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Collective Memory and Forgetting:
A Theoretical Discussion

by Cindy Minarova-Banjac

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Collective Memory and Forgetting: A Theoretical Discussion[1]

By Cindy Minarova-Banjac[2]

Abstract

This research paper focuses on a neglected aspect of memory studies - that of collective forgetting. Collective forgetting refers to how states and citizens selectively remember, misremember, and disremember to silence and exclude alternative views and perspectives that counter the official discourse. The act of 'forgetting' involves deconstructing and reconstructing meanings, values, and institutions, where the dominant group produces a quasi-natural state of reality that delegitimises alternative histories and memories. As well as being an effective tool for maintaining power, it is argued that forgetting plays an important role in foreign and domestic policy as states use narratives of the past to legitimise their national identities.

Keywords: National identity politics; Collective memory; State repression; Counter-memory; Memory studies; Political amnesia; Collective forgetting; Interpretive Approach; Ontological security.

Introduction

This research paper argues that collective forgetting influences foreign and domestic policy as narratives of the past are used to legitimise national identities. Identifying direct and indirect forgetting can show how the past is being remembered, and what aspects are trivialised, hidden, and forgotten. Collective or social memory refers to shared perceptions of the past, where societies ensure cultural continuity by linking the past, present, and future in group narratives. How the past is remembered and interpreted plays an important role in the creation of individual and group identities, represented by oral histories, traditions, myths, and languages (Olick, 1999). With the study of nationalism and identity politics becoming key research topics after the end of the Cold War, when many nations chose or were obliged

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to create new political identities, increasing attention to group memories resulted in a 'memory boom' among scholars and societies worldwide (Bell, 2006; Langenbacher, 2010; Dian, 2017).

Since the 1990s, memory research has been at the forefront of contemporary political debates. For example, feminist scholars have used memory to investigate, interrogate, and transform the complex ways in which women's experiences are remembered through gendered narratives (Spence, 1986; Kuhn, 1995). Investigations into the ethics of memory and whether there is a duty to remember the past are also subject to scholarly discussions (Margalit, 2002; Ricoeur, 2004; Blustein, 2008).[3]

In most studies, collective memory is concerned with how pasts are created by different actors, including nations, religious groups, local communities, and families. Indeed, with many states' social and cultural institutions being challenged by ethnic divisions, anti-colonial struggles, and globalisation (Weedon & Jordon, 2012), the global community is said to be "witnessing an unprecedented politicization of memory" (Radstone & Schwarz, 2010, p. 2). The connection between memory and politics becomes clear when representations of the past are subject to dispute as political elites and their opponents use and abuse memory for political or ideological purposes. In this process, dominant groups exercise public control by restricting and destroying what Foucault (1977) calls 'counter-memories' or memories directed against official histories. Governments do this by manipulating and controlling cultural institutions, the media, access to archives, and the distribution of monuments in public spaces (Gur-Ze'ev & Pappé, 2003; Rodríguez & Fortier, 2007; Meusburger, 2011). Tactics such as discipline and punishment are also used to create 'memories' for offenders against the state. Such punishments include cruel rituals, torture, and public executions,[4] which work to convince individuals to regulate their actions and form part of the state's attempts to impose social control (Foucault, 1975; Lash, 1984).

French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1995) claimed that "there is no political power without control of the archives, if not of memory" (p. 4). This highlights the need for states to secure their sense of identity by controlling classified information from those outside the state while exercising power through the supervision and examination of their own citizens (Foucault, 1975; Dandeker, 1990). Memory becomes central to these forms of control as the

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[3] How popular culture in the form of literature, film, music, and monuments re-appropriate the past is another area that examines memory and society. See, for example, Arias & del Campo, 2009.

[4] In the literature, this is also identified as part of state or political terror. That is, when states use tactics such as disappearances, death squad activities, torture, and genocide to create a culture of fear so that citizens will not dissent or take action against the state. See Schmid & Jongman, 1988; and Blakeley, 2010.

state's security policy is based on what the state officially remembers. In that sense, by reinforcing a fixed understanding of the past in public spaces, the state can ensure a "stable sense of self as the basis of its political agency" (Mälksoo, 2015, p. 222). This is further seen in cases where the state or its agencies intentionally falsifies, fabricates or forges documents or public accounts.

However, the problem with this literature is that for all the obsession with memory, 'collective memory' has remained a slippery concept. The lack of agreement as to what terms like collective, social, and cultural memory are highlights that "memory matters politically in ways which we do not yet fully understand" (Müller, 2002, p. 2). Further, by overlapping with abstract concepts such as 'identity' and the "most elusive of phenomena 'popular consciousness'" (Dower, 1999, p. 25), memory becomes difficult to theorise without introducing a 'semantic overload' (Klein, 2000).

In political studies, memory is commonly described as ideas or stories that are imposed on people by state authorities and the ruling elite.[5] This risks ignoring the role that civil society plays in influencing political and cultural expressions of collective remembrance. While grand historical narratives, monuments of national heroes, and memorials for victims of trauma seem to provide a clear foundation for strong collective memories and state power, such narratives have also been deconstructed, monuments toppled, and the legitimacy of memorials questioned (Molden, 2015). For instance, in 2007 the Estonian parliament passed legislation that permitted the relocation of a Red Army statue to the Defence Forces cemetery outside of Estonia's capital, Tallinn, so that authorities could exhume the remains of Soviet soldiers buried near the statue, identify the bodies, and move them to the cemetery. The relocation was opposed by the Russian-speaking community, who consider the monument as a site for commemorating the Soviet liberation of Estonia from Nazi occupation (Ochman, 2013). However, according to an Estonian government website, the recapture of Tallinn by Soviet forces was "far from being a 'liberation' for the Estonian people. It merely marked a change in foreign regimes and the beginning of a nightmarishly repressive occupation that would last for nearly 50 more years" (Estonian Embassy in Cairo, 2006). As a result, demonstrations were carried out against the relocation, raising difficult questions as to how Soviet soldiers should be remembered during a period when many East

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[5] Yinan He uses this approach in the book *The Search for Reconciliation: Sino-Japanese and German-Polish Relations since World War II* (2009). In it, she states that "although different social groups form different memories of the past, ruling elites tend to create national myths for instrumental purposes and infuse these myths into national collective memory through social institutional frameworks" (p. 25). In this analysis, memories created and shaped by elite interests are emphasised by the Instrumentalist approach.

European states are attempting to articulate their own distinct historical experiences (Spiegel Online, 2007; Mälksoo, 2009).

In academia also, some Western scholars have openly expressed doubt over China's Zheng He narrative, which the Communist Party points to as proof that, unlike European powers, China has never sought to establish overseas colonies or rule by military force (Wei, 2014; Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015). For Wade (2004) and Wilson (2015), who base their claims on the Ming Dynasty's imperial annals and historical Southeast Asian records, China's navy forces would have been equipped with the most advanced firearms available since Zheng He's voyages were organised and carried out as military operations. "The military aspect of these voyages needs underlining, in part because of the stress placed on these missions in much current scholarship, both Chinese and non-Chinese, as 'voyages of friendship'"(Wade, 2004, p. 12). Wade (2016) argues that long after the Yuan naval force was sent to attack Champa (modern-day Southern Vietnam) and Java in the late thirteenth century, Zheng He carried out military expeditions against Sri Lanka in 1411, providing proof of historical 'Asian imperialism' (Hack & Rettig, 2005). Whether Zheng's military interventions were exceptions to China's non-aggression approach or ongoing displays of power remains debatable.

In cases where symbolic and physical violence plays a crucial part in national and international history wars, it becomes unclear how collective memories are produced, reproduced, disseminated and consumed across groups, interests, and power relations. This lack of clarity raises questions about who owns collective memory, what responsibilities groups have in constructing memory, and what it means to remember with integrity. Beyond the state, some theorists claim that in today's culture of globalisation, memory is transcending ethnic and national boundaries and becoming part of a "new global narrative", where multiple actors and networks impact how memory affects society and culture (Levy & Sznaider, 2001; Bisht, 2013; Levy, 2015).[6] Memory studies have often contradicted the dominant narratives endorsed in textbooks and official discourses, leading writers like Gerrit W. Gong (2010) to claim that "the time when elites made foreign policy on the basis of perceived national interests is largely gone. Mass publics now demand their countries to pursue national interest…based on their perceptions, including historical and contemporary memory" (p. 204). Cosmopolitan memories remain a relevant research topic considering that

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[6] This mainly refers to 'civil society' or groups and institutions that stand between the individual and the state, including human rights organisations, non-governmental agencies, and truth commissions. Described as "communities of memory and mutual aid", civil society networks presuppose a new public philosophy that advocates moral realism and global governance (see Grasso, 2001 and Cardoso, 2005).

foreign publics, diaspora groups, and the global media are known to impact how events are perceived and remembered (Dayan & Katz, 1992). However, the problem with Gong's claim is that it does not explain how and why states are still able to "place certain events into the national consciousness while silencing or forgetting others." (Verovšek, 2016, p. 529). As a result, this paper takes a slightly different approach by focusing on the other side of collective memory: that of collective forgetting.

The concept of forgetting is not often discussed in international relations and policy. What is more commonly mentioned is the idea of repression, denial, or amnesia. Hirst and Stone (2015) describe forgetting as examples of making pasts difficult to access. Because these memories are left out of recounted history, they become erased or lost. Although specific definitions of forgetting or frameworks that explain how forgetting works in social and political life have not yet been developed, some memory scholars have foregrounded the importance of forgetting. Norquay (1999) and Assman (2008), for example, state that forgetting is an integral part of memory and that unravelling what is omitted and deemed as not worth remembering is essential to understanding how groups define their histories and identities. In telling one story of the past, other stories or versions are excluded, rejected or misrepresented, possibly leading to security dilemmas, existential crises, and historical animosities. But with no comprehensively formulated account of collective forgetting, the literature remains limited. An oversimplified account, where forgetting is either defined in terms of neglect, failure and injustice: "the shady villain … lurking behind the scenes" (Brockmeier, 2002, p. 15), or as essential to reconciling the past and moving forward (Rieff, 2016), shows how little scholars understand "the complex hegemonic mechanisms"[7] (Sue, 2015, p. 113) underlying forgetting's social processes. This theoretical gap raises important research questions, including:

- What is collective forgetting and what forms does it take?
- How does collective forgetting become normalised in society?
- Does collective forgetting affect community identities and state policies?
- Is collective forgetting impacted by transnational values and norms like human rights?

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[7] 'Hegemony' is a complex phenomenon that will be discussed throughout this article. It refers to ways that agents interact and establish dominance or rule in general. 'Hegemonic mechanisms' outline how this rule comes about or what mechanisms are used to control others. Usually, hegemony is not simply a means of ruling by force but involves shaping and managing other actors' interests so that dominance is achieved through active consent (Cerny, 2006).

- Can forgetting be used as a constructive tool in dealing with memories of trauma and painful experience?

Building on constructivist scholarship, which focuses on the role of ideas, narratives, norms, and identities in international politics, this analysis follows Berger (2012)[8] in his attempts to theorise collective memory and explain why states adopt the kinds of historical narratives that they do. Each of Berger's three approaches discusses memory from a different perspective, highlighting the importance of dominant actors and their interests (the Interpretive approach), historical events and truth (the Historical-Determinist approach), and how culture defines what narratives, identities, and histories states will adopt (the Culturalist approach). Although all three theories are valid in understanding how memory affects state policy, this paper proposes that Dian's (2017) Interpretive approach,[9] which takes into account beliefs, traditions, resistance, and dilemmas, provides a rounded theory for explaining how a nation's struggle with the past informs current foreign policy choices. This section expands the Interpretive approach by focusing on the role of forgetting. As a result, a theory of hegemony that considers deliberate forgetting and 'unconscious' forgetting in everyday acts of memory will also be analysed.[10]

Setting up a Theoretical Framework

Individual and Collective Memory

Understanding the past is an increasingly complex issue and necessary task.[11] How the past is remembered is one of the ways in which groups define themselves in the present, which in

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[8] Thomas U. Berger is a professor of international relations at the BU Pardee School. He theorises on different approaches to collective memory in the book *War, Guilt, and World Politics after World War II* (2012). Berger's account is the most comprehensive in terms of describing the three different approaches to collective memory and politics. Dian (2017) also cites his work.

[9] Expanding on the three approaches put forward by Berger (2012), Matteo Dian, research fellow at the University of Bologna, uses the Interpretive approach to explore the issue of memory and conflict in East Asia.

[10] Berthold Molden's journal article *Resistant pasts versus mnemonic hegemony: On the power relations of collective memory* (2016) was a useful text for analysing hegemonic theory, memory culture, and counter-memories. In it, Molden describes the relationship between master narratives, defiant counter-memories, and the silent majority whose historical memories are rarely heard. Communication channels, like the role of media in reproducing memory, are also discussed.

[11] In the current period of globalisation, the way that memory is used, preserved, transmitted, and forgotten has been affected by the growth of technology and Internet resources. For instance, technology has made it possible to electronically store and access public records that may reveal memories previously unavailable to the public.

turns shapes their expectations for the future. Memory can be defined as the ability to recall the past or, as Nikulin (2015) states, the capacity to mentally retain and reproduce representations of past things such as images and events. For philosopher Mary Warnock (1987), a key aspect to remembering involves the use of cognitive capacities such as learning from experience and imagination, which reconstructs past events and images. Considering that only individuals possess a mind that can mentally learn and represent information, it follows that only individuals have the capacity to remember. German historian Reinhart Koselleck (2004) highlights this point when he argues that commemorating a day of remembrance differs semantically from a lived experience: "[commemoration is] a fully different memory from that which I have kept in my memory as a witness" (p. 3). Since memory is based on personal experience, to claim that a collective can remember is what Koselleck calls an "a priori ideology or myth" (p. 6).

However, in contemporary usage, the idea of memory extends beyond the individual and can mean any mechanism that can recall and store representations of events and images that were either experienced or learnt from external sources (Rossington & Whitehead, 2007). In technology, for example, machines such as computers are programmed to 'memorise' by storing and retrieving data that was put into the system so that information can be used and accessed whenever required. Moreover, groups of individuals are capable of collectively sharing an experience through language and communication, where language acts as the social mechanism that shapes memory and enables the past to be recreated in the present (Durkheim, 1912). As the founder of collective memory studies, Maurice Halbwachs (1941) wrote, "it is language, and the whole system of social conventions attached to it, that allows us at every moment to reconstruct our past" (p. 173). Through communication, groups can remember and recall the past by organising, transferring, and understanding ideas and values. So even though collective memory is not a single representation of the past or an authentic experience like an individual memory is, collectively shared experiences can be located in shared resources, such as language and cultural heritage, where words and objects contain particular meanings that are understood within a social group.

In the chapter *Memory, Truth and Victimhood in Post-trauma Societies* (2006), John D. Brewer provides a comprehensive account of personal and collective memory, pointing out that individuals can have both private and collective memories at the same time. Personal

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Archives are also seen as "spaces of memory" (Jacobsen et al., 2013, p. 222) since agents can use historical records to put forward their own specific narratives that may contrast official versions of the past.

memories exist in relation to social processes that may also shape them, such as language, nationalism, and culture, all of which represent the group's collective memory. Both forms of memory serve some social purposes as they give individuals and groups ways of knowing the world around them. As Pojman (2001) notes, "the present is fleeting, effervescent, uncatchable" (p. 231), meaning that memory and knowledge of the past are what provide groups with sense-making processes that form present values and beliefs. To quote Amos Funkenstein (1989) in his discussion on history and memory:

> Without memory of the past, there is no history, in the sense of events that are meaningful to the collective, events experienced by a collective that is aware of them. Collective consciousness presumes collective memory, as without it there is no law or justice, no political structure, and no collective objects. (p. 97-8)

Memory is, in effect, a fundamental part of identity formation and social cohesion, making it vital to the politics and survival of groups. The way that collective memory functions is that its symbolic form is preserved by becoming exteriorized and objectified before being circulated and re-embodied in society (Assmann, 2011). Whether in the form of written texts, monuments, symbols, or landscapes, memory becomes a search for meaning as groups recognise their finitude and relive their past in the present as a way of ensuring continuity and identity. Even in non-literate Indigenous cultures, memory is used to negotiate and produce spiritual and historic information that will be passed on to the next generation. As an oral historian of the Mande Society in the Mali Empire stated in the *Epic of Sundiata*:[12]

> We are vessels of speech, we are the repositories which harbour secrets many centuries old…without us the names of kings would vanish into oblivion, we are the memory of mankind; by the spoken word we bring to life the deeds and exploits of kings for younger generations. (Niane, 1991, p. 4)

For the Yoruba people in southwestern Nigeria, memory preservers also took the role of court functionaries and official historians who re-enacted the founding myths in festivals and ceremonies. While publicly accepted, these myths and rituals were constantly being reviewed and revised by contesting political groups in the community (Goucher & Walton,

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[12] *The Epic of Sundiata* documents the rise of the Mali Empire, one of three Empires that dominated North-Western Africa for more than a thousand years. For a detailed historical account, see Conrad, 2009.

2013). Such memory practices show that rather than simply storing and reproducing the past, memory involves reconstruction according to the group's present needs, conditions, and constraints since collective memories exist long-after individuals whose recollections they are based on.

Memory and History

It is worth discussing the relation between memory and history here. On the one hand, scholars like Oxford philosopher R.G. Collingwood (1994) have claimed that if memory is a social construction that can be used to fit current political contexts, history and memory should be thought of as two different things. Whereas memory borders on mythology by dividing the world into good and evil and appealing to emotions such as passion and fear, history exists beyond and outside of group frameworks. Historical knowledge should represent an accurate and scientific reconstruction of the past that is tested and retested based on new evidence. Without history, past events can be subject to abuse as agents create mythologies that exaggerate facts to serve their own political purposes (Judt & Snyder, 2012).[13] On the other side of this spectrum, memory is described as the multiple and disorganised voices of marginalised or excluded groups (women, minorities, and so on). From this perspective, memory represents the 'subaltern' voice, whereas history stands for a unified view of the past that is often used to justify oppressive grand narratives (Cubitt, 2013). As an alternative version of the past, memory is opposed to history and the official group discourse, leading to the creation of new knowledges, histories, and memories.

In addition to the memory as subjective/subaltern versus history as objective/official binary, Pierre Nora follows on from Halbwachs and characterises the memory-history nexus through the term 'sites of memory' (*lieux de mémoire*). According to Nora (1989), sites of memory can be understood as "embodiments of a memorial consciousness that has barely survived in a historical age" (p. 12). These sites, including maps, paintings, and monuments, for example, have symbolic importance and are based on past events that actually happened. However, after being propelled by time and change, memory sites no longer represent real environments of memory (*milieu de mémoire*) as the ancient bonds of identity break, and memories become nothing more than

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[13] From a psychology perspective, the reliability of memory is called into question with the False Memory Syndrome. This refers to a mental experience where a person recalls an event that did not happen, indicating that events and accounts of the past can be fabricated by suggestion. This raises questions about truth value, individual subjectivity, and reliability in memory studies (Rossington & Whitehead, 2007).

"sifted and sorted historical traces" (p. 8). Nora states that once memories become historical, these sites are open to new meanings and interpretations as they become raw material without references in the world (Nikulin, 2015). Consequently, the all-powerful and actualising memory becomes subject to historical analysis and criticism. Wherever memory fits on the scale from myth to objective 'fact', Nora's description shows that the boundary between memory and history is fluid as history becomes just another representation of past events. Considering that historians operate in an environment that is influenced by their present conditions and personal perspectives, even critical history must be understood as a narrative process that is "deeply imbued with- often unacknowledged- patterns of culture and ideology" (Erll, 2011, p. 39). Just like myth, religion, and literature, history is only one of many ways of selectively referencing the past, each of which contributes to the production of collective memory.

Memory, Nation, and Security

Since memory refers to different forms of referencing the past that groups use to identify their own distinctiveness, it follows that one cannot discuss 'nation' without discussing memory. In trying to come up with an answer to the question 'What is a nation?" (*Qu'est-ce qu'une nation*?), French historian Ernest Renan (1882) dismisses definitions of nation that are only based on race, language, or geography. Instead, he bases his answer on two components: a rich legacy of memories, and a common desire to live together and perpetuate the value of that heritage.[14] This also relates to Anderson's (1991) 'imagined communities', as collective memory practices help create and sustain chosen or constructed identities which act as reference points for a group's sense of place, history, and belonging (Weedon & Jordan, 2012). Without explicitly calling it memory, Cohn and Dirks (1988) describe the nation-building process as an attempt to create productive, obedient and responsible citizens by nationalising education, creating official histories of the state, and celebrating national symbols that define what is natural, rational, and normal. These traditions, which are reinforced through the group's moral, cosmological, and historical systems, form the 'collective consciousness'[15] of people (Durkheim, 1912). As a result, by

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[14] In short, a 'nation' refers to a territorial group that share a common history and culture (Smith, 1986).
[15] Developed by theorists such as Carl Jung (1970) and Emile Durkheim (1982), 'collective consciousness' refers to the condition of how individuals come to view themselves as part of any collective or social group. 'Consciousness' signifies "joint or mutual knowledge", "internal knowledge", conventions, and customs. In other words, collective consciousness is accepted forms of knowledge that make up a group's reality. It tells the

becoming institutionalised and normalised in public rhetoric, ideas of identity, nation, and self influence people's perceptions and actions in the world (Wang, 2012). Politically, by shaping national interests and intentions, collective memory becomes essential to understanding foreign policy behaviour.

To analyse this relationship further, the constructivist analysis of international relations provides a starting point for determining how collective memory influences policymakers. In general, ideational factors such as memory and identity have often been ignored in international relations as analyses have tended to focus on realist or liberalist approaches that seek to explain how structures affect actors in their decision-making processes (Carlsnaes, 2012). But with recent theoretical developments, particularly in the truth and reconciliation literature (Hamber & Wilson, 2002; Nytagodien & Neal, 2004; de Brito, 2010; Bakiner, 2016), memory is slowly becoming integrated into the discipline. The constructivist paradigm has been particularly important in this respect. As Olick (2003) notes, the constructivist position emphasises how categories of thought and action that are typically understood as products of nature are constructed by actors who choose an identity and create differences from others. In that case, identity is never constant, and interaction between groups is based on the intersubjective construction of 'self' and 'other' (Dian, 2017). Once both groups agree to act by conforming to certain expectations or following specific conditional rules of their chosen identities, the sense of self and other is reinforced. However, since this identification process is an ongoing project, as groups continually seek out new memories to match their current circumstances, potential insecurity can arise not just from physical threats, but from the prospective "developments that call into question a state or group's identity" (Innes & Steele, 2014, p. 16).

The idea that insecurity can result from a lack of identity or that which enables individuals to maintain a consistent biographical narrative is referred to by scholars as 'ontological security'.[16] While originally introduced to the international relations literature by Huysmans (1998), this concept was later developed by McSweeney (1999), Kinnvall (2004),

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group how the world is. The term 'collective unconscious' is also used in this article and it refers to accepted knowledges and biases that the group may not be aware of. So, shared contexts and memories that are inherent to a group: "mythological motifs, combinations of ideas or images which can be found in the myths of one's own folk or in those of other races…a collective meaning, a meaning which is the common property of mankind" (Jung, 1970, p. 322). The group may be unaware of these memories and stories, yet they influence the desires, behaviours, and actions of the group.

[16] 'Ontology' comes from the Latin verb *Ont-* meaning 'being'. So ontology is the study of existence and reality: being in the world. It involves conceptualising why and how objects and other entities exist, and the relationships that holds them together. Ontological security refers to having a stable sense of continuity and identity that makes agents feel secure.

and Mitzen (2006) who state that in addition to 'security as survival', states rely on a sense of 'biographical' continuity that is supported and recognised in and by their relationships with others. Establishing a common identity and institutional frameworks creates certainty and predictability in routines that guarantee order (Kinnvall & Mitzen, 2017). As well as its relations with other actors that recognise the state as 'being in the world', these practices form the foundations from which the state becomes secure and stable.[17]

If these foundations are disrupted as the state's collective identity becomes challenged by counter-memories, or by other actors who no longer wish to recognise the state as sovereign and belonging to the international community, "the result may be anxiety, paralysis or violence" (Kinnvall & Mitzen, 2017, p. 4). Without a secure identity, the state is unable to establish durable social relations, and this calls into question its ability to manage behaviour and survive within a social community. The potential for conflict and violence becomes an issue particularly when states are unable to create memories and images that they want, and have them understood in ways they intended (Olick, 2003).[18] As Little (2011) explains, states exist in webs of power that underlie their social relations in the form of domination, subordination, and exploitation. However, it is not always clear how collective memories are formed and contested, and the impact this has on foreign policy behaviour.

Theoretical Approaches to Collective Memory

In the book *War, Guilt, and World Politics after World War II* (2012), Thomas Berger provides three different approaches to explaining the determinants of collective memory. The first is the Historical-Determinist approach. While memories tend to be exaggerated or understated depending on how particular members of a group remember and interpret the

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[17] The concept of legal identity also comes into this discussion. It can be defined as recognising an agent's existence before the law, "facilitating the realisation of specific rights and corresponding duties" (López et al., 2014, p. 77). States often acquire legal identities through treaties and conventions that legitimise their existence as a state. This means that the international community recognises a government's capacity to rule over a defined territory and enter into relations with other states (Shaw, 2003). An example can be seen in Article 47 of the Treaty on European Union, which recognises the legal identity of the European Union. With this recognition, the Union is able to negotiate international treaties and act in the capacity of a regional organisation (EUR-Lex, 2017).

[18] This is particularly an issue for a state's public diplomacy if the state lacks leadership and coordination to communicate a desirable image abroad. Not having images and memories understood by others the way one wants them understood often undermines foreign policy strategy. For example, if a state's policies appear superficial, one-off, or randomly planned, it raises questions as to whether the state is capable of delivering foreign policy goals and dealing with future challenges (Byrne, 2009). 'Public diplomacy' is about the interaction between a multitude of actors and networks where agents can "foster mutual trust and productive relationships…[which] has become crucial to building a secure global environment" (USC Centre on Public Diplomacy, 2017). For more information, see Nye, 2008 and Szondi, 2008.

past, this approach argues that national memories are primarily shaped by historical facts. That is, by events that "actually happened". Even when political elites decide to distort the past to legitimise their agendas, such manipulations are limited by the lived experiences and historical facts found in the collective and individual memories of the public. Resisting elite-constructed memories is of particular concern in democratic societies where, in theory, groups can access information and express alternative viewpoints. A recent example of this occurred on January 26 when hundreds of protestors marched across Australian capital cities in opposition to 'Australia Day' celebrations. As Australian Indigenous author Bruce Pascoe noted, rather than uniting the nation, this day symbolises violence and colonisation. To change the date "would be a way of recognising the fact that the history of the country hasn't been told" (Murphy-Oates, 2017; Shield & Mitchell, 2017). By continually suppressing historical 'facts', the cost of maintaining the official narrative increases and acts of rebellion are likely to continue.

The Historical-Determinist approach is closely linked to Levy and Sznaider's (2010) concept of 'cosmopolitan memory', where the global media and human rights organisations create moral-political obligations that states are expected to follow. The idea that establishing historical truth is a pre-requisite for long-term peace is reinforced by Berger (2012) when he states that 'good' history lays the foundations for good politics. Failing to recognise historical realities can threaten the ontological security of the state by calling into question the state's legitimacy and increasing resentment between groups, ultimately making reconciliation difficult. The Historical-Determinist perspective is based on positivist epistemology, which argues that a value-free history lies somewhere out there waiting to be discovered. The separation of history from values and human will goes back to the division between history/objectivity and memory/subjectivity, adding a new binary between nationalised memories and a globalised standard of morality. Therefore, it is this "new form of memory" (Levy & Sznaider, 2006, p. 132) based on historical truth that puts pressure on and determines a nation's collective memories.

On the other hand, the Instrumentalist approach argues that it is politics that creates national memories, as political elites have the power to shape collective memory independent of historical truth. Although past events in national memories may have actually happened, recorded memories are there to serve a purpose: to legitimise and give power to the elite. Whether through manipulation, mythmaking, or lies, memories are formed through narratives that make up a "usable past". So, depending on whether a state is at war or peace, the official narrative follows the shifting dynamics of foreign and domestic policy. During war time, for

example, states promote narratives that mobilise society against the enemy. During the Second World War, both Japan and America used propaganda to promote hatred and fear by depicting the other as demonic and sub-human in contrast to the civilised self (Navarro, 2012). While the same images were partially dismantled once the war ended and America began to rebuild Japan economically, memories of the war continued to affect Japanese migrants and businesses who were subject to ongoing racism and discrimination (Speidel, 2017). After the Second World War, Germany also attempted to create new memories of the past with the creation of more than 200 new history books that no longer commemorated the Nazis. This new 'pacifist' Germany saw the First World War as a disaster that left the country economically ruined and vulnerable to the manipulations of Hitler, leading to one of the worst genocides in the 20th century (Macey, 2014). In both cases, ontological security was ensured by using political and cultural resources to create a new identity that justified both policy and decision-making after the end of the war. While some past narratives continued to affect the post-war environment, such as the neo-Nazi movements in Germany and anti-Japanese sentiments in America, the creation of these new memories were rarely challenged.

The Instrumentalist approach puts forward the idea that as dominant groups impose a new direction on social life, subordinates will give their 'spontaneous' consent to the established order. As Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1971) notes, "this consent [which reinforces cultural hegemony by legitimising existing power relations] is 'historically' caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production" (p. 12). As political elites choose new memories to become part of the master narrative, these narratives become embedded in individual memory, linking collective memory to the concept of 'collective unconscious' or ways of thinking that extend from the whole to the individual. This means that the ability to remember and forget certain memories becomes an exercise of power where elites define past experiences and articulate values, norms, beliefs, and prejudices, determining what can and cannot be expressed. While useful in many ways, this approach is unable to properly explain the power and influence of counter-memories, making analysis through Instrumentalism limited.

Finally, Culturalism assumes that culture acts as a cognitive lens or context through which collective memory is shaped. Like Instrumentalism, this approach argues that knowledge and memories cannot be objective since "events are known and remembered through a process of social and cultural construction" (Dian, 2017, p. 10). Collective memories can only ever be understood by broader society if these memories are based on

group norms and values. As a result, Culturalists would argue that to be accepted, new narratives must fit within the population's 'common sense' or culturally accepted ideas about what is normal or natural. Ted Hopf (2013) uses the example of contemporary Russia where mass common sense blocks the Russian elite's neoliberal plan of moving Russia into the core of the world capitalist economy. He states, "Russian mass common sense does not reflect this aspiration…Instead, it is infused with a neo-Soviet identity for Russia that makes it a less-than-perfect fit with the democratic neoliberal project" (p. 332). In the same way, it could be argued that China's attempts to promote a harmonious world order and peaceful coexistence are often misunderstood and misinterpreted by the West whose common sense puts an emphasis on values that China does not follow, including individuality, human rights, and Western democracy.[19]

Some Culturalists state that the boundaries of culture can shift. While national myths become part of the cultural framework that influences memories and knowledge of the world, official narratives may also be subject to change through social interaction. The cosmopolitan memory and the global culture of human rights, for instance, induced states like Chile and Germany to apologise for past rights abuses through the pressure of advocacy groups and non-governmental organisations (Buti & Bus, 1999). Rather than apologising for the sake of historical accuracy, in many cases, international apologies are the result of elites avoiding any actions that can be seen as delegitimizing if the masses are influenced by global norms and demands for an apology (Yamazaki, 2012). In terms of ontological security, any kind of tension that the group may face by internal subgroups or external norms can lead to change if other memories are accepted on a societal level that fit within the group's culture and perception of self.

The Interpretive Approach

All three theoretical explanations are useful to understanding collective memory and foreign policy. The Historical-Determinist approach shows how civil society and diaspora groups can be influential in promoting 'historically accurate' accounts of the past, just as Instrumentalism explains the role of the political elite in deciding and framing national memories. The Culturalists highlight the importance of popular culture and how memories

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[19] As opposed to what Lee (2013) calls Chinese-style or non-liberal democracy, which refers to a government that is accountable and consults its population as opposed to strictly liberal democracy that also has fair elections, rights, and freedoms.

are registered by the masses that also determine what memories are remembered and forgotten. By adopting the Interpretive approach to his analysis, Matteo Dian (2017) introduces further components to explain and understand how memories are formed and influence state policy. Unlike traditional international relations theories, where states are treated as unitary actors that possess unchanging interests in the pursuit of national security in an anarchic system, the Interpretive approach adds layers of complexity to analysis by discussing how diverse and contested meanings, beliefs, and narratives inform political action. As Bevir and Daddow (2015) state, Interpretivists seek "answers to 'why' questions through an investigation of 'how' things came to be, rather than falling back on a covering-law model" (p. 275) that identifies an (1) 'initial condition statement' which (2) flags up relevant scientific law(s) leading to outcomes that hold in all cases where (1) and (2) are met.[20] Even though the covering-law model makes the social and natural world more predictable, its predictions and assumptions ignore the intentions, interests, and beliefs of situated agents and how social meanings determine political activity. The Interpretive approach does this by focusing on ideational factors such as the beliefs of policy actors and the meaning of their actions, while explaining how beliefs are chosen as part of the group's historical traditions and as responses to dilemmas (Bevir et al., 2013).

Recognising the importance of beliefs, traditions, narratives, and resistance as fundamental to every actor's political socialisation can help make sense of contemporary political issues (Bevir & Daddow, 2015). However, a key aspect of the interpretive approach that cannot be found in the other theoretical explanations is the focus on 'dilemmas'. That is, situations that challenge preconceptions about the behaviour and actions of other actors, which can cause a group to incorporate these new experiences and modify the established narrative. Thus, coming to terms with the past or recreating national narratives is not simply a means of governments signalling non-aggression to other states (Instrumentalism), or discovering an objective truth (Historical-Determinism). Revising historical memories can be associated with the rise of dilemmas when current beliefs, values, and narratives of the past are no longer able to legitimise policy choices or provide a coherent reconstruction of past events (Dian, 2017). An example of this occurred for Germany in the 1990s. With a legacy of genocide and war crimes, Germany was reluctant to get involved in the Yugoslav conflict during the Balkan Wars. In the German parliament, there was even a consensus that German

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[20] In other words, an explanation is only valid if it invokes a principle or rule that explains the phenomena in all cases. Realists rely on the idea of an anarchic international system to explain why states act the way they do, and justify why states need to compete for security, markets, and control (Wight, 2006).

troops should not be deployed in any places that had been occupied by the unified armed forces of Nazi Germany (Philippi, 2001). However, with diplomacy no closer to reaching a political solution as Serbian troops entered UN protection zones and began to commit war crimes, Germany had to decide whether an out-of-area military operation could be justified considering that it aspired to be an economic and political power, not a military one. As NATO involvement deepened, the no-military-deployment narrative shifted and German lawmakers affirmed the legality of mutual defence treaties with foreign nations (Oglesby, 2014). With pressure from international organisations and German citizens, who increasingly supported military action as reports of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia emerged (Cooper, 1996), Germany's deployment of troops represents a dilemma or moment of crisis where the decline of the pacifist narrative was met with policy consensus. The country justified this decision on the basis that Germany needs to take part in common security "precisely because Germany has broken the peace in the past" (Deutscher Bundestag, 1994, p. 21166), showing how dilemmas allow agents to revise their political strategies according to their beliefs and chosen memories. By explaining actions and practices through dilemmas, the Interpretive approach can account for change. Without such dilemmas, efforts to resist established narratives will be difficult since official memories form a stable backdrop to current policy choices. The rise of dilemmas encourages meanings of the past to be rethought, resulting in reinterpretations of the group's identity and actions. This often leads to substantial change in domestic and foreign policy.

Collective Forgetting

Most studies on collective memory rarely make reference to acts of oblivion. When forgetting is discussed, it is treated as a force of destruction, failure, or absence that must be countered by remembering (Karreman et al., 2012). For Marcel Proust (1913), for example, it is the heavenly rope of memory that acts as a rescuer of non-being or the loss of self as "entire communities weave symbolic ropes of remembrance in order to rescue endangered portions of their defining heritage from alleged abysses of historical non-being".[21] French theorist Jean Baudrillard (1987) also said that forgetting is "too dangerous and must be replaced by an artificial memory" (p. 22). While Milan Kundera is troubled by the weight of excessive memory, in his book *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984), he points out that

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[21] Cited in Vivian, 2015, p. 225.

forgetting can disburden us in more troubling ways by leaving us feeling insignificant and only 'half real' (p. 5). If memory is associated with identity, nation, group solidarity, power, truth, values, and dignity, it is not surprising that a Manichean classification developed that posited forgetting as memory's negative opposite. The point is made succinctly when Anthony D. Smith (1986) says "no memory, no identity; no identity, no nation" (p. 383). Forgetting here comes to be understood as a negative power: non-being, the loss of individuality, fragmentation, and an involuntary force in individuals resulting from old age and sickness. As memory disorders such as dementia and amnesia can become "disabling and ultimately catastrophic" (Nørby, 2015, p. 569), forgetting and the loss of memory is associated with suffering.

Geographically, forgotten places are often seen as "passive, victimised, or invisible 'other' to global spaces" (Nagar et al., 2002, p. 256) as space becomes monopolised by powerful groups such as the global capitalist, neo-liberal states (Lee & Yeoh, 2004). These dominant groups control and manipulate space to create new places and reinforce existing power structures. Forgetting becomes a necessity as communities are systematically excluded, displaced, or abandoned from privileged spaces to make room for middle class, cosmopolitan aspirations. Thus, as cities develop, geographical spaces become segregated and 'purified' as subordinated groups are removed by urban planners and developers to create places of safety and prestige. In his study on the spatial segregation of the Roma in the Czech Republic, Laco Toušek (2011) highlights that those who are labelled as 'others' are expelled to the outskirts of society due to poverty, criminality, discrimination, and racism. As a result, "spatial segregation manifests itself as a means of social control of otherness" (p. 18) as stigmatising and removing the 'other' acts to silence the socially powerless.

In some cases, the use of forgetting by powerful agents consigns some groups to historical oblivion. In the edited book *Forgotten Genocides* (2011), a number of case studies of forgotten people and crimes are examined, including the mass killings of the Roma throughout Europe, the extermination of the Assyrians in Ottoman Turkey, as well as the history of Australian Aborigines. Australian anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner (1969) was one of the first academics to refer to the erasure of Aboriginal history from white Australian collective consciousness. He notes, "what may have begun as a simple matter of forgetting of other possible views turned under habit and over time into something like a cult of forgetfulness practised on a national scale" (p. 24-5). Defined through the Socialist-Darwinist theory of primitivism with neither history nor culture, Australian Aborigines were left out of the nation's master narrative and told to move on and stop dwelling on the past (Haebich,

2011). The 'Great Australian Silence' can be contrasted to Australia's white heroic past, where the events of World War One and Gallipoli are scrutinised, magnified, exhibited, and venerated. As Colin Tatz (2003) notes, with "every wound, act of valor and every death in that 'birth of the nation'" (p. 142-3), the Indigenous people's traumas continue to be ignored.

Though forgetting and silence can have tragic consequences for identity construction and attitude formation for both individuals and collectives (Stone et al., 2012), the idea of forgetting as memory's 'other' originates from Cicero's *De Oratore* written in 55 B.C. In it, Cicero describes the story of the Greek rhetorician Simonides of Ceos who attended a banquet to recite poetry. When Simonides went outside the hall after his performance, the building in which the event was held collapsed, killing and mutilating the other guests beyond recognition. Only through his memory technique was Simonides able to identify the bodies by visually remembering where each person had been sitting (Karreman et al., 2012; Thomas, 2014). Whereas the collapsed building represents destruction, memory in the story restores identity and allows each guest a proper burial rite. The dualistic model that emerges associates forgetting with sorrow and death. Memory, by contrast, becomes the hero that restores social order, representing life, culture, art, and knowledge. Through it, individuals can know and recognise the world against the threat of oblivion.

Beyond this binary, however, the relationship between memory and forgetting is more complex. Even Renan (1882) who wrote that memory is what defines the nation also stated that forgetting "is an essential factor in the creation of a nation" and through it, "unity is always brutally established" (p. 3). In that sense, rather than memory's counter, forgetting is a prerequisite condition for establishing new memories and identities. In *The Collective Memory* (1950) Halbwachs investigates what happens when memory and collective frameworks are forgotten. He states that whoever "has many remembrances fastened to these new images now obliterated forever, feels a whole past of himself dying with these things and regrets" (p. 3). But for the collective, forgetting can become a dynamic and constructive process as all selective frameworks need to dispose certain elements before incorporating new ones. Halbwachs (1952) uses the example of modern bourgeois societies where couples must form new collective memories from potentially incompatible family memories. He states, "to avoid inevitable conflict which cannot be adjudicated through norms accepted by both, they tacitly agree the past is to be treated as if it were abolished" (p. 77). As an inevitable and necessary part of memory-making, forgetting can be a liberating aspect for individuals and communities that seek to separate themselves from old traditions and memories that continue to impact current politics.

For many traditions, forgetting plays an important role in spiritual and creative life. In Chinese mythology, forgetting is represented by the female icon Old Lady Meng (*Meng Po*, 孟婆) who brews soup for souls before they depart from Hell. The soup induces amnesia as consuming the liquid causes one's past life to be completely forgotten in preparation for the process of rebirth (Reading, 2002). China's Daoist philosophy also emphasises forgetting (*wang*, 忘) in many passages of the *Zhuangzi* where the word appears more than eighty times (Chen, 2015). In Watson's (2013) translated version, the text states that like "the fish who forget one another in the rivers and lakes, men forget one another in the arts of the Way" (p. 50). By proceeding to forget, one is closer to transforming the self and becoming one with the Way.[22] Moreover, in their conversation on how to "sit in forgetfulness" (*Zuowang*, 坐忘), Yan Hui says to Confucius that to sit and forget everything involves driving out perception, doing away with understanding, and making oneself identical with the Great Unity, "deep and boundless" (p. 81). To nourish the mind and enter Heaven, one needs to forget things, forget Heaven, and forget self. This kind of forgetting means to break away from physical and mental desires that can cause harm to self and others, including excessively indulging in material things and making judgements with the mind's limited knowledge. Rather than rejecting or destroying the world, forgetting becomes "a kind of sublation that inherits the position and, through a synthesis, transcends to a higher realm" (Chen, 2015, p. 180). Without boundaries, values, or form, one can experience absolute freedom.

In Indigenous cultures, the act of forgetting has cultural and practical significance, particularly in rituals after death. The ritual of *segaiya* by the Sabarl people of Papua New Guinea is a collective experience of forgetting a deceased individual and their debts. As well as having constructive social effects by moving on from that which has no future use to the living, this process allows for a cultural revaluation where "deconstruction is integral to construction" (Battaglia, 1990, p. 51). Likewise, for Aboriginal Australians and the Jivaro of the Amazon, mourning practices and deliberate forgetting is important to overcoming grief and self-harm. One example that the Aboriginals across Central Australia use is name suppression where the deceased person's name is replaced by the words 'Kwementyay', 'Kumantjayi', or 'Kunmunara', because the family may be 'worrying too much' (Tonkinson

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[22] The 'Way' or *Dao* in Chinese philosophy is an ancient concept that is described as the ultimate purpose of all pursuits. Being one with the Way is to live life accordingly. As Confucius stated in *The Analects*, "If I in the morning hear the *Dao*, I may die in the evening without regret" (4:8). In very broad terms, it can be understood as recognising reality as it is. As such, there are many Daos in the world: the Dao of the sages, the Dao of the superior person, the Dao of benevolence. Dao is both a correct action and an all-incorporating, all-embracing attitude (see Xu, 2010).

& Burbank, 2017). Maier (1993) and Augé (2004) express similar views in their discussions on history and the duty to remember. They state that to prevent ethnic grievances from resurfacing, suffering from too much memory should be replaced by oblivion, which brings groups back into the present and paves the way for a new future without retribution or melancholy. According to Jivaro cosmology, new life cannot be born until the old has been forgotten since there are a finite number of spaces for existence available to future generations (Millar, 2014). Whether as a way of healing or understanding life and death, forgetting is central to the conception of self and others in society.

These ideas were also developed in the Ancient Greek world.[23] Whereas memory was known as Mnemosyne, the goddess and mother of the muses, the river Lethe personified forgetfulness. Just like Old Lady Meng's soup, drinking the waters of Lethe cleanses the souls that are in the process of reincarnation "so that, their memories are effaced, they may once more revisit the vault above and conceive the desire of return to the body" (*The Aeneid*, Book 6). The representation of forgetting by water in the form of soup or river suggests that oblivion is part of a stream: a continuous, flowing process that reconstructs and renews life, identity, and knowledge again and again. Human mortality is frail, but through forgetting an absolution is achieved where the slate is cleaned and memory becomes transformed. The possibility that remembering past wrongs could be used to justify endless acts of revenge and threaten peace in the community was originally considered in 403 B.C. In this year, the Athenian democrats re-entered the city of Athens and declared that all citizens, including democrats, oligarchs, and non-combatants were forbidden from remembering all crimes committed during the civil war (Connerton, 2008). The type of forgetting that includes pardoning or annulling prosecution and judgement of a criminal act would later become known in the West as amnesty or "legal forgetting". Leaving nothing on record was used by English monarchs who, at the time of their coronation, would grant criminals amnesty on past offences (Leys, 2002). In peace treaties, amnesty also became a condition of surrender so that past acts would be associated with the old regime and save perpetrators from violence and imprisonment. The Treaty of Westphalia (1648), for instance, that ended the Thirty Years' War, grants:

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[23] In ancient Greece, memory was considered a special skill for prophets and poets. According to Russell (2003), poets who were excellent at memorising were believed to have powers that gave them access to knowledge in the past, present, and future.

"Oblivion, Amnesty, or Pardon of all that has been committed since the beginning of these Troubles…in such a manner, that no body, under any pretext whatsoever, shall practice any Acts of Hostility, entertain any Enmity, or cause any Trouble to each other…[so that all crimes] during the War, in Words, Writings, and Outrageous Actions, in Violences, Hostilitys, Damages and Expences, without any respect to Persons or Things, shall be entirely abolish'd in such a manner that all that might be demanded of, or pretended to, by each other on that behalf, shall be bury'd in eternal Oblivion" (Clause II).

Forgetting Strategies

From Chinese lore to the Peace of Westphalia, these examples show that forgetting is associated with power as social oblivion is created or enacted for some political purpose. The struggle to transform and characterise the past is often used to lay the foundations for a new future. There are different ways of forgetting that create new beginnings. Taking into account Connerton's (2008) seven types of forgetting[24] and Harmanşah's (2014) forgetting strategies,[25] forgetting in this analysis includes, but is not limited to, direct and indirect forgetting. In both types, forgetting can be understood as "selective remembering, misremembering and disremembering" (Douglas, 2007, p. 13). While the psychological account of forgetting as non-retention or the non-retrieval of information can be applied to political forgetting, oblivion in a social context involves both the deconstruction and reconstruction of meanings, values, and institutions, where new ideologies and meanings are created to confront the past and present. How forgetting takes place entails a complicated process of inclusion, exclusion, selection, and rejection (Karremann et al., 2012).

When done deliberately or intentionally, actors seek to disassociate with the past voluntarily, leading to direct forgetting. Tactics of direct forgetting include subversion (changing the order of information); denial (claims that the information does not exist); suppression (withholding information, which also comes under censorship); mythmaking

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[24] These include: (1) repressive erasure or the destruction of images, removal of names, the specific layout of museums that erases certain memories; (2) prescriptive forgetting, where past wrongs are forgotten to avoid revenge attacks; (3) forgetting for a new identity, including forgetting the details of past marriages; (4) structural amnesia, which occurs when certain memories are not passed on to the next generation; (5) forgetting as annulment, which is about storing and forgetting things; (6) forgetting as obsolescence, where products and goods are discarded after their product life cycle ends; and (7) humiliated silences or silence about past events. For criticisms on Connerton's classification, see Timcke (2013).

[25] The five key forgetting strategies are listed on page 29 of Harmanşah's dissertation. They are: (1) The formation of new narratives that emphasise certain periods of events; (2) the destruction, obliteration, or ignorance of physical remains; (3) the creation of a new symbolic geography that legitimise current policies; (4) selective remembering and forgetting through education, memorials, and ceremonies; and (5) preserving the Other's heritage in subordinated positions, which emphasises that their culture belongs to the past.

(creating alternative information); and trivialisation (making information meaningless or insignificant). Indirect forgetting, on the other hand, may not be deliberate or instrumental, but occurs as a result of underdevelopment, assimilation, or inadvertent stigma. Underdevelopment does not just mean that those that are depicted in terms of economic decline, slow growth, or minimal prospects for improvement are forgotten. Rather, as Lee and Yeoh (2004) state, forgetting is "actively forged as products of the politics of inclusion and exclusion and by power struggles played out among global, national, and local actors in globalisation processes" (p. 2296). Forgetting here may be unintentional, but results from, and is a symptom of, new patterns of development that displace or destroy existing memories. Assimilation, while often direct and purposeful, is an indirect form of forgetting as assimilation policies become successful when the assimilated choose to give up their traditional lives and memories for the new identity. This mainly occurs generationally, when the original identity becomes less sharp and less visible as younger members of the community grow up in an alternative symbolic framework of new languages and narratives and the old framework eventually becomes forgotten. Finally, inadvertent stigma, through exclusion or pejorative language, can also be an indirect way of forgetting. In their study on addiction and stigma, Broyles et al. (2014) highlight that "language intentionally and unintentionally propagates stigma: the mark of dishonor, disgrace, and difference that depersonalizes people, depriving them of individual and personal qualities and personal identity" (p. 218). This is seen with the use of the word 'gypsy' in many European languages. Gypsy or *Cigány* (Hungarian), *Çingene* (Turkish), or *Zingaro* in Italian is a pejorative term that refers to the Roma as those who are 'bad', i.e. those that steal, are dirty, poor and have dark skin (Petriu, 2012). To occur unintentionally, these racist and discriminatory signs or meanings replace any prior meanings associated with the group so that the group becomes entirely known by the negative stereotypes attached to their name.[26] The Romanis, in this sense, became known through these negative stereotypes as harmful associations with the term Gypsy were embedded in everyday language.

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[26] Originating from the areas of Punjab and Sindh in India and Pakistan today, famines and expulsions led the Roms to migrate across Armenia and into Greece and the rest of Europe. While making up many different tribes, clans, traditions, and linguistic dialects, "tales about their origins in legendary so-called Little Egypt; the acknowledgment of their musical and handcraft abilities; and their knowledge in the niche businesses of metal-processing, horse trading, and basket-making" led to fear and distrust in the local population. As a result, although the Roms became settled members of society, to this day they continue to be "stigmatized…as atheists, invaders, vagabonds, and thieves. Persecution, banishment, enslavement, deportation, and oppression ensued" (West, 2011, p. 107).

Direct and indirect forgetting takes place through different mechanisms. For instance, subversion and mythmaking may occur in historical narratives, while denial is reinforced in how museums and physical remains are laid out and remembered. One of the largest museums in China actively forgets the disastrous political campaigns that killed millions of people during the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution, by only briefly mentioning this history under a single photograph in the back of a two-million-square foot museum (Johnson, 2011). Underdeveloped areas may also be symbolically forgotten by not being included on maps, or labelled as areas to be avoided by foreign visitor groups.

Hegemony and Collective Forgetting

A theory of hegemony needs to be considered to understand how states use direct and indirect forgetting strategies to cause oblivion. Hegemony is defined as the ability of dominant groups to impose their interpretations of reality as the normal way to view the world (Gramsci, 1971; Molden, 2016). In other words, the dominant group's way of thinking becomes universal and delegitimizes other forms of thought, so that "hegemonic systems of control become…incorporated into everyday life, organising popular sentiments and discourses" (Sue, 2015, p. 115). Even though the dominant ideology is based on the interests and goals of those in power, these definitions highlight that hegemony works when the dominant ideology becomes internalised by non-elite groups. Hence, hegemonic power is obtained through consent rather than force, since non-elites adopt these legitimizing memories, which permeate all aspects of society (Ramos, 1982).

From a Marxist perspective, advanced capitalist societies were officially established when the ideas of the ruling class became an 'accepted' form of control. As Femia (1987) notes, "conceived to perceive reality through the conceptual spectacles of the ruling class, they [the proletariat] are unable to recognise the nature or extent of their own servitude" (p. 31). Thus, an analysis of official statements, media discourse, and popular culture is necessary to determine how certain events are remembered and forgotten as hegemonic consent is manufactured through both official channels and civil society. In these mediums, the dominant group's memories are repeatedly described, taught, promoted, and framed in terms of common sense. The use of certain words, narratives, and ideas become tools where the dominant group's experiences are assumed to define human experiences and memories, making the target group 'mentally surrender' to avoid being minimalized historically, economically, or culturally. Consequently, consent by free will becomes a matter of survival

and interest as the hegemon oppresses and subjugates subordinated discourses (Alcoff, 2008). This has particularly become an issue in feminist theory with the problem of the male gaze. In a world structured by male dominance, women are forced to see themselves through the eyes of men as the determining gaze projects male fantasies on to the female figure (Mulvey, 1989). Rather than as agents who look, women become looked at and displayed since their appearance acts as visual and erotic cues for male sexual desire. The inability of women to value and express themselves apart from the hegemonic discourse is the result of being historically excluded from producing their own symbols, images, and public discourses (Goddard & Patterson, 2000). Forgetting plays a key role in these processes of subordination. As Hussain (1994) comments, "to be the object of another's discourse is to suffer an erasure…the real is displaced by the image, the signified by the signifier" (p. 108). As well as producing hegemony, forgetting conceals the processes of domination as consent is established through the mutual participation of both the dominant and non-elite groups.

The group's collective unconscious is always in the process of being transformed as cultural consensus conceals present historicity and the prospect for historical development. In this process, some memories are indefinitely prioritized over others according to the power dynamics in society (Molden, 2016). The implication is that the possibility for change or alternative histories are ignored and made unmentionable through what Sheriff (2000) calls 'cultural censorship'. That is, customary silences that are socially shared and culturally codified, through which forms of power are concealed, denied, or naturalised. This type of silence can be distinguished from memory practices that are either enforced and state-led (propaganda) or societal and popular, i.e. led by the masses (counter-memory). The idea that cultural censorship is constituted and reinforced by both dominant and subordinate groups highlights that silence is assumed by a convention that most have an interest to uphold. This can make silence and forgetting difficult to examine. As Sue (2015) states, the topics and ideas that are silenced are often hidden for a reason, embedded in the culture, and reinforced by self-censorship, resulting in limited research on forgetting, hegemony, and collective memory.

Conclusion

Collective memory continues to be left out of mainstream literature in political science and international relations even though it is the foundation through which group identity is

formed. States use narratives of the past, present, and future to create images of themselves to others, and these images affect the ways that leaders and citizens understand and interpret the world. Although it is difficult to measure exactly how perceptions influence decision-making, some constructivist scholars are beginning to recognise that group memories do influence policy-making, group relationships, and international affairs.[27] Clashes over monuments, events of national importance, and even how political and media discourses are framed, are best understood through power relations and the ability of the dominant group to impose its interpretation of reality as the universal norm or the collective common sense.

What is often left out of discussions on collective memory is collective forgetting and how the destruction and silencing of a targetted group is a central part of the formation of national identities. The continuous reorganisation and selection of narratives and traditions by agents who have the power to monitor and control cultural institutions, the media, and archives mean that certain memories will be made subordinate to others through manipulation, distortion, and silencing. This culture of secrecy and the creation of nationalist narratives, where a dichotomy between the Self and Other is made so that the Other becomes a homogenised collective possessing negative traits, is inherent to the politics of ethnicity and nationalism and often becomes unnoticed and unquestioned to the point where new information that counters the dominant memory is completely ignored (Meusburger, 2011). Citizens and educated elites are also capable of refusing to accept counter-narratives as it often goes against their interests to do so, potentially jeopardising the power and privilege they receive by maintaining mnemonic hierarchies. The outcome is a system of hegemony where official narratives are upheld by elites and everyday citizens through cultural censorship.

Further study needs to be done in this area. This paper suggests that identifying direct and indirect forgetting through channels such as media discourse can point out how events and images are being remembered, and what aspects are kept quiet, subverted, made insignificant, and forgotten. In addition to explaining actor behaviour and decision-making, collective memory could also be a useful tool for understanding how societies could reconcile and move past traumatic and painful experiences. There are a variety of ways that this theory can be expanded and tested for future research. For example, examining the phenomenon of collective forgetting through different research methods, including interviews or focus groups with victims and perpetrators of collective forgetting,

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[27] See, for example, Wendt, 1999; Lebow, 2008; and Jahn, 2016.

could highlight how the loss of culture impacts group members' sense of self, and how agents negotiate and censor alternative information and memories in conversation. Discourse analysis, which analyses language through talk, non-verbal interaction, and images, symbols, and documents, is another way that collective forgetting could be studied as it involves analysing what people 'do' with words. To take this study from an ethnomethodology perspective is to look at how social action is accomplished through participants, that is, to understand how forgetting occurs 'in action', which is about showing how meaning is created in both conversation and culture.

The aim of exposing collective forgetting is to identify alternative voices that can provide different perspectives and understandings of the past that may be more representative than the dominant memory framework. In this way, no one form of memory can be privileged as the truth, but should instead represent the many kinds of knowledges and interpretations that can be useful for different strategies and contexts.

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