

# Traversing Memories in Global Politics

Millennium: Journal of  
International Studies  
2025, Vol. 53(3) 561–574  
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DOI: 10.1177/03058298251368424  
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Memories are not just acts of remembrance – they entangle, diffuse and complicate the very contours of global politics. In Gaza, for instance, the invocation of historical traumas and dispossession – especially memories of the Nakba and occupation – has deeply influenced both local narratives and international responses. In the confrontation between Russia and Ukraine, civilisational imaginaries and antagonistic historical narratives have sustained geopolitical rivalry and legitimised further violence. Similarly, the global resurgence of nostalgic nationalisms largely draws on romanticised visions of former glory to consolidate exclusionary political agenda, meanwhile, in ongoing anti-colonial struggles, collective memories continue to animate transnational solidarities, grassroots alliances and movements of resistance.

Yet, the reach of memories extends far beyond traditional political arenas. Memories do not exist in a vacuum, nor do they function as a singular or unified force. Rather, they emerge as plural, often contested formations – collectively mediated yet deeply personal, entangled with intimate understandings, affective attachments and everyday practices. This multiplicity is precisely what renders memories such potent and unpredictable forces: they *traverse* the boundaries between private and public, individual and collective, shaping not only lived experience but also political life. Most strikingly, they

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unsettle taken-for-granted spatiotemporal distinctions – between past, present and future; between ‘here’ and ‘there’ – and expand the very contours of political agency beyond the human subject alone. To engage with memories, then, is likely to divide as it is to unite.

As our *Vol. 53 Millennium* Symposium brought together scholars – both early career and established – from across the globe, it evolved into a generative series of conversations that underscored precisely this: memories *traverse* political imaginaries, unsettle dominant spatiotemporal coordinates and animate the complex, often contradictory realities through which international relations are both practised and theorised. These dynamics become especially visible in moments of crisis and upheaval, where competing narratives of the past are deeply entangled with the politics of war, nationalism, colonial legacies and mobilisation. Memories, to put it differently, are not passive residues of the past, but active and constitutive forces – configuring political identities, (de) legitimising violence, fuelling resistance and reshaping the very frameworks through which global politics is imagined and enacted.

What, then, do we mean by ‘memory’? In crafting our initial Call for Abstracts (CfA), we began by scrutinising essentialist understandings – particularly positivist accounts that reify memory, and even history, as a singular, stable repository of the past. In contrast, our choice to speak of *memories* in the plural was intentional: it sought to capture their inherent multiplicity, relationality and dynamic character. Memories, after all, are best understood not as fixed objects, but as dynamic processes – material, affective and discursive – that mediate our relationships to time, space and more-than-human worlds. They shape who we are, how we relate and how power circulates across global landscapes. Rarely governed by a single logic, memories may take the form of official commemoration or grassroots activism, be transmitted through archives and museums or inherited through silence, and operate through affect as much as through discourse. This framing allowed us to engage – however tentatively – with the contested, situated and evolving nature of memory as both a polyvalent concept and practice.

We approach memories, therefore, as thoroughly relational and expressed through a myriad of practices, including acts of narration, visualisation, ritual, performance, circulation and contestation. They emerge at the intersection of individual experience and collective meaning-making, mediated by institutions, conceptual frameworks, technologies, bodies and spatiotemporal imaginaries. Indeed, as the contributions in this Special Issue collectively contend, memories are deeply entangled also with the present and future, often disrupting established narratives in response to contemporary demands, desires and crises – whether unfolding in proximate spaces, across transnational terrains or even within ourselves.

At the same time, understanding memories as a wide range of processes does not preclude their paradoxical and often (dis)ruptive nature. Frequently associated with trauma, victimhood or loss, memories do more than shape how we engage with one another – they can profoundly *alter* relations, signalling wounds and fractures that are difficult to overcome. In effect, they often reinforce logics of inclusion and exclusion that emerge from collective social distinctions: victims and perpetrators, colonisers and colonised, settler and Indigenous peoples – or more broadly, between humans and non-humans, where the latter are often depicted as devoid of memorial capacity. To be sure, memories complicate neat binaries, even as they risk being confined to the human realm

alone – a legacy that remains deeply reminiscent of mainstream International Relations (IR)’s atomistic ontology and its anthropocentric modes of being, feeling and doing.

The study of memories thus goes beyond disciplinary boundaries. As intrinsically connected to the passing experience of (non-)human life, memories as an area of inquiry have grown consistently over the past two decades.<sup>1</sup> We begin by exploring memories through varied bodies of knowledge before refining that exploration towards memories in IR.

Multi-disciplinary scholars have explored temporal, spatial and non-human aspects of memory-making. Scholars from history and geography to psychology and literature are concerned with understanding memory and living with the past in broad terms.<sup>2</sup> Psychology has predominantly focused on memory as a process at the individual level, while historians understand memory as a social and cultural experience focused on meaning-making and shared experience.<sup>3</sup> Here, scholars examine the intersection of trauma and memory.<sup>4</sup> For scholars of sociology, collective memory encompasses both ‘individual’ or ‘personal’ memories and ‘representations of the past’.<sup>5</sup> Literary and art scholars begin that examination by grounding memory in its representation and practice through for example memorials, museums and monuments.<sup>6</sup> As such they point to a transdisciplinary conceptualisation of memory that encompasses multiple modes of study.<sup>7</sup> As Astrid Erll points out, ‘memory’ is a topic that integrates disparate elements like no other.<sup>8</sup>

1. For a broad history of memory studies as a research field, consider: Jeffrey K. Olick, ‘“Collective Memory”: A Memoir and Prospect’, *Memory Studies* 1, no. 1 (2008): 23–9; Marek Tamm, ‘Beyond History and Memory: New Perspectives in Memory Studies’, *History Compass* 11, no. 6 (2013): 458–73; Susannah Radstone, ‘What Place Is This? Transcultural Memory and the Locations of Memory Studies’, *Parallax* 17, no. 4 (2011): 109–123; Astrid Erll, ‘The Invention of Cultural Memory: A Short History of Memory Studies’, in *Memory in Culture*, eds. Erll A and Nünning A (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2011), 13–37.
2. Michael S. Roth, *Memory, Trauma, and History: Essays on Living with the Past* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2011).
3. Lucrèce Heux et al., ‘Collective Memory and Autobiographical Memory: Perspectives from the Humanities and Cognitive Sciences’, *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Cognitive Science* 14, no. 3 (2023), Article e1635.
4. Mardi J. Horowitz and Steven P. Reidbord. ‘Memory, Emotion, and Response to Trauma’, in *The Handbook of Emotion and Memory*, ed. Sven-Ake Christianson (New York: Psychology Press, 2014), 343–57; Karin Tilmans, Frank van Vree and Jay Murray Winter, eds., *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010).
5. Christina Simko. ‘Collective Memory’, in *Oxford Bibliographies in Sociology*, 2019. Available at: <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780199756384/obo-9780199756384-0215.xml> (last accessed July 31, 2025).
6. Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, ‘Literature and the Production of Cultural Memory: Introduction’, *European Journal of English Studies* 10, no. 2 (2006): 111–5; Lars Eckstein, *Re-membering the Black Atlantic: On the Poetics and Politics of Literary Memory*, Vol. 84 (Amsterdam; New York, NY: Rodopi, 2006).
7. Aline Cordonnier et al., ‘Collective Memory: An Hourglass Between the Collective and the Individual’, *Memory, Mind & Media* 1 (2022): e8.
8. Astrid Erll, ‘Introduction: Why “Memory”?’’, in *Memory in Culture*, eds. Erll A and Nünning A (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2011), p. 1.

We situate our exploration of memories starting from the expansive transdisciplinary landscape. We begin from the consideration that engaging with memories is ‘an all-encompassing sociocultural, interdisciplinary, and international phenomenon’.<sup>9</sup> By developing into its own field, memory studies offer unique insights into the conceptualisation and theorising of memories in politics that we engage with below. Hereafter, we adopt three frames to interrogate how memory, from individual to collective, from narrated to embodied, can illuminate and traverse global politics.

Memory studies have long engaged with the temporality of spectacular events, personal moments and collective traumas. Crucially, the field has recently gone beyond hegemonic conceptions of linear time by thinking with the ‘processes, scattered across time, of which we are made’.<sup>10</sup> For example, work by memory scholars examines the ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic has perturbed the way we live through time. Because of this ‘perceived suspension of ordinary time, temporal understandings of the future are postponed, while the past hovers like a ghost over the present’.<sup>11</sup> In this way, the study of memories centres on attempts to make meaning of past time. Ultimately, memories are understood as echoing practices of witnessing the past in the present and as shaping the future.<sup>12</sup> Its temporal exploration is thus essential. Often, memory studies tell us, these memory practices are ‘associated with a specific *lieux de memoire*’.<sup>13</sup>

Questions of space and place are central to memory studies.<sup>14</sup> The field points to the relational nature of memories as situated within a collective.<sup>15</sup> On this question, these scholars bring three important insights. First, memory scholars invite us to think through the formation, characteristics, qualities and challenges that memory spaces reveal.<sup>16</sup> Specifically, scholars are concerned with making sense of and engaging with the past through memorials, monuments and museums.<sup>17</sup> Second, they establish memories as

9. Ibid.

10. Carlo Rovelli, *The Order of Time* (New York, NY: Riverhead Books, Penguin, 2018), 203; Marije Hristova, Francisco Ferrándiz and Johanna Vollmeyer, ‘Memory Worlds: Reframing Time and the past—An Introduction’, *Memory Studies* 13, no. 5 (2020): 777–91.

11. Siobhan Kattago, ‘Ghostly Pasts and Postponed Futures: The Disorder of Time During the Corona Pandemic’, *Memory Studies* 14, no. 6 (2021): 1401–413.

12. Jie-Hyun Lim, ‘Victimhood Nationalism in Contested Memories: National Mourning and Global Accountability’, in *Memory in a Global Age: Discourses, Practices and Trajectories* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2010), 138–62.

13. Paul O’Connor, ‘The Unanchored Past: Three Modes of Collective Memory’, *Memory Studies* 15, no. 4 (2022): 634–49.

14. We understand that places are space where human experiences are embodied. See Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1977).

15. Timothy Kubal and Rene Becerra, ‘Social Movements and Collective Memory’, *Sociology Compass* 8, no. 6 (2014): 865–75.

16. Robb Conrad Lauzon, ‘Memorial Space and Its Mnemonic Function’, *Memory Studies* 15, no. 5 (2022): 1027–1042.

17. Julian Bonder, ‘On Memory, Trauma, Public Space, Monuments, and Memorials’, *Places* 21, no. 1 (2009): 62–9; Tanja E. Bosch, ‘Memory Studies: A Brief Concept Paper’ (Working Paper, 2016); Joe Moran, ‘History, Memory and the Everyday’, *Rethinking History* 8, no. 1 (2004): 51–68.

shaped through the social space ‘in which they are formed or later remembered’.<sup>18</sup> The place of memories and its relational nature encompasses ‘the space between the stories told, or the events remembered, and the act of remembrance (memory-work) they help frame’, as well as ‘the social practices of collective remembering’ that embodies a community’s understanding of their past.<sup>19</sup> Third, they indicate the challenges of conceptualising memories as space. Here, some scholars invent the notion of ‘place memory’ through which ‘the performative retemporalisation of everyday places and landscapes, survivors demand that their resistant memories and narrative frames of past violence still belong’.<sup>20</sup> Others are interested in the ‘location of memory, in which trauma took place and continues to be inextricably bound with that location in both an affective and evidential manner’.<sup>21</sup>

Lastly, memory studies have richly engaged with memories across human and non-human realms. Some scholars refer to this movement as the ‘fourth turn’ in memory studies, reflecting growing attention to the Anthropocene and its challenge to human-centric assumptions in memory scholarship.<sup>22</sup> A substantial body of work investigate how memories entangled with environment, including oceans,<sup>23</sup> prompting a shift in how we conceive the relationship between memories and ecological contexts.<sup>24</sup> Relatedly, some studies examine the affective dimensions of memories not only in humans but also in animals.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, an expanding area of scholarly works explores how technological advancement – particularly in digital media,<sup>26</sup> robotics<sup>27</sup> and artificial intelligence<sup>28</sup> – intersect

18. William Hirst and Charles B. Stone, ‘Social Aspects of Memory’, in *Emerging Trends in the Social and Behavioural Sciences: An Interdisciplinary, Searchable, and Linkable Resource*, eds. Robert A. Scott, Marlis Buchmann and Stephen Kosslyn (Stanford University, 2015), 1.
19. Julian Bonder, ‘On Memory, Trauma, Public Space, Monuments, and Memorials’, *Places* 21, no. 1 (2009): 62–9; Bosch, ‘Memory Studies: A Brief Concept Paper’; Moran, ‘History, Memory and the Everyday’.
20. Joseph S. Robinson, ‘“We Have Long Memories in This Area”: Ulster Defence Regiment Place-Memory Along the Irish Border’, *Memory Studies* 15, no. 5 (2022): 995–1010.
21. Dylan Trigg, ‘The Place of Trauma: Memory, Hauntings, and the Temporality of Ruins’, *Memory Studies* 2, no. 1 (2009): 87–101.
22. Stef Craps et al., ‘Memory Studies and the Anthropocene: A Roundtable’, *Memory Studies* 11, no. 4 (2017): 498–515.
23. Hanna Teichler, ‘Transoceanic Memory (Studies): Oceans as Mode, Method and Material’, *Memory Studies Review* 1 (2024): 76–92.
24. Erol Gülüm et al. ‘Memory and Environment’, *Memory Studies Review* 1 (2024): 3–15; Clara De Massol de Rebetz, ‘Remembrance Day for Lost Species: Remembering and Mourning Extinction in the Anthropocene’, *Memory Studies* 13, no. 5 (2020): 875–88.
25. Sophia M. Connell, ‘Aristotle on Memory and Emotion in Human and Non-Human Animals’, in *Memory and Emotions in Antiquity: Ancient Emotions IV*, eds. George Kazantzidis and Dimos Spatharas (Berlin; Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2024), 129–52.
26. Silvana Mandolessi, ‘The Digital Turn in Memory Studies’, *Memory Studies* 16, no. 6 (2023): 1513–28.
27. Mykola Makhortykh, ‘Shall the Robots Remember? Conceptualising the Role of Non-Human Agents in Digital Memory Communication’, *Memory, Mind & Media* 3 (2024): 1–17.
28. Sarah Gensburger and Frédéric Clavert, ‘Is Artificial Intelligence the Future of Collective Memory?’, *Memory Studies Review* 1 (2024): 195–208; Andrew Hoskins, ‘AI and Memory’, *Memory, Mind & Media* 3 (2024): e18.

with memories. Collectively, this line of research aims to ‘rethink memories in terms of more-than-human temporalities or scales, as well as developing new conceptualizations of trauma and victimhood’.<sup>29</sup> These transdisciplinary questions and the rich insights emerging from memory studies beyond IR can inform and enrich our engagement with the global politics of memories.

In the field of IR, an increasing number of scholars are exploring the formation, contestation and mobilisation of memories from diverse perspectives.<sup>30</sup> They investigate how memories of the past are constituted in the present and their implications for foreign policy,<sup>31</sup> (ontological) security<sup>32</sup> and political communities.<sup>33</sup> To highlight that memories entangle, dissolve, unite and disrupt global politics, we have examined the previous research on memories beyond IR through their temporal, spatial and more-than-human dimensions. Building upon it, we will briefly explore existing literature on memories in IR through the same concepts: time, space and non-humans.

29. Susanne C. Knittel, ‘Ecologies of Violence: Cultural Memory (Studies) and the Genocide–Ecocide Nexus’, *Memory Studies* 16, no. 6 (2023): 1563–78.
30. For mapping out what research has been done on memories in IR, see these recent publications: Dovilė Budrytė, ‘Memory and World Politics’, in Oxford Bibliographies in International Relations, 2020. Available at: <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199743292/obo-9780199743292-0273.xml>. Last accessed July 31, 2025; Lina Klymenko, ‘The International Politics of Memory’, in Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies, 23 March 2022, Available at: <https://oxfordre.com/internationalstudies/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.001.0001/acrefore-9780190846626-e-664> (last accessed July 31, 2025); Maria Mälksoo, ed., ‘Chapter 1: Politics of Memory: A Conceptual Introduction’, in *Handbook on the Politics of Memory* (Cheltenham, UK; Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2023), 1–16.
31. Maja Zehfuss, *Wounds of Memory the Politics of War in Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Eric Langenbacher and Yossi Shain, eds., *Power and the Past: Collective Memory and International Relations* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2010); Kathrin Bachleitner, ‘Diplomacy with Memory: How the Past Is Employed for Future Foreign Policy’, *Foreign Policy Analysis* 15, no. 4 (2019): 492–508; Chris Deacon, ‘(Re)Producing the “History Problem”: Memory, Identity and the Japan–South Korea Trade Dispute’, *The Pacific Review* 35, no. 5 (2022): 789–820.
32. Ayşe Zarakol, ‘Ontological (In)Security and State Denial of Historical Crimes: Turkey and Japan’, *International Relations* 24, no. 1 (2010): 3–23; Alexandria J. Innes and Brent J. Steele, ‘Memory, Trauma and Ontological Security’, in *Memory and Trauma in International Relations: Theories, Cases and Debates*, 1st ed., eds. Erica Resende and Dovile Budryte (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), 15–29; Maria Mälksoo, ‘“Memory Must Be Defended”: Beyond the Politics of Mnemonical Security’, *Security Dialogue* 46, no. 3 (2015): 221–37; Jelena Subotić, ‘Political Memory, Ontological Security, and Holocaust Remembrance in Post-Communist Europe’, *European Security* 27, no. 3 (2018): 296–313; Karl Gustafsson and Maria Mälksoo, ‘Memory–Political Deterrence: Shielding Collective Memory and Ontological Security through Dissuasion’, *International Studies Quarterly* 68, no. 1 (2023): 12.
33. Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (Cambridge, UK ; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Emma Hutchison, *Affective Communities in World Politics: Collective Emotions after Trauma*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations 140 (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Adam B. Lerner, *From the Ashes of History: Collective Trauma and the Making of International Politics*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2022).



First, time in IR memory studies is generally understood as *(post)modern* and *(non)linear*.<sup>34</sup> In many cases of state-driven memories, time is often regarded as *modern*, meaning that the past, present and future are analytically distinctive. Memories are often considered linear in that memories are uniformly represented as progressing linearly from past to present to future. In contrast, various social groups within and beyond gender, national, ethnic and racial boundaries contribute to memory formation, wherein time is frequently understood as *postmodern* and *nonlinear*. Particularly in cases of traumatic memories, the distinction between past, present and future is collapsed, and the flow of time becomes multidirectional.<sup>35</sup>

Second, numerous IR scholars examine the notion of space, including places, in relation to memories. Their studies of memories in everyday,<sup>36</sup> transnational,<sup>37</sup> postcolonial<sup>38</sup> and digital<sup>39</sup> space illuminate various ways memories permeate modern and largely

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34. Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*; Martin O. Heisler, 'Introduction: The Political Currency of the Past: History, Memory, and Identity', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 617, no. 1 (2008): 14–24; Jenny Edkins, 'Chapter 5: Remembering Relationality Trauma Time and Politics', in *Memory, Trauma and World Politics: Reflections on the Relationship Between Past and Present*, ed. Duncan Bell (Basingstoke, UK; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 99–115; Andrew R. Hom, 'Patriots All Around: Inter/National Timing, Round Numbers, and the Politics of Commemorative Critique', *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 63, no. 3 (2017): 443–56.
  35. Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*.
  36. Lerna K. Yanik and Fulya Hisarlioğlu, 'Chapter 3: "They Wrote History with Their Body": Necrogeopolitics, Necropolitical Spaces and the Everyday Spatial Politics of Death in Turkey', in *Turkey's Necropolitical Laboratory: Democracy, Violence and Resistance*, ed. Banu Bargu (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 46–70.
  37. Erica Resende and Dovile Budryte, eds., *Memory and Trauma in International Relations: Theories, Cases and Debates* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014); Peter Pirker, Johannes Kramer and Mathias Lichtenwagner, 'Transnational Memory Spaces in the Making: World War II and Holocaust Remembrance in Vienna', *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 32, no. 4 (2019): 439–58; Jelena Subotić, 'The International Relations of Holocaust Memory', in *Politics, Violence, Memory*, ed. Jelena Subotić (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2023), 283–96; John Njenga Karugia, 'Provincializing European Memory: Transregional Heritage Politics and Memory Ethics across China's Belt(s) and Road(s) Initiative(s)', in *Handbook on the Politics of Memory*, ed. Maria Mäklsoo (Cheltenham, UK; Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2023), 95–114.
  38. Rosanne Kennedy and Sulamith Graefenstein, 'From the Transnational to the Intimate: Multidirectional Memory, the Holocaust and Colonial Violence in Australia and Beyond', *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 32, no. 4 (2019): 403–22; Matt McDonald, 'Remembering Gallipoli: Anzac, the Great War and Australian Memory Politics', *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 63, no. 3 (2017): 406–18; Alexander D. Barder, 'Race War and the Global Imperial Order: The Armenian Genocide of 1915', *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 63, no. 3 (2017): 382–93.
  39. Maja Zehfuss, 'Hierarchies of Grief and the Possibility of War: Remembering UK Fatalities in Iraq', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 38, no. 2 (2009): 419–40; Nataliya Danilova, 'The Politics of Mourning: The Virtual Memorialisation of British Fatalities in Iraq and Afghanistan', *Memory Studies* 8, no. 3 (2015): 267–81.

artificial boundaries. This analytic movement aligns with numerous efforts by critical IR scholars to provincialise the nation-state as a naturalised unit of analysis. Meanwhile, many researchers focus closely on the role of memorials,<sup>40</sup> monuments,<sup>41</sup> bombsites<sup>42</sup> and bodies<sup>43</sup> in memory politics. Here, scholars demonstrate that places are not merely a backdrop for historical events; instead, they actively shape the formation, mobilisation and implication of memories.

Third, a number of IR researchers explore the role of non-humans in memory politics. Traditionally, researchers focus on the role of humans, including victim(hood),<sup>44</sup> and memory activists.<sup>45</sup> In line with critical engagement with the Anthropocene in IR and memory studies, some scholars investigate the role of more-than-humans in memory politics. Their research includes viruses, such as influenza<sup>46</sup> and COVID-19,<sup>47</sup> as well as the environment.<sup>48</sup>

40. Mike M. Mochizuki, 'The Yasukuni Shrine Conundrum: Japan's Contested Identity and Memory', in *Northeast Asia's Difficult Past*, eds. Mikyoung Kim and Barry Schwartz (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2010), 31–52; Katharine M. Millar, 'Death Does Not Become Her: An Examination of the Public Construction of Female American Soldiers as Liminal Figures', *Review of International Studies* 41, no. 4 (2015): 757–79; Jelena Subotić, 'Foreign Policy and Physical Sites of Memory: Competing Foreign Policies at the Jasenovac Memorial Site', *International Politics* 57, no. 6 (2020): 1012–1029; Christine Sylvester, 'National War Heritage at the Australian War Memorial and Hiroshima Peace Park', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 49, no. 2 (2021): 280–304; Craig Larkin and Ella Parry-Davies, 'War Museums in Postwar Lebanon: Memory, Violence, and Performance', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 25, no. 1 (2019): 78–96.
41. Katherine Hite and Cath Collins, 'Memorial Fragments, Monumental Silences and Reawakenings in 21st-Century Chile', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 38, no. 2 (2009): 379–400; Lina Klymenko, 'Forging Common History', in *Russia's Cultural Statecraft*, 1st ed., eds. Tuomas Forsberg and Sirke Mäkinen, Studies in Contemporary Russia (London; New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2022), 75–97.
42. Charlotte Heath-Kelly, *Death and Security: Memory and Mortality at the Bombsite*, New Approaches to Conflict Analysis (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).
43. Jessica Auchter, *The Politics of Haunting and Memory in International Relations* (London; New York, NY: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2014); Jessica Auchter, 'The Human Body as Site of Memory Politics', in *Handbook on the Politics of Memory*, ed. Maria Mälkssoo (Cheltenham, UK; Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2023), 204–15.
44. Daria Khlevnyuk, 'Victim-Heroes in Collective Memory: Surviving Soviet Repressions Heroically', *Memory Studies* 16 (2021): 175069802199599; Roxani C. Krystalli, 'Narrating Victimhood: Dilemmas and (in)Dignities', *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 23, no. 1 (2021): 125–46.
45. Laure Neumayer, 'Agents of Memory Politics', in *Handbook on the Politics of Memory*, ed. Maria Mälkssoo (Cheltenham, UK; Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2023), 116–29.
46. Jeremy Youde, 'Covering the Cough? Memory, Remembrance, and Influenza Amnesia', *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 63, no. 3 (2017): 357–68.
47. Dovilė Budrytė and Erica Resende, 'COVID-19 as a Collective Trauma in Global Politics: Disruption, Destruction and Resilience', *Societies* 13, no. 5 (2023): 106.
48. Olli Hellmann, 'Collective Memory of Environmental Change and Connectedness with Nature: Survey Evidence from Aotearoa New Zealand', *Memory Studies* 17, no. 2 (2024): 300–316.



In response to the theoretical and empirical significance of memories, *Millennium* has addressed memories in various forms, including a forum on memory and violence (Vol. 38, Issue 2),<sup>49</sup> a book forum on Emma Hutchison's *Affective Communities in World Politics* (Vol. 47, Issue 2),<sup>50</sup> and several standalone articles in various volumes.<sup>51</sup> However, the journal has yet to dedicate an entire issue specifically to memory and politics. With the journal's aim and scope to publish critical, theoretical and boundary-pushing articles in the field of IR, we aimed to intensively explore diverse modalities through which memories are entangled with global politics.

Our Vol. 53 *Millennium* Symposium, nonetheless, revealed that engaging with memories goes beyond responding to scholarly debates; it requires situating them within broader social, political and affective contexts, while remaining attentive to our positions as scholars deeply embedded within the worlds we seek to understand. Over two days, the event became a space not just for thinking *about* memory politics, but for sensing and co-experiencing them. In doing so, we inevitably created new memories of our own. The Symposium thus became more than an academic gathering or intellectual exercise: it mirrored memories' inherent capacity to blur boundaries – through conversations marked by fluidity, mobility and a sense of in-betweenness that exceeded spatiotemporal constraints.

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49. Duncan Bell, 'Introduction: Violence and Memory', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 38, no. 2 (2009): 345–60; W. James Booth, 'Kashmir Road: Some Reflections on Memory and Violence', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 38, no. 2 (2009): 361–77; Hite and Collins, 'Memorial Fragments, Monumental Silences and Reawakenings in 21st-Century Chile'; John Hutchinson, 'Warfare and the Sacralisation of Nations: The Meanings, Rituals and Politics of National Remembrance', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 38, no. 2 (2009): 401–417; Zehfuss, 'Hierarchies of Grief and the Possibility of War'.
  50. Asli Calkivik and Jessica Auchter, 'Symposium Introduction: Debating Trauma and Emotion in World Politics', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 47, no. 2 (2019): 231–6; Benjamin Meiches, 'Traumas Without Bodies: A Reply to Emma Hutchison's *Affective Communities*', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 47, no. 2 (2019): 237–48; Anna M. Agathangelou, 'A Conversation with Emma Hutchison and Frantz Fanon on Questions of Reading and Global Raciality', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 47, no. 2 (2019): 249–62; Andrew A. G. Ross, 'Representation and Mediation in World Politics', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 47, no. 2 (2019): 263–72; Jessica Auchter, 'Narrating Trauma: Individuals, Communities, Storytelling', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 47, no. 2 (2019): 273–83; Emma Hutchison, 'Emotions, Bodies, and the Un/Making of International Relations', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 47, no. 2 (2019): 284–98.
  51. Benjamin De Carvalho, 'War Hurts: Vietnam Movies and the Memory of a Lost War', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 34, no. 3 (2006): 951–62; Jean-Louis Durand and Sebastian Kaempf, 'Reimagining Communities: Opening up History to the Memory of Others', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 42, no. 2 (2014): 331–53; Peter J. Verovšek, 'Expanding Europe Through Memory: The Shifting Content of the Ever-Salient Past', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 43, no. 2 (2015): 531–50; Tami Amanda Jacoby, 'A Theory of Victimhood: Politics, Conflict and the Construction of Victim-Based Identity', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 43, no. 2 (2015): 511–30; Sylvester, 'National War Heritage at the Australian War Memorial and Hiroshima Peace Park'.

It is precisely this sense of excess, movement and entanglement that underpinned our conceptual framing of *traversing*. Our starting point for the term drew heavily on relational thinking across the social sciences,<sup>52</sup> particularly critical interventions in IR.<sup>53</sup> By centring this notion, specifically, we sought to foreground a mode of simultaneity: that is, to show how attending to particular, situated processes – in our case, memories – can illuminate broader patterns in global politics without resorting to totalising frameworks.<sup>54</sup> Global politics, as we understand it, is not a unified field but one marked by multiplicity,<sup>55</sup> fraught with a wide range of histories, experiences and temporalities that rarely align neatly. Indeed, memories reflect such complexity: dispersed, situated and often contradictory, yet profoundly implicated in how the *international* is lived and contested across cultures and even cosmologies<sup>56</sup> the world over.

As we originally framed it, ‘traversing entails cutting across scholarly foci, all the while linking them to their broader environment’.<sup>57</sup> The idea, however, soon expanded to incorporate a broader notion of transversality, as the volatility of memories disrupted both temporal and spatial distinctions through their enduring reverberations in IR. What is remembered *here* and *now*, after all, often exceeds one’s own lifetime and immediate proximity. Thus, rather than subscribing to mainstream IR’s penchant for parsimony and overly coherent logics, traversing evolved into a wider call to navigate the entangled, overlapping webs of global life. This relational imprint is far from arbitrary: what is ultimately at stake is how the very composition of the ‘international’ is not just theorised but also practised – even in our daily actions, where memories are ever-present and, at times, conspicuously forgotten. As Kurki reminds us, ‘we are traversing in all kinds of ways – with spiders and states and technologies – but how we traverse can also shift and reorient to reveal different webs, different layers, different lives, different response-abilities’.<sup>58</sup> Our initial prompt to traverse scholarly works on memory thus became a generative practice: a collective effort to activate and tap into memories’ own traversing potential.

52. For a notable example, see Mustafa Emirbayer, ‘Manifesto for a Relational Sociology’, *American Journal of Sociology* 103, no. 2 (1997): 281–317.

53. See, for instance: Milja Kurki, *International Relations in a Relational Universe* (Oxford University Press, 2020). For similar concepts, including transversality, see Nevzat Soguk and Geoffrey Whitehall, ‘Wandering Grounds: Transversality, Identity, Territoriality, and Movement’, *Millennium*, 28, no. 3 (1999): 675–98.

54. Jef Huysmans and Joao P. Nogueira, ‘International Political Sociology as a Mode of Critique: Fracturing Totalities’, *International Political Sociology* 15, no. 1 (2021): 2–21; Joao P. Nogueira, ‘Keynote Speech’ (Doing IPS Symposium on ‘Transversalising the Social and Political: Writing Time; Making Space’, London, United Kingdom, 14 April 2023).

55. Justin Rosenberg et al., ‘Multiplicity and “the International” as Critique – A Forum’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 52, no. 2 (2024): 499–529.

56. See, for instance: Tamara Trowsell, Navnita Chadha Behera and Giorgio Shani, ‘Introduction to the Special Issue: Pluriversal Relationality’, *Review of International Studies* 48, no. 5 (2022): 787–800; Tamara A. Trowsell et al., ‘Differing about Difference: Relational IR from around the World’, *International Studies Perspectives* 22, no. 1 (2021): 25–64.

57. For the original iteration of our CfA, see <https://millenniumjournal.org/symposium53/>.

58. Milja Kurki, ‘Traversing Webs: Reflections on Relational Theory and International Relations’, *New Perspectives* 30, no. 2 (2022): 189–97.

By *traversing memories*, then, this Special Issue foregrounds their paradoxical capacity: to endure and to dissolve, to recollect and to erase, to unite and to divide. Too often, memories have been approached through the isolated dimensions of time or space: as a chronological residue of the past, or as something territorially fixed to nations, institutions or commemorative sites. Yet such framings risk flattening the ways in which memories move, mutate, and haunt across borders and temporal registers, disrupting linear histories and spatial containments. In short, by *traversing memories*, the interventions that follow – each in their own way – help to make sense of their reverberations through time and space, and to lay bare the limitations of these dimensions' convenient analytical separation for producing knowledge about global politics.

Across this Special Issue, authors make methodological and empirical contributions that engage with the above frame. These multiple explorations equally branch through methodological realms. Traversing memories brings insights from across methodologies, from deep archival study and oral history, to multi-method and aesthetic approaches that in turn further illuminate memory traversing capacities. In addition, authors showcase empirical varieties that push the boundaries of the research. A number of papers diversely investigate how memories relating to violence are entangled with global politics, ranging from everyday violence, war crimes – and specifically genocide – and anti-colonial and imperial legacies. Some other works focus on the role of non-humans, such as military balloons, COVID-19 and climate-related loss and damage.

In addition to methodological and empirical innovations, authors offer theoretical insights by critically engaging with memories' entanglements with time, space/place and more-than-humans. A theme that runs through many contributions concerns the relationship between memory and time itself. Further complicating tidy temporal framings, Amy Cortvriend, Lucy Easthope, Jenny Edkins and Kandida Purnell employ the notion of embodied trauma to interrogate the linear conception of healing and recovery in the context of disaster responses, specifically through their analysis of the dynamics and aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United Kingdom. Their intervention challenges depoliticising narratives that attempt to problematise political traumas through the language of embodied trauma, opening up the possibility of political activism and the emergence of a new sociopolitical order – rather than a simplistic return to 'normal'. With a similar focus on the United Kingdom and Scotland, Chaeyoung Yong explores controversies over Gender-Based Violence by examining tensions between gender critical feminists and trans rights activists. Her article nuances Jenny Edkin's notion of trauma time by capturing how different social actors mobilise linear and non-linear temporalities. She offers three mechanisms through which trauma is experienced outside conventional temporal frameworks: non-linear temporal experiences, openness via encircling the meanings of violence, and hypervigilance and depoliticisation of trauma. Together, these interventions share an emancipatory ethos, contesting dominant (temporal) orders and highlighting how trauma endures across both global and intimate spheres.

Beyond the United Kingdom, and shifting our gaze away from the past, other contributions explore the complex relationship between memories and the future. Through an analysis of three contemporary cases in Asia, Phuong Anh Nguyen examines how states navigate unwanted memories to stabilise fragmented national narratives. By introducing

the concept of *anticipatory temporal othering*, her article highlights how actors manage not only historical legacies but also feared or undesirable futures – where the ‘others’ are not spatially distant or foreign but imagined versions of the self across time: the past self/other and future self/other. These temporal constructions, Nguyen argues, shape contemporary political landscapes and (in)security dynamics in international politics. Also adopting a forward-looking lens, but grounded in the context of Mexico, Arthur Duhé explores how a memory as complex and contentious as colonisation can be strategically reframed for internationalist purposes. Focusing on the Zapatista Army of National Liberation, his article examines their 2021 Journey for Life expedition, highlighting how their articulation of Indigenous philosophy and anti-colonial resistance served as a form of *memorial strategy*. Duhé contends that this engagement with European activists sought to heal the past by re-enacting it in an inverted form – as a ‘memory of what is to come’.

Frederik Carl Windfeld, for his part, further complicates temporal boundaries by showing how weapons of the past inhabit visions that traverse the partitioning of past, present, and future battlefield imaginaries. Focusing on military balloons, his article scrutinises the techno-futuristic frenzy surrounding emerging and disruptive technologies to theorise a distinctive *temporal grammar of disruption*. This grammar, Windfeld argues, follows a recursive logic: the present is projected into an imagined future, which then loops back to legitimise actions in the present – prompting a troubling *amnesia of the moment*. In doing so, his intervention contributes to the broader challenge to linear, progressive temporalities in world politics, where the assumption that the past precedes the present but not the future often remains unexamined.

Taking stock of linear temporal trajectories, other articles examine how collective memories are shaped through unchallenged historical accounts. Offering an epistemological intervention, Taylor Borowitz and Felix Berenskötter explore the connection between concepts and collective memories, grounding both in shared experiences. Their article introduces two heuristic angles to investigate their interplay in the creation of political meaning, highlighting their mutually reinforcing relation. To illustrate this, they analyse two cases: the concept of ‘revolution’, revisiting the epistemic recovery of the Haitian Revolution by historians, and the contested concept of ‘genocide’, examining how the memory of the Holocaust continues to shape the German government’s interpretation of the term. Retaining the focus on Germany but turning to a specific urban site – Berlin’s Görlitzer Park – Johanna Grabert, Laura Kotzur and Mariam Salehi address subtle imperial legacies through the concept of ‘boomerang’ and the transnational and transtemporal dimensions it reveals. Building on the growing scholarship around this notion, they propose an analytical framework comprising three strands of imperial continuity: the governing boomerang, the boomerang of imperial subjectivities and the material boomerang. Together, both contributions foreground the enduring reverberations of colonial and imperial histories – often obscured by treating time and space as separate epistemic categories.

Two of the articles in this Special Issue critically engage with memories through space/place. Responding to a renewed interest in memories of genocide, Giorgio Shani’s article shows how memories of cultural trauma can traverse and disrupt

nationalist imaginaries – often anchored in *lieux historiques* – by fostering a post-national diasporic consciousness rooted in collective suffering and centred on *lieux de mémoire*. His work contributes to an understanding of memory and identity in IR as embodied, multidirectional and de/territorialised – no longer confined to the framework of the nation-state. From a similar critical approach, Xuan Dung Phan's article intervenes in the scholarship on memory activism, through Michael Rothberg's notion of implicated subjects. The paper argues that existing research's primary focus on the role of memory activism within territorialised boundaries limits our understanding of its transnational nature. The article captures two mechanisms embedded in the notion of implicated subjects to traverse national boundaries: cultural memory mobilisation and transnational tactical adaptation.

In addition to the spatiotemporal contributions outlined above, our Special Issue specifically contributes to the theoretical reflection around more-than-humans in relation to memory. Two papers specifically examine memory through the lens of a pharmaceutical factory in Sudan and climate change. Jonathan Blom and Aksel Hvid's paper critically engages in the literature on trauma in IR and New Materialism, and adopts a posthumanist approach to trauma to emphasise the entanglement of more-than-humans as not just traumatising but also traumatised agencies. Further, Pauline Heinrichs, Italo Brandimarte and Adam Lerner examine how climate-related loss and damage is erased within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), teasing out the framework's implications for how we remember and memorialise the effects of climate change, as well as its reverberations in traumatised communities.

In sum, this Special Issue showcases imaginative and often unexpected ways in which contributors have engaged with memories. Taken together, their interventions challenge the dominant onto-epistemological categories, fragmentations and divisions that continue to haunt studies on memories within and beyond IR. By traversing temporal, spatial and more-than-human boundaries, the contributions illuminate memories' deep entanglements with power, identity and resistance in global politics. In doing so, they push the field towards more dynamic and generative approaches to memories that expand 'our' understanding of the political present.

We thank all the participants in the *Vol. 53 Millennium Symposium* for their thought-provoking contributions, as well as the authors, peer reviewers and deputy editors whose collaborative efforts brought this collection to fruition. In traversing these essays, may you encounter new layers, webs, and memories that draw us together rather than set us apart. Finally, alongside our *Vol. 53 Millennium Symposium* papers featured in this Special Issue, we also include a book forum on the 2024 ISA Theory Section Book Prize Winner *Nonhuman Humanitarians: Animal Interventions in Global Politics* (2023) by Benjamin Meiches.

### **Declaration of Conflicting Interests**


The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

**Funding**

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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