The title of this book, “Playing second fiddle?” is intentionally revealing. The starting point for the question posed is whether the European Union has become a second-tier player in the global arena. The phrasing of the question itself suggests a fair share of Euro-centrism. The obvious counter-question would be, and in 2015 it is posed almost with a knee-jerk reaction: What indicators imply that the EU can challenge the United States and China and take a position as a true global powerhouse? In all honesty, not that much. Has the train then already left the station for what is still a very unique experiment, “the European Union”? This is what this book is about.

At this moment, it seems that the EU project, more than ever before throughout its six decades of existence, is exposed to critical pressure, from the inside and the outside. One scare after another has left the experts predicting the imminent collapse of the EU. Crisis meetings in Brussels between European Heads of State have become routine. Metaphors used to describe the economic situation in Europe are plentiful. Comparisons to the nuclear catastrophe in Fukushima have been made and the consequences likened to those of a radioactive meltdown. The solution: isolating the problem in order to limit the damage inflicted on the surrounding environment. The ill-famed “sick man of Europe” has turned out to be the European Union itself.

The European project is one of complex diversity that commentators, in different ways, are trying to grasp, sometimes by referring to metaphors – from the European house with a solid foundation that the Soviet leader Gorbachev once spoke about, to a Greek temple in ruins. The European project contains, of course, still a significant amount of community and togetherness, even if the project’s legitimacy is more fragile than ever considering the present level of tension and conflict. Since the end of the Cold War the EU has, not least in the discourse of EU itself, often been made implicitly synonymous with Europe. It has of course never been correct to assume such congruence, but today it would be outright presumptuous to make this assumption. But, what is then the true position of the EU in Europe and in the world?

At bottom, the common identity project has mainly been one of steering safely away from war and conflict within Europe, rather than extracting pride from golden moments and glories in the past. Using the concept coined by Vamik Volkan (2001), it is chosen traumas rather than chosen glories that have indicated the road ahead. This endeavour has for decades certainly been a resounding success per se, and the grand feat was in 2012 given its symbolic recognition when the European Union was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. But are such great renditions in the past, even in the near past, enough to sway future generations and make them work jointly to achieve commonly defined aims? Also, the contemporary EU project seems largely focused on muddling through which is not very likely to attract a mass following either. The question remains, therefore, what will determine the future of the EU in the coming years?

The Irish political scientist Hugo Brady claimed that after the British veto against the proposed EU Treaty in December 2011 the EU would no longer be the same (www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-16106621). The financial crisis would bring the EU towards the brink of collapse or at least towards a
divide, leaving groups of countries integrating at different speeds. Similarly, during his State of the Union address to the European Parliament in September 2013, the then President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, cautioned that after the Eurozone crisis there will be “no way back to business as usual” and that the EU “will not come back to the old normal”. The crisis was not cyclical, but structural, he argued (Barroso 2013). One way to interpret this is that even in the innermost core of the European Union, as represented by the Head of the Commission, there is a realization of the urgent need for the EU to reinvent and renew itself – or else slowly recede into insignificance. The million-dollar question is of course what the nature and quality of this reinvention should be. Here, Barroso was vague, and his exhortations remained on the rhetorical level of “work jointly and run faster”.

Among scholars several conceivable scenarios for the future development of the EU have been presented. The political scientist Ian Manners (2012) has discussed five: Absentio, Confederatio, Communio, Federatio, and Stato. Scenario number one offers almost no future prospects for the European Union as it is structured today. The second scenario predicts that the future of the European Union is made up of a confederation of nation states. The third scenario suggests that the EU can only survive in a crisis through greater solidarity (Communio) and through a more flexible organization. And the fourth emphasizes that the future of the EU must be a federation. The fifth one points to the possibility of a “regional union of nation states”. This structure strikes a balance between, on the one hand, extended regional integration and national differentiation, on the other.

It is a sobering thought that it was not so long ago that another political scientist, Mark Leonard, wrote the book Why Europe Will Run the 21st Century. When the, admittedly controversial, book was published in 2005, it was noted that the EU had been a success story and very few, perhaps not even Jean Monnet himself, had been able to imagine the success that the European project had achieved over the past five decades. On the other hand, Robert Kagan (2004) in the year before heaped scorn on EU-Europe, which he argued constantly revealed its origin from Venus, not being able to muster the kind of strengths that count in the global arena. Instead the United States stood for the qualities of Mars and was there unruffled in the center of the world’s attention. Kagan clearly predicted that Europe was on its way out, out into the wings making for a silent exit.

At the time of writing, in 2015, the situation of the United States is certainly different from what it seemed to be when Kagan’s pamphlet was written. More than twenty years after the downfall of the Soviet Union, the United States too has finally started to reel from the consequences of imperial overstretch forecasted by Paul Kennedy (2010). No longer the dynamic engine of world economy that it used to be, and increasingly beset by political sclerosis, the future prospects of the United States look bleak. On the other hand, it is as stated above not that Europe has strengthened its hand either. The global financial crisis started in the United States in 2007 and was overtly blamed on the US by strong actors such as Russia (Roberts 2010), but seamlessly transitioned into the Eurozone crisis, which erupted the year after.

The crisis has so far at least, been primarily economic, affecting mainly the 17 Euro states – that is the Eurozone – and not the entire EU as such. But at the same time it is clear that the euro- and financial crisis is not at the core a monetary one but that it ultimately concerns credibility, legitimacy and even the EU’s continued existence. In that sense the crisis is as political and long-term as it is economic and acute. All in all, for the EU as well as for the United States, the past years have meant a
loss of relative strength in global political and economic affairs in relation to the BRICS: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

Frankly speaking, the EU developments beg the question if we are now entering a stage of permanent decline, a transition into the Abendland of the European project, to use Spengler’s term. Or if decline is still too strong a word, it may at least be apt to talk about “diffusion, defusion, dilution, fragmentation” or “mutation” into something more adapted to the changing circumstances (Walker 2013:10). Again, reverting to the words of José Manuel Barroso, the crisis is not cyclical, but structural, and it will not come to pass without major difficulty.

This is where our argument starts. For us as scholars within the humanities and social sciences it is imperative to address the long-term consequences of the occurring shifts. It is a prime responsibility to engage in critical discussion about what may lie ahead and what the possible consequences may be. In designing this book the editors have taken the liberty to construct four slightly different but still in many ways interrelated visions about Europe’s future. In turn, these visions have given name to the titles of the sections of the book:

I. Europe as a Bogeyman.
II. Europe as the Promised Land
III. Europe as a Contested Ideal
IV. Europe as an Anachronism

Europe as a bogeyman

In contrast to previous European great-power actors throughout history, that built their identity by way of national myths and heroic wars, today’s EU is a transnational “state” institution that has its roots in a European trauma – a war that killed millions, including civilians, and where genocide was committed during the Holocaust.

As such, European integration emerged after centuries of wars and conflict, and therefore avoiding war became the constituting factor of European cooperation. As the American historian James E. Sheehan puts it, “the obsolescence of war is not a global phenomenon but a European one” (Sheehan 2008). Thus the disappearance of war after 1945 “created both a dramatically international system within Europe and a new kind of European state.”

When looking back at the development of a common European memory, the idea of Europe has since the end of the Second World War gone through different stages, serving different purposes and having different meanings. Thus, for the Founding Fathers of the European Community, the idea of Europe was a peaceful Europe as a contrast to a Europe divided by war. By that time, Europe was dominated by a memory of war and conflict. And therefore, it became imperative to overcome this memory and introduce a new vision of Europe, a peaceful Europe that had gathered in economic collaboration in order to avoid a new war.
With the introduction of a new and open market during the late 1980s, the idea of a master narrative for Europe as a whole was launched. The economic integration process was to be followed by cultural integration with the development of a European identity as the final outcome. Just as European nation states had their grand narratives, so would Europe. However, it was not that easy to define this master narrative for Europe. What constituted Europe? Where were its borders? Was Europe defined by the Mediterranean and the Baltic Sea? Was Europe a geographical entity, or could it rather be an idea, a specific way of living, a culture, or a civilization? Was Europe in fact united by its diversity, as Romani Prodi eventually claimed?

In this new narrative about Europe, only few references were made to Europe’s bloody and violent past. The Enlightenment, the Republic of Letters, and the specific European tradition of social welfare were important elements while the darker sides of Europe’s past remained absent. And eventually, several critics pointed out that in the 21st century the long-term legitimacy of European unification required a more critical historical reading—one that would acknowledge also the conflicts, the contentions, and the complexity and ambiguity of Europe’s past. Only in that way would Europe be able to recognize the fragility of its future (Pakier & Stråth 2010).

It is within this process that we should understand how the Holocaust during the 1990s was not only addressed by European heads of state and policy makers, but also became the core of a new and more progressive European politics of memory in which the crimes of national socialism were to be commemorated and apologized for, and where keeping alive the memory of the Holocaust became an imperative for European states. For a while it looked like the Holocaust could serve as the constituting factor for Europe, uniting all member states around the imperative that never again should such a crime happen on European ground. And when a group of new states were to become members of the EU in 2004, they too became obliged to keep alive the memory of the Holocaust and like Germany, France, Belgium and other European states acknowledge their share of responsibility for the crimes of national socialism, (Judo 2005; Kroh 2008; Levy & Sznajder 2006).

But only for a while. With the big-bang enlargement in 2004, this position of the Holocaust as the core event of a new master narrative for Europe was challenged when the new member states started to make requests for having their communist past included in the narrative. As Maria Mälksoo writes, while the recollection of the Holocaust had become increasingly institutionalized and internationalized, the crimes of the communist regimes and their traumatic repercussions for contemporary European politics had hardly received comparable academic and political attention (Mälksoo 2009). In that respect, Eastern European memories of World War II are still neglected as lieux de mémoire.

This development has reopened the debate about what narrative Europe should be united around. Should it be a narrative that underlines the common European values that serve as a constant reminder of what Europe should avoid? Or would another narrative that includes also the ambivalence and the complexities of history, where nations can be both collaborators, victims, heroes, and allies serve a contemporary version of the magnetic ‘European project’ better? In other words, is it time to dismiss the idea of Europe as ‘the bogeyman’ and the impression that if states do not live up to the European moral standards of human rights and democracy, both now and then, they are no longer worthy members?
Such questions are not least important considering the last two decades of developments within European politics, with a rise in support for right-wing populism and Euro-scepticism, where it seems that both European heads of states and governments and the European institutions are becoming less progressive in their condemnations of discrimination and racism. While European governments could in January 2000 agree to boycott Jörg Haider’s Austria, the EU has become more cautious in its relation e.g. to the government in Hungary and the party of Golden Dawn in Greece. How should we explain this? Is this attitude a sign of a weakening of the values that once appeared to be at the core of the European project? Or are we returning to the state of interwar years in which European states are becoming increasingly protectionist and nationalist in their scopes and attitudes? Are the concerns of these values a luxury that cannot be afforded in times of economic crisis?

Europe as the promised land: Magnet and future generations

An Internet search of the phrase “Europe the promised land” does not provide any in-depth essays about how a contemporary or indeed a future Europe might qualify as a land of dreams. Instead, we are offered an exposé on migration flows to Europe, or rather the EU. For many outside the EU and Europe the European Community remains a beckoning goal, a promise of a secure and safe future. Countless migrants have lost their lives in an effort to realize the dream of becoming a part of Europe. Thousands upon thousands have drowned on their way from their home countries in Africa. UNHCR reports the number to be around 1 500 in 2011 alone (approximately more than 3 000 in 2014). The ones not accounted for could be at least as many.

Twenty-five years ago, the migratory pressure was not coming from the south. The expected migration was to come from the east. French demographer Jean-Claude Chesnais estimated that from 1992 to 1995 a total of 4–5 million people would migrate to the West from territories tied to the collapsed Soviet Union. Yuri Reshetov, of the Russian foreign ministry, on the other hand, predicted about 4–6 million annually for the same period. Diplomat and deputy chairman of the Russian news agency Novosti, Vladimir Milyutenko, estimated 7–8 million per year or 25 to 30 million by 1995 and so on (Bade 2003).

The then Polish prime minister, Waldemar Pawlak, did not rule out that insufficient economic aid could set millions of unemployed Poles in motion westward and warned in 1992 that if necessary he would open his borders to the east and to the west so that the refugees could migrate further onto Germany. The somber prophecies from the east were followed by equally pessimistic comments from the south when the Senegalese president Abdou Diouf in an interview with Le Figaro expressed that Europe must offer Africa far more massive economic aid than it had up to now, “otherwise you will be overrun by hordes as in the Middle Ages” (Bade 2003).

These are of course examples of complicated political games in turbulent times. There are both push and pull factors from the perspective of the individual but there is no doubt that Western Europe for many has been and still is the Promised Land, in the same way as nearly 60 million Europeans once were lured to North America. In the end, there were no hordes of either Eastern Europeans or indeed Africans arriving in Europe. But one result of making such prophecies public was that Europe took steps not to be caught off guard by future migration flows.
While the outside world increased its focus on Europe the concept of community went from a euphoric state to a sobering up in less than two decades. The generation that as teenagers had experienced the ending of the Second World War had, when they well into their midlives, were confronted with the task of building the new Europe in 1989, to take their personal and collective experiences into account. In many families on the European continent three generations were lost in the First and Second World Wars. It was the children of these lost generations who had to build a new and better Europe. Amongst them were the German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, the eminent historian and former foreign minister Bronislaw Geremek from Poland, Vaclav Havel, Margaret Thatcher and many more.

Today’s generation, such as Spain’s so-called indignados, grew up in a safe, prosperous and rich Europe. Something they have taken for granted. For them, the memory of the European catastrophe is remote. But unlike their parents’ generation, who lived through the European economic growth period, they have had to realize that they belong to a generation that for the first time since World War II may be worse off than their parents. Researchers Mary Kaldor and Sabine Sechow at the London School of Economics show in a report that to this generation of indignados the EU is either completely invisible or bears negative connotations. The question arises to what extent this generation can bring new life to an increasingly dormant European project (Kaldor & Sechow 2013). Or as British historian Timothy Garton Ash recently asked: “Europe needs something more than fear to make it again the magnetic project it was for a half century. But what can that something be?” (Ash 2012)

With a Europe tending to increase its socio-economic inequalities, not much suggests today that the next generation will, or can, infuse new life into the European project. Put another way: It depends on whom you ask and where you ask it! While in Spain every other person under 25 is unemployed, only one in ten young Germans is jobless. Europe is no longer divided between western and eastern Europe. The new split goes between northern and southern Europe, between those who have and those who have not, between German and Swedish young people, on the one hand, and Greeks and Spaniards on the other. The question is then, do we ask too much? Or rather, is Garton Ash right to be searching for this something that can again make Europe that magnetic project it was for half a century? Or is the current European project as “good as it gets” Has it peaked already?

Gloomy observers of the European scene have predicted that it remains for the EU to resign itself to the prospects of a half-life existence (Walker 2013). However, in all fairness, the EU has still not exhausted its possibilities and advantages. It remains the most successful integrationist project in the world, with several neighbouring countries aspiring to become members and share its normative framework. Croatia joined the EU as a fully-fledged member as late as on July 1, 2013, and others are still lining up. On the whole, the EU is still the constitutive reference point for a group of Balkan, eastern European and Caucasian countries that seek to reformulate their identities and obtain recognition as members of international society. Quite visibly there is still an explosive quality to these aspirations. It was the longing for the EU of the public opinion in Kyiv and Western Ukraine that toppled the Ukrainian president Yushchenko and from 2014 on after the events of the Maidan brought about a major crisis between Russia and the EU over Ukraine’s right to determine its own political path of development.
Moreover, and as indicated above, for innumerable individuals in developing parts of the world the EU retains the tenets of the Promised Land, or maybe the expression of the EU being an ever-receding horizon is better still. In her thesis about the liminal existence of African migrants landing themselves in undefined periods of hopeless limbo in Istanbul, Brigitte Suter (2012) showed how a great number of these migrants put all their hopes in being able to get across the border to Greece in order to be able to establish a better life there. Since the years of Suter’s fieldwork Greece has been struck heavily by the Eurozone crisis, even attaining the status of the embodiment of Europe’s malaise. However, even if the horizon is receding, the attraction of the EU ideal is still there for those worse off. The prospects for a better future are simply projected elsewhere, to other parts of the EU, e.g. to Germany or Northern Europe, with the Scandinavian model gaining ever increasing attention for the social and economic benefits it purportedly brings to its citizens.

Europe as an anachronism – and as a contested ideal

In the years of Boris Yeltsin’s presidential reign in the early 1990s, Russia made significant overtures to join the EU as well as NATO, and Turkey for long seemed willing to sign on the dotted line just to become an EU member state, if only the existing members let her in. This has all changed, and profoundly so. Within Europe itself, a new pattern of alliances and orientations is rapidly beginning to emerge. The rather complacent EU perspective was in the first post-Wall decades one of Europe as composed of concentric rings, with the EU at its core, from which the worthy ideals of democracy, rule of law, human rights, good governance, and free market economy have been projected. To speak of ‘normative power Europe’ (Manners 2002), Euro-complacency (Walker 2013) or even a certain streak of Messianism (Weiler 1991) would not seem unjustified.

The prevalent claims of the EU/Europe to take the moral high grounds in world affairs can certainly be labelled an anachronism; it is, as has been outlined above, not reflected in current political and economic relations of strength, as the EU is steadily being overtaken and eclipsed by the BRICS. Added to this, from within Europe itself voices of strong and credible dissent are being heard with regard to who is and should be making claims in the name of Europe. Russia and Turkey are both becoming ever more assertive, challenging the EU with regard to what constitutes core European values and what the essence is of lofty words such as democracy and human rights.

Greater Europe is a concept acquiring a significant meaning to it (Sakwa 2010): Europe is definitely more than the EU. The EU may actually no longer even be the most central part of Europe. In 2010 one analyst claimed that Russia is not primarily after the overthrow of the existing normative order, but clearly seeks to become one of its “managing directors” (Roberts 2010). The keyword of “sovereign democracy”, coined under Vladimir Putin’s first presidential tenure, says it all. What the term indicates is that Russia is its own master, and that no outside actor has the right to interfere to tell the sovereign great power how the concept of democracy should be interpreted in Russia’s internal affairs. This controversy reached a symbolic peak when in connection with the duma elections in 2011 and the presidential polls in 2012 the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) refrained from sending election observers to Russia after having been faced with unacceptable restraints of their numbers as well as their freedom of movement and manoeuver.
However, more was still to come. The political crisis that erupted between Russia, on the one hand, and the EU and the US, on the other, in the wake of the Russian annexation of the Crimea and its intervention in the flaring civil war in other parts of Ukraine, was the worst since the days of the Cold War. In its seemingly blatant disregard of the inviolability of borders of sovereign states in Europe (a principle that even the Soviet Union claimed to be sacred during the Cold War) and its indifference to the right of independent states to determine their own political orientation and development, Putin’s Russia indeed no longer seemed to be interested in just becoming one of the managing directors of the European normative order as defined by the EU. Instead, it seemed intent on opening a show of its own. As developed later on in this book, this may paradoxically mean a renewed chance for the EU. If Russia becomes clearly cast for the role as the bogeyman of Europe, the popular appeal of the EU’s seemingly anachronistic normative order may actually come to face a renaissance.

Outside of Europe, the challenge is also daunting. In many regions worldwide China is manifesting its interests; China is becoming ever more ambitious in the area of political cooperation with Africa, Latin America and Europe itself. From a parochial Swedish perspective one can note that the old national flagship industry, the car manufacturer Volvo, is since several years back owned by a Chinese mega company. Politically, China is hailing the principles of stability and predictability, and cherished values of European civilization like democracy, rule of law and human rights are subordinated to the perceived and overriding concerns of the common good – as interpreted by the governing communist party.

So the ideals that the EU stands for are increasingly becoming contested by ever more formidable actors. If the EU in the near past could trade its normative ideals for the economic benefits it could offer, this is not necessarily so anymore. To be fully honest, Western observers’ marvelling at the rise of China betrays if anything a lack of historical perspective. China has been at the centre of world civilization for thousands of years; Europe’s occupation of mid-stage has in this respect been just a brief stint or perhaps a parenthesis, lasting no more than five hundred years. Put differently, China’s resurgence is in a historical perspective just a readjustment back to normality (cf. Eklund 2011), and maybe it is time for Europe to realize this. After all we may be dealing with a heavy anachronism here.

The structure of the volume

The volume’s ten contributions relate in different ways and to varying degrees to the book title; Playing second fiddle?, as well as to the four visions for Europe’s development outlined above. The volume can – in all modesty – be viewed as a positioning of the European project in time and space – the positioning of a Europe that vacillates between different extremes. At one point in time, in December 2012, the Union was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for its work to promote peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe, and in the next instance, a few months later, European public’s trust in the institution reached new lows. The pendulum swings ever lower and with increasing intensity, not least is this the general impression at the time of writing in early 2015.

Today’s troubled political leaders, both nationally and supranationally, bow down before the historical ghosts that over the last decade have been brought to life throughout Europe. The first
entry (chapter 2), by Anders Hellström, concerns Europe as a Bogeyman. In the chapter “Europe’s Bogeyman: Europeanization of Nationalism” Hellström notes that in the latest European parliamentary elections the Eurosceptical parties – Front National, the Danish People’s Party and the United Kingdom’s Independence Party (UKIP) – became the largest parties in their respective countries. In Greece and in Hungary, the hard-core anti-immigration parties – the Golden Dawn and Jobbik – have both had great electoral success.

Hellström tackles this problem on both a supranational and a national level. First he discusses, in more general terms, the relationship between migration and national identity and how this phenomenon could be understood in the context of the European political landscape. Inspired by Gerard Delanty and Chris Rumford (2004), Hellström suggests that we need to consider the cultural foundations of politics and the historical processes of modernity in order to apprehend the complex dynamics of the European integration process. The author reflects over how the concept of Europeanization of nationalism is helpful to understand the crucial interplay between Europe and the nation; de-nationalisation and re-nationalisation are both immanent features of European politics. To prove his point Hellström focuses on the Sweden Democrats (SD) in Sweden and demonstrates how the party mobilizes voters from both the left and the right, using the national myth of the People’s Home to distinguish between the fearful outside and the authenticity of the inside.

Hans-Åke Persson’s “Europe – The Promised Land – Spaces of Experiences and Horizons of Expectation at the Turn of the Millennium 1990–2000” discusses how a post-war generation of European politicians like Vaclav Havel, Helmut Kohl, Romani Prodi, Francis Mitterrand and Margaret Thatcher in the transition from the 80s to the 90s had a historic opportunity to, simultaneously with the uniting of the two Germany build a new and different Europe – a promised land. The focal point of the contribution is to closely examine what visions of Europe did the European political elite nourish at the start of the 1990s. The perspective becomes all the more interesting, however, when we try to understand the actors in their situations of decision-making by bringing in the psychosocial and cultural historical consciousness as yet another prism through which we can study political behavior and political actors. The chapter also looks at what the individual’s memories, historical experiences, or historical consciousness mean for his or her actions in the domestic and international/European space.

Chapter 4, “Shrinking Futures Ahead? Debating Citizenship, Social Rights and Solidarity in the EU” by Marco Zoppi, attempts at explaining the reasons for the diminishing political role of the EU in terms of missed opportunities. What is missing but should have been there, he argues, is transnational solidarity among EU citizens. In his argument the author focuses on social citizenship, the locus where national differences should be mediated to achieve EU consensus on social policy, which in turn could indicate an ideal that is no longer contested but could even restore the EU as a Promised Land. EU institutions, he argues, have in fact failed at extending solidarity beyond the peculiarities of each member state as their promotion of a common European identity based primarily on culture has highlighted already existing differences even more. Consequently, social policy prevails as a national affair as well as a contested ideal within the EU framework. In the absence of social consensus, the author concludes, solidarity remains “shrunk” to the member states’ level, and at the EU level political potentials remain unfulfilled.
In chapter 5 “Contesting EU Enlargement. The View from the European Parliament after 2004” Magdalena Góra deals with the EU enlargement process and how contested it has been. She argues that the EU’s attractiveness was most significant in the process of the enlargement to the East. However in later enlargements one can sense that EU values, norms and ideals are increasingly contested by candidate countries and new member states. Góra highlights among other things that we by looking more closely at how the advantages of previous enlargements have been depicted, one can make solid inferences about how the EU is perceived and what the ideas are about how it should be. In her analysis of debates in the European Parliament, Góra shows how the views of enlargements have changed over time and where the main lines of political contestation over the EU enlargement have been drawn.

In her contribution Anne Waehrens, “How to Create a European Memory – how to unite East and West?” also analyses the EU’s enlargement, particularly the effects on the EU’s master narrative in connection with the big-bang enlargement in 2004 as seen from the European Parliament horizon. Her starting point is that the EU has tried to reason its way to a common understanding of the European past. The strongest lowest common denominator for this has been the Holocaust. The problem with this is that Eastern and Central Europe, in contrast to Western Europe, also have five decades of communism and totalitarianism to relate to, with millions of victims in the Stalinist era. In some Central and Eastern European countries this means that the victims of the Holocaust is set against the victims of communism. The author demonstrates the tension that arose when the EU demanded that the new countries of the East adapt to what the EU calls the acquis communautaire (the jointly achieved) for the past (the acquis historique) – a kind of Copenhagen Criteria which meant that candidate countries had to confront the dark sides of their past. But the author also questions the one-sidedness of the requirement of a “shared European memory”. Instead, Wæhrens suggests that it “might be fruitful to focus on accepting one another’s different memories and creating a community of memory based on heterogeneity and diversity, especially after 2014”.

If the previous chapters mainly focus on internal European developments, the three following contributions (chapters 7, 8 and 9) put their emphasis on the EU and its borderlands. In “From Nightmare to Pragmatic Partnership: Serbia and the EU”, Christian Axboe Nielsen, analyzes how it in a relative short time has been possible for Serbia to go from having harbored aversions to the European project to seeing the future integration of Serbia into the European Community as urgent. The author points out that Serbia won admiration in Brussels for its pragmatic plans to achieve membership. Nielsen highlights and analyzes the background and the reasons why Serbia in such a short time has managed to make a U-turn in relation to the European project. Not least, Nielsen discusses how the political elite with its previously strong antipathy towards the EU is now at the forefront arguing that Serbia shall be included in the European Community. He notes among other things that with regard to the requirement of so-called Vergangenheitsbewältigung – i.e. confrontation with the past – Serbia is more “European” than many current members of the EU. On the other hand, Nielsen suggests that the Serbian embrace of the EU may well be “the right result for the wrong reasons”.

While Serbia has recently launched direct negotiations with the EU, Turkey – after many years of negotiations – and the European Union have not yet reached any substantial success. The next chapter analyzes how the dragging on of the negotiations between the EU and Turkey affects the Turkish attitude to the idea of being accepted into the European Community. From initially having
been very positive to the EU, the Turkish side has gradually become more and more Eurosceptic. Giray Sadik ventilates this change in his contribution “Paving the Way for the EU as a Global Actor Anachronism: Turks’ Growing Euroskepticism and Turkey’s Euroasian Quest”. Above all he highlights how the pendulum has swung between Turkey’s different foreign policy priorities. On the one hand, there are increased investments in Euro-Asia and Russia and, on the other, there are reduced ambitions for the European project. Sadik shows how Turkey navigates between East and West, between the strong bonds which, on the one hand, are membership in NATO and, on the other, an increasing dependence on Russian oil and gas. This occurs while several studies show that the Turkish population, according to Sadik, would like Turkey to act increasingly independently.

In their chapter, “Ukraine and the Disenchantment of Europe”, Bo Petersson and Cecilie Stokholm Banke take up the current and acute situation between the EU, Russia and Ukraine, asking if Russia with its behavior and attitude towards Europe indeed will come to act as the ‘other’ and eventually give the EU new momentum as a project. By analyzing the way the Crimean crisis from early on was framed with historical references both by Western commentators, politicians and historians, but indeed also by Vladimir Putin, the authors show how present the past is in this crisis. Russia’s annexation of Crimea and its heavy-handed de facto involvement in the civil war in eastern Ukraine has severely challenged the European normative order as defined by the EU tenets of democracy, human rights and respect for national sovereignty. It shows how Russia aspires to define its own norms and implement them on behalf of Europe. This has led to the deepest political crisis between Russia, on the one hand, and the United States and the EU, on the other, since the Cold War.

As recently argued by the American historian Timothy Snyder, the Russian government designated in 2013 for the first time the European Union as an adversary: “in its media and indeed in official foreign policy pronouncements it has characterized the European Union as ‘decadent’, in the sense of being about to disintegrate” (Snyder 2014). This reflects the traditional Russian disdain for weakness and points towards a Russian allegation that the EU is a mere illusion only reflecting the policies and preferences of the United States. It may well be, argue Petersson and Stokholm Banke, that the weakness of the European Union as perceived by the Russian government can come to serve as a future raison d’etre for the EU, providing the Union with new vitality and strength of appeal.

The book’s final chapter and epilogue is written by Sergei Prozorov in his “Reclaiming European Universalism: What Does ‘the Promised Land’ Really Promise?” In his theoretically sophisticated contribution Prozorov twists and turns the concepts, Europe as Bogeyman, Europe as Anachronism, Europe as Contested Ideal and Europe as The Promised Land. Prozorov sees the various European roles at the intersection of the Europeans universal aspirations and “its containment within a particular geopolitical and cultural entity”. Prozorov goes on to argue that Europe’s ambition to be the Promised Land and its up to now universalist aspirations can be seen as a hegemonic gesture. Inspired by Martin Heidegger’s phenomenological account of world disclosure, and Alan Badiou’s Objective phenomenology of worlds Prozorov introduces the term “void universalism”. The idea is to rethink universality without preconditions, to use the concepts of Freedom, Equality and Community and to reactivate the image of Europe as the’promised land’on the condition that we rethink the content of its promise. If this act of rethinking is not made the future of Europe will not be the one of a Promised Land, nor of a Bogeyman, a Contested Ideal or an Anachronism, but one of a Void. And then, one is tempted to add, maybe the rest is silence as Europe would recede into increasing insignificance.
References


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