|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| How we remember war and violence | **C:\Users\Nitin Parmar\Desktop\uob-logo-black-transparent.tif** |

**Introducing Antagonistic Memory**

**In the first week of this course, Professor Stefan Berger began by introducing the characteristics of antagonistic memory and providing examples of this memory mode in Europe today. We will be asking you to reflect on some scenarios and contexts in which antagonistic memory may be present in your own countries or regions too.**

Antagonistic memory depends on **group identity**. There is always an **‘us’**, which is contrasted against a **‘them’**, in a combative or hostile way. Moral categories are also linked to these binary group identities. The group ‘us’ is linked to categories that are good, and the ‘them’ is linked to categories that are bad or evil. The antagonism is then between **‘us = good’** and **‘them = bad.’**

Roles are also adopted and assigned within these moral categories, for example in the ‘us’ category we may have **heroes or victims**, which are perceived as **positive and good**, and in the ‘them’ category there are **villains and perpetrators** who are **negative and evil**.

**Emotions and passions** are key to antagonistic memory which privileges these **raw feelings** to secure a strong sense of **belonging** to a certain community. It focuses on the suffering inflicted on those within this community by ‘evil perpetrators’ who are demonised. A strong empathy with **shared past sufferings** is created to the point where those who identify as part of the community are ready to **fight** against the ‘other’ who threatens it.

Antagonistic memory is **un-reflexive** and **monologic**, in other words individuals or groups are not required to give an account to themselves about their own rationality.

**Historical events** are manipulated in antagonistic memory and are **turned into myths** which can be used to further neo-nationalist or populist agendas. In the video, Stefan used the example of the *Alternative Für Deutschland* (AfD), a German far-right party, which draws on a memory of betrayal in the early history of the German Federal Republic to reinforce categories of ‘them’, the political elite who manipulate ‘us’ the betrayed German citizens. Find out more about the AfD in this [BBC news article](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-37274201)

You will read in the article that the Co-Leader of the AfD, Alexander Gauland, was criticised in the press for using nationalist rhetoric:
*“… declaring that Germans should be “proud” of their soldiers in both world wars. While SS units were notorious for German atrocities in World War Two, the regular armed forces also committed many war crimes.”*

**Discussion: To what extent do you think that the *Alternative Für Deutschland* has manipulated historical events to further their political agenda? Can you give examples of this? How are they using group identities and moral categories in their policies and statements?**