

recognition for the experience of 1989. Any attempt to create a solution and turn this currently very unproductive tension into a productive one will require a close attention to history.

The last point I want to leave you with is this: the problems raised by differing understandings of democracy based on different historical experiences and different memory cultures is not only a European problem. If we pay a closer attention to how conceptions of democracy are shaped by past experiences, this should also makes us rethink our conceptions of development and the way we try to impose democracy on parts of the world that have fundamentally different experiences from Europe. An example here is how we always talk about “state” and “democratic failure” in Africa. The problem may not be in these states and these societies, but in the fact that the concepts of state and of democracy – both of which were created and developed in Europe – fail when they are imposed in cookie-cutter fashion on areas of the world with significantly different historical experiences from Europe. Paying more attention to history, to the past, and the way it affects politics, may require us to radically rethink some of the basic concepts we use in analysing politics.

MARCIN KRÓL

## Liberal Democracy?

**W**e mistakenly use the expression “liberal democracy”. First, I would like to demonstrate that it is faulty, and second, to explicate the consequences of this fault. Democracy and liberalism have been in conflict since the birth of liberalism, which came after democracy. Hence, this conceptual compound is fallacious. The rule of law, from the times of Montesquieu, has not been entangled with the concept of democracy. Montesquieu and his followers rather had in mind “the rule of law” under any kind of regime – in Montesquieu’s case it was a constitutional monarchy. In other words, he meant the domination of a “depersonalized” (Montesquieu’s concept) rule of law over an individual or people. In the Western world we have come to accept this concept and today we all speak about the “democratic rule of law” or use various compounds of democracy and rule of law. This is acceptable, even though one needs to remember that it is democracy that should define the law, and not the other way round.

The 1820s gave birth to liberalism or the idea of an individual’s freedom from any form of coercion, in particular, from political coercion. Later this idea evolved and liberalism has since been understood as the maximal freedom of an individual limited only by the possible threat to the freedom of another individual. As much and not more. One of the great liberals, Benjamin Constant, immediately realized that this maximal individual freedom clashes with the idea of community,

which must underlie any successful democracy. Any community inevitably limits our freedom. A democratic community does not apply political coercion, yet it is founded on the acceptance of civic duty. Moreover, one could imagine a democracy without liberalism and liberalism without formal democracy. These are rather rare cases, yet in terms of logic they are viable. Thus, “liberal democracy” is a combination of contradictions, which makes it a concept lacking in meaning, at least from a theoretical point of view. In most cases, we have in mind the democratic rule of law. However, the emphasis on the maximization of freedom (liberalism) is on the rise, and rightly so, which inevitably leads to radical individualization. The less we are attached to any sort of community, the freer we are. This problem has been noticed both by communitarians and republicans, but not by liberals and democrats. As a result, we still apply the fictitious “liberal democracy”.

This fiction was not questioned for decades, from the late 1940s till the beginning of the 21st century, since, irrespective of the applied labels, the state of the political matter was not bad at all. Yet, creating fiction always ends badly. Now we can see clearly that it is impossible to simultaneously preserve maximal individual freedom and a strong democratic political community. More and more often we complain about individualism and consumerism, and the reason behind this are the forms and varieties of liberalism – in particular, that of utilitarianism. On the other hand, we observe noticeable cracks in the existing democratic communities; we even question their existence. And this is the result of the wearing off of warm or even hot democracy, heated by the breath of community; now it yields its primal spot to the “cold democracy” (Ralph Dahrendorf’s concept), which in fact is not democracy anymore, but the rule of law and procedures.

I do not believe that the explication of the meaning of concepts as well as the conflict between them will lead to a change of reality. But without such an explication and without a discussion devoted to it any change, including that of the rule of law, democracy and liberalism, is not possible. Fallacious concepts inform fallacious politics, which we have had plenty a chance to observe in the recent years.

JOANNA KURCZEWSKA

## Constructing European Remembrance Policies

### **On European past-oriented cultural policy**

This is, as I would like to stress, a small “argument” for the European cultural policy created, conducted, and controlled by the institutions of the European Union. Its scope is not limited to cultural policies, understood as a specific type of historical policy, but includes the cultural policies strategies contained in various other types of policies, both the everyday and the “festive” kind.