Introduction

Collective Memory in International Relations

'Memory—what a strange thing it is! . . . We can only think of it, in the line of an abstract time that is deprived of all thickness . . . Memories are motionless, and the more securely they are fixed in space, the sounder they are', writes the philosopher Gaston Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space* (1958).[1]

Memory—what a strange thing it is indeed! It is always present yet forever in the past. In its unique temporal character, it traverses time. It is knowledge *from* the past, but it is neither history, nor necessarily knowledge *about* the past. It is instead the 'active past'. In its contemporary presence, memory looks backwards and forwards. It builds a bridge over time, and thus connects past, present, and future.

Memory—it is everywhere, yet nowhere tangible! In its ideational nature, it touches everything. It is a product of cognition, but it is not solely idea, thought, or knowledge. Remembering is related to but not the same as thinking. Instead it is 'being in time': *we remember therefore we are*. In its manifestation, memory thus becomes identity. It interweaves who we were to who we are and who we will be.

Memory is private, personal, yet social and political! It is a function of individuals' minds and, equally, a product of their world. While people remember in the lonely spaces of their heads, their memories are but *echoes* from the busy social spheres of their societies. Memory can be thought only in time-contexts and remembering happens within social frames. As such, memory is always also 'collective'.

In attempting to grasp the 'strange' nature of memory, this book focuses on collective memory and sets out to find its imprints on international politics. The concept 'collective memory', as it is used throughout, implies two basic notions: first, that not only individuals, but also *a collective can remember*.

[1] Cited from the 2014 Penguin edition of Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*, which is a translation of his original *La Poétique de l'Espace*, first published in French in 1958. The quote can be found on p. 31 of the 2014 edition.

Collective Memory in International Relations. Kathrin Bachleitner, Oxford University Press (2021).
 DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780192895363.003.0001

In the case of this book, the collective that remembers is the 'country', used synonymously with 'state' and sometimes 'nation'. Countries are viewed as the bearers of collective memory, which in this context is also called 'national memory' or 'national narrative'. Importantly, either term refers to the *national interpretation* of a country's 'history' or 'historical legacy'.

The attribute 'collective' preceding the noun 'memory', however, implies not necessarily that the subject which remembers is a collective, but it, secondly, means that *the process of remembering happens collectively*, that is *within social frameworks*. This idea goes back to the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, who is considered to be the founding father of the collective memory concept. 'It is in society that people acquire their memories', suggested Halbwachs (1992, 38) with an eye to individuals' faculty of memory. What applies to individuals is equally applicable for collectives: they too remember within social frames. Translated into the discipline of international relations (IR) and this book's focus on states as the primary level of analysis, collective memory is assumed to be constituted in the social frames in which countries operate. In IR, these include a domestic and an international dimension. In global politics, Halbwachs' societal space thus refers to the entire world. It is in the 'society of states' that countries acquire their collective memory.

To analyse the impact of collective memory on IR, this study allows memory to travel between the international and domestic spheres of countries. However, importantly, the concept of collective memory not only needs a designated *social space*, but also a *certain timespan* to unfold. According to Halbwachs, collective memory describes the process through which 'the past is not preserved but is reconstructed on the basis of the present' (1992, 40). The concept thus contains not only a spatial, but also a unique temporal component. This has two implications for any research agenda on the influence of collective memory on political outcomes. First, it means that *memory's content and nature changes with time* as the past is reconstructed on the basis of 'different presents'. Furthermore, *memory also shows a changing impact* on these 'presents' as the country moves further away from 'its past' along a temporal line. Any research agenda interested in the influence of collective memory on politics thus must centrally account for time.

In tracing the impact of collective memory in IR, this book therefore starts from the premise that (a) countries are the collective which remembers. Furthermore, (b), the process by which countries remember happens within the social frameworks in which countries interact. In IR, these social frameworks refer to both the domestic and the international environments.

Moreover, (c), to account for collective memory's impact on IR, memory as the explanatory variable must not only travel through space, but crucially also through time. The present study therefore necessarily adopts a longer timeframe to understand memory's varying influence over world politics.

The Argument

This book traces the influence of collective memory in international relations. To that end, it asks where a country's collective memory first emerges and how it guides countries through time in world politics. For that purpose, this study challenges existing accounts which find the origins of collective memory in the domestic societal sphere. Instead, it locates the beginnings of a country's memory in foreign policy strategy within the international environment. Once memory has formed internationally, the analysis returns to the domestic landscape. Among a country's public, it finds memory as the carrier of collective identity over time. From there, collective memory, however, returns to the international sphere: in the medium term, it begins to channel a country's international behaviour, whereas, in the long run, it circumvents also its normative horizon. With time, a country's collective memory therefore is assumed to manifest in world politics in four varying forms: as its *political strategy*, as its *public identity*, as underwriting its international *state behaviour*, and finally, as a source for its *national values*. This book thus not only explores *whether* collective memory has an influence on political outcomes but also *how* and *why* it matters for IR.

Research Design

Collective memory or the 'politics of memory' has not received much sustained attention in academic international relations. The concept is regarded as 'too messy, illusive, and vague', therefore, of lacking any explanatory power at all. Particularly, those scholars embracing the tenets of behavioural political science have been ill equipped to deal with the multifarious, yet subtle roles that memory plays in political processes. It follows that the discipline's mainstream has avoided integrating the concept into its parsimonious models of utility maximization and instrumental rationality (Bell 2009, 349). Even constructivist scholars—with some exceptions—have predominantly not put

collective memory at the centre of their research.[2] The same applies to IR's ontological security literature. Despite the essential role that constructivists assign to 'identity' and its nexus with 'state behaviour', the function of collective memory within this process has rarely been explicitly highlighted.[3]

As a result, neither a unified empirical nor a common theoretical attempt to tackle collective memory exists within IR. Instead, there are several edited volumes presenting varying approaches, cases, and 'collective memories' (e.g. Müller 2002; Bell 2010; Resende and Budryte 2013; Langenbacher and Shain 2010). These 'collected approaches' propose a multitude of ways by which memory plays a role in global politics. This book is a contribution to those attempts to introduce the illusive and seemingly 'ungraspable' concept of collective memory into the vast space of IR. Yet it also aims to develop a common collective approach for IR to understand and trace the influence of memory on world politics.

In that regard, the book starts with a theory-building effort. Guided by the overarching question of how collective memory can impact state behaviour, it borrows from the assumptions made by ontological security scholars who posit that states in IR act in accordance with their identities.[4] In this book, their notion of 'state identity' will be refined by combining it with the insights offered by the interdisciplinary collective memory concept. Based particularly on the sociological descriptions of collective memory made by Maurice Halbwachs (1992) and, later, Jeffrey K. Olick (1999), the definition of identity in IR will be amended with unique collective and temporal characteristics. In fusing the ontological security scholarship and its insights on state behaviour with the interdisciplinary findings on collective memory, the book will thus develop its own approach termed 'temporal security'. It posits a nexus between collective memory and state behaviour in IR: countries are now assumed to situate themselves in time and thus establish an integrity with their collective memory in their courses of action.

Through the ontological security scholarship, the book gains a useful framework for transporting collective memory into IR and connecting it

[2] Exceptions are Cruz (2000), Lebow (2008), and Zehfuss (2007), as well as IR scholars who use terms related to collective memory, such as legacy, historical analogy, historical identity, myths, and trauma.

[3] Exceptions are Innes and Steele (2014) and Mälksoo (2015), who explicitly talk about memory within the ontological security literature.

[4] Scholars working within the burgeoning ontological security literature include, among others, McSweeney (1999); Steele (2005, 2008); Mitzen (2006, 2018); Zarakol (2010, 2017); Subotic and Zarakol (2012); Rumelili (2013, 2017); Mälksoo (2015); Subotic (2016, 2018); Kinnvall and Mitzen (2017, 2018); Kinnvall, Manners, and Mitzen (2017); Ejdus (2018, 2019).

with state behaviour in particular. However, establishing a nexus between collective memory and state behaviour does *not* help to answer *where* the collective memory of a state originates. Neither does it tell us *how* memory's impact can change over time. Thus, this book departs from the ontological security literature in three significant ways. *First*, it specifies the origins of state identity in collective memory in precise and replicable ways instead of assuming it is pre-existent. *Secondly*, it accounts for the possibility of change as countries move through time, contexts, and—domestic and international—spheres. With the dynamic collective memory concept at the basis of state identity, this study can therefore not only account for transformations in *memory's content*, but it, *thirdly*, also factors in *memory's nature* that changes with time. Importantly, these transformations in memory also significantly alter its impact over policy outcomes.

However, how precisely is collective memory's influence rendered manifest in countries? In this book, collective memory is assumed to convey itself in states in the four forms described earlier: as a country's political strategy, as its public identity, in its international state behaviour, and finally, as underwriting its national value system. Memory thus initially becomes manifest in direct, deliberate, and instrumental ways as a political strategy. However, with time, it may also unfold its influence over international policy outcomes in unexamined, constructivist ways as underwriting a country's identity, as channelling state behaviour, and finally, as forming the normative mindset of a country, that is, its values.

The core chapters of this book therefore move collective memory through time and explore its varying impact on IR as a country's strategy, as its identity, as manifested in state behaviour, and finally, as a source for its value system. The chapters, however, illustrate memory's influence on political outcomes not only theoretically, but also empirically through a comparative study in two selected case countries: Germany and Austria.

Case Selection

Both Germany and Austria have a history of National Socialism but very diverse collective memories thereof. How differently their memories played out in their political landscapes after 1945 becomes apparent from the following two, historically significant acts:

15 May 1955, 12:00 am. The Austrian Foreign Minister Leopold Figl, together with his colleagues from the four Allied Powers, appears on the balcony of Vienna's Belvedere. Like a trophy, he waves the Austrian State Treaty which they had just signed. Smiling proudly, he presents proof that 'Austria is free' to the gathered crowds, who begin to cheer loudly. The rejoicing is trumped only by the simultaneous ringing of all church bells in the city. A wave of enthusiasm electrifies the masses and the Allied representatives alike. The Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs Molotov cannot resist blowing kisses to the happy crowds. People start to waltz.[5]

7 December 1970, 10:35 am. On a grey December morning, the West German Chancellor Willy Brandt is on his way to sign the treaty of Warsaw with the People's Republic of Poland. Before the signing ceremony begins, he asks to lay a wreath at the monument dedicated to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, which took place during the Nazi era. At the memorial, Brandt suddenly and spontaneously sinks to his knees. With his head bowed low, he freezes in this position for half a minute. The group of officials and journalists who accompanied him remain in the background. Awe-struck, no one dares speak a word. Lost in the thought of millions of murdered people, Brandt stays kneeling in silence.[6]

What these two official acts have in common is that they both took place on a post-World War II international stage. Furthermore, they were both performed by representatives of peoples who were 'defeated' rather than 'liberated' in 1945. It follows that the two heads of state led two former Nazi-perpetrating countries: Austria and West Germany. Apart from that, these scenes could not be more different. One portrays a group of happy men in front of cheering crowds looking forward to a promising future, while the other shows a man alone, distanced from suspicious bystanders, looking back to a shameful past. One statesman gives a picture of his country's innocence and liberation from undeserved victimhood, whereas the other statesman portrays himself and his country as a guilty, morally responsible, and remorseful perpetrator.

From these two acts, it is clear that how the Nazi legacy was remembered in West Germany and Austria differed fundamentally. Yet, West Germans and Austrians had the same history with Nazism: both countries formed the

[5] Based on Steininger (2005, 142–4). See also Lukas Zimmer, 'Als Figl Österreich freisprach', 14 May 2015, available at: http://orf.at/stories/2278432/2278433/(accessed: 13 April 2020).

[6] Based on Brandt (1976, 398–9).

imperial centre of the Third Reich, and their populations served in the German *Wehrmacht* and held—to an equal extent—high-ranking positions in the Nazi regime. They were not only brothers-in-arms but also the same country since Austria's voluntary *Anschluss* (merger) with Germany in 1938. Needless to say, they also had an equal part in the Nazi extermination machinery and the ensuing Holocaust. As a result, after Nazi Germany's defeat in 1945, both were occupied and divided up among the four Allied Powers. Their post-war societies thus consisted of Nazi perpetrators, victims, and many bystanders (Hillberg 1993).[7]

With their shared historic Nazi legacy but diverse collective memories thereof, Germany and Austria form 'natural counter-cases' for comparative study. The empirical qualitative analysis of this book thus centres on a comparison between (West) Germany[8] and Austria in the post-World War II era. The book employs a case-study technique because it is particularly well suited for determining causal mechanisms between collective memory and policies (George and Bennett 2005). Understanding the multiple effects of collective memory on IR required selecting cases with strong but varied collective memories vis-à-vis the same historical event. In the case of (West) Germany and Austria, the legacy in question is National Socialism, World War II, and the Holocaust. While both countries were the imperial centre of the Third Reich before 1945, they, however and crucially for case selection, have formed very different collective memories/narratives since then. The advantage of this case selection is that the countries have the same history and role therein, thus only showing variation in their collective memory. In that, they form ideal counter-cases to demonstrate the impact of different collective memories over a country's policies in IR.

In terms of collective memory's content, the case studies of this book focus on the Nazi legacy as the cornerstone of German and Austrian memory. The timeframe for the empirical analyses begins with the end of World War II in 1945 and finishes in 2015. To do justice to the alternating impact of collective

[7] Hillberg (1993) originally made this claim for Germany. However, the historic numbers relative to country size also render it valid for Austria. Around 700,000 Austrians were members of the NSDAP, 90,000 of whom had already been illegal members prior to 1938. Once war began, more than one million Austrians served in the *Wehrmacht* (1,126,000 Austrians according to Jagschitz 2000, 80) and 60,000 Austrians belonged to the *Waffen SS*. As a result, around 250,000 Austrians died in combat or became prisoners of war (see Hanisch 1994, 380; Manoschek/Safrian 2000, 125; and Rathkolb 2010, 249). At the same time, Austrians also had leading positions in the Nazi extermination machinery, most prominently Kaltenbrunner, Globocnik, Murer, Stangl, Brunner, Lerch, and Burger. Not least, Adolf Hitler himself was Austrian, born in the city of Braunau am Inn (Hilberg 1985; Reiter 2001, 21–2).

[8] Between 1949 and 1990, Germany was divided into West and East Germany, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the East German Democratic Republic (GDR), respectively. This book's empirical case study before 1990 refers only to West Germany.

memory in different points in time that are either closer or further away from World War II, the empirical scenarios move (West) Germany's and Austria's collective memory of Nazism through the decades. First, as strategy during the 1950s; then as identity in the 1960s, as behaviour during the late 1960s and early 1970s, and finally, as values in the new millennium. Within these decades, 'critical situations'[9] were selected to highlight the presence of collective memory in these diverse forms. They start with the question of reparation payments to the State of Israel in 1952, then the trial of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1961, the outbreak of war in the Middle East in 1967 and 1973, and finally the European refugee crisis in 2015. The advantage of comparing the reactions of (West) Germany and Austria to the same events is that such an analysis reveals the impact of different collective memories in the same situation. Furthermore, this case selection allows for a longer timeframe and thus assesses collective memory's alternating influence on politics over time. If collective memory is indeed at the basis of the identity, behaviour, and value system of the case countries, then (West) Germany and Austria must not only have formed different collective identities but as a result—and over time—must have also developed diverse state behaviours and values.

Research Methods

The book employs a combination of comparative case-study techniques with historical process-tracing in archival research, content, and discursive analysis as well as elite interviewing. Process-tracing is used to examine causal mechanisms at work between variations in collective memory and outcome (George and Bennett 2005; Beach and Pedersen 2012). In applying this method, I triangulate across multiple data pools, including primary archival sources, newspaper and other media reports, public opinion surveys, in-person interviews, and secondary literature. I employ process-tracing to ascertain temporal linkages not merely between but also within the cases as they move through time.

Collective memory not only has a different content in the two cases and thus shows a different comparative impact on their policies, but it also changes

[9] This book's selection of critical situations follows the research design of the ontological security literature which too focuses on 'critical situations' to understand a country's identity needs. Critical situations for Steele (2008) and Ejdus (2018) are events that disrupt or bear the potential to disrupt self-identities.

its form over time, and with it, its influence on political outcomes. As a consequence, collective memory can be directly/actively and indirectly/passively impacting politics. Where the influence of collective memory is direct/active, memory is likely to be verbally expressed. On the other hand, where its influence is indirect/passive, it remains subconscious and, therefore, unmentioned. This phenomenon has obvious implications for methods, requiring the empirical case studies of this book to each follow their own, adapted methodological approach (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003).

Equally, a switch in methods is required dependent on who the 'bearers' and 'makers' of memory within a collective are. In the chapters of this book, they range from political elites to the broader public, situated in the international or the domestic environment of countries. Furthermore, Chapters 2 and 3 assess the official and public discourse surrounding collective memory in matters directly related to the Nazi past, that is, reparation payments and the case of Adolf Eichmann. In contrast, Chapters 4 and 5 deal with less obvious connections between the memories of Nazism, with the events in question being the Middle East conflict and the refugee crisis. Due to the chapters exploring varying points in time, each empirical analysis is furthermore built on diverse data sources. While for the historical chapters, official documents were available in the state archives, the last chapter relies more heavily on new media sources. To tackle memory's active and passive, expressed and subtle, influences on policy outcomes, each empirical chapter thus lays out at the beginning the methodological approach most suitable for tracing the impact of collective memory as strategy, identity, behaviour, or values in diverse contexts and points in time.

Structure of the Book

The book has two main goals. The first is to contribute to theory building to link collective memory with IR. The second, interconnected goal is to trace how collective memory influences a country's international course of action through time. The book's principal theoretical contribution is to yield the insights from the interdisciplinary collective memory concept and to add its unique temporal dimension to specify the nexus between identity and behaviour posited by IR's ontological security scholarship. From this, it contributes to our understanding of ontological security as 'temporal security'. With this new concept, it defines the origins of a country's identity and describes how memory guides international state behaviour through time.

Chapter 1 establishes a conceptual framework that connects the IR literature with the interdisciplinary collective memory concept. It does so by looking at IR's burgeoning *ontological security scholarship*, starting with extrapolating the concept's core components, particularly its understanding of the 'self' or 'identity' of a country and its posited nexus to state behaviour. In a second step, it then explores *the nature of collective memory*, and establishes its unique, temporal, and social connotations as the grounds of its own definition of state identity. Combining the revised insights of IR's ontological security scholarship with the interdisciplinary collective memory concept, a novel theoretical framework termed *temporal security* is developed. It describes countries as temporal security-seekers which out of the urge to 'be-in-time' establish continuities with their collective memory, that is, with their 'narrated self in the past'. The reference point for this unfolding process is always collective memory, which manifests itself twofold: in specific memory content referencing the past but also in the four forms related to memory's temporal nature: political strategy, public identity, state behaviour, and national values. In each of these forms, collective memory affects countries to either more direct or more indirect degrees.

Chapters 2 to 5 pick up on how collective memory manifests in global politics through these four forms. Each chapter starts with theorizing 'memory as political strategy' (Chapter 2), 'memory as public identity' (Chapter 3), 'memory as state behaviour' (Chapter 4), and 'memory as national values' (Chapter 5) in IR. In discussing these various forms, the chapters place memory in time, alternate it between countries' international and domestic spheres, and record the varying degree of their impact on policy outcomes. Following the theoretical considerations, Chapters 2–5 then illustrate their points via the cases of (West) Germany and Austria, highlighting the varying impact their diverse collective memories have had on their policies. To account for time, the chapters trace collective memory in the case countries chronologically from the end of 1945 to the present in selected 'critical situations'.

The immediate post-war period, the late 1940s and 1950s, is when West Germany's and Austria's official memories about the Nazi legacy formed. In comparing West German and Austrian post-war policies towards Israel, particularly with regards to the question of reparations to the Jewish state in 1952, Chapter 2 illustrates how the foundations for their collective memories were laid in the international sphere. In more detail, this chapter spells out how post-war international constellations and foreign-policy interests framed the beginnings of two very different narratives of the same Nazi past.

Once these two contrary collective memories took shape internationally, they began to carry diverse national identities for West Germany and Austria in the domestic sphere. In comparing West German and Austrian reactions to the trial of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1961, Chapter 3 demonstrates how a selective narrative of the Nazi past began to underlie these countries' sense of self. Already a decade after their stories were forged initially for foreign policy purposes, these provided the lenses through which the public and its representatives perceived the Eichmann trial, the Nazi crimes, and their own role in them.

With robust national narratives in place only twenty years after the end of World War II, Chapter 4 illustrates how—in the medium term—these began to shape the international behaviour of West Germany and Austria in diverse ways. The empirical scenario analysed in this chapter is the outbreak of war in the Middle East. In comparing how West Germany and Austria came to take sides with either Israel or the Arabs during the Six Day War of 1967 and the Yom Kippur War and international oil crisis of 1973, this chapter explains their diverse courses of action with their different memories.

Lastly, our framework also suggests that—over the long run—collective memory forms not only a country's identity but also its value system. As such, Germany and Austria must keep identifying different versions of how they ought to act in their current policies. This belated influence of collective memory is illustrated in Chapter 5 and draws on the example of the diverse German and Austrian responses to the refugee crisis of 2015. Triggered by the Syrian war, large numbers of refugees started to march along the Balkan route towards the EU. However, the refugees arrived in countries which—if our theory holds—looked back in different ways and, therefore, must have identified diverse versions of how they ought to act vis-à-vis this pressing, normative matter in world politics.