is remembered as a liberation or defence from an outside enemy, without internal allies or collaborators.

As Halbwachs claimed, memory groups need landmarks. This also applies to war memories. A war cannot usually be remembered in its entirety. Hence, it is specific instances and events (decisive battles, decisions, alliances, victories) or locations (Diên Biên Phu for the French or Stalingrad for Germany and the Soviet Union) that condense certain experiences, developments or values to be remembered. If those landmarks are absent, as Martin Evans claims for the Algerian War, remembering becomes difficult

(Evans, 1997b:74). Finally, if wars are carried out on specific ideological or racial motives, and if these motives do not match the values of the present society (such as the wars of de-colonisation, or Nazi-Germany's war of extermination in Eastern Europe), those events are also difficult to remember for the perpetrators and their subsequent generations. Thus, the nature of wars exerts a considerable impact on the ways of remembering the war.

Wars create different memory groups. Some of them may be lobby-groups for the social security of the retired, seriously wounded or incapacitated soldiers, widows and/or orphans of soldiers; others might have more explicit political agendas. The fact is that since war affects entire societies, there is usually a wider range of political memory groups related to war than there might be in other types of memory. As I mentioned above, looking at political memory groups, as opposed to focusing exclusively on political parties, might help to provide a more accurate picture of the complexities of war memories and their impact on politics.

This chapter has sought to clarify key terms such as collective memory, individual memory, practical-moral imperatives, political memory groups as well as the characteristics of collective war memories. The next chapter, in turn, will introduce the Critical Theory of communicative action of Jürgen Habermas and set the ground for the analysis of how this can be fruitfully applied to the question of how we can analyse the impact of collective war memories on international politics.

Chapter 2

A framework for the study of collective war memories and international politics: Habermas' Critical Theory¹

Collective memories, in general, and collective war memories, in particular, are constitutive parts of societies. Understanding changes in the form, and societal function, of collective war memories begs questions about the conceptualisation of the wider social and political context in which remembering of past wars takes place. For, in the absence of such an understanding of society and societal development, I believe, such changes go unexplained.

As chapter 1 pointed out, the public remembering of past wars is not only a symbolic, but, also, a communicative action that shapes and expresses the three dimensions of collective war memories (cognitive, emotional, practical-moral dimension). Habermas' Critical Theory of social evolution, which focuses on the evolution of communicative action, provides a valuable lens to look at the wider context in which the collective remembering of past wars takes place. Two reasons account for this; first, it highlights the becoming of social phenomena and renders them historical, not given objects of study. Second, Habermas' theory provides insights into changes of communicative action within societies that also suggest different forms of identity formation, including of remembering –this latter being understood as a communicative, not a mental act.

This chapter aims to provide a better understanding of the broader framework in which the phenomenon of collective war memories will be discussed. More specifically, the general framework provided in this chapter will be used as departure point for tackling two specific theoretical concerns; namely, how to apply the concept of social learning in remembering past wars in modern societies (chapter 3), and how to conceptualise political legitimacy (chapter 6), so that this concept might aid our understanding of the impact of collective war memories on specific decisions in international politics. It is in

¹ In recent years there has been a proliferation of approaches in the social sciences, which characterise themselves as “critical”. In order to distinguish these approaches from the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School, in this text I will capitalise this latter.

fact my contention that the concept of social learning in collective memory and the concept of political legitimacy, as developed in this thesis, provide, together, two important instruments in the study of collective war memories in IR.

In this chapter, as indeed in the rest of the thesis, I claim that Habermas' theory, with its emphasis on communicative processes and the historicity of ideas, practices and values, enables us to understand the emergence, historical becoming and transformation of collective war memories, and, building upon the more general contributions of the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School, can aid our comprehension of the surge and transformation of collective war memories, as well as their impact on politics.

The first section of this chapter will introduce main characteristics of the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School, some of whose authors, such as Walter Benjamin, Max Horkheimer or Theodor W. Adorno were concerned about the relationship of societies to their past –in fact, the very term “*Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit*” (“dealing with the past”, “coming to terms with the past”) was coined in West Germany by Adorno in 1963 (Adorno, 1996:125-146). This, and the emphasis of the Frankfurt School on the historical becoming of social phenomena renders looking at Critical Theory and its application to the study of collective memory a fruitful exercise. The second part, in turn, will concentrate on the Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas, who has often been referred to as the “second generation of the Frankfurt School”. Habermas' participation in the so-called “Historians' Debate” in 1986-1987 in West Germany, on the role of the remembered past for present identity-formation,² encapsulates this author's awareness of the importance of collective memory for the constitution of present societies. In the third part, I will focus on two specific aspects of Habermas' theory that are particularly relevant to this work. I refer to his concept of social evolution as rationalisation and his theory of communicative action –including his discourse ethics. In the fourth and final part, I will discuss the application of Habermas' Critical Theory to specific questions regarding the study of collective war memories.

² This aspect will be dealt with extensively in chapter 4.

2.1 Characteristics of the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School

To comprehend something we must, to begin with, perceive it in its immanent connections with other things and examine the conditions under which it exists and becomes (Theodor W. Adorno).³

‘Critical Theory’ refers to a type of theory developed by the Frankfurt School in the 1920s – 1960s, and later modified by Jürgen Habermas. To be sure, there exists not *one* Critical Theory, but many Critical Theories. In fact, the boundaries of Critical Theory are a matter of continuous scholarly debate.⁴ Despite the shifting focus and demands of their individual approaches, all Critical Theorists coincide in their critique of empiricist science and metaphysical thinking: on the one hand, they all see metaphysical or abstract theories as a product of subjective reason and imagination, without any grounding in either empirical facts or the historical processes themselves. On the other hand, Critical Theorists maintain that empiricism neglects history as a socio-historical process and, thus, reifies the observed.⁵ Out of this “double front” against abstract theorising, on the one hand, and a limitation to research of the empirical environment, on the other hand, the Frankfurt School developed an approach that aimed to combine empirical research with social philosophy into one form of reflection, for which, in 1937, Max Horkheimer coined the term “Critical Theory” (Horkheimer, 1992:205-259).

In other words, Critical Theory supports social research by analysing objects in the present but, at the same time, seeks to reflect on the developments (beyond historical circumstances) that gave rise to this phenomenon (say, nationalism, or, the modern state etc.) and are responsible for this phenomenon’s becoming. Following Marx and Hegel, Critical Theorists do not seek to identify arbitrary or circumstantial factors, but focus, rather, on *essential* factors they call *praxis*. For this – ambitious – task Critical Theories have – despite the many different versions – three characteristics in common:

³ Quoted in: Held, 1995: 214.

⁴ On the specific research interest of the Frankfurt School between 1920 and 1950s see: Dubiel, 1988. On the different manifestations of Critical Theory within the Frankfurt School see: Held, 1995. For a general introduction to Critical Theory that focuses on the period of the Frankfurt School see: Arato and Gebhardt, 1982 and Jay, 1973.

⁵ Adorno, Marcuse and Habermas departed from that critique against empiricist science to develop their respective versions of Critical Theory. On Adorno and Habermas see: Adorno et al. 1976.

1) The central role of human praxis: Critical Theory does not focus on ‘practices’ at random, but focuses on *essential* collective human practices that are necessary for the reproduction and collective survival of societies. This *anthropological* reflection has given rise to the notion of praxis as developed by Marx (and different from the use of the word by the ancient Greeks), which refers to essential collective human activities that can be found in any society and whose different organisation explains the social formation of societies.⁶ In its early stage (1920s to 1930s) the Frankfurt School followed Marx and identified social labour as the praxis that produces and reproduces societies. Habermas, in turn, made the same reflection, but identified both communicative “interaction” and “social labour” as two parts of praxis. Consequently, for Critical Theory, the becoming of empirically observed phenomena is the result of praxis.

2) The mediation of different spheres of society through one another: Critical Theorists claim that the effect of praxis on society and individuals is neither direct nor straightforward. Assuming such a direct impact would render a theory deterministic or mechanistic (Jay, 1973:42). Instead, Critical Theory identifies different spheres of society that are mediated through one another in historically different ways and both influence and are influenced by praxis. Within the tradition of the Frankfurt School, not only has praxis been defined in different ways, but also the definition of the spheres (or systems) and their relative importance in the reproduction of societies has differed. However, the actual impact of those spheres on each other and on praxis is a matter of historical research, not a matter of theoretical debate. Thus, the analysis of society has to “grasp and investigate the context of relations and mediations, the developments and transformations, the whole of human practice of which any given object is a part” (Marcuse, quoted in Held, 1995:228).

3) The task of self-reflection: Critical Theorists maintain that any theory is part of social praxis and, therefore, needs to rest on a ‘double reflexivity’. That is to say, it needs to understand (i) the factors that created the need for a certain theory (genesis of theories) and (ii) the use (including the political use) that will be made of this theory (application of theories). The neglect of self-reflection is a charge made by Critical

⁶ On the notion of praxis as developed by Marx and modified by the Frankfurt School and a critique of both see: Bubner, 1971. On praxis and the difference to action see: Bernstein, 1972. On the privileged position of social labour within collective human action in Marx see: Riedel, 1994:6.

Theorists against empiricist theories. By highlighting the becoming of phenomena and by identifying the forces that go into the reproduction of a certain phenomenon or order, Critical Theory seeks to create a consciousness, not only of its historicity, but also of the possibility to transform it. A seemingly natural object, institution or social formation, thus, turns into a historical one and may require legitimating for its continuous existence. Being conscious of those forces is a precondition for changing them in such a way as to emancipate oneself from their impact, which might have been hitherto regarded as natural or inevitable.⁷

In sum, Critical Theory's critique of empiricist science leads to three common features, which should enable Critical Theory to go beyond empiricist science, rather than to reject it altogether: its notion of praxis, its definition of different social spheres and their interaction, and its self-reflexivity. Furthermore, the reference of Critical Theory to "praxis", as the essential collective human activities that structure societies, also prevents a random selection of "practices". The insistence on "praxis", as opposed to post-structuralist "practices", rests on the assumption that essential activities can be found in any society, something that justifies their privileged position in the analysis.

By its own standards, Critical Theory should contribute to advance the study of collective memory by helping to account for the becoming of national war memories and by highlighting the factors that may lead to a transformation of the current manifestation of this phenomenon.

2.2 The main features of Habermas' Critical Theory

Between the 1960s and 1980s, Jürgen Habermas developed a theory of social evolution based on a notion of praxis and the definition of different spheres of society. While in his theories Habermas ultimately abandoned many assumptions of the Frankfurt School, most notably, a philosophy of history and historical materialism as methods of analysis,

⁷ As Habermas points out, the subject experiences the emancipatory power of reflection with itself to the degree that its formation process becomes transparent to itself. See: Habermas, 1991b: 243-244.

he continued to adhere to the three elements of Critical Theory mentioned above as fundamental for the study of societies.

The aim of this section is to introduce Habermas' theory; first, by explaining the core assumptions and categories related to Habermas' notion of praxis and, later, by introducing the different evolutionary stages that Habermas identifies for each sphere of praxis. Since the critical approach to the study of collective memory presented in this work will be derived from Habermas' theory, the following discussion relies mainly on Habermas' own writings, rather than on secondary interpretations of his work.⁸

2.2.1 Habermas' notion of praxis: work and interaction

Habermas identifies two different types of social action as praxis: work [*Arbeit*] and interaction [*Interaktion*]. “Work” refers to those activities that are aimed at securing the material survival of societies. Controlled observation, empiricist social science and natural science are part of work: through the establishment of causal links and models, the knowledge about objects allows predictions and increases the likelihood of successful intervention in the natural and social world. Work produces a science that aims at explaining, predicting and controlling external objects and puts it at society's disposal (empirical science). By contrast, “interaction” refers to activities that create inter-subjectively valid meaning between humans, such as the definition of situations and events, the validity of certain norms and the self-understanding of social entities (identity-formation). Interaction produces a science that focuses on understanding (hermeneutics). The difference in knowledge, which each form of praxis produces, also implies a different method to analyse the current state of work and interaction within any given society.

Habermas refers to all institutions of work as “systems”, and to all institutions of interaction as “lifeworld”. Each set of institutions integrates its members in different

⁸ For an introduction into the different debates concerning Habermas' theory see: Rasmussen (ed.), 1996; and McCarthy, 1978. While for this work I have consulted some English translations of Habermas' writings, most of the sources quoted are originally written in German. In such cases the translations are mine, and so I state it in the pertinent footnotes.

ways. Institutions of lifeworld integrate their members through communicative action and fulfil the function of socialisation, social integration and identity formation:

Under the functional aspect of mutual understanding communicative action serves to transmit and renew cultural knowledge; under the aspect of co-ordinating action, it serves social integration and the establishment of solidarity; finally, under the aspect of socialisation, communicative action serves the formation of personal identities. The symbolic structures of lifeworld are reproduced by way of the continuation of valid knowledge, stabilisation of group solidarity, and socialisation of responsible actors. The process of reproduction connects up new situations with the existing conditions of lifeworld [...] (Habermas, 1987b: 137-38).

A hermeneutic analysis of the narratives helps us understand the spheres of interaction. An understanding of social integration reveals, in turn, the *intentionality* of action (what does a society, according to its self-understanding, want or aim to do?), the self-understanding and meaning framework of a society (who and what are we?) and the normative structure accepted by its members. This analysis, Habermas claims, can only be made 'from within', from the self-understanding of collective actors [*Verstehen* approach], because controlled observation cannot unlock the shared norms, meaning frames and identity formations that are central to lifeworld, which can be found in any society.

Systems, by contrast, integrate their members through *system integration*, which, according to Habermas, refers to:

[...] The specific steering performances of a self-regulated system. Social systems are considered here from the point of view of their capacity to maintain the boundaries and their continued existence by mastering the complexity of an inconstant environment. [...] From the system perspective, we thematise a society's steering mechanisms and the extension of the scope of contingency (Habermas, 1976:9-10).

Systems increase their complexity in order to control the external environment and to offer technical solutions to problems and threats to the physical and material survival of society. Systems require factually true statements about the external environment in order to develop that complexity (Habermas, 1988a:34; 1995b:222-223). They integrate

their members into the acquaintance of technical rules to follow and co-ordinate action through generalised media, not communicative action (as lifeworlds do).⁹ Habermas regards the spheres of production, public administration and warfare as systems specialised in securing the survival of societies (1988b:288).

Furthermore, for Habermas, societies need to be seen as systems that must fulfil certain functions and imperatives in order to survive, disregarding the individual *intentions* of action. Those imperatives structure possible *outcomes* of action and their impact on outcomes of action cannot be understood through hermeneutics, which reveals only the self-interpretation and self-understanding of societies. Societies need to be thought of as self-adapting systems that have to overcome problems of material reproduction or other threats to their survival, whose successful counter-strategies limit the range of possible options- options members of the society may not be aware of. This aspect of social praxis, Habermas argues, can only be grasped by an observer's perspective [*Erklären* approach] that looks from the outside at society.

Work and interaction influence each other in historically specific forms, and both are mediated through the normative structures of societies (laws, rules, norms, written customs): the imperatives of systems need to be anchored in the normative and institutional structure of lifeworld, otherwise they will not be systematically fulfilled (Habermas, 1988a:457-458). According to Habermas, systemic imperatives need to be included into the normative structure and the self-interpretation of collectivities in order to trigger and stabilise the action that is necessary to carry out functions that are vital for systematic survival (1988b:240). Habermas regards, therefore, the normative structure of societies as the 'fault line' between system and social integration¹⁰: while rules, norms and laws need to stabilise action that satisfies the imperatives of systems, they also need to be reconciled with the self-interpretation of collectivities and their normative traditions:

[...] the flexibility of normative structures [...] does not depend solely, nor primarily, on consistency requirements of the normative structures themselves. The goal values of social systems are the product, on the one hand, of the cultural values of the constitutive tradition and, on the other, of the non-

⁹ On the idea of generalised media see: Habermas, 1988a: 457-459.

¹⁰ For a further elaboration on this dual structure of norms and laws in Habermas see: Rehg, 1996, especially p.177.

normative requirements of system integration. In the goal values, the definitions of social life and the survival imperatives that can be reconstructed in system theory, are connected (Habermas, 1976:7).

Thus, argues Habermas, the current state of normative structures of societies gives a good indication of the part of praxis that dominates overall societal reproduction.¹¹

To sum up, in Habermas' theory, societies show a particular form of work as well as interaction, and both dimensions of praxis need to be taken into account in the understanding of the reproduction of a specific society. Work and interaction refer to empirically identifiable, different sets of institutions. Habermas refuses to reduce societal reproduction either to systems or lifeworld: for one thing, if the analysis of societies is reduced to identity formation, discourse analysis or the self-interpretation of participants, the analysis is based on three unsustainable assumptions: (a) the independence of culture from other, non-communicative aspects of society; (b) that the self-interpretation of societies is correct (not an ideology, conscious lie or simply wrong) and (c) that participants are autonomous in their reproduction of lifeworld.

For another, reducing the formation and transformation of societies to the systemic perspective leaves out all aspects of social integration, in particular the intentionality of societies. Habermas proposes a two-step analysis of the historical manifestation of praxis in societies (1976:8-9), where a hermeneutic approach reveals the cultural reproduction, the social integration and socialisation of members (interaction), while a system theoretical approach of the same society identifies the imperatives for physical and material survival (work) (1988b:180).

2.2.2 Rationalisation processes according to Habermas

Habermas, like the late Frankfurt School, abandoned the idea that History follows a certain path or moves toward a certain goal that is described by the term of Reason. While Habermas rejects the idea of *telos* in History, he still defends the Enlightenment idea in the sense that certain “rationalisations” are possible. So Habermas’ description

¹¹ Habermas, 1988b:458. Habermas regards the evolution of normative structures as the ‘pace maker of social evolution’, because it enables the implementation of new forces of production and the increase societal complexity. See: Habermas, 1995b:35.

of the rationalisation of praxis is both a potential for a more rational society (normative aspect) and a description of societal development (empirical aspect), which is conceptualised as “social evolution”:

The theory of evolution does not refer to History in its entirety nor does it focus on specific events, as far as those events are conceptualised as a sequence of narratable historical events. Instead, the historical material is scrutinised under the perspective of social evolution. This is not a macro process that takes place within a species [...] Evolution can be identified through the rational reconstruction of a hierarchy from closed to more open structures. If we separate those structures from events [...] we do not need to assume any one-dimensionality, continuity, necessity or irreversibility of historical trends. We assume some deep-seated anthropological structures that have been developed in the process of hominisation, which mark the starting point of social evolution. [...] Those structures are a description of the room for learning that is deduced by logic. Whether or when those new structures emerge is a matter of contingency (Habermas, 1995b:248).¹²

Habermas identifies different possible stages or organisational principles in each sphere of praxis. In other words, work and interaction change over time; so does the relation between the two spheres. The analysis of the different possible stages in each sphere of praxis is what constitutes Habermas’ theory of social evolution. However, as the quote above indicates, Habermas does not seek to provide a history of civilisation or a philosophy of history (in contrast to the early Frankfurt School), where one empirical epoch has to follow onto the next by necessity, or where the different forms of praxis are deduced by necessity from the previous form. Instead, Habermas describes *possible* stages.

As I mentioned before, Habermas does not only argue that both spheres of praxis change over time, but he also claims that there is an evolution within the two spheres, as well as in the relation between the two spheres. The possible ascendance from one stage of development of praxis to another is what Habermas, following Max Weber, calls a rationalisation process. Habermas attaches to different stages of praxis a specific capacity for learning (1988a:104-105). Those potentials for learning, in turn, transform systems and lifeworlds. For Habermas societies do not only learn in the evolution of

¹² My translation.

new forces of production but also in interaction, i.e. the way their social norms and identities are produced. In sum, Habermas' theory of social evolution also focuses on the evolution of cognitive, communicative and interactive competencies in societies (1995b:134).¹³

2.2.2.1 Rationalisation processes in lifeworld

To be understood and to interact meaningfully at all, a background storage or background understanding, that is the ensemble of cultural and meaningful ideas, traditions, values, and knowledge, is a necessary pre-condition. Following the hermeneutician Hans-Georg Gadamer and the phenomenologist Edmund Husserl, Habermas calls this background knowledge "lifeworld".¹⁴ Within his theory of social evolution Habermas assumes a rationalisation process *between* the two spheres of praxis, systems and lifeworlds, but also *within* each sphere:

I understand social evolution as a second-order process of differentiation: system and lifeworld are differentiated in the sense that the complexity of the one and the rationality of the other grow. But it is not only *qua* system and *qua* lifeworld that they are differentiated; they get differentiated from one another at the same time (Habermas, 1987b:153).

Habermas takes as an imagined starting point of his theory the social evolution of archaic or primitive societies with mythical world-views. Those societies, Habermas claims, are dominated by social integration that is carried out by a unified world-view, often based on mystical or religious thinking. Unified cultural systems of interpretations or world-views guarantee a meaningful context in which the subjective and social intentions are coordinated (1988a:73). In those societies the main reason for a very analogical and specific interpretation of the external world is the massive uncertainty and threats to physical survival from the external world. Those threats are 'interpreted away' through concrete, super-natural myths that dominate the natural and the social world to the same degree.

¹³ See also: Held, 1995:330.

¹⁴ On the notion of lifeworld in Habermas' social theory see: Habermas, 1988a:107.

At the same time, those mystical and magic explanations limit the possibility to learn about external nature and, thus, to overcome external threats. Furthermore, those mythical worldviews do not enable those societies to make a distinction between natural objects that can be manipulated and human subjects, who are responsible for language and social action. Equally, mystical world-views conflate the external world with the social and inner world of the individuals of a society (1988a:81-82). This renders them ‘closed systems’ of thought in two ways: firstly, they do not allow the differentiation between the world of external objects, the social and the inner world. This prevents the emergence of a consciousness about the fact that unified world-views prescribe social norms, guarantee collective understanding and the sharing of definitions and meaning through likewise interpretations of the environment. This lack of differentiation further limits the ego-formation and individual identity to prescribed forms- in fact, individuals do not have a notion of identity at that stage. Unified world-views also fail to be reflexive, i.e. to realise that they are worldviews or a tradition (1988a:85).

The first rationalisation within unified world-views – Habermas claims - is the transition from mystical world-views to polytheistic world-views, followed by monotheistic world-views, which are passed on to metaphysical systems of thought that grant Reason the place of God as a unified point of explanation or legitimisation. All those unified world-views aim at interpreting the world, as such, from a unified concept (Reason, Will of God); yet they detach themselves increasingly from the specific empirical *content* and become more *formal* and, thus, more open to different content and critique, than specific manifestations do. Habermas asserts that *formal* world-views are more rational as they allow a greater growth of knowledge (1988a:103-4).

The next stage of rationalisation of lifeworlds is what Habermas calls the *de-centring of world-views*. Habermas argues, with the child psychologist Jean Piaget, that societies, like human beings, show certain stages of moral and cognitive development: a child learns to differentiate a world of objects, a social world and an inner world to which it has a privileged access. Through social interaction, the child learns to distinguish between the external universe and a parallel separation between the social and subjective world. This process is called a ‘decentring of an egocentrically dominated world-view’ (Habermas, 1988a:106). The de-centring of world views (one unified source of justification and explanation) means that each sphere of interaction, i.e. the

self-expression of societies and individuals (identity formation), the legitimisation of values and norms and the knowledge on the external world takes place in specialised discourses and is no longer deduced from one single logic.

Only with the separation of lifeworld into three distinct spheres, there is a need to coordinate the interpretations and validity claims in those spheres through communicative action (1988a:106). The three different parts, which learn (in principle) through communicative action, revolve around different validity claims: *theoretical discourses* inquire into the truth of statements and aim at accumulating those statements in order to use them for other means; *practical discourses* focus on the rightfulness of behaviour and sanctions, prohibit or legitimise specific action; and *expressive discourses* ask about the truthfulness of representation, in particular of collective and individual identities. By contrast, unified world-views, such as religions, give answers to all three validity claims and do not permit a focus on one only. With the de-centring of world-views language assumes new tasks of social integration that had been hitherto carried out by religion or mythical worldviews:

[...] language no longer serves merely to transmit and actualise prelinguistically guaranteed agreements, but more and more to bring about rationally motivated agreements as well; it does so in moral-practical and in expressive domains of experience no less than in the specifically cognitive domain of dealing with an objective reality (Habermas, 1987b:107).

Language, then, is not only a transmission belt for pre-established validities; it increasingly needs to ascertain and reach the acceptance of validity claims.¹⁵ With the de-centring of world-views there is a consciousness that truth and normativity are not given *a priori*, but that they require justification and good reasons for the acceptance of certain truth claims (theoretical discourse) or claims for rightful behaviour (practical discourse). The problematisation of validity claims and the possible redemption through arguments is the rationalisation of lifeworld that gives communicative action its importance for social reproduction. The more this process of decentring advances within

¹⁵ This also gives a historical perspective to Halbwachs' general claim that collective memory requires social meaning and bonding. According to Habermas' theory of social evolution, this only applies to de-centred lifeworlds.

lifeworld, the more previously unproblematic validity claims in the objective, social and internal worlds become contested.

According to Habermas, lifeworld is a storage of interpretation efforts by previous generations (1988a:449). This accumulated stock of shared interpretations 'in the back of participants' is the necessary presupposition for any meaningful conversation or coordination of action. But with the de-centring of world-views, hitherto valid norms or traditions become the conscious object of communicative action - that is to say they become the object of an attempt (that can fail) to weigh reasons for or against the continued acceptance of that value or norm. As such, de-centred lifeworlds undermine the pre-established validity claims and replace them with a procedure that re-establishes shared understanding and acceptance:

The more the worldview that furnishes the cultural stock of knowledge is decentred, the less the need for understanding is covered in advance by an interpreted lifeworld immune from critique, and the more this need has to be met by the interpretative accomplishments of the participants themselves, that is, by way of risky (because rationally-motivated) agreement, the more frequently we can expect rational action orientations. Thus [...] we can characterise the rationalisation of the lifeworld in the dimension 'normatively ascribed' versus 'communicatively achieved agreement' (Habermas, 1984:70).

Thus, while rationalised societies increasingly question validity claims, these are necessarily only a small proportion of all validity claims in lifeworld, given the 'hermeneutic condition' of lifeworld.

The decentring of a unified world-view into its components allows the development of institutions that focus on one validity claim, either the question of true statements about external objects (modern empirical science), or questions about legitimate action (legal systems and moral institutions) and a set of institutions dealing with self-expression of individuals and collectives (aesthetic institutions). Each set of institutions is guided by different validity claims for which it needs to provide *justifications* through *communicative action*. As soon as this separation takes place within world-views, each human sphere can learn progressively through *specific forms of arguments* and *specific forms of learning*. The objective world through generalised hypotheses, the social world

through reflexive questioning of norms and the subjective world through aesthetic reasoning (Habermas, 1988a:109).

Moreover, Habermas claims, this process of de-centring de-links systems that aim at securing the collective survival from lifeworlds. The external world is de-mystified and becomes the object of systematic analysis and observation. This objectification of the external world allows an enormous increase in knowledge that can be used to control and manipulate external objects. Therefore, systems concentrate on true statements and use them for *instrumental action*. At the same time, lifeworlds are released from the task of securing the survival of society and limit their functions to the reproduction of values and shared meanings, ego-formation and the development of normative structures through *communicative action*. Only in those three symbolically structured areas does communicative action assume the role of producing agreement on specific validity claims.

The three spheres of lifeworld - culture, society and personality – are themselves open to specific rationalisations after the de-centring of world-views. All three spheres can assume three different stages that Habermas develops by drawing on Lawrence Kohlberg's model of moral consciousness. Kohlberg identifies three stages of moral consciousness in personal development: the pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional stages. In the *pre-conventional stage* individuals learn the ascribed roles, values, truth and identity; in the *conventional stage* they recognise the conventionality of the content and learn to differentiate between a concrete content and the form of a value system, identity or norm - but they do not question the form itself. Only in the *post-conventional stage* do humans question the appropriateness and rightfulness of the form. In other words, humans become reflective upon the conventions they acquire and apply in social interaction, as well as the form and content of identity. Habermas argues that these stages can also be found in the development of societies.¹⁶

Habermas applies the three stages of Kohlberg to the development of world-views (cultural reproduction), the evolution of normative structures (social integration) and identity-formation (socialisation). In each sphere of lifeworld he identifies the pre-

¹⁶ For a further elaboration on Kohlberg's theory and its application to social evolution see: Habermas, 1999b:127-206. See also: Browning, 1996:84.

conventional, conventional and post-conventional stages as potentials for social evolution. Each subsequent stage increases the capability of learning and is therefore seen as more rational (Habermas 1995b:179). The first rationalisation leads to the structural differentiation between system and lifeworld on the one hand, and between the three spheres of lifeworld on the other hand; the second rationalisation within each sphere of lifeworld entails an increasing separation of form and content, whereas the third rationalisation sees a reflexive appropriation of the sphere of lifeworld (values, norms, identities) (Habermas, 1988b:218).

Rationalisation in value systems: Cultural knowledge in mystical world-views is tied to specific contents and a specific social entity. The more formal the value systems become, the more they are able to detach themselves from concrete empirical examples and create a critical awareness between those values and the examples of those values. Habermas argues that the universalisation, generalisation of values and concepts creates a greater potential for learning and growth of knowledge than concrete, particular sets of values. Finally, the more de-centred world-views become, the less agreement is to be found *a priori*. The de-centring of world-views, furthermore, allows the transition from a conventional to a post-conventional moral consciousness. The more cultural traditions prescribe validity claims that are binding, the less members of society have a consciousness or a chance to relate to those validity claims with 'yes' or 'no' (Habermas 1988a:107-108).

Rationalisation in normative systems: Although Habermas insists that normative structures are not only the outcome of communicative action, he claims that the reproduction process of normative structures can also be identified with one of Kohlberg's stages of moral consciousness. However, Habermas adds that the degree of rationalisation in societal norms also expresses a degree of personal emancipation and self-realisation (1993:354). Thus, in the *pre-conventional stage*, only the consequences of action are judged: members of society follow norms in order to avoid punishment and to achieve positive gratification; in the *conventional stage*, actors become aware of different roles and laws, they understand generalised expectations of behaviour attached to certain roles (whoever the person to assume that role) and they judge the intentions and orientations to norms; however, they still do not question the norms themselves. In the conventional stage of moral consciousness, norms need to satisfy the criteria of

coherence and stringency. A predictable procedure and a coherence of values encoded in the legal and normative system of a society ensure an understanding of the conventional normative structure of society. Norms become justified with reference to general principles as opposed to particular preferences. But with the de-centring of unified world-views those normative structures lack an overall justification, which can only come from within - that is, from the members of society themselves.

It is only at the *post-conventional stage* that the norms themselves are judged (Habermas, 1995b:71, table 1a). This rationalisation of the normative structure leads to a formalisation similar to the value systems. In other words, norms become increasingly formal and universal (accommodating different contents). Finally norms lose any legitimating power from outside (God, King, Reason) and need to be justified through a process, a procedure that is itself subject to justification. At the post-conventional level any content of norms is subject to a revision by an agreed process. No content is accepted *a priori* as rightful. Norms at this level also need to be seen by participants to express a generalisable will to be accepted within a practical discourse. At the post-conventional level, legitimacy can only be established *a posteriori*. Habermas claims that with the decentring of world-views and the reflectiveness of normative structures there is simply no way back to a previous stage.

Rationalisation in identity-formation: A parallel evolution of norms is possible with respect to an ever more inclusive membership: the more norms are applicable to a wider range of different members of society, the more universal and abstract they need to be. At the same time, the definition of membership itself changes from the acceptance of the group one is socialised into (pre-conventional stage) to a reflexive appropriation of those criteria for defining membership – including a conscious change of membership. This leads to the third area of rationalisation in lifeworld: identity formation. At the pre-conventional level identities are not regarded as such, but appropriated as socialised and found. At the conventional level different roles and identities can be discerned without the possibility of questioning them in their entirety. Even within that stage Habermas identifies a move from concrete role identities (within the family, for example) to more abstract and more complex role systems such as that of political order (1995b:24). Only at the post-conventional level, however, do members of society make a conscious effort to select those parts of their biography that they regard as part of their identity, which

they choose to take responsibility for (conscious judgement on pre-given personal history).

As Habermas points out, collective identities are not homogenous actors writ large; instead personal and collective identities are complementary and linked to each other. The more concrete and particular a membership of a society is, the more limited is the possibility for individuals to relate to their own personal identity. The more abstract and formal the definition of membership becomes, the more autonomy do individuals have in developing their own identity and the greater the variety of empirical manifestations (Habermas, 1988b:88; and 1995b:30).

In modern societies those highly complex individual identities can only be reconciled on the basis of general principles. Therefore, collective and individual identities stabilise and require each other. No content of personal or collective identities is accepted at the post-conventional stage any longer *a priori*, it is subject to a conscious process of construction, selection and judgement. As is the case with norms, the reflectiveness of identity leads to a stress on the process rather than on the specific content (Habermas, 1995b:107). Individuals assume an identity in their childhood through socialisation and social integration. At a later stage this naïvely assumed identity is put to the test by reflection and selection.

While Habermas rejects a causal link between the different spheres of lifeworld, he argues that a post-conventional moral consciousness in culture requires a post-conventional stage in society and identity-formation and vice versa (1995b:93-94). For, the process of de-centring of world-views and the increased rationalisation of normative structures afford individuals the opportunity to develop a greater variety of identities. Under the umbrella of universal principles of norms, a greater individuality and individual autonomy becomes possible.

In sum, Habermas' theory of social evolution identifies certain rationalisation processes in lifeworld. One is from unified world-views to de-centred world-views, where three different discourses are prevalent in each sphere of life-world (norms, values, identities). With the de-centring of life-worlds into the three spheres, societies can learn enormously, but they also need to re-establish mutual understanding and agreement

increasingly through communicative action, which had been hitherto provided by tradition. Based on L. Kohlberg's model of moral consciousness Habermas argues that after the de-centring of unified world-views, a pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional stage of evolution is possible in the spheres of identity-formation, normative structures and the self-expression of cultural values. These rationalisation processes in each sphere require, in turn, an increasing universalisation of moral and legal norms, of membership as well as different manifestations of personal identities that adhere to ever more abstract and formal principles (Habermas, 1988b:127). The more language takes over the function of mutual understanding, co-ordination and identity formation through communicative action, the more the rationalisation potential of lifeworlds can be realised and new forms of social learning become possible.¹⁷

2.2.2.2 Rationalisation processes in systems

The integration of members of society that takes place via processes of reaching understanding is not only limited by the force of competing interests but also by the weight of systemic imperatives of self-preservation that develop their force objectively through the action orientations of the actors involved (Habermas, 1984:398).

The decentring of unified world-views also opens up the possibility to develop success-oriented thinking (instrumental reason) according to its own logic and its own criteria of validity. Systems develop an ever more complex structure (for example through the division of labour) in order to increase the capacities that help them to solve technical problems of survival. Systems are co-ordinated by generalised media or 'generalised languages', such as money, that allow a much higher level of complexity and prevent failed agreements, as in the case of communicative action. The role of money, for example, is to socialise participants into certain behaviour and to prescribe certain technical rules if participants want to survive in the system. Habermas characterises this de-linking of the economic system from lifeworld as a rationalisation because it increases dramatically the control over external nature and provides the conditions for an efficient way of organising the material reproduction of society. This de-linking from

¹⁷ Habermas 1988b:132. However, although the shift from unified world-views onto communicative action increases the possibility of rationalisation, this process also increases the risk of dissent, of failed attempts to reach an understanding. See: Habermas, 1988b:393.

other spheres of society helps to increase the instrumental rationality through empirical-analytical knowledge.

Both forms of social praxis, interaction and work, can assume different forms that are not entirely historically contingent, but also subject to certain stages of rationalisation. At which stage a specific society can be found at a specific historic time is a matter of historical research.

2.3 Habermas' theory of social evolution and discourse ethics

Habermas not only identifies rationalisation processes in praxis and the role of communicative action at a certain stage of rationalisation, but he also asks *how* norms and rules are best re-established in a post-conventional society through communicative action. In his theory of communicative action, which is a part of his theory of social evolution, Habermas analyses the *necessary and conducive* conditions in communicative actions in order to enhance the chances of re-establishing a mutual understanding on norms, values and collective self-expressions (identities). It is this area to which we now turn.

The aim of communicative action is to reach consensus or agreement on validity claims concerning the rightfulness of norms or the truthfulness of expressive behaviour of individuals and groups through argumentative means, i.e. speech acts:

[...] I shall speak of *communicative* action whenever the actions of the agents involved are coordinated not through egocentric calculations of success but through acts of reaching understanding. In communicative action participants are not primarily oriented to their own individual successes; they pursue their individual goals under the condition that they can harmonise their plans of action on the basis of common situation definition. (Habermas, 1984:285-286).

Most of the validity claims raised in communicative action are made unconsciously, or, in Habermas' words, "naïvely", and go, therefore, unchallenged (Habermas, 1996c:241). It would be illusory to assume that *all* mutual understanding is reached by

communicative action. However, Habermas claims that *increasingly* validity claims are no longer pre-given by tradition, but subject to conscious reflection, debate or disagreement. Post-conventional societies increasingly require discourses to re-establish agreement where tradition fails to provide mutual understanding: “Normative agreement has to shift from a consensus pre-given by tradition to a consensus that is achieved communicatively, that is, agreed upon [*vereinbart*]” (Habermas, 1984:255).

Thus, the inherent goal of communicative action is a co-operative effort of reaching mutual understanding. This achievement is unique to communicative action and cannot be the result of instrumental or strategic interaction:

Agreement can indeed be objectively obtained by force; but what comes to pass manifestly through outside influence or the use of violence cannot count subjectively as agreement. Agreement rests on common *convictions*. The speech act of one person succeeds only if the other accepts the offer contained in it by taking (however implicitly) a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ position on a validity claim that is in principle criticisable. [...] Reaching understanding is the inherent telos of human speech (Habermas, 1984:287, italics in original).

As such, communicative action depends upon a certain social development that Habermas identifies within modern societies. Once validity claims are no longer naïvely reproduced through communicative action, they need to be dealt with on the level of discourses, if they should command a sense of obligation and agreement again. Post-conventional societies are increasingly aware of the naïve transmission of values, norms and self-expressions through communicative action and challenge their validity. According to Habermas, if naïvely accepted validity claims are challenged, interlocutors have three choices:

As soon as this consensus is shaken, and the presupposition that certain validity claims are satisfied (or could be vindicated) is suspended, the task of mutual interpretation is to achieve a new definition of the situation which all participants can share. If their attempt fails, communicative action cannot be continued. One is then basically confronted with the alternatives of switching to strategic action, breaking off communication altogether, or recommencing action oriented to reaching understanding at a different level, *the level of argumentative speech* [...] (Habermas, 1991a:3-4. My italics)

Discourse is for Habermas the *reflective form of communicative action*, where participants switch to *argumentation* in order to uphold, modify or abandon validity claims. In a discourse participants focus on the validity claims and try to mobilise good reasons to uphold, reject or modify them. In order to concentrate on this objective, Habermas identifies certain characteristics of discourses. They

- deal only with the subject matter of contested validity claims
- are not decided by producing additional information
- are not settled by certain (pragmatic) requirements for action
- are guided by the only motivation of reaching a co-operative understanding
- treat any validity claim as hypothetical (even those that currently enjoy recognition)

(Habermas, 1995c:130-131)

In discourses, actors interrupt communicative action, step out of a certain context of action and concentrate on an argumentative ‘game’ that decides on contested validity claims. On such a level, discourses cannot be decided by coercion or by contributing empirical data, but only by *arguments*, by providing *valid reasons*. In discourses in their pure form, only the “forceless force of the better argument” will decide the outcome. A discourse “produces” only arguments, not information; it is not part of an action and is, therefore, experience-free. A discourse is also different from a compromise. The latter, Habermas claims, has the purpose of striking a balance [*Ausgleich*] between particular and often contradicting interests, whereas discourses try to find a common interest and a common ground as a result of arguments (Habermas, 1999b:82-83).

According to the validity claims raised, Habermas differentiates a discourse on the claim of truth (theoretical discourse) from a discourse on the appropriateness and righteousness of prohibitions, norms, or imperatives (practical discourse). Practical discourses on norms, as all discourses, are decided not by an arbitrary approval, but by an acceptance of justifications or arguments in favour or against certain validity claims: “Yes/no positions on normative validity claims do not spring from a contingent freedom of choice but the binding force of good reasons” (1987b:215).

These “good reasons”, Habermas claims, are the binding force of norms that coercion cannot replace and that are the ultimate rational basis of practical-moral validity claims. In the very last instance actors accept norms, if they can mobilise arguments to defend the validity claim of that norm (or if they *could* mobilise arguments if they were asked

to defend the norm). “Good reasons” are not merely a matter of empirical research, Habermas claims, but actually an understanding of the logic *why* these arguments and reasons command agreement within a community:

The interpreter would not have understood what a ‘reason’ is, if he did not reconstruct it with its claim to provide grounds, that is, if he did not give it a *rational interpretation* [...] The description of reasons demands *eo ipso* an *evaluation*, even when the one providing the description feels that he is not at the moment in a position to judge their soundness. One can understand reasons only to the extent that one understands *why* they are or are not sound, or *why* in a given case a decision as to whether reasons are good or bad is not (yet) possible (Habermas, 1984:115-116; italics in original).

Habermas identifies those good reasons as the internal connection between the factual validity of norms and the obligation or acceptance to adhere to those norms.¹⁸ This result of a successful practical discourse is where the moral obligation comes from. It is not – and cannot be – the result of coercion or strategic interaction.

Following Emil Durkheim, Habermas claims that any moral norm has to be in the interest of all those concerned. This intrinsic claim may and must be tested within a practical discourse: If a norm can be regarded as being “good for all those present at a practical discourse” it has the chance of being accepted and command a moral obligation by all those participants of a practical discourse. The difference in interest is where Habermas sees (besides giving ‘good reasons’) the second reason for the moral force of practical discourses:

In the process one will cite to another the reasons he has for willing that an action be declared socially binding. Each member must be convinced that the proposed norm is equally good for all. And this process is what we call practical discourse. Any norm that is put into effect via this route can be called justified because the fact that the decision is reached through a process of argumentation indicates that the norm deserves to be called equally good for all concerned (Habermas, 1995d: 71).

¹⁸ “Hence the empiricist notion that norms obligate only to the extent that they are backed up by well-founded expectations of sanctions neglects the fundamental intuition that the non coercive binding force is transferred from the validity of a valid norm to the duty and the act of feeling obligated” (Habermas, 1993a: 52).

Through a practical discourse, Habermas claims, the actual *generalisability* of moral norms can and should be identified (1991c:22). Accordingly, the moral principle in practical discourses is the basis that ensures that the results and side effects, that are likely if certain norms are adhered to, can be accepted by all without being coerced to do so (Habermas, 1991c:12). This validity claim remains in force, until a new discourse modifies or refutes it (the idea of the fallibility of validity claims).

Habermas admits that most norms are not the result of a practical discourse, but often a mixture of strategic and communicative action:

The general presuppositions of argumentation cannot be easily fulfilled because of their rigorous idealising content. Rational discourses have an improbable character, existing like islands in the sea of everyday practice (1993a:56).

Habermas readily concedes that the rightfulness of norms is hardly ever decided by the ‘forceless force of the better argument’ alone. But his point is not a normative judgement from outside, but actually a reconstruction of the necessary assumptions within communicative action and discourses to be conducted at all. Habermas draws on the theory of argumentation developed by Karl-Otto Apel (1980), and other theories of linguistics and language to argue that everybody who engages in a discourse on validity claims necessarily has to assume that certain conditions are met that make it meaningful to engage in such a discourse (even if it can be shown that these conditions have been hardly present). The approach that identifies the necessary presupposition that everybody makes when engaging in a discourse is what Habermas calls “universal pragmatics”¹⁹:

[...] in every real process of argumentation the participants unavoidably undertake [...] a ‘projection’. They must make a pragmatic presupposition to the effect that all affected can in principle freely participate as equals in a cooperative search for the truth in which the force of the better argument alone can influence the outcome. On this fact of universal pragmatics is founded the fundamental principle of discourse ethics: only moral rules that could win the

¹⁹ “The task of universal pragmatics is to identify and reconstruct universal conditions of possible understanding [*Verständigung*]. In other contexts one also speaks of ‘general presuppositions of communication’ but I prefer to speak of general presuppositions of communicative action because I take the type of action aimed at reaching understanding to be fundamental” (Habermas 1991a:1).

assent of all affected as participants in a practical discourse can claim validity (1993a:49-50).

Habermas reconstructs the necessary pragmatic prerequisites that have to be sufficiently fulfilled in the eyes of the participants, before they decide to engage in an argument. With the help of universal pragmatics, Habermas seeks to illustrate the *necessary* assumptions that one has to make when deciding to enter into an argumentation game. The more those necessarily assumed conditions are present in the discourses, the more the potential for rationalisation in norms, identities and values is realised. Thus, those conditions are normative and intrinsic within discourses at the same time.

Habermas highlights the reasons why humans refrain from engaging in argumentation with, say, a wall, or in a situation where the linguistic goals of arguments cannot be attained. In the absence of an assumption that the necessary conditions are sufficiently met, there is no meaningful engagement into discourse. Habermas identifies the sum of the necessary presuppositions to engage in discourse as the “**ideal speech situation**”:

The ideal speech situation is neither an empirical phenomenon nor a mere construct, but rather an unavoidable supposition reciprocally made in discourse. This supposition can, but need not be, counterfactual; but even if it is made counterfactually, it is a fiction that is operatively effective in the process of communication. Therefore I prefer to speak of an anticipation of an ideal speech situation [...] (Habermas, 1999c:180).²⁰

Habermas characterises the necessary presuppositions of an ideal speech situations as follows:

- We assume that the other is capable of understanding our utterances and that she is able of using the appropriate medium of communication (this includes the capacity to change the level of communication, if necessary)
- Only generalisable interests can find consensus under those circumstances
- We treat each other as equal and free individuals who participate equally
- Any outside force is absent
- The only force to be accepted is the “forceless force of the better argument”²¹

However, if for the participants it is evident that certain norms are imposed by force alone, or that the presuppositions of a practical discourse are not sufficiently met, they

²⁰ My translation.

²¹ On a full list of presuppositions see: Habermas, 1995c:171-183; Habermas, 1982. See also: Held, 1995:345.

may be made obedient to follow the norms, but they may not grant a moral obligation to them (Habermas, 1995c:553). The less the conditions for an ideal speech situation are given, the less likely is a sense of moral obligation towards certain norms. The presence or absence of these conditions can be analysed empirically.

These presuppositions are also the source of Habermas' discourse ethics, a normative claim on when norms should be valid (1991c:12-13). For Habermas any norm or validity claim should only be accepted, or can be regarded as being reasonable, if it is the outcome of a discourse where the presupposed, idealised conditions are sufficiently met. The ideal speech situation is, ultimately, the basis for Habermas' critical standard for empirically identified norms, values or forms of self-expression. Habermas distinguishes between the facticity of norms and their worthiness of being valid. Habermas' idea of rational practical discourses focuses entirely on procedural matters and argues that the results of a practical discourse that meet the idealised presuppositions agreed upon by consensus are rational (1991c:201). Thus, Habermas departs from a so-called consensus theory of truth that also applies to practical matters (1999c). Habermas insists that we cannot deduce from the fact that a norm is adhered to or not rebelled against that it enjoys validity in the eyes of those that follow it:

We must distinguish between the social fact that a norm is intersubjectively recognised and its worthiness to be recognised. There may be good reasons to consider the validity claim raised in a socially accepted norm to be unjustified. Conversely, a norm whose claim to validity is in fact redeemable does not necessarily meet with actual recognition or approval (Habermas, 1995d: 61).

Habermas rejects the idea that the outside observer can judge the rationality or “true” validity of norms. At the same time, he does not refrain from making a critique of seemingly socially accepted norms, but uses his ideal speech situation as a yardstick to criticise the becoming or current validity of existing norms. Norms may either suppress generalisable interests or claim to be in a general interest, while they express only the interest of some (Habermas, 1995c:529).

In conclusion, Habermas points to a further rationalisation of lifeworld in the realisation of the ideal speech situation. He identifies universal criteria intrinsic in discourses that focus on re-establishing mutual understanding and agreement, where a conscious doubt

about the validity of certain claims has been raised. These criteria can be used to criticise existing norms and rules and their inherent claim to express a general interest.

2.4 Developing a Habermasian framework for the study of collective war memories

For the sake of clarity, I would like to recapture the main points of Habermas' Critical Theory that are relevant to the study of collective war memories, before going on to develop the specific concepts that will be used in this work. Habermas' Critical Theory is based on a notion of praxis that combines "work" and "interaction". While the rationalisation and changes in what Habermas calls "work" is much better developed and documented through authors such as Max Weber, Karl Marx, Niklas Luhmann, in fact, it is "interaction" that is of particular importance and interest to Habermas' Critical Theory (without neglecting the role of "work" and "system integration" from the picture of societal reproduction). Interaction is based on mutual understanding that needs to be established through speech acts of language from a certain level of development onwards. For Habermas "interaction" can increase the capacity of societies to learn in several possible stages.

Following Lawrence Kohlberg Habermas distinguishes between the pre-conventional, the conventional and the post-conventional levels of social learning. He regards the area of identity-formation, values and aesthetic self-expression and normative structures (rules, laws) open to these three levels. In post-conventional societies, norms, values and self-expressions require justification, as does the way of justifying their validity.

The only way to re-establish an agreement, say, for a norm, where citizens have the consciousness that it is a norm that requires justification, is through a practical discourse that focuses entirely on reaching mutual understanding by mobilising arguments and good reasons for the validity of this norm. Habermas describes the procedures in a practical discourse and the necessary conditions for it to work at all. One of the minimum criteria for Habermas is the assumption by participants that there is a sufficient chance of convincing by arguments. If participants feel that this minimum is not present (for example in the case of coercion or an impression that no sufficient or any openness to arguments), the practical discourse might simply fail. Habermas' point

is not that the only way to reach agreement is through practical discourse as defined by him. Other possible means are, in fact, coercion or compromise (an agreement based on mutual interests without necessarily sharing or even accepting the interests or course of action of others) and they may well replace a practical discourse. However, Habermas' argument is that participants who reach an agreement without any practical discourse do not feel an obligation towards that agreement. They may respect the agreement out of self-interest, tradition, inertia or other priorities.

Habermas highlights the necessary conditions for a moral obligation (however remote from empirical reality this might be). These conditions are spelt out in Habermas' ideal speech situation. They provide a critical yardstick against which agreements on values, norms or identities can be judged. The more the discussion or discourse approaches those conditions, the more we can expect participants in this discourse to feel a moral obligation toward the agreements. Finally, using the term of "generalisability" Habermas assumes that under conditions of the ideal speech situation, a tendency towards universal values or norms is to follow.

Those are, in a nutshell, the main points of Habermas' Critical Theory, which may help to advance our knowledge in the study of collective war memories and to the central question posed in the introduction: namely, how can we study or analyse the impact of collective war memories on international politics? I would now like to discuss the three main areas where, I claim, Habermas can help to further our knowledge on the questions posed; namely, (a) an understanding of the rise of national collective war memories based on the Habermasian concepts of praxis and rationalisation (chapter 3); (b) an application of the concept of social learning to the remembering of past wars (chapter 3) and, (c) the development of a concept of political legitimacy, which helps to advance our understanding how collective war memories contribute to the legitimating of decisions in international politics.

Collective war memories, as defined in chapter one, form part of what Habermas identifies as lifeworld: as other elements of lifeworld, they also depend on mutual understanding and shared meanings. Thus collective war memories also form part of socialisation and social integration processes. Here, we find again the hermeneutic condition that Halbwachs already identified for collective memory in general. It is

interesting to note that Habermas identifies warfare as part of “systems” and not lifeworld. This may apply to the actual warfare on the battlefield, but given longer wars and the memories of wars, there are clear references to aspects of the lifeworld (such as memories, identity, values).

Habermas also provides a notion of praxis that helps to grasp the logic of becoming of collective war memories in modern societies. It is my contention that additional insights about the emergent role of collective war memories in modern societies can be gained by looking at the rationalisation processes in lifeworld and its implications on collective war memories (chapter 3). Additionally, as I will argue in the next chapter, the process of remembering past wars itself can be distinguished in different levels of social learning (pre-conventional, conventional, post-conventional). Thus, collective war memories are not only affected by the rationalisation processes of lifeworld, but actually show a similar potential for rationalisation themselves. This aspect will be explored in detail in the next chapter.

The conditions of practical discourse, in turn, provide important clues as to how to understand the ways in which collective war memories add legitimacy to international politics in post-conventional societies. Such a concept of political legitimacy, building on Habermas’ idea of practical discourse, will be developed in chapter 6. Developing these two concepts (social learning in collective war memories and political legitimacy) together advances our knowledge of the impact of collective war memories on international politics and, ultimately, contributes to the knowledge about collective war memories in the study of IR. The suitability of those two concepts to empirical research will be illustrated in chapters 4 and 5 (on social learning in collective war memories) and chapter 7 (analysing the legitimating impact of collective war memories on international politics).

**B. Studying the rise and transformation
of national war memories with a
Habermasian concept of social learning**

Chapter 3

National war memories and the Habermasian rationalisation processes in Western Europe

Chapter 2 introduced Habermas' Critical Theory of social evolution and – in general terms – the steps of rationalisation in what he calls systems and lifeworlds. According to the assumption of Critical Theory, the different forms of praxis (defined as the combination of “work” and “interaction” by Habermas) help us to understand the rise or decline of certain phenomena beyond historical circumstances. In this chapter, I propose, first, to describe those processes within the Habermasian categories of system and life-world and their rationalisation in more detail for the case of Western Europe in order to illustrate them more fully and, second, to highlight the processes that led to the emergence and rising importance of national war memories in modern societies as means of social bonding and socialisation. The main argument of this chapter is that collective war memories were of minor importance to pre-modern societies and that they gained increasing importance for societal reproduction in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In the first part (3.1) the chapter looks at the historical process of rationalisation of systems (economic system, state bureaucracy, warfare) and lifeworld (identity formation, value formation and the creation of norms) in Western Europe; in the second part (3.2) it shows how the rationalisation processes that took place with the advent of modernity boosted the importance of national war memories for modern societies. In the third part (3.3), the chapter goes one step further and develops the argument that the process of remembering past wars itself is open to social learning, i.e. that we can remember wars in different levels of social learning. Indeed, it is my contention that, despite its being an important aspect of collective war memories in the present, this potential for social learning has hardly been addressed. I further argue that we are currently witnessing a crisis of conventional remembering of past wars as well as some signs of the emergence of post-conventional collective war memories (something that

will be defined in 3.3). This claim, derived from Habermas' Critical Theory, will be illustrated in the following two chapters, where the social learning in collective war memories in Germany (chapter 4) and France (chapter 5) will be discussed. Together, these three chapters outline a way to approach the becoming of collective war memories beyond historical circumstances and the different levels of social learning in remembering past wars.

3.1 The rationalisation processes in Western Europe according to Habermas

The masses of freed individuals become more mobile - not only politically as citizens, but economically as labour force, militarily as conscripts, culturally as pupils, who learn to write and read and are thus incorporated into mass communication and mass culture (Habermas, 1987a: 165).¹

While war has been a constant in human history, modernity brought about fundamental changes to warfare and, therewith, to the impact of collective war experiences on societies. The term 'modernity' is often contested, but there seems to be consensus about the fact that 'modernity' entails three interconnected processes that began to gain momentum in the late eighteenth century: (a) the process of industrialisation and the expansion of capital; (b) the process of increased rationalisation and bureaucratisation of societies; and (c) the political revolution and process of democratisation that began with the French Revolution. This section will discuss each of these processes in the light of Habermas' Critical Theory and will then turn to Habermas' account of the rationalisation of systems (economic sphere, political administration, warfare: 3.1.1) and lifeworld (3.1.2), to conclude with a discussion of the impact of those rationalisation processes on national war memories (3.2).

As was stated in chapter 2, Habermas characterises the process of modernity as a rationalisation process in which systems and lifeworlds became differentiated from each other and transformed further in their respective spheres. This process, Habermas argues, took place for the first time in Western Europe, where mystical world-views

¹ My translation.

were replaced by monotheistic religions and were then followed by the notion of Reason in the Enlightenment. This de-centring paved the way for the emergence of different sets of institutions that no longer followed one world-view or validity claim. This not only made modern jurisprudence and moral philosophy possible, but also the rise of empirical-analytical science and the technical use of its results. Moreover, the de-centring from religion paved the way for a linear consciousness of time and history.² Such an understanding furnished the basis for social memory, connecting past and present.

After the de-centring of world-views, and the separation of systems and lifeworld in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Western Europe, further rationalisation processes within each sphere of Habermas' praxis took place. These are discussed below.

3.1.1 Rationalisation processes in systems (economic sphere, political administration, warfare)

Habermas claims that, with the Renaissance in Europe, empirical-analytical science emancipated itself from religion. This was one important ingredient for capitalism to emerge. The economic system was de-linked from other parts of praxis and began to follow its own logic. This logic also affected the organisation of governments, given the mutual dependency between state and economy. A bureaucratic state organisation and a capitalist mode of production turned out to be most efficient in securing the material reproduction of societies. They were consequently adopted by all countries in Western Europe. With the emancipation of the economic sphere from other spheres, the state disappeared as entrepreneur. The state left the economic activities to others and began to depend on the collection of taxes for its income. Habermas regards this change as a rationalisation within the economic system, because the bourgeois society was much more capable of securing the material survival than the feudal or estate systems were (1991a). At the same time, the capitalist system could only work if the state guaranteed

² Reinhard Koselleck highlights how a changed consciousness of history, from sameness to circularity and salvation doctrine by the early Church to Enlightenment introduced a "temporalisation" (*Verzeitlichung*). Thus, according to Koselleck, having a consciousness of a historical development increased the interest in history. This change took place in the course of the eighteenth century in Europe. (Koselleck, 1985:17).

the freedom of property and investment, as well as the enforcement of the rights and obligations of contractual relationships.

During the **industrial revolution** the capitalist systems increased the mobility of people, news and commodities (Habermas, 1995a:176). Many local bonds and structures were severed and people mixed – even across political boundaries – much more than before. Peasants moved to towns, the workplace became separate from the home and the mobility between different workplaces increased due to changes in employment trends. This movement brought about the de-rooting of peasant communities that had remained in the same area over centuries, as well as movements within (and sometimes beyond) political boundaries. Additionally, modern means of communication and transport made an increased awareness of other members of this political community possible.³ The expanding industries and their huge demand for labour force pressed for more comprehensive, more inclusive definitions of membership, i.e. citizenship, and a medium in which those members of a community, hitherto unknown to one another, could interact and communicate. This latter required a standardised culture and education that was provided by state administration from the nineteenth century on.

The political administration is what Habermas calls the ‘political system’ as it evolved in Western societies between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries (1988a:169-171). The political administration relies on clear hierarchies that distribute powers in such a way as to guarantee an effective and efficient bureaucracy. This bureaucracy is able to carry out political decisions effectively. Habermas follows Max Weber in arguing that the rational bureaucratic state administration was the most successful form of both organising the implementation of political decisions and administrating the polity. The rationalisation process of the modern state was based on the centralised system of taxes, a centralised and monopolised military force, with the monopoly of legislation and law enforcement, and a bureaucratic administration that organised given tasks successfully (Habermas, 1988a:226-227). Both spheres thus became dependent upon each other, for the state only had the means to engage in warfare if it could raise enough financial resources. Habermas claims that this mutual dependency still exists today.

³ Benedict Anderson argues that there is a close link between capitalism and integration through communication: See: Anderson, 1991:44.

Legislation and state bureaucracies increasingly penetrated society and regulated hitherto private spheres of interaction through formal law. This direct interaction between legislation and citizens also triggered an interest in national legislation. Citizens became interested in the formulation of national policies, because they were increasingly affected by them. With the advent of modernity, the central governments not only acquired the monopoly of the use of legitimate force within the political boundaries, but they were also seen as the legitimate representation of the nation abroad. This assumed an identity between the expressed will of the national government, the will of the state and the people it represented abroad. The modern, centralised state structure was, furthermore, able to extend the reach of a standardised mass education (although in many countries this did not cover the entire territory). This new administrative power fostered a new subject of education, history classes. As Smith argues for the case of France:

[...] Republican nationalist French leaders sought to 'create France' and 'Frenchmen' throughout the area of the French state by institutional and cultural means. Military service for all, a regimented mass, public education system, inculcation of the spirit of glory and *revanche* against Prussia, colonial conquests and assimilation, as well as economic infrastructure, all helped to turn 'peasants into Frenchmen' in Eugene Weber's well-known formulation. But there was one field, in particular, which helped to create the imagined community of *la France*: history, or more especially, history teaching (A. Smith, 1999: 165-166).

This was a new means available to the modern state that helped to disseminate a centrally controlled education and a standard answer to the self-definition of the political community to many local communities, which had hitherto had very autonomous ways of life and, on occasions, an education system of their own.

Furthermore, the industrial revolution brought about a revolution in weaponry and, therewith, **warfare** as well. In fact, the new arms industries with their high demand of steel and timber were important pillars of the industrial revolution (Krippendorff, 1982). The new weapon technology and the increased quantities of weapons available as a result of modern forms of production were, thus, both an outcome and a motor of the industrial revolution, but also of the centralisation of the state itself (Mann, 1996: 225).

Technological changes were accompanied by a transformation in the organisation of the army. Heavy artillery, machine guns and tanks all required mass-armed forces for their use. This explains the rise of conscript armies that matched well with the level of weapon technology until 1945 (Giddens, 1992: 222-254; Posen, 1993). In particular mainland countries (as opposed to islands) were forced to recruit a great number of soldiers (Hinze, 1932). Governments, with their rational bureaucracies, were now able to organise national armies, to advance their professionalisation, to raise the necessary revenues and implement the supervision of conscript armies, now required mass armed forces from the entire polity. War and war preparations became more total and, due to the increasing power of destruction of modern weapons, more brutal (for those at the front and at home alike). Rationalisation in warfare meant immense technological advancements that considerably elevated the stakes of warfare, the brutality and the sacrifice necessary for a victory.

It should be stressed that the introduction of conscript armies in France and elsewhere was not a simple 'awakening of the nation' to defend itself. While the increase of political rights and the principle of popular sovereignty convoked citizens to fight for 'their' nation, conscription would not have been possible without another feature of modernity, i.e. the bureaucratisation and rationalisation of the state. Historically, conscription was a means by a poor French revolutionary government to prepare itself for an expected attack from a coalition of countries whose combined forces seemed to outnumber the revolutionary army by far. Conscription (*levée en masse*) was not greeted everywhere in France as the long-searched-for empowerment of the people - on the contrary. Outside of Paris, many young men had to be forced into the army (E. Weber, 1976). It was only by means of rationalised state power (inherited from the dynastic French ruler) that it was possible to organise and enforce conscription even against a certain level of resistance within French society. The introduction of conscript armies was therefore possible because of *both* processes of modernity, political emancipation *and* a rationalised state power. In the course of the nineteenth century, one country after another in Western Europe adopted conscription (the United Kingdom was the last to follow during the First World War).

3.1.2 The rationalisation processes in lifeworld

Habermas claims that between the Renaissance and Absolutism (fifteenth to eighteenth centuries), normative structures became increasingly systematised and based on ever more formal and universal principles, without yet being subject to an overall justification (1988a:231-233). Habermas also identifies the surge of an ever more inclusive definition of membership of the polity, once traditional concepts of kinship had been contested. Both developments (more inclusive membership and systematisation of norms) are interpreted by Habermas as the result of two rationalisation processes, in lifeworld as well as in systems. On the one hand, the institutionalisation of capitalism required the concept of formal equality, i.e. the individual as bearer of equal rights before the law, the right to property and the possibility to enforce contractual obligations through the law. On the other hand, the rationalisation of lifeworld increased the pressure of more generalised concepts of membership and equal rights within that society that came to be based on universal principles (Habermas, 1996d). This expansion and diversification of the members could only be accommodated, according to Habermas, by using a more formal concept of membership, such as that of "citizen". This was followed by an increased formal equality between the members of society expressed by the law, which also granted greater personal autonomy to each member, and thus protected and enhanced this diversity. The advantages of formal equality and the subsequent universalisation of membership allowed a greater variety of subjectivity and personal autonomy than, for example, archaic societies based on kinship, but, according to Habermas, they also made the task of reaching understanding through communicative action more pressing and difficult.

In the increased institutionalisation of the public sphere Habermas sees the advancement of rationalisation in the establishment of post-conventional norms in Western Europe (1990). He claims that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the public sphere became the locus of deliberation and the space where communicative action, the redemption of validity claims, could take place. The public sphere was meant to control the government and to establish legitimacy for political decisions as the result of public deliberation. In the liberal period of Western societies (eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries), the public sphere would be limited to public matters and would leave the

private sphere untouched. With the progressively greater interference of the state in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries in areas hitherto regarded as private (economy, family, social relations), with the rise of the welfare state, and with the penetration of society into government via political parties, this liberal separation between the public and the private sphere became increasingly blurred. Social groups sought to formulate government policies, not only control them through public debate. Habermas tries to identify the public sphere as the necessary locus of public reasoning, but also the locus of commercial interests and manipulation by the political administration.

It was not only the industrial revolution, but also the **political revolution** that gave warfare and war memories a particular shape. With the political emancipation, first, of the bourgeoisie, and, later, of wider parts of society, objects of (dynastic) politics turned more and more into the subjects of (democratic) politics. This transformation was part of a broader shift that was accelerated and implemented into political reality after the French Revolution. Those who had had war experiences had also become political subjects, i.e. they could elect or could be elected. The political revolution also triggered a process that replaced mercenary armies with national armies based on male conscription. The male citizen not only became the bearer of rights and obligations in the political process, but also the official defender of the political community. While prior to the French Revolution, people had always experienced the war as victims (for example during sieges, loots etc.), most people (except the mercenaries) had not been involved in the actual warfare.

Only with the political revolution gaining momentum with the French Revolution and the increasing need of comprehensive war efforts, first male citizens and ultimately, in the twentieth century whole societies, became active parts of warfare. While coercion was clearly a factor in implementing conscription, for example in France, the idea of the citizen in arms did exert a mobilising effect that augmented the effectiveness of warfare (Liddell Hart, 1967). Indeed, without such an appeal to citizens, conscription would not have been so successful. Yet, it would only be with the involvement of entire societies in warfare during the Second World War, that the claim that war is “a national experience” came closer to empirical reality.

As Mayall argues, the political revolution triggered a shift from dynastic to popular sovereignty. The political community was now defined by the people who lived (or were supposed to live) within state boundaries and no longer by the dynast ruling over a certain territory (Mayall, 1990). This not only led to a reconciliation between existing state boundaries and the allegedly ‘chosen’ people living within them, but also to the elevation of the individuals living within those present or future state boundaries to repositories of national sovereignty. Popular sovereignty, Habermas claims, expressed, but, also, advanced the process whereby normative structures became reflexive, i.e. when societies became aware that they lived under self-given rules, no content was any longer accepted *a priori* as the rightful norm to follow. Any content was, in principle, open to revision and thus subject to change. The agreement of what was accepted behaviour depended increasingly upon a *procedure*, not a specific outcome. The reflectiveness of normative structures, thus, brought about a difference between legality and morality. Any law could be legitimised with reference to a specific procedure, and the rightfulness of law was increasingly guaranteed by the adherence to those procedures (Habermas, 1998a). Yet, the procedures themselves also required justification. According to Habermas, it is at this point that the universal principles of equal political participation and the procedure meet, for those principles need to justify the legal system *per se*. The institutionalisation of the democratic principle made laws self-referential and changed the social basis of politics (Habermas, 1995a: 176-177).

With the advance of secularisation in the course of the nineteenth century, the role of religion in the creation of solidarity and a sense of community clearly declined. This is when “civil religions” began to rise. Nationalism, “an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining identity, unity and autonomy of a social group some of whose members deem it to constitute an actual or potential nation” (A. Smith 1999:18) was one of the contenders to combine the universalist values of the political revolution while maintaining the particularity of the political community (Habermas, 1996d). As many authors on nationalism claim, within this ideological movement, one ingredient clearly was the attention to collective memory and collective war memory to construct that solidarity among members who did not know each other personally. Therefore, I would argue, that *national* collective war memories were a means of reconciling the contradiction between universal values of the political revolution and the particularity of

the polity between the late eighteenth and the early twentieth century in Western Europe.

The more *inclusive* the definition of membership became, the more *formal* the definition of the body politic had to be. This enhanced inclusiveness referred to *universal* principles in order to reconcile the increased diversity within the body politic (Habermas, 1987a:165). The universal principles of freedom and equality, which were part of the political revolution sparked by the French Revolution, advanced democratisation, universal suffrage and the ever more accepted equation of the sovereign with the people in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This equality was institutionalised in formal law and expressed in the general concept of citizen; at the same time, this equality fostered a notion of “nation” that appealed precisely to the equality of the citizens of the body politic:

The invention ‘popular nation [*Volksnation*]’ (Hagen Schulze) had a catalysing effect on democratisation processes. There would have been no democratic basis for a legitimisation of power without a national consciousness. Only the nation constructed the context of solidarity between persons who had been unknown to one another (Habermas, 1995a:176).⁴

The more diverse and the more inclusive membership became the more collective identity formulations had to embrace the whole political community. This idea of equal members of a community is precisely what the different formulations of nationalism and – as a result of nationalism – national identities should achieve. Habermas argues that without such an inclusive programme, any appeal to such a community would have receded into particularism and would have been hardly capable of mobilising a society (Habermas, 1995a:90).⁵

The previous paragraphs have briefly tried to outline the changes leading to modern societies within the categories of Habermas’ theory of social evolution (rationalisation of systems and life-worlds), drawing strongly on the analysis Habermas made himself

⁴ My translation.

⁵ This accounts for civic nations as well as for ethnic nations. Even civic nations that appeal to a togetherness due to birth in a specific territory need to justify why membership should only apply to a particular territory. On the distinction between “civic” and “ethnic” nations see: Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity*, pp.9-13.

of that process, when modernity turned the *objects* of warfare, politics and state sovereignty into *subjects* of warfare, politics, and state sovereignty. Habermas himself draws heavily on writings by Marx and Weber, but adds his own aspects of rationalisation in lifeworlds to that. Although many authors have described this process of modernisation, it is my contention that the Habermasian conceptual framework provides some insights into the current diagnosis and a future outlook of the societal role of collective war memories in modern societies that would be lost in, say, a Marxist or Weberian analysis of modernisation. This transformation from object to subject in those three areas (political revolution, definition of sovereignty, advances of warfare) is characterised by a double and seemingly contradictory move: On the one hand, the means of external and social control by the modern state bureaucracy over the citizens increased enormously via modern laws, mass education, conscription and other means. On the other hand, there was a move towards more independence and autonomy of individuals from the community expressed by the equal status of citizens, the formal rights granted to each citizen by law, who also became the defender of the political community. The historical introduction of conscription highlights the crossroads of these rationalisation processes in the nineteenth century.

Capitalism also led, at the same time, to more freedom and independence (from serfdom, guilds, freedom of contract) and new and drastic dependencies and controls (through the market). Those processes required larger communities, given the formal equality within those communities and the de-rooting caused by capitalism. Thus, a different frame for the political community was required for members who did not know each other personally, but had to imagine that community living in the same political borders: the national frame. Those processes also led to a new type of warfare; namely, a mass-armed force warfare. Every Western country became transformed in a different way through these processes, according to its specific political, economic, demographic, military and geopolitical conditions. In other words, there were different roads to modernity defined as rationalisation processes of systems and lifeworlds, but all of these countries were somehow on one of these roads (Greenfeld, 1992).

3.2 The role of collective war memories in the rationalisation processes in Western Europe

In this section I wish to argue that the processes discussed above triggered three important developments concerning collective war memories: (1) the social framework for remembering wars shifted from a more localised context to the national context in the course of the nineteenth century in Western Europe. National war memories became an important means to perceive the imagined community as a national community; (2) the object of those memories, i.e. wars, shifted from the local to the national level. Given the requirements of modern warfare and the results of the political revolution, warfare shifted onto the national level; and (3) national governments had a necessity to engineer more national frameworks of remembering, in order to reconcile the arbitrary territory of the political community with universalistic values.

On the shift from local to national war memories: The new mobility brought about by capitalism dissolved many established bonds and, therefore, memory groups, and gave an impetus to the de-localisation of collective memories. In other words, the industrial revolution induced a mobility of individuals that supported the shift from smaller to larger frameworks. This shift was by no means automatic. New frameworks may always be created within classes, regions or towns, but it was the greater mobility, that enhanced the possibility of bonding through experiences that were shared throughout the (national) political boundaries (Lipsitz, 1990:6; Gellner, 1983:8-38). The industrial revolution made national frameworks possible.

In addition to the new mobility, the means of the modern state bureaucracy (mass education, control of archives, organisation of commemorations) facilitated the emergence of national war memories. Furthermore, the new means of communication, provided by the modern era – especially by what Benedict Anderson calls “print capitalism” (1991) - became important for a collective war memory to be used on the level of the national, imagined community, where the dominant form of oral history that had been used in local communities for generations was clearly no longer suitable. Modernity, thus, shifted the main interpretation of warfare to the national level and replaced, in many cases, the predominance of local frameworks, where memory was not

consciously generated or documented, but rather lived in stable and static communities and passed on by oral accounts from one generation onto the next.⁶

Pointing to the societal acceleration process caused by capitalism, some scholars have regarded collective memory – with its stress on continuity by linking past and present and its focus on sameness –, as a necessary counter-balance to the ever faster changes occurring through the spread of capitalism.⁷ Furthermore, modernity, with its concomitant mobility, not only rendered, as Habermas states, a common legal framework necessary, but also triggered a need to engineer a ‘national culture’ as a medium of communication. As Gellner points out:

In general, each such [modern] state presides over, maintains, and is identified with, one kind of culture, one style of communication, which prevails within its borders and is dependent for its perpetuation on a centralised educational system supervised by and often actually run by the state in question, which monopolises legitimate culture almost as much as it does legitimate violence, or perhaps more so (Gellner, 1983:140).

Collective memory, in general, and collective war memories thus, acquire the status of a medium through which members of an imagined community with no personal bonds can communicate and find common ground. As Halbwachs claimed, the national framework for structuring experience is usually quite remote from the experience of individuals. Therefore, other social frameworks seem much more relevant to the individual’s experience. Yet, wars are not only one of the few events that have a profound impact on each and every member of the nation, but they are actually one of the few occasions where the nation is supposed to have acted as such- as a nation. War and war memories are not only an important means of state-building, of forging a national framework of memory, but, often, the primary provider of the form (national identity) as well.

⁶ Pierre Nora deplores the disappearance of the “*milieux de mémoire*” and regards memory sites “*lieux de mémoire*” as a lesser substitute to reconstruct a form of memory that is not extracted from lived memory. See: Nora, 1990:11-12.

⁷ “But the celebration of recurrence is a compensatory device. Capitalism, in Marx’s famous phrase, tears down all social immobility, every ancestral confinement and feudal restriction; and invented rites, however implicated they often are in that very process of modernisation which capitalism drives remorselessly on, are palliative measures [...].” (Connerton, 1989: 63-64).

The political revolution and democratisation starting with the French Revolution, as documented, among others, by Eric Hobsbawm (1985) and Michael Mann (1993), meant that collective memory had to appeal to the members of a territory and a body politic. This explains the rising importance of “national” history and the “national” past (Hobsbawm, 1985; Mann, 1993:167-213). Additionally, as Hobsbawm points out, political elites and intellectuals propagated the idea that individuals *should* regard certain events or values as ‘theirs’ and interpret them in a particular way, thus remembering them. These means of advocacy of a particular framework were expressed in different forms of nationalism. This is not to say, however, that collective memories account for national identity; while clearly, experiences allegedly shared by the whole of the body politic are powerful instruments of self-representation, and they are far from being the only ones.⁸ Thus, the creation of a sense of ‘we’ on a national level included more than collectively shared memories (A. Smith, 1991).

On the shift from dynastic and local warfare to national warfare of citizens: With male conscription and the involvement of entire societies in warfare (especially during the twentieth century), the ideological claim made in the nineteenth century, in the sense that two or more peoples had fought against each other, became, increasingly, an empirical reality, which rendered national framework central for the collective remembering of past wars, as opposed to other, more localised, forms of collective memory. Wars fought together on the same side reinforced the sense of a shared past even further and provided powerful ‘material’ for a collective memory that now embraced the whole political community. Collective memory became, thus, a self-reinforcing argument that was a new dimension of military survival in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Collective national memory became, in fact, an important element of the advancement of national identity and nation-building in the nineteenth century in Western Europe.⁹ Thus, collective memory and, especially, collective war memory, owe their increased importance in socialisation, social integration and ego-formation to a historical combination between rationalisation processes within societies that met with a distribution of power across states.

⁸ For the debate on national identity, nationalism and their relation to modernity see: Anderson, 1991; Gellner, 1997; A. Smith, 1998.

⁹ According to Hobsbawm the army was, next to the primary school, the most important institution of the nineteenth century to create a national consciousness and to actually spread a national language. See: Hobsbawm, 1990:115.

However, the fact that more and more parts of society became actively involved in warfare did not mean that the experience of war was the same for all participants. Here I would argue, that with increased totalising warfare, in particular during the Second World War, experiences of war actually became strongly differentiated. This hampered the possibilities of governments to control post-war memories, given the fact that many citizens themselves had experienced war first-hand.

The increasing engineering of national war memories by governments: The privileged position within one political community has given modern governments powers not only over warfare, but also over its remembering. While modern governments cannot claim a monopoly of the *interpretation* of war experience, they have considerable influence on the shaping of memory of war by means of selective information dissemination. Governments and military staff are the central planning agencies during a war and thus have a privileged knowledge of, say, how the different war efforts were tied together, how the armies reacted to expected or actual moves by the enemy. All this information is withheld from the majority of citizens and soldiers not only during, but also after the war. It is here where national governments are very powerful. Most of the documents are stored away in high security archives. In other words, the political system increasingly controls the “documented memory” of past wars, i.e., particularly, national archives. Information dissemination is extremely censured during and after wars. In the name of national security and national interest, governments decide which information is released when and to whom. Furthermore, governments can discipline historians, politicians or journalists who try to challenge their policy of information control by charging them with high treason or damaging release of state secrets (Wilson (ed.), 1996:3).

The withholding or release of confidential documents is heavily influenced by the present situation between states. If it seems favourable to the positions of the country or to the fostering of certain relations, governments generously ignore any time limits put on the release of secret documents. In other words, archive politics becomes an integral part of current foreign policy. In this respect, governments often instrumentalise historians interested in sensitive foreign policy issues for the promotion of their objectives by giving them access to selected archive material (Wilson (ed.), 1996:2-6; Nora, 2001d).

However, those government restrictions and policies have their limits. Faced with the secrecy of the government, historians can refer to other sources, including archives in foreign countries. Moreover, with the advent of modern mass media, the capability to store information and document events increased exponentially, thus reducing considerably the ability of governments to exert effective control over all information. This notwithstanding, governments do have a specific access to delicate information they may or may not open to historical research or the general public.

Heads of states or former statesmen also try to influence collective war memories through *memoirs* in which they describe how dramatic events of official national history ‘truly’ happened (Egerton (ed.), 1994). More and more *memoirs* are published while their authors are still alive, and these authors often take part vividly in the debate about their memoirs. Given the privileged position of former statesmen, those memoirs are often regarded as ‘authentic’. This influence on the information available can be increased through influencing or controlling mass media. Additionally, and particularly during the twentieth century, governments used ever more often mass media to create the sense of a simultaneity in the war experience of those who were not physically present at the battles, be it at home or abroad (Lipsitz, 1990:6). This mediated form provided a surrogate experience of war, often neglecting the fact that there were intermediaries that made this ‘experience’ happen. This new opportunity to ‘experience’ war without physical presence through modern mass media (news broadcasts, cinema, and newspapers) and its assumed simultaneity have also created new opportunities for manipulation by governments.

After the French revolution, governments progressively ritualised the supposedly shared national history, which often entailed a notion of a common descent and shared experiences, through public ceremonies, monuments and festivals. Additionally, the educational and military revolution gave governments hitherto unknown means of penetrating and organising socialisation and social integration. Collective memory, therefore, contributed to a necessary ‘nation-building’ by governments to either limit the application of universal principles to particular polities, or, conversely, to extend citizenship to the borders of a body politic. They also had to combat those movements that tried to transgress state boundaries, such as class coalitions or universalist religions (Habermas, 1974).

The ever-increasing sacrifice citizens were asked for made commemoration of the dead a vital task for governments in order to show that dead for the community were honoured. Diane Barthel considers war commemoration by governments and civil society one important aspect for the continuation of a willingness to die for that community:

Sacrifice is an important concept and considered crucial to a nation's survival. If people are no longer willing to sacrifice for their nation, can the nation long exist? Commemoration serves to encourage future acts of sacrifice, as it promises the would-be heroes that they will not die in vain and that they will be remembered by future generations. It is an unwritten pact between the dead, the living, and the unborn, and it is enacted through social rituals- the acts of commemoration (Barthel, 1996:80).

However, those commemorations also have the important social function of collective grief, as was pointed out in chapter 1. Thus, governments face the ever more pressing need to organise commemorations; nonetheless, since World War I, they have had to share that task with war veterans' associations and numerous other organisations (Winter, 1999:47).

The level of societal mobilisation and the sacrifices asked by all participating countries in the First World War triggered a dichotomisation between the 'us' versus 'the enemy' that increasingly allowed only one outcome: total victory of the own side and total submission of the enemy. The proclamation of a partial victory or a moderate peace agreement was seen as insufficient in exchange for the sacrifices that the national governments demanded from their people (Fussell 1975:75-79). This was an impact that total mobilisation had on the technical system of warfare at a time, where those fighting could – as they still can - influence war aims as citizens. While the development from experience to image is seen as part of any collective memory, the emergence of widely shared and accepted dichotomies between self and enemy after wars only gained momentum in the nineteenth century. One corollary of that dichotomisation was totalising images of 'us' and 'them', fuelled by the increasing level of sacrifices by the citizens. The clear physical separation of sides, the attachment of moral values to each side during the war, the separation in uniforms, all fit well with the pre-established dichotomies and often directed the forming of images after the war. Thus, to use

Habermas' terms: here, lifeworld limits the options of the technical system of warfare. The dichotomisation also has important cognitive and practical-moral implications for the war memories that follow. As will be shown in the next two chapters, the First World War was a watershed in France and Germany in this respect.

In this chapter I have sought to identify and discuss the processes and trends that help to explain the rise of national war memories and the role of collective war memories within the Habermasian framework of rationalisation of work and lifeworld. It is my contention that an analysis within that framework of those same rationalisation processes after 1945 allows an informed diagnosis regarding the fact that the prominence and importance of *national* war memories might be about to change. At least, I would claim, there are several challenges from a number of angles, which suggest that they will not continue to be as it first developed in the nineteenth century. Furthermore, I would even argue that the very same processes that gave rise to national collective war memories could now be leading to their transformation in the future.

The first aspect is **modern warfare** with the high technology and nuclear weapons that have characterised it since 1945. This is a type of warfare that technically achieves higher levels of destruction than mass-armed forces and seems, therefore, rational. Such warfare does no longer require the mobilisation of entire societies for the act of warfare (more for the political and moral support). One indicator of the new prevalence of this changed type of warfare is the fact that most European countries abandoned conscription after the Second World War (van Doorn, 1975). Modern weapon technology, in particular nuclear and electronic weapons, has made mass armed forces obsolete. Conscript armies have become unnecessary and so have army and military service as means of supporting a preference of the national framework for war memories. Thus, modern countries with nuclear and high technology weapons may confront low-intensity warfare, but not repeat a history of warfare like the Second World War. This also has important implications for the 'material' of future war memories, as wars are now more likely to be either 'out of area' (and thus far away from the 'home-front') or civil wars, thus involving members of the same polity. As was discussed in the first chapter, civil wars are particularly difficult to remember in a way as to create bonding (van Creveld, 1991).

A second aspect is the arbitrary **end of the political revolution** at the borders of states. This is an argument put forward by Habermas himself. After the French revolution, popular-national sovereignty replaced dynastic-territorial sovereignty in Western Europe. The political community was now defined by the people who lived (or were supposed to live) within state boundaries, rather than by the dynast ruling over a certain territory Mayall, 1990; Hall, 1999). While the processes leading towards a post-conventional moral consciousness that enshrined popular sovereignty occurred *within* societies, the realisation of the *universalist* potential of this consciousness found its limits in the distribution of political power *among* states that had been inherited from absolutism. The control over territory and people was the result of the use of force, tactics and relative strength, but hardly the result of post-conventional moral consciousness.

Governments had an interest in maintaining an order established in Westphalia and the retention of political power, while their possibilities were limited by the hitherto achieved rationalisation of the lifeworld and the systems.¹⁰ As Habermas points out:

Citizens constitute themselves out of their own will as a political association of free and equal; *fellow nationals* recognise themselves in an ethnic community characterised by a common language and historical experience and destiny. The nation-state has this in-built tension between the *universalism* of an egalitarian politico-legal community and the *particularism* of a historical community (Habermas 1995a:179).¹¹

A third aspect is the continuous drive of **mobility of labour and capital** that led to significant mobilisation within national borders. Habermas states that the same pressure towards greater mobility that accompanied the industrial revolution now exerts pressure towards a greater inclusion than national citizenship can offer. This pressure is increased through migration waves from areas that have a surplus of labour to areas where there is a perceived demand of labour. With the same logic that applies to the national level, capitalism further expands and requires labour where it is needed. This increasing mobility challenges the obstacles put by national boundaries – a similar development that had challenged local obstacles during the industrial revolution.

¹⁰ On the engineering efforts by governments in nation-building between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries see: Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1992.

¹¹ My translation. Emphasis added. For the contradiction between universal, cosmopolitan man and specific citizen in IR see: Brown, 1992; Linklater, 1990b.

In conclusion, Habermas' analysis of the rationalisation processes that have taken place in both spheres of praxis suggests that national war memories have been both important means of socialisation and of identity-formation since the nineteenth century, as well as a result of rationalisation processes in warfare and political administration. Therewith Habermas sheds light on the fact that *national* war memories are a modern phenomenon. Interestingly enough, if those developments that took place in the realm of praxis are followed after 1945, one might find evidence that national war memories are changing both in their form and function. National war memories may, in fact, be giving way to broader frameworks (given the tendencies of political revolution and globalisation) or may even be in frank decline, because there is now a different type of rationalised warfare that makes mass mobilisation and, thus, mass experience of war less likely. Additionally, I would add to that diagnosis that the experience of warfare by societies in the First and Second World Wars seems ambivalent for sustaining a national framework of remembrance: on the one hand, it increasingly becomes a national or joint experience, on the other hand, the diversity in experiencing war makes it more and more difficult to construct a framework that accommodates all those experiences.

3.3 The current crisis of national war memories: on the road to post-conventionality?

Memory of war, and indeed memory per se, has often been understood in new ways since 1945. While some authors make the Holocaust the turning point, others see in it merely one last and most horrible stage in a development already underway [...] on the road to postmodernity.

(Olick and Coughlin, 2003:55)

As was discussed above, collective war memory is important for modern societies in several ways: (1) as one of the means of communication among citizens who are de-rooted and live as an 'imagined community', it is (2) a consequence of modern warfare as well as (3) of the political revolution brought about by modernity. At the end of section 3.2, I argued that all three areas of praxis are currently changing, and the assumption is that the role of collective war memory should change as well. This is not to predict the future or to speculate on near changes, but is in line with the idea of Critical Theory to analyse the becoming, the necessary conditions that bring a certain

phenomenon into existence, at a certain historical epoch. Furthermore, once the rationalisation processes that brought national war memories into existence, or, at least, rendered them a significant cultural device of collective identity in modern society, have been identified, it is possible to theorise on the transformations this role might undergo when those processes change as well.

So far, however, the view has been from *without*. That is to say the focus has been on the rationalisation of “work” and “interaction” and its impact on the becoming and transformation of national war memories. In this section, I would like to suggest a view and analysis from *within*, i.e., from the point of view of the remembering of past wars itself. Here I argue that this is a practice within lifeworld, a representation of the past to the present, a form of collective self-reflection. Given these characteristics it seems possible to assume that the remembering of past wars, and thus collective war memories themselves, is conducive to a process of social learning from the pre-conventional to the post-conventional level, like the one Habermas assumes for the dimensions of lifeworld in general.

As was stated in chapter 2, Habermas applies Kohlberg’s child-development theory to the evolution of societies. As Kohlberg does, within lifeworld, Habermas distinguishes the area of creating and justifying norms, the area of ego-formation as well as values, and the claim that each sphere is open to the possibility of three learning levels. The development of social learning moves from a very clearly defined, empirically specific content of identity, norms (and roles of actors) and values that is very closed toward ever more formal categories (norms, values, identities) that accommodate a greater empirical variety and become more open. At the same time, the change occurs from a fixation on the object (value, norm, identity) in an early conventional stage toward a reflecting and active subject: while individuals accept specific empirical forms at an early conventional stage, they become aware of the abstract form (identity, value, and norm) and, finally, reflect upon the right form of value, norm and identity. The increased level of social learning moves from a pre-established level of acceptance to a post-conventional level which makes form and content of lifeworld a matter of reflection and critique.

It is my contention that these three levels of social learning can be applied to the collective remembering of past wars and, that, in the course of the twentieth century, a tendency towards the emergence of post-conventional collective memories, in general, and post-conventional collective war memories, in particular, has evolved. Following the logic of Habermas and Kohlberg and taking into account the three aspects of lifeworld, I will argue that social learning of remembering past wars (1) can take place and (2) has done so in Western Europe between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but more particularly, since the Second World War. Based on Habermas' theory, I will define three stages of social learning in the collectively remembering past wars as follows:

Pre-conventional level: there is no awareness that memories of past wars are sought or socially reproduced. War is only remembered by its effect and the usefulness on the basis of action-reaction. Bonding is maintained by communal contexts and is mostly unconscious and not a subject of reflection.

Conventional level: Participants are aware that memories exist and link them to specific empirical contents. There is no awareness of the three dimensions (cognitive, practical-moral, emotional) of collective war memories. There is an early conventional stage which looks at empirical sameness through time and tries to identify "natural traits" of social entities (of own society as well as others). At an advanced conventional level, there is a consciousness about the constructed nature of collective remembering, but it is still limited to a particular empirical sameness of experience. At that advanced level memory groups try to foster social bonding through presumed positive (empirical) events in the past that allow an affirmative collective identity.

Post-conventional level: There is a conscious selection and reflection of past events for the present. The remembering clearly separates the emotional from the practical-moral and cognitive dimensions of past events. Each is made subject to different public discourses. The remembering does not focus on particular empirical sameness (content), but on a practical-moral reflection on the past, which identifies values and norms supported or rejected by that reflection. Social bonding is the result of shared values and

norms, derived from the reflection on the past and no longer on the sameness of empirical experience (form). Memory groups try to foster social bonding through a successful joint reflection upon a presumed shared past that reconfirms or rejects certain practical-moral imperatives.

The remembering of past wars follows the logic of increased openness as described by Habermas in his theory of social learning: while in an early stage, membership is limited by the claim of empirical sameness, in later, more advanced stages, the reflection on past events in three different dimensions (emotional, practical-moral, cognitive) becomes more open and thus more inclusive. In other words, it is no longer the claim of having experienced war in the same way that creates social bonding, but a shared reflection of that past event that is of particular interest and value for a political community. Such a reflection is more open, because it allows the accommodation of different empirical experiences of war and is, therefore, more open.

It is my belief that a growing challenge to conventional remembering of past wars has been taking place, especially after 1945, which has led, in some cases, to the emergence of signs of post-conventional war memories. Above all, narratives of unified, joint, 'national' experiences of the past are being challenged both from below and from other countries. For example, in the 1970s in Europe, the Jewish communities succeeded in asserting their distinct experience during the Second World War. Regional and local communities have also strongly challenged the national, all-encompassing, narratives of, say, the Spanish Civil War, the French Resistance, or The Great Patriotic War in the Soviet Union (1941-1945). Thus, the notions of assumed empirical sameness of a unified national war memory have been put into question by sub-groups. Similarly, the Japanese view of itself as victim of US American aggression has been more and more disputed by countries that suffered Japanese occupation during the Second World War or by the USA itself (Barkan, 2000:46-64). Given the circumstances of the twenty-first century (and the level of both rationalisation of praxis and social learning of remembering past wars), it seems increasingly difficult, according to Richard Werbner (1998), to repeat the strategy of nineteenth century-Western Europe in former colonies of Africa. If atrocities have been committed and a war, that is morally rejected by the

subsequent generation, has been fought, denying the facts or to throwing a veil of silence over them becomes ever more difficult.

Those examples, I would argue, are signs of a crisis of conventional remembering of past wars, as well as of past events in general. We are not only increasingly aware of the different memories of the past, but also ask questions about the process whereby they were selected. This is significantly different from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when nationalist movements discovered an interest in the past, but felt like archaeologists of a given, empirical wealth to be discovered. Today many groups increasingly pose those questions of selection and inclusion. In this sense, the practice of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries was predominantly within the conventional level of social learning on collective war memories, whereas since the mid-twentieth century signs of advanced conventional – or even- post-conventional social learning in war memories have become apparent. To be sure, it is the selection process of memories itself that has been increasingly challenged by counter-memories. More concretely, the selection of empirically present values in the past that are portrayed as positive or affirmative for the present is what has now come to be under attack.

Several strategies to deal with the crisis of national war memories are applied by different societies or suggested by the literature. Firstly, governments or societies may stick to the claim of empirical sameness of experience and marginalise differing voices. The case of the memory of the Algerian War suggests that a strategy of forced forgetting may still be feasible (Evans, 1997a) – but ever more difficult to sustain (Grosser, 1990). Others may reject the idea of a collective remembering of past wars altogether (maybe with the exception of collective grief). Another strategy may be an increased acceptance and “celebration of difference”, acknowledging the different, partial experiences of groups in wars and reject any claim of sharedness beyond the social groups concerned.

Yet another option is suggested by Habermas’ theory of social evolution, which I wish to put forth, namely, to advance from conventional to post-conventional remembering

of past wars. Instead of suppressing certain unwanted aspects of the past or reducing the empirical variety of war memories, post-conventional remembering would make it possible to engage in an open debate on that past and to derive moral conclusions or moral judgments about that past. In this context, History does not become “*magistra vitae*” (Cicero), a guide to life, but, rather, a rare opportunity to have a discourse on ethical and moral standards of the community, on the things that political community should or should not do. Thus, the main change from conventional to post-conventional remembering of past wars lies in the qualitative shift from selecting *empirical* sameness or particular values of the past, to a memory that accepts the different voices and achieves sameness and bonding through collective *reflections* or *judgments* on the past, leading to the affirmation of the result of that reflection, not the empirical data of the past.

A practical discourse based on collective war memories might, as Habermas has pointed out, fail. In other words, there is no guarantee that an attempt to create agreement in a pluralistic society of different memory groups, that the efforts to arrive at a practical discourse on collective war memories, will always succeed. Groups may arrive at different practical-moral or ethical conclusions from the past. However, given the greater inclusiveness of a reflexive agreement on past wars, such a practical discourse still harbours a greater chance of bearing an agreement than the (increasingly challenged) claim to empirical sameness of past events.

Since Habermas explicitly aims to focus on a *logic* of a certain rationalisation and not prescribe or describe a specific *dynamic* of development, his theory of social learning cannot be directly applied to empirical research. For such a purpose, not only circumstantial factors have to be taken into account, but also the relationship between the different social and political actors. Thus, Habermas’ social theory needs to be expanded in order to be able to provide guidance to empirical research.

The first step in this sense is to include the memory groups of a given time. If we follow Halbwachs’ claim that any collective memory needs social groups for its support, it is important to identify those. Furthermore, as I claimed in chapter 1, there are sub-groups

within those memory groups, namely, political memory groups, which derive practical-moral and political claims from their interpretation of past events. They are the basis and bearer of collective war memories and those who are central to the practical discourse regarding collective war memories. Focusing on the constituting memory groups not only helps to understand changes over time in a political community, but also helps to avoid the danger of reification of political communities, countries or nations, mentioned in the introduction. It is those political memory groups who need to be identified in the first step.

A second step derives directly from the different stages of social learning applied to remembering past wars: it entails overcoming the claim to empirical sameness or difference of the object of remembering and the subject that remembers. As long as there is an essentialist view of both, there is little learning possible, since subject and object try to reconfirm empirical traits over time. In other words, if the remembered 'other' is regarded as an unchanging object, the learning is reduced to confirming the sameness of the object over time. The same applies to the remembering subject. This is completely different when both the subject and the object are regarded as historically changing entities. In such a case, the remembering of more options of behaviour, more possibilities of change need to be taken into account. Such consciousness of change also allows different practical-moral imperatives toward that object, albeit is still fixed to the object of empirical remembering.

Finally, the more remembering of past wars becomes a reflection of the political community on itself, the more the community uses the memory of a past as a means for that reflection, by detaching itself from that object. In other words, the remembering subject reflects upon itself by using collective war memories as a mirror. The remembering of the past is directed consciously toward a practical discourse of the values and priorities of those groups remembering. The social bonding is achieved through a joint reflection on values and norms, rather than on any presumed empirical sameness of experience caused by an object writ large or experienced by a subject writ large.

To sum up, an analysis of three particular aspects in remembering past wars helps to highlight the historically dominant level of social learning in remembering past wars:

- The analysis of political memory groups and their position within the political system and their practical-moral imperatives derived from collective war memories
- The level of sameness or change that is assumed of the remembered object as well as the remembering subject
- The level of detachment of the remembered object from the practical-moral discourse on collective war memories by the remembering subject

This chapter has, on the one hand, sought to offer an insight into the processes that led to the rise (and, maybe, future decline) of collective war memories in modern societies. On the other hand, it has put forth a concept of social learning and has applied it to the remembering of past wars. Based on these discussions, one of the answers to the central question of the thesis; namely, “how can we study the impact of collective war memories on international politics?” would be “by looking at the level of social learning in the collective activity of remembering past wars”. In particular the practical-moral dimension of collectively remembering past wars looks different and causes different impacts on politics, depending on the level of social learning. It is these three areas of social learning developed above that I would like to turn my attention to in the next two chapters, where I intend to show that Germany (chapter 4) and France (chapter 5), for very different reasons and on very different paths, developed signs of post-conventional collective remembering of wars in the twentieth century.

Chapter 4

Social learning in remembering past wars in Germany in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

Chapter 3 introduced Habermas' Critical Theory of social evolution, as well as his theory of the three stages of social learning (pre-conventional, conventional, post-conventional) and applied it to collective war memories. As I stated in the previous chapter, I believe that Western European countries have experienced a development towards post-conventional remembering of past wars, especially after 1945. In this and the following chapter I attempt to illustrate the signs of that development, first, in the case of Germany and, then, in the case of France. My aim is to show that in both societies, for very different reasons, a transformation in the way past wars, particularly the Second World War, are remembered, took place. In accounting for these transformations, Habermas' categories of conventional and post-conventional remembering are particularly useful.

Taking into account Halbwachs' claim that social groups are the necessary bearers of collective memories, focusing on memory groups within political currents and parties appears justified. This implies that one may be able to identify co-existing memory groups that show different levels of social learning. Hence, any periodisation of collective learning in remembering past wars has to be taken with a note of caution. As will be shown, there are prevalent forms of social learning, but there are always differences and groups with different social learning as well.

Both this and the next chapter look at the process of social learning from 1871 (after the Franco-German War) to 1995 (the 50th commemoration of the Second World War). That period may, at a first glance, appear too extensive for substantive research in only two chapters. Two reasons account, however, for the selection of this time-frame: first, identifying different levels of social learning in remembering past wars requires an analysis of more than one generation; and, second, there are important continuities and transformations of political memory groups in both countries that could not become

apparent, if a shorter period had been chosen. This also means that particular issues concerning collective war memories, such as amnesty laws, particular trials, debates on particular events, cannot be exhaustively discussed here. Rather, the idea is to illustrate the way of remembering and the link to different levels of social learning. Far from being exhaustive case studies, both chapters aim to illustrate the process of social learning in two specific Western European countries.

These two chapters will look at political currents (such as liberals, conservatives, socialists) and try to identify the specific political memory groups within them. This means that several political memory groups, understood as “the particular social groups that have a particular interest in advancing practical-moral imperatives they derive from collective memories”,¹ may be found in one political current. Often, political memory groups may have a shared experience from the past which informs a specific political claim. Yet, it is not the experience they necessarily have to share, but rather, a meaning attached to that experience.

The first step in the analysis of how collective war memories influence politics is to identify memory groups within political parties. The second step is to analyse the prominence of practical-moral imperatives derived from remembering past wars in their public political discourses. These two steps seem necessary given that political currents or, more specifically, political parties need to reconcile different demands, different agendas for political action. Political memory groups, thus, compete with each other, but also with other groups, which put forward demands that are not derived from practical-moral imperatives of collective war memories. Moreover, the mere presence of memory groups within parties neither means an automatic formulation of practical-moral imperatives, nor that such imperatives are prominent within the parties or political currents.

The focus on political memory groups tries to avoid the reification of entire societies. However, it is important to stress that, even at that level, there is no monolithic memory, but, rather, a constant process of transformation. The social basis, outside events or the internal process of reflection and communication might cause transformations of social

¹ See: chapter 1, section 1.5.

memories of the past within memory groups and political parties. These two chapters can, therefore, only hint at transformations within political memory groups, but it would be beyond the reach of this work to inquire into the reasons for those internal transformations. By focusing on political memory groups, however, a reification of “French” or “German” collective war memories is avoided without a historical and social explanation of their social and political basis and thus their transformation.

These two chapters not only look at the prominence of political memory groups within political currents and parties, but also discuss the role and position of political parties within the political system and political power. In carrying out such an analysis, my aim is to explain why certain political memory groups had more possibilities to implement their practical-moral imperatives than others and to point to the different means they had to impose their views on politics and collective war memories within societies.

This chapter’s focus on wars that involve France and Germany leaves aside other wars (such as the war in Indochina or Algeria in the case of France) that may be very important for politics in general or international politics in particular, but may not necessarily have an impact on Franco-German relations. It would simply be beyond the scope of this thesis to apply the approach to other wars as well. The empirical analysis of this and the next chapter will focus very much on public debates (in parliament, in public discussions, public trials, interviews etc.) and public commemorations.² This methodology derives from the claim developed in chapter 1, in the sense that collective memory is established and reproduced in the public sphere. Although opinion polls are sometimes quoted, they have a different quality to them, in that they are the collection of individual opinions and memories. As Halbwachs claims, the sum of individual memories is not necessarily a shared memory, as this latter requires a medium, such as the public sphere, for creating a shared meaning. This is the reason why this and the next chapter focus on issues of *public* remembrance and *public* speeches and leave out an interpretation of symbolism or symbolic representation, which has become a popular branch of analysis of collective war memories in recent years.

² It therefore relies heavily on primary sources in German and French. All translations are mine.

This and the following chapter are structured in a similar way. Each chapter is chronologically ordered and highlights in its first part the political memory groups within political parties and their practical-moral imperatives. The first section of this chapter looks at the period between 1870 and 1945 in Germany. It analyses the political currents and the prominence of political memory groups within them. The second section looks at the post-1945 period until 1990 (reunification of the two Germanys). In this part, East and West Germany are discussed separately. As I will argue, the 1980s were an important decade in both Germanys, which signalled the emergence of a different form of remembering by some political memory groups within both polities. The third section briefly discusses the remembering in the unified Germany.

4.1 Essentialising and conventional remembering of past wars with France in Germany between 1870 and 1945

The idea that a people must endure a specific fate because of special and unchanging collective character traits is a testimony of intellectual laziness and, in the final analysis, of mean intentions.

Jacques Droz³

With the help of three wars; namely, the Prussian-Danish war in 1864, the Austro-Prussian war in 1866 and the Franco-Prussian war in 1870, the borders of the unified Germany, which was proclaimed in 18 January, 1871, in Versailles, were decided by military force. Those wars ended, in fact, a discussion that had taken place over much of the nineteenth century on the precise borders of Germany. As a result, unified Germany would fail to include the whole of Austria-Hungary, the rival of Prussia and the home of German emperors for centuries. At the same time, those three wars triggered a wave of forgetting about, or distancing from, the Holy Roman Empire of German Nations and the alleged cultural ties of Germany to Austria.⁴ Moreover, from 1871 German historiography fostered the remembering of those three wars as the inevitable result of the compelling drive to establish a strong, modern Prussia-led Germany.

³ Quoted in: Gödde-Baumanns, 1987:16.

⁴ It was controversial whether the terms “Reich” and “Kaiser” should be used at all in 1871, since the German liberals opposed any continuity with the medieval Habsburg Empire (Schieder, 1992:88-89).

Between 1815 and 1870 the attitude of German political currents and nationalists towards France had been mixed. While the ideas and political values of the French Revolution were welcome, especially by the German liberals, the French occupation of German territory sparked a strong anti-French sentiment among German intellectuals such as Arndt, Körner, Fichte and, even, Hegel (Rovan, 1986:82). The dispute of the precise border between France and Germany aroused strong anti-French feelings in the 1840s (during the so-called “Rhine crisis”) for the first time, when French intellectuals and politicians demanded a revision of the Congress of Vienna to re-establish the Rhine River as the natural border between Germany and France (Gödde-Baumanns, 1987:4). With the military victory and the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine from France after the signing of the Peace Treaty of Frankfurt in 1871, the admiration of France among German intellectuals and politicians was replaced in some political currents by a sense of superiority that prevailed until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914.

With the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, a war of a hitherto unknown magnitude of suffering came to an end (Fussell, 1975 and Winter, 1994). The sheer number of soldiers returning from the front, often physically wounded or maimed, constituted a visible reminder of the First World War and triggered a proliferation of organisations by former soldiers and their families, as well as state agencies, to deal with those physically or mentally affected by war. With the end of the First World War there was also an increasing shift in Germany as well as France - or Great Britain, for that matter - from glorifying the act of warfare, to highlighting the negative consequences thereof.

In Germany, the 1918-1919 capitulation and its conditions were difficult to comprehend for large segments of the population, as the German army had surrendered before any foreign soldier had set foot on German soil. At the same time, the end of the First World War also heralded the end of the constitutional monarchy and the establishment of democracy. This also led to a shift of political currents in power from *völkisch* Conservative groups to the Social Democrats, the Liberals, the Catholic Centrum Party,⁵ which also gave some new memory groups access to power.

⁵ These three parties formed the so-called “Weimar coalition” and were the staunchest defenders of the Weimar Republic.

During the Weimar Republic (1919-1933), the Versailles Treaty and its overcoming was the dominant topic that shaped the relationship between (democratic) Germany and (democratic) France. When Hitler assumed power on 31 January, 1933 many in Germany hoped the time would be ripe to dispense with the Treaty of Versailles. With the rise of the Nazis, but also the Communists in Germany and elsewhere, ideologies gained a new prominence in politics, and so did warfare. For the first time, war aims included the extermination of entire peoples or parts of society. At the same time, occupiers (such as Nazi-Germany or the Soviet Union) would treat people in the occupied territories differently, according to ideological and, in the case of Nazi Germany, racist criteria.

The total defeat of Nazi-Germany in May 1945 also meant a shift in political currents having access to political power in what later became East and West Germany. In East Germany the Communists very soon monopolised power. In West Germany, a political Conservatism shaped politics for the next 20 years that differed from the political Conservatism during the Imperial period or the Weimar Republic, especially in its attitude towards democracy and the acceptance of Western values.

At the same time, the victorious powers of the Second World War assumed political control, which included the forging of war memories in both Germanys. With the unification of the two Germanys in 1990, there was, again, a shift of political currents in the former East Germany, which replaced and marginalised the hitherto dominant Communist regime and party, and, therewith, the political memory groups it harboured. Thus, Germany not only experienced very different types of warfare (as other countries did), but also dramatic changes in the political currents in power and fundamental shifts in the access of political memory groups being able to shape the official versions of collective war memories. Finally, each world war meant a change of the political system in power in Germany. For the Germans, therefore, remembering past wars also often implied remembering regime changes.

4.1.1 Political currents and their respective memory groups between 1871 and 1945

Despite the dramatic changes that took place between 1871 and the German defeat in the First World War in 1919, a remarkable continuity among certain political currents and their respective memory groups can be identified. This is not to deny that some political memory groups appeared only after 1919, and that others went through important transformations. Yet, the continuities are striking and, as such, they should be highlighted.

4.1.1.1 The conservative political current and its memory groups: remembering the eternal self and the hereditary enemy

With the establishment of a German Empire in 1871, there emerged a conservative protestant Right in Germany. In 1871 the Conservative Party (since 1876: the German Conservative Party) and the Free Conservative Party, since 1871 renamed German Reich Party were formed. They gathered Conservatives of different strata with a focus on military tradition, a strong state and many with a Juncker background (landowners of territories in Eastern Prussia). This political current also harboured many high-ranking generals and soldiers and had close ties with organisations that popularised expansionist policies in Germany, such as the Colonial League, the Naval League and the All-German League (Poidevin and Bariéty, 1977:197) a strong, military state and an authoritarian rule, particularly in Prussia. This political current was the backbone of the Chancellors from Bismarck to Bethmann-Hollweg (1871 to 1914) and secured a parliamentary majority together with the National Liberals throughout the Imperial period.

The Right fostered the idea of a German people with eternal traits and pictured France as the “eternal and hereditary enemy”, who had always tried to dominate and invade Germany. These essentialising views of Germany (which had just come into existence as a polity) and France dominated the remembering of past wars within this political current. Earlier French intrusions into German territory, particularly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, were remembered and interpreted as a proof of these traits of two naturally opposed peoples, while periods of peaceful coexistence were neglected (Mitter (ed.), 1981:149, footnote 9). Conservatives and many high-ranking military officers saw

this as a confirmation of the need for an inevitable future revenge and, thus, war with France. Many Conservatives even asked for that future war to finish “once and for all” the French will of intrusion into Germany.

As in France, the German Conservatives also shared the idea of an eternal dispute with France and oppositional character traits of the two peoples that made conflict and war inevitable and foreclosed any initiative of rapprochement or peaceful coexistence. While Germans were regarded by Conservative politicians and writers as being honest, diligent and strong, the French people were associated with weakness, falseness and moral decline (Jeismann, 1992:380). The defeat in the 1870-1871 war was seen by that political current as a proof both of French moral decay and Germany’s superiority. There was a repeated emphasis “that France was in moral and biological decline”, which, in turn, had significant consequences for its future political and economic position in the world (Mitter (ed.), 1981:143-144). This view was repeated time and again by General Bernhardi, leader of the powerful All-German League and author of the popular book *Germany and the next War* published in 1914 (von Bernhardi, 1914).

Based on such a remembering of past wars, Germany had to be prepared against any threats emanating from the international sphere and the next war that was sure to come. The ability to face those threats had priority over domestic issues, thus the defence and preparedness of Germany for a possible war was paramount.⁶ The Conservatives used propaganda among German public opinion to brand anyone in France, who rejected the Peace Treaty of Frankfurt, which had ended the Franco-German War in 1871, as a revanchist with aggression intentions towards Germany (Groh, 1990:435). The usefulness of this discourse for internal purposes is evidenced by the fact that Otto von Bismarck, the German chancellor between 1871 and 1890, resorted frequently to the argument of the “French threat” to get military budgets passed through Parliament (Ritter, 1977:248-249).

After the loss of the First World War, the former Protestant Conservatism gathered in what became the German National People’s Party (*Deutschationale Volkspartei* – DNP). This party held on to its prominent political values, opposed the newly

⁶ This priority was expressed by the historian Leopold von Ranke with the term “primacy of foreign policy over domestic politics” (*Primat der Aussenpolitik*). See: Behrens and Noack, 1984:98.

established Republic, democracy and the Versailles Peace Treaty. It had close ties with the largest organisation of returning soldiers after the First World War, the ‘Steel Helmet’ (*Stahlhelm*) and glorified war and sacrifice in wars. Many generals, such as Ludendorff (who ruled Germany from 1916 almost in a dictatorial manner) and Hindenburg (the ‘hero of Tannenberg’), were both to be found in this party (Poidevin and Bariéty, 1977:244).

The German military and, above all, General Ludendorff, consciously fostered the myth that it was the revolutionaries and those opposed to monarchical and military rule that had weakened the military in combat and were to blame for the defeat in the First World War and for the Versailles Treaty. This was how the stab-in-the-back-myth (“*Dolchstosslegende*”) against the German military, which was popularised by the Conservatives, was born in 1920. This myth not only fostered military and conservative traditions, but also undermined the legitimacy of the newly established democracy and republican rule in Germany, as well as the forces that supported that political system. For the Conservative Right, remembering the First World War meant, above all, the remembering of a betrayal by the political Left (Social Democrats, revolutionaries, Left Liberals).

Hatred against France was fuelled both by a continuous essentialising view on the opposition between France and Germany and the current views on the Versailles Treaty, which were exacerbated by the occupation of the Ruhr area in 1923 by French and Belgian forces, in response to a delay in the reparation payment by Germany. In the Right, which participated in some governments and, through Hindenburg, held the post of the president from 1925, there were still many currents of the Protestant Right from the old Imperial Germany that saw in the behaviour of France a confirmation of the decadent and misleading character of the French, the eternal enemy. Thus, there was a widespread continuity within this political current in the level of social learning.

4.1.1.2 Opposing the essentialised enemy: the Social Democrats

The German labour movement that, since the 1860s, found a political voice in the Social Democratic Party (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* - SPD) openly pledged for a rapprochement with France and rejected the negative and essentialising

stereotypes of France and the French. It further opposed the Sedan Day celebration, the official commemoration day of the German victory over France in 1870/71 on 1 September, celebrations since the 1880s and organised counter-commemorations on 18 March (day of the German Constitution and the French Commune in 1871), where the friendship with France was celebrated (Groh, 1990: 438). Through the Socialist International, the German Social Democratic Party sought ties and common policies with their French counterparts. However, the Social Democratic Party had no access to state power and acted from political opposition between 1890 and 1918.

Thus, the SPD clearly rejected any essentialising forms of remembering and sought rapprochement with France. It made a clear distinction between political community and political currents in France, and rejected the self-definition of the Germans as a people with eternal traits that had been confirmed by past wars. This attitude remained prominent during the Weimar Republic, although it was difficult to advance these views in the face of the Treaty of Versailles and its conditions.

4.1.2. Transformations of political currents and their respective memory groups between 1918 and 1933

Parties on the Centre and Left (the Catholic Zentrum, the liberal parties German Democratic Party - *Deutsche Demokratische Partei*, DDP – the German People's Party - *Deutsche Volkspartei*, DVP - and the SPD) assumed power for the first time in their history in 1919. Within that political current there was, however, also a strong sense of the need to overcome the enmity with France and a rejection of the war memories that assumed any structural or natural rivalry with the Western neighbour. However, just like the question of Alsace-Lorraine bore a heavy weight on every attempt at rapprochement between France and Germany in the period between 1871 and 1914, so did the Versailles Treaty between 1919 and 1933. Until 1925, there existed strong anti-French sentiments among the members of the Weimar coalition. But after 1927-1928, following the rapprochement between France and Germany in Locarno, a marked change towards France took place among the liberal and left political scene in Germany.

While the Conservative Right (DNVP) and the moderate Right (DVP) supported a strong state and a strong military as the means of overturning the unfortunate results of the Versailles Treaty, there was also a growing pacifist movement in Germany that was to be found in sections of the Left (Communists, SPD, some members of the DDP). Reflecting upon the experiences of past wars (not only, but above all with France) these groups advocated a general disarmament and de-militarisation. They were supported by many novelists or artists who focused on the horrors of the First World War and rejected future wars.

4.1.2.1 The liberal political current and its memory groups

In contrast to the Protestant Right, the Liberals (mostly to be found in the South and West of Germany) kept close and traditional ties to France (Rovan, 1986:88-89). After its failed attempt to democratise and liberalise the German political system in 1848, the liberal movement split into the National Liberal Party and the Free Democratic Party. While the latter stressed democratisation and liberal rights as the predominant political agenda and remained mainly in opposition, the former joined coalitions with the Protestant Right in several governments and pleaded for a strong German state, which supported nationalistic policies.

This sense of pride in the German state, the German status and German strength was contrasted by German politicians with what they perceived as French weakness and deception. But the Liberals also re-read the last wars as part of a teleological, inevitable outcome of a united, modern state of Germany under the leadership of Prussia.⁷ By contrast the Holy Roman Empire of German Nations, which lasted until 1806, and the German League that existed between 1815 and 1866, were remembered as a time of weaknesses, disunity and predominance of a backward Habsburg Empire and, was, therefore, rejected. Within this political current there was, thus, much less essentialising remembering: Instead, the past wars (1864, 1866, 1870) were remembered as a clear break with a less than glorious German past.

⁷ On this teleological re-reading of the past toward a *kleindeutsche* German state after 1871 see: H. Schulze, 1985:70.

After the First World War the Free Democratic Party of Imperial Germany turned into the DDP, while the National Liberals gathered in the DVP, the latter having strongly supported the war aims of the German governments during the First World War. The Liberals supported the Weimar Republic, but also tried to overcome the results of the Versailles Treaty for Germany. The German People's Party, with Gustav Stresemann as its main figure, clearly abandoned the nationalistic and state-oriented reading of the past and reflected upon the causes and consequences of the First World War. Holding strong ties with diplomats and civil servants, the DVP rejected an essentialising reading of the past wars and stressed, rather, the errors in judgement that had been made by the German chancellors.

4.1.2.2 New political currents at the extremes

On the two extremes of the political spectrum there were the newly formed Communist Party (*Kommunistische Partei Deutschland*, KPD) founded in 1918-1919 and, since 1923, the German National Socialist Worker's Party (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeitspartei*, NSDAP), the Nazis. The Communists were in favour of a social revolution, which enjoyed preference as a programmatic priority over the defence of democracy or the reversal of the Versailles Treaty. When the Nazi Party assumed complete power with the passing of the emergency laws (*Ermächtigungsgesetz*) in March 1933, other political parties were proscribed and the NSDAP was the only political party allowed until 8 May 1945.

4.1.3 The rise of racial essentialising remembering between 1933 and 1945

Past wars, particularly the First World War, were remembered in a different way with the rise of National Socialism and its racist Aryan theories, which, although with reservations, counted France somewhat among the Aryan camp. At that time the notion of France as an eternal enemy disappeared. Instead, the idea of a racist war with the Slavic East and against the "Jewish Bolshevik conspiracy" gained importance and supplanted older anti-Semitic feelings of the Right in Imperial Germany. With the clear focus set on the East and the internal enemies of Communism and the Jews, earlier confrontations between France and Germany lost prominence under the Nazi regime.

However, the contempt for the ‘decadent’ France, cultivated by the Conservatives remained a *topoi* under the Nazis and was reinforced by the perceived weakness of France expressed by pacifist movements on the political left and right in France in the 1930s.

That the Nazi’s new race-bound vocabulary was more than rhetoric was evidenced by the very different ways in which, between 1940 and 1945, Germany fought the war on the Western and Eastern fronts. In fact, while the latter was a war of extinction, not only against the Jewish population but also against the Czech, Polish and Russian intelligentsia, as well as against Communist leaders, in some occupied Nordic countries, as well as in the Netherlands, fraternisation between Germans (including soldiers) and the local population was, under Hitler’s orders, welcomed on racist grounds. Moreover, in France, ordinary German soldiers were ordered to respect the civilian population.⁸ This notwithstanding, the German occupants of France pursued the concentration, extradition and later extermination of Jews and Communists, as they did in other occupied countries, and carried out massacres in reprisal of attacks against the German army by resistant fighters and partisans (as in France in Oradour-sur-Glane in 1943). Those different strategies in the Eastern and Western front indicate that, for the National Socialists, racial belonging and political affiliation were more important than national belonging as criteria to define the enemy. This, in turn, had implications for different parties and, later, for the formation of memory groups concerning the Second World War.

4.1.4 Public commemorations of past wars between 1871 to 1945

From 1875 the German nation, a nation without a national anthem and without a national flag until the 1890s (when the commercial fleet was ordered to use an imperial flag besides the state flags), celebrated the Day of the Battle of Sedan (*Sedanstag*), on 1 September, as both the victory of Germany over France and the birth of a united Germany. Yet, on that proclaimed “national” holiday particular political values were celebrated as well: Prussian militarism and its rulers were glorified, while the Social

⁸ On the perception of the “cultivated German soldier” in occupied France during the Second World War see: Rovan, 1986:109.

Democrats and political Catholicism were consciously excluded (Schellack, 1990; Leiner, 1988; H. Müller, 1969). The Social Democratic Party, in turn, regularly organised counter-celebrations and counter-rallies on that same day. Thus, the commemoration of the victory over France was never a unifying event and several attempts by Social Democrats and Free Democrats to abolish this celebration were made.

For the National Liberals, this victory had not merely been a victory of one nation over another, but was also the victory of a political regime, of certain political values that celebrated themselves thereafter. This example of the commemoration of the *Sedan Day* highlights the political definition of the German nation after 1871; namely, one characterised not by territory or ethnic belonging, but rather by political features, as the deliberate exclusion of Social Democrats and Catholics proves. The commemoration of the Franco-German war may have therefore triggered a certain image of France, but it did not achieve an internal unity – as it did in France during that same period.

This lack of shared meaning during Imperial Germany was even more visible during the Weimar Republic, when public commemorations of the First World War led to a clash of different memory groups and political currents. The stab-in-the-back myth of the Conservative Right and the Nazis made a common commemoration for all political memory groups difficult, if not impossible: the reason for the defeat and a political imperative detrimental to those of other political memory groups left no common ground for commemoration.

Equally, the Conservatives and the Nazis, on the one hand, and the Centre and Left, on the other hand, differed about the way of remembering the last war. While the former continued to glorify war (exemplified by Ernst Jünger's book *In Stahlgewitter*), the latter focused on the horrors of war (exemplified by Paul Maria Remarque's novel *Im Westen Nichts Neues*). Thus, there was neither a commonly accepted commemoration day nor a commonly accepted war memorial. In other words: there was no shared mourning, no shared remembering of the First World War, despite the undeniable trauma it had caused.⁹ The controversy emerging from the war of 1870-1871 and the

⁹ Illustrative examples for this polarisation were the two war memorials from 1919 and 1934 in Hamburg. See: Reichel, 1999:61-68.

two provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, played virtually no role in German politics and German memory in the inter-war period (Poidevin and Bariéty, 1977:242).

Between 1933 and 1945 there was a clear death cult celebrated by the Nazis. However, there were few commemorations of specific dates related to past wars. During the Nazi period of Germany there were only four public commemorations: Thanksgiving (end of October), the Day of the Fallen Heroes (16 March), Labour Day (May 1), Day of the Fallen Martyrs of the Nazi movement (9 November) (Reichel, 1999:225).

4.1.5 Levels of social learning in remembering past wars between 1871 and 1945

Between 1871 and 1918 many German politicians and writers referred to nations as persons, with monolithic characters, attitudes and features. Conservative political memory groups in power, which also dominated the Imperial public sphere, had a tendency to regard social and political features of the neighbouring society as a natural, not as a historical phenomenon. This way to personify and naturalise nations and their past and the subsequent structuring of collective war memories is very much in line with an early stage of conventional learning. However, this feature of antagonism between France and Germany is a modern invention and does not stand a historical analysis (Mitter (ed.), 1981:26).

Michael Jeismann (2002) has argued that in the nineteenth century an enemy was necessary to create a national consciousness and the invocation of the enemy had a unifying effect among all the parties both in Germany and France. One's presumed eternal character was increasingly defined in opposition to the other. This created a sort of double-bind, a way of defining oneself in contrast to the "other". German Conservatives, but also some Liberals felt to be the opposite of France (and vice versa). This is a very rigid way of structuring memories and of directing acts of forgetting: anything that does not fit into the traits identified in the present and the past is marginalised. Conservatives and some National Liberals explained the French *revanchisme* no longer in historical terms, i.e. with reference to the Peace Treaty of Frankfurt, but, rather, essentialised and seen as a proof of an eternal national character. Each nation, in fact, identified the other nation as being the ugly side of modernity

(Jeismann, 2002, *passim*). The negative ‘other’ became, thus, an important ingredient of both polities’ political project and self-definition.

However, even if those essentialising forms of remembering past wars with France prevailed between 1871 and 1918, there were different war memories that also led to different practical-moral imperatives, especially challenging the inevitability of war with France. National-liberal circles still assumed a possible conflict with France, but not as a result of historical inevitability, but rather, for reasons of competition. Free Democrats and Social Democrats clearly distinguished between the political community (France, Germany) and the political actors in the past and present. It might be suggested that the perspective of (national and international) historical class struggle was an important factor that prevented the Social Democrats from using eternalised personification of nations. The different forms of remembering the past were evident in the controversies on *Sedanstag*.

The structuring and the level of reflection on memory of past wars diversified during the Weimar Republic. For the Conservatives, the memory of the last war was confirmed by current events during the 1920s. Despite grief about the lost war and the misguided scapegoating of the new political system for this defeat, essentialising forms of remembering past wars prevailed within this political current. After the First World War, the national liberals clearly changed their views on war and the relationship to the former enemy France. Thus, the National Liberals and the Free Liberals joined the Social Democrats and many writers that used the remembering of the First World War to reflect on political values and actions to prevent future wars. Thus, signs of advanced conventional learning were visible and dominated politics in the second half of the 1920s.

With the rise of National Socialism, another form of essentialising that also embraced the remembering and framing of past wars took place. This time the frame was not a national character (as during the Imperial period) but a race one. Thus, war lost its potential for moral reflection and became an inevitable part of life (as the death cult of the Nazis suggests). In fact, the level of social learning was reverted during National Socialism in Germany from a diversity of remembering to a race-based essentialising of remembering past wars.

4.2 The divided war memories in West and East Germany: 1945-1989

Due to technological advances, the level of destruction increased tremendously in the Second World War. This led to an increase in casualties, wounded, physically and psychologically affected by war. At the same time, the ideologically-based will to exterminate an entire people or groups of people and the Holocaust added another extreme experience and further blurred the boundaries of conventional warfare (in particular, since the war was declared to be “a war against a race”) and atrocities against civilians. This suggests, firstly, that the collective memory of the Second World War had a new quality and, secondly, that being so powerful, it sidelined many earlier war memories.

The course of Second World War was heavily informed by ideologies, which cut across national boundaries, such as Fascism, Liberalism, Communism. *National* war memories were, therefore, in some countries much more difficult to establish and reproduce in the aftermath of the war and still are, more controversial and prone to being contested. To further complicate the picture, German occupation forces did not treat all citizens in the occupied zones equally, but made clear distinctions on racial and ideological grounds. This renders the memories of this war difficult to approach along exclusively national lines. There were ideologically-based coalitions or closeness between a certain group of people, say, the Communists and the Soviet Union or the Nazis and Vichy France. At the same time, there was a general, nation-wide, resistance to the German occupation that often united otherwise very heterogeneous or antagonistic groups. These webs of coalitions render collective war memories of the Second World War much more complex and compartmentalised than, for instance, the memory of the First World War. Memories of the Second World War, in sum, appear to be more controversial and more difficult, but very powerful for memory groups.

When Germany surrendered to the Allies on 8 May, 1945 the defeat had been total. A repetition of the stab-in-the-back myth, as after the First World War, was simply not an option, given the absolute depletion of the German army (Herf, 1997:203-204). In August that year the Allies met in Potsdam, Germany, to discuss the way in which they would jointly shape the future of Germany. In fact, part of the Joint Allied Control

Council that was created at the Potsdam Conference, was meant to shape German memories of the Second World War through its programmes of democratisation, re-education and de-nazification. In October 1945 the Nuremberg trials began, where the Allies charged many leading German members of the Nazi Party, as well as members of the military and paramilitary organisations, with crimes against humanity and with planning and carrying out a war of conquest. The trials lasted about a year with great media coverage in Germany and the rest of the world.

In May 1945, there were about eight million members of the Nazi Party and related organisations, many millions of returning soldiers from the Western and Eastern fronts and civilians who had suffered air raids since 1943 and the occupation by different troops. There were about twelve millions of German refugees who had been expelled from the Eastern provinces of Germany (Silesia, Pomerania, East Prussia) but also from other regions where ethnic Germans had lived for centuries (for example the Sudeten Germans from Czechoslovakia). These expelled groups later organised themselves in “*Landsmannschaften*”.¹⁰ There were also some Jewish Germans returning to Germany (often with Allied troops) and Germans (Communists, Social Democrats, opposition leaders from the two Christian Churches, Roma and homosexuals) released from concentration camps such as Dachau, Neuengamme or Buchenwald or returning from exile (Hudemann, 1984). This far from exhaustive enumeration of groups strongly, yet differently, affected by World War II, is meant to stress that, despite the joint experience of war and its horrors, the end of the war meant quite different things to different groups. Some of them found manifest political expression, whereas others remained in the private or public cultural sphere.

4.2.1 The remembering of the Second World War in West German politics (1949-1989)

The West Germans had little option but to remember the Second World War and the crimes committed in the name of Germany for several reasons. As a matter of fact, West Germany regarded itself as the legal heir to 1937 Germany (before the annexation of

¹⁰ This term, however, was historically laden, as Yvonne Bollmann points out: “*Landsmannschaften*” referred to small, informal units of the German army in the 1920s and now, after 1945, referred to a representation of a specific region. See: Bollmann, 1998:69.

Austria and the Sudetenland). The Federal Republic of Germany assumed, thus, the legal and financial obligations derived from events and crimes committed in the name of Germany in the Second World War, such as payment of restitution to Israel, compensation to forced labour in state enterprises, as well as for earlier events, such as the payment of the outstanding debt from the First World War.

This was a very different attitude from the ones adopted in East Germany, Austria or post-war Italy. East Germany, for one, regarded itself as representing a clear break with the old Germany, resuming certain traditions, but definitely departing from the militarism and capitalism that characterised pre-war Germany. In this sense, East Germany portrayed itself as the new and better Germany. Austria, in turn, regarded itself as the first victim of German aggression and not as an integral part of a common subject that committed certain crimes. Italy went down a similar path and elaborated the myth of the *resistenza* as the foundation of post-war Italy, thus giving birth to the notion of another, non-Fascist Italy (Dubiel, 1999:278-279; and Reichel, 1999:22). These three countries made a conscious distinction between “political regime” and “country” and rejected therewith all ideas that suggested that there existed a “national” trait or a national continuity that bore responsibility for the past.

4.2.1.1 Associations related to the Second World War

Unlike in France, there was never a Ministry of War Veterans either in West Germany or in reunified Germany. Between 1945 and 1949, the Western Allies consciously prevented any association of former soldiers from being formed.¹¹ Associations with Nazi content were forbidden from the very beginning, as were associations of former soldiers, wounded or permanently disabled in war. Under the Allied rule these groups were forced to integrate in associations that represented civilian victims. This is when the Imperial League of Civilian and Military Victims [of war], Pensioners and Relatives of the Fallen (*Reichsbund der Kriegs- und Zivilgeschädigten, Sozialrentner und Hinterbliebenen*, often referred to as “*Reichsbund*”) and the Association of Military

¹¹ This was based on Allied Control Council proclamation no. 2 from 20 September 1945 that was later confirmed by the Allied Supreme Council law no. 34 from 20 August 1946. For a discussion on the Allied policy to prevent any “regrouping” of former combatants see: Meyer, 1984: 82-85. The only exceptions were the so-called “*Notgemeinschaften*” at the level of federal states (*Länder*), which dealt with the material conditions of many soldiers.

Victims, Relatives of the Fallen and War Pensioners (*Verband der Kriegsgeschädigten, Kriegshinterbliebenen und Sozialrentner Deutschlands*, often referred to as *VdK*) were formed to represent, *inter alia*, the many military and civilian victims of war. Yet, even the associations of war victims awoke the suspicion of the Allies, as the latter feared the emergence of possible militarist traits in such organisations (Hudemann, 1984:25-26). In July 1950, the League of German Victims of War and Relatives of the Fallen (*Bund Deutscher Kriegsgeschädigter und Kriegshinterbliebener*, BDKK) was formed as the first association that focused entirely and exclusively on war victims. However, it never replaced the two established organisations, *Reichsbund* and *VdK*, which remained the strongest associations for material claims of war victims. Attempts in the 1950s to form a single association between the two failed. Thus, this dual structure of associations with mixed membership (war-related and non-war-related) existed throughout the period under consideration (1945-1995) and has survived until today (2006).

After the establishment of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949, associations of war veterans could be formed. Thus, former German soldiers gathered since 1951 in the Association of German Soldiers (*Verband deutscher Soldaten* - VDS), or the German Military Society (*Gesellschaft für Wehrkunde*). Both associations excluded former members of the SS or the Waffen-SS. In turn, the private organisation “Popular League of German Tombs-Care” (*Volksbund deutscher Kriegsgräberfürsorge*), which was already active after the First World War, took upon itself the task to provide and care for the tombs of the German soldiers. Since the 1950s the “Aid Organisation on the Principle of Mutuality” (*Hilfsgemeinschaft auf Gegenseitigkeit*- HIAG), of former members of the Waffen-SS was tolerated by West German authorities until 1992, when it was finally forbidden. Indeed, the memory of the Waffen-SS was particularly controversial in post-war Germany, for some argued that the Waffen-SS had simply been a special unit of the German military, while others claimed that its members were the most fanatic Nazis and had been authors of the destruction, particularly on the Eastern front.¹² The victims of the Nazi regime were represented by the Association of the Persecuted by the Nazi Regime (*Verein der Verfolgten des Naziregimes* - VVN). From the outset, this association was dominated by Communists from East Germany.

¹² This controversy about the Waffen-SS re-emerged in 1985, when US president Ronald Reagan visited a German military cemetery near Bitburg, where Waffen-SS members were buried. On the Waffen-SS see: Stein, 1966.

When the controversies with other groups included in the VVN increased, West Germany founded its own association of persecuted by the Nazi regime, the League of the Persecuted of the Nazi Regime (*Bund der Verfolgten des Nazi-Regimes* - BVN).

As chapters 1 and 3 pointed out, both governmental policies on archives and amnesties are vital issues for collective memories. The pursuit of punishment and the identification of personal responsibilities are important ingredients of public memory. The three aspects are interrelated: access to archives is often the precondition for trials, but it is even more important for research that might influence collective memory. Trials, in turn, attract public attention and may spark general debates or increased research on the past. Periods of silence or conscious attempts at forgetting in democratic societies are often caused by amnesty laws, restrictive archive policies or attempts to avoid public trials. Without clarifying these conditions for public memory to develop, the analysis of public discourse on collective war memories might be misleading.

Between 1945 and 1955 the Allies had the overall responsibility for the prosecution of war criminals in West Germany. In the French and British zones, prosecutors from both countries were clearly overburdened with that task. But so were the German federal courts when, in 1955, the Federal Republic of Germany acquired the responsibility for the prosecution of war and Nazi crimes. In order to meet this new responsibility, the ministries of justice of the states (*Länder*) of the Federal Republic of Germany created in 1958 the Central Investigation Bureau of Nazi Crimes in Ludwigsburg. This office was entrusted with the preliminary investigations of each case. Should sufficient proof be found, the office had to hand it over to the district attorney where the person charged with war crimes was registered. Between 1958 and 1983 about 89,000 charges were filed, less than 10% (6,565) leading to a conviction. By 1983, 1,767 trials were still pending (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 25 May, 1983). Thanks to the work of the Ludwigsburg Centre important trials began in the 1960s (the Auschwitz trial in Frankfurt) or 1970s (the Maidanek trial from 1975 to 1981). By contrast, about 12,868 persons (12,500 until 1950) were convicted in the same period in East Germany (Herf, 1997:72-73). From 1965 on, most minor crimes, manslaughter, for instance, were no longer prosecuted in West Germany. But the issue of limitation on the prosecution of murder and crimes against humanity during the Second World War, after intensive parliamentary debates in 1960, 1965, 1969 was definitely settled in favour of lifting any time limit and of

opening the way of continuous prosecution in 1979. Many of those considered “minor offenders” or simply members of the Nazi Party were rehabilitated in the 1950s.

Most archives in West Germany were opened and made available for research in the early 1960s, although many documents had been lost through the bomb raids, evacuations and transfers of files abroad during and immediately after the war (Kwiet, 1989:186-187). Yet, the most important archive on Nazi members in Germany (over 25 million files), remained in the custody of US forces in West Berlin, in the so-called *Document Center*. The German government and the governments of the German states had access to those archives upon request. This Centre was only handed over to the German authorities in July 1994 and became the Berlin Document Centre (*Berliner Dokumentationszentrale*) of the Federal Archives of Koblenz (*Bundesarchiv Koblenz*).

4.2.1.2 Political memory groups within political parties

The Federal Republic of Germany, formed by the three Western zones in 1949, had a fairly wide-ranging political spectrum which resembled, at first, the one of the Weimar Republic, but was transformed to a high and stable concentration on three parties from the mid-1960s onwards: the Conservative Christian-Democratic Union (CDU) together with its sister party in Bavaria, the Christian Social Union (CSU), the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and a unified Liberal Party, the Free Democratic Party (FDP). This high concentration on few parties meant that many compromises between different memory groups had to be sought.

Many leaders, who had actively resisted the Nazi regime and, as a result, had to flee the country or suffer in concentration camps, gathered in the Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party in West Germany. Both parties had a clear reputation of having opposed the Nazi regime. As the leader of the Social Democratic Party, Kurt Schumacher, explained in 1945:

The Social Democratic Party is the only party in Germany that has held on to the lines of democracy and peace. This is why it is the only one who can claim that the principles of its policies have been approved by the judgement of history.¹³

¹³ Quoted in H. Schulze, 1982:191.

With the memory of its own past and the memory of the two world wars, the SPD regarded itself as the party that defended freedom and democracy and claimed moral and political leadership in the shaping of the post-war political system.¹⁴ The Communist Party (*Kommunistische Partei Deutschland*, KPD), in turn, was banned by the West German Constitutional Court in 1956 for being anti-constitutional. It regrouped in 1969 as the German Communist Party (*Deutsche Kommunistische Partei*, DKP) and was tolerated thereafter. The DKP never gained seats in the federal parliament (nor any state parliament). The exclusion of the Communist Party from the West German political scene also meant a diversion of the resistance memory groups of the Left in West Germany mainly to the Social Democratic Party.

A significant transformation of political Conservatism took place in West Germany in stark contrast to the developments that had taken place during the Weimar Republic. After 1945, politicians such as Konrad Adenauer and Jakob Kaiser for the first time succeeded in gathering conservatives of both confessions, i.e. Protestantism and Catholicism, to form the Christian Democratic Union (*Christlich-Demokratische Union*, CDU). From the very beginning, the CDU considered itself within the Christian and democratic tradition of Germany. This self-understanding broke clearly with the authoritarian and anti-democratic conservative tradition of Protestant and Prussian conservatism that had existed between 1871 and 1933, and offered German Conservatism a Rhenish and democratic alternative (Herf, 1997:215.216). After the Second World War, there was no longer any significant *völkisch* conservative political current in West or East Germany, which had often been the mainstay of anti-French sentiments on conventional memory grounds in Imperial and inter-war Germany. Under the chairmanship of Konrad Adenauer, former mayor of Cologne, the CDU, opened up its membership to former “ordinary” members of the Nazi Party. Together with the Liberal Party (*Freie Demokratische Partei*, FDP) and the conservative German Party (*Deutsche Partei*, DP), the CDU received most of those former ordinary members of the National Socialist Party, as well as many former soldiers and diplomats of the Third Reich (Dubiel, 1999:55 and 66-67).

¹⁴ For Schumacher, the Social Democratic Party had always been the ‘other Germany’, in contradistinction to National Socialism and imperial expansionism. See: Herf, 1997:251.

In the 1950s, the group of ethnic German expellees had their own political expression and party, the League of the Homelandless and Right-Deprived/All-German Bloc (*Bund der Heimatlosen und Entrechteten/Gesamtdeutscher Block* - BHE), which also formed part of Adenauer's government from 1953-1957 (together with the national-conservative German Party, and the national-liberal Free Democratic Party). In 1961, the BHE and the German Party fused, but failed to reach any significance in the subsequent elections. Thus, leaders of the German expellees from the East found a political home, first, among the Social Democrats (in opposition to Adenauer's policy of *Westintegration*) and, later, in the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (in opposition to Brandt's *Ostpolitik*). As a result, the memory group of the expellees was very influential in formulating government policies in the 1950s.

In the 1950s the German Party received some of the DNVP politicians of the Weimar Republic. In 1961 the German Party formed a coalition with the BHE and was renamed All-German Party (*Gesamtdeutsche Partei*, GDP). However, this party could not enter the federal parliament after 1969 and the remaining members joined the CDU/CSU, which became, and still is, the sole conservative force in the German parliament.

The Liberal Party, FDP, was the home of most of the former public and diplomatic servants in West Germany and also allowed former ordinary members of the Nazi Party in its ranks. The FDP was increasingly able to unite the national liberal wing and the free democratic wing of the liberal movement that had split and opposed each other during the Imperial and the Weimar Republic periods, although, at the beginning, it had a clear bent towards the national liberal wing.

Finally, former and current convinced Nazis gathered since 1950 in the Socialist Reich Party (*Sozialistische Reichspartei* - SRP) that considered itself the legal heir to the Nazi Party and the political force of former soldiers (Meyer, 1984:90). Its most prominent figure was Major Remer, with whose help the uprising against Hitler by General Stauffenberg and others on 20 July 1944 had been crushed. The SRP was proscribed by the High Court in 1952, after having had a significant success in the state elections of Bremen and Lower Saxony. After its dissolution, some – mostly moderate - members of this party joined, above all, the FDP and CDU, and, to a lesser degree, also the SPD (Hoffmann and Jesse, 1993:215). Some other members of the SRP re-emerged in the

1965-founded National Party of Germany (*Nationalpartei Deutschlands*, NPD), which gathered the German extreme Right, and had some limited success in two state elections. In the period under discussion the NPD never entered the federal parliament.

4.2.1.3 Practical-moral imperatives in West Germany based on war memories

With the demise of the anti-democratic, *völkisch* oriented Conservatism, and the exclusion of former Nazi-members from the political system, there was widespread willingness among the West German political elites and memory groups to overcome the long-standing enmity with France. In fact, memory of the two World Wars strongly pointed towards the need to seek rapprochement with France. This imperative was shared by CDU/CSU, the Liberals (FDP) as well as the Social Democrats and was one important element favouring European integration.

The moral-practical imperatives, which were shared by all political forces present in post-war West Germany, stressed the need to renounce any military aggression, militarism or military expansionism.¹⁵ This was reflected in the Basic Law (the constitution of West Germany), which, in Article 26 rejected wars of aggression or conquest. The reflection about World War II also brought about a widespread rejection of military means to solve international disputes, the military in general and nationalism, chauvinism or racism, all of which had been prominent in Nazi ideology. As a result, even terms such as ‘patriotism’, ‘national consciousness’ and ‘nationalism’ became suspect.¹⁶

In Germany, the Left and the Right drew very different practical-moral lessons from “Munich 1938”: The widespread commitment to pacifism that resulted from the conscious reflection upon the memories of the Second World War was particularly

¹⁵ From the lessons of the last war “grew the deep conviction that another war must never start from German soil. This vital interest is a central claim of our policies. It is borne by the wish for reconciliation and understanding.” “Erklärung des SPD-Vorstands anlässlich des 40. Jahrestags des Ausbruchs des Zweiten Weltkrieges” reprinted in *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 9 August 1979.

¹⁶ “National Socialism rendered nationalism in its maddest form, namely racism, so absurd that only some fools in Germany dare flirting with it. In that respect, the change of the Germans after the Second World War is completely different from the situation in Germany after the First World War.” President of the German Parliament, Eugen Gerstenmaier, in 1964 in Paris reproduced in: „Frankreich und das deutsche Nationalbewusstsein“, Special print from: *Bulletin des Presse- und Informationsdienstes der Bundesregierung*, Nr.158/64 and 161/64.

strong in the Centre and the Left. However, conservative groups, such as the CDU, also referred to Munich, albeit drawing from this image a different practical-moral imperative:

Adenauer focused on the need to avoid repeating the mistakes the democracies had made in the 1930s. [...] For Adenauer, a foreign policy of Western integration and rearmament [...] was the result of his interpretation of the 'lessons of Munich' (Herf, 1997:298).

Thus, different political currents drew different political-moral imperatives from the German past that clashed in the 1980s during the debates on the Euromissiles in the German parliament (Herf, 1991). Similarly, in the heated debates on pacifism, that regularly took place between the CDU and the Green Party, "Munich" appeared as an argumentative figure in favour of strengthening and against seeking non-military means (Dubiel, 1999:193-199).

Another practical-moral imperative emerging from the reflection upon the recent war was a clear commitment to Western style democracy, freedom and human rights (Herf, 1997:201). This conclusion had, for example, priority for the CDU under Chancellor Adenauer and implied pursuing a strict orientation towards the West (*Westintegration* und *Westorientierung*). This was in stark contrast to the policy preference of the SPD in the 1950s. Reflection on and rejection of the gross and systematic violations of human dignity and life during the Nazi period gave rise to a strong imperative to protect human dignity (which became Article 1 of the Basic Law), human rights and to embark on a clear road to democracy.

The imperative towards democracy and human rights, that later came to be known as the "anti-totalitarian consensus" in West Germany, also found support in the memory of the recent past from 1871 to 1945. The lessons of history in favour of democracy, freedom and human rights were often (at least until the 1970s) combined with an attack against East Germany, in particular by the conservative CDU. For example, in 1964, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of 30 January 1933 -when Hitler assumed power- the CDU wrote:

We all have the duty to remain vigilant and sensitive against open and clandestine moves that could be the beginning of totalitarian developments. But even more urgent is the still unresolved task of bringing freedom, human rights and rule of law to that part of Germany, where this has not existed for the last 30 years (Johann Baptist Grasl, CDU, *Deutscher Unionsdienst*, 29 November 1963:1).

This political lesson from German history was reinforced and supported by the German historiography which, from the 1960s, began to reflect upon the reasons for the becoming of the Third Reich. This reflection prompted a significant production of literature on the continuities between the German Empire and Nazi Germany, and identified common traits or deficits that had paved the way of Nazism to power. The weakness of the liberal movement, the lack of a democratic revolution and the unification of Germany under an authoritarian political regime were all regarded as specifically German factors that had contributed to the rise of Nazism in the twentieth century. It was in the context of this intellectual endeavour of historians to explain Germany's recent history that the notion of the "special path" of Germany to modernity was coined (Grebing, 1986; Plessner, 1959; Faulenbach, 1998).

As regards foreign policy, the "special path" literature identified significant continuities between the Second and the Third Reichs. In the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, so runs the argument, the German foreign policy was regarded as highly unstable, unpredictable and detrimental to the interests of Germany. Indeed, it has been argued that Germany's moves between different allies and enemies, oriented towards the East, then to the West, and back again, contributed to the perception of Germany as unpredictable and, therefore, aggression-prone. Among the post-war political class of Germany, particularly in the CDU, SPD and FDP, the reflection on Germany's allegedly unpredictable foreign policy gave rise to a strong concern with predictability and reliability (*Berechenbarkeit* and *Verlässlichkeit*) of German foreign policy. In this context, European integration was often hailed as a way to serve these two imperatives.¹⁷

¹⁷ "The emphasis on the national inevitably leads to a loss of predictability. The trust in the predictability of German politics that has been built up over a long time would be affected. As you can see, my colleague Schäuble [CDU], how irritated European governments react to your recent proposals!" Contribution by Hans-Ulrich Klose, spokesman on foreign affairs of the SPD during a parliamentary debate in 1994. See: Klose, 1994:1-2

If European integration was seen as a way to guarantee a predictable and reliable foreign policy, it was also strongly advocated by the West German political class, for it represented a rejection of nationalism and appeared as a means of reconciliation and rapprochement with France.¹⁸ As Heidemarie Wieczoreck-Zeul from the board of the SPD declared in 1994:

Europe was the answer to Fascism, National Socialism and barbarism. This is why we will defend the binding of Germany into the European Union and the close ties to our neighbouring country, France, as an achievement, which is not only in Germany's immediate interest, but also a guarantee for a civilised development inside of Germany. The European Community has turned enemies into partners, even friends (*Sozialdemokratischer Pressedienst* 49, 111, 14 June 1994, pp.7-8).

The different access of political memory groups to political power gives one answer to the question of what shaped West German public discourse on past wars, especially the Second World War. Another aspect that is central to this thesis, is the level of social learning in the process of public remembering. It is this aspect we are turning to now.

4.2.1.4 Levels of social learning in West Germany between the 1950s and 1980s

Konrad Adenauer became the first Chancellor of West Germany in 1949 with a narrow lead over his rival from the Social Democrats, Kurt Schumacher. The Christian Democratic Union of Adenauer and Erhard governed West Germany for seventeen years (1949-1966), mostly with its liberal ally, FDP, its sister party in Bavaria, the Christian Social Union (CSU), but also with the Party of the Refugees (BHE) and/or the conservative DP (*Deutsche Partei*). In 1966, there was a grand coalition between the Social Democrats and the CDU under the chancellorship of Kurt-Georg Kiesinger, which was replaced by the first SPD-led government in 1969 under Chancellor Willy Brandt (who had been the foreign minister under the grand coalition).

The 1950s and 1960s were dominated by conservative-liberal governments with the support of the German Party and the BHE. This favoured political memory groups of former expellees, Church-based resistance and included many ordinary members of the

¹⁸ For instance, both Chancellor Brandt (SPD) and Chancellor Erhard (CDU) referred to the European integration as a means "to take away any ground for exaggerated nationalism". See: F. Neumann, 1975:78.

Nazi Party and soldiers. The 1950s and 1960s saw a period of silence and a focus on own, German, victims and loss. The first German government under Konrad Adenauer pressed for an amnesty of many lower and medium-ranking officials that resulted in a wide-ranging amnesty in 1950. On 11 May 1951 article 131 of the Basic Law was passed by the West German parliament, allowing the return to office of many public servants that had been removed by the Western Allies after 1945.

Between 1945 and 1949 Western Allies carried out the de-Nazification process, which was highly unpopular among West Germans (Herf, 1997:202). The Western Allies and West German politicians felt they faced a dilemma: they wanted to promote a vivid and open memory of the Second World War but they sought to attain democratisation at the same time. Adenauer gave a clear priority to democratisation over justice and memory (Meuschel, 1999:119). His concern was that many citizens might reject the young democracy, as had happened to the Weimar Republic. The memory of the failed German “democracy without democrats” clearly guided Adenauer’s strategy to urge for an early end of de-Nazification and to limit the prosecution to leaders of the Nazi regime. West German politicians obtained a wide-ranging amnesty by the Western Allies as a price for integration into the West (Dubiel, 1999:47-48).

The Social Democratic opposition insisted on the need to carry out more public debates and reflection about the widespread support of the Nazi ideology that had led to the Second World War. The discussion the SPD advocated would be, however, delayed until the late 1960s. Many authors, such as the philosopher Hermann Lübbe and the historian Jeffrey Herf, have argued on a similar line with Adenauer, that the relative silence in West Germany on the collective past was a necessary trade-off both to win over a majority either still sympathetic to Nazi ideas or not really enthusiastic about democracy, and win in parliamentary elections at the same time.¹⁹ Moreover, according to Siegrid Meuschel,

¹⁹ On Hermann Lübbe’s claim regarding the need for „communicative silence“ (*komunikatives Schweigen*) in the 1950s and 1960s see: Maier, 1997:90. On this trade-off between democratisation and a weak memory see: Herf, 1997:6-7.

[t]he young republic distanced itself clearly from the [Nazi] dictatorship, prosecuted its successor organisations and apologists. But it did not dispute the character of National Socialism and the Second World War, the alignments and responsibilities of society. Rather, it rehabilitated the army, the police and the bureaucracy en bloc. Instead of focusing on remembering the Holocaust and the crimes of the German *Wehrmacht* and instead of seeking judicial justice, it focused on an end to de-Nazification and a philosemitic ‘reconciliation’ (Meuschel, 1999:116).

The 1950s have often been described as the decade of amnesia in West Germany (Frei 1996). Using Habermas’ categories of social learning, this might be reformulated in the following way: The governing parties and their governments made a radical break between the political community as such and the political regime in power between 1933 and 1945. At the same time, they identified with their own suffering at the front or at home, in fact, the suffering under the political regime as well. The principle separation between political regime and political community facilitates a social learning that reflects upon the past regime and passes a moral judgement on it. This is what happened, even as early as the 1950s, and marks a difference to the behaviour of many Conservatives after the First World War.

While the joint effort at the front was still positively connoted, political values and the regime were separated from this effort. This judgment was expressed by the identification with the victims of the regime. At the same time, the public rejection of that regime was so complete, that no responsibility could be assumed for the deeds carried out in the name of the German people, i.e. the political community. This resulted in a peculiar remembering and forgetting: while many West Germans remembered the Second World War in the 1950s as victims of war and the political regime, thus separating the political regime from the political community, the deeds of perpetrators made in the name of Germany were either blamed on some leading figures of the Nazi regime or simply not made subject of public discussion and therefore forgotten. Those who felt personal victims of the political regime, however, such as the Communists, the Social Democrats and many others interned, tried in vain to ignite a more open and moral debate on the recent past. The silence of the 1950s was, thus, both a sign of advanced social learning (separating political community and political regime) and a sign of limited social learning (not making the actions of the political regime subject to public reflection).

Another expression of that peculiar form of social learning is the fact that politicians and historians referred to the recent past in the 1950s as “accident” (*Betriebsunfall*), which had been caused by Hitler and his “system”. They made a clear separation between “the people” and “Hitler/Nazis/the vicious system”, which completely overlooked the totalising efforts of the Nazi propaganda, which precisely tried to close the gap between regime and people. For many citizens, politicians and historians the way to describe the end of the war was that of “the German catastrophe”. This *topoi* was acceptable to many Nazis, opposition leaders who had suffered in the hands of fellow Germans, soldiers and those deplored having lost the war. It was the historian Friedrich Meinecke who, in 1946, coined that phrase in his book of the same title. The “German catastrophe” meant, in fact, something that had come over Germany and the Germans, something uncontrollable. Needless to say, this formulation omitted the responsible subject from the equation (Reichel 1999:11).

Another example of this way of remembering is the war commemoration culture in the 1950s in West Germany. The memory sites of the Second World War were often inscribed with “To all victims of war and terror regimes” (“*Allen Opfern von Krieg und Gewaltherrschaft*”). This formula abstracted from the very different sources and reasons of suffering during the Second World War.²⁰ It included soldiers at the front, those tortured and killed in the concentration camps, civilians tortured and killed on racist grounds, forced labour and, finally, Nazis who died in the Allied air raids, as well as expellees from Eastern Germany. This abstraction gave all these groups an equal status of victim.

The speeches of politicians in the 1950s focused entirely on the suffering of German soldiers. No word was uttered about the reasons that had led to the war, hardly a word on other, non-German victims of the war. In the 1950s alone, over 30,000 monuments were erected in West Germany to commemorate the fallen soldiers (Reichel, 1999:86-87). It was only a handful of Social Democrats, the first West German president, Theodor Heuss, and the Communists in West Germany, who pleaded for an open encounter with the recent past – without much success (Dubiel, 1999:42; Herf, 1997:209-239). The discussion was very much informed by the question of personal

²⁰ Peter Reichel claims that the *Volksbund für Kriegsgräberfürsorge* had a great share in this general formula on war memorials (1999:20).

responsibility and guilt. In the 1950s West German politicians from all parties were adamant in rejecting any idea that suggested that all Germans were responsible for the crimes committed in the German name during the Second World War. As Kurt Schumacher, head of the SPD, claimed in 1951: “One must not depart from false collective judgements and make democracy pay for the sins of the dictatorship.”²¹

That rejection of collective responsibility and guilt nurtured the suspicion (already formulated by a few such as Theodor Heuss) that the rejection of collective guilt (*Kollektivschuld-These*) had, in fact, turned into a collective innocence hypothesis (*Kollektivunschuld-These*), which blamed some Nazi leaders and “the system” for the wartime crimes. Thus, during the 1950s and 1960s a positive identification with the German soldier, in a broader interpretive framework of the victim of a political system, was prevalent. The 1950s saw, hence, the development of two different, even mutually exclusive attempts to reconstruct a collective German identity in the light of the memory of the recent German past:

While some politicians on the Left were of the opinion that the new Republic could only gain democratic legitimacy so far as it broke up with the previous tradition of National Socialism, the conservatives in the CDU and the DP clung to the ghost of a national tradition that had not been damaged by National Socialism and expected only from this tradition a cultural-political integration of the Federal Republic. [...] Some few Nazi leaders were to be made responsible for what had happened, but the far-reaching identity-creating traditions of the Germans should be spared from the liability of genocide (Dubiel, 1999:63).

Thus, the Conservatives of the CDU and the German Party hoped to retain a positive memory even of the Second World War, focusing on the military (forgetting the Nazi crimes) while the SPD, the Communists and many intellectuals asked for an ethical and reflective-moral debate on the Second World War, which, was often conflated with discussions on personal guilt or responsibility. One of the reasons for this lack of moral debate in the 1950s might be found in the rising anti-totalitarianism and anti-Communism in the 1950s as one deputy of the SPD suspected in a parliamentary debate in 1979:

²¹ Quoted in: Zitelmann, 1993a:246.

For thirty years in the existence of the Federal Republic there has been no institutional or moral start. At the same time, anybody who publicly pointed to fact of this scandalous absence was indiscriminately denounced as Communist (Deputy Hansen quoted in Dubiel, 1999:171).

Whatever the reason, it is clear that a moral debate did not take place in the 1950s and early 1960s. This was advanced in the late 1960s and 1970s, partly due to some prominent trials in Germany, but also due to the rise of a new post-war generation. The late 1960s and 1970s saw a rise and self-assertiveness of the Jewish memory of the Second World War. Triggered by public trials on former officials of concentration camps such as the Maidanek Trial or the Auschwitz Trial, but also popularised by documentary movies such as *Holocaust* in 1978 or the Diary of Anne Frank, there was an increasing awareness of the fate of German and foreign Jews during the Second World War (Kushner, 1997). This challenged the identification of many Germans as victims and caused repulsion towards anything German among some members of the post-war generation in the 1980s, to be found in some anti-Fascist groups on the far Left (Dubiel, 1999:147).

The new awareness of the fate of the Jews in the Second World War rendered the identification with a common national memory increasingly difficult in West Germany. For one, the abstraction of “victims of war and terror regimes”, which had been current since the 1950s, clearly failed to grasp the different fates and memories of the multiple groups that had been, some way or another, affected both by the Nazi terror and the war. In this context, the Jews took it as an insult to be lumped together, indistinctly, with other memory groups of the Second World War. Yet, the differentiation of victim groups made it increasingly difficult for the Germans to identify simply with the brave German soldiers fighting for their country.

As in France, the student revolts of the 1960s challenged the status quo, and with it, the hitherto dominant memories of the Second World War. Indeed, a generation that was not biographically connected to the Nazi period, but still felt close enough to reflect upon the meaning and the consequences of “its” National Socialist past, had grown up (Dubiel, 1988:5-8, especially 6). The “sons and daughters” generation asked questions about the responsibility of the previous generation and challenged the myth of the Germans’ having been the victims of Hitler and his vicious regime. This generational

debate still focused very much on personal responsibility and guilt. It did not foster a moral debate on the past war and what it meant for present morality.

The interest in the fate of the Jews during the Second World War also augmented the interest in the War at the Eastern front. This interest marginalised the war at the Western and Northern front as being “comparatively clean”, despite oppressions and crimes against civilians in the West. The fact that the war in the East had been declared, from the outset, a “war of extermination” (*Vernichtungskrieg*) rendered the distinction between war against civilians and military war much more difficult to make. As it was continuously stressed during the Nuremberg trials, the army and its special forces (*Einsatzgruppen*, *Sicherheitsdienst*, *Waffen-SS*) cooperated very closely with ordinary military units in the war on the Eastern front to attain military victory, but also to exterminate Communist commissars, Jews and the Eastern European intelligentsia (Heydecker and Leeb, 1985/1958:291-448). This notwithstanding, popular memory, nourished by testimonies of former generals living in West Germany, created and reproduced the image of an overall “clean and honourable war” fought by the regular army (*Wehrmacht*), while attributing the cruelty against the civilian population and acts of extermination to the SS (Janssen, 1990:48). It was only in the late 1980s and early 1990s that this myth – which since the Nuremberg trials had been known by historians to be a myth - was openly and publicly challenged (Herf, 1997:217-218; Giardano, 1990). But even within this distinction between the war in the East and the West there were events, such as the massacre of over 600 citizens of the village of Oradour-sur-Glane, carried out by the Waffen-SS in 1943 in France that faced the threat of marginalisation by the focus on the War on the Eastern front.²²

With the rise and assertion of different memory groups concerning the Second World War, a narrative that made all Germans victims of the Nazi regime to the same degree became ever more challenged. Furthermore, the positive identification with the German *Wehrmacht* was strongly undermined in the 1970s and early 1980s. However, at that stage, a moral debate was still absent.

²² What made that massacre even more controversial was the fact that some Alsatians were members of the Division *Das Reich* of the Waffen-SS, which carried out the massacre. Thus, French people participated in a massacre against French people. On the French trial regarding Oradour see: Klarsfeld and Rousso, 1992:24; Grosser, 1990:110.

This should change in the 1980s, where different forms of remembering the Second World War openly and publicly clashed. One catalysing aspect was the fact that a new political party, the Greens, entered parliament in 1979. This party was integrated by sons and daughters of the war generation. At the same time, there was a conservative policy, put forward by Helmut Kohl, to carry out what he called a “spiritual-moral turnaround” (*geistig-moralische Wende*). Kohl wanted to assume collective responsibility for the Nazi past and the Second World War while embedding this part of national history into (a) a longer period of German history and (b) contrasting it with the positive history of the Federal Republic of Germany. In other words, the recent past after the Second World War should be made part of German collective memory, but also periods before the Second World War should be added to create an overall affirmative national history, where the Second World War was but a deplorable part. In this vein, Kohl advanced two museum projects, one on German history in general, the *Deutsches Historisches Museum* (German Historical Museum) to be opened in Berlin 1998 and a museum on the (successful) history of West Germany, *Haus der Geschichte* (“The House of History”) in Bonn. Helmut Kohl resumed therewith a project that had already been formulated in the 1950s; namely, the historisation of National Socialism and the re-discovery of a “healthy” national history, of which National Socialism was but one – regretful - period.

The 1980s and the 1990s were actually the belated public confrontation of different memories of the Second World War coming forth. This conscious policy by Helmut Kohl, aided by the historian Michael Stürmer, of creating an affirmative collective German memory, became the subject of a very heated debate in 1986, known as the “Historians’ Debate” between several historians and the philosopher Jürgen Habermas (Maier, 1997). To be sure, this debate covered several important issues, but one of its central aspects is of particular relevance to this work, namely, the role of historiography itself in engendering an affirmative collective memory. As Habermas claims:

The inevitable [...] pluralism of interpretations only mirrors the structure of open societies. Only this provides the opportunity to become aware of one’s own ambivalent, identity-relevant traditions. This is necessary for a critical appropriation of traditions with multiple means, [...] something that is incompatible with closed and secondary natural historical images as well as with any form of conventional, namely affirmatively and pre-reflexively shared identity (Habermas,1987a:42).

In his contribution to the Historians' Debate, Habermas asked for a moral debate on the past and what he called a "reflective appropriation of the past". By that he meant a judgement of the past and identification with the positively reflected moral values of that judgement. This debate, which transcended academic circles, is, I would argue, a first instance of public awareness of post-conventional elements in the reflection upon the past. Indeed, the debate shed light on the fact that different memory groups were not willing to subsume under an affirmative, state-engendered version of collective war memory. Furthermore, many were not willing simply to forget the negative facts of German memories of the Second World War. Conservative politicians and historians had lamented for a long time the "weak German national identity" that needed to be overcome by "stepping out of Hitler's shadow". The fundamental strategy, made explicit in the 1980s, was, as has been mentioned, to search for affirmative grounds in German history and to present National Socialism as one period. The alternative model by the Left was the "critical reflection of tradition" which meant "not a break with tradition but the competence for a historically open and productive encounter and a reflective acceptance or rebuttal of values and elements of tradition" (Dubiel, 1999:239).

The Historians' Debate was by no means simply a debate among intellectuals. It had ample resonance, especially in political circles, as the fierce exchanges in the German Parliament, in particular between the members of the Green Party and the Christian Democratic Union show. Alfred Dregger, speaker of the (CDU) majority, and one of the most important advocates of a memory of the "clean" war of the front soldiers, insisted in 1977: "History has the task to counter-balance the loss of identity in a mass society" (quoted in Loreck, 1985:3). On another occasion Dregger made a plea for a "healthy" affirmative national history:

We are worried about the lack of history and the lack of care towards our nation. Without a profound patriotism, which is normal to other peoples, our people will not be able to survive. Those who abuse the 'Dealing with the Past', which was certainly necessary, so as to make our nation unfit for the future, will be faced with our resistance (quoted in: Broszat, 1986:12).

The Conservatives and the Liberals, in power since 1982, fostered a new affirmative memory by conscious attempts to contrast the enemy image of the Second World War-

Germany with the post-war NATO-member-West Germany. With the aim to show that modern Germany had turned into an ally of former foes, the conservative Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, staged in 1984 a reconciliation ceremony with French Prime Minister, François Mitterrand, at the battlefield of Verdun. Kohl did the same with US President, Ronald Reagan, in Bitburg, Germany, in May 1985. This planned event caused an outcry among the Jewish community in the US, who, having learnt that the cemetery of Bitburg also housed tombs of members of the *Waffen-SS*, opposed President Reagan's participation (Herf, 1997:352). When Alfred Dregger, heard of the objections presented in the US Congress to Reagan's participation in the act, he wrote to the US Congress:

If you demand your president not to make that noble gesture at the military cemetery of Bitburg, I shall have to interpret [this demand] as an insult to my brother and my dead comrades [...] I ask you whether you regard the German people as your ally, a people that was subdued under a brown dictatorship and that has stood on the side of the West for forty years (quoted in Reichel, 1999:239).

Dregger was an exponent of a political memory group within the CDU that repeated many of the forms of remembering from the 1950s: he held on to the positively remembered *Wehrmacht* and saw the Germans victim of a "brown dictatorship", i.e. the Nazi regime; at the same time, he appealed to the recent past of the Federal Republic of Germany as an ally to the USA. The outcry in the USA as well as in Germany signalled that different memory groups, especially the Jewish memory groups in both countries, were not willing to accept that form of remembering as one great narrative orchestrated from above.

Public remembering of the Second World War also became a controversial issue in the 1980s. Prior to the 1970s there had been no general debate in parliament about the recent past, apart from the discussions linked to specific laws (like amnesty laws, restitution laws). Post-war West Germany commemorated the end of Second World War on 8 May and 1 September as the beginning of the Second World War. In the 1950s and 1960s West Germany made no public commemoration on 8 May at all, there were only short speeches broadcasted by radio (F. Neumann, 1975:77-78). It was only in the 1970s that Chancellor Willy Brandt and president Heinemann held speeches in parliament. First and foremost, 8 May was remembered as the end of the Second World

War, hardly as the end of Nazism. In the 1970s and 1980s the 8 May was officially called the “anniversary of the end of the Second World War”.²³ While many conservative politicians wanted this day to be reserved for the commemoration of one’s own dead and suffering, politicians on the Left favoured the idea of a commemoration of the liberation from the Nazi regime. Also in the 1970s, Jewish memory began to play an increasingly important role in German commemorations, 26 January (liberation of Auschwitz) and 9 November 1938 (Pogrom night, often referred to as *Reichskristallnacht*, night of crystals in the Reich) became, thus, important dates in the German national calendar for commemorating the Second World War in the 1980s.

Since the 1980s the conspiracy of Stauffenberg on 20 July has been remembered as a day of resistance to the Nazi regime, as the “rise of the conscience” (“*Aufstand des Gewissens*”). Interestingly, the contribution of the Communists to the resistance against the Nazis was consistently ignored in public commemorations in West Germany. Additionally, there is a “National Day of Grief” (“*Volkstrauertag*”) that had already been introduced during the Weimar Republic and continued to be celebrated under the Nazi regime as the “national commemoration of fallen heroes” (*Heldengedenktag*). On that day Germans commemorate the fallen soldiers of all wars and take care of the tombs. This national day of grief usually takes place on the second Sunday before the first Advent in November and is not accompanied by public commemorations but is rather a private, individual, usually family-oriented activity (Hudemann, 1984: 35; Knischewski and Spittler, 1997:242). It should be stressed that 11 November (Armistice Day ending the First World War) has never been a public commemoration day in Germany.

4.2.2 The remembering of the Second World War in East German politics: the structural overcoming of fascism

In the immediate aftermath of the war, East Germany had a similar wealth of memory groups like West Germany. However, with the access to power by the Soviet-backed

²³ “As if agreed beforehand, Scheel, Schmidt, Heinemann, Brandt, Erhard and Kohl all speak unanimously on the ‘anniversary of the end of the Second World War’. [...] ‘The day of liberation’ is not used by any of those leading politicians.” (Neumann 1975:77).

Communists and the beginning of the Cold War, many memory groups were marginalised:

A very differentiated and plural memory culture of victims, resistance fighters and returning emigrants and their respective initial moral weight were, so to speak, expropriated by those elites gaining political power [in East Germany] and re-constructed as a new system of identity-forming images of orientation and enemies (Danyel, 1999:134).

The discourse on the German past was very quickly monopolised by the Communists, while other groups had no possibility to include their memories in the official state memory. Among the Communists, it was those exiled politicians in Moscow (in particular Wilhelm Pieck and Walter Ulbricht) who had the lead over the Communists who had gone into exile to Mexico City or had stayed in Nazi Germany (Danyel, 1999:134 and Herf, 1997:162-200). In East Germany a very swift policy to include former members of the Nazi Party into the state apparatus and society was implemented (McLellan, 2004; Fox, 1999). As in West Germany, political currents sympathetic to Nazi ideologies had no space for articulation or participation in politics (Danyel, 1999:136).

For the East German government, there was also a clear hierarchy among the political memory groups of the last war. The first distinction was between “fighters against” and “victims of” National Socialism (similar to post-war France). The former were regarded as being more valuable than the latter. Within the resistance against the Nazi regime, Communist resistance was pivotal, followed by other forms of active resistance (Herf, 1997:80). Many former concentration camps in the territory of West Germany were “forgotten” for more than ten years, before the West German governments thought about creating and securing memory sites there. This contrasts starkly with the situation in East Germany, where the Communist governments created memory sites in the former concentration camps from very early on. However, those memory sites clearly privileged the Communist memory of the camps and celebrated the Communist resistance fighters, thus neglecting other groups, who had been detained there as well. Furthermore, the memory of those camps was often connected with the heroic struggle of the Red Army that, according to the Communist reading, with great sacrifices, had freed Germany from Fascism.

The Communist regime in East Germany always celebrated 8 May as a day of liberation from Fascism. East Germany universalised its memory of the Second World War, portraying it as the struggle between Communism and Fascism, which concluded with the final victory of Communism. Parties to that struggle had been (on the same side) the German and foreign Communists and the Soviet Union. The Communist regime in East Germany avoided talking about German Nazism, but referred, in general terms, to Fascism. And since Fascism had been caused by (a certain stage of) capitalism, in adopting Communism as a political and economic system, East Germany – so it claimed – had structurally overcome and dealt with Fascism once and for all. This interpretation of the past fit very well into the worldview that would prevail during the Cold War, a period during which East Germany would continue to fight capitalism and remnants of German Fascism hand in hand with the Soviet Union.

In the view of the East German ruling class, National Socialism was a heritage that the Federal Republic of Germany had to deal with. The GDR portrayed itself in the tradition of the attempted German revolutions, such as the liberal revolution in 1848 and the socialist revolution in 1918/19 (Reichel, 1999:22). Given this state-organised collective war memory, the resistance of the Communists and the Left, opposition groups to Hitler organised in the Soviet Union (such as the National Committee of Free Germany (*Nationalkommittee Freies Deutschland*, NKFD) and the military victory of the Red Army enjoyed a monopoly. While the Jewish memory was able to assert itself in West Germany and France from the 1970s, in East Germany it continued to be silenced (Herf, 1997:15-16). The use of Communism as legitimising ideology, which at the same time proclaimed a successful “dealing with the past” (the GDR declared itself repeatedly the “winner of history”) was dominant from the mid-1950s to the mid-1980s, when, for the first time, two representatives of the Church-based opposition tabled a paper that challenged the official reading of the East German past.²⁴

Using Habermas’ categories of social learning as criteria, there was a clear reflection on the political system and a moral judgement of the past. In that sense East Germany was an example of post-conventional remembering. However, this reasoning was not the result of *public* debate, thus creating a shared meaning, but rather proclaimed by the

²⁴ On the paper by the two leaders of the Protestant Peace Movement in East Germany, Markus Meckel and Martin Gutzeit, „8 May – Our responsibility“, see: Herf, 1997:363-365.

ruling regime. It is the absence of public debate in East Germany that authors like Jeffrey Herf and Siobhan Kattago make responsible for a decisive difference in the development of collective war memories in East and West Germany. In West Germany, they argue, a public sphere developed that was increasingly used to challenging, discussing and arguing over issues of collective war memory (Kattago, 2001:3). By contrast, in East Germany there was no one who could publicly recall the counter-history about the collective past, thus impeding the critical reflection, appropriation and rejection of specific values or a comparison between the personal memory and the official memory. Thus, while there was a post-conventional reflection by a small group, it lacked a broader debate within East German society which could have created a shared meaning or collective reflection on the Second World War.

The East German regime also drew explicit practical-moral conclusions from the memory of the Second World War. The commemoration of the International Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Fascist Terror in September later turned into a rally for East Germany's "struggle for peace".²⁵ In the official reflection of East Germany there was, like in the West, a strong sense of pacifism, of rejection of militarism and military expansionism. In fact, in the 1980s the West German Left appealed to the common pacifism as a point of coincidence between East and West Germany, when they spoke about a "community of responsibility" (*Verantwortungsgemeinschaft*) for peace (Bender, 1983:3).

Collective war memories in East and West Germany were, similar to those of Gaullists and Communists in France, seen in the context both of one's own political project and of political competition, here even exacerbated by the beginning of the Cold War. Whereas East Germany claimed to have eradicated Fascism through the establishment of a popular democracy, West Germany combined its "anti-totalitarianism" with a rejection of National Socialism and Communism, while stressing, at the same time, the need to defend and strengthen democracy. Thus, collective war memory in the two post-war Germanys was also influenced and formed by different political currents and, above all, the Cold War and the ideological conflicts that bore it. Similarly, the fact that the

²⁵ "They [the Communists] thus lent past heroism a specific ideological purpose that reinforced the current 'struggle for peace' of Soviet diplomacy." Herf, 1997:164.

political projects of East and West Germany were diametrically opposed blocked in each society a confrontation of the past for thirty, in some cases for almost fifty years:

The self-critique of the West Germans that was due disappeared under the shadow of the critique against Communism – just like the “anti-Fascism” of the SED elites prevented the rigorous self-examination of the East Germans – this is the moral drama of the post-war period (Dubiel, 1999:171-172).

4.3. The remembering of the Second World War in unified Germany: 1990 - 1995

With the unification of the two Germanys in 1990, different strands of political memory groups came together (K. Neumann, 2000 and Frei, 2005). However, this was not a fusion or melting of two equal strands of memory, but, rather, an extension of the West German variety of war memories to East Germany. On the one hand, there was an entire elite change in former East Germany, which allowed the non-Communist memories to come forward. On the other hand, the political parties of the West expanded eastwards and dominated the formulation of the collective war memories of their newly affiliated members (marginalising the former Communists even further). The official war memory of former East Germany was therefore transformed both from within (regime and elite change) and from outside (expansion of Western parties eastwards). Thus, the official East German memory of the Second World War quickly vanished from public commemorations. Some members of the former SED still have a voice in the newly-found successor party *Party of Democratic Socialism*, PDS, where anti-fascism as a common self-understanding is still present.

It is my contention that the 1990s, particularly the period 1990 to 1995 (with many commemoration ceremonies remembering the 50th anniversary of many events) showed a continuing clash of different levels of social learning with regard to the Second World War. I seek to illustrate this claim through three examples: (1) the commemoration of 8 May, including the commemoration in 1995 in Berlin, (2) the commemoration of resistance against the Nazi regime, and (3) the question of national identity.

Commemorating the 8 May: With reunification the question of commemoration dates of World War II became a subject of debate. While many countries in Europe celebrate 8 May as the day of liberation from both foreign occupation and the Nazi regime, in Germany this commemoration remained ambivalent. The former celebrations in East Germany of the liberation from the Nazi regime found no resonance in united Germany. With West German president von Weizsäcker's speech in 1985, in which he stated for as first president all the different memory groups (perpetrators, victims, bystanders) of the Second World War, the specific experience of each group was acknowledged publicly for the first time. Von Weizsäcker also clearly defined 8 May as "an end of a wrong path of German history" and as a "day of liberation", although not a day of joy (von Weizsäcker, 1985:15). He also used consistently the term "we", thus assuming collective responsibility "from the perspective of a generation of perpetrators that reflected upon its responsibility" (Dubiel, 1999:209) and avoided the identification with either the victims (preferred strategy of the Left), with the victorious powers united in anti-totalitarianism or anti-communism (preferred strategy of the Right) or anti-Fascism (preferred strategy of the East German Communists).

Von Weizsäcker's speech did not, however, put an end to the discussion about the significance of 8 May. Ten years later, on 8 May 1995, as the 50th anniversary of the end of the Second World War was celebrated together with the former Allies, German politicians reinitiated the discussion. Alfred Dregger and Conservative politicians rejected the idea that 8 May had been a day of liberation from a political regime, but, was, rather, a day of loss, suffering and expulsion for the German nation (Dubiel, 1999:263-270). By contrast, many politicians from the Left and Centre, including some of the CDU such as Rita Süssmuth, president of the German parliament, pleaded for a clear moral judgement on the political values and the political regime instead of taking the political community as reference.

The commemoration of resistance against the Nazi regime: The government under Chancellor Kohl of the 1990s wanted to create a national museum of German resistance. Kohl advanced the idea to put the conspiracy of General Graf Schenck von Stauffenberg at the centre of that permanent exhibition. Yet, the attempt to kill Hitler on 20 July 1944 by a group of generals led by General von Stauffenberg was predominantly regarded as

treason in the 1950s and 1960s, and had, consequently, not been celebrated.²⁶ But with the increased awareness of the murderous and vicious character of Nazism that began to develop in the 1970s, the resistance to that regime and the commemoration thereof gained in importance. It is interesting to note that the conspiracy led by Stauffenberg was publicly remembered, because – it was argued — the conspirators wanted to save the honour of Germany. This conservative memory of “honourable resistance” as opposed to Communist-inspired resistance is even more noteworthy given the fact that Stauffenberg and the other conspirators had actually no intention of installing a republic or a democracy. Interestingly, political memory groups on the Right were generous in forgiving those “early errors” (Helmut Kohl), while the SPD admitted repeatedly that it continued to have strong reservations about the commemoration of this conspiracy against Hitler, because it happened quite late in the war and did not aim at democracy (Miller, 1984).

Nonetheless, the conservative parties and their memory groups persistently and consciously denied Communist-inspired opposition groups the status of honourable resistance to the Nazi regime. Throughout the history of West Germany, German soldiers who had joined a network against Hitler in the Soviet Union were regarded as traitors and excluded from restitution. This has not changed even after unification. Finally, the permanent exhibition now shows all the different types of resistance against the Nazi regime, including the Communist resistance. There is a striking similarity between the commemoration of 8 May and this exhibition: while there is an increase in the different groups portrayed as victims or resistance members, a moral debate on the Second World War has been rejected by many conservative groups as well as the Kohl government. This was precisely what politicians from the opposition (especially SPD, PDS) asked for.

Forging a national identity that includes a memory of the Second World War: While the German Party, the Free Democrats and the Conservatives had favoured a search for positive elements of the German past in the 1950s and 1960s, in the 1990s the call for a moral debate on the German past (and thus a rejection of Kohl’s strategy in the tradition of the 1950s and 1960s) became louder. Although a group around Alfred

²⁶ Until the 1960s 25% of those interviewed regarded this act as treason. See: Reichel, 1999:255-256.

Dregger continued to identify with the brave soldier and searched for positive elements of the German past, a group led by Rita Süssmuth (president of the German parliament) also supported a reflection upon the German past during the Second World War as a means to attain moral strength. Ms. Süssmuth advocated this form of remembering against party fellows from the CDU in 1994:

Memory of the negative aspects of our past does not weaken us, as we once feared. Rather it frees us from its burdens, transforms weakness into strengths, brings us together rather than opposing one another. Vigilant and alert memory [*wachsame Erinnerung*] is the protector of freedom. If we forget the lack of freedom, persecution and annihilation, we endanger our own freedom [...] Memory does not stop when the Germans regained freedom and unity (quoted in Herf, 1997:367).

As Jeffrey Herf rightly noted, the memory of the Second World War and the Holocaust actually became more salient in the 1990s and did not – as some foreign observers feared – wane (1997:355). The 1990s in Germany showed the parallel existence of conventional as well as post-conventional memory groups within the political parties. Thus, no claim can be made in the sense that Germany collectively moved to a post-conventional remembering of the Second World War. However, the fact that increasing importance has been given to the moral reflection on the Second World War, even within the CDU, is a sign that post-conventional remembering might be on the rise in united Germany.

In united Germany there are signs of the acceptance of different empirical memory groups of the Second World War, as well as an increasing call for a moral debate on the German past. This renders a conventional form of remembering past wars increasingly difficult, as the development from the 1950s to the 1990s show. With Habermas this development can be interpreted as a move towards a post-conventional remembering of past wars.

4.4 Conclusion

The collective memories of the Second World War that were publicly formulated after a decade of amnesia focused on the war on the Eastern front and the Holocaust. Thus, the general discourse on the memories of the Second World War gave a memory of war with France rather limited prominence. This might have been a result of the fast victory in 1940, the rather limited level of atrocities committed by the German occupation force and the rather limited amount of casualties of German troops during battles and occupation between 1940 and 1944. This is in stark contrast to post-war France, where Germany still occupied the central place in collective memories of the Second World War.

It is my contention that for the post-war period in West Germany, four groups or types in reflecting upon German memory of the Second World War can be identified: First, there was one group to be found on the extreme Left, among anti-Fascist groups who rejected anything German or nationalistic, any reflection that had a national reference point. Second, there was a large coalition conformed by the Green Party, the Social Democratic Party and some members of the liberal FDP and the CDU, who were willing to accept the negative memories of the Second World War and to draw lessons from them, in other words: to accept them and remember them in a reflected way. There was, thirdly, a Right that dominated the 1950s and was later, in the 1980s and 1990s spearheaded by Alfred Dregger and Helmut Kohl that sought to re-establish a positive German identity by identifying with the brave German soldier (Dregger), the recent past of West Germany and the longer national German history (Kohl). Finally, there was an extreme Right current that rejected any wrongdoing of the Germans during the Second World War and denounced a reflection on the past that included repentance as “national masochism”.

With the emancipation of Jewish memory (but also other victim groups such as Roma, Sinti, homosexuals, forced labour) in the 1970s to the 1990s, the conservative way of remembering lost more and more currency. The ambivalence in Germany about the commemoration of 8 May stems from both the different memory groups who remember different things on that date and the tension between two levels of social learning in

collective war memories. The more post-conventional memory makes a clear difference between an abstract political collectivity and a specific political regime and the political values it represented, thus celebrating liberation from that political regime. The conventional memory of the Second World War highlights the loss and the suffering of the political collectivity and regards it as the date of defeat of the German nation. I believe that the struggle between those different memory groups and their different ways of remembering can be framed within a difference of social learning in remembering the Second World War.²⁷

Probably the fact that too many German citizens were personally involved in the horrors carried out during the Second World War and the fact that they needed to be won (a) for democracy in general and (b) for winning democratic elections, led to a delay of the debate on the past, which eventually took place in the 1980s and 1990s. As has been discussed throughout this chapter, this debate goes far beyond the question of who remembers what (and how), but, actually, points explicitly to the practical-moral aspect of remembering: memory implies an orientation of action, it is not only a memory chip of dates and emotions. This practical-moral aspect has now been made the subject of reflection and conscious debate in Germany.

The analysis of political memory groups and their collective war memories in Germany from 1871 to 1995 shows a remarkable development from an essentialising enemy image to signs of moral reflection and judgement on the past. Many circumstantial factors contributed, no doubt, to this development. Yet, it seems important to note that the sheer scale of destruction, the wide affectedness of war and the growing diversity of memory groups all led to a challenge of a master narrative and an increasing impossibility to invent memories as well as to a significant difficulty to forget parts of one's history. Thus, the conventional strategy of "remembering the positive, forgetting the negative" has become increasingly ineffective. However, as the debate in the 1980s shows, once the plurality of memories and the plurality of practical-moral imperatives advanced by different groups is accepted, the only way to try to re-establish shared meaning and accepted memories is on the basis of a practical discourse. This discourse

²⁷ Dubiel argues in a similar way that the conservative and Left answer to the memory of the Second World War is between a traditional national identity and a post-national identity (1999:235-236)

may not lead to consensus and fail. But as long as there is no voluntary or forced silence of different memory groups, this discourse remains without alternative.

Chapter 5

Social learning in remembering past wars in France in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

Since 1815 and well into the 1910s, the definition of the borders of France was a matter of discussion, despite the fact that French national history and historical continuity have always been closely linked to the “Hexagon” with the orientation towards “natural borders” (Pyrenees, North Sea, Atlantic, Rhine River, and Alps) (Nordman 2001:119). This alleged uncertainty notwithstanding there has been a very strong link between the state of France and its rulers, on the one hand, and the definition of the French political community on the other hand (unlike in Germany). As Pierre Nora points out:

No other country has established such close links between the national state, the economy, the culture and the language. [...] So it is not surprising that the French have written their history largely as the history of the state, the various forms assumed by the state, the struggles for power, and the men who held power (2001b:xxxvi)

The outcomes of the Congress of Vienna did not arouse any anti-German or anti-Prussian feelings in France, not even in those provinces occupied until 1818 by Prussian forces. On the contrary, Germaine de Staël formed a positive, sometimes nostalgic, view of Germany with her popular book *De l'Allemagne*, published in 1814. In that book, Germany was portrayed as a positive alternative to the rationalised France, in coincidence with earlier French interpretations of Germany and Germans that came from Montaigne and Voltaire (Leiner, 1988:28-9; Mitter, 1981:78).

From 1815 to 1870, French intellectuals, historians and politicians discussed the attitude that French society and politics should assume towards the German efforts to attain national unification. While some historians and political scientists (like Alexis de Tocqueville, Jules Michelet or Edgar Quinet) supported German unity on moral-cultural grounds, throughout the nineteenth century, the French governments – be they republican (1848-1851, after 1870) or monarchical – had as one of the goals, if not *the*

goal, of French foreign policy the prevention of the emergence of a unified German state on the grounds that it threatened French hegemony and might lead to a “Habsburg encirclement” (Gödde-Baumanns, 1987:5).

The positive attitudes among French intellectuals towards German unification would change, however, after the war in 1870-1871, which had so obviously exposed the powerlessness of France to prevent both military defeat and the loss of Alsace and Lorraine. Former admirers of Germany, such as Ernest Renan, now regarded Germany as a militarised society with no literature, spirit or talents (Gödde-Baumanns, 1987:7). Between 1870 and 1890, there was a growing French patriotic literature that portrayed revenge as inevitable. Spearheaded until 1878 by Léon Gambetta, the Republicans claimed for revenge. In the 1880s the Minister of War, Boulanger, with the help of the Radicals, called revenge the prime objective of France. But from the 1890 onwards, and although a true cult had emerged to remember the “lost sisters”, Alsace and Lorraine (Ernest Lavisse, quoted in Poidevin and Bariéty, 1977:113), French politicians seemed less and less willing to go to war for a revision of the Frankfurt treaty. Despite several attempts at rapprochement between the two countries between 1871 and 1914, notably during the Moroccan crisis in 1911, the memory of the two lost provinces, Alsace and Lorraine, remained the main obstacle for real change in the Franco-German relationship.

Unlike in Germany, in France there was no change in the political regime after the First World War, nor in the staunch support for the right wing of the Radicals and Liberals, such as Clemenceau, and Poincaré in the general elections in November 1919. This “national bloc” formed the governments in France between 1919 and 1923. All political parties except the Socialist Party supported the government’s insistence on the strict implementation of the Versailles Treaty – anything else would be to betray the many dead who had fought for France (Poidevin and Bariéty, 1977: 241). In 1924 there was a shift to the Left, when the “*Cartel de Gauche*” (Radicals and Socialists) took over. Thereafter and until 1932, French politics would be split into two camps on the treatment of Germany: “the Left insisted on the only solution being a negotiated one [...] that led to peace; [while] the Right feared that France was on the way of giving away the victory and to compromising peace itself” (Poidevin and Bariéty, 1977:241).

While between 1871 and 1918 there was scarce interest in Germany, the interwar-period saw a huge increase in interest in German architecture, culture, and philosophy (Rovan, 1986:102). Two very prestigious journals devoted to Germany were founded: *Revue d'Allemagne* (founded in 1927) and the *Cahiers Franco-allemands* (founded in 1929) (Mitter, 1981:188). Between 1926 and 1929 certain rapprochement took place and trade agreements between France and Germany were signed (Bariéty, 1988:101-127). But, just as during the last quarter of the nineteenth century the sticking point had been Alsace-Lorraine for France, this time it was the Versailles Treaty for Germany that made it difficult to cooperate more. With the collapse of the financial markets in 1929 and the end of moderate parliamentary rule in Germany this brief period of rapprochement ended.

After shifting coalitions, in 1936 the Socialists and Radicals formed a government headed by Léon Blum and supported by the French Communists (*Front Populaire*) that was opposed by the French extreme Right (Höhne, 1989). Reacting to the occupation of the Rhineland, the German support for Franco in the Spanish Civil war and the introduction of three-year conscription in Germany, Blum and his foreign minister, Daladier, decided to rearm France and abandon “integral pacifism”. At the same time, negotiations were under way to form a coalition with the Soviet Union. However, many politicians felt that the Franco-Russian alliance prior to 1914 had borne responsibility for the outbreak of the First World War and, under their pressure, the negotiations were postponed and ultimately failed (Poidevin and Bariéty, 1977:298-300).

In the face of the German attack in June 1940, the French parliament granted the “vainqueur de Verdun”, General Pétain, all emergency powers of government. On 8 July, 1940 Pétain signed a truce with Germany, which occupied the northern part of France, while Pétain was allowed to create a puppet state with the capital in Vichy. What became known as the “*L'Etat Français*” (as opposed to “*La République Française*”) of Vichy lasted until November 1942, when German troops occupied all of France. Parts of the military and political elite of France went into exile to London (among them General de Gaulle), others went to Algiers.

5.1 Essentialising and conventional remembering of past wars with Germany in France between 1871 and 1944

While in Germany the different leagues popularised pan-German ideas and anti-French sentiments, in France this role was assumed by writers, journalists and publicists, who often had a military background. An analysis of the French literature on Germany suggests that, from the 1880s onwards, there were several authors claiming the existence of two (dichotomised) Germanys within the German Empire: There was the aggressive, brutal, powerful and restless Germany, that was also associated with militarism and economic growth, on the one hand, and the romantic, sometimes irrational, cultural and aesthetic Germany, on the other hand (Rovan, 1986:98). Between 1871 and 1930 there was, therefore, a theory of the “two Germanys” that sought to accommodate contradicting, but timeless features attributed to Germany: its idealism-spiritualism and its militarist-hegemonic aspirations (Leiner, 1988:38). Interestingly, however, both Germanys were seen, for different reasons, by these writers as being opposed to French character traits:

[...] between the irrational Germans [...] and their counterparts, [there is] the French who feel obliged towards objectivity, towards Reason and social duties. This results in a historically insurmountable contradiction between the German Protestantism and the French Catholicism, between German mystics and Roman ratio, between the German imperialist polity [...] and the French liberal polity, between German *Geist* as serfs of the material world [...] and the reflective French spirit that goes beyond the link to nature (Mitter, 1981:208).

The war in 1870-1871 clearly strengthened the view on Germany as aggressive and obedient, which was captured in images such as the “barbarians” or “the Huns” (referring to King Attila and the Huns who invaded Europe in 451). The military defeat in 1870, thereafter referred to as “*l'année terrible*”, was described by many French contemporary historians as the “invasion by German hordes”. At the same time, as Christian Amalvi shows, this image of France’s being invaded by barbarians led to a re-reading of past history. Historical examples in the past such as the Roman invasion of the Gauls, the Hundred Years War and the invasion of France by Prussian troops in 1813-1814 became a confirmation of this defensive perspective (1990:452).

With the outbreak of the First World War, there was a vast propaganda on both sides of the Rhine. In France there was a “patriotic hysteria that [...] created an image of Germany, which was characterised by a paroxysm of hatred and sometimes exposed features of madness” (Heitmann, 1966:176). This propaganda reinforced the idea of a “barbaric Germany” which seemed to be the natural enemy of France. The perception of Germany after 1918 was heavily influenced by writings published before and during the First World War. While some authors continued to write on Germany as a barbaric and deadly enemy, others repeated the idea of a two-Germanys-theory, which also included an aggressive, unpredictable Germany. Thus, there were continuities in the writings on Germany between 1871 and 1940. However, practical-moral imperatives derived from those images would be different among the political currents, as the next section will show.

5.1.1 Political currents and their respective memory groups between 1871 and 1945

Despite the many different political parties and movements that were transformed or reformed rather quickly in France, in the period between 1871 and 1944 three main political currents can be identified in France that, I wish to stress, included political memory groups towards Germany: the ruling liberal and radical parties, who supported the Third Republic; the far-right monarchical movement and, finally, the socialist movement.

5.1.1.1 The liberal-radical political current

The ruling liberal elite under Thierry or Léon Gambetta defined France and the current political system as heirs to the French Revolution and saw France as the defender of universal human rights and self-rule. As such, they considered themselves to be safeguards of the French Revolution and its political heritage. This political current, which shaped the official memory of France during the Third Republic (1875 to 1940), regarded Germany and, in particular, Prussia, with great suspicion, given what was perceived as Prussia’s political authoritarianism and strong militarism (Poidevin and Bariéty, 1977: 259). Thus, the main suspicion of French liberal-radicals towards Germany had its origins in the otherness of the political system of the neighbouring country. This otherness, however, was not seen in historical but in essentialist terms, as

being linked to a romanticist and “irrational” character trait of the Germans, which found its expression in Historicism (or, as Nietzsche called it, the “monumental historicism”: Nietzsche, 1998) that contrasted with the French rational way of analysing historical and social developments (Jeismann, 2002:172).

The Third Republic was regarded by the French liberals as no less than the “incarnation of civilisation” that was threatened by the German barbarians. Thus, Liberals and Radicals contributed to the memory of the war in 1870-1871 as an invasion of France by barbaric Germans (Jeismann, 1992:173-190). Many prominent liberal and radical politicians were members of the “*Ligue des Patriotes*”, founded in 1882, which made the revision of Treaty of Frankfurt and the return of Alsace-Lorraine to France its primary goal.

5.1.1.2 The monarchical, anti-revolutionary Right in France and its love-hate relationship with Germany

Throughout the Third Republic, the monarchical, traditionalist conservative Right in France was excluded from political power. Nevertheless, this political current exerted a considerable influence on the French views on Germany through publications and discussions in the public sphere. Its most important organ became the journal *L'Action Française*, founded in 1899, turned into a daily newspaper in 1908, as well as the *Institut d'Action Française*, founded in 1905. Leading authors of this journal were Charles Maurras and Jacques Bainville, the latter having been in charge of the “foreign policy section” of the daily newspaper (Weber, 1962; Mitter, 1981:125-126).

This political current defined France in monarchical, hierarchical, Christian and anti-Semitic terms and rejected the heritage of the French Revolution. For the conservative Right, the French Revolution was to be equalled with the anarchy that had weakened France since 1789. The “*Terreur*” against those opposing the French Revolution and the Jacobin rule, in particular the Catholic and monarchist Western provinces, such as the Vendée, was to be remembered for its cruelty by the revolutionary government. In fact, while the ruling liberal-radical elite forced into oblivion both the *Terreur* and the excesses of the Jacobin rule in their official representations of France, it was precisely these two aspects that the conservative Right focused upon in their remembering of the

Revolutionary Wars and the critique of the current situation of France (Sirinelli, 1992:352-354).

The French monarchical right despised Germany as an inferior people and also referred to the Germans as barbarians. At the same time, members of this political current embraced many of the political values that were prevalent in Imperial Germany, such as authoritarianism and monarchical rule. In its antagonism to Germany, the monarchical Right in France focused, rather, on the religious aspect and equated Germany with Prussian Protestantism. More importantly, however, it made Germany responsible for the decline of France, above all for the fall of the monarchy in 1870. The defeat in 1870 was seen as proof of the fact that turning away from its Catholic and Roman heritage was weakening France. By rallying for a Catholic and monarchical France, the political Right opposed, at the same time, the Republican idea of France and Protestant-dominated Germany (Amalvi, 1990:453-4).

After 1890 the monarchical Right, under the leadership of Maurras and Barrés, advocated a “defensive nationalism” (“nationalisme défensif de la droite”) that focused on the defence of the French culture and included certain elements found in the otherwise despised neighbour in the East, such as economic strength as well as natural and rural romanticism. This defensive nationalism was undoubtedly still very anti-German, yet its focus was neither revenge nor the redemption of Alsace-Lorraine (Poidevin and Bariéty, 1977:154-6).

Those views of Germany by the French monarchical Right found a popular expression in the book *Histoire de Deux Peuples* published in 1915, by Jacques Bainville. This work portrayed Germany as the eternal “deadly threat”, who could only be successfully contained by monarchical French rulers. In more than one hundred editions and more than 88,000 copies sold up to 1961, this book formed, together with a second work of Bainville’s, published in 1918, *Histoire de Trois Générations*, the image of Germany of two generations in twentieth century France (Heitmann, 1966). Bainville, who succeeded Poincaré as a member of the Académie Française, made the “crusade against Germany” his lifelong task, even claiming that, from the beginning of time, there had been an unsolvable eternal enmity between France and Germany caused by the conflict

about the Rhine frontier (Gödde-Baumanns, 1987:8-9).¹ I wish to argue that this love-hate relationship of the French monarchical Right with Germany was a feature to be found throughout the period between 1871 and 1944: The monarchical Right demanded the destruction or decisive weakening of Germany, with Bainville and Maurras being the most fervent advocates of a complete dismemberment of Germany after the First World War (Heitmann, 1966:178-179). The call for revenge or for a new war had remained strongest in this political current. Yet this call for war did not only refer to the issue of Alsace-Lorraine, but was also based on more wide-ranging attitudes or ideas about the French and the German nations and their inevitable course towards war. Nonetheless, in the 1930s, Maurras and Bainville showed increasing sympathy to the Nazi ideologies of Germany. The monarchical Right became more and more brothers in spiritual and ideological arms with Nazi Germany, although it did even more so with Fascist Italy (Rovan, 1986:104):

For the nationalistic Right, Hitler offered a spiritual closeness. His system coincided in all essential points with that of Barrés and Maurras: the mythical cult of blood and soil, the anti-intellectualism, the enmity to Jews and Marxists, the doctrine of the superiority of one's own nation and the inferiority of neighbouring people and others (Heitmann, 1966:185).

This love-hate-relationship between the French monarchical Right and Nazi Germany continued throughout the 1930s. While some authors, such as Jacques Bainville, continued producing writings against the German character, other authors and politicians of that political current tended to sympathise with Nazi ideas. In the 1930s, this political current turned inwards in its antagonism and directed its hostility not against Germany, much less against Nazi Germany, but rather against the French Republic. Theirs was an “aggressive, antidemocratic and anti-Bolshevist pacifism”, a “curious defeatism” that longed for a regime change in France even if this was to be attained through defeat (Rovan, 1986:104-5).

Apparently, Charles Maurras and some thousand of his followers celebrated the victory of Germany over France in late-summer 1940, since this represented the chance to

¹ It may be more than coincidence that Bainville's books were translated into German in 1939 and generally regarded by the Nazi as a confirmation of the enmity with France (Gödde-Baumanns, 1987:8).

establish a non-revolutionary, non-republican, authoritarian, Catholic, monarchical France the French monarchical Right was hoping for – with the help of the Germans (Heitmann, 1966:185). Thus, while there was a proclaimed national antagonism between Germany and France, there was a political and, later, ideological closeness between the monarchical Right in France and both the monarchical and Nazi Germany.

In the interwar period, the French military was heavily influenced by the *Action Française*. They shared many of this movement's convictions about Germany and the Germans. Colonel de Gaulle expressed similar ideas about the “German character” in his book *Vers l'armée de métier* in 1934 (Mitter, 1981:210). Thus, liberal-radical, as well as monarchical politicians contributed to the view of Germany as being barbaric. This view was reconfirmed by linking recent memories of the war in 1870-1871 with further distant memories of German incursions into France. While the French republicans regarded militarism and anti-rationalism as the barbaric traits in Germany, for the French Catholics it was, rather, its Protestantism and its ugly side of modernity, the modern economy that rendered Germany barbaric. Different traits attributed to the German nation were thus highlighted by the image of the “German barbarian” with the identical aim of vilifying the Eastern neighbour:

[...] in France, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the ‘enemy’ was seen by the royalists and Catholics as the eternal opponent of the sacred national and Catholic history, while for the Republicans and laicists [Germany was] the eternal opponent of the achievements of the Revolution (Jeismann, 2002:167-8).

At the same time, monarchists and the far Right, on the one hand, and the liberal-radicals, on the other, drew very different practical-moral conclusions from that image (return to monarchy as the only way of dealing with Germany or: defence of liberty and freedom more necessary than ever).

5.1.1.3 Opposing the eternal enemy: the Socialist Movement

The Socialist movement, in particular under the charismatic leader Jean Jaurès claimed to follow the tradition of the French Revolution, but also that of the uprising of the Paris

Commune, led by the Paris working class, and crushed in March 1871.² The Socialists sought a rapprochement with Germany, in particular with their German Socialist counterparts, and to that end they resorted to international bodies such as the Socialist International. The Socialist Party was excluded from political power until 1936, when it joined the Popular Front (*Front Populaire*) until June 1940, when power was handed over to Marshall Pétain. Thus, the possibilities for the Socialists to shape official war memory in France were, in the period under discussion, rather limited. The view of French Socialists on Germany was shaped by the perspective of international class struggles. Germany was seen as an advanced industrialised country that was on the way to a socialist revolution.

Within the Left, in particular the socialist movements, there was a growing anti-militarism that opposed revenge and war as policy option, but that rejected German militarism as well (Poidevin and Bariéty, 1977:156). It was only the Socialist movement under Jaurès that opposed war, but was increasingly worried about or even hostile towards a militarised Germany and asked for means of caution. The French Socialists were the only political group that did not accept the nation as the pivot of moral values and supported international friendship with Socialist counterparts in Germany also (Jeismann, 1992:379).

5.1.2 Transformation of political currents and their respective memory groups between 1918 and 1945

With the prevalence of the “*Cartel de Gauches*”, a more conciliatory and pacifistic approach towards Germany slowly gained ground. Interestingly, the Communist Party also supported a more conciliatory approach towards the former enemy, even before the Hitler-Stalin pact in 1939. Nonetheless, this attitude of the French Communists should change dramatically in 1941, when Germany attacked the Soviet Union. Ironically, while the Socialists in France gained influence and supported a more appeasing approach that rejected an essentialised and personalised view of Germany, in Germany itself, a fusion of old conservative, *völkisch* ideas and racist theories gained ground.

² Jean Jaurès even gave France the sole responsibility for the war of 1870/71 and was one of the few French politicians who rejected all criticism against Bismarck's alleged tactic to trick France into war (Gödde-Baumanns, 1987:11).

With the rise of the Nazi party to power, however, this attitude among French Radicals and Socialists changed. The Left opposed Nazi Germany while the Right, which had been strongest in demanding a weakening of Germany, now saw Nazi Germany as an ally against international Communism and the Soviet Union (Mitter, 1981:216-218).

5.1.3 Public commemorations of past wars between 1871 and 1945

In the Jacobin tradition the liberals of the Third Republic promoted a national historiography, exemplified by the writings of Ernest Lavisse, as well as national history classes that reinforced the idea of France as a symbol of universal human rights, and of French history as a constant march towards the attainment of those values, towards that *telos*, which had started even before the French Revolution. The particular manifestation of those universal human rights gave France a “*mission civilisatrice*” in relation to other countries. The Third Republic was, thus, the Golden Age of patriotic history classes and of national memory, as Pierre Nora points out:

Everything changed in the last third of the nineteenth century, when history became a science and the Republic turned it into a national institution. It had its temple, the newly restored Sorbonne. [...] History and memory were being brought together in such a way as to become another point of reference for the nation: in this sense, national history was becoming the French memory (Nora, 2001a: xvi).

In his interpretation of French history, one that had been specifically elaborated to be taught, Lavisse cultivated a memory of Alsace and Lorraine and offered a successful fusion of the conservative and republican myths regarding the origins of the French nation. Indeed, prior to Lavisse’s synthesis, the Left identified the origins of France in the rebellious Vercingétorix and the Gaules, while the monarchists focused on Clovis and his baptism in Reims in 496, the Franks and Joan of Arc. Lavisse fused both memories and declared both, Clovis and Vercingétorix, the founding figures of France (Sirinelli, 1992:348). Together with Joan of Arc, these three figures were seen as French heroes against outside intrusions, in general, and Roman-Germanic intrusions, in particular. Therewith Lavisse helped to foster a clear revival of the notion of common roots in the aftermath of the defeat in 1870.

The Third Republic did not have a commemoration day for the war in 1870-1871. One of the reasons may be found in the controversy surrounding that war, which recalled the regime change, the crush of the Paris Commune and a painful military defeat. Liberal politicians and governments institutionalised in 1880 instead the celebration of the French Revolution on 14 July (Bastille Day) (Hobsbawm, 1992:271). But this commemoration of the French Revolution and its legacy remained controversial between 1871 and 1945. In fact, authors such as Jean-François Sirinelli consider this question to be “an almost permanent civil war in historiography” between 1814 and 1945 (Sirinelli, 1992:384). In the interwar period, some historians on the Right reiterated that the French Revolution had been the role model of genocide, while official France, dominated by Liberals, Radicals, Socialists and Communists, all of whom subscribed to the heritage of the French Revolution, continued to celebrate the memory of the French Revolution as the basis of modern France and the rise of universalist values such as human rights and political emancipation.

In 1922 the French National Assembly decided to commemorate 11 November (1918) as the victory of the French democracy over Germany. This date is still commemorated in France today (2006). But the First World War was ambiguous in French memory. On the one hand, it was the great victory of the nation and the Republic, while, on the other hand, it embodied an incredible scale of suffering and sacrifice.³ The only blind spot for many years to come would be the 1917 mutiny and the mass repression and executions that followed it (Grosser, 1990:172).

5.1.3 The level of social learning in remembering past wars between 1871 and 1945

The predominant mode of remembering past wars with Germany in France between 1871 and 1940 shows elements of a conventional level of social learning: Character traits of the Germans were essentialised, therewith explaining past and current behaviour and providing a guide to future action. Both liberal-radicals and monarchist politicians conceived, for different reasons, of the Germans as a people of uncivilised barbarians. While the former stressed the political otherness of Germany, for many

³ On the creation of the memory of the First World War through monuments in the inter-war period in France see: Sherman, 1999.

intellectuals and the latter it was an essential feature of the Eastern neighbour. Historians close to the monarchical Right, such as Bainville and Barré, stressed the notion that there was a natural antagonism between the two peoples; that the Germans were “the devil” (Barrés) that led “naturally to a holy war” between the two countries. Many interesting parallels between the essentialising attitudes of the enemy in Germany and France in the 1870-1918 period can be found. For one, the political consequences drawn by the political Right in both countries were similar: to both war seemed inevitable, in the name of revenge, even desirable. With the exception of the Socialist movement, political groups both in France and Germany made no differentiation between the political entity they identified as the enemy and the political forces shaping that image.

As in Germany, the creation of a nation in France called for an invention, an abstraction, which required the same level of abstraction in the imagining of other national entities. In the final analysis, it is the stage of nation-building that might help to explain the prevalence of that level of social learning. Although the existence of the two-Germanys-theory already signals the differentiation between different, opposing perceived characteristics, they are still defined in essentialist terms.

In the 1920s essentialising views on Germany as barbaric as well as the two-Germanys-theory remained strong in the French literature on Germany. The suspicion of a “Pan-German dream” (*rêve pangermaniste*) and a will of expansion and hegemony was something attached to Germany as a whole. This resulted in a clear animosity, or at least a very suspicious attitude towards Germany, as is shown in Louis Reynard’s popular work “The German Soul” (*L’âme allemande*). In the 1920s, the “*incertitudes allemandes*” (uncertainties concerning Germany) and the “*menace pangermanique*” (the pan-German threat) were popular rhetorical figures from the essentialising memory of liberal-radical and monarchical writers alike, that reinforced the insistence by French politicians on the annexation of all German provinces on the left part of the Rhine, as well as security guarantees against Germany (Mitter, 1981:192-195).

While in the 1920s a conventional, essentialising image of Germany prevailed (including the popular “Two-Germanys-theory”) among the liberal-radical political current, this image of Germany became increasingly “ideologised” in the 1930s,

depending openly on the political closeness or distance to the regime in power in Berlin. The clearest change of politics – if not so much of rhetoric – is to be identified in the monarchical Right in France. The defeatism and support for Nazi ideas contrast with the attitude – often by the very same people – prior to 1914. The same changes – in the opposite direction – can be identified among the Left: While there was a growing will for rapprochement with republican Germany (from which the Nazi regime still profited in the first years in power), the Left became increasingly hostile on political and ideological grounds. Thus, both political currents (monarchical Right and Left) transformed their perception of France's Eastern neighbour in response to the political changes that took place there. In other words, there was a growing distinction between the German political entity and the political regime in power.

Such a differentiation made by the monarchical Right was, nonetheless, only partly a result of conscious reflection as defined in chapter 3. The growing Nazi ideology simply replaced one collective abstraction ("nation") by another ("race") which happened to elicit sympathy within France. The conscious reflection upon collective war memories was still absent and essentialising patterns for structuring those memories along ideological lines prevailed. This is very much in line with the results of the research on Germany during the same period. It was only after the Second World War that this level of social learning changed.

It is interesting to note that essentialising remembering of past wars with Germany was not limited to the monarchical Right in France, but also widespread among the Left (above all the Jacobin style Radicals). This is a marked difference to Imperial Germany and the Weimar Republic. But, as in the case of Germany, a note of caution has to be made. Not only the growing pacifist movement after the First World War, but also many politicians avoided this essentialising remembering and drew very different practical conclusions from those memories. This was most widespread among the Socialist and Communist parties in France in the 1920s and 1930s. However, the official policies and the writings and debates on Germany that included an interpretation of past wars with Germany at that time were still dominated by such level of social learning. The same note of caution needs to be made for the period to be analysed in the next section: even after 1944 those essentialising forms of remembering past wars with

Germany did not disappear but could be found, at least until the 1960s and were only gradually transformed.

5.2 Collective war memories in France between 1945 and 1995

With the landing of the Allied troops on D-Day on the coast of the Normandy on 6 June, 1944 the liberation of France began. On August 25, 1944 Paris was liberated by Allied troops, with French contingents under General de Gaulle leading the victorious troops into the capital. By the end of 1944, the French territory of 1940 was again under French and Allied control. Immediately after liberation purges and trials against “traitors of France” began. The liberation itself became a cause of myth-making because the French governments celebrated and commemorated D-Day, but, above all, the liberation of Paris, as the self-liberation of France by itself, marginalising the majority contribution of the Allied forces in this effort (Namer, 1987).

In France there existed diverse memory groups of the Second World War. There were soldiers having fought at the front, the deported, the prisoners of war and those having experienced German occupation in the North and, after November 1942, in the whole of France. There was the *Résistance* movement within France, which had gained strength since 1941 and had soon been dominated by the Communist Party of France (PCF). There were also opposition groups in Algiers and London that claimed to have supported the *Résistance* within France. Finally, there were the politicians responsible for the Vichy regime that had cooperated with the German authorities in the occupied French territory in the North, many of whom had fallen prey to the cleansing actions of 1944-1945, or were condemned afterwards by French civilian or military courts. Others re-entered public service and political life in 1951 and 1953, after amnesty laws had been passed.

In France, resistance to the German occupant or to the Vichy system did not become a founding myth, as it happened in other countries such as Italy. However, the groups who had opposed German occupation and organised the military resistance and liberation of France were regarded as the most important political forces to shape

France's future. There were several small political parties in the immediate post-war period that made explicit reference to their role in the *Résistance* during the war. Nevertheless, several attempts to form one national Resistance party or platform in 1945 failed (Rousso, 1991:19). There was a "veritable hierarchy of suffering" in France (quite similar to the hierarchy in East Germany), expressed by the prominence of memory groups in public commemorations after 1944 in France: volunteer resistance fighters were regarded as morally higher than "racial deportees", who, in turn, had a higher status than "ordinary POW" and, at the end of the ladder, "slave labour". Thus, returnees from concentration camps were ignored and their participation in parades forbidden (Rousso, 1991:24-26).

But the Second World War was not the last and only war in France to be remembered in the period under investigation. Most of the French colonies became independent of France through a peaceful process between 1958 and 1960. However, in two cases, French Indochina (which later became Laos, Viet Nam and Cambodia) and Algeria (and, to a lesser degree, Madagascar), the secession of former colonies was accompanied by massive violence and even war. France fought from 1946 to June 1954 in Indochina and from November 1954 to 1962 in Algeria.⁴ The latter war was conducted extremely cruelly on both sides using torture and mass repressions against civilians. Although those wars also produced their own memory groups in France and, in particular in the case of the Algerian War, parallels to the Second World War in France were drawn, it would be beyond the scope of this thesis to include those as well in the investigation, which focuses on those French memory groups of the Second World War.⁵

5.2.1 Associations related to the Second World War

One of the largest memory groups from World War II was the *Union Française des Associations de Combattants* (French Union of Combatants Associations, UFAC). There was also one single association of prisoners of war (POW), the *Fédération*

⁴ However, even this description is problematic, because from the point of view of the French governments, Algeria was an integral part of France; thus, France could not be at war with itself. On this aspect see: Evans, 1997b:74.

⁵ On the memory of the Algerian War in French society see: Evans, 1997a; Prost, 1999

Nationale des Combattants Prisonniers de Guerre (the National Federation of Combatant Prisoners of War, FNCPG). It was only through pressure from different groups of the National Resistance Council that this memory group would be accepted. Even in 1944, the fear of dominance of the federation by the Communists was present. After the liberation, François Mitterrand was secretary general of this movement and remained in close ties with it throughout his political career (Durand, 1984:41-53). The French section was also very active in the international POW association, the *Confédération Internationale des Anciens Prisonniers de Guerre* (Deutsch-französisches Institut, 1995:77).

From the very beginning the French Government founded the Ministry of War Veterans and Victims of War. The ministry was sustained by a close cooperation with numerous social organisations of war victims, former combatants and deportees. More importantly for the purposes of this research, the Ministry was, and still is, in charge of articulating and “guarding” the collective memory of the two World Wars in France. Thus, former combatants and war victims had their own ministry through which they could exert influence on public commemorations.

One of the departments of the Ministry of War Veterans, the *Délégation à la Mémoire et à la Information Historique* (DMIH) is in charge of: (1) taking care of soldiers’ tombs in France and abroad; (2) preparing commemoration ceremonies in cooperation with social associations; (3) taking care of commemoration sites and providing “historical information” (for instance through educational programmes for schools about past battles or living in war); and (4) “the defence of memory”. This last task is to be understood as the collection of information and testimonies about the time of war and the organisation of public events to diffuse those testimonies. The Department of Memory and Historical Information further acts as advisor whenever laws concerning national memory are being discussed, publishes the journal *Les Chemins de la Mémoire*, and is in charge of the exhibition areas or small museums of various former concentration camps and war memorials (Baudot, 1997-1998).

In the aftermath of the liberation in 1944, there was a widespread purge outside the courtrooms against the so-called *collabos* (collaborators with the German occupation), especially in the former territory of Vichy France. Figures vary, but many authors

assume that about 12,000 persons were killed during the 1944-45 cleansing. As regards the official trials, between 1945 and 1950, 127,000 charges were filed, and 80,000 suspects were found guilty, 6,800 of whom were sentenced to death. 1500 of those death sentences were actually carried out (Conan and Rousso, 1994:17-18). In the trials after liberation the most common crime was “espionage for the enemy”. Yet, hardly anybody was tried in French courts for crimes against the Jews or the general civilian population, like those committed by the paramilitary units of Vichy, the *Milice*. Marshal Pétain himself was also sentenced to death on the charge of treason, but was later paroled and sent to Ile de Yeu, where he died on 23 July 1951. The legal foundation of the trial against Pétain was controversial, though, given the fact that Pétain’s government had received the power from the National Assembly in June 1940.

In October 1944 the *Commission d’Histoire de l’Occupation et de la Libération de la France*, (Commission on the History of the Occupation and Liberation of France, CHOLF) was founded; one year later, in 1945 the *Commission d’Histoire de la Guerre* (Commission on the History of the War, CHG) began collecting government documents related to World War II. Both commissions were merged in 1951 to form the *Comité d’Histoire de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale* (World War II History Committee, CHGM), which was attached to the office of the President of the Council and later to the office of the Prime Minister. Finally, the CHGM was replaced by the *Institut d’Histoire du Temps Présent* (Institute of Contemporary History) in the late 1970s (Rousso, 1992:242 and 248).⁶

Many French archives were difficult to access in the post-war period in France, with many files being classified. Not just the National Archives but also the departmental archives in France restricted the access to the files of the Vichy era (Azéma and Bédarida, 1992:45). The archives from the German occupants, for example, those of the Gestapo (German Secret State Police), were handed over to the Ministry of War Veterans or to the military archives, where sixty years would have to pass before they could be accessed (Klarsfeld, 1982). The first post-war legislation on archives in France was passed in 1970, when the “thirty years of silence” had already gone by in France (Conan and Rousso, 1994:90-104). In 1979, the French president, Giscard d’Estaing,

⁶ The CHGM made a thorough investigation of the purges, establishing the official figure of 10,000 killed during the purge 1944/45, but did little research on Vichy.

opened up the national archives that dealt with Vichy France and France under German occupation. However, numerous archives that were under the administration of the departments or regions applied many restrictions on the access to their archives, even in the 1990s (Nora, 2001a: ix): for example, research on files regarding trials during the Vichy regime is prohibited for 100 years. On 26 December 1964 the French parliament unanimously passed a law that stated that crimes against humanity could be charged any time without temporal limitation of prosecution.

5.2.2 Political memory groups within political parties and currents

The French political parties from 1944 on mirrored in many ways the party structure of 1930s France, some party names even remained unchanged (like the French Socialists). However, given the fact that many groupings and splinter groups which lasted little, before being regrouped again, existed in post-War France, it seems more appropriate to refer to political currents instead of political parties and identify the relevant political memory groups within them during the Fourth Republic (1946 – 1958).⁷ In the Fifth Republic (1958 to date) the party spectrum became more stable and concentrated, above all, on more or less five stable parties: the Gaullist Conservatives (RPF/RPR), the Republican Centre-Right MRP/UDF (*Union pour la Démocratie Française*), the Socialists (*Parti Socialiste* – PS), the French Communists (*Parti Communiste de la France* – PCF), and, finally, since the 1980s, the Green Party (*Les Verts*).

The party that reigned most prominent among the domestic French resistance against German occupation (but also against the Vichy regime) was the French Communist Party. Many Communists had suffered under German repression (the Vichy regime not only handed over exiled opponents to the Germans, but also French Communists), some of them even having been detained or deported to concentration camps, such as Buchenwald (Germany). Given the fact that the Communist Party was granted the reputation of having made the largest sacrifice in the French domestic resistance and having been a central figure of the National Resistance Council (*Conseil National de la Résistance* – CNR) the memory of the domestic battle against German troops and the Vichy government was central to the Communist memory of the Second World War. To

⁷ On the development of political parties in post-war France see: Huard, 1996.

stress this sacrifice for France, the Communists referred to themselves as the “party of the 75000 shot” (“*parti des 75,000 fusillés*”).

In 1946 de Gaulle founded the *Rassemblement pour la France* (RPF) that was later renamed *Rassemblement pour la République* (RPR) and was generally regarded as the political - Gaullist - Right. The RPF was also the home to many high-ranking officers of the French army, many of them having been in exile in London with de Gaulle, others having been in exile in Algiers. The resistance memory groups from the exile (Algiers, London), many of them with military background, clearly dominated the RPF/RPR.

The term “*rassemblement*” made direct reference to the patriotic and republican political movements that had been popular during the 1930s in France. The RPF/RPR understood itself as an alternative to the Fourth Republic and as an alternative to the left *Résistance* and regarded itself as an “extension of the Free France of 1940”, thus excluding both the members of the domestic *Résistance* and members of Vichy at the same time (Roussou 1992: 582). In de Gaulle’s interpretation, the French victory in the Second World War had also been a victory of the republic. This afforded the republican system strong support from conservative and moderate political groups, although the Third Republic had been discredited in the eyes of many politicians, because of its alleged disunity and moral defeatism in the 1930s. De Gaulle won, thus, the French conservatives for the republic (just like Adenauer won the German conservatives for democracy).

While a first attempt to form a right-wing party of republicanism failed (*Parti Républicain de la Liberté*), the People’s Republican Movement (*Mouvement Républicain Populaire*, MRP), succeeded in gathering moderate rightwing politicians with a clear commitment to the Republic. Similar to the CDU in West Germany with ordinary members of the Nazi Party, the MRP integrated many ordinary members of the Vichy administration. Thus, with a wide electorate of the MRP being close to “maréchalisme”, the relative silence on the occupation period became “key to its memory” (Roussou, 1992:565). Many conservatives of the MRP, which was renamed in 1965 Union for French Democracy (*Union pour la Démocratie Française*, UDF), had close ties with the Catholic Church and the party’s regional stronghold were Catholic regions such as Alsace or the Western provinces of France. The MRP/UDF considered

itself as France's Christian-Democratic, Liberal-Conservative party. The MRP/UDF was home to some bourgeois resistance politicians during the Second World War, but had no strong foundation in the *Résistance*; it also gathered some prominent members, who had a deportee background, such as Simone Veil, herself a survivor of Auschwitz (Roussel, 1992:602). Between 1943 and 1944, the predecessor of the UDF, the MRP, was headed by George Bidault, the chairman of the National Resistance Council, CNR, after the founder, Jean Moulin, was arrested and executed by the Germans in 1943. Thus, while there were some individuals with a strong link to particular memory groups of the Second World War, overall no predominant political memory group within this political current can be identified, unlike the case of the Communists, the Gaullists or the Socialists.

In fact, the Communists' memory prevailed among the Left-oriented groups, although it had to compete with the memory of domestic resistance of the Socialist Party, which also had a strong membership of domestic *résistants* and deported French. The Socialists, who gathered since 1946 in the SFIO (French Section of the Workers International: *Section Française de la Internationale des Ouvrières*), had a strong presence of those active in the domestic resistance against the German occupation forces and the political opponents of Vichy, many of whom had been sent to Buchenwald. Thus, the same memory groups that can be found within the Communists are to be found in the SFIO, later renamed *Parti Socialiste* (PS). With the disappearance of the Radical-Socialists at the end of the Fourth Republic, the Socialists also integrated increasingly this political current within its ranks. Until today there is a Jacobin wing within the PS that feels close to the values and policies of the Radicals.

The Liberal-Radicals, who regarded themselves the heirs to Jacobin-style republicanism and who played an important role in the Third Republic, regrouped under different names in the Fourth Republic. The most important group was the Social-Radicals, headed by Edouard Daladier (French Foreign Minister in 1938 during the Munich Agreement) and Edouard Herriot (former French Prime Minister in the 1930s). This group later disintegrated and many of its members joined the Socialist Party, while others flocked to the newly formed UDF. Thus, the political current of Poincaré and Clemenceau ceased to exist in the Fifth Republic. The Radicals shared the trauma of the weakening by external and internal enemies of the Third Republic (which they regarded

as the mainstay of their party). This political current had fostered a suspicion against Germany that had partly been the result of some essentialising features discussed in the previous section.

The monarchical Right in France did not have its own political voice between the late 1940s and the 1960s, although the memory of Marshall Pétain was actively defended since the 1950s. Rather, many members of the Vichy regime gathered in the UDF, some also integrated into the Socialist Party or the RPF/RPR. According to Henry Rousso, after 1944 the former monarchical and anti-republican Right close to the *Action Française* and the political values of the *Etat Français* of the Vichy government were discredited for three reasons: its enmity towards the Third Republic, its open support of the Munich agreement and the welcoming of the fall of the republican regime in 1940 (Rousso, 1992:557-8). Thus, the espousal of republicanism (which distinguished the moderate right from the discredited monarchical and Vichyite Right) became an essential component of the programmes and discourse of conservative parties.

The memory group of the Vichyite Right, however, found a more prominent place in the Far Right that emerged in the 1970s, especially the Front National (FN) of Jean-Marie Le Pen. The FN was and still is also the political home of the old far-right ideas, spearheaded by the *Action Française* under Charles Maurras and the Vichy government. This party, which has gained several seats in the National Assembly and governs in several large cities, especially in southern France, has articulated the voice of the anti-republican, anti-Semitic and anti-French Revolutionist France and supports a positive memory of Vichy France, “the traditional, national, Catholic France”.⁸

5.2.3 Practical-moral imperatives in France based on war memories

The pacifism that prevailed in France after 1918 was entirely discredited by the events that followed in the 1930s (especially Munich 1938) and 1940s (Grosser, 1990:172). For all political currents in France the lesson from the pre-war period, culminating in the behaviour of the Western powers towards Hitler in 1938 in Munich, was that

⁸ Rousso, 1992:598-9. The journal *Présent* of the Front National, quoted in: Florin 1997:8.

pacifism was not worth pursuing; a discredited pacifism and, therefore, a need for strength and a strong national military had to be acknowledged:

The lesson of 1938 for France is that pacifism does not lead to peace, but that yielding to threatening neighbouring regimes cannot ultimately prevent war. Pacifism and the weakness of armament of the 1930s not only led to war and the shameful defeat in 1940, it also led to a sense that the military defeat had been a moral defeat (Picht, 1996:108).

The defeat within six weeks was a very traumatic experience which raised questions about the reasons for the absence of effective defence. Here the memory of Munich played a very important role as did the abandonment of the French army by the British expedition corps in Dunkirk. In fact, one important consequence of this reflection was the assertion of the need for independence and to refrain from relying too much on others for the national defence of France (Heuser 1998:207). This practical-moral imperative was particularly strong among the Gaullists.

De Gaulle himself and the Gaullists combined this imperative for national independence with an idea of French grandeur. This imperative of grandeur, however, was not drawn primarily from recent memories (the successful resistance to German occupation). More distant memories also nurtured it. The idea of grandeur was also supported by the Radicals with a clear remembering of the French Revolution, i.e. France portrayed as the nation that embodied universal rights and the spread of republicanism.

Another practical-moral imperative that was particularly stressed by associations of former deportees was the defence of human rights and combat of racism.⁹ Since the deportees had experienced the inhumane treatment by the Nazis and later realised the extent to which the Vichy regime had contributed to it, a particular focus was put on the defence of human rights, democracy and the combat of racism or anti-Semitism. This imperative was particularly widespread among the Left and Centre in France. Marked parallels with post-war West Germany can be identified in this respect (often based on joint experience in Nazi concentration camps or forced labour camps).

⁹ See for example Simone Veil's speech, quoted in *Le Monde*, 8 May, 1985, p.2.

Another imperative derived from the reflection of World War II was related to the role of a/the opportunities brought by a common Europe to overcome suspicion, fear and hatred (Veil, 1985). European integration appeared as a promising strategy to overcome old prejudices and foster Franco-German reconciliation and rapprochement. This imperative was very strong on the Left, the Centre and the associations of World War II deportees and non-Communist members of the domestic Resistance. However, European integration was also frequently seen as the imperative to deal with the alleged German economic expansionism and superiority. It combined two practical-moral imperatives that were heavily informed by collective war memories in France: a united Europe was, on the one hand, a tool of rapprochement and reconciliation; on the other hand, it was a tool of containment. Both imperatives can be found side-by-side in the discourse of the political Centre of MRP/UDF, represented by Robert Schumann or Jean Monnet, but also the Radicals of the Fourth Republic as well as some Socialists.

As this brief analysis highlights, those imperatives were not shared across the entire political spectrum, but varied according to each group's political project. While there were some similarities that might have had their origins in similar experiences (such as that of the deportees and inmates in concentration camps), there was also a marked difference between the societies of both countries, which found clear expression in the area of defence: German politicians very much stressed the need for predictability and accountability in foreign affairs, while French politicians stressed the need for an independent and strong state in particular in defence matters.

5.2.4 Levels of social learning in France between 1945 and 1995

How much confrontation, how much discord, because each memory clashes with a 'counter-memory', in particular if it regards crimes that the French committed against the French.

Alfred Grosser (1990:149)

Between 1944 and 1946 General de Gaulle formed a transitory government that was replaced in 1946 by a regular government composed of Socialists, Communists and the Centrist MRP. Since 1947, twenty-one governments with shifting majorities and

unstable coalitions followed, which were mainly sustained by the centre-right MRP. Thus, during the Fourth Republic there was no Left government, but, rather, a support for or sustaining of governing coalitions by Left parties. This gave the MRP an influential position in the late 1940s and 1950s.

The Fourth Republic, organised as a parliamentary democracy, lasted until 1958, when it was replaced by a presidential democracy. After a succession of governments and the political turmoil brought about by the Algerian war, de Gaulle became Prime Minister again, and, after the referendum on the constitution of the Fifth Republic that turned France into a presidential Republic, he became France's first president. De Gaulle dominated French politics in the 1960s with Gaullist prime ministers at his side, before he resigned in April 1969 after a failed referendum. He was followed by another Gaullist president, George Pompidou, who governed until 1974. Then, the first president of the centre-right (UDF), Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, took power and stayed in office until 1981. François Mitterrand became the first Socialist president in 1981 and stayed in office until 1995, when he was succeeded by the Gaullist Jacques Chirac. Thus, Mitterrand was in power during Chancellor Helmut Kohl's policy of "spiritual-moral turn" and during the period of German reunification.

From 1947 to 1981 the Right (RPF/RPR and MRP) dominated governmental policies in France and gave Gaullist memories of the Second World War a privileged access to official commemoration in France. The French Communists, with the significant exception of their participation in the first post-war government, were excluded from political power until the 1980s, although they remained a very powerful opposition force. In its turn, the Socialist Party (SFIO/PS) participated in some governments of the Fourth Republic, but was excluded for more than twenty years from power during the Fifth Republic. The Communists participated in the first government under Socialist rule (from 1981 to 1983) and tolerated in 1997 a Socialist government by Prime Minister Lionel Jospin. Thus, the political currents that included important political memory groups of the domestic resistance only belatedly and limitedly (in the case of the Communists) had access to political power in France.

In the late 1940s and 1950s the dominant form of remembering the Second World War was that of *résistance* in its different forms. Not much unlike West Germany in the

1950s, where all Germans had been portrayed as victims in one form or another, in France all Frenchmen and women were portrayed as having resisted German occupation in one form or another. Central to this way of remembering were the Communists and the Gaullists, who most strongly shaped the official memory of the Second World War and derived their policies and self-understanding from that memory, thus marginalising other memory groups from the sphere of politics (Conan und Lindenberg, 1992:8).

Similarly to West Germany in the 1950s, the Conservatives and Centrists in France (such as the RPF, MRP, the Radicals) rejected the idea that most Frenchmen were guilty of collaboration and criticised the excesses of the purges in 1944-1945. In 1950 the Gaullists prompted a debate about an amnesty law concerning the recent past. This debate marked the end of the coalition of *Libération*. While the French Communists and some Socialists opposed the amnesty law, the Right and Centre (MRP, Radicals, and UDSR) favoured it (Azéma and Bédarida, 1992:46). Finally, on 5 January 1951 the first amnesty law, which granted amnesty for crimes committed between 10 June, 1940 and 31 December, 1945, was passed. On 6 August 1953 the second amnesty law came into force granting amnesty for crimes committed between 1936 and 1946. These laws also covered the crimes committed during the cleansing (*l'epuration*) that took place between 1944 and 1945. As Rousso notes,

[T]he end of the cleansing, the end of non-eligibility and other restrictions [...], the affirmation by the law of judicial oblivion, the progressive release from prisons [...] and finally the beginning of a process of social reintegration of former 'collaborators' marks a decisive turnaround, not only in the collective war memory but also in the memory of [French] political forces (Rousso, 1992:570).

It was Charles de Gaulle who created an abstract notion of resistance, which Rousso defines as "resistentialism", which coincided neither with the domestic resistance nor with the resistance from exile and that became the dominant form of remembering the Second World War in France until the late 1960s. This vague notion was even able to accommodate most "normal" citizens of Vichy France, except for some deplorable exceptions:

[...] first, a process that sought to minimise the importance of the Vichy regime and its impact on French society, *including its most negative aspects*; second, the construction of an object of memory, the ‘Résistance’, whose significance transcended by far the sum of its active parts [...]; and, third, the identification of this ‘Résistance’ with the nation as a whole, a characteristic feature of the Gaullist version of the [resistance] myth. (Rousso, 1991:10)

Since “resistentialism” referred to some abstract resistant attitude towards the German occupant, members of the Vichy government could, in certain terms, also identify themselves with it (Rousso, 1992:576). For de Gaulle, resistentialism was an attitude of the “real France” that had never ceased to exist.¹⁰ For de Gaulle, resistance meant, in the first place, military resistance, because in the General’s view, the war against Germany had not ended with 1940, but had only been interrupted by an armistice.¹¹ In fact, de Gaulle insinuated that France as a whole had been in resistance and had finally “found itself again” in 1944. Creating a memory of the Second World War around de Gaulle’s resistentialism meant that the post-war political system was based on a community of those who had resisted the foreign occupant (Rousso, 1991:19).

The importance of the Resistance and its public celebration meant, as the other side of the same coin, silence on Vichy (Conan and Rousso 1994:21-22). In the 1950s a new myth emerged among the French political class, namely that of Vichy France and Marshal Pétain having made the best of the situation by pretending to co-operate, but, in fact, giving the least possible help to the German occupants. General Rémy, a renowned general of the *Résistance*, even went one step further. In a newspaper article on 11 April 1950, he described Pétain and de Gaulle as two parts, as the “sword” (*l'épée*) and the “shield” (*le bouclier*) of French resistance (Rousso, 1984:120). This “*double jeu*”-thesis was popularised by Robert Aron in 1954, when he also advanced the theory of two Vichys, the good Vichy of Pétain and the bad Vichy under Laval (Azéma, 1996:285 and 287). However, the whole episode of Vichy remained difficult to tackle in French memory and remained marginalised from the 1940s to the 1960s in official French commemorations (Rousso, 1992:576; Amouroux, 1997).

¹⁰ “La résistance, c'est l'essence même de la France” Charles de Gaulle, quoted in : Rousso, 1992:574.

¹¹ “This view [resistance as military resistance] offered two notable advantages: the civil war could be forgotten because the mission of the army is to fight foreign enemies, not handfuls of domestic traitors [...]; and the political and ideological diversity of the actual Resistance could be ignored.” Rousso, 1991: 91.

Out of this idea of a successful French resistentialism, de Gaulle formed the idea of France, “*la Grande Nation*”. For de Gaulle France either was a grand nation or it did not exist. This claim to greatness extended the view on French history and memory beyond the Second World War and went much further into the past. Examples of this greatness were to be found in the dynastic, but, especially, in the republican periods of France.

However, this form of remembering the Second World War as “France in resistance” faced contradictions, oppositions and alternative voices since 1945. The Communists, for one, stressed the domestic resistance symbolised by the National Resistance Council, while the Gaullists favoured the memory of “Free France”, proclaimed by de Gaulle on 18 June 1940 (Roussou, 1992; Nora, 2001c). On that day Charles de Gaulle appealed to the French people not to give up the struggle. In post-war France the Gaullists celebrated that day, while the Communists organised counter-commemorations. Both groups had an interest in fostering the memory of resistance, but they also took pains to discredit each other in their role of resistance. In this vein, the Gaullists portrayed the Communists as separatists. The Communists regarded the resistance from abroad as the easy way and highlighted the high price the Communists had to pay for their own resistance.

Despite sporadic mentioning, the Vichyite memory was virtually absent from public commemorations in post-war France. However, a group of former ministers and high-ranking public servants under the Vichy regime challenged the official silence and opposed the accommodation of Vichy France in the idea of “France in resistance” by forming the *Association pour Défendre la Mémoire du Maréchal Pétain* (Association for the Defence of the Memory of Marshall Pétain, ADMP) in 1951 (Roussou, 1984). This association was devoted to far more than just defending the memory of a man; it sought rather, to vindicate a whole political system. It based its defence of the memory of Vichy France on five essential claims: (1) Vichy was a legitimate regime; (2) the founding act of the regime had been the emergency rights in June, not the armistice in July 1940; (3) Pétain never collaborated with the German occupants but resisted daily as much as possible and co-operated to the smallest degree necessary (*double-jeu* of Pétain); (4) it was the Germans, not Pétain who had been responsible for the anti-Jewish laws; (5) Pétain did not flee the country, contrary to de Gaulle and others, and remained

in France even after 1942, when Vichy France was occupied by German forces (Rouso, 1984:116). Vichy France was thus defended by its supporters as a legal successor to the French Republic that had tried to make the best out of the defeat in 1940.¹²

If the memory of “France in resistance” was dominant thanks to the Gaullist and Communist memory of the Second World War between the late 1940s and the 1960s, it also entailed, as a negative foil, a focus on the crimes of Nazi Germany, as well as the marginalisation of internal alternative memories, especially those of the French Jews:

Until the end of the 1960s, the memory of Nazi barbarism was symbolised by Mont Valerien or Oradour, but not by Vel d’Hiv (which had been destroyed) nor Izieu (a place hardly anybody knew) (Conan and Rouso, 1994:20).¹³

In other words, the prevailing form of remembering of the Second World War in France during that period was outward-oriented, focusing on the invasion by another political community, Germany, and abstracted from the different internal memory groups subsumed by the theme of France in resistance. This is a conventional way of remembering, where the distinction between political community and political currents is absent.

During the late 1940s and 1950s, Germany remained a central point of preoccupation for French politicians all along the political spectrum. The Gaullist and Communist conventional form of remembering coincided with a perception of Germany in terms that showed many continuities with the interwar-period and retained some of the ideas prevalent then. Despite the advent of the Cold War and the growing concern with the threat of the Soviet Union, the German threat prevailed in the 1950s (Knipping, 1988:149). As Joseph Rovan points out,

A major part of the [French] population, including many elements of the Left, nurtured their outdated fear-hatred towards the Germans, *les boches*, through the memory of the Second World War. This mood was reinforced by the systematic propaganda of the Communist Party [...] (Rovan, 1988:156).

¹² In fact, given the legal grounding of Vichy France, authors such as Michel Dacier claimed that in 1940 the French civil war had begun with a resistance against a legitimate government (Rouso, 1992:559).

¹³ On the discussion of 16 July as commemoration day and the events surrounding the Velodrôme d’Hiver (Vel d’Hiv), where French Jews had been rounded up in 1942 and later been deported also with the help of the Paris police see: Carrier, 2005.

In the post-war period the PCF was eager to warn against rearmament of West Germany, which was seen as the home of the German militarism and capitalism. In a certain way, the Communist Party continued the traditional Two-Germanys-Theory, this time identifying East Germany with the progressive and West Germany with the militarist and reactionary Germany (Heitmann, 1966:191). Furthermore, the PCF demanded a strong control of West Germany, given its “expansionist” nature. It is interesting to note that the term “expansionist” became an important attribute of Germany, whose use went beyond the Communist Party and did not only refer to military, but also (and increasingly) to economic affairs.

With the theme of “expansionism” the Communists could connect with older memories concerning Germany, such as the military expansion in the nineteenth century, the economic expansionism in Central Europe (“*Mitteleuropa*”, the German word used in France stood for that expansionism) in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the expansion in the First and Second World Wars. They also connected to the sentiment from the nineteenth century between fear and admiration for Germany’s economic performance. This motive of expansion was repeatedly used by some French analysts on Germany, shifting in focus - from military towards an economic expansionism (Poidevin and Schirrmann, 1985).

The second dominant political memory group, the Gaullists, declared in January 1944 as one of its goals to prevent any re-emergence of the “eternal Germanic threat” (“*menace perpétuelle du germanisme*”). De Gaulle’s war aims regarding Germany had many similarities with Poincaré’s aims after the First World War: special status for the Rhineland, the Ruhr and the Saar region; and a loose or federal structure for Germany (Poidevin and Bariéty, 1977:326). De Gaulle and many Gaullists considered the time between 1914 and 1944 as a “thirty years war between France and Germany”. This reinterpretation left the war of 1870-1871 out of the picture and declared the entire inter-war period as a time of war or conflict between the two countries (Rousso, 1992:573). The rapprochement between 1925 and 1930 was forgotten or marginalised in light of the events that followed in the 1930s and 1940s.

The hostile or, at least, suspicious attitudes toward Germany by the Communists and Gaullists immediately after the Second World War were further nurtured by

contemporary analyses of Germany from a social-psychological and collective point of view: André Siegfried claimed in 1950 that the Germans lacked personality and were internally hollow with an incredible energy ready to use for any purpose. In turn, the historian Joseph Rovan insisted that France should live up to Germany ("*L'Allemagne est un défi*": Germany as a challenge), while another historian, Edmont Vermeil, reiterated the thesis, already advanced in 1940, of the two Germanys in his *L'Allemagne*, reprinted in 1945. This position between suspicion and hatred towards Germany expressed a widespread consensus among political parties (except some segments of the Socialist Party) in the late 1940s and well into the 1950s. Thus, Communists as well as Gaullists, supported the remembering of Germany and the experience in the past wars in conventional, almost essentialising ways.

This prevalent form of remembering is different from the one exercised by deportees or even non-Communist members of the domestic Resistance, to be found in the Socialist Party as well as the MRP. The non-Communist members of the *Résistance* had made a distinction between the German people and the Nazi regime from the very beginning and the Socialist wing of the *Résistance* proposed a socialist Europe that included a socialist Germany (Rovan, 1986:108-109).¹⁴ In the words of Jacques Delarue, a leading member of the *Résistance* and author of a book about the Gestapo:

The crimes of Nazism are not the crimes of a people. The cruelties, the love of force, the religion of power, the blood-thirsty racism are neither the characteristics of an epoch nor of a particular nation. They belong to all countries and to all epochs (quoted in Mitter, 1981:270-271).

Joseph Rovan, born in Munich and himself a survivor of a forced labour camp near Dachau, suggests that the experience of fellow inmates in the concentration camps led to a different view of Germany and the Germans. Thus, initiatives to establish a closer relationship with Germany came from non-Communist members of the *Résistance* and returning deportees, but also from former French prisoners of war in Germany (Mitter, 1981:260; Gascar, 1967).

¹⁴ This distinction, Rovan claims, was also motivated by the fact that German émigrés had fought in the French *Résistance*, too.

Those groups were also at the forefront with other initiatives to overcome the old enmity with Germany and to support a new, democratic Germany. The Socialist Party sought ties to its German sister party from very early on. It was also the French Socialist Party that stressed the fact that the Germans had been the first victims of the Nazi regime, thus challenging collective images of Germans as perpetrators and occupants. From those memory groups further proposals were put forth aimed at encouraging the rapprochement between the two countries, such as the union between French and German cities (twin-towering-programmes), the exchange of young students, an increased exchange of information and interest in the other country. The schoolbook initiative that had already existed in the inter-war period was revived again and institutionalised with the help of UNESCO and the Council of Europe in the Eckert-Institut in Brunswick, Germany. The hitherto dominant characterisation of Germany by Bainville was also challenged in works on Germany by French historians such as Alfred Grosser or Jacques Droz (1970). The latter even convinced the French government in 1951 to support a Franco-German initiative to settle disputes among historians about Franco-German historical relations (Heitmann 1966:193). With the aim of increasing mutual knowledge and contacts between Germany and France, Emmanuel Mounier formed the “*Comité Française d'Echanges avec l'Allemagne nouvelle*”, whose members mostly came from the non-Communist *Résistance* or were returnees from concentration camps (Mitter, 1981:272). The MRP/UDF, the dominant political force in the Fourth Republic, also sought a rapprochement with Germany and combined its intentions with a discourse on the pertinence of European integration.

In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War there was a clear prevalence of rejection of and hatred against Germany and the Germans among the French public, which, however, did not reach the levels of 1918.¹⁵ According to Mitter, only five years after the end of the Second World War the will to establish closer links with Germany increased and calls of fear and revenge slowly disappeared, indicating a fall in essentialising forms of remembering Germany and its role in the Second World War (1981:271). Surveys carried out between the 1950s and the 1970s register a steady rise in the approval of the rapprochement with Germany, from 50% in 1950 to over 70% in 1959. In 1979 followers of the UDF showed the highest approval rate, while those over

¹⁵ Joseph Rovan claims that the French experience with German soldiers during the Second World War before D-day was rather positive (1986:107-8). This is confirmed by Mitter (1981: 270).

65, members of the Communist Party or the rural France were much less enthusiastic (between 25 and 37%). The figures also suggest that the number of French who believed in a natural antagonism between France and Germany fell sharply and that essentialising forms of remembering – outside the political parties and currents – were in decline. The identified hatred of Germany among the French public remained at its strongest among the extreme Right and the Communists (Heitmann, 1966:189-190; Rovan, 1988:156).

However, the attitude towards West Germany remained ambivalent, as these same surveys show. There remained a fear that the economic power of the Eastern neighbour, which caused admiration but also fear (“Sondage: la fin de l’antigermanisme en France”, in *L’Express*, 24 March, 1979). The topic of “German expansionsism”, particularly fostered by the French Communist Party, remained a concern fuelled by memories of the Second and First World Wars.

The memory of “France in Resistance” against an outside threat should change in the 1970s and 1980s. It is my contention that the memory of the Second World War within the French society, but also within political currents, turned inwards, i.e. turned towards a consciousness of what had happened *inside* France and what the role of the different political groups during World War II really had been. This gradual change came about by four developments that will be discussed subsequently and that definitely meant the end of the memory of “France in resistance” by the late 1980s: (1) the new prominence of the Vichy government and its role during the Second World War, (2) the rise of Jewish memory, (3) the rise of a new post-war generation, (4) the first trials in the 1980s against Frenchmen under the law of crimes against humanity related to the Vichy government.

Vichy and its role during the Second World War: It was only in the 1970s with the works of three non-French authors, namely the German Eberhardt Jäckel (1966), the British historian Alan Milward (1970) and the US-American Robert Paxton (1972) that the memories of Vichy France that had evolved in the 1950s were challenged. Paxton in particular defied the idea of a “double-game” and “daily resistance” by the Vichy regime. He claimed that the “national revolution” and collaboration went hand in hand with many social and political reforms undertaken in Vichy that had been neither

imposed nor demanded by the Germans. Finally, Paxton showed that there had been a genuine anti-Semitism in Vichy, that was not to be confused with Nazi ideology, and which was not a simple concession to German demands. Gradually it became clear that a “national revolution” of antidemocratic and authoritarian forces had taken place in Vichy, even at the cost of military defeat and subjugation under Nazi-Germany. The Vichyites wanted to establish a new political order, similar to Fascist Italy or Franco’s Spain and hoped that, by collaborating sufficiently with the Germans, they would have the autonomy to carry out the reforms they deemed necessary. This was altogether different from a *double-jeu*-strategy and different from a forced collaboration with an occupant. It was a third variant, hitherto not discussed, which however shed much light on some of the particularities of Vichy France (Burrin, 2001; Hoffmann, 1992).

The repression of the Vichy period from French memory is first and foremost the achievement of de Gaulle’s resistentialism, which lost its grip in the 1970s and thus failed to silence the anti-republican and Vichyite memory groups:

[...] the civil war, and particularly the inception, influence and acts of the Vichy regime, played an essential if not primary, role in the difficulties that the people of France have faced in reconciling themselves with their history - a greater role than the foreign occupation, the war, and the defeat, all things that, though they have not vanished from peoples’ minds, are generally perceived through the prism of Vichy (Rousso, 1991:9-10).

Another step towards the reconsideration of Vichy and its legacy was the documentary “The Sorrow and the Pity” (*Le Chagrin et la Pitié*) by Max Ophuls, which had to be shown in cinemas in 1971, because directors of public television channels refused to broadcast it. This documentary showed interviews in which the situation and behaviour of the citizens under the Vichy regime were described. It became clear that most of the people adapted to the new situation and went about their usual business as much as possible. The picture painted in this documentary did not fit at all with the self- image of “France in resistance” propagated by the Gaullists. In his “Lacombe Lucien”, Louis Malle painted in 1974 a similar picture. This led to an intense controversy about Vichy France in which criticism of the French as cowards and opportunists was made. Although this extremely negative picture of the “French in resistance” was somewhat corrected by subsequent research, by the mid-70s the Gaullist myth of France in

resistance and the idea that just a few French had collaborated with the Germans had become untenable.

At the same time, the rediscovery of Vichy also provided new political space to the political far Right:

[...] political debate in France erupted into a kind of verbal civil war. The vitriolic nature of the debate was reminiscent of the 1940s [...] At the same time, the extreme right rediscovered its racist roots and resurrected ideas, or rather ideologies, which resembled [...] the racist ideologies of the wartime years (Rousso, 1991:132-133).

The rise of Jewish memory: There was a parallel rise of a separate French Jewish memory of the Second World War in the 1970s.¹⁶ This new expression of the Jewish memory was strongly supported by Serge Klarsfeld, president of the “Association of Sons and Daughters of Jewish deportees in France”. Klarsfeld publicly investigated the behaviour of Vichy France towards foreign and French Jews, as well as towards exiled politicians who were deported to Nazi-Germany. He further collected information and statistics on the extent of French collaboration in the extermination of French Jews (Klarsfeld, 1982).

Moreover, in France, as in West Germany, the Eichmann process had an important impact, but it was, above all, the trials in Germany against high-ranking officers of the SS and Gestapo working in France, such as that of Herbert Hagen in 1980, that especially fuelled a reconsideration of Vichy and gave new prominence to the French-Jewish memory (Conan and Lindenberg, 1992:11). Thus, “in French memory Auschwitz, the symbol of the politics of extermination of the Jews, replaced Buchenwald, the symbol of the politics of oppression against resistance fighters” (Rousso, 1992:602-3). What became an important symbol of French complicity (in particular by the French police) was the rounding-up and deportation of Jews in Paris on 16 July 1942 at the *Velodrome d'Hiver*, generally referred to as “Vel d'Hiv”, whose story became increasingly known.

¹⁶ On the marginalisation of Jewish memory in post-war France until the 1970s see: Wolf, 2004.

Challenges from a new post-war generation: Like in Germany, the challenge to the belief in France in resistance came from the post-war generation of the end of the 1960s, combined with a political transition (in France: end of Gaullism). This questioning was also triggered by the films mentioned above.

Trials on Vichy: The first person to be tried and be found guilty of crimes against humanity was the German Klaus Barbie, head of the SS in Lyon, who had been extradited from Bolivia. The trial against Barbie influenced the discussion on the memory of the *Résistance* and gave the Jewish memory of the Vichy regime, which clashed with the Resistance memory, an increased voice (Rousso, 1991:213).

Four Frenchmen were charged with crimes against humanity: Paul Touvier in 1972, Jean Leguay, assistant of Secretary General of the Vichy Police in 1979, Jean Bousquet, Secretary of State for the Police in Vichy, who played a decisive role in the cooperation with the German Gestapo, in 1991, and Maurice Papon, Secretary General of the department Gironde, in 1998 (Rousso, 1992:594). Touvier's case deserves special attention. He was arrested in 1988, and in 1992 the first trial against him took place. In April 1992 the French High Court acquitted Touvier of all charges, on the grounds that the law was not applicable in his case. The verdict was based on an interpretation of the Vichy regime by the High Court. Vichy France, reads the verdict, collaborated on pragmatic terms with Nazi Germany, but was not possessed by the same policy of ideological hegemony as Nazi Germany was. This judgment was welcomed by many Vichyites and conservatives, but rejected by many families of Jewish deportees, as well as by historians, such as René Remond, who charged the Court with outright historical revisionism.¹⁷ In turn, the trial against Maurice Papon, which lasted until 1998, shed light on Papon's role in the *Milice* of the Vichy government in Bordeaux (Rousso, 2003). Those trials also signalled a shift in war memories: In his first trial in 1949, René Bousquet had been charged with helping the Germans to find clandestine radio stations of the resistance in France in 1949. In his second trial in 1992, he was charged for his role in the deportation of French Jews during the Vichy government (Conan and Lindenberg, 1992:10).

¹⁷ On the court ruling and the reactions in France see: Fritz-Vannahme, 1992:11.

The 1990s in France, finally, saw the acceptance of the contribution of the Vichy government to the Holocaust, as well as the differentiation between political currents during the Second World War. Thus, in the 1990s, France officially and definitely abandoned the totalising narratives of “France in Resistance”. Although in 1993 François Mitterrand made 16 July, the day of Vel d’Hiv, a national commemoration day, he refused to offer an apology in the name of the French people.

François Mitterrand said in 1993: “The ‘*Etat français*’ that was the Vichy regime, not the Republic. Don’t ask the Republic to be accountable for that – it did what it should have done” (quoted in: “Ende eines gaullistischen Mythos”, in *Der Tagesspiegel*, 18 July, 1995). In a similar fashion Lionel Jospin claimed in a parliamentary debate: “France did not become guilty under the German occupation. It is the resistance that represents France, but not Vichy” (quoted in “Ende eines gaullistischen Mythos” in *Der Tagesspiegel*, 18 July, 1995). The apology would however be made two years later, by Jacques Chirac, the Gaullist president who stated: “Yes, the criminal madness of the German occupant was supported by the French, by the French State” (quoted in *Franfurter Rundschau*, 22 October, 1997). The acceptance of France’s responsibility was a clear break with the idea that France had been essentially in resistance, as well as a confirmation of the existence of another France, Vichy France - something that the Gaullists and many politicians has vividly denied for fifty years. Another myth that came increasingly under attack was that of the *Résistance*, whose alleged reach, magnitude and unity were strongly questioned by historical research in the 1990s (Conan and Lindenberg, 1994; Laborie, 1994). Even today, some authors feel that the *Résistance* is still mystified.

Between 1945 and 1980 France faced a similar problem to Germany: what to do with the memory of Vichy France? By all political standards neither the support of Nazi Germany in its pursuit of its racist policies, nor the *État Français* of Pétain is connoted or interpreted by the republican parties in a positive way. The way of dealing with this past in France was, in the beginning, similar to the early strategies in West Germany: i.e. silencing and, whenever acknowledgement is inevitable, declaring it the responsibility of a few misguided individuals. These approaches became untenable in the 1970s and 1980s, among other reasons, because marginalised memory groups (such as the French Jews or the members of Vichy France) contradicted the official version.

However, once the memory of those “dark days” had found public expression, it could no longer be ignored. The public acceptance of the role of the French government in the persecution of fellow French citizens in the 1990s formally acknowledged that.

This move from a totalising remembering focusing on the external enemy to a differentiated remembering focusing inside France and on different political values and regimes can also be identified in the history of war commemorations in post-war France. In 1945, both world wars were remembered in France on 11 November. It was only in 1953 that 8 May became a holiday (“*jour férié*”) and national commemoration date of the victory over Germany. The status of holiday was removed by de Gaulle in 1959, although it remained a commemoration day. In the name of European integration and Franco-German friendship, in 1975 French president Giscard d’Estaing abolished 8 May as a commemoration day altogether. This decision was condemned by associations of war veterans and the Communists. However, the decision was maintained until 1981, when François Mitterrand reversed it.¹⁸ In the late 1940s and 1950s, 8 May was celebrated by Gaullists and Communists as a military victory over another country. Yet, others (Socialists, many members of MRP, Radicals) celebrated that date as the victory over a political regime. In France, like in Germany, the memory of the Second World War is too heterogeneous to unite the French people. This does not only refer to the specific memory of groups (domestic or exile resistance, deportees or prisoners of wars), but also to the subject of remembering:

The French commemorations regarding the Second World War face the problem of defining their object. At the end of the day, what is commemorated? The liberation? The victory over Germany or over Nazism? The victory of France or the victory of liberty? The victory of the resistance fighters or the victory of the entire country? [...] The multiple contradictions and celebrations are characteristic of the rituals themselves and the schedule of all the celebrations (Frank, 1984:289).

The different object of remembering as well as the different political values commemorated during anniversaries of the Second World War are expressed in rival

¹⁸ “The 1975 abolition of 8 May as a national holiday was intended to draw an official veil over the fratricidal war for Europe, as Giscard put it in his letter to the members of the European Council. A side benefit [...] was that a veil would simultaneously be drawn over France’s internal conflicts.” Rousso, 1991:184.

commemoration sites and ceremonies. Thus, while on 8 May Gaullist-inspired commemorations stress the unity, the “*rassemblement*” and appeal to national unity and “*France une et indivisible*”, parallel commemorations by the Communist Party emphasise the domestic resistance against Nazism and similar regimes (i.e. Vichy, which is also portrayed as a “treason of a certain class”) (Frank, 1984:284). At the same time, the Union of War Veterans commemorates the end of the war as the victory of France over Germany. In fact, on 8 May there are always two commemoration ceremonies that take place in different sites: one on Mount Valérien, dedicated specifically to the war veterans and another general commemoration headed by the President at the Étoile.

The post-war French governments (most of them dominated by the MRP) have stressed the fact that 8 May was a victory over a political system, not another nation. It was a victory of the free people over oppressive regimes that denied the dignity to human beings (preamble of the constitution of the Fourth Republic from 27 October 1946). By pointing to the suffering of many Germans under the Nazi regime, many French politicians of the Centre and Left, as well as the organisations of deportees, stressed the difference between the German people and the Nazi regime. It was with the aim to celebrate the victory of democratic and republican values that suggestions for a joint Franco-German commemoration of 8 May were made by French politicians. As François Mitterrand, reflecting upon the meaning of 8 May, declared in Berlin 1995 in one of his last speeches before his death:

Are we remembering a defeat? Or are we remembering a victory? And a victory of what? It is without any doubt a victory of freedom over oppression, without doubt [sic]. But in my eyes, it is – and that is the only message I would like to leave behind – a victory of Europe over itself (Quoted in: Dubiel, 1999:272).

In the same vein, Jacques Chirac celebrated on 25 August 1994, the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Paris, not a victory over Germany, but a victory over a political regime:

This was a defeat of an ideology, Nazism, which tried to deny that which is inherent in human nature: That is the reaffirmation of the rights that France has spread throughout the entire world for two hundred years (quoted in *Le Monde*, 25 August, 1994, p.1).

Thus, the commemoration of the 8 May in the 1990s was now seen also by a Gaullist president (as by the preceding Socialist president) as a victory over a political regime, over certain political values, not as a victory over a political community in the first place. This separation accommodates, I would argue, the inward-looking memories of the Second World War in France that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s. It also prepares a reflection on political and moral values that resorts to the memory of past wars and its commemoration as its material. I would therefore claim that a shift from a conventional to an advanced conventional level of social learning is identifiable in France in the 1990s. This shift refers to the entire political spectrum, except for the French Communists and the Vichyites.

This shift from commemorating a national past to celebrating political values is also visible in the late 1980s and 1990s, when traditional commemorations of the French nation were concerned. Since the 1970s there have been repeated and stronger challenges to the nearly one hundred years of French memory institutionalised by the Third Republic:

It was through this division [between national collective history and private memories of specific French groups] that traditional French identity was constructed and developed for a century, and this was the mould that cracked. It cracked under a double movement: the internal collapse of the myth that bore the national project and the emancipation that liberated the minorities (Nora, 2001a: xiv).

The Third Republic had institutionalised a national memory that was top-down and consciously marginalised other memories. But in the late 1980s and 1990s the challenge of this strategy can be illustrated by two specific commemorative occasions: 14 July 1989, and the commemoration of Clovis' baptism in 1996. Although 14 July has been a traditional national day of commemoration in post-war (Republican) France, there was an enormous controversy around the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution in 1989. This re-opened a debate already present in nineteenth century in France, when the (more conservative) legitimists debated with the republicans about the achievements of the French Revolution. Among others the book by René Sébillot on the French Revolution published in 1987 shed light on the costs of Jacobin rule, the *Terreur*, and what many regarded as the genocide of the inhabitants of the Western

provinces.¹⁹ In fact, Sébillot, a French economist, argues that the French Revolution is only celebrated and remembered in such a positive way thanks to the successful Napoleonic wars (by a monarch) that followed. If only what happened during the French Revolution were celebrated, it would be, argues Sébillot, the commemoration of genocide. As a result of this controversy, in 1989, only the declaration of the human rights was celebrated, but many historical events were left out of the official commemorations.

In 1996, the French government attempted to celebrate 1500 years of the baptism of Clovis, the Franc king, whom French official memory and historiography celebrate as the founder of France (although most contemporary historians agree that the Franc king Philippe Auguste was historically the first “King of France”) with a ceremony of “baptism of France and the French nation” together with the Pope. But for many Frenchmen and women this was the Catholic, royalist and anti-republican France that was to be celebrated here, challenging the separation between State and Church prevalent in France since 1905. This image of Christian France was further fuelled by Jean Marie Le Pen’s declarations in the sense that Clovis was the symbol of the real, Christian France. After massive protests, these celebrations were called off. The controversy around both the French Revolution and the Baptism of Clovis as cornerstones of French national memory, together with the discussion on Vichy France, show that the French collective memory shaped by the Third Republic became increasingly contested. Moreover, not only the memory, but also the historiography on which it stands, i.e. the historiography of the Third Republic that was so dominant in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in France has come increasingly under attack.

Memory groups that had been marginalised in the past no longer accepted to be left outside the official French memory: Between the Petainist myth of Vichy (double game, saving France) and the resistentialist myth by Gaullists and Communists (reducing French action to resistance) many memories were left out, for example, from those living under the occupation, deportees and forced labour (Rousso, 1991:303). In fact, more and more groups demanded in France the acceptance and inscription of their

¹⁹ In Sébillot’s appreciation 2 million Frenchmen and women died during the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars that followed: 400,000 in warfare during the revolutionary period, 1 million during the Napoleonic wars, and 600,000 through the “Franco-French civil war and the Guillotine”. This is, according to Sébillot, more killed than during the First and Second World War together (Sébillot, 1987).

memory in the national memory: the descendants of those killed during the Terreur, the children of the Jewish deportees, the families that lost their homes during decolonisation (Dupuy, 2002). Other claims that compose the official French memory, such as the civilising mission or the claim of a *Grande Nation* have also been challenged, for example, by the wars of de-colonisation in Indochina and Algeria. The succession of wars (1914-1918, 1939-1945, Algerian War) led, on the one hand, to a real loss of French power; on the other hand, it contradicted the claim for greatness. These instances, again, show that unifying collective war memories are increasingly disputed in France. Different memory groups assert their own version of the past, different political memory groups openly challenge official, unifying memories.

The late 1980s and the 1990s also led to a growing awareness of the opposing political currents since the French Revolution that had not been reconciled. One element that contributed to that perception was the reinterpretation of Vichy in the 1970s and 1980s, which shed light onto the “other”, non-republican France. The achievements and costs, the remembering and forgetting of the French past since the Republican synthesis and the remembering of the French Revolution (as an event that divided the country) was made increasingly the subject of public debate. Since the 1980s historical interpretations of what is now called the Franco-French war (“*la guerre franco-française*”) that went on for more than one hundred years, have appeared ever more frequently. As Stanley Hoffmann points out:

[...] Vichy had, at the same time, new and old elements to it. The old one, which is recurrent in French history, is the will to reject an abolished regime, to redraw if not memory then at least the patrimony [...]; this is the strategy of excommunication and exclusion; this is, in short, the Franco-French war that has never really ended (Hoffmann, 1992:40-41).

The late 1980s and 1990s heralded the emergence of a consciousness that the familiar national history and memory excluded and marginalised alternative voices and fostered certain political values. Thus, the empirical claim that this official national memory captured the entire nation was contradicted by the existence of at least a republican and laicist France of the Left and a monarchical, hierarchical and Catholic France of the Right (Dupuy, 2002). Without neglecting the important differences and specific nuances in each epoch, there appears to be a continuity of political memory groups or – at least –

proximity between the Action Française, Vichy France and the National Front opposing the official French memory supported by the liberal-radicals, the national bloc, the Cartel des Gauches and the republican consensus in post-war France. The coincidence of the political values and the memories they stressed lends support to the thesis that this conglomerate can be identified as a political memory group. This consciousness challenges from within totalising narratives on national war memories.

With the remembering of the Second World War in a more inward-looking way, the remembering of Germany was also transformed: in the 1940s and 1950s, essentialising memories of Germany prevailed among the Gaullists and Communists, as well as the Radicals. With an increasing experience of post-war West Germany and an increasing separation of the German polity from specific political values to be remembered, essentialising remembering of Germany steadily declined. One remnant of that essentialising memory of Germany that has been nurtured particularly by the French Communist Party, however, seems to have exerted political weight even in the 1990s: the theme of the “expansionist Germany”, particularly after the end of the Cold War and German reunification in 1990. While the fear of military expansionism disappeared with the integration in multilateral defence systems in the 1950s, the concern with economic expansionism remained alive among the Left and some Gaullists.²⁰ This is a trait of the essentialising image of Germany that was developed in the late nineteenth century.

Interestingly, it was also the Communists and some intellectuals on the Left who preserved and reproduced in the first three decades of the post-war era the idea of a two-Germanys-theory, East Germany being the good part of Germany and West Germany being the Fascist, capitalists and militarist part. These images coincided with the self-legitimisation of the Communist regime in East Berlin. By contrast, the moderate Right and Left (UDF, RPR, and PS) in France clearly broke with these essentialising images of Germany and reflected upon the conditions that had led to the three wars between the two countries between 1870 and 1940. A clear distinction was made between the political system and the German nation in the treatment of West Germany. Thus, a reflected collective war memory prevailed in the French moderate Left and Centre that led to new possibilities for dealing with Germany. Even the far Right of the FN that

²⁰ This aspect will be discussed in more detail in chapter 7.

gave the Vichy past more – and positive – prominence did not resort to the essentialising remembering of Germany à la Bainville, but focused on the domestic battle against a republican France, like the monarchical Right did in the late 1930s.

However, a reflexive turn, like the one that took place in West Germany in the late 1980s, did not happen (yet) in France, despite the public acceptance that any totalising empirical claim of representing French war memories (such as de Gaulle's resistentialism) was untenable and notwithstanding the fact that the silence on the internal conflicts within France had been broken, as the cases of the rise of Vichy memory and the controversies surrounding the commemorations of the French Revolution evidenced. Thus, while the conventional way of remembering was challenged and signs of advanced conventional remembering are now visible, there has not yet been a move towards a reflexive appropriation of the collective past, as authors such as Suzanne Citron deplored at the end of the 1980s:

[...] there is no great debate, like there is among German historians, about the meaning of the past in general, about the memory of the national identity; and the way of reconstructing the past has been hidden. Personally, I think that this reveals a taboo: even our most renowned historians do not want to cast a general, critical view on the great republican synthesis elaborated by their university colleagues of the Third Republic (Citron, 1989:35).

Thus, while there are clear signs of crisis of the national war memories and their practical-moral imperatives in France during the period analysed, the future way of structuring the remembering of those past wars was open. The acceptance of the negative sides of the past, the acceptance of diversity of memory groups, however, is a first important step that has been taken in France to prepare a possible transition from a conventional to a post-conventional remembering of past wars in the future.

5.3 Conclusion

In Chapter 3 Habermas' theory of social learning was applied to the collective remembering of past wars and used for the analysis of Franco-German collective war memories in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. With the help of those categories it

could be seen that collective war memories can be structured in different ways and thus pre-form practical-moral imperatives in different directions. An essentialising form of remembering a war with a political entity precludes the possibility of change and eternalises certain traits and behaviour. By contrast, the more the political values and imperatives advanced by that political entity are remembered and differentiated, the more the future is open to change and the more political values become central in the public commemoration of the past. Collective war memories can become a vehicle for change, once the essentialising images have been overcome.

If collective war memories are no longer fixated exclusively on the object, but also on the reflecting subject, a practical-moral debate on political, ethical or moral values can be conducted using the collective war memories as its material. In both cases, France and Germany, such a move from a remembered object to a reflection on the remembering subject took place to certain degree. In other words, memories, in particular those of the Second World War, turned inwards. Three steps could be identified in post-War West Germany and France that describe that move: (1) The increasing acceptance of diversity of memory groups that challenge totalising narratives of national war memories (such as the victims of war and terror regimes in West Germany and the French resistance in France); (2) the realisation and public debate on the different political values and currents underlying different memory groups; (3) the discussion of political values and a conscious moral judgement on them, instead of focusing on individual guilt and responsibility for the past war. This latter aspect seems also a matter of generations: in West Germany as well as France, the lack of a more moral and general judgement on the last war was clearly linked to the biographical entanglement of post-war politicians in both countries.

Such reflective and critical approach is clearly different from the conventional approach aimed at finding an agreeable collective memory and history that can accommodate the increasing diversity of memory groups, which assert their voices and right to be heard. The referent of one's own political community and the object of the other political community become increasingly problematic. The acceptance of diversity of war memories within, and the differentiation of different groups in other countries, often go together, as the analysis of post-war France suggests. While there may be certain delays, caused by personal shame or guilt, the generation to follow, which has no biographical

link to the events, may question specific silences or acts of judicial forgetting (amnesty laws). Thus, it may not always be possible to overcome silence, but it becomes more and more difficult in national and international relations to silence those memory groups that feel their experience should be validated too.

The rejection of totalising war memories increases the pressure to structure collective war memories in a different way. One option to do so may be a post-conventional way of remembering. Such an option seems only feasible, if a democratic, permeable public sphere is available. Where this public sphere is absent, “official” war memories may be disseminated, but not necessarily accepted and used as a collective frame for war memories. This absence can be seen in the case of official war memories promoted by the East German Communists. While there were many signs of post-conventional remembering of the ruling Communist class, this latter did neither engage in a public debate with other memory groups nor depart from an acceptance that empirical variety existed. In the absence of such a debate, which belatedly took place in West Germany and France in the 1980s, the acceptance and defence of that interpretative framework proved to be rather limited: with the fall of the Communist regime, commemoration sites in East Germany were changed, celebrations altered and the old sense of superiority was taken away without much contestation in the public sphere of reunified Germany.

This chapter has analysed developments from the nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth century, which show a transition from early conventional to first signs of post-conventional levels of remembering past wars. The early, essentialising forms of remembering may well correlate with the nation-building stage and the levels of warfare discussed in chapter 3. This highlights the fact that Habermas’ theory of social learning is not merely an ethics or a political agenda, but also a means of grasping developments in the collective remembering of past wars. The fact that post-conventional social learning was somehow possible in West Germany, however, was not simply a matter of higher Reason, but, as I wish to argue, also a consequence of three historical facts: the fact that West Germany assumed the legal heritage of the German Reich and thus could not escape the memory of its collective past (unlike East Germany, Austria and Italy); the magnitude of destruction, suffering and murdering that had taken place in the name

of Germany that made silencing extremely difficult; and, finally, the occupation and enforced construction of a wholly new German state by the victorious powers.

It is necessary to stress that these different levels of social learning do not follow automatically or collectively. As a matter of fact, different levels of social learning may coexist side by side as the historians' debate in Germany shows. What Habermas' theory of social learning suggests is that while there is the *possibility*, the potential of social learning with respect to collective war memories, there is no *telos* in history, no automatism or inevitability.

With the help of Habermas' theory of social learning an additional element of collective war memories can be better appreciated and analysed, especially the different practical-moral imperatives derived from remembering past wars. By applying the different levels of social learning as analytical tools, those differences become apparent. This adds a new dimension to the study of collective war memories to the previous critical studies, which have often focused on *who* dominates the official memories (the sociology of memory).

As the case of Franco-German relations has shown, practical-moral imperatives derived from collective war memories can make a difference in international relations. Clearly, these practical-moral imperatives have to compete with other imperatives in decision-making. Thus, it is far from clear whether or not these imperatives played any significant role in the actual *decisions* in Franco-German relations. This possible impact, and this is my argument derived from Habermas, can only be assessed within a communicative concept of political legitimacy. Elaborating on this concept is the aim of the following chapter.

**C. Studying the Impact of Collective War
Memories on international politics with a
Habermasian concept of political
legitimacy**

Chapter 6

Conceptualising the Impact of Collective War Memories on International Politics: A communicative notion of political legitimacy

Some answers to the question of how collective war memories influence international politics have already been advanced: chapter 1 highlighted the importance of political memory groups, their practical-moral imperatives derived from war memories and their role within political parties and the respective political systems. Chapters 2 and 3 pointed to the level of social learning in the collective process of public remembering as an important factor in understanding the kind of impact collective war memories might exert on politics. These different impacts based on different levels of social learning were illustrated in chapters 4 and 5 in the cases of France and Germany.

As chapter 1 suggested, many scholars stress that collective war memories are “used” or even “abused” to legitimate political orders or specific policies (Buffet and Heuser, 1998). Yet, these authors usually fail to provide a notion of political legitimacy that explains exactly *how* this alleged legitimating effect is to be understood. It is the aim of this chapter to fill this gap. More specifically, here I seek to develop a theoretical framework of political legitimacy, which can be applied to empirical studies on the impact of collective war memories on issues of foreign policy and international politics. This theoretical framework is based on Habermas’ theory of communicative action and provides useful analytical tools to identify the *empirically different* impacts of collective war memories on political legitimacy. By consequence, this framework rejects an absolute and general assertion about the relationship between collective war memories and political legitimacy and accommodates different empirical outcomes of this relationship.

The chapter is structured as follows: The first part highlights why certain notions of politics screen out a notion of political legitimacy and, thus, fail to provide a conceptual

basis for clarifying the relationship between collective war memories and political legitimacy. After having identified the shortcomings of those notions of politics, the second part develops a communicative notion of politics and political legitimacy, based on Jürgen Habermas' concepts of 'communicative action' and 'political discourse'. Finally, by outlining a possible research programme, the third part highlights how this notion of political legitimacy can be applied to empirical cases.

6.1 Towards an applicable notion of political legitimacy

[...] The tradition [of IR theory] is defined by negation, by what it is not. And what it is not, by most accounts, is political theory. Sometimes this is intended to suggest that it is concerned with human relationships that are not subject to a centralised authority, as if centralised authority were a precondition for political life in general rather than a characteristic of some forms of political life in particular.

Robert B.J. Walker (1993:33)

It is a consensual view in the literature, that the term political legitimacy refers to a notion of rightfulness or acceptance of political outcomes based on judgement. The notion of legitimacy, so conceived, sheds light on the question of why people accept or even support a political outcome (empirical claim) or why they should do so (normative claim). Nonetheless, the understanding of political legitimacy depends heavily on the notion of politics being used.

There are, in fact, numerous definitions of politics; some stress the precise description of an actual process (empirical definitions), while others describe what politics should look like (normative definitions). Empirical definitions of politics highlight with varying emphasis (a) the distribution of power; (b) the fact of authority that indicates a certain permission, acceptance or legitimacy of decision-making powers and their results; (c) rules or regularities of political outcomes that are to be differentiated from spontaneous, unpredictable and entirely informal processes. Normative definitions of politics, in turn focus on the question of what a political process should look like, what kind of political values should prevail. The most common definition of politics, however, is that offered by Max Weber, who claims that politics is the "authoritative

allocation of rules and values".¹ Hence, politics refers in general terms to collectively binding decisions made by institutions and actors that are entitled (authorised) formally or informally with certain capabilities (powers) to contribute to those decisions that are binding for an entire body politic.

In the domestic realm, politics so conceived is evidenced by (a) an established and institutionalised division of power that characterises the polity (constitution, party system, law-making and law-enforcing procedures), (b) the ideas and normative content of policies that are the outcome of the competition among different ideas and values and, finally, (c) the procedures and processes followed in order to establish specific policies through alliance-building or, more generally, all forms of formal and informal power exerted in order to shape and influence the outcome of policies.

6.1.1 Politics without legitimacy: utilitarian notions of politics

Only political orders can have and lose legitimacy; only they need legitimating. Multinational corporations or the world market are not capable of legitimating.

Jürgen Habermas (1991a:179)

The empirical notion of politics just mentioned refers to a tension built into the political process itself: the *feature of struggle* between different interests and ideas to shape orders, authority, rules, norms and policies, on the one hand, and the *feature of acceptance* of the binding character of these rules and norms, indeed of political authorities and their decisions themselves – even by those who did not prevail in the political struggle –, on the other hand. These two features beg the question of why those who were not able to shape orders, authority, rules, and norms accept them.

Ranging from Hobbes to Max Weber, the prevailing strand of political thought, which is based on a utilitarian notion of politics (Habermas, 1988c) regards the political process as a strategic interaction between egoistic actors. Thomas Hobbes and Machiavelli are

¹ On Weber's notion of politics and alternatives see: Dahl, 1963.

prominent representatives of this school. Relevant actors in this idea of politics are usually conceptualised (for heuristic purposes) as isolated units that pursue their goals in a success-oriented manner. In a similar vein, rational or social-choice theories depict politics as the interaction between success-oriented egoistic individuals (Elster and Hylland, 1986). Political outcomes and the acceptance of political power, then, rest on compromises between interests or the imposition of one's will over that of others.

Theorists who advocate a utilitarian notion of politics can also be found in the discipline of IR. Prominent members of this school within the IR literature are the Realists and authors of works on game theory or rational-choice theory. In the Realist view, for example, the outcome of international politics is the clash of will or interests, where the final arbiter is power within a structure characterised by the distribution of power among actors. Looking at the compromises between different interests and the distribution of power among actors, so the Realist answer, helps us to understand the particular shape of a political order, the acceptance of outcomes and certain international rules. Other utilitarian political thinkers would add one more explanation for acceptance by quoting Thucydides: "The strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must" (quoted in Kratochwil, 1993:63). Enforcement may be carried out by a central government in domestic politics or by a hegemonic power or a coalition of states in international politics. Utilitarian notions of politics, which focus on the aspect of struggle (be it for power or a struggle between different belief systems), explain the acceptance of the outcome of politics either with reference to fears of sanctions or with reference to strategic (present or future) interests. Such a utilitarian notion of politics rejects, however, any role of ideational factors in the shaping of the acceptance of international politics and, consequently, lacks a notion of political legitimacy.

6.1.2. The shortcomings of utilitarian notions of politics

A fundamental problem arises over politics being conceptualised in this utilitarian fashion. If the political process can be characterised this way, *why* should rational

egoists accept a political outcome that is not in their interest? Such an acceptance would contradict the assumption that political actors are strategic actors. In fact, if political orders and binding rules and norms are the outcome of politics as defined above there is no place for stable political orders to develop - at most there is room for shifting alliances that emerge and disappear according to the shifting goals of political actors. Stability may be desirable, but there is no room for *explaining* this stability if we define politics as the interaction between rational egoists. As Talcott Parsons states it:

A purely utilitarian society is chaotic and unstable, because in the absence of limitations on the use of means, particularly force and fraud, it must [...] resolve itself into an unlimited struggle for power (quoted in Habermas 1988b:315).

In other words, utilitarian approaches cannot account *within their theoretical assumptions* for any stability or order that is not imposed permanently from the outside.² This applies both to domestic and international politics. Yet, the stability of many domestic orders (and the different elements of the polities) defies this (general) notion of politics. Likewise, in international politics this utilitarian assumption has been refuted (Kratochwil, 1989). In other words, utilitarian notions of politics cannot sufficiently accommodate the two opposing features of politics mentioned above and reduce politics, to a great extent, to the feature of struggle.

This shortcoming has been admitted by some utilitarian political thinkers themselves. For example, Thomas Hobbes and John Locke agree that repression and imposition cannot secure the acceptance of political outcomes alone or provide a sufficient basis for collective action.³ Both authors regard a minimum of agreement or adherence by the ruled that is inter-subjectively shared, as necessary for any political system to survive. This admission by Hobbes causes what Richard Ashley refers to as the “Hobbesian problem”:

[...] In the absence of a framework of norms *consensually accepted by its members*, it might be possible momentarily to establish an orderly social

² This idea of order as coercion from outside has been developed in the term “hegemonic stability” within the Neo-Realist tradition. On hegemonic stability see: Keohane, 1984; Gilpin, 1981.

³ On Thomas Hobbes see: Albrecht, 1990:137. John Locke argues along similar lines in: Locke, 1975.

aggregate [...] among instrumentally rational individuals. Except under conditions of total stasis, however, it cannot be maintained (Ashley, 1986:278).⁴

Since utilitarianism cannot explain when, why and how the ruled (being rational egoists!) should accept or even support outcomes that are against their instrumental interest, the claim to acceptance by those who do not prevail in a political struggle remains entirely an appeal by Hobbes and other utilitarian thinkers that is not a logical conclusion from their theoretical assumptions.

Secondly, utilitarian notions of politics screen out the impact of the perception and interpretation of interaction between actors in politics. Political outcomes are taken as objective givens or results, not as a matter of constant interpretation by political actors (Kratochwil and Ruggie (eds.), 1994:4-19). This inter-subjective nature of politics and norms is actually an important part of understanding politics and, as one application thereof, norms and regimes. They, therefore, neglect the important role of discourse on authority, orders and rules that has been highlighted by political thinkers, philosophers and IR scholars alike.⁵ This is also the reason why such notions of politics could not possibly provide any understanding of how the three dimensions of collective war memories discussed in chapter 1, namely, the emotional, the cognitive and the practical-moral dimensions, might influence politics.

A third shortcoming of utilitarian notions of politics is these approaches' silence on the formulation process of the actors' interests. Some utilitarian theories, such as game-theories, take a certain formulation of interests as given, while others such as Realism refer to objective interests caused by structural or natural necessity (Griffith, 1992). The former type of theories is silent on the process of formulating collective interests while the latter defines interests in objectivist terms, whatever the actors' subjective definition of interests might be. Thus, utilitarian notions of politics either have no explanation for the formation of interests of actors or face the problem to accommodate different

⁴ Emphasis added. E.H. Carr had already conceded: "Just as within the state every government though it needs power as a basis of its authority, also needs the moral basis of the consent of the governed, so an international order cannot be based on power alone, for the simple reason that mankind will in the long run always revolt against naked power. Any international order presupposes a substantial measure of general consent." (Carr, 1993:235-6).

⁵ This fundamental meaning of inter-subjectivity in social and political life has been put forward very forcefully within philosophy by Gadamer, 1975; in social sciences by Dallmayr and McCarthy, 1977 and in IR theory by Hollis and Smith, 1991; as well as by Linklater, 1990.

outcomes within an assumption of fairly constant interests. These shortcomings are consequences of the definition of politics, not a methodological neglect. At the same time, such a definition either rejects or is unable to conceptualise the influence of collective war memories on the formulation of collective interests.

As the previous discussion shows, any attempt to conceptualise the possible impact of collective war memories on international politics is heavily informed and influenced by the notion of politics used. Departing from a utilitarian notion of politics entails, however, facing the “Hobbesian dilemma”, i.e. the lack of explanatory value why and how the ruled should accept outcomes that are against their strategic interest. Moreover, utilitarian notions of politics disregard the modes of interaction in politics and remain silent on the reasons for the changing formulation of collective interests.

6.1.3. The special condition of international politics: no need for a notion of politics?

Authors such as David Easton or Max Weber argue that a necessary precondition for a political system is a mechanism for enforcing the authoritative allocation of values and ideas. This enforcement is not guaranteed in international politics in the same way it is in domestic politics. The lack of a central political authority in the international realm has made many scholars and political thinkers question whether the international realm is a political realm at all, preferring to call it the realm of “international relations”. Other theorists, such as the Realists and Neo-Realists, regard international politics as a *specific* political realm, namely, that of survival and thus of necessity, where there is no place for ethics, morality, or legitimacy.⁶

Both the stronger claim (the international realm as a non-political realm) and the weaker claim (international realm as the political realm of survival) were used to separate the sphere of domestic politics from international politics. This alleged separateness has been challenged conceptually, empirically and normatively in recent years. Firstly, it has been argued, foreign policies are part of a political process originating in the domestic realm, but related to issues of the international realm and – as far as the implementation of specific foreign policies of governments is concerned – controlled by domestic politics (Hill, 2003:1-24). Secondly, despite the absence of a central political

⁶ On this argument see: Waltz, 1959: 159-223; Wight, 1966:12-33. For a critique of these assumptions see: Jackson, 1996; Linklater, 1990a, Hutchings, 1999:1-27.

authority, there are political structures in the international realm, such as international law and international institutions, some of which are even endowed with independent decision-making and rule-enforcement mechanisms (such as the European Court on Human Rights, the World Trade Organisation, The Commission and the Court of the European Union), something that defies the claim that political authority rests only within states and points to aspects of global governance. Thus, it seems appropriate to refer to “international politics” as a political realm, where there is a *lower degree* of guaranteed implementation and a greater uncertainty of guaranteed implementation of rules than there is in domestic politics, but nevertheless a political realm.

So conceptualised, international politics can also be identified with the double feature of struggle and acceptance of policy outcomes, orders or authorities. We are thus faced with the same shortcomings of utilitarian notions and puzzling question of political philosophy in international politics: how can we understand the acceptance and a sense of moral obligation in that realm? As Robert Jackson has stated, “international political theory and domestic political theory diverge at certain points, but they are two branches of one overall political theory which is fundamentally preoccupied with the conditions, arrangements, and values of organised political life on the planet Earth” (Jackson, 1996:204).

It is my contention that a notion of political legitimacy based on Habermas’ theory of communicative action provides this link between individuals and the realm of states. Such a notion will be developed in the next part (6.2.) by applying Habermas’ Critical Theory, in particular, his notion of ‘practical discourse’ and the ‘ideal speech situation’, to politics. But before proceeding in that direction, some general requirements for a useful notion of political legitimacy (6.1.4) and specific requirements of political legitimacy in international politics (6.1.5) will be discussed.

6.1.4 General requirements for a notion of political legitimacy

No political society, national or international, can exist unless people submit to certain rules of conduct. The problem why people should submit to such rules is the fundamental problem of political philosophy.

E.H. Carr (1993:41)

The shortcomings of utilitarian notions of national and international politics are the product of a deficiency of the very notions themselves, not a mistake of application. Thus, the very concept of politics needs to be reconsidered. Habermas suggests that, in order to overcome these intrinsic limitations of utilitarianism, it is necessary to add a notion of moral obligation *in the theoretical assumptions and conceptualisations of politics*, a sense of rightfulness, to both the political process and political outcomes that goes beyond strategic interests and that explains the acceptance and acceptability of outcomes:

Social orders cannot be explained in terms of some collective instrumentalism; a de facto order issuing from the competition between purposive-rational actors for power and/or wealth remains unstable so long as the moral moment of conscience and obligation – that is to say, the orientation of action to binding values – is missing (Habermas, 1987b:213).

The legitimate distinguishes the morally acceptable from the morally unacceptable in politics without necessarily coinciding with the factual. The adherence of politics to the concept of political legitimacy should (at least in the long run) add to political stability, while the fact of political stability does not automatically indicate legitimacy. To equate stability with legitimacy leads to a tautology with little explanatory value. The concept of legitimacy has to provide ways of differentiating mere stability from moral obligation towards a political order and its outcomes. Political legitimacy is, thus, a critical standard within politics, judging the rightfulness of political orders, processes and outcomes.

Legitimacy can refer to different aspects of politics, i.e. the political order, political norms and results or specific policies. It entails a claim to express the interest or will of all those affected. Thus, the addressee of legitimacy is always the sum total of all those

affected by a specific norm, political order or policies. In the case of domestic politics, it is usually the entire body politic, whereas in international politics this may vary between a regional group of political communities or even encompass humankind. If a decision or order were overtly expressed only in the interest of some, it would be difficult to see how it should command an obligation of those, in whose interest it is not. This claim, however, in the sense that legitimacy represents a general interest is subject to sustained critique: claims to legitimacy in politics are often criticised for being “really” in the interest of some groups only, and by no means in the interest of all affected.⁷ Yet, these kinds of critique may question specific ways of legitimating, but they usually do not defy the formal category of legitimacy. In fact, the standard for criticising empirical forms of legitimacy is often provided by another notion of legitimacy.

Legitimating is the process leading to legitimacy, a status that can be reached, maintained or lost. There may be different ways of legitimating in order to reach a status where the ruled wish to accept and support the assumptions, structure, processes and outcomes of politics. However, a meaningful notion of legitimacy faces two fundamental challenges that explain why E.H. Carr regards it as such a difficult notion to grasp. For one, if we hold an empirical notion of legitimacy, i.e. one that describes and identifies the factors that make a political order legitimate *in the eye of the ruled*, we rely on descriptions of a current state of legitimacy. Max Weber, for example, identifies three forms of legitimating political rule: (1) legality, (2) charisma (of political leaders) and (3) ultimate values (either embedded in tradition or ultimate principles).⁸ Yet, scholars and social scientists do not judge the reasons for those factors’ attaining political legitimacy. In fact, they seldom dwell on the precise causes for this identified belief in legitimacy. Why and how, say, certain ultimate values, lend legitimacy to a political order in the eyes of the ruled is something Max Weber does not address. This answer is also absent in procedural notions of legitimacy, such as those provided by the systems theories of Talcott Parsons or Niklas Luhmann. One might, in fact, conclude with Gerhard Beisenherz that empirical notions of legitimacy raise more questions than they provide answers:

⁷ This has been a critique of Marx and Marxist writers on the liberal ideas of representation and politics. See: Marx, 1978. For IR this critique has been raised by Ashley (1986:270).

⁸ For an introduction and critical appraisal of Weber’s notion of legitimacy see: Speer, 1978: 86-92.

It is obvious where “legitimizing through procedures” and “ultimate reasons” converge: in the lack of justification of the reasons for the legitimating [effect] and a [...] reference to facticity (Beisenherz, 1980:54).⁹

Thus, the first challenge of a notion of legitimacy is to avoid equating legitimacy with the factual adherence to norms or to avoid only describing the subjective belief in the legitimacy of politics.

For another, if the notion of legitimacy we adopt is a *normative* one, that is to say a notion that focuses on the factors that should render a certain order legitimate, the challenge we face is to justify our own criteria – a difficult task in the so-called post-metaphysical era and in modern, pluralistic societies. Both strands of theories on political legitimacy (empirical and normative), therefore, have to fulfil certain requirements in order to be usefully applied to politics. First, if an empirical notion of legitimacy seeks to elucidate the question raised by E.H. Carr, namely, why people submit to rules, it needs to provide an understanding of the reasons *why* the ruled accept certain features of politics as legitimate by which effect. Second, if a normative notion of legitimacy should command any philosophical and scientific credibility it needs to be able to justify its own standards that are not arbitrarily posed from outside. These general features need to be specified for the case of international politics. Doing so is the task of the following section.

6.1.5 Legitimacy in international politics: specific requirements

The categorical separation of “international politics” and “domestic politics” that many authors on international relations make, may beg the question whether this “great divide” (Clark, 1999:15-32) between the two spheres require different concepts of legitimacy. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to engage in an analysis of the practical, conceptual or normative corollaries of this debate, but I want to discuss briefly the requirements of a concept of political legitimacy that is not strictly limited to domestic

⁹ A closer look at the often-quoted modes of legitimacy reveals that the “ultimate reasons” for legitimacy in Weber’s writings refer either to belief (affection or value-based legitimacy) or to an acceptance of the factual (tradition and legality). On this aspect see: Speer, 1978: 86-7.

politics, but also takes into account the legitimating effects in international politics or foreign policies.

There is a broad literature in the IR discipline that, far from claiming that the domestic and the international spheres of politics are necessarily the same, does empirically, conceptually, as well as normatively, challenge the idea of “The Great Divide”.¹⁰ Ian Clark has argued convincingly that international orders affect the internal composition of states and vice versa. For example, the spread of the democratic state after 1945 has paved the ways for international norms and regimes of human rights protection. In the context of present tendencies of globalisation, Clark regards states as a “bidirectional valve” that has to mediate pressures from the international sphere and the domestic sphere and highlights this mediating function in several key areas of international politics, such as security and economics (Clark, 1999:67). I believe that this metaphor of “bidirectional valve” of states between the domestic and the international politics can also be usefully applied to the question of political legitimacy.

If we follow the argument in the sense that the sphere of international politics is the realm where states still occupy a primary role, then, the question arises as to how we conceptualise “moral obligation or acceptance by states”. Even the English School, which focuses on commonly agreed rules of the “international society”, fails to provide such an understanding of how this mutual acceptance has been reached in the period of popular sovereignty (Bull, 1977). I wish to argue that this conceptual deficit is due to the lack of theorising the relationship between state and domestic society. In fact, a sense of acceptance or moral obligation without a link to political communities and their members seems to be conceptually hollow. Authors such as Holsti have discussed the different relationships between states and society with reference to “state strength” in international politics (1996). Holsti points out that a weak link between state and society may give the state more margin of manoeuvre in international politics, but it also means a “weak” or no support from the domestic realm for those interests pursued or the outcomes of international politics (Holsti 1996; see also: Halliday, 1994:79). Holsti argues that this “strength” comes from different forms of legitimacy. However, he fails

¹⁰ For an overview on the normative implications of this divide see: Hutchings, 1999. On the empirical and conceptual implications of this divide see: Clark, 1999.

to conceptualise the legitimating effect of each form. Thus, states act as mediators in the processes of legitimating international politics in the interaction with other states and their own political community. This, I argue, is the first instance where states play this role of legitimating valve.

The second mediated process is the issue of representation. States in the international realm officially claim to represent the political will and common interest of their ruled and thus mediate between the domestic constituency and the international sphere. Such a claim, however, is not simply a normative one, but also reflects the current practice of international politics and, in consequence, of international political legitimacy. Historically, and ever since the order of Westphalia was instituted, states have not only monopolised the political representation of a certain territory abroad, but with the shift from absolutism to popular sovereignty, they have also claimed to speak *on behalf* of a certain people that inhabit a specific territory under effective control. Speaking on behalf of a people is empirically one among several necessary pre-conditions to be a legitimate actor of modern international politics (in addition to mutual recognition, a claim to effective control of a territory). Unlike private actors in international politics such as trans-national corporations and international non-governmental organisations, states do not represent specific interests but, rather, the political will and common interest of those governed. This necessary claim of representing the collective will or collective interest of a certain people renders governments legitimate in international politics, but also opens the door to a possible immanent critique from those represented, who may question the truthfulness of the claim that certain interests are actually pursued in their name.¹¹ Thus, while the claim of governments to represent the collective political will of the ruled abroad is a *constitutive* element of international political legitimacy, this very same claim has a *regulative* function in domestic politics, i.e. within the political community. These two aspects of political legitimacy are inextricably linked to each other.

¹¹ As Ulrich Albrecht claims the concept of “national interest” entails a basic democratic power that transcends any governmental formulation of national interest: “Those who speak on behalf of the national interest or in the name of a nation in the media need to be aware that the respective constituency might ask questions regarding the legitimacy of those definitions.” Albrecht, 1986:62. On such a critique see, for example: J. Hoffman, 1998; Richmond, 2002.

This regulative function within political communities refers to the formulation of the collective interest as a formal category, which commands more legitimacy domestically than particular interests - although it seems futile to define a particular content of this collective interest from a scientific viewpoint.¹² Moreover, the content of what is regarded as the collective interest of a political community may vary from case to case. Each state represents a formulated national interest in the international sphere. Outcomes in international politics require, therefore, at least a legitimating at two levels: (1) the reconciliation between the different national interests discussed outside the political community and (2) within each political community. To give an example: legitimating the war in Iraq does not only require the consent of the Security Council of the United Nations, but is also a matter of legitimating within the political communities. Both levels interact, as the different positions and their attempts to reconcile them have shown. Again, the metaphor of the states as bidirectional valves, which have to mediate between pressures from one's own political community with pressures from other political communities seems useful.

Finally, there is no neat separation of both legitimating effects on each level. When governments negotiate, say, the International Convention on Climate Change, non-state actors try to influence the debate and the legitimating of certain outcomes by mobilising cross-national information and debates (sometimes even organising alternative summits). In other words, there is a certain discursive permeability between the two levels of legitimating discourses in international politics, rendering the two levels merely concepts (in Weber's sense: ideal types) for heuristic purposes that do not necessarily coincide with empirical manifestations. This tendency has been grasped in recent discussions on world public opinion and the tendency towards public diplomacy (Hill, 2003:262-280). Non-state actors interfere in international discussions and negotiations but also in domestic debates and discourses for legitimating certain foreign policies.

¹² There has been growing criticism of objectivist or scientific uses of this concept. As Joseph Frankel points out: “‘National interest’ is the most comprehensive description of the whole value complex of foreign policy. It is also an exceptionally unclear concept.” (1970:26). For a critique of scientific concept of national interest and an introduction of “national interest” (or public interest) as a formal and communicative concept see: Kratochwil, 1982.

In conclusion, a general concept of political legitimacy seems useful and necessary for international politics. Such a concept of legitimacy of international politics should take two aspects into account: (1) the mediating role of states between legitimating efforts from outside the political community (by states as well as non-state actors) and inside the political community on issues of international politics (including foreign policies); (2) the inclusion of the political community and, ultimately, individuals and their relation to states, in order to account for the *actual legitimating effect* or the legitimising force that an international institution, outcome or structure commands.

Needless to say there are other motives or reasons for accepting or supporting certain decisions, such as strategic interests, but political legitimacy focuses on the aspect of acceptance and obligation towards international politics. Such a notion will be developed in the next section (6.2) by applying practical discourse and the ideal speech situation, concepts which were introduced in chapter 2, as yardstick for judging decisions in politics. The third and final section (6.3) of this chapter will develop a notion of political legitimacy and illustrate how that theoretical notion can be operationalised and applied to empirical research in foreign and international politics.

6.2 A notion of political legitimacy based on Habermas' concept of communicative action

In his works *Theory and Practice* and *Facticity and Norms*, Habermas himself raises the question of how a sense of obligation is achieved in different political orders, as well as in specific discourses in politics, taking into account the requirements for a meaningful notion of political legitimacy mentioned above. In a nutshell, his answer lies in the *conditions of the practical discourse*. Habermas rejects any content or proposition as legitimate *a priori* (in the so-called post-metaphysical condition) and points to the necessity of a democratic procedure to be followed to establish political legitimacy:

[...] Only democratic procedures of political will-formation can in principle generate legitimacy under conditions of a rationalised lifeworld with highly individuated members, with norms that have become abstract, positive, and in need of justification, and with traditions that have, as regards their claim to

authority, been reflectively refracted and set communicatively aflow. (Habermas, 1987b:344)

This is in line, Habermas argues, with the development of Western democracies since the eighteenth century, where the idea of a procedural notion of political legitimacy was first developed. The attainment of legitimacy of norms, rules and laws, in what Habermas calls post-conventional societies, requires, on the one hand, a certain legal procedure and, on the other hand, a public deliberation which gives citizens the chance to be actively or passively involved. Both aspects, Habermas claims, are necessary conditions for political legitimacy; pure legality (the following of a certain procedure in the establishment of laws and rules) is a necessary but not sufficient condition for legitimacy (Habermas 1996c:110-111).

Habermas derives his notion of political legitimacy from the assumptions of a practical discourse, which he describes as the “**ideal speech situation**”. As was explained in chapter 2, every participant in a practical discourse needs to make the assumption that the certain conditions are sufficiently met. In a nutshell, those conditions refer to an equal participation where outside force or manipulation is excluded and, therefore, the only force to be accepted is the forceless force of the better argument.¹³ If participants realise that those conditions are not sufficiently met, they will abandon the discourse or reject any validity of the outcome. Otherwise they will be willing to engage in a practical discourse and accept political outcomes that are not strictly in their strategic or instrumental interest. The identification of the conditions of the practical discourse is Habermas’ attempt to reconcile the two seemingly opposing features of politics, the feature of struggle and the feature of acceptance. By pointing to the *necessary* conditions of political discourse derived from speech act theory, Habermas also tries to live up to the requirements set out for a notion of political legitimacy: it does not necessarily coincide with the empirical fact of adherence to norms and rules, while justifying the standards of critique with reference to a reflection on the *necessary* conditions of discourses from within discourse and not applying arbitrary or metaphysical standards from outside.

¹³ On full account of the conditions of practical discourse see: Section 2.4 of this thesis.

In analogy to practical discourses, it could be argued that there is only a sense of moral obligation in post-conventional societies if the conditions of the “ideal speech situation” are sufficiently institutionalised in the political order and the political process. Habermas defines this institutionalisation in the political process as the “deliberative model of democracy”, which entails:

- A rule of law that guarantees the equal application of laws to everybody and the enforcement of laws to everybody
- Individual rights that guarantee the possibility to participate in the deliberation of the political process in an equal and free (meaning: non-compulsory) fashion
- A network of non-governmental spheres of the public, where deliberation on political decisions can take place spontaneously and freely
- The principle of popular sovereignty guarantees that laws passed are self-given and in the public interest (Habermas, 1998a: 155-157).

Those four prerequisites are all equally valid and necessary to institutionalise the presuppositions of practical discourses in politics (Habermas, 1998a:399-467; Habermas, 1998b:239-252). In modern societies political legitimacy can only derive from a self-giving of laws that treats each political subject as free and equal. The procedure to produce laws, then, derives its legitimacy from the principle of popular sovereignty. Individual rights, including the rule of law, guarantee that everybody can influence the constituting of political power and participate in the free deliberation of political processes. Consequently, the more the establishment of political order and norms assumes the form of the idealised conditions of a practical discourse, the more the political order and its outcomes (laws, rules, and decisions) will command legitimacy by the ruled. This “democratic principle” is a derivative of Habermas’ discourse principle and informs Habermas’ understanding of political legitimacy.

The more a debate on political orders, policies or decisions approaches the model of deliberative democracy, the more political legitimacy is granted. If the conditions of the practical discourse are met, it is, in the final instance, the arguments presented that create the ultimate rational basis of legitimacy – arguments that can be accepted or rejected:

Legitimacy means that there are good arguments for a political order's claim to be recognised as right and just; a legitimate order deserves recognition. *Legitimacy means a political order's worthiness to be recognised.* This definition highlights the fact that legitimacy is a contestable validity claim; the stability of the order of domination (also) depends on its (at least) de facto recognition (Habermas, 1991a:178).¹⁴

With this notion of political legitimacy Habermas also tries to reconcile the formulation of collective interests that may not always be in a narrow strategic or instrumental interest of all those concerned: the more the conditions of a deliberative democracy are institutionalised in the political order, the more this formulation of collective interest or will commands a sense of moral obligation by all those in whose name it is put forward. Whether or not political outcomes or norms are in the interest of all those concerned cannot be decided from the outside, but only through a practical discourse by all affected members of a political community themselves (Habermas, 1999c:305). Central to Habermas' notion of political legitimacy is, therefore, the institutionalisation of public deliberation of political decisions. In addition to general elections and the representation of interests in parliamentary bodies, the power of questioning, arguing and deliberating proposed laws, and the putting of issues on the political agenda, is central to the creation of political legitimacy in post-conventional societies. This is what Habermas calls the "communicative power" that can be mobilised against administrative power in politics (Habermas, 1998a:228-9; Habermas, 1990:11-50). One important component and locus of this communicative power is a widespread and decentralised network of informal, autonomous public spheres. These public spheres allow all citizens to participate in deliberation if they choose to. In the same vein, public parliamentary debate opens the space of politics to public deliberation. Those public spheres can also transcend national boundaries and be organised internationally and regionally.

Habermas is very much aware that modern mass media should not be confused with free deliberation, although the former provide the necessary basis for a deliberative will formation. But he insists that there are important gradual differences that cause different qualities of public opinions. The more those publics are controlled by the administrative power and the more the assumption by the body politic that the public spheres are not a

¹⁴ Italics in original.

locus of free deliberation prevails, the less political legitimacy is likely to exist and the less political outcomes are accepted by the ruled. Without *effective* communicative power there is no political legitimacy (1998a:446). This claim also applies to the attempts to manipulate the public sphere. If an attempt to manipulate becomes public, it automatically loses its argumentative power (Habermas, 1998a:441).

In addition to the conditions of political discourse producing political legitimacy, Habermas also identifies three main types of arguments within the political discourse that are commonly used to legitimate politics: (1) moral, which refers to arguments based on universally valid norms; (2) pragmatic, which refer to the right means to reach given ends or to decide between different aims and (3) ethical, which are a self-reflection of the past and present being of the political and cultural community.

The difference between ethical-practical and moral-practical arguments is more difficult to discern empirically, although both types of arguments relate to different political communities (Habermas, 1993a:1-18). Ethical arguments refer to specific political communities and their becoming. Here, Habermas admits that certain moral obligations may be valid for some political communities but not for others. The difference is caused by the specific values and moral commitments that are based on a collective lifeworld and its reflexive appropriation: A political community's critical self-reflection on its own history highlights the values present in it as well as a judgement on the continuous validity of those values (Habermas, 1998a:199). Moral-practical discourses are about norms in general, while practical-ethical discourses refer to a specific *ethos*, linked to a specific political community, although practical-moral arguments (with general validity of rightful norms) should not contradict specific practical-ethical arguments.¹⁵ However, practical-ethical discourses may go beyond practical-moral discourses and reflect the collective form of life and its history.

Legitimate laws and legitimate political orders need to prevail in all three types of arguments in political discourses, not just in one set of arguments:

¹⁵ On this difference between the two types of discourses in the context of IR see: Brown, 1992 and 2002; Linklater, 1998.

Legitimate law must pass a discursive test that potentially engages the entire range of different types of discourses. These include [...] moral and ethical discourses [...]; in addition, in so far as an issue involves conflicting particular interests and values that do not permit consensus, a legitimate legal regulation of the issue must involve fair compromise (Rehg, 1996:179).

In conclusion, Habermas' discursive model can be applied to politics and provides a useful notion of political legitimacy. Political legitimacy depends upon the institutionalisation of an idealised practical discourse as Habermas defines it. The more those conditions are absent, the less likely a sense of moral obligation towards political orders or outcomes exists. This notion of political legitimacy based on Habermas' universal pragmatism and discourse ethics, presented in chapter 2, avoids the shortcomings of empiricist notions of political legitimacy (i.e., ultimately not knowing the reasons for the belief in the legitimacy) and tries to avoid the charge of being a subjective and metaphysical wish-list. By looking at the inclusion or exclusion of the publics, it is possible to discern in how far communicative power could be developed for issues of international politics. Thus, Habermas theory of communicative action provides a critical standard within his notion of political legitimacy that can be applied to existing political norms and rules. By looking at the way those political discourses are organised we also avoid the charges against naïve discourse analysis that focuses entirely on the content of discourses and fails to take into account the conditions of discourse.

Habermas also points to different types of arguments that may be mobilised within a political discourse (practical, ethical, moral). It is precisely ethical arguments, arguments linked to the self-reflection of a specific political community, which are of great relevance to the possible influence of collective war memories in politics: practical-moral imperatives derived from collective war memories may be prominent ethical arguments in political discourses and thus shape the legitimacy of political decisions. With such a notion of politics and political legitimacy we will move on to defining a Habermasian notion of political legitimacy that is suitable for international politics.

6.3 Studying the impact of collective war memories on international politics: applying a Habermasian notion of political legitimacy

6.3.1 A Habermasian notion of political legitimacy for international politics

As I have already suggested, Habermas' concept of political legitimacy can be applied to the study of politics in general and, with some adaptations, also to the study of international politics. Various reasons account for this. First, the different types of arguments within the public spheres can be discerned when discussing issues of international politics within political communities: are they pragmatic, ethical or moral arguments in order to support or reject certain validity claims? Second, the moral obligation that international political norms and institutions command within political communities can be assessed in very much the same way as domestic political orders and outcomes. The more they adhere to the idealised presuppositions of a practical discourse, the more they can claim political legitimacy within the political community. Thus, political legitimacy goes beyond governmental discourses and looks into how citizens could participate in the deliberation of political decisions actively or – if they so wish – passively. Third, the application of Habermas' discursive model to the analysis of political legitimacy also provides a general critical standard that applies to both domestic political structures and international political structures and outcomes from the point of view of the political communities and the outside analyst.

While the concept of political legitimacy developed here focuses on the legitimating effect within political communities, Habermas has suggested that this concept of political legitimacy, which is based on general political theory and philosophy, might also apply the international realm itself. As Habermas points out:

Since *morality based on principles* [*prinzipielle Moral*] is sanctioned only through the inner authority of conscience, its conflict with the public morality, still tied to the concrete citizen, is embedded in its claim to universality; the conflict is between the cosmopolitanism of the 'human being' and the loyalties of the citizens (which cannot be universalistic as long as international relations

are subject to the concrete morality of the more powerful). If one follows [...] the developmental logic of global systems of social norms [...] resolution of this conflict is *conceivable* only if the dichotomy between in-group and out-group morality disappears, the opposition between morally and legally regulated areas is relativised, and the validity of *all* norms is tied to discursive will formation (Habermas, 1976:87).

Habermas claims, first, that international politics in general commands less legitimacy than domestic politics, precisely because it fails to institutionalise conditions of the practical discourse mentioned above. At the same time, Habermas defines a political project that aims to advance a discursive will formation in international politics that is more in line with those conditions. This, I would argue, is a logical conclusion from Habermas' own theory. This political project, to overcome the divide between citizens and men, is also central to Andrew Linklater's justification for an "ideal of a universal communicative community" (1998:107), which draws heavily on Habermas' discourse ethics. This comes very close to the project of "cosmopolitan democracy" (Clark, 1999:155), a project that Hutchings also links to Habermas and his work (1999:159-162).¹⁶

Habermas' concept of political legitimacy is not only the normative basis for transforming present barriers to a political and practical discourse on international politics. It also provides guidance to the analysis of legitimating effects towards issues of international politics. It is my contention that, in the final instance of Habermas' analysis, it is individuals that assume a sense of obligation toward a political decision, order or structure; it is they who grant legitimacy to international politics, not governments or states conceptualised as abstract entities. What Habermas' communicative concept of political legitimacy points to is, then, the need to analyse the different conditions of political discourse on issues of international politics (1) within political communities, and, (2) beyond the political communities. In this context, barriers to the ideal speech situation of a political discourse may provide indication of a possibly low legitimating effect in international politics. The notion of international political legitimacy appears, therefore, not as an ideal-type or critical (but utopian) yardstick, but, to different degrees, observable – and thus useful for empirical research.

¹⁶ On the potential of transforming political community through transforming, among others, practical discourses in international politics see also: Proops, 1996.

The central question of this thesis, that is, how are we to study the impact of collective war memories on international politics, defies a direct and straightforward answer. The answer provided in this chapter is that collective war memories can influence political legitimacy, depending on the conditions of the practical discourse (taking the ideal speech situation and its institutionalisation in political structures and processes as a critical yardstick) and the type of arguments (pragmatic, moral, ethical) prevailing in the political discourse. However, as is the case with the concept of social learning, Habermas' concept of political legitimacy is still a very abstract one, having been developed by debating issues of political legitimacy within political philosophy. The final section of this chapter explains how this general concept of international political legitimacy can be operationalised in order to guide empirical research.

6.3.2. Understanding the impact of collective war memory on international politics: a research agenda

This thesis rests on the assumption that it is necessary to distinguish the discourse on collective war memory from the political process. This made it necessary to develop a notion of political legitimacy, which provides the framework for analysing the empirically changing impact of collective war memories on political legitimacy. This notion suggests two areas of empirical research, which provide, in their totality, helpful insights as to whether or not collective war memories had an impact on legitimating specific decisions or processes of international politics:

- the empirical analysis of the arguments used in a public discourse, including an analysis of the type of arguments put forward (ethical, pragmatic, moral)
- an analysis of the conditions of that practical discourse, using the criteria of the ideal speech situation as yardstick and judging the degree to which those empirical arguments might have contributed to a sense of moral obligation (legitimacy) toward the decisions, orders or policies

There may be certain objections to this research programme. One may be the usefulness of assessing the establishment of international norms and orders by using as critical yardstick the presupposed conditions of an ideal speech situation, which are already difficult to fulfil in the domestic realm. The conditions set by the ideal speech situation

in the diplomatic realm – as being the “area least affected by democratisation” (Hill, 1991:86) - seem entirely unreachable in practice. The same arguments have already been made for domestic politics. And the same answer given for that realm applies to international politics. If the source and sense of obligation towards the process and outcome of international politics should be assessed, this is one credible set of criteria to do so. And it may, in fact, highlight the reasons for a weak legitimacy of international politics. In other words, the seemingly *utopian* level of political discourses may actually identify the *real* level of moral commitment, and thus be useful for the analysis.

Another critique might point to the fact that most issues of international politics are dealt with outside the public deliberation by “secretive states”. However, the analysis of public discourses does not preclude the possibility of clandestine or secret political decisions that shape international politics. On the contrary, it is often the case that those decisions *need* to be taken out of the public eye precisely *because* they contradict the prevailing moral and ethical codes.

For specific decisions in international politics circumstantial factors must not be excluded altogether. One aspect is to focus on the political groups that participate in the practical discourse. Another is to take the international factors into account as well. Both dimensions help to grasp the specific context of a decision or policy to be formulated. In order to assess the legitimating effect of collective war memories in international politics, it seems necessary to take the following three dimensions into account in empirical research:

- international factors and developments that shaped the decision analysed or the legitimisation discourse itself;
- the political sociology within each society, the empirically identifiable arguments put forward (pragmatic, ethical, moral arguments) and their relation to practical-moral imperatives derived from collective war memories
- the conditions of the political discourse and the assessment of the degree to which those empirically identified arguments contribute to political legitimacy.

The second dimension also highlights the prominence of practical-moral imperatives derived from collective war memories in the political discourse. But only if this analysis

is juxtaposed to the conditions of the political discourse are we able to pass a judgement as to the extent to which those practical-moral imperatives *actually* contributed to legitimating the decisions in international politics. Such a two-step analysis (analysis of arguments put forward AND the analysis of the conditions of political discourse) is different from deducing directly a legitimating effect from the empirical presence of historical analogies.

The third dimension is directly taken from Habermas' notion of political legitimacy. Habermas states that a legitimating effect of political decisions is more likely if a previous political discourse has taken place, which fulfils the requirements of the ideal speech situation. This is, first and foremost, a matter of the structure of the political system, which provides indications about the possibility to engage in a political discourse on specific decisions and to weigh the different arguments and options. In addition to the question of political structure, there are two further areas of research that highlight a degree of permeability of the political discourse: (a) the degree of information dissemination by governments that take different and controversial arguments into account; (b) the reflection of different arguments present in the wider public in the parliamentary debate as well as the wider media. The second issue inquires in particular whether parliament or the media act as so-called gate-keepers for certain arguments and discussions, letting pass some and withholding others. The more parliament and the mass media act as gatekeepers of arguments, the less permeable is the political discourse.

Habermas' concept of political legitimacy can be applied to all the different levels of discourse within and, even, beyond political communities. While clearly an exhaustive analysis of decisions in international politics would require looking at legitimating efforts both within and beyond political communities, in the context of this thesis I will limit myself to illustrate the application of the Habermasian concept of political legitimacy to legitimating efforts *within* political communities, where states play an important role of mediating between legitimating efforts from other states and their own political communities. It is my contention that the mediating function of states in the domestic realm, by confronting the political community with legitimating attempts from other states, can be analysed. However, it would simply be beyond the scope of this

thesis to include an analysis of the conditions of political discourse beyond political communities.

As the literature on international politics and foreign policy analysis suggests, the relevance of collective memories in general and collective war memories in particular may vary according to the topics under discussion. Collective war memories deal, by definition, with an experience of national survival, an existential experience by warfare with other groups or countries. Thus, by the very definition of this experience, collective war memories exert a great influence on present threat perceptions, decisions and courses of action in the realm of defence and security (Heuser, 1998:199). To a lesser extent, and this is the second hypothesis, this may also apply to acts of transferring substantial sovereign power to supra-national bodies, as happened in the course of the European integration process between 1945 and 1995. Precisely because it is sovereignty which appears to be at stake, it is not far fetched to assume that, in those cases, collective war memories might have a stronger impact on actual decisions than in other areas of international politics. This pre-selection does not limit the applicability of the concept of international political legitimacy but rather directs us to certain policy areas where practical-moral imperatives of collective war memories are more likely to play an important role. It is with this hypothesis as guidance that I now turn to the examination of the decisions in France and Germany concerning the establishment of a European Defence Community (EDC) and the institution of a European Monetary Union (EMU).

Chapter 7

The impact of collective war memories on selected issues of Franco-German relations between 1945 and 1995: EDC and EMU

As the previous chapter stated, the actual impact of collective war memories on *decisions* in international politics cannot be read off directly from the implicit, or sometimes explicitly stated practical-moral imperatives derived from collective war memories. In fact, as with any mono-causal explanation, a general causal claim cannot account for differences of outcomes. While chapters 4 and 5 of this work illustrated different practical-moral imperatives derived from collective war memories in France and Germany, the present chapter seeks to highlight how prominent or important those practical-moral imperatives actually were in legitimising political action in the domestic realms, where states have to mediate between the domestic and international sphere on international issues. It is my contention that the concept of political legitimacy based on Habermas' theory of communicative action and its research programme (developed in section 6.3.2) provide an adequate framework to assess the *actual impact* that collective war memories had on such decisions.

Many authors have claimed that Franco-German relations after 1945 were heavily influenced by collective war memories in both countries. A comprehensive analysis that would put that claim to the test in important decisions in Franco-German relations is, however, clearly beyond the scope of this thesis. Yet, as was stated in chapter 6, it seems likely that decisions concerning security matters, as well as decisions related to transfers of sovereignty, should be legitimated by collective war memories to a higher degree than those decisions related to other fields of international politics. This is why this chapter aims to apply the concept of political legitimacy to the decisions, first, to form a European Defence Community (EDC) between 1950 and 1954 (section 1) and, second, to conform a European Monetary Union (EMU) between 1990 and 1993 (section 2). Selecting two decisions that are separated by a considerable time span might

also help us to identify possible developments in the impact of collective war memories on Franco-German relations.

Each of those two sections proceeds in four steps: in the first one, the national and international contexts that contributed to the tabling of a specific decision are discussed, the second part analyses the empirically identifiable arguments of political currents, clusters them according to Habermas' categories (pragmatic, ethical, moral) and locates the prominence of practical-moral imperatives derived from collective war memories within those arguments. The third part, in turn, highlights the conditions of the political discourse using Habermas' ideal speech situation as critical yardstick. The fourth part assesses the extent to which collective war memories legitimated the decisions in France and Germany with regard to EDC and EMU. The international factors and the political groups that put forward certain arguments during the exchange of political discourses will be identified by using secondary material, while the empirical arguments and the conditions of the political discourse will be analysed by using primary sources, such as newspapers from France and Germany, as well as official protocols from parliamentary debates and press releases by political actors.¹ The chapter concludes with an evaluation of the concept of political legitimacy and assesses the usefulness of the Habermasian approach to analyse the legitimating effect of collective war memories.

7.1. The European Defence Community (EDC) in the 1950s: a victim of collective war memories?

7.1.1 The international factors leading to EDC negotiations

After the Second World War the Western Allies assumed political power in their occupation zones in Germany. It was at the London Conference in 1948 that it became clear that there was no hope of reaching an agreement between the four powers on the political future of Germany. Thus, the three Western powers continued to negotiate certain recommendations regarding the future of the Western occupation zones. Those

¹ Unless otherwise stated, the translations of all these materials are my own.

recommendations entailed the creation of a West German state by fusing the three occupation zones and the equal participation of that West Germany-to be in the European Reconstruction Programme.

In March 1948 the Soviets left the Allied Control Council in Berlin and began a blockade of (West-) Berlin soon afterwards. The Berlin blockade and the toppling of a democratically elected government in Czechoslovakia by the Communists were signs of the looming Cold War in Europe. Discussions in the State Department of the United States began about organising the defence of Western Europe. In 1948 the Brussels Pact was formed and in April 1949 NATO was founded. Five years after the end of the Second World War the discussions of a new form of cooperation in form of European integration gathered pace in Western Europe. 1949 saw the rise of additional international organisations such as the Council of Europe and the OEEC (Organisation of European Economic Cooperation) as a framework for the Marshall Aid Plan (European Reconstruction Program). West Germany did not take part in any of the two organisations.

As early as 1949 the German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, offered a defence contribution by West Germany. But until 1949 the policies of demilitarisation were still the guiding principles towards West Germany and the West Allies were hesitant to rearm it. Even after the Federal Republic of Germany was founded the Allies created an office of military disarmament to supervise the future demilitarisation.

French governmental policies towards Germany between 1944 and 1949 were predominantly informed by the policies formulated after the First World War (Auerbach, 1990:587). Although some political currents influenced by the Resistance and former deportees, had formulated different strategies towards Germany, these did not have any practical impact before 1950, when international circumstances proved the hitherto applied policies futile and favoured a different approach towards Germany. But, between 1944 and 1950 French politicians were still “obsessed by a possible revival of the German danger” and de Gaulle himself stated February 1945 the goal of France in “to make sure that no German aggression will be possible in the future’ (Poidevin, 1991:331-332).

The USA and Great Britain, but also the Soviet Union, disagreed with most of the French suggestions of de-coupling certain regions from Germany or, at least, creating a loose political order in that country. With the fusion of the American and British zones in 1947, some restrictions to German sovereignty were lifted. Further concessions followed after the founding of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949 under the so-called Petersberg Protocols. From its inception, the West German government was interested in reducing and abolishing the controls imposed by the Allied powers in industrial production as well as in the area of rearmament.

Within the United States government, and, also, informally with Chancellor Adenauer, discussions about a German defence contribution to Western forces began in 1949 (Ziebura, 1997:78). But the French government was not willing to consider the rearmament of Germany, and was completely opposed to an independent national German army, which would contribute in the context of NATO to joint Western defence efforts (Herbst, 1989:90). With the Marshall Aid and monetary reform, the increase in industrial production and the “economic miracle” in West Germany gathered pace. There were numerous concerns in France that Germany would soon overtake and, then, dominate economically and, later, politically Western Europe as the first industrial power.

The official Allied policy of demilitarisation in Germany changed dramatically, when Communist North Korean attacked South Korea in June 1950. The parallels and coincidences between Korea and Germany abound and a similar scenario happening in Germany did not seem so remote to many decision-makers and politicians at that time. The USA officially demanded a contribution by West Germany to the defence of Western Europe within a multilateral framework. Adenauer reiterated in two memoranda from August 1950 his offer for a West German contribution to Western military defence in return for a re-establishment of West German sovereignty (Herbst, 1989:95-96). In September 1950 Truman asked France and Great Britain to accept a German defence contribution (which implied West German rearmament) within NATO or to face a possible reduction of US troops in Europe. Under those international circumstances, the French government changed its policy towards Germany in 1949/1950. The new solution was ‘Europe’:

During this time, the relationship of the two peoples was transformed from the deepest hatred, inspired by the unparalleled inhumanity of Nazi domination, to close cooperation and even friendship. [...] Yet this understanding would not have been lasting if a new character had not entered into this relationship *à deux*. That character was Europe. The attempt to reconcile France and Germany was merged in the construction of Europe [...] (Willis, 1965:vii).

As French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman later explained, if more members were involved, who accepted restrictions on their sovereignty, it might be easier for Germany to accept them as well (Willis, 1965:104). Apart from this very realistic argument, however, there was an intention to create a Europe that was more than an international organisation. Such integration should help maintain European peace and make a war between France and Germany structurally impossible and ‘unthinkable’. Between 1950 and 1955 the Western Allies, including France, were able to trade the increased return of sovereign rights for increased West European integration. It was made clear to Adenauer and the West German government, that, in return for integration in the area of coal and steel, as well as in the realm of defence, the rights of the Allied powers would be considerably reduced and, in the case of a defence contribution, altogether abolished.

Another concern in France was that a more sovereign West Germany might shift toward the East, in order to attain reunification with East Germany at the price of neutrality. By “binding” West Germany firmly to Western organisations that temptation should be avoided (Trausch, 1995:112). Finally, given the economic pace at which West German industry was recovering and an army being amassed of roughly 500,000 men with modern equipment a fear of German domination in a new Europe without certain restrictions and rules seemed almost inevitable to the French government, in general, and Schuman, in particular. Binding West Germany more strongly to the West implied, however, two significant prices to be paid: it postponed the outlook of German unification (which the Social Democratic opposition and some members of Adenauer’s cabinet stressed) and it meant that all other participating countries (including France) also had to sacrifice sovereign rights.

The Schuman Plan (for a European Community for Steel and Coal - ECSC, proposed in May 1950) and the Pleven Plan (for a European Defence Community - EDC, proposed in October 1950) shared, therefore, a similar logic developed in the French Foreign Ministry by Jean Monnet. Members should give up certain sovereign rights to a High

Authority (or, in the case of EDC, European Defence Minister) to be controlled by a council of ministers and a parliamentary assembly. The nature of the trade-off between the two sets of interests was made clear by linking the different treaties with each other: The Pleven Plan would only be ratified once the Schuman Plan had come into effect. The abolition of the Allied control rights over Germany (with few exceptions) as identified in the Basic Agreement (also called Bonn Agreement) was to be signed, once the EDC treaty had been ratified. In the case of the Schuman Plan, the treaty was signed on 18 April, 1951 and came into effect on 10 August, 1952. With the signing of the Schuman treaty the ‘little revision’ of the Occupation Statute was carried out on 7 March, 1951. On 9 July, 1951, the declaration of the end of war between the Western Allies and West Germany had been signed; and on October 9, 1951, the Allies renounced all supervisory powers for West German federal and Land legislation. Finally, on July 25, 1952, the International Authority of the Ruhr (IAR) surrendered all its competences to the High Authority of the ESCS.² The ratification of the Schuman treaty in January 1951 was secured in West Germany by the majority of the governing coalition (CDU, DP, FDP, BHE) and opposed by the Social Democrats and the Communists.³ In France, the Socialists (SFIO), the Centrist MRP (Schuman’s party) and the left UDSR secured the majority in the National Assembly for the Plan, opposed by the Gaullists, the Communists and the Progressivists (Grosser, 1956:101-102).

The Pleven Plan accepted German rearmament, but, from the outset, sought to include the German units in an integrated West European army. Thus, Germany could contribute to Western defence without having an independent national army. Pleven proposed a defence minister who would oversee joint military planning in a chiefs of staff committee, supervised by a parliamentary assembly. The smallest unit possible (battalion) should be kept national, but any unit above should be European. There was meant to be a European Armament Agency and joint procurement for armaments. Certain controversial weapons should not be produced in “strategically exposed” areas (i.e. in Germany, which was considered to be at the frontline of the East-West

² In return, West Germany assumed all debts of pre-World-War-II Germany and paid all the reconstruction aid (Herbst, 1989:96).

³ “The [German] Communists joined the Socialists in opposing the pool on the ground that it would deliver German industry into the hands of foreign capitalists, assure the loss of the Saar, and invite the seizure of Germany’s natural resources. Their attitude was in striking contrast to that of the French Communists, who claimed that the pool would hand French industry over to German imperialism and the neo-Nazis.” Willis, 1965:129.

confrontation). Support and aid by third parties (especially the United States) would be given to EDC as a whole and then divided among its members. Thus, no national contingent would be self-sufficient, because it would neither have a national supply system nor an independent budget. The national armies that already existed were allowed, under specific circumstances, to exist, albeit outside the EDC (overseas territories, military action within a UN mandate). According to special procedures, member states could withdraw temporarily certain parts of the army. The entire EDC armies were to be under the command of the Supreme Allied Commander of Europe (SACEUR) of NATO.

But there were also marked differences between the original proposal by Pleven in 1950 and the EDC treaty that was signed in Paris on 27 May, 1952.⁴ The largest national unit now was declared a division (12,000 to 13,000 men); the European Defence Minister should be replaced by a “Defence commissariat” or “Board of Commissioners” consisting of 9 members (2 each from France, Germany, Italy and one each from the Benelux countries). Many decisions required unanimous support by the Council of Ministers, giving each country veto rights. Finally, the USA and Great Britain added security guarantees in case Germany withdrew from the treaty. The Occupation Statute would be abolished in the Bonn Agreement, once the treaty on EDC was ratified.

7.1.2 Legitimising decisions on EDC: arguments and groups

7.1.2.1 The groups and arguments in Germany

The parliamentary Left opposed this treaty based on arguments related to the national interests of Germany and its status, put forward by Kurt Schumacher between 1950 and 1952, and, after Schumacher’s death, by Erich Ollenhauer, leader of the SPD. Schumacher regarded EDC as another step away from a possible reunification with East Germany and complained about the ‘blackmail’ entailed in offering sovereign rights in return for rearmament. Although the SPD did support the anti-militaristic and pacifistic “Without-Me-Movement” (*Ohne-mich'-Bewegung*), whose political position was very

⁴ For a more detailed account of the treaty and the changes made during the negotiations see: Furdon, 1980.

much informed by the lessons of the Second World War and was supported by Allied re-education, its main arguments revolved around issues of both national equality (which they saw violated in the paragraphs on EDC that treated Germany in a discriminatory way as a ‘strategically exposed zone’ and because of the fact that Germany would not have any troops outside EDC) and unification.

One important argument in the debate was the “Korea analogy”. While the government argued that without rearmament West Germany faced the fate of South Korea, the opposition was not convinced that Germany was comparable to Korea (given the presence of US-American troops in Germany). Although the SPD clearly favoured economic, cultural and overall-political orientation and integration into the West, it rejected the idea of military integration, which, it feared, might even trigger an arms race in Europe. The West German Communists rejected the claim that the international situation required a military alliance including German troops. Deputy Reimann, from the Communist Party, even claimed that the “threat from the East” fitted perfectly into Goebbel’s Nazi propaganda against the East in general and the Soviet Union in particular (*Stenographsches Protokoll des Deutschen Bundestags*, Session 190, 7 February, 1952). Thus, the Communists and the Social Democrats in Germany resorted to quite nationalistic arguments, departed from a different threat perception as the government and saw little benefits for Germany in those treaties.

By contrast, the governing CDU/CSU of Adenauer emphasised the need for West German rearmament (independent of any changes in the occupation statute in return of rearmament) in the face of the Communist threat in Eastern Europe and Korea. At the same time, Adenauer regarded military integration as another step (together with the Schuman Plan) towards European integration and, finally, Franco-German reconciliation. In turn, other members of CDU/CSU, like Franz-Joseph Strauss, admitted that the issue of rearmament had arrived very abruptly, given the efforts already made to re-educate the German people:

We have taken seriously the principle of ‘re-education’ or ‘re-orientation’, we have not regarded it as a propaganda instrument, we have taken it so seriously that we would have foregone any military activities in our political lifetime and that of our next generation (*Stenographsches Protokoll des Deutschen Bundestags*, Session 190, 7 February, 1952).

But Strauss then went on to attack the “Without-Me-Movement” as playing into the hands of the Soviet Union by not realising the current threat from the East. The governing FDP reiterated the claim that – in particular after the Berlin-blockade – any pacifism would help the cause of Soviet expansion. Opposition and governing parties thus differed sharply on the interpretation of the international security situation in Europe.

Adenauer countered Schumacher’s argument about EDC’s being a step away from German reunification by arguing that German reunification had to be achieved from strength, not from weakness. Adenauer claimed that through strength within the Western alliance there was a possibility for substantive negotiations with the Soviet Union, not before. Finally, there were those parties that, in principle agreed to the treaties, but attached conditions to their approval. The BHE joined the government coalition in supporting the EDC treaty when Adenauer promised to ask for a prior settlement of the Saar question. The FDP, in turn, demanded the “rehabilitation of the ordinary German soldier” in the context of the EDC treaty (*Stenographisches Protokoll des Deutschen Bundestags*, Session 190, 7 February, 1952, p.8132). What the FDP most objected to was the foreseen unequal treatment of West Germany. The FDP insisted upon a motion that requested the government to negotiate towards equal treatment.

Both the end to the occupation regime and the restrictions to German sovereignty, as laid out in the Bonn Agreement, was generally welcomed by all parties in the German parliament. The CDU/CSU pointed to the fundamental difference between a national army that was meant to boost national pride and status, and an army included in a defence system that protected certain values. As Deputy Jaeger from the CDU/CSU admitted, young Germans would be only willing to fight under a European flag, not under a sole German flag (*Stenographisches Protokoll des Deutschen Bundestags*, Session 191, 8 February 1952, p.8178). Adenauer was able to win the support of the FDP by insisting upon equality of EDC members together with the German Party by demanding a change of treatment of the German war criminals. The German parliament linked several conditions (“motions”) to the support of the government to sign the EDC treaty and the Bonn Agreement:

- equality of rights should be maintained

- restoration of democratic rights in the Saar region
- equitable distribution of defence costs
- release of the war criminals
- end of the occupation regime (Willis, 1965:156)

The most important of these conditions was a clear mandate by Adenauer to negotiate a new text that would insist on the equal treatment of all participants of EDC (Press Release CDU/CSU, *Deutschland-Union-Dienst (DUD)*, 9 May, 1952, p.2). On March 19, 1953, the Bundestag adopted the EDC Treaty and the Bonn Agreement by a vote of 224 in favour and 166 against.

Outside the West German parliament two groups or movements mobilised for or against the treaty: the pacifists and the former career soldiers in West Germany. With the announcement of an EDC treaty in his cabinet, Adenauer faced strong criticism from his Interior Minister, Gustav Heinemann, who finally left the government and formed his own party, the All-German People's Party (*Gesamtdeutsche Volkspartei*). This party opposed the EDC treaty on two accounts: first, the rejection of militarism and German rearmament, and, second, the policy preference of Western integration at the expense of German reunification. Heinemann, the president of the Synod of the Protestant Church, found strong support among the two churches, as well as among the 'Without Me' Movement'. Throughout the debates on EDC, the anti-rearmament attitude displayed by Heinemann and his party reflected the majority opinion within West German society (Willis, 1965:145). Another internal criticism of this treaty came from Jakob Kaiser, the Minister for all-German questions and former member of the East German CDU. He considered military integration into the West as yet another step away from German reunification (Herbst 1989:106-107).

By contrast, former career officers of the German *Wehrmacht* saw in military integration an opportunity to rehabilitate their reputation and regain an accepted status (Willis, 1965:147-151). They openly linked the willingness to contribute to Western defence to an end of war-crimes trials against soldiers, a position Adenauer and his government adopted in the negotiations with the Allied High Commissioners in Bonn.⁵

⁵ "Thus, by 1951 Germany's ex-soldiers had entered the debate over the Pleven Plan with vigour and organisation. For the first time since the end of the war, they faced the federal and Allied governments from a position of strength that added weight to their demands: renunciation of the doctrine of collective guilt and rehabilitation of the German soldier's honour; release, or at least judicial review, for soldiers

But that enthusiasm fanned fears in Germany, France and other countries that ‘Hitler’s generals’ and the former ‘officer caste’ would be reinstalled.

Despite the support of former career soldiers, who had not committed any personal crimes, Adenauer and the governing centre-right parties acknowledged the still fresh memories of the Second World War. From the outset, Adenauer accepted an integration of German units into an integrated army, thus avoiding a German national army. He was also willing to accept the limitations on the German army as a means of creating trust among the other members of EDC. Realising the fears in other countries, the CDU/CSU parties tried to reassure the neighbouring countries on the motives and policies of a German member of EDC:

Germany does not seek any domination, neither in a united nor in a non-united Europe. It neither wants war nor does it want a war for the ‘liberation’ of the Germans behind the Iron Curtain [...]. On the other hand, we are aware of the still very active mistrust of the foreign countries toward the Germans. And this is also a reason why we are in favour of those treaties, because their binding character prevents any aggressive policy and any policy that aims at domination (Press Release, *Deutscher Unionsdienst*, 24 September, 1953, pp.1-2).

Adenauer fought off any ideas of German neutrality (in exchange for German unification or avoiding German rearmament), because he thought Germany would not survive such a position and rejected the idea that neutrality meant avoiding German rearmament.⁶

The pacifists in West Germany clearly referred to moral, as well as ethical, arguments to oppose the Treaty. They were very much informed by memories of the Second World War. By contrast, the Social Democrats referred to more pragmatic arguments in their opposition to EDC. For them, it was the wrong means of achieving national independence (or sovereignty) as well as German reunification. Practical-moral imperatives derived from collective war memories were not very prominent in the arguments of the SPD. The Social Democratic Party displayed a surprisingly nationalistic line of argumentation, although former deportees within the SPD had

punished as war criminals; and equal status for the German soldier and officer in the European army and for the German state in the European union.” Willis, 1965:150.

⁶ See Adenauer’s declarations in this respect in *Die Welt von Morgen*, Monthly journal, February 1952.

formulated imperatives focusing on reconciliation, and overcoming nationalism and militarism in West Germany.⁷

The governing CDU and CSU, by contrast, used a fairly balanced mix of pragmatic and ethical arguments in their political discourse: on the one hand, they put forward such pragmatic arguments as the current threat perception of the East and *Westintegration* as a means of getting rid of Allied controls of Germany. On the other hand, *Westintegration* was indeed seen as an ethical argument on the reflected history of Germany (especially the idea of a special path of Germany in the past) and a strengthening and tying of West Germany to Western democracies. The willingness by the CDU/CSU to adhere to controls of Germany by European integration was justified publicly by Adenauer and other conservative politicians with reference to the still existing distrust and fear towards Germany and, thus, as a confidence-building measure. These ethical arguments were clearly informed by collective war memories within the CDU/CSU, although the stress of a new situation (threat from the East) was much more prominent than the argument of Franco-German reconciliation or that of overcoming nationalism or militarism.

The other governing parties, DP, BHE, and FDP, used fairly pragmatic arguments and conditions for their support of EDC (equal treatment, solving of related problems through those negotiations) and referred less to ethically or morally informed arguments. The German Party and Adenauer seized the opportunity of rearmament to end war-crimes trials and to rehabilitate the German soldiers. Finally, the West German Communists drew heavily on historical parallels between the anti-Soviet policy of Nazi-Germany and the current debate on EDC. Moreover, they referred to the moral as well as ethical arguments of pacifism and disarmament. Given the spectrum of political currents and arguments put forward in West Germany regarding EDC, practical-moral imperatives were not too prominent. Only the governing CDU/CSU, to a certain degree, and the Communists drew more heavily on arguments informed by collective war memories. Others, notably the SPD, used different types of arguments.

⁷ In fact, as meetings of the Socialist International, such as the 6th congress of the Socialist International in May 1953 in Paris show, the SPD was fairly isolated in such a position, whereas most European Socialist parties supported EDC on the grounds that it helped to overcome nationalism, national militarism and was a means to create trust among former enemies. On this congress see: *Europress*, 3 June, 1953.

7.1.2.2 The groups and arguments in France

When the Schuman Plan was ratified in the French National Assembly, there were some remarkable speeches against, but also in favour of the treaty that were heavily influenced by collective war memories. General Aumeran was the most outspoken, warning against a new German expansionism, while Gaston Palewski, from the Gaullists RPF, warned against a German hegemony within the Europe of the Six (Grosser, 1956:100-102). The Communists aired similar concerns and feared that the French coal and steel industry could be handed over to warmongering Nazis and German imperialists (Willis, 1965:129). The support by the Socialists, MRP the UDSR and many Radicals secured a majority for the ratification of the Schuman Plan in the French National Assembly. But many, if not all, of these arguments would resurface in the debate on EDC.

There were four governments during the ratification period, from Antoine Pinay (The Independents; March to December 1952) to René Mayer (Radicals; January to May 1953) to Joseph Laniel (Independent; June 1953 to June 1954) and, finally, Pierre Mendès-France (Radicals; June 1954 to February 1955). The Pinay government was supported by the ‘European coalition’ (MRP, SFIO, UDSR, Radicals), while Mayer, Laniel and Mendès-France depended upon Gaullist support. At the same time, the influence of the MRP declined, and the SFIO went into opposition. As in the German parliament, members of the French National Assembly attached various conditions before the signing of the EDC treaty and the Bonn agreement in its session in February 1952. Some conditions simply referred to other matters that should be solved before signing these treaties. Those issues were:

- A solution to the Saar problem
- The subordination of the European army under a political authority with limited but clear competences
- A security guarantee by the United States that it would deploy US American troops on European soil
- A close association of Great Britain to EDC (if not actual membership) (“Neuer Kompromiss im Kabinett Laniel” in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 18 April, 1954).

Unlike the United States and Great Britain, for French parties the integration within NATO did not seem to provide far enough control of German forces to avoid a

development that might be directed one day against France. Thus, the objective of furthering European integration seemed to provide (a) a Western European defence against the threat of the Soviet Union, (b) a controlled rearmament of West Germany, (c) a protection or assurance that this German force could not – again – be used against France. This last motive, clearly informed by memories of the Second World War and other Franco-German wars, was strong within the MRP, the Radicals and the SFIO. Foreign Minister Georges Bidault put forward this argument very forcefully during the debate in October 1953 in the French Senate (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 31 October, 1953). In particular the MRP used the slogan “EDC or *Wehrmacht*” in order to rally support for EDC (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 30 January, 1952). The Socialists and the MRP saw a means of overcoming Franco-German hostility, to create trust and to overcome old forms of nationalism and militarism (especially SFIO). Many parties, including the SFIO, in particular the Conservatives, Gaullist, some Radicals and Communists were against German rearmament at this time altogether (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 16 September, 1953).

The opposition to EDC varied and also changed over time. The party opposed from the very beginning to EDC was the Communist Party. For the PCF, German rearmament would lead to the re-establishment of old officer castes, of authoritarianism, “a Europe of Adenauer, the Americans and the Vatican”, all directed against the Soviet Union (*The Times*, London, 20 November, 1953). The Communists also stressed the loss of French sovereignty and French independence. Thus, the main argument was a general rejection of German rearmament in any form. Some Gaullists and all Communists and Progressivists composed this group, forming sometimes a quite unusual alliance.⁸

A second group of opponents did not believe in the effectiveness of the control of Germany within EDC. It did not matter how many safety clauses were included therein, they feared that, in the long run, Germany would dominate and even impose its own objectives (like reunification with East Germany) onto EDC. This fear was very widespread among Conservative, Independents (like M. Reynaud) and radical deputies (like Edouard Herriot and Edouard Daladier). The repeated explanation of the current

⁸ “One of the odd sights of the preliminary debate has been Communists and nationalists periodically sharing the same platforms ‘as in the Resistance of war time’, as they have expressed it, condemning the German rearmament plan.” “France is divided on EDC”, in *New York Herald Tribune*, 18 February, 1954.

procedures (unanimity for certain decisions, procedures and structures) could not clear those doubts. It was over the credibility of those safeguards against Germany provided by EDC where the judgments differed (“Party Differences on European Defence, *The Times*, London, 20 January, 1953).

The question of safeguards against a possible renewed German aggression was the particular concern of the Socialists. As their secretary general, Guy Mollet, stressed time and again, the SFIO was willing to support ratification of EDC and the Bonn Agreement, if three conditions were met: security guarantees by the United States, closer association of Great Britain with EDC and a political authority supervising EDC.⁹ The Radicals demanded similar guarantees and set some additional conditions before ratification could proceed (a prior agreement of the Saar problem and the ratification of the additional protocols) (“Die Radikalsozialisten stellen Bedingungen” in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 21 September, 1953). Others, like Bardoux from the Farmers’ Party claimed that ‘Little Europe’ (Europe of the Six) would fulfil the “wishes of the Pangerman League before 1914 or the aims of a greater German Reich” (quoted in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 19 November, 1953).

A third group was not willing to pay the necessary price of supra-nationalism, a certain loss of sovereign rights for France, in order to exert the desired control on German rearmament. That view was most widespread among the Gaullists, although the Gaullist Party (RPF) was also split between those who preferred a certain control over Germany and those who wanted less control of Germany, but full independence and sovereignty of the French military. De Gaulle himself was first in favour of integration, whereas he later insisted that France should not give up its sovereign rights, even if that implied Germany’s having its own national army albeit integrated in a confederation (like in the case of NATO) (*Le Monde*, 27 February, 1953). Some Gaullists, like Michel Debré, followed him in this direction, while others, like M. Beaumont, preferred a tighter control over Germany (see: *Le Monde*, 19 October, 1953).

⁹ This was the position of SFIO during 1953. In a resolution on an extraordinary congress in May 1954, the SFIO supported the ratification of the treaty as it considered that the three conditions had been sufficiently met. See: *New York Times*, 31 May, 1954. Despite this resolution, half of the deputies defected from that party line in the final vote on EDC in August 1954.

Many politicians refused to accept the inevitability of a German rearmament during the ratification debate. The French government clinched on to a possible agreement with the Soviet Union between 1950 and 1954, always hoping that some form of agreement among the four victorious powers of the Second World War might prevent the need for German rearmament. The repeated attempts to halt ratification and to push for a Four-Powers-Conference on Germany between 1952 and 1954 count as one of its objectives to overcome the original reason for the swift rearmament of Germany. This explains the many delays that occurred when a possible conference with the Soviet Union seemed an option to French politicians.¹⁰

A fifth group was worried about the young Bonn democracy and the re-establishment of the old military through EDC. Thus, the concern was a rise of militarism and nationalism and a weakening of the young Bonn democracy by re-establishing the old career soldiers' elite that had fought the Second World War. This was a very significant concern among deputies of the Left and newspapers with roots in the resistance (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 30 January, 1952, p.2). In contrast to those opponents of EDC, the supporters of the treaty argued that the alternative to EDC was "*Wehrmacht*", meaning precisely a national German army that would have authoritarian repercussions for the Bonn democracy. This was an argument put forward by supporters of EDC in the SFIO (like Guy Mollet or Pierre Commin).¹¹

During the ratification period in France there were numerous attempts to fulfil the requirements set by various French parties for a ratification of the EDC treaty. The United States gave a formal guarantee as a form of annex to the treaty committing itself to continuous deployment of forces in Europe. Great Britain did commit her troops to be deployed in the framework of the Brussels Pact (later renamed Western European Union). Parallel to the negotiations on EDC, an ad-hoc committee headed by the Belgian Paul-Henri Spaak drafted a treaty on the European Political Community that was presented, in January 1953, to the enlarged parliamentary assembly of ECSC and later to the foreign ministers of the Six in summer 1953. This political authority was to

¹⁰ "The fact that the traditional French fear of Germany has not been displaced by fear of the Soviet Union explains much of French opinion regarding the pending treaty." *The New York Times*, 25 August, 1954.

¹¹ See Commin's speech at the National Assembly reprinted in: *Das Parlament*, 18 November, 1953.

be the overarching construction for EDC, mentioned in Article 38 of the EDC treaty. This treaty was to be ratified once France (and Italy) had ratified the EDC treaty and the Bonn agreement. But in 1953 the French government added a number of pre-conditions to the treaties, many of them at the demand of the Gaullists:

- Unity between French troops overseas and in EDC
- Weighting the votes of France in case of temporary withdrawal
- Free movement between different deployments without prior agreement by SACEUR
- Links between Great Britain and EDC should be strengthened
- An agreement between France and Germany on the Saar
- A Four-Power-conference with the Soviet Union
- A political authority of EDC

Another issue was the burden-sharing in Indochina, where France was heavily dependent upon US American material and financial support. That should be dealt with before Mayer, himself a supporter of EDC, accepted to proceed with the ratification of the treaty. The Four-Power-Conference was called off, while the political authority existed in a draft version to be discussed in a meeting of the Foreign Ministers in September 1953. The talks on the Saar, however, did not advance, but France received so-called ‘interpretative documents’ by other prospective EDC members that declared the unity of French troops and the possibility to move troops from overseas to EDC and vice versa.

When Prime Minister Pierre Mendès-France came to power in 1954, the new government was asked by the Gaullists to negotiate amendments to EDC treaty. This time, the supra-national character of EDC should be abolished or, at least, suspended for 8 years. Mendès-France tried to convince other members of EDC in August 1954 in Brussels to agree to those substantive changes to the treaty. All other five members rejected the proposal. When Mendès-France presented these (Gaullist) positions to the French public, Robert Schuman (MRP) and André Philipp (SFIO) issued statements to the press in the sense that they and many of their fellow deputies would no longer support the ratification of such a watered-down treaty. This instance is a good example, how states sometimes have to mediate within and between political communities. Within the French parliamentary system, the positions drifted further apart. A majority for a supranational EDC seemed ever more remote. What was voted on in the final

session on 28 – 30 August 1954 was a compromise document between a Gaullist-influenced government and 5 member states who had waited for more than a year to know whether or not France would ratify this treaty. Mendès-France referred to this impatience in his opening speech in August 1954:

They [the other five EDC countries] told me: the rearmament of Germany was proposed to you, you proposed the European army. The European army was proposed to you and you asked for additional protocols. They were given to you and then you asked for prior conditions. They were given to you, too, and today you ask something new, pending a new Premier who in six months will ask for something else again (quoted in *The New York Times*, 29 August, 1954, p.5).

In the final vote on 30 August 1954 the treaty was defeated, 319 in favour, 264 against the defeat (12 abstained, 31 were not present at this session). Those in favour of the defeat were the Communists and the Social Republicans, those clearly against the defeat of EDC were the Christian Democrats (MRP, the party of Robert Schuman). Those who made the difference (as compared to the vote on the Schuman Plan) were the Radicals and the Socialists. Both parties were evenly split between supporters and opponents of the treaty, thus giving the opponents of the treaty an overall majority. The Gaullists (RPF) were also split, although a slight majority rejected the treaty.

The French parties (from the Communists to the Gaullists, but also in the Centre) referred to arguments that were heavily informed by collective war memories (French independence, control of Germany, safeguards against a future German threat) and combined them with pragmatic arguments for solving other issues through those negotiations. Opponents and supporters of EDC alike referred to the possible German threat as an argument to strengthen their position. The memory of the 1930s and early 1940s were still very prominent (with some politicians from that period still present at the debates). The practical-moral imperative of independence and national greatness, as well as the mistrust of being left alone with Germany, still afforded very powerful arguments in the political discourse. Thus, it can be argued that collective war memories and the practical-moral imperatives that political memory groups derived from them were quite prominent in the French discourse on EDC – much more prominent than in West Germany. Opinion polls of that period suggest that this predominance in the parliamentary realm in France reflected the views of the wider French public. To what

extent did those ethical arguments had a legitimising effect on politics? This is the question I aim to tackle in the next part.

7.1.3 The conditions of the political discourse on EDC in France and Germany

France as well as West Germany had general media coverage on the negotiations concerning the Schuman Plan as well as the Pleven Plan. But, as Jean Monnet later admitted, one of factors that contributed to ratification of the Schuman Plan was that there had been no wider public debate on the treaty (Trausch, 1995:120). Monnet presumably saw no majority or support in the French public for such a step only five years after the end of the Second World War. A quick ratification, as in the case of the Schuman Plan, apparently was not an option in the case of the Pleven Plan, given the parliamentary divide on this decision. The treaties (EDC and Bonn Agreement) were discussed twice in the French National Assembly, on October 24-26, 1950 and February 11-19, 1952, before being signed. Between signing and voting for the ratification there were few public debates on EDC in France: No government official made an effort at the beginning or during the two years of the ratification process to explain the treaty and its details to the French public.¹² Only in late 1953 did the first public debates in the National Assembly and the Senate take place:

- October 27, 1953 (in the Senate)
- November 17-27, 1953 (National Assembly)
- August 29-30, 1954 (when the National Assembly defeated the ratification of the treaties)

This means one and a half years passed, during which the treaty was only discussed in specialised committees but hardly in a wider parliamentary public sphere. Since 1953, there were several press conferences by general de Gaulle, denouncing the treaty as the end of France and French sovereignty. Other opponents of EDC also gave ample press conferences, thus dominating the public debate in France (*Frankfurter Allgemeine*

¹² “Robert Schuman, former Foreign Minister of France, went far ahead of French opinion in accepting the European army treaty, which would have provoked far less sharp opposition if it had been explained more fully to the French people.” *The New York Times*, 29 February, 1953, p.2. The Times complains in a similar vein: “Neither at this early stage [signing of the treaty] nor indeed at any subsequent time did the Government’s representatives, from M. Robert Schuman and M. Pleven downwards, pay nearly enough attention to enlightening public opinion or to answering the charges made against the treaty.” *The Times*, London, 17 August, 1954, p.1.

Zeitung, 14 November, 1953). Meanwhile, the press covered the events widely, although quotes from politicians (however accurate they were with regard to facts) were often left uncommented. However, opinion polls at that time suggest that the French parliament did not act as a gatekeeper of arguments but did reflect the prevailing and existing arguments present in French society at that time.

There may be different reasons for this lack of information (including a pessimistic outlook by the supporters of EDC for a likely result against EDC), but, from a Habermasian point of view, the conditions of political discourse in France lacked many instances that suggest a legitimating effect of the discourse: there was little information and even less public exchange on the different arguments concerning EDC in France between 1952 and 1953. This only changed in late 1953 and 1954, when the debates acquired a high intensity, evident in the length of the debates (the debate in November 1953 lasted over a week). While the information of the wider public may have been rather limited, the level of exchange in parliament was very open by late 1953. These are indicators of a limited but, nevertheless, considerable legitimating effect by those arguments presented in France.

The conditions of the political discourse in West Germany, however, were further away from those of an ideal speech situation than they were in France. Chancellor Adenauer aimed at a quick ratification of the treaty, probably because of its unpopular corollary of rearmament. The German government did not give much information concerning the two treaties. This was a widespread complaint by opposition leaders, but also members of the governing parties.¹³ Thus, neither the public nor parliament felt very well informed. The German public was informed by the press about some features of the two treaties, but the government did not explain the treaties to the public and did not invite public debates. As in the French case there may be various reasons for this lack of debate in the wider public (widespread opposition to rearmament and the concern that military integration into the West would further lessen hopes for German reunification), but the fact remains that the popular “Without-me” Movement had no strong voice in the parliamentary debate (not even among members of the SPD) and was moreover denounced by the governing parties as advancing the cause of Soviet expansionism. The

¹³ On those complaints see: *Stenographisches Protokoll des Deutschen Bundestags*, Sessions 190 and 191, 7 and 8 February, 1952.

German parliament clearly acted as a gate-keeper of arguments and did not engage – unlike in the French National Assembly – in a lengthy or intensive debate. There were two general debates on EDC before the signing of the EDC treaty in the German Bundestag: on 8 November, 1950 and on 7-8 February, 1952. After the treaty had been signed in May 1952, there were three short parliamentary debates in West Germany on the ratification of the treaty on 9-10 July, 1952, 3 December, 1952 and 19 March, 1953.

It is worth noting that West Germany had already ratified the treaties (EDC and Bonn Agreement) when France had not had a single debate in the National Assembly on the treaties. In each reading the deliberation was rather short – sometimes even less than a day. Thus, in the case of West Germany the conditions of the political discourse suggest a less legitimating effect on the decision on EDC than in France.

7.1.4 The actual impact of collective war memories on the decisions concerning EDC: an assessment

As the analysis under 7.1.3 suggest, the French political discourse took on board more practical-moral imperatives derived from collective war memories than the West German one. The fear that, in the medium term, France would be dominated by Germany, and the fear that Germany might use EDC for revenge policies, particularly recovering lost territories, prevailed over trust in Germany and the structure of EDC. Although this fear seems to have been very widespread in the different French political currents and the wider French public, the strategies to counter that perceived threat were different, even opposed, to each other: while the Gaullists and conservatives insisted on independence and relative autonomy, many Centrists saw supranationality and safeguards within the structure of EDC as the best cure to that threat. Thus, for the supporters of EDC the supranational character was pivotal, which was not acceptable to the Gaullists. If this is added to the conditions of political discourse that were deficient, but still more permeable than in West Germany, it is not far fetched to say that collective war memories had more of a legitimating effect and, therefore, more impact on the actual decision concerning EDC in France than in West Germany.

The rather limited impact of collective war memories in West Germany may also have been an outcome of the ‘decade of amnesia’ described in chapter 4. However, the

parliamentary majority was very different from the majority thinking on rearmament in German society, and its support of the rehabilitation of former soldiers. Adenauer took a certain risk when he asked for the rehabilitation of the German soldiers. Although this was more accepted in German society, there were clear fears both within German society and neighbouring countries that ‘the old generals’ might be back.

Many authors argue that the time was premature to advance European integration in the area of a common defence only five years after the end of the Second World War (Herbst, 1989:86; Remond, 1994:536; Lord Beloff, 1993; Duke, 1999: chapter 1). Others claim that the French society and political class were simply not ready yet to let go of the past (Lerner and Aron (eds.), 1957). Interestingly, the arguments and the different groups did not differ so much between the Schuman Plan and the Pleven Plan in France, except for the Socialist and the Radical parties. But a comparison with the internal debate in other prospective EDC countries (Italy, Benelux) shows that although similar arguments were used in those countries, different recommendations for political action and decisions on EDC were drawn.¹⁴ In particular in the Benelux countries EDC was seen as the best means of overcoming mistrust, exerting a certain degree of control over German rearmament and strengthening Western defence against the Soviet Union. In other words, all came out strongly in favour of EDC, although the same arguments were considered as in France. Similar remembered pasts, thus, may result in different practical-moral imperatives.

This first section of this chapter tried to illustrate the application of the notion of political legitimacy to empirical research in order to help to provide an informed answer to the question of the degree to which collective war memories influence international politics. As has been argued throughout this and the previous chapter, this illustration does not want to deduce the entire decisions and course of action with reference to collective war memories. It rather tries to provide a theoretical grounding of an answer to *what degree* – or in comparison between different political communities – collective war memories did have an impact on decisions in international politics.

¹⁴ “In the parliamentary debates of the Benelux almost the same arguments have been discussed as in the French National Assembly. However, the results in the Benelux countries were strong majorities in favour of EDC, a confirmation of the insight that EDC is the best means to bury mutual distrust, to create mutual trust and to secure the common peace.” (*Die Neue Zeitung*, 22 August, 1954, p.8).

The next section turns to another area of European integration that deals with an important national symbol, a national currency, which was to be merged with those of other members of the European Communities. The analysis of a decision in the 1990s also helps to identify some shifts or changes within the West German or French society of the impact of collective war memories on Franco-German relations.

7.2 European Monetary Union (EMU): thanks to collective war memories?

We want the Euro not as a means of dealing with the past but as an option for our future.

Gerhard Schröder, German Chancellor in 1998 (quoted in Schaefer, 1998:11)

The move towards a single currency in the European Communities between 1989 and 1993 marked a very important step forward in the European integration process. It deeply affected the means of national states and demanded many competences that had hitherto lain with the national states to be transferred on a so-called supra-national level. This implied first and foremost the area of monetary policies and the future role of the central banks and their relation to national fiscal and economic policies. But, above all, it meant the replacement of a national currency by another currency shared by several nations. Thus, an important symbol of national identity and pride, but also an important means of state sovereignty, was at stake.

It is important to note the process character of the decision to establish an Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). While the conditions and the timetable were agreed upon in the negotiations 1990 and 1991 finishing in the final round of negotiations in Maastricht in December 1991, there were intermediate steps on the road to EMU, which was finally established with the circulation of the Euro in January 2000, replacing the national currencies of Spain, France, Germany, Greece, Finland, Austria, Ireland, Portugal, Italy. In other words, while there were some fundamental and important decisions made before and actually at Maastricht, other decisions remained open due to the evolution of the process towards the second and third, and final, phase of EMU. This analysis only covers the debates to the point when the ratification process was finished (November 1993) and provides some hints on later discussions only as they directly related to previous debates.

It is my contention that after the debate in 1954 about a common defence, implying the end of an entirely national, independent army and a strictly national policy of defence, this debate in 1989 to 1993 about the decision to join or not an Economic and Monetary Union was, by far, the most important decision concerning state sovereignty and

national identity in the post-war period in Europe. However, almost 40 years elapsed between these two decisions. This period was marked by continuous cooperation within the European Economic Community (EEC) and EURATOM, both created in 1958, the defence cooperation within the Atlantic Alliance and the West European Union. France and Germany not only experienced periods of cooperation and conflicts within the European Communities, but also ever closer bilateral cooperation. With the signing of the Franco-German friendship treaty on January 20, 1963, regular consultations every six months were institutionalised. In 1988, a Franco-German defence council, an economic and monetary council as well as a council on cultural affairs were established to enable ever closer bilateral coordination between these policy areas.

At the same time, there was a more open debate on the experience of the memory and lessons of the Second World War in Germany as well as in France. The Vichy Syndrome, brought into the public by Henry Rousso and others in France, as well as the Historians' Debate in Germany, led to an ever more intense debate on issues of the past, as well as to a debate on the practical-moral implications of remembering those events. Thus, the decision on EMU falls within a more frank and open, sometimes heated, but also generally more reflected debate on the Second World War, where some of the 'first generation'-members, with personal memories of the Second World War discussed the content and meaning of collective war memories with a 'second generation', who had no personal, first-hand experiences.

7.2.1 The international factors leading to EMU negotiations

The European Communities had gradually established an internal market by removing tariff and non-tariff barriers between 1958 and 1968, establishing a customs union, and gradually lifting certain limitations to the movement of capital within the EC. From the early 1970s, the EC member countries had also aimed at coordinating their monetary and economic policies. In 1971, EC countries created the 'snake in the tunnel' system, where the currencies floated freely on the international monetary market together and were pegged, within certain margins, to the German Mark (Steinherr (ed.), 1994). Given the economic turmoil and the very divergent economic policies of EC countries, this system had to be abandoned that year. At the same time, early ideas of moving from the

‘snake’ to a monetary union were dropped. The German Chancellor Schmidt and the French President Giscard d’Estaing created the European Monetary System, where a calculated basket currency, the ECU, was created that coordinated the joint floating on the international currency market. Parallelly, supply-driven economic policies, sometimes combined with considerable deficit-spending were increasingly abandoned by most EC countries by the late-1970s and early 1980s. Thus, there was an increasing convergence in the 1980s between the economic, monetary and fiscal policies of the EC member states, while the value of stability and a strong currency gained in importance.

It was only in the mid-1980s that the economic and monetary conditions were ripe for further economic integration. This was achieved in 1985, where the EC commission proposed the ‘completion of the internal market’ based on four freedoms to be established by January 1993: the freedoms of capital, labour, goods and services. Over two hundred directives and a move towards the majority voting principle in the EC, were agreed upon in the Single European Act (SEA), in force since 1987. This further economic integration was meant to complete an internal market and the first step towards a possible Economic and Monetary Union.

However, given the convergence in economic and monetary policies and the liberalisation of the common market created by the late 1980s, the German Bundesbank exercised a strong influence. Within the logic of further strengthening the common market project of the EC, many members within the EC Commission and the member states regarded a single currency, which would exclude certain risks and further lower transaction costs (in particular of changing currency from one country to another) within the internal market of the EC as the next logical step toward further economic integration (Emerson and Huhne, 1991). At the same time, some member states, especially France, hoped to overcome the dominance of the German Bundesbank and make monetary policies a joint EU responsibility (Ziebura, 1997:346).

With the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s the EC was seen as a ‘stability anchor’ in Europe. Many foresaw in 1990 a huge challenge to the EC and its institutions, if a considerable number of new member states were to join the EC. In particular, this might render further integration more difficult. Given that logic, many member states (particularly France and Italy) and the EC Commission (headed by Jacques Delors)

regarded a deepening of the integration of EC, before new member states were admitted, to be vital for the future stability of the EC institutions (Spence, 1992). The EC first had to become an actor with the necessary tools in order to play an active role in Europe.

After 1989 the separation of the two Germanys became ever more untenable. With the opening of the Austro-Hungarian borders in mid-1989 and Gorbachev's assurance that the Soviet Union would not intervene, East Germans put pressure on the timetable for German reunification by leaving East Germany in huge numbers.¹⁵ This caused a speeding-up of international and internal negotiations on German reunification. A treaty on German economic, monetary and social union was signed on 1 July 1990, while the last remaining issues on external aspects of German unification were settled in the sixth round of the 2+4-treaty talks in Moscow on 12 September, 1990. The five new *Länder* of East Germany joined West Germany under Article 23 of the Basic Agreement (West German constitution) on 3 October 1990. United Germany remained a member of the North Atlantic Alliance and the EC. The coincidence of German unification and the end of the Cold War in 1989/1990 heralded the end of the post-war order without a clear new structure arising. This caused great concerns about the future orientation of a united Germany, but also sparked the discussion within Germany about its future foreign policy orientation (Markovits and Reich, 1997):

When the Berlin wall was breached and German unification became a distinct possibility, the idea initially sounded alarm bells throughout Europe. Some feared a *revival of German desire for hegemony* in Europe as a whole and certainly within the Community (Spence, 1992:137, emphasis added).

The French President, Mitterrand, expressed particular concern at the beginning of the process that led to German unification. When he realised that German unification would come much sooner than expected and when it was clear, by February 1990, that the Soviet Union would not block German reunification, he urged a speeding up of European integration. Still in November 1989 Mitterrand warned the German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher: "Either German unification will happen after European unification, or you will be faced with a Triple Alliance (France, Great Britain,

¹⁵ How much this aspect affected the timetable of German unification, which was originally forecast by Chancellor Kohl and other European countries to take years, is documented in: Teltschik, 1991.

Russia), and that will lead to war. If the German unification follows that of Europe, we will help you" (quoted in Ziebura, 1997:366). Helmut Kohl tried to reassure other countries that a united Germany would not abandon the path of European integration, a reassurance he gave in March 1990 and on numerous occasions to other European leaders and publics (Teltschik, 1991:329).

At the European Council meeting in Strasbourg on 8 and 9 December 1989, President Mitterrand pressured the German Chancellor to accept a conference on EMU within a year. He also promised Kohl to support enlargement of EC to Central and Eastern Europe as well as German reunification in exchange (Ziebura, 1997:360). Kohl agreed to that *quid pro quo*:

For Kohl, Germany had to facilitate the acceptance of the unification by its partners, by reassuring them with a most profound integration of Germany into a European group, to tie an uncertain Germany [...] and to avoid any nationalistic tendencies among German compatriots. In Paris, the government was willing to follow that suggestion since March 1990, because the relaunching of the European construction was seen as the only remaining means to control of Germany (Soutou, 1996:402).

Chancellor Kohl and foreign minister Genscher had great interest in achieving German unification with the consent of its allies and neighbours. The German government was determined to speed up European integration from early 1990 in order to calm any fears about the traditional "German uncertainty", i.e. a possible German 'swing policy' between East and West and the fear of German domination of Europe, particularly of Central and Eastern Europe. Helmut Kohl kept stressing that German unification and European integration are two sides of the same coin. Thus, I would argue, that the timing of the EMU negotiations and the interest of Germany and France in negotiating an EMU was very much linked to German unification.

The ever more certain possibility of a German reunification triggered, at the end of 1989 and during 1990, a certain re-emergence of historically charged images with regard to Germany in the Western public, which reinforced those fears even more: in March 1990 Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister of Great Britain, had a seminar on the consequences of the perspective of German reunification at Chequers near Oxford. In this seminar

Charles Powell, Mrs. Thatcher's foreign policy advisor, was said to have listed a series of features of present German character such as "angst, aggressiveness, assertiveness, bullying, egotism, [and] inferiority complex" (quoted in Spence, 192:137). Newspapers in France asked whether a resurge of Bismarck's policy was due; a general feeling of fear of dominance was fuelled by historical memories, many of them linked to the last war. In France, the term *Mitteleuropa* became synonymous for German domination in Central and Eastern Europe. These fears were further nurtured by a book published by Pierre Béhar (1990), who warned of the German '*Drang nach Osten*' (pull towards the East); in turn, Georges Valance, from *L'Express*, saw, as the title of his book suggested (*France-Allemagne – Le retour de Bismarck*, Paris 1990) a return to Bismarck's policies. These books reinforced the fears of a dominance-seeking, restless, irrational Germany that had been prevalent in the interwar-period.

These contributions in the French and European press and public spheres reconfirmed certain fears and concerns regarding a unified Germany in the uncertain post-Cold War Europe. From March 1990 Germany, together with some allies within the EC, demanded a parallel process of negotiation for a Political Union. These negotiations should start at the same time as the negotiations leading to EMU. Germany and France co-ordinated their ideas regarding the two conferences and both, Chancellor Kohl and President Mitterrand, formulated joint proposals to the EC Presidency in 1990 (Dyson and Featherstone, 1999; Mazzucelli, 1997; Teltschik, 1991; Attali, 1995). In April 1990 the heads of states of the European Communities decided to add an Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) on Political Union to the agenda. France demanded negotiations on EMU, leading to a single currency in return (Soutou, 1996:405). Thus, Mitterrand and Kohl linked the treaty on EMU, the treaty on Political Union and German unification.

The opening of the two intergovernmental conferences on EMU and the Political Union was announced in Rome in December 1990 with the mandate to aim at concluding those negotiations within a year. Those negotiations came to a final stage with the heads of states negotiating between 9 and 11 December 1991 for more than 30 hours the "Treaty on the European Union" in the Dutch city of Maastricht (therefore often referred to as "Maastricht Treaty"). Formally this treaty was signed on 7 February 1992 by the European Community Finance ministers (Corbett, 1992; Cafruny and Rosenthal (eds.), 1993).

In this treaty EMU was one of the three “pillars”; another pillar was the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) between the governments of the EU. Finally, a closer cooperation was agreed upon in the area of visa policy, asylum policies and immigration issues. As part of the Political Union a new type of “co-decision” between Commission, Council and Parliament was introduced that strengthened the role of the parliament in certain areas, especially linked to the domestic market. The general principle of subsidiarity was also introduced into the treaty, however, without being clearly defined. It was also agreed in Maastricht that a review meeting in 1996 by the European Council would decide whether further steps towards political union could be made.

While the results on CFSP and Political Union remained rather vague and open, the results on EMU were more precise. The establishment of an EMU would happen in three phases. The first phase had already been reached by June 1990, ending all controls to the movement of capital and a high degree of economic and monetary convergence. In a second phase, forecast to be reached by end-1993, a European Central Bank System would be established composed of independent central banks obliged to safeguard, above all, currency stability. The responsibility for monetary policies was to rest firmly with the national central banks. In a third phase, which would not start later than 1999, a single currency, supervised by an independent European Central Bank, would be introduced. By the latest in 1996 a European Council would decide, with qualified majority, which countries qualified for the third phase and would set a date to begin with the third phase. If at least 7 countries qualified before 1996, EMU could also start earlier. If there were not enough countries to qualify by 1996, those countries fulfilling the economic criteria *had* to form an EMU by the end of 1998 (automatic transition between phase 2 and phase 3). There were several criteria referring to macro-economic data like public debt, new debt, inflation rates that needed to be objectively fulfilled, before countries could join the single currency.

The European Central Bank (ECB) was to be independent of any political guidelines and its primary objective the safeguarding of currency stability. A Social Chapter was annexed to the Treaty and was signed by all EC member states except Great Britain (who signed it in 1997). There was no mention of an “Economic Government” or political guidelines for the ECB, but the cohesion and regional funds of EC would be

used to support economic convergence for those countries that did not yet qualify for the third step of EMU. These were the main results and outcomes of the Maastricht Treaty, which became the subject of debate in the EC member states during the ratification procedures.

7.2.2 Legitimising decisions on EMU: arguments and groups

7.2.2.1 The groups and arguments in Germany

In Germany the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty required approval of the parliament (Bundestag), where the centre-right government consisting of CDU, CSU and FDP had the majority, but also the second chamber of the *Länder* (Bundesrat), where the SPD had the majority. After the negotiations, the parties assessed the results in a parliamentary debate on December 13, 1991. The ratification process lasted roughly one year. The final debate on the Treaty of the European Union and, thus, on the ratification of the treaty by the German parliament, took place on December 2, 1992 with two additional motions, one on EMU, the other on Political Union, being passed.¹⁶ Germany had to amend the Basic Law (German constitution) in several aspects, including the article concerning the Bundesbank and the right of EU citizens to vote in local German elections. Additionally, new articles were included to grant the *Länder* more say in steps towards future European integration (von Werner and Schwarze, 1992).

Yet, the ratified treaty could not be deposited in Rome as planned, because several charges of presumed incompatibility between the German Basic Law and the Treaty of Maastricht had to be clarified by the Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe. Manfred Brunner, the head of cabinet of Martin Bangemann, the German commissioner on the internal market of the EC Commission, filed a complaint at the constitutional court arguing that – given its democratic deficit – the treaty was not compatible with the German Basic Law (Brunner (ed.), 1994; Appel, 1994). The Greens filed similar charges against a lowering of environmental standards through majority voting in the EC (Hugenroth, 1993). Only after a positive decision by the Constitutional Court on October 12, 1993, about the compatibility of the treaty with the German Basic Law, the

¹⁶ See: German Bundestag, *Drucksache 12/3905* (resolution on Maastricht treaty) and *Drucksache 12/3906* (resolution on EMU).

German government could deposit the ratified treaty. The Maastricht treaty thus went into effect on November 1, 1993.

The governing CDU/CSU and FDP coalition, as well as the opposition parties (the Greens and SPD), generally welcomed a deepening of European integration and steps toward EMU.¹⁷ The political class of Germany was clearly pro-European integration in both areas, EMU and Political Union. In Germany, I argue, five sets of arguments could be discerned in support of an EMU (assuming that it took the shape demanded by the German parties):

- The economic benefit for the German economy
- EU as an anchor in the new Europe
- The new geopolitical situation
- Avoidance of falling back on new and old nationalisms
- Avoidance of fears or uncertainties by other countries concerning Germany

It is worth noting that in many debates in the German parliament arguments for (rarely: against) Maastricht and the virtues of European integration in general were often blended. This was also the case with the argument of the economic benefits of EMU. This refers to the argument that an export nation such as Germany needed open access to markets. As the governing CDU stated:

[...] more than 55 per cent of our exports go to the member states of the EC. Additionally, there are the undisputable advantages of a larger ‘domestic market’, which the German industry needs in order to be able to compete on the world market. It is equally important that Europe comes ever closer together economically and politically on the world markets, in order to speak with one voice. In the long run, this implies a stable currency with an independent central bank (“Zu Maastricht gibt es keine Alternative”, in *Deutscher Unionsdienst*, 46, 155, p.2).

The German economy would benefit from that increased integration. Similar arguments were put forward by the Minister of Finance, Theo Waigel (1993:65). This argument, however, was not very prominent in the public debate and was only mentioned sporadically. These economic advantages were also put forward by many authors in the

¹⁷ See: Joint Motion “Gemeinsamer Entschliessungsantrag der CDU/CSU-, FDP- und SPD Fraktion im Bundestag zu den Verhandlungen von Maastricht” from December 5, 1991, reprinted in: *BT-Drucksache 12/1747*.

general debate on European integration, as well as by members of the German banking sector (Hoffmann and Kramer (eds.), 1991; Issensee (ed.), 1993).

But the argument of the EC as a stability anchor had more weight in the German discussion, because it linked EMU to the need (from the perspective of many German politicians) to make the EU institutions ‘fit’ for Europe (especially the integration of Central and Eastern Europe) together with advances in the Political Union. The speaker of the opposition SPD on European affairs, Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul, stressed therefore that “in this unstable situation in Central and Eastern Europe, the EC is needed more than ever as a European actor”: “A signing of the treaty to EMU without a Political Union is not acceptable” (Interview, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 1 December, 1991). This view and, particularly, the link between the EC as a stability anchor and the need for further political integration was shared by the governing parties.

Another argument was the new geopolitical situation of united Germany. Since Germany was now in the centre of Europe, a need for a joint Community, uniting East and West was the best solution possible for Germany. As, for example, Thomas Goppel (CSU) explained:

Whether we like it or not, whether we are conscious of it or not: Germany, placed in the middle of this continent that grows together, can and will define its interest only within that context. There is no German special or single path; Germany’s self-understanding will always be a European understanding. [...] A natural, absolutely autonomous, self-understanding of the Germans has always been impossible (Goppel, 1993:31).

This argument points to two important practical-moral imperatives from the collective war memories that were debated between the 1960s and 1980s: The avoidance of a ‘swing policy’ between East and West, which was made responsible especially for the First World War, and the avoidance of a ‘special path’. With the European Community, which will eventually include Central and Eastern Europe, the argument goes, this structure renders a temptation or need for a ‘swing policy’ obsolete and avoids a single or special German path within Europe. At the same time, as Rudolf Scharping (SPD), the new opponent of Helmut Kohl in the 1994 elections, pointed out to an audience in

Paris in late 1993, such a binding of Germany would help to overcome distrust of Germany:

A Germany tightly linked (“*corsettée*”) into the European integration is also the best guarantee that Germany will not distance itself from Europe and seek dangerous and isolated policies, which bear the risk, in the end, of justifying old prejudices against Germany and of re-awakening old historical fears of our neighbours. These might lead to the isolation of Germany or to the forming of alliances against Germany (Scharping, 1993:25).

This argument in favour of EMU and European integration was linked to two other arguments that were very prominent in the German debate on Maastricht; namely, a fear that member states of EC might, with the end of the Cold War and the end of a Communist and Soviet threat, relapse into nationalistic foreign policies or might put national interests before European integration. This relapse might, in the worst case, as Helmut Kohl repeated time and again, even lead to a war - a view that was clearly shared by the governing parties, as well as the SPD opposition (Banchoff, 1997). The SPD also introduced a motion in the debate on Maastricht on 8 October 1992 titled “Against falling back into nationalism: for a democratic Europe with a stable currency”.

In this motion the SPD urged parliament:

Germany must not give way *once more* to the danger of nationalism. Europe needs to be spared the horrible trespasses of old and new nationalisms. As no other country in the middle of Europe, Germany depends upon the Community. [...] We want a strong Europe, to which the larger Germany can join its entire force. (Bundestag-DR., 8 October, 1992, emphasis added).

Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher argued in March 1992 that the alternative to Maastricht was a new nationalism in Europe and Germany. Helmut Kohl also stressed several times that the process of EMU was a means to avoid the relapse into nationalism.¹⁸ As Ziebura points out, European integration of Germany was also meant to counter any nationalistic temptations within Germany (Ziebura, 1997:377). Thus,

¹⁸ The argument of European integration's preventing a relapse into nationalism was also prominent among Germany's Left. See: Glotz, 1990; and Ludwig, 1993.

Kohl's strategy was directed at European neighbours and allies, but also towards Germany itself.¹⁹

Reliability was, therefore, a key objective of the governing parties as well as of the SPD opposition: there should be no room for perceived fears or uncertainties about the new Germany. The upsurge of historically charged ideas where Germany might turn (or return) to, fuelled the concern that collective war memories might gain importance again. Debates about the 'return of Bismarck', of a renewed German dominance, encoded in terms like 'Fourth Reich' or '*Mitteleuropa*', seemed to suggest that Germany had to do its utmost to be reliable and avoid anything that might awaken these memories.

While the justification to join EMU was very much informed by ethical arguments, there were also important pragmatic arguments. The best way of achieving a successful EMU for German parties was to adhere to three principles in its construction: the new currency had to be as stable as the German Mark, the European Central Bank had to be very similar to the Bundesbank (independent and primarily responsible for the safeguard of currency stability) and there should be no financial transfer across member states or financing of state deficits. Thus, while there were ethical arguments in favour of EMU that were heavily informed by practical-moral imperatives of collective war memories, there were also pragmatic arguments on the design of EMU.

In the Single European Act German (SEA) politicians identified a 'democratic deficit' in important areas: since the SEA had introduced majority voting, decisions – against the expressed will of Germany – might, nevertheless, become binding for Germany. In some areas this binding decision would lack any parliamentary, democratic control (neither the European Parliament nor the German Parliament could control that decision).²⁰ For all German parties the Maastricht Treaty was an opportunity to close this democratic gap. All parties generally welcomed the results on EMU, but were quite

¹⁹ Even in the broader public debate this argument was hardly disputed. One of the few authors to challenge this argument was Bruno Bandulet, who actually criticised Kohl for having agreed to Maastricht as a 'victim of a German inferiority complex'. See: Bandulet, 1992.

²⁰ On the democratic deficit of the EC see the motion of the SPD in the parliamentary debate on December 5, 1991, "Stärkung der Rechte des Europäischen Parlamentes", in *BT-Drucksache*, 12/1746.

disappointed about the results concerning the strengthening of the European institutions and the political union.²¹

In conclusion, the entire German political class – with some exceptions to be discussed in 7.2.3 – favoured EMU with arguments that had clear references to practical-moral imperatives of collective war memories. This was mixed with some pragmatic aspects of geopolitical situation, the EC as the best stability anchor in a united Europe and clear ideas regarding how best to achieve a stable and durable EMU. Thus, overall, historically-laden arguments reigned very prominently in the parliamentary debates to legitimate EMU in Germany between 1990 and 1993.

7.2.2.2 The groups and arguments in France

In 1992 a constitutional council decided that the French constitution had to be amended in order to be compatible with the Maastricht treaty. Thus, the French government agreed to four amendments (related to EMU, asylum and immigration and voting rights for EC citizens in France) into the final text and the consent to pass a '*loi organique*' on European citizenship (Appleton, 1992:10). With those amendments the French Senate passed the treaty on June 16, 1992, and the National Assembly on June 18, 1992. The extraordinary constitutional congress (members of the Assembly and the Senate together) met in Versailles on 23 June, 1992 and voted for the constitutional amendments (and the revised text) overwhelmingly in favour (592 in favour, 73 against, 14 abstentions) (Raoux and Terrenoire, 1992). The president signed the text the following day, and on June 26, 1992 the text was published in the *Journal Officiel*. President Mitterrand announced on June 3, 1992, that a referendum would be held on September 20. In that referendum the French citizens voted in a very tight result in favour of EMU and the Maastricht Treaty.²² By end-September 1992, the ratification process had concluded in France.

The party of François Mitterrand, the PS, the UDF and a majority of Gaullists (RPR), as well as the Greens (*Les Verts*) supported further moves towards European integration, in

²¹ Some members of the opposition party SPD, such as Peter Conradi, were so disappointed with the results, that they recommended a rejection of the treaty. See: Conradi, 1992:30.

²² The exact result was: 13.786.574 yes votes (51.05%); 12.623.582 no votes (48.85%), 30.32% abstentions. On these figures see: Huwe, 1992: 359-361.

general, and EMU, in particular. These parties resorted to five arguments during the parliamentary debate and the later debate prior to the referendum:

- EMU as the last chance to tie reunited Germany to the West
- Increase of French influence in monetary issues
- Europe as a stability anchor in a new Europe
- Way of overcoming the dominance of the German Bundesbank
- Stability and a hard currency as the basis of competitiveness and sustainable growth

For the French government, headed by the PS and François Mitterrand, an important, if not *the* central, argument for EMU at that point was to ‘tie’ a now larger Germany to the West and into European integration (*The European Times*, 4 June, 1992, p.2). A European framework to “dilute the German power” had become a priority for them (Spence, 1992:140). It was either EMU or a national German foreign policy leading to German dominance of Europe. The ‘yes’ camp, including President Mitterrand in the pre-referendum campaign, clearly referred publicly to the argument that Germany should be ‘bound’ by EMU. Minister Rocard even said that “Maastricht had to be approved in order to ‘keep Germany from its demons’, for ‘after two generations of democracy, Germany might be tempted by romantic irrational forces, and pursue interests backed by the all-powerful Deutschmark’” (quoted in Criddle, 1993:234). This position was also echoed by some former or actual government officials (Attali, 1994; Bianco, 1992). So it was particularly the French Socialists who referred to this argument that was laden with collective war memories.

On the one hand, European integration was to absorb German power and limit freedom of action, but EMU should also curb the dominant position of the Bundesbank in European monetary and economic affairs (Criddle, 1993:230). However, the political class and media were divided in their judgment whether EMU was actually a means of controlling and curbing the power of Germany and the German Bundesbank or, in fact, either a means of extending and increasing that power or an insignificant instrument for that purpose, which, at the same time, cost a very important part of French sovereignty. By contrast, in particular the Communists and the group around Chevènement from the ‘no’- camp did not believe that EMU would prevent a German dominance. On the contrary, given the neoliberal outlook of EMU, many opponents of EMU regarded it as

the first step toward German domination of Europe. As Marie-France Garaud pointed out, “the idea of hamstringing Germany through the Maastricht Treaty is ludicrous; rather, the treaty installs the preponderance of German power in the Community” (quoted in: Criddle, 1993:235).

The Centrist parties (UDF, UDC) did subscribe to the argument that the economic future lay with EMU and that France had a chance to increase its competitiveness and its say in European monetary affairs through EMU (as compared to the previous situation, where the German Bundesbank decided unilaterally the European monetary policy) (Schmuck, 1992:98). More political and economic integration seemed to be a necessity after the end of the Cold War. Europe should become a strong actor and an anchor of stability in Europe. Those two parties also defended the stability-oriented monetary philosophy of the Maastricht negotiations (Guigou, 1994 and Lequiller, 1994).

Those arguments were echoed by the ‘yes’ camp during the debate prior to the referendum. This camp, partly organised in the ‘*Comité national pour le ‘oui’*’, by the Minister of Culture, Jacques Lang, comprised members of the ruling Socialist Party, including President Mitterrand, the French President of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, Michel Rocard, French Minister for European Affairs, Elisabeth Guigou, the centrist-right UDF with ex-President Giscard d’Estaing as party chairman, the UDC, the centrist splinter group of the UDF, and segments of the ecological party *Les Verts* with Antoine Waechter and Brice Lalonde.

Now, while the French Socialist government was convinced that joining EMU was in France’s best interest, its idea of how best to design EMU was significantly different from that of the German government. Indeed, Mitterrand was interested in an inter-governmental Council of Ministers of the Economy and asked for a ‘social Europe’ and a “European Economic Government” (Banerjee, 1995:411-412). The understanding of monetary policy’s being part of economic and fiscal policies in order to stimulate growth and employment is in accordance with traditional French monetary policy – even given the changes in French monetary policies in the 1980s (Solms, 1997:827-828). Such an Economic Council would, on the one hand, provide political guidance on

monetary policies, but also give France a right of veto.²³ This proposal did not find entry into the final text of the Maastricht Treaty.

Some Gaullists, the Communists and the Extreme Right opposed the Maastricht Treaty for sometimes very different reasons. However, three main arguments can be identified that also found some support among the other parties:

- Preventing the end of French (monetary) sovereignty and French sovereignty in general
- The negative effects on employment and fiscal spending
- The negative effects of migration

A considerable number of deputies from the Gaullist RPR chose to abstain from the votes on the Maastricht Treaty. Their main concern was with the remaining sovereignty of France once the EMU had been established. In fact, there were three 'defectors' from the Right, the former Minister Charles Pasqua (RPR), Philippe Séguin (RPR) and Philippe de Villiers (UDF) from the province of Vendée. All three opposed the ratification of EMU and the Maastricht Treaty, because they were against the loss of sovereignty and the demise of the French currency (Guyomarch and Machin, 1992:66). This latter argument was shared by many Gaullists who were against the Maastricht treaty precisely because of the loss of sovereignty that seemed to signal the end of the French nation-state. Marie-France Garaud strongly criticised supra-nationality and demanded a return to inter-governmental cooperation (Garaud, 1992; and Garaud and Séguin, 1992).

Another argument that was linked to the loss of sovereignty was the clear democratic deficit of EC and an aversion to the 'gentle dictatorship of the Brussels technocrats' who were increasingly in charge of former national policies (Goybet, 1992). On the extreme Right, Jean-Marie Le Pen, from the *Front National*, argued that EMU and European integration, in general, would increase migration from the Mediterranean area and entail the end of French sovereignty (Bouret, 1992:140-147).

²³ This was also a solution to what Soutou described as the 'ambiguous French position': "France wanted to control Germany within a European framework, but without losing its own freedom of action by reserving its veto rights." Soutou, 1996: 403-404.

On the Left, the former Minister of Defence, Pierre Chevènement, was opposed to the loss of sovereignty, but also to the social and economic policies that the move towards a strong currency implied. Philippe Séguin (RPR) regarded the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, after France was faced in 1993 with more than 3 million of unemployed, as a “new Munich Agreement with its social consequences” (quoted in Banerjee, 1995:414). The Communists regarded EMU as the “Europe of the bankers and multinationals”, which would lead to further job cuts, rising unemployment and a lowering of the standards of the French social security system (Cridle, 1993; Herzog, 1992). In other words, the negative economic and social effects of EMU were at the centre of the critique by the PCF, strongly supported by former Defence Minister Pierre Chevènement. The latter regarded the Maastricht treaty as “a masochistic, deflationary proposal which would drive a number of member states into real austerity and thereby threaten French export markets” (Cridle, 1993:233; Chevenèment, 1996) and warned of the transfer of citizens’ rights “in favour of the capital oligarchies” (quoted in *Der Tagesspiegel*, 21 April, 1992). This was also the critique of some renowned French economists (Feldstein, 1992; Mallet (ed.), 1993). Compared to Germany, there was much more controversial debate, and the economic implications of joining EMU were clearly central to this debate.

These arguments against the Maastricht Treaty were reiterated during the debate that preceded the referendum in the heterogeneous ‘no’ camp, which was organised in the ‘*Non de Gauche pour l’Europe contre Maastricht*’, headed by Max Gallo, former member of the Socialist Party (Gallo, 1992), the ‘*Comité pour une autre Europe*’ dominated by dissident-Socialists, left-Gaullists and Communists, the ‘*Rassemblement pour le ‘non’ au referendum*’ headed by Séguin and Pasqua, and de Villiers’ ‘*Combat des valeurs*’.

7.2.3. The conditions of the political discourse on EMU in France and Germany

It appears that there was a widespread consensus among the political class of Germany on EMU. In distinction to France, there existed a broad agreement, far beyond the political class, that a stability-oriented monetary policy should be maintained. Except for the reformed East German Communists, nobody proposed to return to inflationary

financing to stimulate growth and employment, especially in East Germany. But the political class of Germany was not representative of widespread opinions within Germany and of most German economists on the timing of EMU. According to opinion polls, the Germans were afraid to give up their national currency and opposed EMU at that time.²⁴ A group of 62 leading German economists supported the arguments against the timing of EMU. To them, it seemed premature to rush to EMU, given the burden of German reunification and the still existing differences between the possible member states joining a single currency.²⁵ Surprisingly, the debate within the political class did not reflect those concerns on EMU. One of the few politicians to make the argument that Germany should learn from the German economic and monetary union and not hasten to European EMU, repeating previous mistakes, was Oskar Lafontaine from the SPD (Zellentin, 1992:701, footnote 10). In fact, Lafontaine recommended a rejection of the Maastricht Treaty on the grounds that EMU was insufficient and would lead to a similar catastrophe as the German economic and monetary union (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 6, 1992. p.10). Neither his position nor his arguments appeared in the parliamentary debate on EMU (in fact, Lafontaine, having been the previous Socialist candidate as chancellor, never spoke on that matter at the German parliament) or in official documents of the SPD.²⁶ This lack of parliamentary debate over 'learning from the German EMU' was also in stark contrast to the process in other member states of EC:²⁷

Perhaps the most important lesson for member states, bearing in mind the proposals for European Economic and Monetary Union contained in the Maastricht Treaty, has been the short-term failure of German EMU. [...] As to German views on deeper European integration, the evidence from the integration of the two Germanys has not led the German government to increase circumspection (Spence, 1992:157 and 159).

²⁴ In January 1992 the Allensbach Institute für Meinungsforschung reported that 57% of the surveyed Germans thought it was a "bad decision" to abandon the Mark. Only 10% were in favour of speeding up European integration, while 30% were in favour of slowing it down. This contrasts with 51% in 1988 who favoured swift European integration. Survey results quoted in: Zellentin, 1992:705. Eurobarometer in 1992 and 1993 suggested that the Germans would reject EMU, if they were asked in a referendum. See: *Eurobarometer*, no. 38, Bulletin CE 11/1992, no. 1.3.247 and *Eurobarometer*, no.39, Bull. CE 5/1993, no. 1.2.151.

²⁵ The Anti-Maastricht manifesto was published in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 11 June, 1992; in English translation in: *The European Times*, 13 June, 1992. The latter newspaper also claimed that "80 per cent of the public is opposed to surrendering the mark".

²⁶ Outside parliament, several authors placed this argument in the public debate. See: Baader, 1993; Krause, 1992; Nölling, 1993; Schauer, 1993.

²⁷ On the ratification debates in other EC countries see: Laursen and Vanhoonacker (eds.), 1994; Chittibatelli, 1995.

In other words, there was no general debate in Germany on EMU and, instead, there was an almost consensual reaffirmation of the ‘how’ of EMU among the German political class. The German parliament seems to have functioned as an active gate-keeper of debates. Press critiques were criticised for their ‘negativity’, which fuelled fears of losing the Mark (Geiger, 1991:211). German parliamentarians complained that there had been too little information about the progress of the negotiations by the government, but also the representatives of the *Länder* complained about the lack of information during the negotiations 1990-1991 (*Stenographisches Protokoll des Deutschen Bundestages*, 12/50, October 17, 1991, pp.4140 and 4154). While the government was interested in *informing* the public about the Maastricht treaty²⁸, it did not agree to the suggestion to hold a referendum on EMU. Thus, taking the ideal speech situation as a yardstick to look at the level of legitimacy achieved during the public debate that preceded the signing of the Maastricht treaty, it seems that certain fundamental and general points of objection were excluded from the very beginning from the parliamentary public. A wider debate, as the one that took place in France, did not occur in Germany. This suggests that the decision in Germany was based on a broad parliamentary legitimacy, but not necessarily on a broad public legitimacy among the majority of the East and West Germans. Given the critical debates in the broader public and the arguments against EMU (particularly against “EMU now”) that were not reflected in the parliamentary debates, some observers complained about a “thoughtless and conformist plenary debate” in Germany (Ziebura, 1997:383).²⁹

While there was comparatively little exchange of views and debate during the parliamentary ratification process in France (with the exception of the interventions by de Villiers, Séguin, Pasqua and Chevènement), the referendum forced many political groups and parties to take a position toward EMU and the Maastricht Treaty. Over the summer a majority for the yes-vote seemed certain by approximately 60%. However, in a poll from 23-24 August the ‘no’ vote was, for the first, time a majority. Thus, the ‘yes’ camp, of which the entire government was part, started to engage in a debate, which

²⁸ See for example the governmental information on Maastricht: Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung. *Der Vertrag von Maastricht über die Europäische Union: Fragen und Antworten*. Bonn, Oktober 1992.

²⁹ An observer of those debates later deplored: “This is the revenge for the fact that the discussion on the Euro has been led so one-sidedly, above all in Germany. For fear of irritating the German citizens and voters and thus reinforcing the mistrust towards the new currency, the political controversies with the neighbours and the partner France have been hidden all too often and too easily” (Solms, 1997: 828).

included televised and other public discussions. A highlight was certainly the debate at the Sorbonne on September 3, 1992 between Philippe Séguin and François Mitterrand with a video link with Chancellor Kohl in Bonn (Criddle, 1993:235). There was also no stark contrast or reduction of the arguments presented in the wider French public and the parliamentary debates. Thus, the French parliament did not act as a gatekeeper, like the German parliament appears to have done.

Whatever Mitterrand's reasons for deciding in favour of a referendum, which was not a necessary requirement in the ratification process, the campaign before the referendum created the possibility and, in fact, required the government and the political class in France, to engage in an open debate on the reasons why France should ratify this treaty.³⁰ The reasons for the decisions of the Frenchmen in the referendum, which took place on 20 September 1992, may have varied and might not have been related to Maastricht or EMU. However, the preceding public debate was a very good way to increase the legitimacy of this decision. Again, judged against the ideal speech situation as a yardstick, the decision in France on EMU and the Maastricht treaty counted on more legitimacy than it did in Germany.

7.2.4 The actual impact of collective war memories on the decisions concerning EMU: an assessment

Looking at the arguments in the German public debate, the impact of collective war memories on the decision in Germany in favour of EMU was considerable, not to say paramount. I would even argue that, without reference to the practical-moral imperatives derived from collective war memories, this decision in Germany, in particular its timing, cannot be adequately understood. However, it seems that it was the coincidence of the end of the Cold War, looming German reunification and the substantive change in national sovereignty that were responsible for this surprising influence. The issue of a single currency by itself might not have been informed and influenced by collective war memories, but, rather, by the present concerns about the dominant Bundesbank. Yet, the conditions surrounding the political discourse on EMU

³⁰ It has been claimed that Mitterrand wanted to boost his (then low) popularity and divide the political right (UDF/UDC – RPR) on the issue. On these presumed motives of Mitterrand see: Appleton, 1992:3-5.

in Germany suggest that this decision could count on a high parliamentary legitimacy but not necessarily on a wider legitimating effect – on the contrary. Many fears and arguments mentioned in the mass media were branded as “negativity” of the media or marginalised.

The strong impact of collective war memories on the discussion in the parliamentary realm might also explain why a more open debate did not take place in Germany. While many critics argued on economic grounds, the political class was more concerned about the future perception and acceptance of Germany in Europe. EMU was a mere step, an example, to reassure the rest of Europe that Germany would not depart from the common path, that Germany would be reliable. This motivation seemed to be partly based on an interest in ‘tying’ Germany to the West and to European integration. This attitude of Germany, which puzzled many observers, can only be grasped with reference to the practical-moral imperatives, based on collective German war memories, sustained by the German political class.

In France practical-moral imperatives of collective war memories were most prominent within the Socialist Party, which focused on the need to tie Germany to the West. In this argument, memories of German expansionism and domination (this time limited to the economic area) reinforced current concerns in the economic and social fields. While Schuman and Mollet argued in 1954 ‘*Wehrmacht* or EDC’, some supporters of EMU, it seems, said ‘German domination of Europe or EMU’. Whether EMU actually fostered or curbed that domination was a matter of dispute. Thus, fear of German domination reigned quite prominent in the French debate, but not as prominently as during the debate on EDC. Advocates of a new Germany, of Franco-German friendship, such as Joseph Rovan, wrote disappointed:

For some of those voting ‘yes’ [...] the primary goal of the European Union was to ‘tie Germany’ in order to prevent it from becoming dangerous [...]. Strange way to talk about your primary partner. [...] Maastricht was for some the instrument of German imperialism that will again dominate the continent, finishing a project that has been tried [...] in two world wars. For others, Maastricht is an instrument, which has to prevent all that. The obsession with the German danger remains very strong in France and this is the bottom of the business, which is easily exploited (Rovan 1992:3).

Another imperative, the need for independence of France was an important argument among the Gaullists. Although many authors claimed that the years before Maastricht had actually shown that France had de facto lost its sovereign power over its monetary policy, the formal abdication of that policy area was of great concern to many Frenchmen (Ferri and Tibaud, 1992). The imperative of a strong, national, independent state remained a political factor in France, although with much less force than in 1954. Other, more pragmatic arguments that were unrelated to collective war memories also bore considerable weight, such as Europe as a stability anchor, the democratic deficit or the expected impact on migration. There was more controversy over the right monetary and fiscal policy stipulated by EMU and a fear of huge social and political costs caused by the austerity imposed by EMU.

Given the conditions of the political discourse in France on EMU, particularly before the referendum, one can assume that the two arguments based on collective war memories (tying Germany to the West to avoid dominance in Europe; maintaining national sovereignty) had a strong legitimating effect on the French decision on EMU. In each case, the decision on EDC and EMU, supporters and opponents alike referred to European integration either as a means to prevent a return of 'old' Germany (thus being in favour of the institution) or the fact that this institution would either be a useful vehicle for or a useless obstacle to German domination (Ziebura, 1997:383). In each case the historical fear of Germany was central.

7.3 Conclusion

The empirical results of the review on the two decisions that affected Franco-German relations, EDC and EMU, give an insight into the impact of collective war memories on Franco-German relations after 1945 and some hints of the changes in this impact between 1950 and 1990. The fear of German expansion and German domination remained a considerable, in the case of EDC, even paramount, argument of supporters and opponents alike. But it also played an important role in the French discussion on EMU. The plea, most notably among the Gaullists, but also among the Communists, to

maintain national independence and sovereignty, was also an important argument to be found in both political discourses in France. It is therefore striking that there were quite similar arguments in France on the decision regarding EMU and the decision on EDC despite the passage of more than thirty years: The fear of a return to pre-1945 conditions was very strongly informed by collective war memories. This referred to the feared ‘neutrality’ of a reunified Germany, combined with an orientation towards Central and Eastern Europe (summarised by the notion of ‘*Mitteleuropa*’). EMU was also discussed by a considerable part of the political class and French public either as a means of ‘tying the giant before it is too late’ or a means of future European domination by Germany. The pessimists did not believe in the containing effect of EMU, while the supporters and optimists did.

However, there are also marked differences in the French political discourse on the two decisions. The issue of European integration was much more accepted, even within the Gaullist RPR and even many Communist voters (if not Communist deputies). The voting on EMU in the French Senate and French National Assembly shows just how strong support for European integration and EMU had become. In this debate a considerable part of French politicians and public saw genuine advantages in European Economic and Monetary Union and had a very favourable attitude toward European integration. Thus, while some arguments concerning a ‘restless and dangerous Germany’ seemed similar to those in the debate of 1954, their political weight in the French parliamentary realm clearly decreased.

The empirical results of the two cases also suggest that the impact of collective war memories on legitimating German decisions in international politics actually increased. In 1952-53, the Social Democratic Party was surprisingly nationalistic and did not share the arguments, put forth by fellow Socialist parties or Adenauer, regarding the need to use EDC to overcome distrust toward Germany. This is in stark contrast to the SPD of 1990 that strongly supported EMU on the grounds that it was necessary to prevent a ‘relapse into nationalism’ or a ‘special path’ of Germany. This, I would argue, is part of the social learning process that took place between the 1960s and 1980s: given the idea that a ‘swing policy’ had been responsible for the First World War, the ‘special path’ concept clearly suggested a deepening of European integration. Finally, the rejection of militarism and nationalism was a strong argument in the German parliamentary debate.

This chapter also aimed at illustrating the application of the concept of political legitimacy as a framework to assess the actual impact of collective war memories on decisions affecting international, in this case Franco-German, relations. This concept, derived from Habermas' theory of communicative action, proposed a two-step analysis that focuses on the empirically identifiable arguments **and** the analysis of the conditions of political discourse. This research agenda focuses on the presence of political memory groups and the respective practical-moral imperatives derived from collective war memories they propose and the legitimating effect read off by the communicative conditions of the political discourse. This approach seems particularly suitable for assessing specific decisions in international politics that can count on a wider public interest. A debate, limited in time (such as the end of a ratification process) with a clear decision at the end has the advantage of facilitating the analysis of the specific legitimising basis of that decision.

However, specific decisions are always subject to many, also circumstantial factors, which render single-factor explanations weak or unconvincing. Thus, it can only be claimed that collective war memories 'mattered to a certain degree'. One of the limitations of the approach is, therefore, the difficulty of weighing certain arguments. How significant or how dominant was one argument as compared to others? The previous two sections have tried to give an idea of the dominant arguments by referring to key documents (motions, ratification resolutions etc.), the number of publications and, finally, the number of political actors and groups using this argument. However, there remains a considerable degree of subjective assessment and pre-selection. This research agenda also includes a critical aspect, because it reflects on the conditions of the discourses it analyses. By using the ideal speech situation as a yardstick of legitimising force, a critical means of qualifying public utterances is provided. In cases of Western democracies the differences may not be too significant. However, if authoritarian regimes or manipulative governments are also included in such analysis, the concept of political legitimacy advanced in this work provides a means of taking those differences into account.

The initial hypothesis of this chapter stated that collective war memories are of particular relevance in cases of substantive loss of sovereignty or existential issues, such as defence or international peace and security. The two empirical cases discussed in this

chapter appear to confirm this hypothesis. Cases that are dealt within bureaucratic procedures of foreign policy are less useful for such an approach, because the legitimacy of those decisions can hardly be tested. Thus, the concept seems particularly useful for the cases stated above and less for ‘normal procedure’-decisions in international politics. There may be other areas of international politics that are subject to public debate and public discourse, where, at the end, a decision is made. In such cases an analysis may find that collective war memories are of little or no relevance. This, however, is not a theoretical weakness of the concept of legitimacy, but an empirical result that actually allows a negative answer to the question, whether or not collective war memories had an impact on specific aspects of international politics. This possibility of a negative answer, I would argue, is one of the greatest strengths of this concept of political legitimacy.

This dissertation aims to advance the study of collective war memories by providing a theoretical concept of political legitimacy that helps to analyse whether or not collective war memories affect international politics. The research agenda developed in chapter 6 provides some ideas regarding the possible origins of a changed impact: changing international factors, the analysis points to the “good reasons” mobilised for or against a certain decision, the changing conditions of the political discourse. Moreover, as chapters 3, 4 and 5 suggest, an analysis of the level of social learning also highlights the source of different practical-moral imperatives derived from collective war memories. All those aspects also provide indicators for a *changing* impact of collective war memories on international politics. The analysis of the legitimising basis, grounded in arguments that a post-conventional society requires in order to create legitimacy *a posteriori*, allows us to understand the differences, changes and dynamics that concepts such as “collective identity” are usually unable to grasp. Although many additional aspects may be included (such as the transformation of political memory groups – as for example within the German SPD or the French Gaullists) for a full account of the reasons why the impact of collective war memories may have changed, the concept of political legitimacy avoids any totalising correlations or assumptions and can therefore accommodate explanations of change and transformation to a certain degree.

This thesis has tried to advance the question of how to analyse the impact of collective war memories in politics, in general, and international politics, in particular. The answer

has been twofold: it depends, first, on the level of social learning, which in turn, influences the practical-moral imperatives that derive from collective war memories. Secondly, it depends upon the role of collective war memories in legitimating decisions in international politics. Certainly, this makes the analysis more laborious and limits the scope of generalising assumptions and results. This two-step approach may not provide the most parsimonious answer to the question posed at the outset of the thesis. But I am convinced that, despite its limitations, the two-step answer helps us to understand differences, provides a critical self-understanding of collective war memories and avoids the trap of reifying concepts such as “identity”, “collective consciousness” or “images” that always beg the question of their becoming, transformation and variety of outcomes.

Finally, I wish to stress that both the concept of social learning and the concept of political legitimacy, elaborated here, are not only theoretical concepts that advance knowledge on the relationship between politics and collective war memories, but also provide certain approaches to a critical practice towards collective war memories. It is precisely this consideration which I turn to in the next and final pages.

Final remarks

From the theory to the critical practice of remembering past wars

This dissertation has focused on the question of how to conceptualise the impact of collective war memories on international politics. In its attempt to tackle this question, the thesis provided not one parsimonious, general theory or assumption but, rather, proceeded in several steps: chapter 1 highlighted the first step; namely, the differentiation between the dimensions of collective memories (emotional, cognitive and practical-moral) and the identification of the memory groups that put forth specific practical-moral imperatives (sometimes referred to in the public discourse as “lessons from the past” encapsulated in the formulation of collective memories). Chapter 1 defined those particular groups as “political memory groups”. The position - and this is the first answer offered by this thesis - , and the influence of those political memory groups in the political system, in general, and within political parties, in particular, give a first insight into how collective war memories enter politics.

Chapter 3 not only provided an insight into the socio-historical factors that led to the rise of *national* war memories in modernity (type of warfare, political revolution, industrial revolution), but also pointed to the Habermasian concept of social learning, which structures remembering and has a considerable influence on the formulation of practical-moral imperatives in politics. The different levels of social learning in collective war memories influence heavily the formulation of practical-moral imperatives derived from collective war memories. In this context, the more an object is remembered as being eternal or fixed in time, as is the case of the early conventional level of social learning, more general and repetitive imperatives are likely to be formulated. The more political groups within a polity are remembered differently, the more differentiated the practical-moral imperatives. The act of remembering itself shows different levels of openness. At a post-conventional level of social learning, at the level of reflexive remembering, attention turns away from the remembered *object*, focuses on the *remembering subject* and reflects upon the meaning that remembered

events have for political communities. Thus, a second answer to the question of the thesis is: the impact of collective war memories on politics depends on the prevailing level of social learning within a society and its influence on the formulation of practical-moral imperatives.

While the two answers offered thus far focus entirely on the *process of remembering* and the dimension of practical-moral imperatives, they also suggest an analytical approach of the political process by identifying the position of political memory groups within that process. In chapter 6, however, the argument was taken further by stating that collective war memories, in general and practical-moral imperatives in particular, also influence the legitimating of political decisions and outcomes. Based on Habermas' theory of communicative action, which focuses on the conditions of practical discourses and the types of arguments used in politics, the chapter provided a notion of political legitimacy that should enable us to identify where and how collective war memories may influence political decisions, particularly in international politics. Thus, the third answer to the question of the thesis lies in the analysis of the conditions of public political discourse of decisions in international politics and the arguments put forward to legitimate them during this discourse.

The two concepts introduced here to the study of collective war memories, namely, the concept of social learning and the concept of political legitimacy, are developed from Habermas' Critical Theory. In the final instance, both concepts point to the importance of communicative action and reflection in remembering past wars. Both the formulation of collective war memories and their practical-moral imperatives, as well as the legitimating of political decisions, focus on *public* debate, on *public* exchange of views. Thus, the analytical contribution of the thesis lies in pointing to the aspects of communicative action, as defined by Jürgen Habermas, in the analysis of the "politics-memory nexus" (Müller (ed.), 2002:2), discussed in the introduction of this work. The reflection on those communicative aspects of collective war memories does not remain at the level of reflection but can usefully be *operationalised* to guide empirical research. This guidance to empirical research is illustrated, for the case of social learning in remembering past wars, in chapters 4 and 5, and, in the case of legitimating political decisions through collective war memories in chapter 7.

The theoretical contributions of this thesis also qualify certain findings of the literature in IR on collective war memories. For one, the puzzling question posed in chapter 1, of how collective war memories may fuel further violence, in some cases (like Yugoslavia, or Northern Ireland), and rapprochement and more peaceful relations, in other cases (such as France and Germany), was answered in this thesis with reference to the role of communicative action in national and international politics. The violence-memory-more violence cycle described by some of the literature on protracted conflicts screens out the communicative elements of this effect by referring to cognitive-psychological theories. But, again, by focusing on the political memory groups and the way of legitimising political decisions in those conflicts, the practices that lead to an escalation or reproduction of violence – or even war – may be explained. In the cultural sphere, collective memory is not a simple given, a residue on the hard drive of societies, but an outcome of practices and conscious action, such as history classes, poetry, films, parades, commemoration days, dances. This thesis argues that the same applies to the political sphere: certain memories are not simply there, influencing politics, but are formulated, reproduced and rehearsed whenever a possibility occurs, particularly in the case of practical-moral imperatives advanced by political memory groups. The memory of the special path in Germany about its past is a case in point.

This thesis also contributes to the literature that describes political communities within state boundaries as social and historical entities, whose processes of collective communication and reflection provide important insights into the formulation of policies in international politics, but also towards other political communities (regarding them as social and historical units themselves). Following one of the central elements of Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School, part of a self-reflective approach is to become aware of the historicity of the observed object. This work, therefore, tries to avoid the pitfalls of static theories, by pointing to different factors of the becoming of collective war memories, of their continuities and their changes. Changes in the impact of collective war memories on national and international politics may in fact occur as a result of a modified relation between political groups, different levels of social learning, a change in the practical-moral imperatives derived from those memories, changed conditions of discourses and debates on collective war memories or changes in the international environment. In addition to those factors, there is also a socio-historical dimension that has been highlighted in chapter 3 of this thesis: the role of national war

memories within political communities is a modern phenomenon itself and may be about to change. This insight, derived from a notion of praxis that grasps the societal context, in which collective war memories are embedded, adds to the efforts made in this thesis to provide a theoretical understanding of the *changing* impact of collective war memories in international politics.

These are some of the heuristic values identified in this thesis on applying the communicative action concept of Habermas for the analysis of the relationship between politics and collective war memories. Their specific strengths, but also weaknesses, in terms of guiding empirical research were discussed in the previous chapters. Yet, there is a general critique of discourse analysis and communicative action that also applies to the approach developed here. The approach focuses on the *public* debate on collective war memories, as well as on the *publicly formulated arguments* in favour of certain policies, decisions or actions to be taken. Obviously, there are limits and filters that select certain arguments and suppress others. In fact, some arguments might be formulated in private but, for lack of approval, not publicly. Admittedly, this is a risk that this approach faces. However, the counter-argument that, for example, the public arguments used by, say, Adenauer, were false and 'in reality' he had quite different motives from the ones stated publicly *at the time of public debate and deliberation*,¹ also needs to be proven. Often, the same limits of sources that make us doubt that people act according to their publicly formulated arguments and legitimisations, apply to the opposite claim. In the final instance, I would argue, this is a question of truthfulness: do actors behave according to what they publicly say and express? Truthfulness cannot be 'proved' once and for all, but only be made plausible by comparing words and subsequent deeds. If they coincide, we may believe that the practical-moral imperatives and cognitions gained from collective war memories are truthful guides to action and perception.

Some authors argue that certain arguments and memories are not publicly debated because they are repressed or, in fact, only present in the collective unconscious (and therefore beyond the conscious control of individuals). Theodor Adorno, for example,

¹ At a later stage we may be in a position to test those arguments against evidence in archives, once that information has been made available. Still, at the time of public debate we may be left without this possibility.

referred to the 1950s as the time of repression of the memory of the Second World War in Germany. Forgetting is the necessary opposition to remembering and always a complementary part of memory. While the concept of the “collective unconscious” is difficult to grasp (and sometimes close to reification), it is my contention that a *comparative* analysis of social learning and legitimising through collective war memories across different political communities may help to identify particular “blind spots” or repressions of certain memories in specific political communities (like in the case of Germany in the 1950s, also identified in the ratification debate on EDC) – without relying on the concept of the collective unconscious and its methodological problems.

Beyond the heuristic values identified above, I would claim that Habermas’ theory of communicative action applied to the relationship between politics and collective war memories also provides important guidance to a *critical practice* towards the politics-memory nexus. In other words, this Critical Theory forms part of those approaches that do not limit themselves to best describing and analysing the changing impact of collective war memories on politics, but actually poses the question of how to *transform* the impact of collective war memories. This leads inevitably to the question of *ethics* of collective war memories, and, as a consequence, to the question of what should be *done* (critical practice) about collective war memories and their impact on politics.

I believe that these critical approaches can be found in each of the three dimensions of collective war memories mentioned in chapter one. For one thing, the emotional dimension of collective war memories has been the subject of numerous psychological and psycho-analytical works, particularly on the topic of trauma. The sense of sacrifice, of loss, the need for collective survival and victory are some of the most important emotional aspects of collective war memories. The psychological literature suggests, as a practical step, ways of dealing with the emotional dimensions of trauma, such as guilt, shame, sense of superiority, or repression through therapeutical methods such as melancholia, trauma-work, or working-through. These practices suggest ways of ‘freeing’ the subjects from the uncontrolled emotions they experience each time those memories are invoked. They also help people to get a grip on those emotions, to control them to a certain extent and to be able to function in normal life. These therapeutical practices are very much linked to personal memories of survivors of genocide,

Holocaust or extreme mass violence, yet they are often suggested to nations or groups as well. It must be kept in mind, however, that silence does not necessarily entail absence of memories and their emotional dimension. Much to the contrary, the emotional power of some memories might be so overwhelming that self-censuring occurs, as the case of returning Frenchmen from the Algerian war or returning deportees in the Second World War demonstrates. But, as long as they are not made the subject of public commemoration, this approach will find it difficult to identify the three dimensions of collective memory.

Many authors who focus on the spiritual aspect (often related to Christianity) of coming to terms with past extreme experiences, like war, refer to the concept of reconciliation (Müller-Fahrenholz, 1997; Tutu, 1999). This alludes to acts (or rituals) of forgiveness or acts of apology, public acceptance of past wrongdoings. In the former case, individuals or groups refrain from demanding punishment or restitution for the sake of better future relationships. In the latter case, former perpetrators accept their wrongdoing and ask the victim group for forgiveness. Here several aspects of dealing with the emotional dimension of collective war memories can be identified: this often implies that former enemies meet (like the former soldiers from both sides of the trenches during the Allied landing of the Normandy in 1944), that they converse, that the victims are confirmed and reaffirmed by those who perpetrated certain violence and that the latter admit to wrongdoing. These acts often liberate former victims or those who suffered mass violence and enable them to let go of the search for an apology, for an understanding, or an acceptance of wrongdoing by those who permitted or carried out crimes in wars. In this sense, there are emancipatory practices in the emotional dimension of collective war memories. The approach developed in this thesis does not contribute to this fairly well developed literature on critical practices concerning collective war memories.

However, there are also critical practices in the other two dimensions of collective war memories, namely, (1) the factual basis of collective war memories and (2) the discourse on the practical-moral dimension. As chapter 3 highlighted, there is a growing control of the factual basis of collective memories by governments through their archive policies or their withholding of documents. This means that the factual aspects of collective war memories can be manipulated. On the other hand, the increasing availability of information and its storage increasingly counters such governmental

intentions. The availability of information, often hampered by governments with reference to present international relations or national security, becomes ever more pressing. In fact, the complete opening of the secret files of East Germany after the downfall of the Communist regime is a case in point, where the (West German) government chose to make almost all the information available to the individual citizens. This prevented the emergence of certain assumptions about secret files held back and countered successfully some attempts of myth-making (by former Communists). Thus, another critical practice on collective war memories is the openness to data and information on past wars.

In contrast to national collective war memories, the ‘voices from below’ acquire increasing importance. State-sponsored offers for the structuring of collective war memories may still be the basis for the dominant narratives on past wars, but they are being increasingly challenged by groups who feel that their particular experiences are not sufficiently appreciated or articulated. This has been the case in France and Germany with regard to the Jewish memory. Totalising narratives on collective war memories, which claim that a certain narrative captures the empirical sameness of the experience, can be challenged from within by giving different groups a voice. This strategy of totalising memory, I argued in chapter 3, was prominent in the process of nation-building in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Its corollary was the marginalisation of perceived negative aspects and partial memories that did not fit into the national narrative. Given the increased self-consciousness of different memory groups and the availability of information about their particular experience, it is increasingly difficult to sustain those totalising narratives. The point, however, is not to “celebrate diversity” for the sake of it. It is rather a challenge to any claim to represent collective experience all citizens can identify with.

As I argued in chapter 4 and 5, the challenge to any totalising claim to represent the empirical experiences of all groups within society is a chance to advance another level of social learning: instead of selecting “positive” memories of past wars that the political community can identify with, the political community should accept positive as well as negative memories and experiences in the past and pass a conscious moral judgment on them. The identification, then, is not with the claim of empirical sameness of experience, but with the joint experience of reflection on different experiences. By

consciously challenging those empirical claims such a change of reflection can be advanced. Such a change can also be advanced by conscious public debates on the meaning and the practical-moral implications of past wars. The chapters on France and Germany suggest, however, that such a debate is easier, or even only possible, after the generation of those actively and biographically involved in the wars is gone. Otherwise a more general, morally and ethically informed debate is conflated with the question of personal responsibility and guilt – which is altogether different (Jaspers, 1947). Practical-moral imperatives are usually implicit in many messages, but rarely the subject of debate. Matters, however, can be advanced by specifically tabling a debate on the ‘lessons’ and the practical consequences of dates, events and results remembered from the past. A conscious debate on the practical-moral messages provides the possibility of challenging the often implicitly present moral codes.

Another critical practice that this thesis suggests is the challenge to essentialising remembering, as discussed in chapters 4 and 5: in cases where the object of remembering is grossly over-generalised or even essentialised (the same actor throughout time), the possibility of change is closed. In the worst case, the future is a repetition of the past. Such an option is not only empirically false, but it politically forecloses conscious efforts to overcome the present state of international relations. The early stage of conventional learning implies a closed image of the self and the other. However, such an image can be challenged from within by questioning the alleged sameness of different political groups. This has been the constant work of authors such as Joseph Rovan and Alfred Grosser with regard to French narratives on Germany. Yet, this line of questioning can equally be used to challenge the assumed sameness of countries or groups. In fact, providing theoretical frameworks that precisely highlight the possibility of change and transformation is itself a critical device against essentialising or general theorising the relationship between memory and politics.

Habermas’ notion of ideal speech situation, the foundation of his discourse ethics, also provides an important critical yardstick for communicative action concerning the level of social learning, as well as the legitimating impact of collective war memories on specific political decisions. Are the conditions of free deliberation as described in chapter 6 fulfilled? The empirical cases of East and West Germany suggest a huge difference in remembering past that responded to the absence or presence of a public

sphere that allowed – or not- the free deliberation described by Habermas. The same critical judgment can be applied to the claim that collective war memories did or did not legitimate certain political decisions: By looking not only at the empirically identifiable arguments in the political discourse, but also at the conditions of that discourse, an informed judgment on the actual impact of collective war memories on politics, but also a critique of that discourse is possible. The standards of critique provided by Habermas' ideal speech situation also suggest practical ways of changing the present political discourse towards free deliberation, the permeability of public spheres and the participation of all interested. This, I would argue, is ultimately the critical agenda of a Habermasian Critical Theory applied to the study of collective war memories.

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