Power and the Past: Collective Memory and International Relations

WASHINGTON D.C. — “Remember 9/11” has tolled throughout the new millennia in the U.S. impacting how Americans vote, what products they choose to buy, how they choose to travel, and their opinions on domestic and foreign policy. Memories of past tragedies affecting our international relations is nothing new; the Holocaust has long impacted policies of nations across the globe. The collective memories of post-Soviet countries color relations with modern Russia; South Africa continues to struggle with memories of apartheid; and the Armenian genocide still influences relations between Turkey and Armenia.

And yet, only recently have international relations scholars started to seriously examine the influence of collective memory on foreign policy formation and relations between states and peoples. The ways in which the memories of past events are interpreted, misinterpreted, or even manipulated in public discourse create the context that shapes international relations. A new book, *Power and the Past*, brings together leading scholars in history and international relations to provide a groundbreaking examination of the impact of collective memory.

This timely study makes a contribution to developing a theory of memory and international relations and also examines specific cases of collective memory’s influence resulting from the legacies of World War II, the Holocaust, and September 11. Called “essential reading for anyone interested in the past's indelible imprint on the present” by Lily Gardner Feldman of Johns Hopkins University, this volume illustrates clearly how the memory of past events alters how countries interact in the present, how memory shapes public debate and policymaking, and how memory may aid or more frequently impede conflict resolution.

According to Andrei Markovits, of the University of Michigan, “This collection features some of the most intelligent, articulate, and accessible scholarship on the crucial issue of memory's profound role in shaping key aspects of contemporary politics, both domestic and foreign, all over the world.”

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